

AN EXAMINATION OF FACTORS CONSIDERED BY THE
TEXAS PRINT MEDIA ON THE USE OF A
MEDIA RESOURCE TOOL

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background and Setting	1
Need	3
Problem Statement	5
Purpose and Objectives	5
Terminology	7
Limitations	10
Assumptions	10
Significance of the Problem	10
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	13
Overview	13
Theoretical Framework	14
Cotton Industry	17
News Gathering	20
CottonLink Media Resource Guide	23
Agricultural Policy	24
Alternative Perspectives	26
Significance of the Review of Literature	28
III. METHODOLOGY	31
Objectives	31
Design	32
Population and Sample	34
Instrumentation	35
Conditions of Testing	39
Data Analysis	40

IV.	RESULTS AND FINDINGS	41
	Objectives	41
	Findings Related to Objective One	44
	Findings Related to Objective Two	45
	Findings Related to Objective Three	51
	Findings Related to Objective Four	58
	Findings Related to Objective Five	65
	Findings Related to Objective Six	72
	Findings Related to Objective Seven	74
	Findings Related to Objective Eight	77
	Findings Related to Objective Nine	85
	Findings Related to Objective Ten	87
	Findings Related to Objective Eleven	88
V.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	92
	Objectives	92
	Procedures	93
	Conclusions Related to Objective One	94
	Conclusions Related to Objective Two	95
	Conclusions Related to Objective Three	95
	Conclusions Related to Objective Four	96
	Conclusions Related to Objective Five	97
	Conclusions Related to Objective Six	98
	Conclusions Related to Objective Seven	98
	Conclusions Related to Objective Eight	99
	Conclusions Related to Objective Nine	100
	Conclusions Related to Objective Ten	100
	Conclusions Related to Objective Eleven	101
	Recommendations	101
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	108
	APPENDICES	112
	A. DEMOGRAPHICS FOR RESEARCH SAMPLE	112
	B. TELEPHONE SURVEY INSTRUMENT	115
	C. NON-RESPONDER MAILED SURVEY INSTRUMENT	119
	D. SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT	125

E. AXIAL CODING OF DATA	132
F. SELECTIVE CODING OF DATA	141

ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the impact the CottonLink media resource guide had on the increased coverage of cotton and means of improving industry-provided media resource guides. It also sought to identify newsgathering techniques used and identify the types of articles published and desired by members of the Texas print newspaper media.

The population of Texas newspapers was stratified into four groups based on geographic location and publication of cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005; eight participants were drawn from each population sub-set, resulting in a sample of 32. The researcher conducted interviews with participants, using a researcher-designed telephone survey instrument. A total of 26 participants were interviewed.

The majority of participants did not recall receiving the CottonLink media resource guide. Participants said they primarily gather information for articles through personal interviews, Internet resources, and the Texas Cooperative Extension. Articles about boll weevils and cotton ginning were the most frequently cited cotton articles published by sample newspapers. Information on new technology or improvements in the cotton industry was cited as the most desired cotton topic for publication. The most frequently published agricultural articles by participants included news and feature articles written by staff writers, Texas Cooperative Extension information, weather information, and meeting and conference information.

The most important general news topics to participants were local news and community events, local school news, and local government topics. The most important

agricultural news topics included crop harvest articles, weather information, and livestock articles. The most common means of determining article newsworthiness is through topics' interest and impact and proximity to readers. The most frequently cited means of determining story importance was interest and impact of articles' topics, followed by attention-grabbing, proximity, and space available.

Findings revealed that participants want source contact information and localized information included in media resource guides. The most desired format for information dissemination is through the Internet, press packets or binded copy, or e-mail. Participants said media resource guides were useful because they provide useful, hard-to-access information and story ideas. They also stated media resource guides were not used because of a lack of local information.

A selected sample of newspapers chose not to publish cotton-related information said this decision was due to the fact that cotton is not a locally grown crop. Most participants whose newspapers did not publish cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005 said access to resources may enhance publication rates. The most frequent suggestion to improve cotton news coverage was to localize information.

Recommendations resulting from this study included suggestions for formatting and distributing media resource guides, providing editors with story ideas at strategic times of the year to increase coverage, providing local source training, and additional research regarding information sources, reporting behaviors, actual determination of newsworthiness, and journalists' abilities to effectively communicate about the science of agriculture.

LIST OF FIGURES

1	Rogers and Dearing's (1987) model of agenda setting	15
2	Theory of planned behavior model	16
3	U.S. cotton growing locations, yields, and change	18
4	Diagram of CottonLink media resource guide use and effectiveness study	30
5	Primary cotton producing regions of Texas	35
6	Geographic distribution of research participants	44
7	Media sources identified by research participants	47
8	Individual sources identified by research participants	49
9	Cotton article topics published by research participants	52
10	Sources of cotton articles published by research participants	54
11	Cotton topics desired for publication by research participants	56
12	Agricultural article topics published by research participants	62
13	Most important general news topics to research participants	67
14	Sources of important agricultural topics identified by research participants	68
15	Important agricultural topics identified by research participants	71
16	Newsworthiness determinants identified by research participants	73
17	Story importance determinants identified by research participants	76
18	Content suggestions for media resource guides identified by research participants	81

19	Preferred format for information dissemination identified by research participants	83
20	Reasons why cotton articles were not published by selected newspapers	87
21	Selected participants' likelihood of publishing cotton-related articles with access to resources	89

LIST OF TABLES

1	Information Sources Cited by Participants	50
2	Topic Categories and Specific Cotton Topics Cited by Participants	52
3	Sources of Cotton Articles Published by Participants' Newspapers	53
4	Topic Categories of Cotton Articles Desired by Participants	58
5	Topics of Agricultural Articles Published by Sample Newspapers	61
6	Categorized Topics of Agricultural Articles Published by Participants	65
7	Most Important News Topics and Categories to Sample Newspapers	66
8	Most Important Agricultural Topics and Categories to Sample Newspapers	70
9	Determinants of Newsworthy Topics Cited by Sample Newspapers	73
10	Determinants of Story Importance Cited by Sample Newspapers	75
11	Media Resource Guide Topics Desired by Sample Newspapers	80
12	Ideal Delivery Formats for Media Resource Guides	83

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Setting

Cotton is an American icon of the South, and it has been an important cash crop to the United States since first being planted around 1556 (National Cotton Council, n.d.b). Today, the cotton industry is a vital part of American agriculture. Cotton lint, meal, hulls, and cottonseed oil are processed to generate clothing, cooking products, and livestock feed components. Most of the country's cotton production occurs in 17 southern states, ranging from Virginia to California. In the 2003 season, the United States produced about 18.3 million bales of cotton. Texas contributed the most bales to the tally, accounting for nearly 4.4 million (USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service, n.d.a). The industry provides more than 400,000 jobs nationwide and supplements the economy with more than \$25 billion annually (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002a).

Texas is the second-ranked state in the nation in terms of total agriculture production, and agriculture is the second largest industry within the state itself (Texas Department of Agriculture, n.d.). Texas is the leading producer of cotton in the United States, and much of that production is concentrated among the high and rolling plains of the state. In 2003, about 4.35 million acres of cotton were harvested in Texas (National Cotton Council, n.d.a). In the major cotton-producing area of the High Plains, 25 counties produced more than 2.18 million bales to the state's total yield (Plains Cotton Growers, Inc., n.d.). Cotton significantly contributes to the state's total of \$2.5 billion in

agricultural exports, and it helps provide more than 39,000 agriculturally related jobs in Texas (Texas Department of Agriculture, n.d.).

The mass media is all around us and it can be difficult to completely remove oneself from its influences. Media outlets encompass a vast array of technologies, including newspapers, television, radio, and the Internet. The general public turns to these mass media news sources on a daily basis for information about current events.

Journalists cover stories that are presumed to be important issues to the general public, often covering a variety of topics. Seven news determinants are used to assess the importance of a news story by journalists and editors, in regards to its coverage and placement within the medium. These news determinants are comprised of timeliness, importance, conflict, proximity, unusualness, progress, and human interest (Marks, 2000). Journalists and editors evaluate each story in regards to these determinants to evaluate a story's newsworthiness and relative importance to the other stories presented in the medium. The general public is presented with stories deemed as important enough for publishing or broadcast, but they lack any real power to influence these decisions.

In order to assist Texas journalists in their coverage of cotton, Texas Tech University developed and distributed the CottonLink media resource guide in 2003. This interactive CD-ROM provides viewers with general information and facts about cotton and also includes a photo gallery of cotton images, lists of potential sources, and related Internet links. The media resource guide was distributed to the 534 newspapers in Texas: 511 tools were mailed to newspapers with small circulations and 23 tools were hand-delivered to the largest newspapers by Texas Tech University agricultural

communications faculty. The intent of the media resource guide was to provide journalists with an easy-to-access tool that would decrease the amount of research time necessary when preparing a news story. Texas Tech hoped that by placing cotton information at the media's fingertips, journalists would be able to focus on writing stories with a more accurate portrayal of the cotton industry.

Need

The general public relies on mass mediums, including newspapers, television, and radio, for information regarding local, state, national, and global issues. When audiences take information presented by the media at face value and assume it is important because it is being broadcast, an enormous amount of power is created in favor of mass media. Journalists, editors, and others within mass mediums determine what stories are published or broadcast on a daily or weekly basis, and assign relative importance to the story or topic through the story's placement and length within the medium. Brooks and Sissors (2001) said journalists decide how much space a particular story is allotted in the newspaper and that allows the journalists to control public's access to information. The layout location and article length can influence the public's agenda. "By deciding to put the city council's decision to raise taxes at the top of page one, the journalist made that a topic of public debate, thus setting the agenda for the community" (Brooks & Sissors, 2001, p.10).

The power held by mass media is referred to as agenda setting. In agenda setting, the media determine what stories are important enough to be presented to the public. A

journalism adage, stated by Cohen (1963), says “[the press] may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (p.13). If so desired, a medium could publish stories that relate solely to editors’ or journalists’ personal agendas, not necessarily to the public’s information needs. The repeated presence of a topic in the media subconsciously signals to consumers that the issue is important, and the positive or negative connotations within the coverage may transfer to the viewer as well.

Policy makers, including the general public and elected officials, routinely refer to mass media for information about important topics and are privy only to what editors’ and journalists’ decide to print and broadcast. Rubin and Windahl (1986) said “individuals require media-delivered information to function in modern societies” (p.185). As the public’s need for information increases, their motivation to seek information increases, their dependency on the media increases, and media-delivered information is more likely to affect individuals’ thoughts and actions (Rubin & Windahl, 1986). At many newspapers, reporters with little agricultural experience are sometimes required to write agriculture stories, including those about cotton. This lack of background knowledge could lead to an inaccurate portrayal of the commodity and may negatively influence policy makers after repeated coverage. Day (2006) said the media must provide information to their audience that is accurate, truthful, and useful, and the failure to do so can prevent individuals from gaining necessary information on a topic in order to make an educated decision.

Problem Statement

Cotton is a major cash crop in Texas, contributing more than \$80 billion annually to the Texas economy (Texas Department of Agriculture, n.d.). Many consumers receive cotton industry information through print media articles that may have been written by agriculturally illiterate reporters. The CottonLink media resource guide was developed by Texas Tech University and distributed to 534 daily and weekly newspapers throughout Texas in August 2003 in order to provide journalists with cotton-related information and sources. Since, there has been a documented increase in the number of cotton-related articles published in Texas print newspapers. What influence did the CottonLink media resource guide have on increasing the number of cotton-related articles published in Texas print newspapers, and how can industry-provided media resource guides be improved? What types of articles are currently being published by Texas print newspapers, and what newsgathering techniques are currently being used by members of the Texas print media?

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact the CottonLink media resource guide had on the increased coverage of cotton, means of improving industry-provided media resource guides, and to determine the types of articles published and newsgathering techniques currently employed by members of the Texas print media. This study will determine the following objectives:

1. Determine the extent and effectiveness of the CottonLink media resource guide usage among members of the Texas newspaper media.
2. Determine information sources utilized by members of the Texas newspaper media to gather news.
3. Identify types of cotton-related articles published and desired by members of the Texas newspaper media.
4. Identify types of agricultural articles published by members of the Texas newspaper media.
5. Determine what topics members of the Texas newspaper media deem most important to their newspapers.
6. Determine how members of the Texas newspaper media determine newsworthy topics.
7. Identify how members of the Texas newspaper media determine article importance in their newspapers, in terms of length and layout of the articles.
8. Determine ideal content areas and media format for information dissemination to Texas newspapers.
9. Identify opinions held by members of the Texas newspaper media regarding media resource guides.
10. Identify reasons why selected Texas newspapers did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005.
11. Identify members of the Texas newspaper media's likelihood of publishing cotton-related articles and suggestions to improve cotton news coverage.

Terminology

Active format – Resource format that requires a physical action on behalf of the user to access information.

Causal Relationship – A theoretical notion that change in one variable forces, produces, or brings about a change in another (Lindenmann, 2002).

Circulation – The number of copies sold of a given edition of a publication, at a given time or as averaged over a period of time (Lindenmann, 2002).

Clip – An article that is obtained from the clipping service containing key words that are identified by the client.

Clipping Service – A business hired to monitor and clip all key words in daily and weekly newspapers on topics identified by the client.

Conflict – News determinant focusing on struggle, including man vs. environment and man vs. man (Marks, 2000).

Creative Source – An individual or organization, separate from the media, that develops and distributes news information to media outlets.

Focus Group – An exploratory technique in which a group of somewhere between eight and 12 individuals – under the guidance of a trained moderator – are encouraged, as a group, to discuss freely any and all of their feelings, concerns, problems and frustrations relating to specific topics under discussion. Focus groups are ideal for brainstorming, idea-gathering, or concept testing (Lindenmann, 2002).

Gatekeepers – Any person or thing that controls access or otherwise regulates (Agnes, 2004).

Human Interest – News determinant focusing on ideas, events, or situations which touch human emotions (Marks, 2000).

Importance – News determinant focusing on the scope and importance of the idea, event, situation or person (Marks, 2000).

Individual Sources – Sources consulted by members of the media that originate from a separate location, such as organizations or outside news media.

Inputs – The research information and data from both internal and external sources that are applied to the initial stage of the communications planning and production process (Lindenmann, 2002).

Media Sources – Sources consulted by members of the media that require direct experience by the journalist through attendance, interviews, or physical contact.

News Determinants – Seven items that are evaluated to assess the worth of a particular story for publication or broadcast.

Outcomes – A long-term measure of the effectiveness of a particular communications program or activity, by focusing on whether targeted audience groups changed their opinions, attitudes and/or behavior patterns as a result of having been exposed to and become aware of messages directed at them (Lindenmann, 2002).

Outgrowths – The culminate effect of all communication programs and products on the positioning of an organization in the minds of its stakeholders or publics; May describe the outtakes of a communications program activity (Lindenmann, 2002).

Outputs – The short-term or immediate results of a particular communications program or activity, with a prime focus on how well an organization presents itself to

others and the amount of exposure it receives; The final stage in the communications production process, resulting in the production and distribution of media items (Lindenmann, 2002).

Outtakes – A measure of the effectiveness of a particular communications program or activity, by focusing on whether targeted audience groups received the messages directed to them, paid attention to the messages, understood or comprehended the messages, and retained and can recall the messages in any shape or form; Initial audience reaction to the receipt of communications materials (Lindenmann, 2002).

Passive Format – Resource format in which the user receives information in a ready-to-use state.

Progress – News determinant focusing on improvements made by man; this may include research developments, better production methods, education and/or new equipment (Marks, 2000)

Proximity – News determinant focusing on the physical and/or psychological closeness to the audience and the point of publication or broadcast (Marks, 2000)

Timeliness – News determinant focusing on the immediacy or recentness of the event; the first reason for a news story (Marks, 2000).

Unusualness – News determinant focusing on rare, odd and sometimes unforeseen ideas, events, or situations (Marks, 2000)

Limitations

The following limitations of this study should be considered:

1. This study will be limited to the coverage of cotton.
2. This study will be limited to print newspapers. It does not include electronic newspapers, newsletters, or magazines.
3. This study will be limited to Texas newspapers.
4. This study is a qualitative study and has limited generalizability outside of the research sample.

Assumptions

The following assumptions of this study should be considered:

1. The CottonLink media resource guide will affect the level of bias in members of the Texas newspaper media.
2. The members of the Texas newspaper media that will be interviewed in the research sample will provide honest answers.

Significance of the Problem

Agriculture is the second-largest industry in Texas and accounts for more than \$200 billion annually (Texas Department of Agriculture, n.d.). The diverse agriculture fields provide jobs to approximately 39,000 working Texans. The United States produces about 18 million bales of cotton each year and sends more than 6.5 million bales of it overseas, making the nation the largest worldwide cotton exporter (USDA-Economic

Research Service, 2002b). Texas leads the nation in cotton production, and the industry generates \$5.2 billion in statewide economic impact annually, making it the leading cash crop in the state (Smith and Anisco, 2000).

Cotton is a highly subsidized commodity at the state and federal levels; thus, it is an important issue for policymakers to consider. Often, policymakers are exposed to information regarding cotton solely through mass media communication channels. The information proposed in these channels does not always accurately portray the cotton industry, due to a lack of knowledge on part of the journalist and editors. The CottonLink media resource guide is a comprehensive interactive guide to the cotton industry and provides journalists with information, links, and sources for their cotton-related articles. The CD-ROM was distributed in 2003 and was intended to help journalists reduce the amount of time necessary to research cotton stories and help increase the accuracy of the resulting stories. Between 2002 and 2004, there was a 17.5% increase in cotton-related stories within Texas newspapers (Vineyard, 2004).

This study is an extension of the research conducted by Beesley (2003) and Vineyard (2004). The results of this study will determine if the CottonLink media resource guide was used by journalists and editors who received the tool in 2003, and if the tool was linked to the documented increase in cotton coverage statewide, as documented by Vineyard (2004). The study will also determine the areas of the CD-ROM that need to be improved in order to increase the use of the tool and identify current newsgathering techniques used by the Texas print media.

If the CottonLink media resource guide is found to have influenced the accurate coverage of cotton in Texas newspapers, this study could be applied to other commodities and/or states. Many reporters and editors nationwide lack experience in agriculture. Media resource guides relating to other important state and national agricultural commodities could help increase the coverage journalists' understanding about the industries.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature was performed to generate a more complete understanding of how journalists find, determine, and gather news material in order to determine the role the CottonLink media resource guide may have in this process. In addition, one must understand the cotton industry, news gathering techniques, the CottonLink media resource guide, and agricultural policy to fully comprehend the research study.

Overview

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact the CottonLink media resource guide had on the increased coverage of cotton, means of improving industry-provided media resource guides, and to determine the types of articles published and newsgathering techniques currently employed by members of the Texas print media. This study is the third research study with the CottonLink project. The two prior studies regarding cotton coverage in the Texas print media were completed by Beesley (2003) and Vineyard (2004) and sought to determine the extent of cotton industry news coverage among Texas print newspaper journalists between September to February during the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 cotton growing seasons, respectively. While the prior studies sought to identify the volume of cotton news stories and analyzed sentence content to determine bias, this study evaluated the usage, effectiveness, and areas of improvement

of the CottonLink media resource guide and determined how Texas print media members gather news.

Theoretical Framework

The media has traditionally been viewed as information gatekeepers – organizations that evaluate an abundance of information and determine the most important topics the general public should be informed about (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 2001). The power of the media to determine important topics on behalf of the public is the basis for agenda setting, the primary theoretical framework for this study.

The agenda setting theory states that the media creates public awareness of issues by determining the issues that are presented to the public, originally observed by McCombs and Shaw (1968) through research of presidential campaigns. The media possesses the power to evaluate potential news stories and determine which topics to present to the public, creating issue awareness in the minds of the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1968). The presence and extended exposure of topics in the media creates salience for the issue in the minds of consumers, thus creating the assumption that the issue is important because it is deemed newsworthy. Figure 1 diagrams the media's influence in the agenda setting theory.

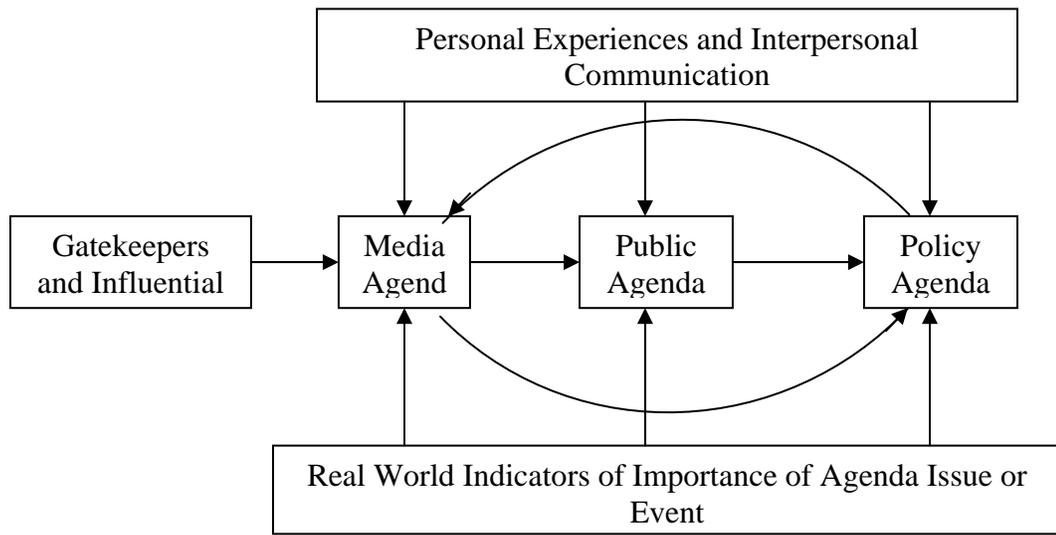


Figure 1. Rogers and Dearing's (1987) model of agenda setting (as cited in McQuail and Windahl, 1993).

The grand theory overshadowing the theory of agenda setting is Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, which evaluates individuals' attitudes and perceptions toward an action in an effort to predict the intention to perform the action (University of Twente, n.d.b). The theory takes into account the behavioral expectations of one's influencers (normative beliefs), societal expectations (subjective norms), and extraneous factors that may affect the behavior (control beliefs). The theory of planned behavior helps predict intentional behavior (University of Twente, n.d.b). The theory of planned behavior is expressed in Figure 2.

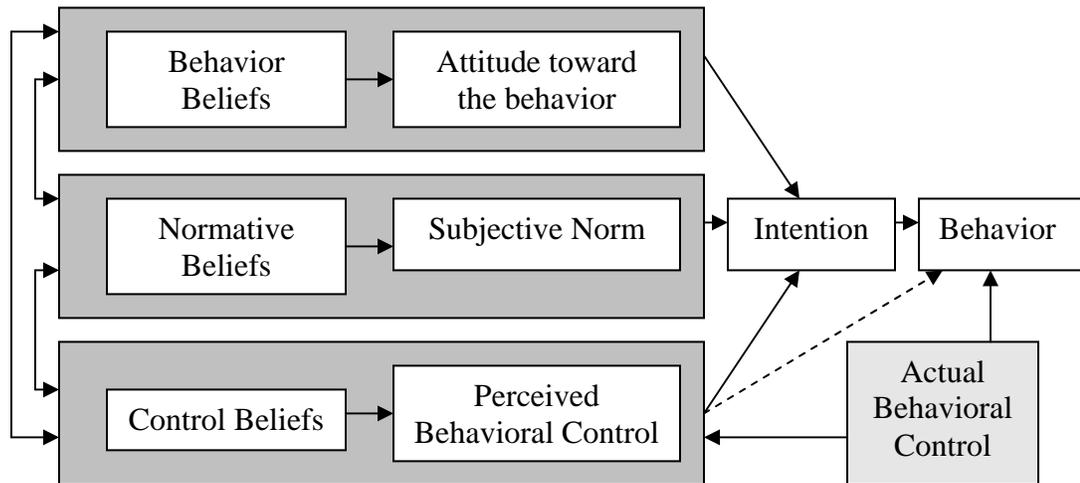


Figure 2. Theory of planned behavior model (Ajzen, 2002).

To thoroughly understand the agenda setting theory, one must understand the mechanics of how stories are selected for presentation in the news. The study will determine the usage level of the CottonLink media resource guide, its effectiveness in helping reporters find and use information about the cotton industry, and identify the current means journalists use to research and report on stories. Through the use of the agenda setting theory, this study sought to determine how journalists use news determinants to choose the stories they report on and will help agricultural industry representatives package and distribute information to aid in understanding and accurate reporting.

News topics coverage and placement have the ability to influence the media audiences' perceptions of the featured individuals, organizations, or topics (Jefferies-Fox, n.d.). The public's perception regarding agriculture may be directly influenced by attitudes presented in agricultural media coverage (Haygood et al., 2002). Often, the

public assumes that the media is presenting information in a non-biased and accurate manner, thus accepting the information as truthful. When journalists allow personal biases to interfere in their news coverage, it has the potential to impact the attitudes of the audience as well. Therefore, the agenda setting theory is an important component when evaluating the media's perceptions of agricultural stories and studying the impact a media guide can make on news gathering and publication techniques.

Cotton Industry

Fields of cotton in bloom is a traditional icon of the American South. Cotton is an important part of U.S. state and federal economies, and the industry creates more than \$25 billion in consumable products annually (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002a). The U.S. cotton crop is grown in 17 states that stretch across the southern portion of the country, known as the "Cotton Belt" (Cotton Incorporated, n.d.). Ninety-eight percent of the U.S. cotton production is grown in 14 Cotton Belt states, including Texas (National Cotton Council, 2002). The growing area of the U.S. cotton crop is illustrated in Figure 3, provided by the United States Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (n.d.b).

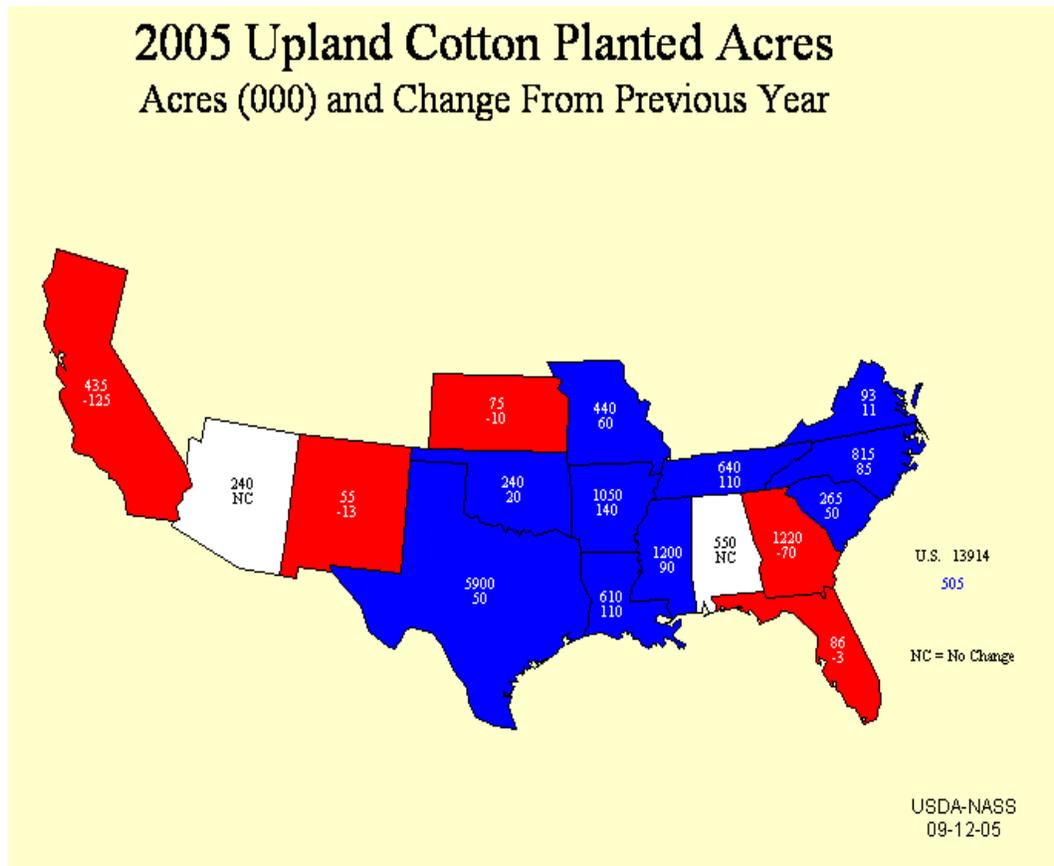


Figure 3. U.S. cotton growing locations, yields, and change (USDA-NASS, n.d.b).

Cotton has been in existence for centuries, with evidence of it dating back to Egypt around 12,000 B.C. (Cotton Incorporated, n.d.). The remnants of cotton fabrics dating back to 500 B.C. have been discovered in the southwestern United States (Cotton Incorporated, n.d.). Today, more than 35,000 farmers grow cotton throughout the United States on more than 13 million acres of land (National Cotton Council, 2002).

Two major varieties of cotton are grown in the United States. American Upland Cotton, *Gossypium hirsutum*, is the most common variety grown in the United States and accounts for approximately 97% of the total U.S. crop (USDA- Economic Research Service, 2002a). A longer-stapled variety known as American Pima Cotton, *Gossypium*

barbadense, is also grown in the country (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002a).

The American Pima variety produces longer staples of lint and is primarily grown in the arid conditions of the Southwest (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002a).

While the primary demand for cotton is the lint produced by the plant, other sources of revenue can be extracted. The cotton seed comprises the majority of the cultivated cotton crop and its three parts – the oil, meal, and hulls – can be put to use (National Cotton Council, 2002). Cottonseed oil is extracted from the seed and is used as cooking oil, while the meal and hulls of the cotton seed are used as livestock feed and fertilizers (National Cotton Council, 2002).

Cotton is a major agricultural and economic product in the United States and Texas. The United States produces an average of 17.2 million bales of cotton annually, making it the second leading producer of cotton worldwide (National Cotton Council, 2002). China leads the annual worldwide production of cotton, producing about 20 million bales (National Cotton Council, 2002). The cotton industry provides more than \$25 billion to the nation's economy annually and creates about 400,000 jobs nationwide (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002a).

Agriculture is an important industry in Texas, accounting for an approximate \$1 billion contribution to the state's economy (Texas Department of Agriculture, n.d.). The state leads the nation in the production of cotton, cattle, goats, hay, mohair, sheep, and wool (Texas Department of Agriculture, n.d.). The state's agricultural industry helps create more than 39,000 jobs for Texans, and the agriculture exports were valued at \$2.5 billion annually in 1999 (Texas Department of Agriculture, n.d.).

“Cotton is the leading cash crop in Texas,” (Smith & Anisco, 2000, Cotton Production section, ¶ 1). In 2003, about 5.6 million acres of cotton were planted throughout Texas (USDA-National Agricultural Statistic Service, n.d.). Texas cotton farmers produce about 4.5 million bales of the nation’s annual tally, making it the leading state in terms of domestic cotton production (National Cotton Council, n.d.a). The High and Rolling Plains regions are highly concentrated areas of cotton production within the state. The 25 counties comprising the High Plains region produced 2.18 million bales of cotton in 2003, which contribute to the area’s average of 2.65 million bales over the past five years (Plains Cotton Growers, Inc., n.d.). Overall, the cotton industry contributes approximately \$5.2 billion to the state’s economy, with about \$1.6 billion going directly to the cotton producers (Smith and Anisco, 2000).

News Gathering

The media is ever present in today’s society. Media encompasses various information outlets, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and billboards. The public relies on journalists to find and report on topics relevant to the nation and its citizens. Journalists are charged with determining what information is important to the public and, therefore, deserves space in the publication or broadcast. News determinants are criteria used by journalists to assess the worth of topics for presentation to the public. Brooks et al. (2001) stated that journalists can determine the newsworthiness of a topic by evaluating its relevance, usefulness, and interest as the criteria relate to the media organization’s audience. Marks (2000) outlined seven news determinants: conflict,

human interest, importance, progress, proximity, timeliness, and unusualness. Cartmell II, Dyer, Birkenholz, and Sitton (2003) found that a topic's perceived level of importance and interest to readers affects articles' publication in the media. By evaluating these criteria, journalists and editors can assess the relative importance of each topic and determine which topics should be presented to their audience.

Journalists obtain information and story topics from a variety of sources. Some journalists actively get out into the community to interact with their audiences and identify story ideas from the public's viewpoint (Barton, 2003). The Associated Press wire service is used by more than 6,700 media organizations, allowing them to receive news stories from AP bureaus worldwide (Haygood et al., 2002). Callison (2002) stated that a recent survey found that 81% of print journalists utilize the Internet daily to research story ideas, but many do not find useful information on Web sites they visit. Callison determined that "journalists demand unique, multimedia content-rich news and information that they can access both in a timely manner and in a usable format" (p.30). E-mail and article research are the most common Internet uses by journalists (Wright, 2001). Stringer (1999) found that Pennsylvania newspaper editors and reporters primarily consulted cooperative extension agents regarding agricultural news topics, with approximately 29% of the respondents using the cooperative extension as a news source at least one time per week. Day (2006) said public relations information from various organizations is a vital source to news media. "News organizations depend on public relations information (in some cases quite heavily) for both economic and journalistic reasons. The cost of gathering information from every possible organization within a

community would be prohibitively expensive without the assistance of representatives from those organizations” (Day, 2006, p.100).

Although the mass media has the power to set the public agenda, the public retains some power of its own. Brooks et al. (2001) stated that “the ultimate judges of what is important and which stories are worth telling are the consumers of journalism: the audiences.” The public has the ability to access a variety of news mediums and topics at any time of day, due in part to the widespread introduction of the Internet in the 1990s. The media’s traditional role of gatekeepers, who sort through large volumes of news and decide what to present, may eventually evolve into the role of a navigator, where journalists will simply sort and explain news while consumers determine what information they wish to view (Brooks et al., 2001). Although consumers have more power in terms of news access than ever before, they still desire assistance from the media to know what news is most important and to help set their agendas (Brooks and Sissors, 2001).

The public expects the media to present an unbiased, truthful representation of the story. Fairness, accuracy, and objectivity must be achieved by journalists in order to maintain their individual professional ethics (Brooks et al., 2001). Furthermore, Brooks et al. (2001) point to accuracy as the foundation of ethics, saying “Accuracy is the most important characteristic of any story, great or small, long or short. Accuracy is essential in every detail” (p.13). Truthful information in articles is also important to maintain credibility of the news organization. Day (2006) said audience understanding of a story is

assisted through truthful reporting, and journalists' goals should be to provide complete and accurate news coverage of a topic regardless of space and time constraints.

Research conducted by Stringer (1999) found that more than 75% of Pennsylvania reporters surveyed said their newspapers' agricultural news coverage included articles on farmland development, gardening, water quality, the environment, and agricultural organizations. Another study of agricultural topic coverage found that "fewer than one-half of the statements from the Associated Press wire service were based on verifiable facts" (Haygood et al., 2002). Due to the fact that the public relies on media outlets to provide truthful information, it is imperative that journalists strive for accurate, unbiased topic coverage.

CottonLink Media Resource Guide

The CottonLink media resource guide is an interactive CD-ROM that provides information about cotton and the cotton industry. The media resource guide was developed by the Texas Tech University Department of Agricultural Education and Communications through funding from the university's International Cotton Research Center. The tool was developed to help foster greater understanding about the cotton industry among Texas print newspaper journalists and provide contact information on experts within the industry (Vineyard, 2004). Media information located in a central location is presumed to be more helpful to journalists (Callison, 2002).

The CottonLink media resource guide provides a one-stop information source for the media, providing information regarding cotton history, expert source contact

information, Internet links, and a photography archive. High-quality pictures were provided by many sources, including Cotton Incorporated, John Deere, and the Texas Tech University agricultural education and communications department (Vineyard, 2004). Media resource guides are able to provide journalists with topics' contexts, data, and article starting points (Voss, 2003).

Texas Tech University's Department of Agricultural Education and Communications distributed a total of 534 copies of the CottonLink media resource guide throughout Texas. Every print newspaper with membership in the Texas Press Association received a copy of the CD-ROM, although the delivery method varied. The CD-ROMs were mailed to 511 newspapers with small circulations. The 23 newspapers with the largest circulations had their media resource guides hand-delivered by members of the agricultural education and communication department faculty in order to ensure acquisition by the newspapers' reporters.

Agricultural Policy

Cotton is an important commodity in a domestic and global sense. In 1997, the U.S. cotton supply was valued at \$120 billion at retail and generated about \$40 billion of revenue through different industry sectors (National Cotton Council, 2002). The nation produced about 18.26 million bales of cotton in 2003 (USDA-National Agricultural Statistic Service, n.d.a). An average of 31% of the U.S. grown cotton supply was exported over the past five years (National Cotton Council, 2002).

The United States is a major player in the worldwide cotton game. “The United States ranks second in world cotton production, third in world cotton consumption, and third in the size of its ending stocks” (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002c, ¶ 2). China is the leading producer and consumer of cotton. According to the United States Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service, six worldwide markets generate 40% of the worldwide cotton imports: European Union, Indonesia, China, Brazil, South Korea, and Thailand (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002c). U.S. cotton exports comprise 25% of the world market’s trade, including exports to these six world markets (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002c).

U.S. cotton mills utilize an average of 10.8 million bales of domestic cotton annually (National Cotton Council, 2002). With the decrease of domestic cotton mill use, the U.S. usage is expected to plateau around six million bales (Cline, 2003). This has led cotton industry professionals and agricultural economists to believe that U.S. cotton sales will only grow through additional cotton exportation (Cline, 2003). Currently, 30 % of cotton worldwide is exported before being transformed into processed goods (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002a).

Many cotton producers rely on subsidization and crop insurance available through the 2002 Farm Act and other legislation (USDA-Economic Research Service, 2002b). Subsidization and crop insurance is available at different premium levels and allow producers to collect payment on crops that are priced below the government “guaranteed” price or that fail to meet the farm’s documented average yield, due to uncontrollable occurrences (Harwood and Novak, n.d.). These programs help U.S. farmers cover the

fixed costs assumed from planting a crop that ultimately is damaged prior to harvest or makes sure producers receive at least a guaranteed price on the commodity.

Legislation regarding agricultural policy surfaces regularly at the state and federal level. Policymakers, including the public and legislators alike, have the opportunity to influence the outcomes of legislation through various actions, including voting and lobbying. In order to fully understand and accurately support or protest these bills, policymakers need to be informed about the issues. Terry and Lawver (1995) found that urbanization has facilitated incorrect perceptions and a lack of awareness about agriculture. Individuals rely on media organizations to present important, accurate, and balanced information regarding these topics. When reporters are unfamiliar with agriculture or other topics, it may potentially result in inaccurate or incorrect reports being disseminated to the public and can result in a lack of agricultural support for farmers and industry. Agricultural policy, as well as other legislative issues, relies on objective reporting that presents all sides of an issue to the public. Objective or balanced reporting provides an abundance of information to the audience and allows them to draw their own conclusions from it (Kingdon, 1994). By providing relevant, balanced information to the public, the media allows policymakers to make up their own mind on the issues.

Alternative Perspectives

Haygood et al. (2002) conducted a study regarding the coverage of agricultural stories by the Associated Press wire service, in which researchers collected and evaluated

articles written by the Associated Press and assessed the level of bias existing in the service's coverage. Researchers gathered all agriculturally related articles distributed by the Associated Press wire service during November 2000, categorized articles based on topic area, and evaluated the content of each articles' sentences using the Hayakawa-Lowry news bias categories to classify sentence content. Results of the study were compared to a similar study conducted by Hess in 1997. The study found that the amount of agricultural stories distributed by the Associated Press wire service had increased by 22%, and the coverage of agricultural policy topics had tripled in occurrence (Haygood et al., 2002). In terms of sentence bias, the study found that fewer judgment sentences were written and the number of report sentences had increased from 1997 to 2000. However, the number of report unattributed sentences had increased at a higher rate than the report attributed sentences (Haygood et al., 2002).

The research also used the theory of reasoned action as the basis of the study's theoretical framework. The researchers use the theory to emphasize that the media's portrayal of agricultural topics has the potential to influence the public's attitudes and perceptions towards agricultural topics. If these learned attitudes and perceptions are consistently negative, the effect may be that agricultural policy decisions suffer.

While many of these points are applicable to the CottonLink media resource guide effects study, an issue arises in the conclusion section of Haygood's et al. (2002) study. The researchers stated that the purpose of the study was to emphasize the importance of agricultural literacy among reporters and that "making reporters aware of their bias statements may encourage them to include more factual and verifiable statement"

(Haygood et al., p.12). Simply knowing some statements contain bias will not be sufficient in changing the writing styles or agricultural literacy of journalists. In order to change the agricultural literacy of reporters, education of agricultural topics must take place in an unquestionably more efficient, easier to use, and easier to access medium that contains more valuable information for journalists to utilize. Callison (2002) stated in his research regarding the media's use of Web sites for news gathering that "journalists demand unique, multimedia content-rich news and information that they can access both in a timely manner and in a usable format" (p.30). The CottonLink media resource guide addresses these needs and is believed to provide journalists with a superior method of information collection. The results of this study will determine if the CottonLink media resource guide was successful in decreasing the level of bias in Texas print newspaper agricultural story coverage.

Significance of the Review of Literature

This review of literature established the need for additional research regarding the extent of use and effectiveness of the CottonLink media resource guide among Texas print newspaper journalists, potential areas of improvement to help journalists report on agricultural topics, and current newsgathering techniques print journalists employ. The need was established by researching cotton, news gathering techniques, the CottonLink media resource guide, and agricultural policy.

After analyzing the literature, it is clear that cotton is an important cash crop in Texas and the nation that significantly contributes to the state and federal economies.

Cotton is a highly subsidized commodity on the state and federal level, resulting in a need to present accurate, non-biased information to policymakers regarding the industry and legislative topics at hand.

The media has the power to set the public's agenda regarding important issues by choosing which stories to publish or broadcast. Potential news stories' importance are assessed by evaluating seven news determinants, including conflict, proximity, importance, and timeliness. Reporters research the stories through various mediums, seeking general information regarding the topics and potential source contact information. Journalists seek informative, useful information that can be accessed quickly and easily.

The CottonLink media resource guide, distributed by Texas Tech University in August 2002, attempted to address this need for useful, accessible media information. The CD-ROM tool was designed to help educate journalists in an effort to promote the accurate portrayal of cotton in the media. Since the media plays a part in determining what issues are important to the public, the agricultural and cotton industries must make an effort to educate the media and provide news story support. Figure 4 diagrams the relationships of variables in the study.

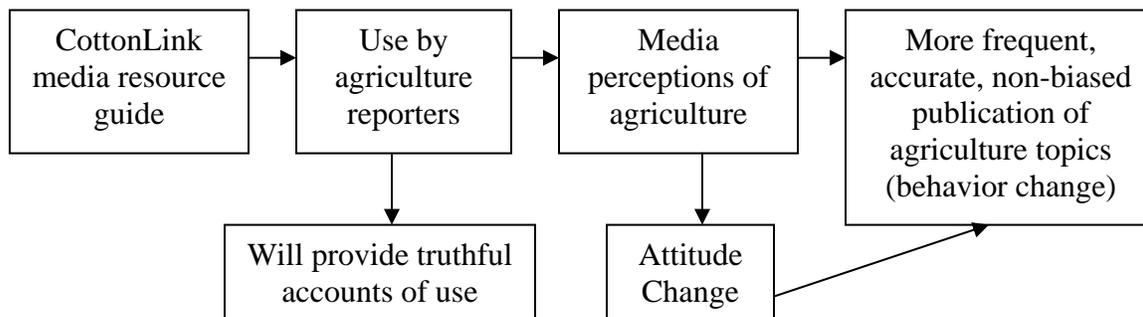


Figure 4. Diagram of CottonLink media resource guide use and effectiveness study.

Because the perceptions and attitudes of the media have the opportunity to affect the public’s awareness and agendas, the study regarding the use and effectiveness of the CottonLink media resource guide is warranted. By gaining a greater understanding the variables involved in the study through the literature review, a more in-depth study will be able to be performed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact the CottonLink media resource guide had on the increased coverage of cotton, means of improving industry-provided media resource guides, and to determine the types of articles published and newsgathering techniques currently employed by members of the Texas print media.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine the following objectives:

1. Determine the extent and effectiveness of the CottonLink media resource guide usage among members of the Texas newspaper media.
2. Determine information sources utilized by members of the Texas newspaper media to gather news.
3. Identify types of cotton-related articles published and desired by members of the Texas newspaper media.
4. Identify types of agricultural articles published by members of the Texas newspaper media.
5. Determine what topics members of the Texas newspaper media deem most important to their newspapers.
6. Determine how members of the Texas newspaper media determine newsworthy topics.

7. Identify how members of the Texas newspaper media determine article importance in their newspapers, in terms of length and layout of the articles.
8. Determine ideal content areas and media format for information dissemination to Texas newspapers.
9. Identify opinions held by members of the Texas newspaper media regarding media resource guides.
10. Identify reasons why selected Texas newspapers did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005.
11. Identify members of the Texas newspaper media's likelihood of publishing cotton-related articles and suggestions to improve cotton news coverage.

Design

This study utilized ethnographic research design. Ethnographic research seeks to develop a true picture regarding the habits and actions of a specific group of individuals. “The emphasis in ethnographic research is on documenting or portraying the everyday experiences of individuals by observing and interviewing them and relevant others” (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003, p. 512). In this study, the group being researched was members of the Texas print newspaper media. Researchers sought to determine the types of articles this group wrote and published, newsgathering techniques used, and opinions and preferences regarding media resource guides. This research design will allow a more detailed understand of the sample group.

The study's external validity was preserved by using a randomized sequence sampling method to recruit subjects for the study. Internal validity was controlled by random subject selection of homogeneous participants to participate in the study and only one researcher collected data, in order to prevent collection bias and help control for subject attitude and implementation. Additionally, the researcher read each question in the interviews word-for-word from a pre-established questionnaire to prevent error from changing the interview wording and meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Only one measurement was taken, so history and maturation were not threats to the study. Location may have been an uncontrollable threat as subjects' locations varied due to their association with different newspaper organizations. The researcher kept the instrument as brief as possible to aid in the prevention of subject mortality. In order to limit non-response error, the researcher sent out a hard copy of the questionnaire with a cover letter to newspapers that were not reached for telephone interviews. This group was asked to complete the questionnaire by hand and return it to the researcher via the self-addressed-stamped envelope each received. Ethnographic research is "highly dependant on the particular researcher's observations and interpretations" (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003, p. 524). In order to help reduce observer bias, a group of four researchers analyzed the results of the interviews to identify themes present in the data. The group discussed the themes until a consensus was reached by the four researchers.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of members of the Texas newspaper media from the 527 Texas print newspapers that received a copy of the CottonLink media resource guide in August 2003. The population list was obtained through membership records with the Texas Press Association. A sample of 32 journalism professionals from this population was randomly selected to participate in focus group interviews. The sample was selected using the stratified random sampling technique, with eight individuals selected from the predefined Plains cotton-producing region, eight individuals from the Coastal cotton-producing region, eight individuals from the Greater-Texas region, and eight individuals whose newspapers did not publish any cotton-related articles.

Figure 5 illustrates the Texas regions used in this study. The state of Texas was divided into three main sections based on cotton production. The Plains region and Coastal region are high-producing cotton regions. The Plains region, located in the northwest section of the state, is comprised of 66 counties. The Coastal region, located in the southern portion of the state, is comprised of 30 counties. The remainder of the state, indicated by the white counties in Figure 5, is classified as the Greater-Texas region. Eight newspapers were randomly selected from each of the three regions from a population that included all newspapers in the respective region that published at least one cotton-related article from September 2004 to June 2005. Newspapers that did not publish any cotton-related articles, regardless of regional classification, were placed into a separate category. Eight newspapers were randomly selected from this population to

participate in the study. By stratifying the selected sample, a representative sample of the Texas newspaper industry was achieved. A sample size of 32 was selected due to the economic and time constraints of the study. Because of the small sample size, research results should not be generalized beyond the sample.

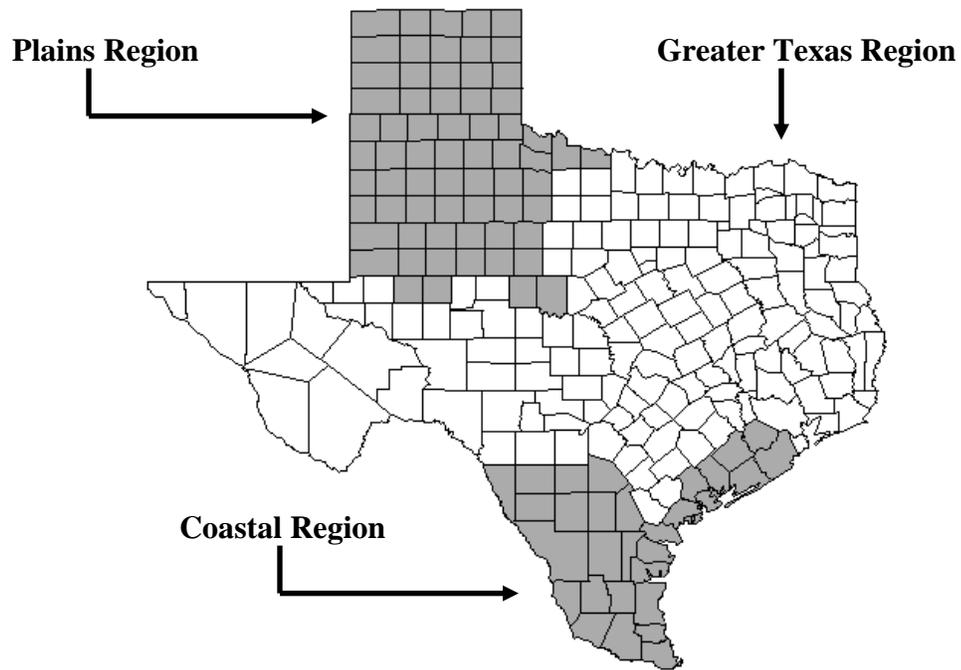


Figure 5. Primary cotton producing regions of Texas (Doerfert, Beesley, Haygood, Akers, Bullock, & Davis, 2004).

Instrumentation

In this study, the effectiveness and extent of use of media resource guides and newsgathering techniques were identified by questioning members of the Texas print newspaper media about their personal experiences. To measure these factors, an

interview questionnaire was prepared by the researcher. The questionnaire primarily consisted of open-ended questions, but included some close-ended questions as well.

Because this study was exploratory in nature, several measures were taken to prevent error from tainting the data. The instrument used in the data collection was evaluated by a panel of experts at Texas Tech University, in order to ensure face and content validity. The researcher also pilot tested the instrument with five agricultural education and communications graduate students at Texas Tech University during July 2005. Based on the results of the pilot test, two wording revisions were made to the questionnaire.

Four procedures were used to enhance the generalizability of the study. The sample studied in the research was obtained through stratified random sampling of the population. The randomized sample was generated using the Web site www.random.org. Records on the amount of cotton-related articles published from Sept. 1, 2004, to June 21, 2005, were maintained by researchers using articles provided by the Texas Press Clipping Service. The clipping service is a subscription-based organization that reviews all Texas print newspapers and sends the subscriber articles in which at least one predefined key word was identified. The population was stratified based on Texas newspapers located in the two main cotton-producing regions and the non-cotton producing region that published at least one cotton-related article during September 2004 to June 21, 2005, and newspapers that did not publish any cotton-related articles during the same time period. This helped create a representation of newspapers from all cotton-production ranges, regardless of article publication.

A questionnaire was developed by the researcher, evaluated by Texas Tech University experts, and pilot tested by the researcher among five Texas Tech agricultural education and communications graduate students. Individual telephone interviews were conducted with sample editors and journalists. The questionnaire was administered to all subjects and the researcher asked follow-up questions to clarify and further understand initial responses.

Twenty-five telephone interviews were conducted with research participants, and the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, in addition to collecting handwritten notes during the interview. Handwritten notes were maintained to help ensure accuracy of transcription and as a back-up data collection method. Transcription was completed by the researcher and a trained assistant, and transcriptions were spot checked by the researcher to ensure accuracy. Additionally, a reflective journal was maintained by the researcher. Following each interview, the researcher compiled reflective field notes regarding the mood of the interview and the occurrence of any external stimuli. By referring back to the journal, the researcher gained additional insight into participants' responses. One research participant responded to the questionnaire that was mailed to non-responders; because this response was submitted on a printed version of the questionnaire, it was not transcribed and reflective notes were not made.

The transcribed data collected during the interviews underwent triangulation to identify themes, using open, axial, and selective coding. Triangulation of data compares researcher's observations to other information sources (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2003). Transcription of the interviews' audio recordings constituted the open coding. After the

interviews were transcribed, thematic analysis was also conducted by the researcher to define emergent themes in the data. Themes' occurrences were tallied from all interviews and listed in order of the frequency of their appearance. The researcher and a panel of agricultural communications experts at Texas Tech University evaluated the thematic analysis results and identified patterns that emerged in the data; this method comprised the axial coding. The researcher and the expert panel then selectively coded the data and refined the patterns to "intensive coding around one category" (Berg, 2001, p. 253). This form of coding helped identify information relating to the study's purpose and helped identify alternative purposes emerging through interviews (Berg, 2001).

While this study was the first qualitative research conducted regarding the CottonLink media resource guide, two prior CottonLink-related studies have been completed. Beesley (2003) evaluated the publication of cotton-related articles in all Texas print newspapers during September 2002 to February 2003. Vineyard (2004) replicated Beesley's study after the dissemination of the CottonLink media resource guide in August 2003 and collected all cotton-related articles published in Texas newspapers during September 2003 to February 2004. In both previous studies, all published cotton articles were collected by a press clipping service, and a panel of experts coded each article's sentences using the Hayakawa-Lowry method to determine the presence of reporter bias in the articles. The researchers determined the extent and quality of cotton-related reporting statewide before and after the distribution of the CottonLink media resource guide in August 2003.

Conditions of Testing

Individual, pre-scheduled telephone interviews were used to collect data for the research. Interviews were scheduled with sample participants from June 30, 2005, to July 25, 2005, and interviews were completed from July 6, 2005, to July 25, 2005. Prior to the start of the interview, the researcher asked the participant if the scheduled time was still acceptable. The instrument was administered verbally, word-for-word from the questionnaire, and responses were tape recorded and handwritten in interviewer notes. Interview responses were later transcribed, and the interviewer recorded impressions of the interview immediately following the interview's conclusion.

An average instrument completion time of approximately 15 minutes to 20 minutes was estimated by the researcher through pilot testing of the instrument. Interviews with sample members were individually scheduled, and an average amount of time allotment for the interview was suggested at this time. This helped ensure that subjects would plan for enough time to complete the interview. By allowing subjects to schedule an interview time that best fit their personal schedules, a higher compliance rate was achieved. Subjects were contacted several times throughout a four-week period in order to schedule interviews. Results of each attempted contact were maintained by the researcher in a Microsoft Excel document.

The researcher successfully scheduled and completed interviews with 25 of the 32 sample participants, resulting in an initial 78.12% response rate. Upon initial contact, one sample participant declined participation in the study and refused to schedule an interview. At the end of the four-week period, the six sample newspapers that had not

been contacted successfully were mailed a hard copy of the questionnaire and a personalized cover letter explaining the research project and asking for their participation. These packages were mailed on July 26, 2005, and were addressed to the newspapers' editors. This group of newspapers was asked to complete the hard copy of the questionnaire within a two-week timeframe and return it to the researcher via a self-addressed-stamped envelope. One non-responder returned a completed questionnaire, resulting in a final response rate of 81.25%. Upon further observation, no significant differences were observed between the non-responder and the original respondents.

Data Analysis

The data was independently analyzed by a panel of experts at Texas Tech University using thematic analysis and open, axial, selective coding. Each coder evaluated the data and identified all thoughts that were present. The thoughts found in the data were further evaluated to identify those relating to the media resource guides and newsgathering techniques. Finally, coders identified emergent themes present in the data. These identified themes' appearances within the different data sets were calculated and presented in a table that lists the themes in order of most frequently cited to least frequently cited.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact the CottonLink media resource guide had on the increased coverage of cotton, types of articles published and newsgathering techniques currently employed by members of the Texas print media, and means of improving industry-provided media resource guides.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine the following objectives:

1. Determine the extent and effectiveness of the CottonLink media resource guide usage among members of the Texas newspaper media.
2. Determine information sources utilized by members of the Texas newspaper media to gather news.
3. Identify types of cotton-related articles published and desired by members of the Texas newspaper media.
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5. Determine what topics members of the Texas newspaper media deem most important to their newspapers.
6. Identify how members of the Texas newspaper media determine newsworthy topics.

7. Identify how members of the Texas newspaper media determine article importance in their newspapers, in terms of length and layout of the articles.
8. Determine ideal content areas and media format for information dissemination to Texas newspapers.
9. Identify opinions held by members of the Texas newspaper media regarding media resource guides.
10. Identify reasons why selected Texas newspapers did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005.
11. Identify members of the Texas newspaper media's likelihood of publishing cotton-related articles and suggestions to improve cotton news coverage.

Participants in the study were randomly selected based on their newspaper's regional location and their newspaper's publication of cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005. Regarding newspapers that had published at least one cotton-related article during this time frame, eight participants were randomly selected from each of the three main cotton-producing areas in Texas: the Plains region, the Coastal region, and the Greater Texas region. Newspapers that did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005 were placed into a separate category, regardless of their regional location in the state, and eight representatives were selected from this group as well.

The sample population used in this study consisted of 32 randomly selected and stratified newspapers. Sample participants were employed in a variety of capacities at their newspaper, including positions as reporters, editors, publishers, managers, and

owners. A response rate of 81.25% was achieved. All newspapers in the Plains-region sample were interviewed, and this region achieved the highest individual response rate of 100%. The Greater-Texas region sample and the Non-Cotton-Publishing newspapers each achieved an 87.5% response rate: both groups had one non-responding newspaper. The lowest response rate was the Coastal region at 50%, as four newspapers were interviewed, one newspaper declined to participate, and three newspapers were non-responders. Sample participants' geographic distribution is illustrated in Figure 6. Participating newspapers in the sample are denoted by the stars, and the survey's non-responders are represented by circles in Figure 6.

After initial responders' data were collected, researchers distributed a hard-copy version of the survey instrument to the seven non-responders. A cover letter explained the purpose of the study and asked non-responders to complete the survey within a two-week timeframe and return it to researchers via a self-addressed stamped envelope. One non-responder returned a completed instrument. Researchers determined no significant differences to exist between the non-responder and first responders in the sample.

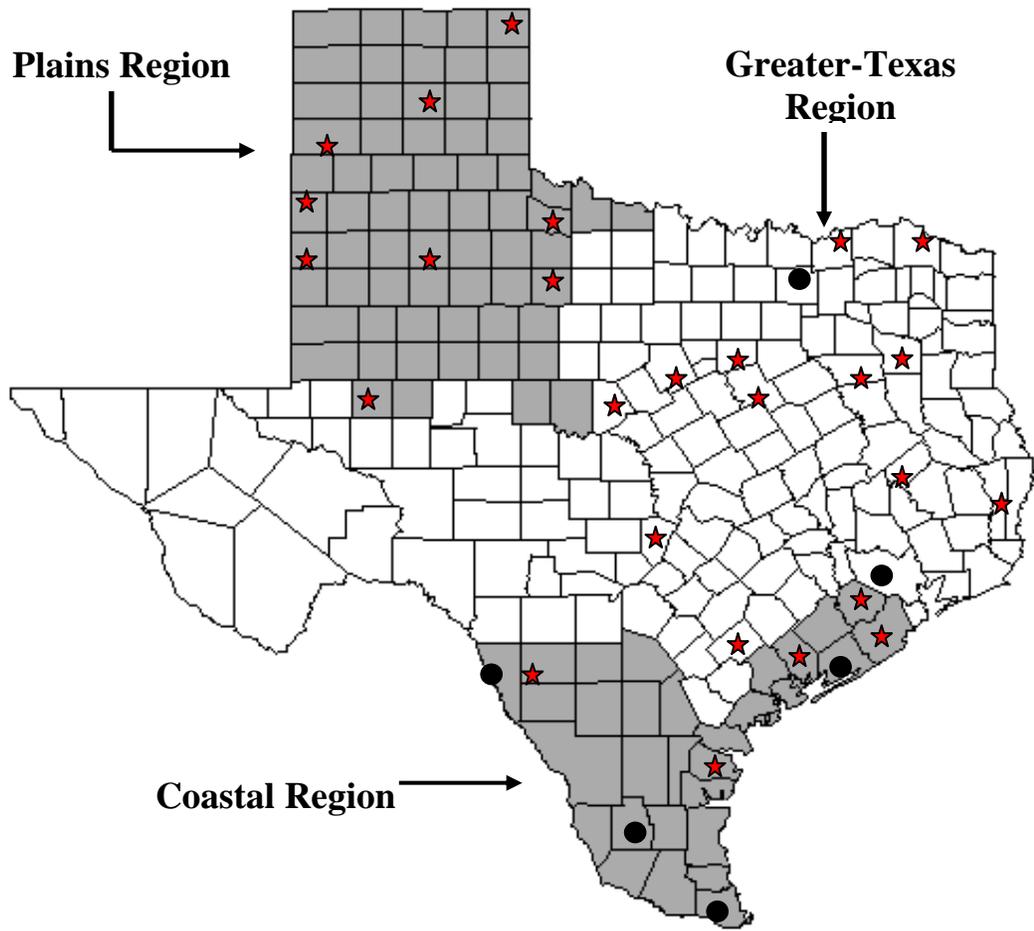


Figure 6. Geographic distribution of research participants.

Findings Related to Objective One

The first objective of this study was to determine the CottonLink media resource guide's extent of use amongst members of the Texas newspaper media and to determine its effectiveness, if used. Sample participants were asked if they recall receiving the CottonLink media resource guide in August 2003. Two participants, I-10 and I-32, out of the 26 that participated in the study recalled receiving the CottonLink media resource

guide. Participant I-10, a senior managing editor at a Plains-region newspaper, did not recall if the CottonLink CD-ROM was used by any newspaper staff members. Participant I-32, the editor and publisher of a newspaper in the Greater-Texas region, recalled receiving the CottonLink media resource guide and was interested in using the guide, but ultimately did not use the resource.

Our main problem with not using it was just that we have such a small amount of space available in our paper to keep our ad-to-news ratio where it is. We have to turn away almost anything that is not locally generated because we have to get everything in, all of our local news first ... Since it wasn't locally generated, it kind of got put in the holding pen, you know. We thought 'well, we'll probably use that' ... I looked up and we hadn't used it and three months had passed and then six months. I think I just finally filed it somewhere. (I-32)

Of the participants who stated that they did not recall receiving the CottonLink media resource guide, seven offered possible explanations for their lack of exposure to the resource guide. Two participants, I-4 and I-12, stated that they were involved with different positions at their respective newspapers. Participant I-14 said the guide most likely would have gone to his/her newspaper's agricultural reporter on staff at the time, an individual who had since retired from the newspaper. Four participants – I-16, I-17, I-29, and I-30 – stated that they were not employees of their respective newspapers at the time the CottonLink media resource guide was distributed.

Findings Related to Objective Two

Objective two sought to identify information sources utilized by members of the Texas newspaper media to develop stories. Twenty-three news sources were identified by participants. Through data analysis, researchers placed the identified news sources into

one of two categories: media source or individual source. Media sources were defined as sources requiring direct experience by the journalist through attendance, interviews, or physical contact and activity; these include Internet resources and meeting attendance. Individual sources were defined as information that does not require direct participants and usually comes from outside organizations or other news media, such as the Texas Cooperative Extension and personal knowledge. Researchers identified 15 media sources and 10 individual sources in the data.

In the media source category, four frequencies of use levels were established by researchers, ranging from very high to low. The very-high frequency category included responses from 17 participants or greater; the high frequency category included responses from eight participants to 10 participants; the medium frequency category ranged from three to four participants; and the low frequency category was two participants or less.

The very-high frequency category was comprised of personal interviews, of which 25 participants identified using, and Internet resources, of which 17 participants identified using. In the high use category, 10 participants reported using press releases, nine participants said they use community members and organizations, nine participants use other media, and eight identified using city and county officials to gather news. Comprising the medium-use category were meeting attendance, reported by four participants, college and university resources, identified by three participants, and e-mail information, which was reported by three participants. Finally, the least frequently used sources included government organizations, telephone calls, and wire reports, all of which were identified by two participants each, and faxed information, identified by one

individual. The media information sources identified by the research participants are summarized in Figure 7.

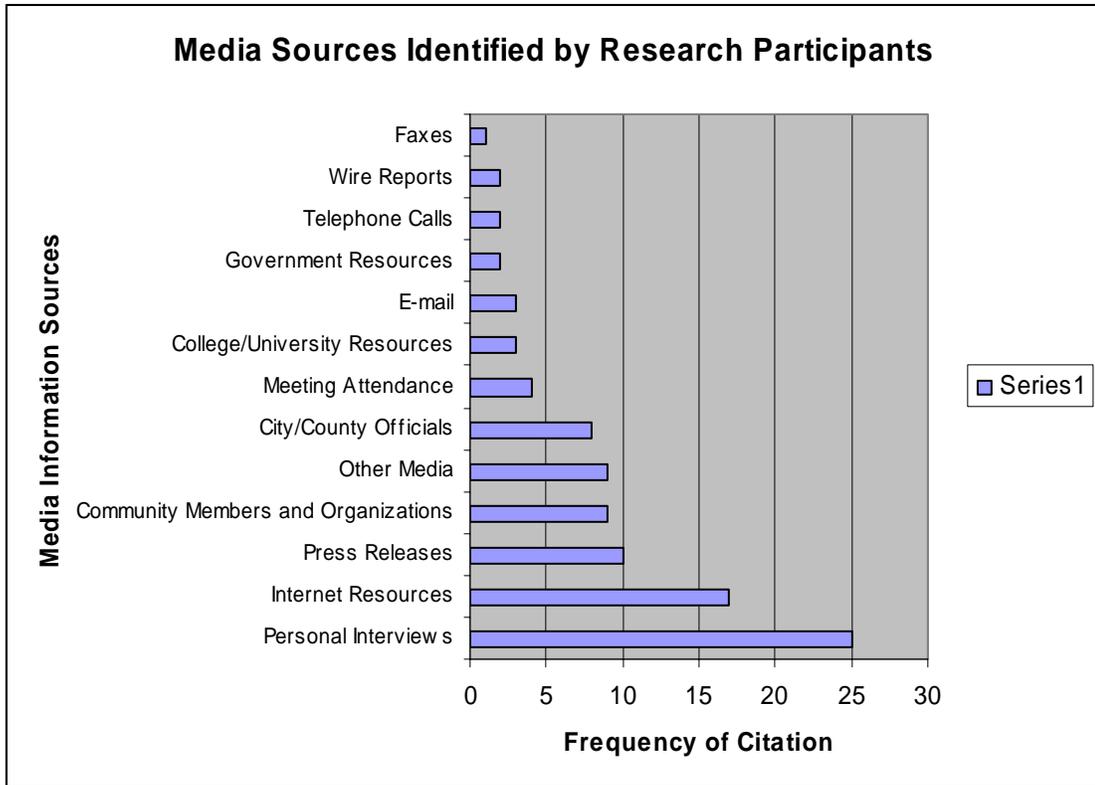


Figure 7. Media sources identified by research participants.

One participant, the general manager for a Coastal-region newspaper, stated that local sources are often used. “Mainly we consult with people within the county. We don’t really go out of our area to look for information,” I-5 said.

Another participant, the managing editor of a Plains-region newspaper, stated that story ideas can come from various sources.

We sometimes have information from area farmers or area ag-related businesses who have mentioned something and sparked an idea for a story. Sometimes it’s something from a news release. Even if we don’t put that news release in, there might be an idea that’s generated by the news release. (I-16)

One source, the editor for a Greater-Texas region newspaper, explained the variety of news sources used by newspaper employees. “We attend meetings, we open e-mail, and I make assignments, and we go out and interview people, take pictures, consult with our city and school officials,” I-30 said.

The individual source category was divided into three frequency-of-use areas. The high frequency category consisted of responses of six participants and above; the medium frequency category ranged from three responses to five responses; and the low frequency category ranged from two participants’ responses and below. Information from the Texas Cooperative Extension was the most frequently cited individual source, as it was identified by 19 participants. The medium use category was comprised of three sources: five participants identified use of personal knowledge, three participants said they use their newspaper’s morgue, and three participants identified Plains Cotton Growers as an information source. The low-use category included six individual information sources. Two participants identified the Farm Service Agency. High Plains cotton producers, soil conservation organizations, the Texas Association of School Boards, the Texas Cattle Feeders Association, and the Texas Department of Agriculture were each named by one participant in the data. The Individual information sources identified by research participants are summarized in Figure 8.

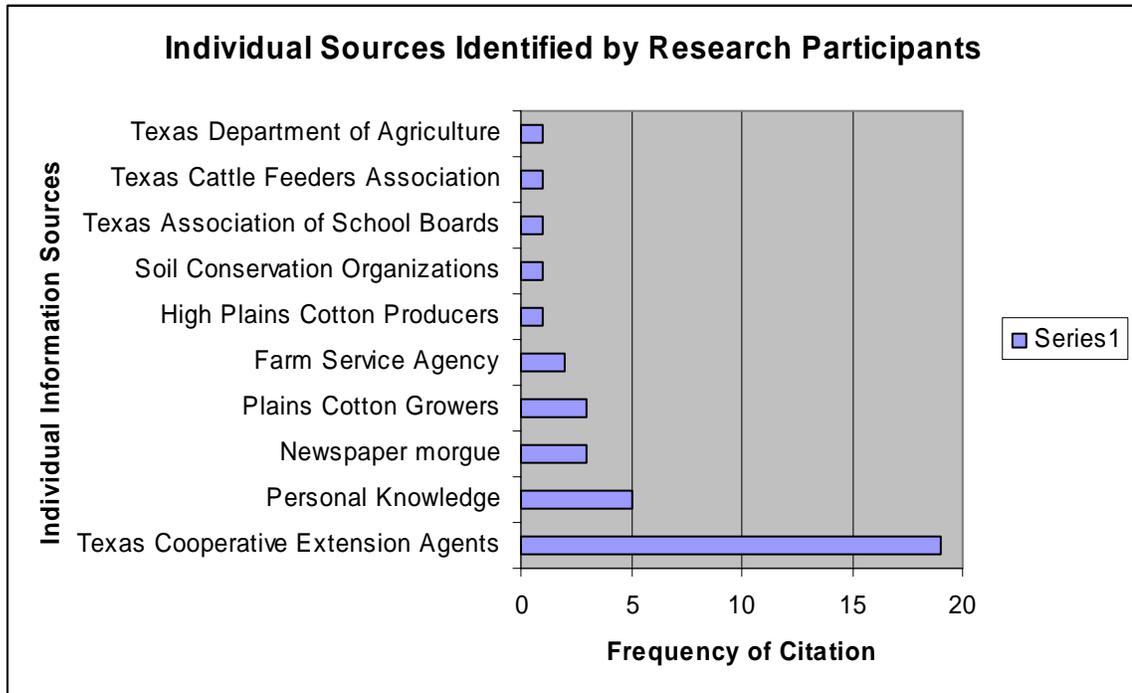


Figure 8. Individual sources identified by research participants.

One source, the editor and publisher for a Greater-Texas-region newspaper, said extension agents help his/her newspaper in several ways. “We have county extension agents ... that provide us with columns and they also, when they organize an event, they let us know,” I-25 said.

Throughout data analysis, several themes emerged from the data. Information sources that were identified by participants could be classified into four categories, based on information’s origin: educational, governmental, agricultural organizations, and personal. The information sources in the data also could be classified as active or passive collection means, regarding type of activity editors and journalists perform to receive the story information. The emergence of these themes cannot be verified from the data due to

collection means, but future research should be performed regarding these topics. Table 1 shows the breakdown of each information source and its frequency of identification.

Table 1. *Information Sources Cited by Participants*

Source Type	Information Source	Number of Respondents	Frequency Category
Media	Personal Interviews	25	Very High
Media	Internet Resources	17	Very High
Media	Press Releases	10	High
Media	Community Members and Organizations	9	High
Media	Other Media	9	High
Media	City/County Officials	8	High
Media	Meeting Attendance	4	Medium
Media	College/University Resources	3	Medium
Media	E-mail	3	Medium
Media	Government Resources	2	Low
Media	Telephone Calls	2	Low
Media	Wire Reports	2	Low
Media	Faxes	1	Low
Individual	Texas Cooperative Extension Agents	19	High
Individual	Personal Knowledge	5	Medium
Individual	Newspaper Morgue	3	Medium
Individual	Plains Cotton Growers	3	Medium
Individual	Farm Service Agency	2	Low
Individual	High Plains Cotton Producers	1	Low
Individual	Soil Conservation Organizations	1	Low
Individual	Texas Association of School Boards	1	Low
Individual	Texas Cattle Feeders Association	1	Low
Individual	Texas Department of Agriculture	1	Low

Findings Related to Objective Three

Objective three sought to determine types of cotton-related articles members of the Texas newspaper media routinely publish and types of cotton-related articles they would like to publish. Regarding cotton articles Texas newspapers routinely publish, participants provided article topics that were classified by researchers into one of six categories: planting, growing season, weather, harvest, post-harvest, and economics/policy/marketing. In the planting topic, four participants said they publish articles relating to cotton planting or replanting. The growing-season category was subdivided into three sections. Seventeen individuals reported publishing boll weevil information, four participants said they publish articles relating to cotton crop damage or disasters, and one participant reported publishing chemical application articles. Four participants published information relating to weather's affect on the cotton crop. In the post-harvest category, 13 participants said they publish cotton ginning articles, and one participant reported publishing stalk destruction information. Within the economics/policy/marketing category, three individuals said they publish government or legislative information, two reported publishing farm loan or subsidy information, and one published information on cotton markets or prices. The topics identified by research participants are summarized in Table 2 and Figure 9.

Table 2. *Topic Categories and Specific Cotton Topics Cited by Participants*

Topic Category	Specific Topic	Number of Responses
Planting	Planting or Replanting	4
Growing Season	Crop Damage or Disaster	4
Growing Season	Boll Weevil Information	17
Growing Season	Chemical Application	1
Weather	Weather	4
Harvest	Harvest Information	5
Post Harvest	Ginning	13
Post Harvest	Stalk Destruction	1
Economics/Policy/Marketing	Government or Legislation	3
Economics/Policy/Marketing	Farm Loans or Subsidies	2
Economics/Policy/Marketing	Market or Prices	1

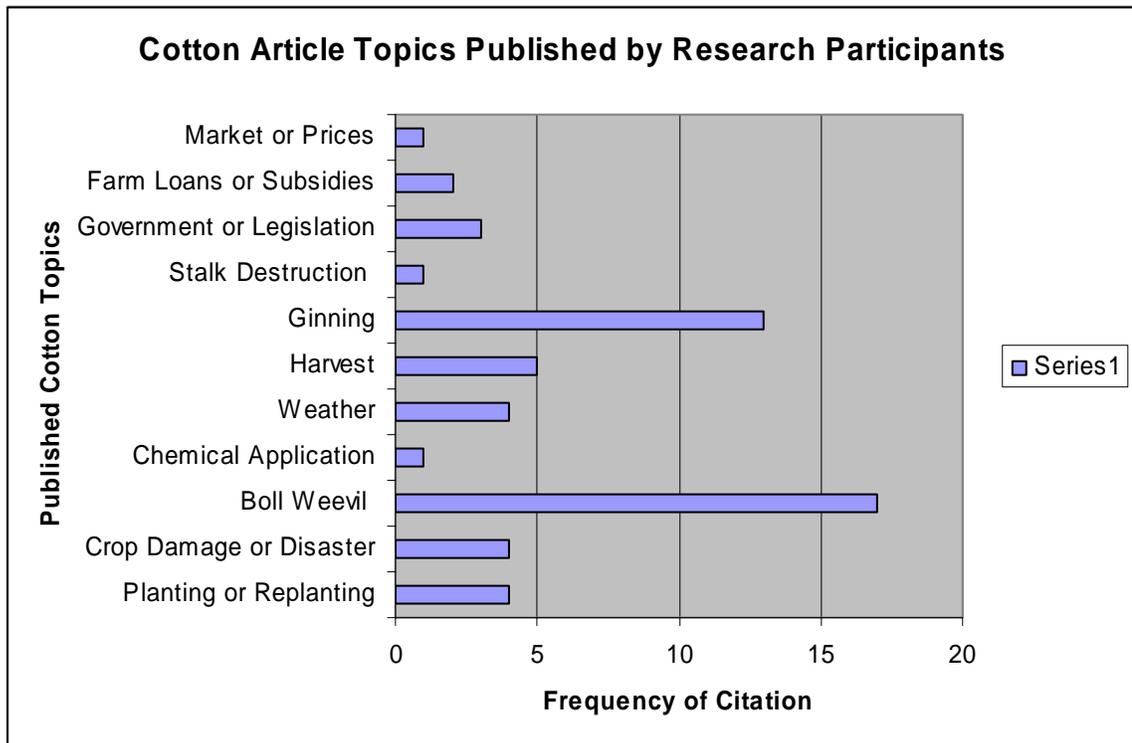


Figure 9. Cotton article topics published by research participants.

One participant, the publisher of a Plains-area newspaper, detailed his/her newspaper's cotton coverage.

I'll publish something early on about the general outlook for the upcoming crop year. I'll publish a couple of articles during the season. If we have any bad weather ... or any other kind of crop damage, I'll usually write something about that, and then as the harvest season gets going, then I'll do a series of articles over the harvest period to update the status of the harvest. (I-13)

Another participant, the managing editor of a Greater-Texas-region newspaper, said information his/her newspaper publishes must be local. "Something that is obviously local or obviously has a connection to our readers is something that we're looking for," I-17 said.

Some participants identified sources of cotton-related articles they publish. Six individuals reported publishing cotton-related information provided by the Texas Cooperative Extension. Five participants said they publish information from Plains Cotton Growers, and four individuals stated they publish information from the Plains Cotton Cooperative Association. Information from the Texas Department of Agriculture and articles from wire media services were each identified by two participants. The sources of cotton articles published by research participants' newspapers are summarized in Table 3 and Figure 10.

Table 3. *Sources of Cotton Articles Published by Participants' Newspapers*

Specific Source	Number of Responses
Texas Cooperative Extension	6
Plains Cotton Growers	5
Plains Cotton Cooperative Association	4
Texas Department of Agriculture	2
Wire Articles	2

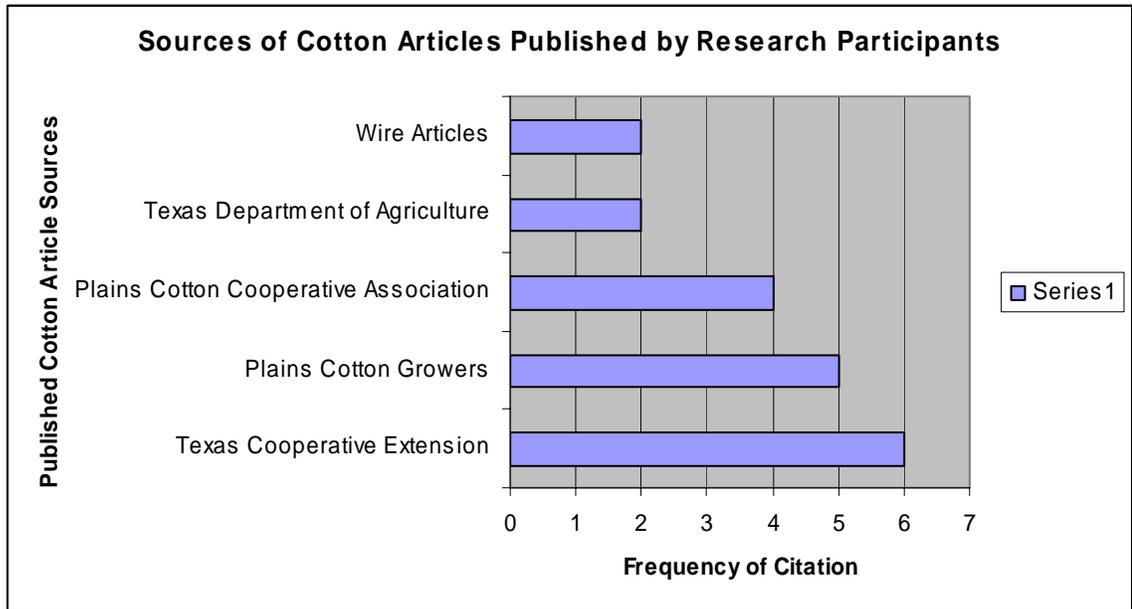


Figure 10. Sources of cotton articles published by research participants.

One news editor for a Greater-Texas-region newspaper said his/her newspaper reports on major stories and gets articles from wire media services. “Anything that’s on the AP [Wire], we’ll go with that. We don’t have an agricultural reporter, but if something, some big issue comes up, we’ll do an article,” I-20 said.

Types of cotton-related articles desired by members of the Texas newspaper media were classified into high, medium, and low sections by the researchers, based on their frequency of appearance in the data. The high frequency citation category included topic cited by more than five participants; the medium frequency category included responses cited by three participants each; and the low frequency category included responses from two participants or less. Comprising the high category was a desire for articles relating to new technologies or improvements in cotton, cited by six participants. The medium category included three desired topics. Articles relating to local cotton

growers, feature articles, and harvest and product-production-process articles were each identified by three participants each as articles they would like to publish. The low category was comprised of 12 article topics. Boll weevil, marketing, and production-level articles were each cited by two participants in the data. Basic cotton information, beneficial programs, industry trends, statistics, weather, and types of farming available in specific locations each were cited one time by a participant. One participant noted that his/her newspaper is interested in covering major stories relating to cotton, and another participant said he/she would be interested in any cotton-related articles. One participant said his/her newspaper would not be interested publishing any cotton-related news. Cotton-related topics that are desired by sample participants for publication are summarized in Figure 11.

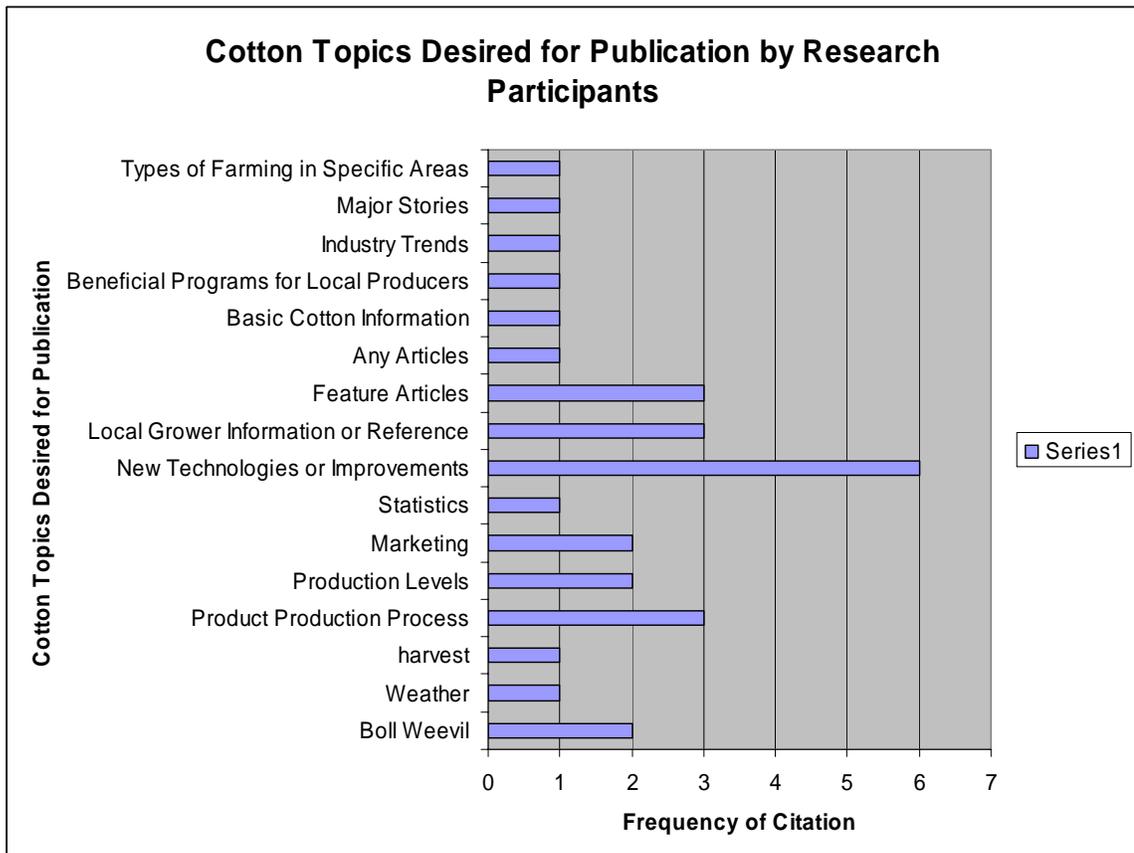


Figure 11. Cotton topics desired for publication by research participants.

The publisher of a Plains-area newspaper said articles he/she publishes must aid readers. “I’m just looking for articles that are of benefit to my readers,” I-13 said.

Another participant, the general manager of a Coastal-region newspaper, said readers may be interested in cotton products’ production process. “It would probably be interesting for people to understand the process of how cotton is harvested in the fields and where it ends up; what products are made from cotton or the traffic it takes to get to its finished product,” I-5 said.

The cotton-related articles desired by the research sample's newspapers can be classified according to topic area, using nine categories: planting, growing season, weather, harvest, post-harvest, economics/policy/marketing, technologies, industry basics, and no interest. No articles were reported in the planting category. In the growing season, two participants identified a desire to publish boll weevil information. One participant identified an interest in weather-related cotton information, and one participant said he/she would be interested in cotton-harvest articles. In the post-harvest category, three individuals said they would like to publish information about cotton products' production processes, and two participants said they would like to publish cotton production information. The economics/policy/marketing category had two subdivisions: two participants desired information about cotton marketing, and one participant wanted statistical information about cotton. Six individuals reported a desire for information relating to new technologies or improvements in cotton. The industry-basics category was comprised of eight desired topics. Three participants each identified an interest in local grower information or references and/or feature articles. Basic cotton information, beneficial programs for local producers, industry trends, types of farming in specific areas, and major cotton-related stories were identified by one research participant apiece. One participant also identified a desire for any cotton articles. One individual identified no interest in publishing any cotton-related articles. Table 4 summarizes the categories of cotton-related topics desired for publication by research participants.

The managing editor of a Greater-Texas-region newspaper said cotton industry members must provide assistance to members of the news media. "Newspapers our size

don't have the luxury of having an agricultural specialist; we're pretty much general. Not only do you need to help the media understand what is happening, but why it is important to be covered," I-17 said.

Table 4. *Topic Categories of Cotton Articles Desired by Participants*

Topic Category	Specific Topic Desired	Number of Responses
Planting	None	0
Growing Season	Boll Weevil Information	2
Weather	Weather Information	1
Harvest	Harvest Information	1
Post-Harvest	Product Production Process	3
Post-Harvest	Production Levels	2
Economics/Policy/Marketing	Marketing	2
Economics/Policy/Marketing	Statistics	1
Technology	New Technologies or Improvements	6
Industry Basics	Local Grower Information or Reference	3
Industry Basics	Feature Articles	3
Industry Basics	Any Articles	1
Industry Basics	Basic Cotton Information	1
Industry Basics	Beneficial Programs for Local Producers	1
Industry Basics	Industry Trends	1
Industry Basics	Major Stories	1
Industry Basics	Types of Farming in Specific Areas	1
Not Interested	No Articles	1

Findings Related to Objective Four

The study's fourth objective was to identify agricultural article topics published by members of the Texas newspaper media. The participants identified 26 topics and sources of information they routinely publish. Using natural breaks in the data, researchers coded the article topics and sources into four categories, ranging from very-high-frequency citations to low-frequency citations. The very-high-frequency category

was comprised of topics cited by 20 participants or more; the high frequency category included topics cited by 15 to 20 participants each; the medium frequency category ranged from five citations by participants to 10 citations; and the low frequency category included topic identification by less than five participants each.

In the very high category, eight article topics and/or sources were identified. Feature stories written by staff reporters was the most frequently cited item, with all 26 participants responding that they publish agricultural features written by their newspapers' staffs. News reported by staff writers and information from the Texas Cooperative Extension were each identified by 24 participants as agricultural articles they publish. Twenty-three individuals said they publish agriculturally related weather stories, and 22 participants said they publish information about agricultural meetings and conferences. Government policies, special-interest topics, and Texas Department of Agriculture information were each cited by 21 participants as published material. In the high-frequency citation category, 19 individuals said they publish crop harvest articles, 18 said they publish agricultural market or economy stories, and 17 noted they publish crop planting articles. Sixteen participants said they publish agriculturally related pictures that are not accompanied by articles. Crop pests, livestock commodities, and agricultural columns written by Texas legislators or commissioners were each identified by 15 participants. Six topics comprised the medium-frequency citation category. Ten participants said they publish plant commodity information, eight said they publish agricultural news articles from the Associated Press wire, and seven participants said they publish agricultural feature stories from the Associated Press wire. Seven individuals

identified that they publish genetics-related articles, six publish livestock industry or ranching-related information, and five participants publish fashion- or textile-related articles. In the low-frequency citation category, two individuals mentioned they publish information from community agricultural organizations. Farm loan, farmers' markets, fishing and hunting, and quarantine information were each mentioned by one participant. Table 5 and Figure 12 summarizes the agricultural article topics published by research participants.

Table 5. *Topics of Agricultural Articles Published by Sample Newspapers*

Topic	Number of Responses	Citation Frequency Category
Features by Staff Writers	26	Very High
News by Staff Writers	24	Very High
Texas Cooperative Extension Information	23	Very High
Weather	23	Very High
Agricultural Meeting or Conference	22	Very High
Government Policies	21	Very High
Special Interest	21	Very High
Texas Department of Agriculture Information	21	Very High
Crop Harvest	19	High
Agricultural Market or Economy	18	High
Crop Planting	17	High
Pictures Unaccompanied by Articles	16	High
Crop Pests	15	High
Livestock Commodities	15	High
Texas Legislators' or Commissioners' Columns	15	High
Plant Commodities	10	Medium
News by the AP Wire	8	Medium
Features by the AP Wire	7	Medium
Genetics	7	Medium
Livestock Industry or Ranching	6	Medium
Textile or Fashion	5	Medium
Community Agricultural Organizations	2	Low
Farm Loans	1	Low
Farmers' Markets	1	Low
Fishing and Hunting	1	Low
Quarantine	1	Low

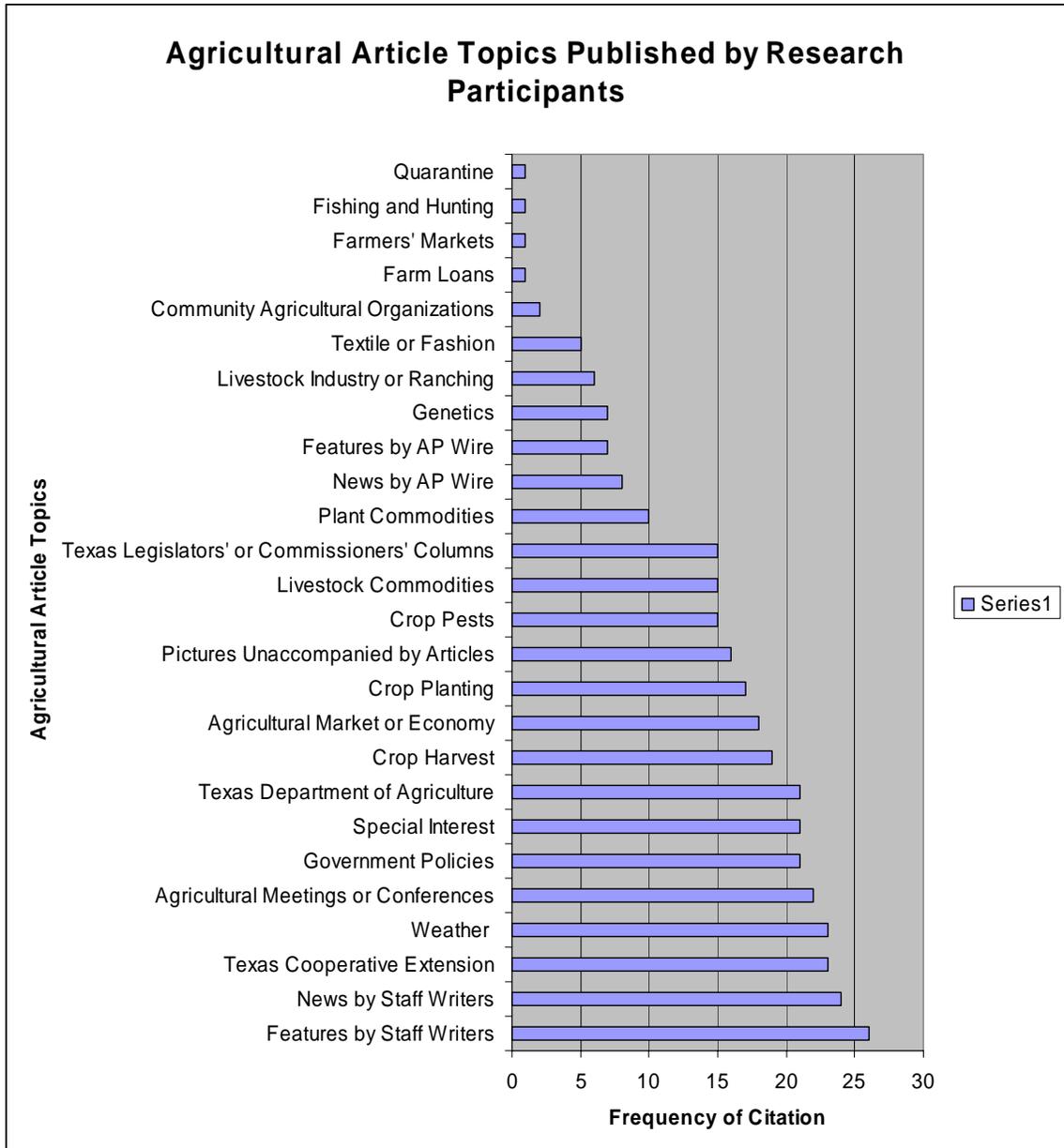


Figure 12. Agricultural article topics published by research participants.

One participant, an editor for a newspaper in the Greater-Texas region, said staff stories are often included in the newspaper. “Anything that’s reported by my staff I’ll use,” I-30 said.

Another news and managing editor from a Greater-Texas-region newspaper said articles from the Texas Cooperative Extension are routinely published in the paper. “I’d say every month I usually have something,” I-21 said.

The editor and publisher of a Greater-Texas-region newspaper said weather articles must specifically relate to the local area. “The only time the weather makes the news is when it has some drastic effects, one way or another,” I-25 said.

A managing editor for a Plains-region newspaper said articles’ information must relate to local readers in order to be published. “If it’s something that we think affects our local farmers, then there’s a good chance that we’d run it,” I-16 said.

The categories of agricultural information published by responding newspapers can be categorized further into information topics and information from creative sources. Researchers classified 16 responses from participants into the topic category. These agricultural topics published by responding newspapers were: weather; agricultural meetings or conferences; government policies; special-interest topics; crop harvest; agricultural market or economy; crop planting; crop pests; livestock commodities; genetics; livestock industry or ranching information; textile or fashion; farm loans; farmers’ markets; fishing and hunting; and quarantine information. The information originating from a creative source category was comprised of: features written by staff writers; news written by staff writers; Texas Cooperative Extension information; Texas Department of Agriculture information; agricultural pictures not accompanied by an article; agricultural columns by Texas legislators or commissioners; plant commodities;

news stories from the Associated Press wire; feature stories from the Associated Press wire; and information from community agricultural organizations.

Data classified into the topic category was further coded by researchers into one of 10 refined topic categories: planting, growing season, weather, harvest, post-harvest, economics/ policy/ marketing, industry basics, livestock, meetings, or other. Seventeen editors or journalists identified publishing crop planting articles. Within the growing season category, 15 participants said their newspaper published information about crop pests. Agriculturally related weather stories were published by 23 sample newspapers, and crop harvest topics were published by 19 newspapers. Post-harvest topics included textile or fashion articles, identified by five individuals. In the economics/policy/marketing category, 21 participants said they publish information about agricultural government policies, 18 publish agricultural market or economy information, and one said he/she publishes farm loan information. Special-interest topics were included in the industry basics category and were identified by 21 participants. Included in the livestock category, 15 participants said they publish livestock commodities, seven said they publish genetics information, and six said they publish information related to the livestock industry or ranching. Twenty-two participants noted their newspapers publish agricultural meeting or conference information. In the category of other information, farmers' markets, fishing and hunting, and quarantine information were each identified by one participant. Table 6 summarizes the topics of agricultural articles identified by participants as currently being published by their newspapers.

Table 6. *Categorized Topics of Agricultural Articles Published by Participants*

Topic Category	Specific Topic	Number of Responses
Planting	Crop Planting	17
Growing Season	Crop Pests	15
Weather	Weather	23
Harvest	Crop Harvest	19
Post-Harvest	Textile or Fashion	5
Economics/Policy/Market	Government Policies	21
Economics/Policy/Market	Agricultural Market or Economy	18
Economics/Policy/Market	Farm Loans	1
Industry Basics	Special Interest	21
Livestock	Livestock Commodities	15
Livestock	Livestock Industry or Ranching	6
Livestock	Genetics	7
Meetings	Agricultural Meetings or Conferences	22
Other	Farmers' Markets	1
Other	Fishing and Hunting	1
Other	Quarantine	1

Findings Related to Objective Five

Objective five involved identifying article topics members of the Texas newspaper media deem most important to their newspapers, both in general news and agricultural news. After coding the data, three categories of most important general news topics emerged: proximity, timeliness, and length. While timeliness and length stood alone, the proximity category was subdivided into three additional categories of local news, local announcements, and local economy. Eight topics comprised the proximity-local news category. Seventeen participants identified local news and community events as one of their most important topics, 13 participants said local school news was important, and 10 participants identified local government as an important news topic.

Six participants identified local agriculture as an important topic to readers, five identified local sports news, two participants said crime information was an important topic, and one participant identified new information. In the proximity-local announcements category, meetings and youth organization information were identified by one participant each. The proximity-local economy category included local economic information, identified by six participants, and oil and water were each cited by one individual. Timeliness was cited by one participant, and articles of a short length was cited by one participant. The most important general news topics identified by research participants are summarized in Table 7 and Figure 13.

Table 7. *Most Important News Topics and Categories to Sample Newspapers*

Topic Category	Specific Topic	Number of Responses
Proximity-Local News	Local News and Community Events	17
Proximity-Local News	Local Schools	13
Proximity-Local News	Local Government	10
Proximity-Local News	Local Agriculture	6
Proximity-Local News	Sports	5
Proximity-Local News	Breaking News	2
Proximity-Local News	Crime	2
Proximity-Local News	New Information	1
Proximity-Local Announcements	Meetings	1
Proximity-Local Announcements	Youth Organizations	1
Proximity-Local Economy	Local Economy	6
Proximity-Local Economy	Oil	1
Proximity-Local Economy	Water	1
Timeliness	Timeliness	1
Length	Short Length	1

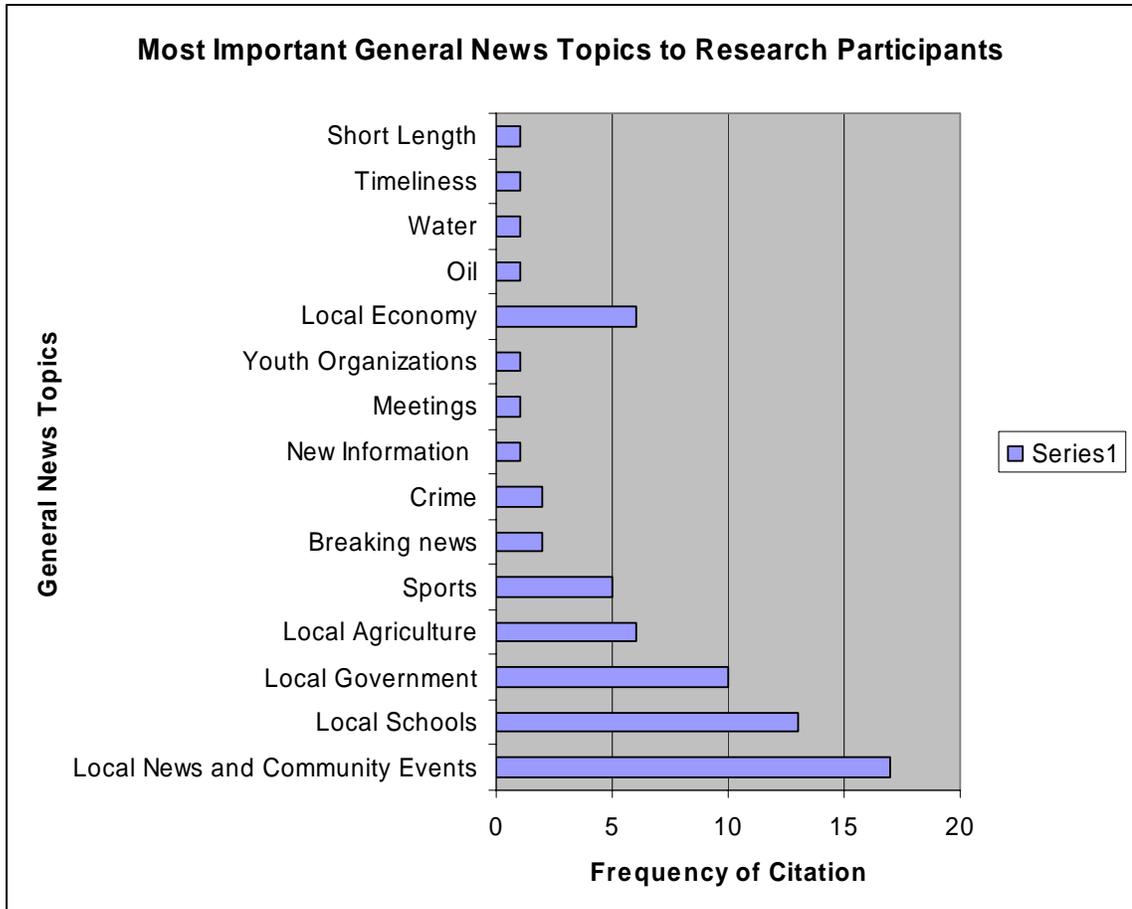


Figure 13. Most important general news topics to research participants.

The managing editor of a Plains-region newspaper said proximity is an important factor at his/her newspaper. “We focus on local. Our main goal is to have all, especially the front page, be entirely local,” I-12 said.

Another participant, the editor and publisher of a Greater Texas region newspaper, said many small newspapers focus on local education news. “Most community newspapers are going to report on those things that I mentioned like schools – schools being the greatest common denominator,” I-25 said.

Specifically focusing on agricultural articles, data were categorized by researchers into articles' creative sources and article topics. Four items were coded into the creative source category. Information from the Texas Cooperative Extension was identified as an important topic by four participants, information from agricultural organizations was identified by three participants, and Farm Service Agency information and new or breaking agricultural news were each considered by two participants each as an important topic. The sources of important agricultural article topics that were identified by research participants are summarized in Figure 14.

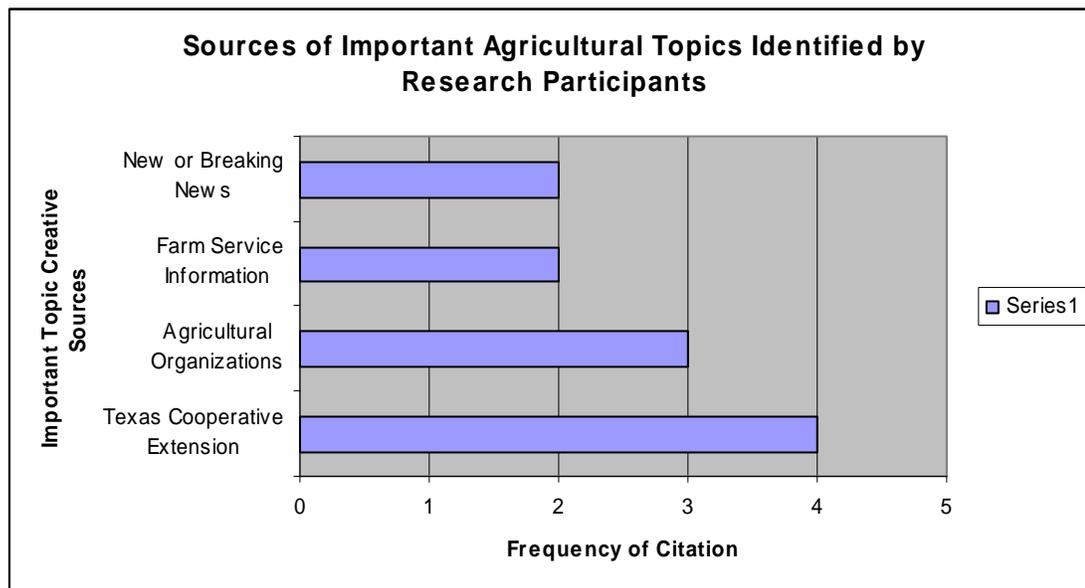


Figure 14. Sources of important agricultural topics identified by research participants.

The most important agricultural topics, identified by research participants, were coded into nine topic areas. Within the planting topic category, three participants said planting articles are important and one participant identified preparation-for-planting articles. The growing category included two sub-classifications: crop status articles were

identified by four participants and insect topics were cited by three individuals. Weather articles were considered top be an important agricultural news topic by eight individuals, and crop harvest articles were important to 12 participants. Within the economics/policy/marketing category, seven sub-classes existed. Government policy was cited as important by three individuals, and market information was identified by two participants. Government programs, grants or loans, land control, land rights issues, and losses were each identified by one participant. In the livestock category, six participants identified livestock topics as important agricultural news, and one individual cited ranching information. Topics comprising the other-topic category were human-interest articles, quarantine information, and timber, each cited by one editor or journalist. Meetings were an important agricultural topic to four participants in the study. Within the rural living category, general living tips, and education each were cited by one participant. The most important agricultural topics identified by research participants are summarized in Table 8 and Figure 15.

Table 8. *Most Important Agricultural Topics and Categories to Sample Newspapers*

Topic Category	Specific Topic	Number of Responses
Planting	Planting	3
Planting	Preparation for Planting	1
Growing Season	Crop Status	4
Growing Season	Insects	3
Weather	Weather	8
Harvest	Crop Harvest	8
Economics/Policy/Market	Government Policy	3
Economics/Policy/Market	Market Information	2
Economics/Policy/Market	Government Programs	1
Economics/Policy/Market	Grants or Loans	1
Economics/Policy/Market	Land Control	1
Economics/Policy/Market	Land Rights Issues	1
Economics/Policy/Market	Losses	1
Livestock	Livestock	6
Livestock	Ranching	1
Other	Human Interest	1
Other	Quarantine	1
Other	Timber	1
Meetings	Meetings	4
Rural Living	General Living Tips	1
Rural Living	Education	1

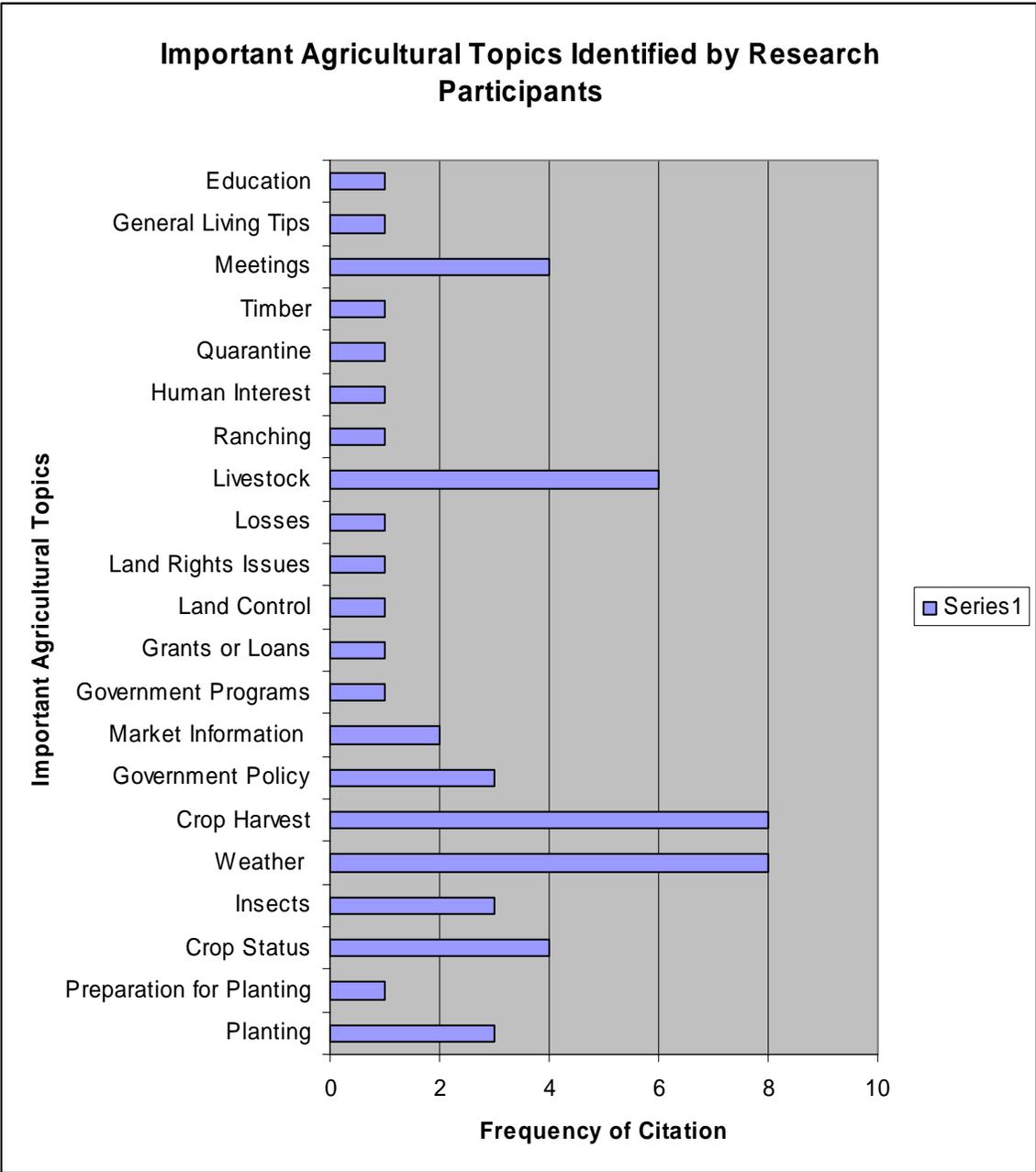


Figure 15. Important agricultural topics identified by research participants.

The managing editor of a Plains-region newspaper said agricultural news topics can be divided into three main classifications. “They can be broken down into the areas of what you’ve done, what you’re doing, and what you’re planning on doing,” I-16 said.

The editor and publisher of a Greater Texas region newspaper identified economic changes and its effect on agriculture as an important topic. “World market changes that cause either an upswing or a downswing in harvesting and selling,” I-25 said.

Findings Related to Objective Six

The study’s sixth objective involved identifying how members of the Texas newspaper media determine newsworthy topics for their publications. The most frequently cited determinant of articles’ newsworthiness by participants was interest and impact on readers, with 21 participants identifying this determinant. Eight participants said a topic’s proximity to their newspaper’s readers makes the topic more newsworthy. Timeliness, importance, and informative topics were each cited by two participants as factors that determine a topic’s newsworthiness to the newspaper. Topics that generate readership and get readers involved were each cited by one individual, and one participant said topics are published on a space-available format. One participant said every item the newspaper receives is published, unless the material is libelous. The newsworthiness determinants identified by research participants are summarized in Table 9 and Figure 16.

Table 9. *Determinants of Newsworthy Topics Cited by Sample Newspapers*

Newsworthiness Determinant	Number of Responses
Impact or Interest to Readers	21
Proximity to Readers	8
Timeliness	2
Importance	2
Informative	2
Everything is Published, Unless Libelous	1
Generates Readership	1
People Involved	1
Space Available	1

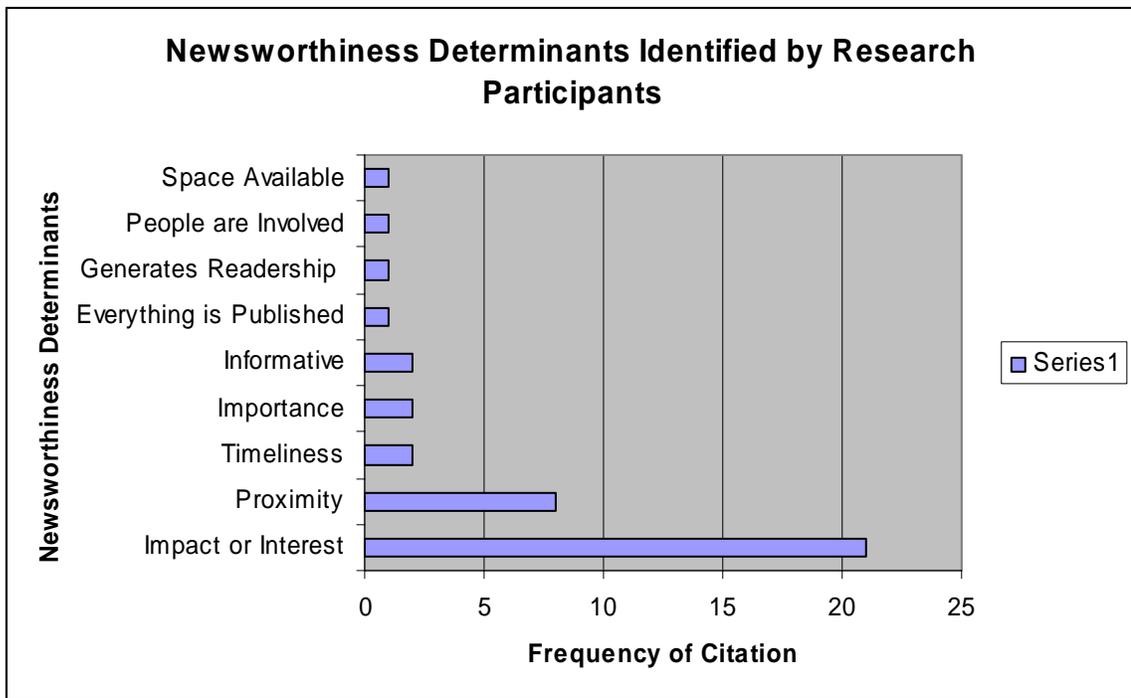


Figure 16. Newsworthiness determinants identified by research participants.

The editor and publisher of a Greater Texas region newspaper said impact and proximity are important to his/her newspaper when selecting article topics. “Newsworthy topics for us ... are things that affect people locally. It has to be about local people or affect local people in a strong way,” I-32 said.

Another participant, the editor of a Coastal-region newspaper, said his/her newspaper's primary determinants are proximity and reader interest. "If they're of interest and pertain to our area and I think it's something that will inform our readership, then that's important," I-7 said.

The news editor for a newspaper in the Greater Texas region said newsworthy topics are "just based on the priorities of journalism: just the currency, the interest to readers, how it affects people, who's involved" (I-20).

Findings Related to Objective Seven

The study's seventh objective sought to identify the determinants used by members of the Texas newspaper media to determine story importance, in terms of each article's length and layout within the publication. After coding the data, participants said impact and interest of an article's topic was the greatest determinant of the story's importance, with 17 participants citing this determinant. Attention-grabbing topics, space available in the newspaper, and proximity of the topic were each cited by six participants. Timeliness of the article was identified by four participants, and articles about thefts or crimes and those accompanied by high-quality artwork were cited by two participants each. Articles about meetings and money were each identified by one participant, as were articles with unusual topics and those with high-quality writing. The articles' subject matter helped one participant determine the stories' importance, and one individual noted the amount of information could impact stories' importance. One individual said the newspaper's editors determine story placement, and one participant said his/her

newspaper had no limitation on the articles' length or layout. The story importance determinants identified by research participants are summarized in Table 10 and Figure

17.

Table 10. *Determinants of Story Importance Cited by Sample Newspapers*

Story Importance Determinant	Number of Responses
Impact or Interest to Readers	17
Interesting or Attention Grabbing	6
Space Available	6
Proximity	6
Timeliness	4
Thefts and Crimes	2
Quality Artwork	2
Amount of Information	1
Editors Decide Story Placement	1
Meetings	1
Money	1
No Limitations	1
Quality of Writing	1
Subject Matter	1
Unusualness	1

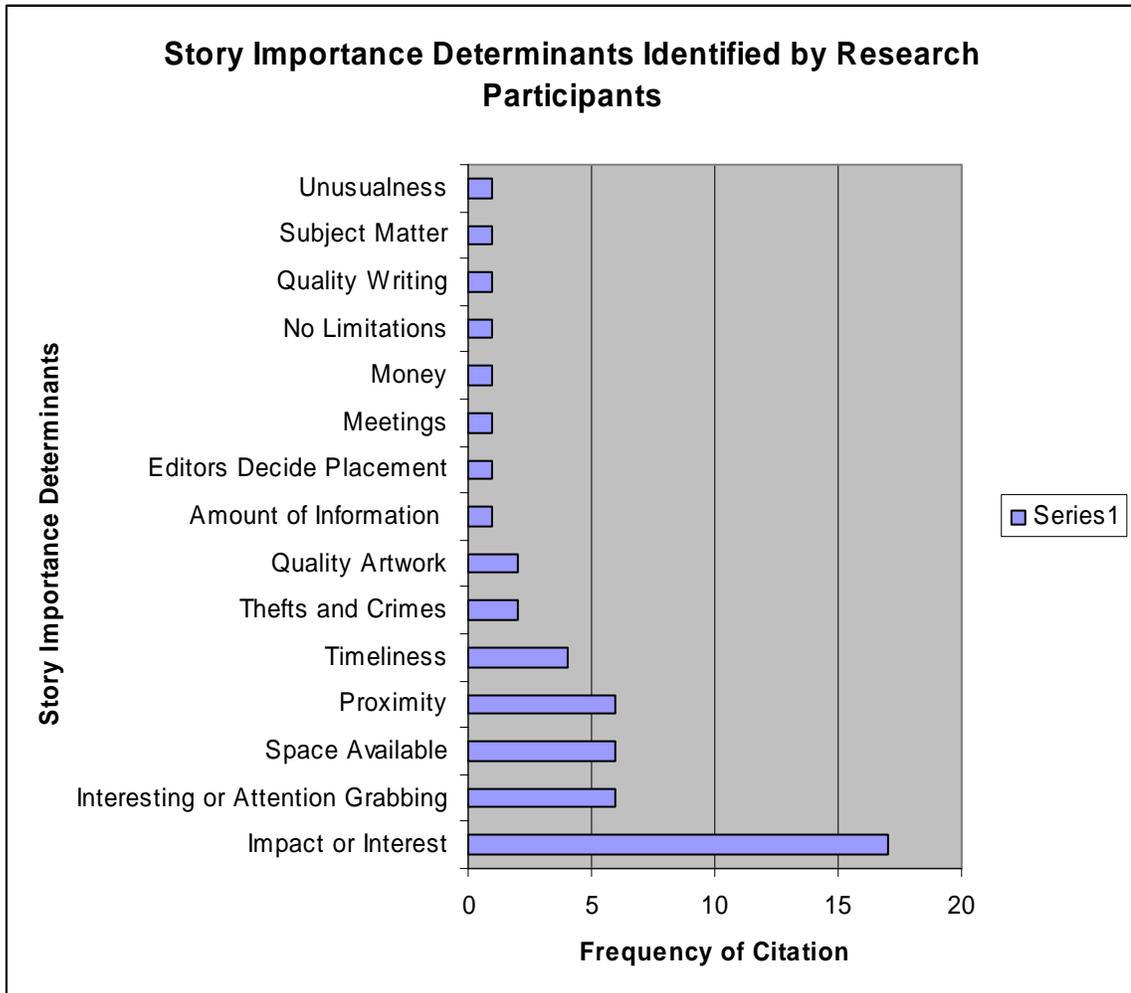


Figure 17. Story importance determinants identified by research participants.

A reporter for a Greater Texas-region newspaper said timeliness and impact are frequently used story importance determinants at his/her newspaper. “We consider the most important to be, of course, the most up-to-date, the latest information, and just again how much of impact it has on our readership,” I-24 said.

The managing editor for a Plains-area newspaper said space available and the article’s perceived effect determine story importance. “Space, of course, is a large

consideration; the impact is the key thing. The more it will affect local commerce, the more it will affect the local people,” I-16 said.

Another participant, the managing editor of a newspaper in the Greater-Texas region, said factors other than space help determine story importance at his/her newspaper. “The sense of urgency, as far as immediate impact, is critical and ... the way we perceive the importance to the reader. Frankly we rarely have a problem with space; usually we have space for all the stories we want to put in,” I-17 said.

The editor and publisher of a Greater-Texas-region newspaper said additional factors can help determine articles’ lengths and layouts. “You have lesser factors such as how well-written the story is, how much information there is in it. Length will sometimes dictate where you place the stories, and how much artwork you have are all things that determine placement,” I-25 said.

Findings Related to Objective Eight

Objective eight involved determining the idea content areas and format for information dissemination to Texas newspapers, desired by members of the Texas newspaper media. Twenty-one topics and formatting ideas for media resource guides were provided by participants. Researchers coded these responses into high, medium, and low frequency of citation categories. The high frequency category included topics cited by six or more participants; the medium frequency category included topics identified by two to three participants each; and the low category included topics cited by less than two participants. In the high frequency of citation category, seven participants requested

source contact information be included in media resource guides. Specific, localized information and statistics and figures were each cited by six participants. In the medium-frequency citation category, environmental topics or requirements for various industries were identified by three participants. Subject history and overview were each cited by two participants. Fifteen items comprised the low-frequency of citation category. Basic information, chemical usage, livestock, local training courses, meeting procedure guidelines, research group information, specific crop information, technical information, terminology or jargon, timber industry, and tourism or property were each identified by one participant. Suggestions to keep the guide brief, categorized by industry, easy to read, and well-indexed were provided by one participant each.

The managing editor of a newspaper in the Greater Texas region said source contact information should be provided to members of the media to help ensure accurate reporting.

The basic research and statistics is kind of a given, but ... what would be most helpful is to ... make sure there are contacts, so that we can dash off an e-mail, make a phone call, talk to someone who is involved in the production of this guide. Sometimes this information can be misinterpreted without some expert guidance telling us what it really means. (I-17)

Another participant, the managing editor of a Coastal-region newspaper, said terminology and potential resource information is beneficial.

I guess maybe common terms that maybe the general public may not understand ... kind of a glossary of terms or a glossary of common organizations in the agricultural field ... maybe a list of popular agricultural schools in the U.S. or a list of organizational groups that do quite a bit of agricultural research who might be able to provide a resource. (I-29)

The managing editor of a newspaper in the Plains region said basic information can help reporters. “Kind of the ‘dummy’s guide’ to ... what would make for a successful year in terms of agriculture,” I-14 said.

Researchers analyzed the data and placed the participants’ responses into one of two categories: topic suggestions or format suggestions. Format suggestions included making the media resource guide information brief, easy to read, well-indexed, and categorizing by industry. Eighteen items were coded into the topic category. Participants suggested including source contact information, specific local information, statistics and figures, environmental topics and industry requirements, subject history, and subject overviews. Additionally, editors and journalists participating in the study suggested including information on chemical usage, livestock, local training courses, meeting procedures, research group information, specific crops, technical information, terminology or jargon, timber industry, and tourism or property, as well as basic information about the topic being covered. The content suggestions identified by research participants are summarized in Table 11 and Figure 18.

Several participants, including the editor of a Greater Texas-region newspaper, said local information is key to getting the information published. “It should specifically focus on certain areas, geographical areas. If those areas are the areas we cover, then I’ll pay a lot more attention to it,” I-30 said.

Table 11. *Media Resource Guide Topics Desired by Sample Newspapers*

Suggestion Type	Specific Suggestion	Number of Responses
Topic	Source Contacts and Information	7
Topic	Specific, Localized Information	6
Topic	Statistics and Figures	6
Topic	Environmental Topics and Industry Requirements	3
Topic	Subject History	2
Topic	Subject Overview	2
Topic	Basic Information	1
Topic	Chemical Usage	1
Topic	Livestock	1
Topic	Local Training Courses	1
Topic	Meeting Procedures	1
Topic	Research Group Information	1
Topic	Specific Crop Information	1
Topic	Technical Information	1
Topic	Terminology or Jargon	1
Topic	Timber Industry	1
Topic	Tourism or Property	1
Format	Brief	1
Format	Categorized by Industry	1
Format	Easy to Read	1
Format	Well-Indexed	1

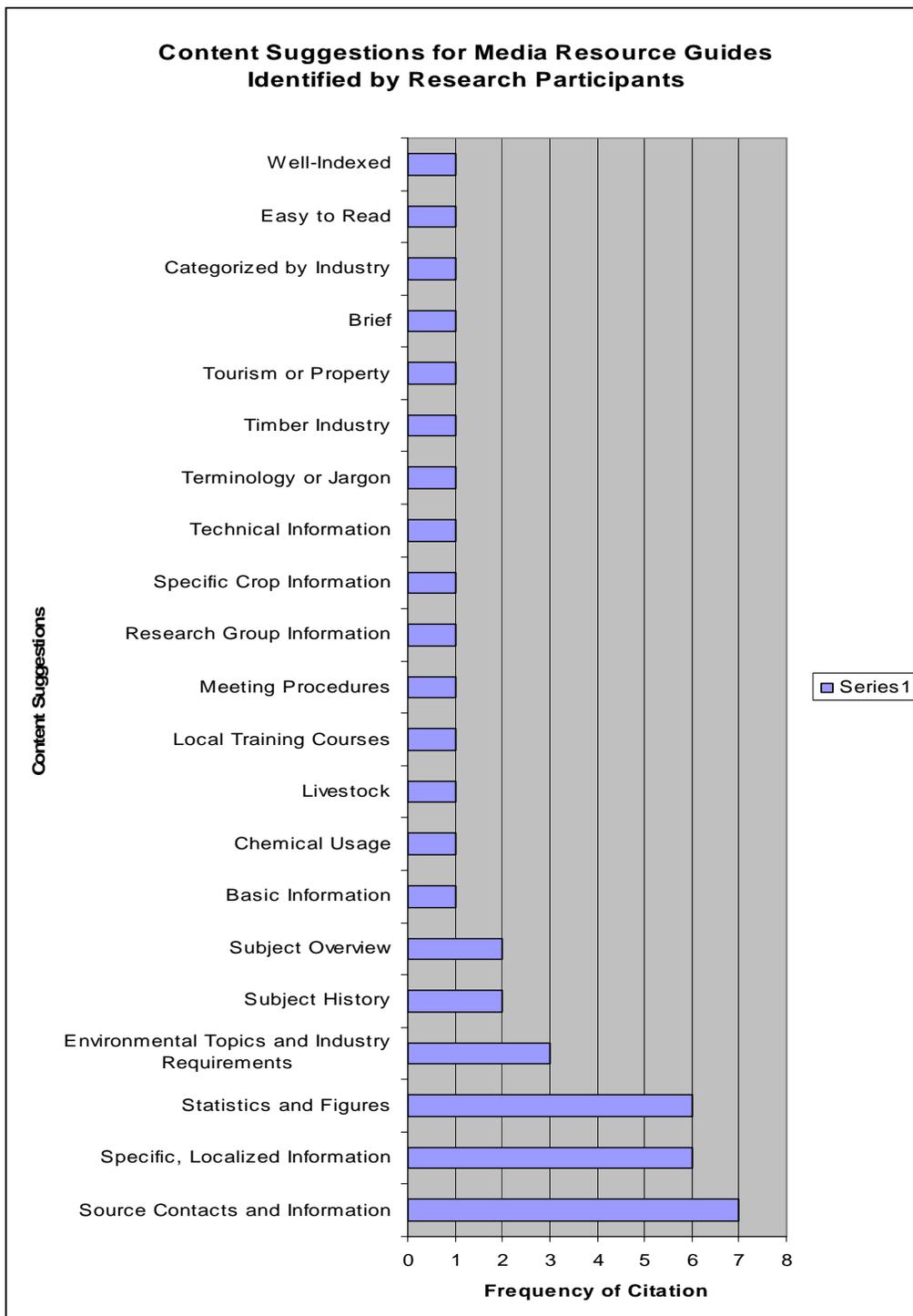


Figure 18. Content suggestions for media resource guides identified by research participants.

During the research, participants were asked what format was the best for their newspaper to receive information, and participants provided answers spanning eight different media formats. Researchers coded participants' responses into two categories: active formats or passive formats. Active formats included any media format that required a physical action on behalf of the user to access the information, such as logging onto the Internet or inserting a CD-ROM into a computer. Passive formats involve media formats in which the user receives information in a ready-to-use state. Within the active-format category, nine participants said they prefer to receive information online, via a Web site. Eight participants said they like to receive information in press packets or as binded copy, and six individuals preferred utilizing compact disks to access information. Using .pdf files and outlines were each preferred by one participant each. Passive formats cited by sample participants included e-mail, which was identified by eight individuals. Five participants said they prefer to receive information via a fax machine, and one individual said he/she prefers to receive information through the traditional mail system. The format preferences for information dissemination that were identified by research participants are summarized in Table 12 and Figure 19.

Table 12. *Ideal Delivery Formats for Media Resource Guides*

Type of Format	Format	Number of Responses
Active	Online	9
Active	Press Packets or Binded Copy	8
Passive	E-mail	8
Active	Compact Disk	6
Passive	Fax	5
Active	PDF File	1
Active	Outline Format	1
Passive	Mail	1

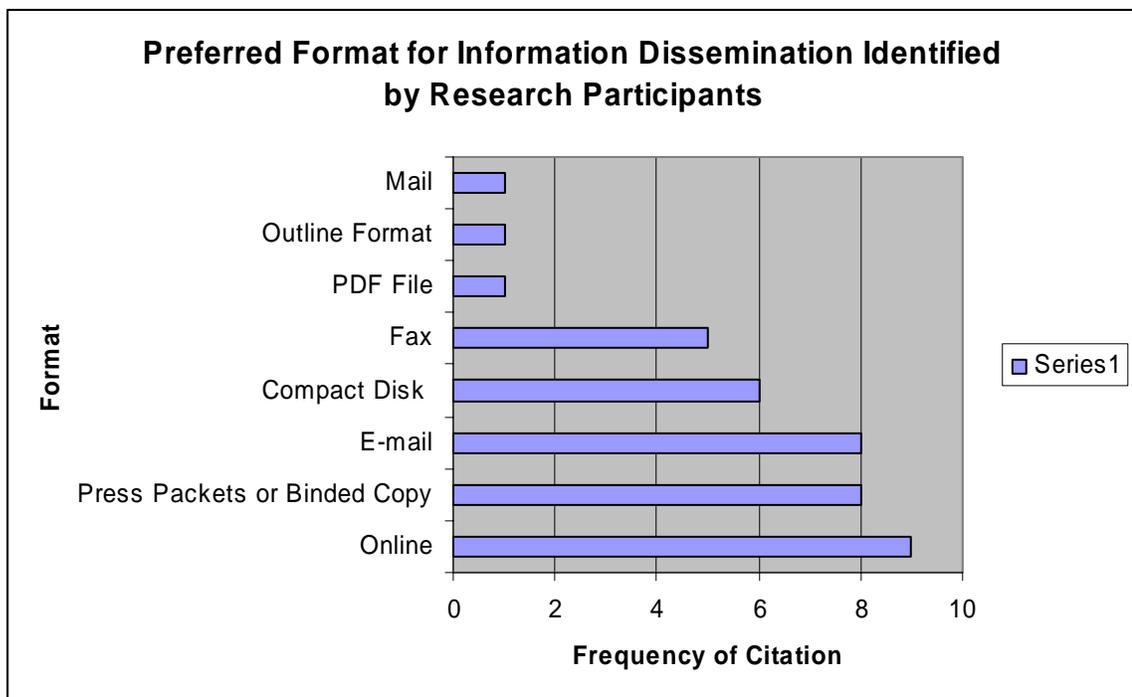


Figure 19. Preferred format for information dissemination identified by research participants.

Of the nine individuals that cited online formats as their preferred format, three stated that it was easier to use and access. Others said it includes more up-to-date information, takes up less space, saves time, and allows the user to pull text directly from

the source. A reporter for a Greater Texas-region newspaper said Internet sources are useful because of the search function. "I prefer Web-based format. I think that's the easiest. I can just go in there and search what I'm looking for and be able to find it," I-24 said.

Individuals who preferred to use e-mail media formats said it is preferred because it is faster, printable, and text can be formatted or copied directly from the source; each of those reasons was cited by three respondents. Other participants said e-mail can provide an alert to mailed information coming to the newspaper, is the most portable, and allows the user to respond directly to the sender of the information if questions arise. One participant, the general manager of a Coastal-region newspaper, listed several reasons why he/she prefers e-mail. "Because you can cut and paste easy. You can print it out and have a copy to look at while you ... assimilate your story, and it's just the most portable format," I-5 said.

Of the six respondents who prefer to use compact disks, three said it is easier for them to use, and two participants each said it is faster to use and reduces the amount of retyping necessary on behalf of the user. Others said they like compact disc formats because they can use keyword searches and it requires less space in their offices. The editor of a Greater Texas newspaper said he/she likes the merits of hard copies and compact disks. "I like paper because I can look at it and skip thorough and see the whole thing at once, but CD-ROMs would be good because I wouldn't have to retype anything," I-30 said.

Another source, the managing editor of a newspaper in the Greater-Texas region, said he/she prefers to receive hard copies of resource information, but likes when users are referred to an online source for further details. “I guess something that’s like a print document, a book or something like that, even if it’s just a summary that can refer us to a Web site where complete details are found,” I-17 said.

Findings Related to Objective Nine

The ninth objective of the study sought to identify opinions held by members of the Texas newspaper media regarding media resource guides. Fourteen different opinions were collected by the researcher from the 26 participants. Researchers coded the opinions into two main categories: opinions regarding the favorable use of media resource guides and opinions regarding reasons why resource guides were not used. Within the category of the favorable use of media resource guides, information was classified by researchers into the areas of opinions reflecting good information and saving time.

Ten opinions reflected good information found in media resource guides. Three participants noted useful information found in media resource guides. Providing hard-to-find or hard-to-access information, sources for articles, useful background information or article starting points, and ideas for articles were each stated by two participants. One individual stated that media resource guides help writers and readers understand the specific topic more thoroughly, and one said they help provide a broad scope of the specific industry or issue. Providing a historical perspective of the topic was noted by one participant, and one participant stated writers can’t rely on the Internet for all article

information. One individual said media resource guides help editors and journalists save time when writing their articles.

One individual, a managing editor of a Greater Texas-region newspaper, said media resource guides help provide topic background. “Quite often, they provide us with some background, some basic foundation of information that we use,” I-17 said.

The editor and publisher of a Plains-region newspaper said resource guides save time. “They give you a lot of information that just otherwise wouldn’t be available here or would take a lot of research time to found out,” I-31 said.

Opinions reflecting reason why editors and journalists do not use media resource guides were placed into two categories: proximity and other sources available. Leading the category of proximity-based opinions was a lack of local information provided in media resource guides, cited by four participants. One participant said he/she has no need to use out-of-area resources, and one said his/her readers are not engaged in agricultural activities. One participant said most information he/she needs can be found online, and this opinion was coded into the not used category based on other sources being available.

The managing editor of a Plains-region newspaper said the use of media resource guides is not as widespread as it once was. “At one time they were a lot more useful than they are now because of the Internet,” I-12 said.

Another participant, the editor and publisher of a newspaper in the Greater Texas region, agreed and said he/she primarily uses local sources. “I stress local, local, local. If I’m going to do a story, I’m going to go to a local source ... Any other information I need, I’ll usually go to the Internet and do my research there,” I-32 said.

Findings Related to Objective Ten

Objective ten dealt with uncovering reasons why selected Texas newspapers did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005. Seven participants whose newspapers did not publish any cotton-related articles during this time frame participated in this portion of the study, and they provided three main reasons for their newspapers' decision not to publish any cotton-related articles. Five participants said cotton is not grown in their local area. Two individuals said their newspapers did not receive any cotton-related information throughout this time period, and one participant said limited space available in the newspaper was the reason no cotton-related articles were published. Figure 20 summarizes the reasons identified by research participants regarding why they chose not to publish any cotton-related articles.

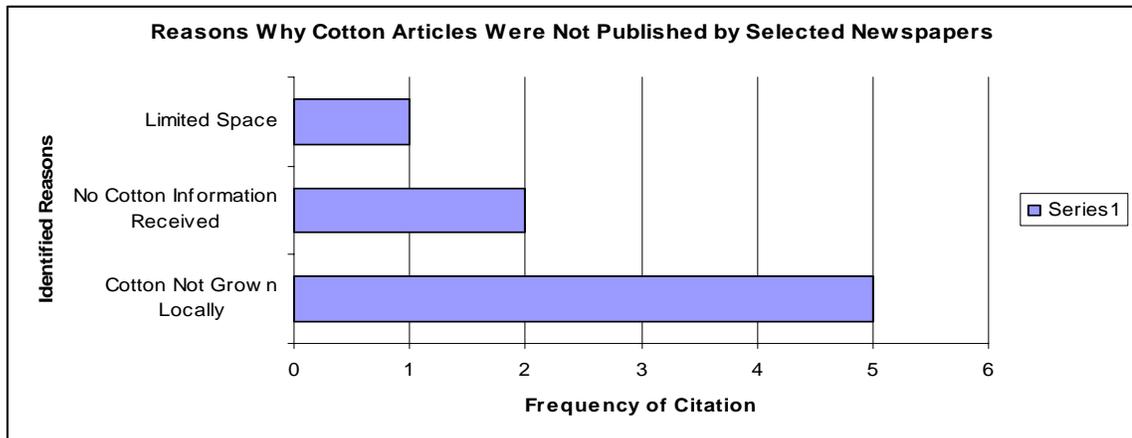


Figure 20. Reasons why cotton articles were not published by selected newspapers.

The editor of a newspaper in the Greater Texas region said cotton is not an important topic to his/her readership. "I'm not aware of ... anybody who grows cotton in

this area, and even if there was someone who grew cotton in this area, it would only be one or two people ... This county has probably more ranching than it does agriculture,” I-30 said.

Another participant, the managing editor of a Coastal-region newspaper, agreed and said his/her newspaper likes organizations to provide the newspaper with article information. “We’re very heavily populated, so I wouldn’t consider agriculture something of great importance to this area ... We rely on other organizations to provide that news to us if they would like for it to receive coverage,” I-29 said.

The editor and publisher of a Greater Texas-region newspaper that did not publish any cotton articles said he/she would have considered publishing cotton-related information if the newspaper had received it. “No one sent me anything that seemed to be really about cotton ... I would have run something on cotton if it had included information about local growers,” I-32 said.

Findings Related to Objective Eleven

The study’s eleventh objective was to identify members of the Texas newspaper media’s likelihood of publishing cotton-related articles in the future and suggestions for improving cotton-related news coverage. Seven participants whose newspapers did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005 were questioned about their likelihood to publish cotton articles in the future. Five participants said they would consider publishing cotton-related articles if they had access to resources, such as databases, Web sites, and press releases. Two participants said they would not be

interested in publishing future cotton-related articles. Figure 21 summarizes the likelihood of selected participants to publish cotton-related articles in the future.

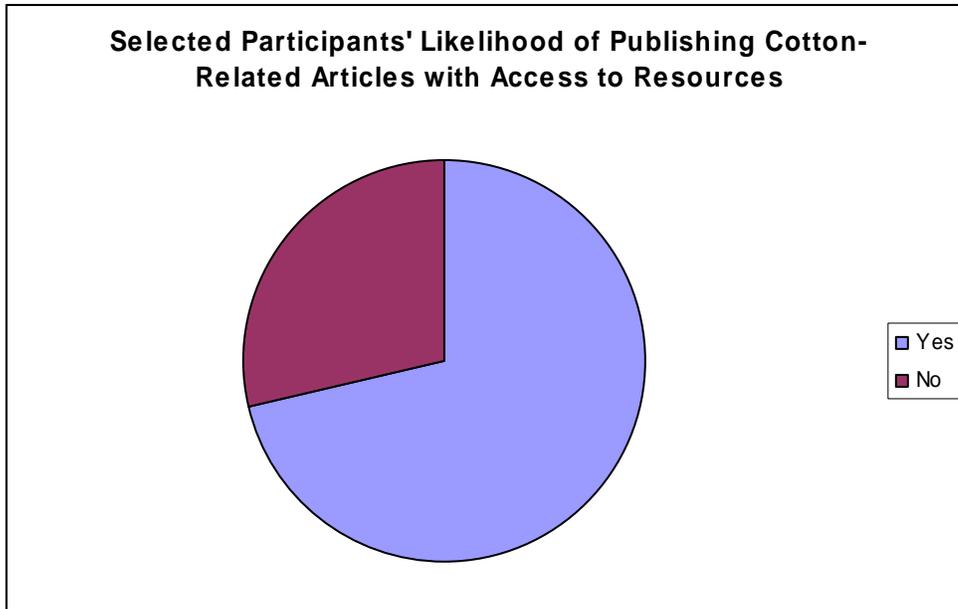


Figure 21. Selected participants' likelihood of publishing cotton-related articles with access to resources.

The editor and publisher of a newspaper in the Plains region said his/her newspaper will begin to publish cotton-related information when cotton production moves closer to the newspaper's readership area. "If cotton comes to this area, we'll need a lot of basic information on cotton: their markets and how it's grown and when it's grown ... best-suited varieties. We would be just starting from the ground floor up, just like the farmers would be," I-31 said.

The editor of a Greater Texas-region newspaper said he/she would consider running cotton-related articles if access to press releases was available. "It would have to be press releases ... because I'm not going to go and hunt them down," I-27 said.

Another participant, the editor and publisher of a Greater Texas-region newspaper, said he/she would be interested in publishing a feature-type cotton article. “If someone e-mailed me an article ... that was a feature story or of general interest about cotton ... and it had a local flavor to it, I’m sure I would run it,” I-32 said.

Through interviews with all participants, five suggestions for improving cotton-related news coverage emerged. Researchers categorized these improvement suggestions into two categories: suggestions relating to journalist training and those relating to agricultural literacy. Three suggestions were placed into the category of needed training for journalists. Two participants said information and articles provided to newspapers need to be localized in order to improve coverage. One participant suggested that writers follow Associated Press style, and another said writers should improve their news release leads. In the category of agricultural literacy, one individual said agricultural organizations need to make cotton an important topic to local readers, and another participant suggested proving to newspapers that their readers would be interested in cotton-related topics.

The senior managing editor of a Plains-region newspaper said his/her newspaper is more interested in publishing locally based information. “Anytime we can provide a local hook to it, we’re always more interested in printing it,” I-10 said.

The managing editor of a newspaper in the Coastal region said cotton-related articles must be important to local readers in order to warrant space in the newspaper. “Prove to us that there are members of our general readership that would have an interest in those specific stories,” I-29 said.

The news and managing editor of a Greater Texas-region newspaper said the small size of his/her newspaper limits the amount of agricultural news coverage. “I would like to do more of that kind of stuff ... it’s just kind of hard because I’m a one-man show. We’re rural and farming is a big thing around here, so I try to do as much as I can on covering agricultural news,” I-21 said.

One participant, the editor of a newspaper in the Greater Texas region, said agricultural news is important, but the amount of coverage it receives reflects the interests of the newspaper’s readership. “I think it’s important to do it if it’s an important part of your readership area, but I don’t think ... it’s a large enough part of our readership area for me to concentrate on it when I should be concentrating on other things,” I-30 said.

Another individual, the editor and publisher of a newspaper in the Greater Texas region, said newspapers appreciate assistance from organizations regarding agricultural news coverage, but stated that articles must be localized to a specific region. “We really could use help from organizations sending us things, but they do need to remember, you can’t write one article for the entire state of Texas and have it be something that’s going to run in a small local newspaper,” I-32 said

The managing editor of a Greater Texas-region newspaper said the coverage newspapers give to agricultural topics doesn’t necessarily reflect its importance to the area and economy.

We feel it’s much more important than the resources we devote to it. I think it’s just the way our state’s economy is going and the way the educational system is going and the success the agricultural industry has in producing more and more with fewer and fewer people. It’s very difficult to adequately cover it the way we want it to be done, but just because we’re not giving it the attention that it deserves, it doesn’t mean we don’t recognize how important it is. (I-17)

CHAPTER V
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact the CottonLink media resource guide had on the increased coverage of cotton, means of improving industry-provided media resource guides, and to determine the types of articles published and newsgathering techniques currently employed by members of the Texas print media.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine the following objectives:

1. Determine the extent and effectiveness of the CottonLink media resource guide usage among members of the Texas newspaper media.
2. Determine information sources utilized by members of the Texas newspaper media to gather news.
3. Identify types of cotton-related articles published and desired by members of the Texas newspaper media.
4. Identify types of agricultural articles published by members of the Texas newspaper media.
5. Determine what topics members of the Texas newspaper media deem most important to their newspapers.
6. Determine how members of the Texas newspaper media determine newsworthy topics.

7. Identify how members of the Texas newspaper media determine article importance in their newspapers, in terms of length and layout of the articles.
8. Determine ideal content areas and media format for information dissemination to Texas newspapers.
9. Identify opinions held by members of the Texas newspaper media regarding media resource guides.
10. Identify reasons why selected Texas newspapers did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005.
11. Identify members of the Texas newspaper media's likelihood of publishing cotton-related articles and suggestions to improve cotton news coverage.

Procedures

This study sought to determine if the CottonLink media resource guide was utilized by members of the Texas print newspaper media and identify what types of agricultural and cotton articles are being published, what news determinants are used, and suggestions for resource guide composition and dissemination. Newspapers with membership in the Texas Press Association served as the population for the study, and they were placed into four regional- and article-publication-based categories. Newspapers that published at least one cotton-related article from Sept. 1, 2004, to June 21, 2005, were categorized based on their geographical location into the Plains region, Coastal region, or Greater Texas region. Newspapers that did not publish any cotton-related articles during this timeframe were placed into a separate category. Eight sample

participants were randomly selected from each of the four categories, contributing to a total sample of 32 participants. Sample newspapers were contacted by the researcher over the telephone, and interviews were scheduled with the appropriate employee at the newspaper.

Interviews were conducted with sources at the scheduled times, and conversations were voice recorded and hand-written notes were compiled. The researcher also maintained a reflective journal to help identify the mood, tone, and events occurring during each interview. Using the voice recordings, interviews were transcribed and, thus, coded openly. The transcriptions were coded axially and then selectively by the team of researchers.

The following conclusions were compiled from the data collected and are based on the data analysis conducted by the researcher. These conclusions are subject to the limitations identified in Chapter 1 and should not be generalized outside of the sample population.

Conclusions Related to Objective One

The study's first objective sought to determine the extent of use and the effectiveness of the CottonLink media resource guide, distributed by Texas Tech University in August 2003. The majority of participants questioned in the study did not recall receiving the CottonLink media resource guide; in fact, only two editors or journalists recalled receiving the guide. Neither of those two participants who recalled

receiving the CottonLink media resource guide recalled if they or their staff used the guide.

Conclusions Related to Objective Two

The second objective in the study was to determine information sources used by members of the Texas newspaper media to gather news. Sample participants identified 23 news sources, and researchers placed these sources into two categories: 15 were placed into the media source category, and 10 were placed into the individual source category. Within the media source category, the most frequently cited source was personal interviews conducted by editors or journalists, and it was identified by 25 participants. The use of Internet resources was identified by 17 participants as a news source. In the individual source category, the Texas Cooperative Extension was cited as a news source by 19 participants. The use of Internet resources by a majority – 65% – of the participants supports Callison’s (2002) findings that the majority of print journalists use the Internet to research stories and ideas. The high rate-of-use of Texas Cooperative Extension agents as sources by participants supports the findings of Stringer (1999), who identified the Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension as the most frequently used agricultural news source amongst Pennsylvania newspaper editors and journalists.

Conclusions Related to Objective Three

Objective three was to identify the types of cotton-related articles currently being published by members of the Texas newspaper media and to identify types of cotton-

related articles members of the Texas newspaper media would like to publish. The most frequently published article type is information about boll weevils, as it was identified by 17 editors or journalists in the study. Cotton ginning articles was identified by 13 participants, making it the second most frequently cited cotton article topic. Cotton-related article sources were identified by some participants as well, and six individuals noted that they receive and publish cotton articles from the Texas Cooperative Extension. Information regarding new technologies or improvements in cotton was identified as the cotton topic most desired for publication, as it was cited by six participants. This finding is supported by a related finding in Vineyard's (2004) study. Boll weevil, cotton ginning, and Texas Cooperative Extension information were categorized by Vineyard as industry provided news. In her study, Vineyard found this category had the highest article publication rate, with approximately 64% of cotton articles published from September 2003 to February 2004 were categorized into the industry-provided category.

Conclusions Related to Objective Four

The study's fourth objective was to identify types of agricultural articles currently being published routinely by members of the Texas newspaper media. Responding participants identified 26 topics and sources of agricultural information currently being published. Data relating to this objective was categorized based on its frequency of identification by participants, type, and topic. The most frequently cited agricultural article was feature article written by newspapers' staff writers, and it was identified by all 26 participants in the study. Twenty-four participants said they publish agricultural news

stories written by their staff writers and information from the Texas Cooperative Extension. Agriculturally related weather articles were routinely published by 23 participants' newspapers, and 22 participants said they publish information on agricultural meetings and conferences. Twenty-one individuals said they publish agricultural article on the topics of government policies, special-interest topics, and Texas Department of Agriculture information. A similar study in Pennsylvania found environmental, youth organizations, water quality, farm land development, and gardening to be the most frequently published agricultural news articles by editors and journalists (Stringer, 1999). Pest and disease control was identified as a published agricultural topic by 87% of editors in the study. The current study's findings regarding types of agricultural articles published by Texas print newspapers do not support Stringer's study.

Conclusions Related to Objective Five

Objective five sought to determine the topics members of the Texas newspaper media consider most important for publication in their newspapers. In the general news category, which includes all articles published by the newspaper regardless of topic, the topics of proximity, timeliness, and length emerged from the data. Most of the topics suggested by participants were included into the proximity category by researchers. Local news and community events were cited as an important general news topic by 17 participants. Local school news was cited as an important topic by 13 participants, and 10 participants identified local government topics.

Regarding only agricultural topics, crop harvest articles were identified as an important agricultural topic by 12 participants. Eight participants cited weather articles as an important topic, and six participants said livestock-related articles was an important agricultural topic. Information from the Texas Cooperative Extension was identified by four participants as an important source of information.

Conclusions Related to Objective Six

Objective six involved identifying topics members of the Texas newspaper media consider newsworthy. The most prominent means of determining the newsworthiness of articles was the topic's interest and impact on local readers; it was identified by 21 participants. Topic proximity to local readers was cited by eight participants, making it the second most popular means of determining newsworthiness. These findings support the findings of Cartmell II (2003), who found interest to the local community was the most frequently used means of determining topics' newsworthiness by Arkansas newspaper editors. These findings are also supported by Brooks' et al. (2001) findings that the newsworthiness of topics is determined by their relevance, usefulness, and interest.

Conclusions Related to Objective Seven

The seventh objective of the study was to discover how members of the Texas newspaper media determine story importance in their newspaper, relating to the length and layout placement of individual articles. Interest and impact of an article's topic was

again the most frequently cited determinant of story importance, and it was identified by 17 participants. A three-way tie emerged for the second most frequently cited story importance determinant: attention-grabbing topics, proximity of topics, and space available in the newspaper were identified by six participants each. The finding that interest and impact of a topic most frequently determine placement and layout within the publication was supported by Cartmell II's et al. (2003) findings that community interest was the most frequent determinant of story publication.

Conclusions Related to Objective Eight

The study's eighth objective was to determine ideal content areas and media format for information dissemination to members of the Texas newspaper media. Regarding the content areas desired by Texas editors and journalists, the most frequently identified area was source contact information. This topic was cited by seven participants. Six editors and journalists each identified a desire for specific, localized information and/or statistics and figures.

The media format most desired for information dissemination by members of the Texas newspaper media was Internet-based material, cited by nine individuals. Information in press packets or as binded copy was identified by eight participants as a desired medium for information dissemination, as was information received via e-mail at the newspaper. The use of Internet material by journalists for newsgathering is supported by Callison's (2002) finding that 81% of journalists access the Internet for article research. The finding that Internet and e-mail are preferred information-gathering means

by journalists is supported by Wright (2001), who referred to the finding of a survey by Middleberg and Ross that e-mail and article research are the most popular journalistic uses of the Web.

Conclusions Related to Objective Nine

Objective nine sought to identify opinions held by members of the Texas newspaper media regarding media resource guides. Responses collected were categorized according to opinions regarding using media resource guides and those regarding not using media resource guides. In the category reflecting favorable opinions of why participants use media resource guides, three participants said the guides provide useful information. Two participants each cited providing hard-to-find or hard-to-access information, useful background information or article starting points, and/or article ideas. Regarding opinions why media resource guides were not used, lack of local information was the most frequently reported reason; it was identified by four participants. The opinions supporting the use of media resource guides are supported by a statement by Voss (2003) that resource guides provide context and data for a specific topic and can serve as a journalistic starting point for article research.

Conclusions Related to Objective Ten

The tenth objective of the study involved identifying reasons why seven newspapers included in the study did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005. The most frequently cited reason why no cotton-related

articles were published during this time frame was that cotton is not grown in the respective newspaper's coverage area. This reason was identified by five of the seven respondents.

Conclusions Related to Objective Eleven

Objective eleven was to identify members of the Texas newspaper media's likelihood of publishing future cotton-related articles and to determine suggestions for improving cotton news coverage. Five of the seven participants said they would consider publishing cotton-related information if access to resources was available. Resources included databases, Web sites, and press releases. The most frequent suggestion for improving cotton news coverage was to localize cotton information to specific regions, and it was identified by two of the seven participants questioned.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were placed into three categories: recommendations for media resource guides, local information, and future research. They are based on the conclusions of the study.

Recommendations for developing more effective media resource guides include the following.

1. The CottonLink media resource guide should be adapted to a Web site. Material, including statistics and source contact information, should be updated regularly. It

should be continually maintained to provide the most up-to-date information for members of the media.

2. Future media resource guides or the CottonLink Web site should include specific information that is localized to various geographical areas within the state, in order to increase the rate of use of the guide and the rate of publication for cotton-related articles. Geographical information should include a database of cotton statistics, categorized by county, and it should be searchable by zip code or county name.
3. The topics identified by this study's research participants as desired cotton topics should be featured in a prominent "New Developments" section on the CottonLink Web site.
4. Information included on the CottonLink Web site should be available to download in a variety of formats in order to increase the ease of use for media outlets. All information should be provided in Microsoft Word, .pdf, and rich text formats to ensure compatibility with most computers.
5. Extension agents should be included as potential source contacts on the CottonLink Web site or future editions of the CottonLink media resource guide.
6. A supplementary e-mail component should be developed and distributed by the Texas Tech University Department of Agricultural Education and Communications. E-mails should be sent to newspaper editors throughout the state four times per year, based on the four major components of the cotton season: planting, growing, harvest, and ginning. The e-mails should include

potential story topics newspapers may wish to cover during the corresponding cotton-season timeframe. It should also include a link to the CottonLink Web site and wording that encourages media members to visit the link for additional information.

7. Newspaper editors' should be the point of contact for all information relating to the CottonLink media resource guide, in order to combat the high rate of turnover in other positions. Editors' contact information should be updated annually.
8. The CottonLink media resource guide should be marketed to extension agents, commodity groups, and agricultural science teachers in order to increase awareness of the resource tool and the cotton industry.
9. A media resource guide relating to the livestock industry should be developed and disseminated to media organizations. Articles should be collected and coded according to the methods used in Beesley (2003) and Vineyard (2004), and media-industry personnel should be interviewed to determine actual usage of the media resource tool.

Discussion Regarding CottonLink Improvements

Through this research, several means of improving future editions of the CottonLink media resource guide were identified. From the data, the ideal means of information dissemination seems to be through the use of a Web site supplemented with periodic e-mail announcements. Internet resources and e-mail resources were the most frequently cited suggestions regarding ideal information dissemination format. Topics identified by research participants as cotton information they currently publish should be

highlighted in individual sections on the Web site, to ensure information is easily accessible. Information about desired cotton topics that were identified by research participants should be displayed on the home page of the CottonLink Web site, to enable quick and easy access to these resources. Additionally, localized information, such as annual cotton production statistics on a county level, should be provided on the Web site. All information, sources, and photographs on the Web site should be searchable based on zip codes, county names, or city names. This will help make local information easily accessible to media outlets and may increase the use of the Web site. All contact with media outlets regarding the CottonLink Web site should be conducted with the media editors. Editors are traditionally the decision makers and primary gatekeepers within their organizations; by using editors as the CottonLink points of contact, the likelihood of the correct individual receiving the information increases.

Because many of the research participants in this study were familiar with their local extension agents and used them as sources, extension agent information should be included in the Web site's source contact directory. Information about the CottonLink Web site and potential story ideas should be distributed to extension agents, commodity groups, agricultural science teachers, and other sources included in the source directory. By informing sources about topics media outlets may be interested in running articles about, sources may be empowered to initiate contact with their local media, thus transforming those individuals from passive sources into active sources regarding the coverage of cotton.

Recommendations for gaining greater access to local information include the following suggestions.

1. Resource guides distributed to the media should include localized information and potential local contacts, in order to increase the use of the respective guide. Source contacts and resource information should be searchable based on zip code or county.
2. Media training should be provided to local sources by a central organization, such as the Texas Cooperative Extension Service. By educating producers, ranchers, and other members of the agricultural sector, more articles may be produced regarding agricultural news.
3. Quarterly e-mails containing cotton-related story ideas should be distributed to potential sources. By informing sources of topics that may be interesting to media, sources may be more likely to approach the media about article ideas, transforming the individuals from passive source to active sources.
4. Agricultural organizations that routinely provide article information to media outlets should be informed of the media's desire for specific and localized information.

Recommendations for future research include the following suggestions.

1. The instrument used in the study should be revised for future use to collect additional information. Some questions, especially those relating to objectives two and ten, should specifically identify active versus passive information collection and dissemination methods. Additional, questions should be added to

the instrument to assess research participants' agricultural backgrounds and their backgrounds as trained scientific communicators.

2. Future research should determine if information sources identified in objective two can be grouped according to four themes: educational, governmental, agricultural organizations, and personal. Data seems to suggest the emergence of these four categories of information sources, but it could not be verified based on the current data.
3. A longitudinal study should be conducted with this study to observe changes in their reporting behaviors as the CottonLink Web site is developed, marketed and revised.
4. Future research should identify actual publication rates and opinions regarding post-harvest topics. Data in this study seem to suggest that the publication of post-harvest cotton topics stop at cotton ginning. Further research is needed to determine why a deficiency seems to exist in the identification of post-harvest cotton articles.
5. Future research should focus on identifying how newspapers determine what topics impact and interest their readers. Interest and impact was the most frequently cited newsworthiness determinant and story importance determinant in this study. Identification of the means behind this determinant could help cotton-industry members increase the publication of cotton-related news.
6. Future research should be conducted to determine journalists' abilities to effectively communicate about the science of agriculture.

7. Additional research regarding information sources, news determinants, and agricultural- and cotton-related topic publication rates needs to be conducted in order to support the findings of this study and generalize the results to a population larger than that of the sample population. Additional research regarding the effectiveness of industry-specific media resource guides should be conducted within additional mediums, markets, and industry areas.

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APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHICS FOR RESEARCH SAMPLE

Table A1. *Coastal Region Sample Demographics*

Subject ID	Newspaper	City	Experience	Reporter	Editor	Job Title Publisher	Owner	General Manager	Non-Response
I-1	Valley Morning Star	Harlingen							X
I-2	Hebbronville View	Hebbronville							X
I-3	Zavala Co. Sentinel	Crystal City	30 years			X			
I-4	Jackson Co. Herald-Tribune	Edna	18 years			X			
I-5	Gulf Coast Tribune	Needville	30 years					X	
I-6	Palacios Beacon	Palacios							X (declined)
I-7	Taft Tribune	Taft	30 years			X			
I-8	News Gram	Eagle Pass							X

Table A2. *Plains Region Sample Demographics*

Subject ID	Newspaper	City	Experience	Reporter	Editor	Job Title Publisher	Owner	General Manager	Non-Response
I-9	Foard Co. News	Crowell	13 years		X	X			
I-10	Groom News	Groom	15 years		X				
I-11	Crosbyton Review	Crosbyton	10 months	X					
I-12	Hereford Brand	Hereford	37 years		X				
I-13	Morton Tribune	Morton	4 years			X			
I-14	Midland Reporter-Telegram	Midland	10.5 years		X				
I-15	Twin Cities News	Rochester	9 years		X		X		
I-16	Muleshoe Journal	Muleshoe	15 years		X				

Table A3. *Greater Texas Region Sample Demographics*

Subject ID	Newspaper	City	Experience	Reporter	Editor	Job Title Publisher	Owner	General Manager	Non- Response
I-17	Brownwood Bulletin	Brownwood	33 years		X				
I-18	Detroit Weekly	Detroit	27 years			X	X		
I-19	Hillsboro Reporter- News	Hillsboro	24 years		X				
I-20	Cleburne Times- Review	Cleburne	2.5 years		X				
I-21	Yorktown News	Yorktown	6 years		X				
I-22	Cedar Creek Pilot	Gun Barrel City	58 years		X				
I-23	McKinney Courier- Gazette	McKinney							X
I-24	Dublin Citizen	Dublin	2 months	X					

Table A4. *No Cotton Published Sample Demographics*

Subject ID	Newspaper	City	Region	Experience	Reporter	Editor	Job Title Publisher	Owner	General Manager	Non- Response
I-25	Jasper Newsboy	Jasper	Greater Texas	55 years		X	X			
I-26	Blanco Co. News	Blanco	Greater Texas	16 years			X			
I-27	Groveton News	Groveton	Greater Texas	45 years		X				
I-28	Houston Informer and Texas Freeman	Houston	Greater Texas							X
I-29	Pearland Reporter- News	Pearland	Coastal	5 years		X				
I-30	Tri County Leader	Whitehouse	Greater Texas	25 years		X				
I-31	Booker News	Booker	Plains	10 years		X	X			
I-32	Leonard Graphic	Leonard	Greater Texas	12 years		X	X			

APPENDIX B
TELEPHONE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Background Questions

Tell me your name, job title and number of years of experience in the journalism field.

What beats do you and other reporters typically cover?

What topics come to mind when you think of agricultural news? (General Perspective)

CottonLink Questions

Do you recall receiving the CottonLink media resource guide in August 2003?

If yes: Who received the CD-ROM?

Was it utilized?

Can you tell me what beat reporters used CottonLink and how often?

What aspects of the CD-ROM were used?

In your opinion, what was the most useful section?
What areas of CottonLink should be improved?

Now I'm going to ask you about each section of the CottonLink media resource guide. Please rate each section from 1 to 4 based on its usefulness, with 1 = not useful and 4 = very useful.

- Was the "Overview" section of the media resource guide useful?
- Was the "Contact Directory" section useful?
- Was the "Photo Gallery" section useful?
- Was the "Department of Agricultural Education and Communications" section useful?
- Was the "History of Cotton in Texas" section useful?
- Was the "Related Links" section useful?

If no: Why wasn't it used?

If no, go to general MRC questions.

General MRG Questions

Now I'm going to ask you some questions about media resource guides in general, and you can draw from any that you may have received in the past.

Are industry-specific media resource guides useful for preparing or researching articles?
Why do you feel that way?

What information and general topic areas should media resource guides include to increase your likelihood of using the resource?

What media resource guide format would be the best for your publication to receive information? Why?

General News Questions

I now have some questions about newsgathering and how it relates to your publication.

What types of cotton-related articles do you routinely publish? What cotton-related topics would you like to report on, perhaps if you had additional information?

What is the approximate monthly percentage of agriculturally related articles that are published in your newspaper?

Of that number, what is the percentage of cotton-related articles published monthly?

What sources do you routinely consult to find ideas for agricultural articles? What additional sources do you consult for general news ideas?

I am going to list some types of agricultural articles. Please tell me if your newspaper routinely publishes these article types.

- News- reported by staff
- News – reported by AP Wire
- Feature – reported by staff
- Feature – reported by AP Wire
- Weather
- Plant Commodities
- Livestock Commodities
- Agriculture Market or Economy
- Crop Planting
- Crop Harvests
- Cotton Ginning
- Crop Pests
- Government Policies
- Agricultural meetings or conferences
- Genetics
- Textile/Fashion
- Special interest
- Texas Department of Agriculture information
- Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation information

- Texas Cooperative Extension information
- Columns by Texas legislators/commissioners
- Plains Cotton Cooperative Association information
- Plains Cotton Growers information
- Pictures
- What other agricultural topics do you routinely publish?

What are the top three most important topics for publication in your newspaper?
Focusing specifically on agriculture, what are the top three most important agricultural topics your paper publishes?

How do you determine newsworthy topics?

How does your newspaper determine story importance, in terms of length and layout?

How do you gather news and research your topics?

Newspapers with no Cotton Articles

During my research, I noticed your newspaper did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005.

Why did your newspaper choose not to publish any cotton-related articles this year?

Would you be interested in cotton articles covering specific topics? Would you be more likely to run these articles if you had access to press releases, sources and other resources?

What could cotton industry members do to increase the coverage of cotton in your newspaper?

Ending Question

Those are all of the questions I have for you.

Is there anything else you would like to share with me about agricultural reporting or newsgathering techniques?

APPENDIX C
NON-RESPONDER MAILED SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Agriculture in the Media Survey

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge regarding your publication and personal experience. Each section has an italicized paragraph of instructions for your convenience.

Background Questions

1. Please provide your name, the newspaper you're currently employed with, your job title and number of years of experience in the journalism field.

2. What beats do you and other reporters typically cover?

3. What topics come to mind when you think of agricultural news?

4. Do you recall receiving the CottonLink media resource guide in August 2003 from Texas Tech?

If yes, please answer questions 5 and 6.
If no, please proceed to question 13.

5. Who received the CD-ROM?

6. Was it utilized?

If yes, please answer questions 6 through 10.
If no, please proceed to question 12.

7. Can you tell me what beat reporters used CottonLink and how often?

8. What aspects of the CD-ROM were used?

9. In your opinion, what was the most useful section?

10. What areas of CottonLink should be improved?

11. *The following questions regard each section of the CottonLink media resource guide. Please rate each section from 1 to 4 based on its usefulness, with 1 = not useful and 4 = very useful.*

- Was the “Overview” section of the media resource guide useful?
- Was the “Contact Directory” section useful?
- Was the “Photo Gallery” section useful?
- Was the “Department of Agricultural Education and Communications” section useful?
- Was the “History of Cotton in Texas” section useful?
- Was the “Related Links” section useful?

12. If you answered no to Question 5, why wasn't it used?

General MRG Questions

Questions 13 through 15 relate to your experiences with media resource guides (i.e. packaged information that help journalists write their articles). This section is for all newspapers.

13. Are industry-specific media resource guides useful for preparing or researching articles? Why?

14. What information and general topic areas should media resource guides include to increase you likelihood of using the resource?

15. What media resource guide format would be the best for your publication to receive information? Why?

General News Questions

Questions 16 through 28 inquire about newsgathering and how it relates to your publication. This section is for all newspapers.

16. Did your newspaper publish any cotton related articles from September 2004 to June 2005?

If yes, please proceed to question 17.

If no, please proceed to question 19. Also, please complete questions 29 through 31.

17. What types of cotton-related articles do you routinely publish?

18. What cotton-related topics would you like to report on, perhaps if you had additional information?

19. What is the approximate monthly percentage of agriculturally related articles that are published in your newspaper?

20. Of that number, what is the percentage of cotton-related articles published monthly?

21. What sources do you routinely consult to find ideas for agricultural articles?

22. What additional sources do you consult for general news ideas?

23. *The following list includes types of agricultural articles. Please indicate if your newspaper routinely publishes these types of articles by checking the boxes of those that your newspaper routinely publishes.*

- News as reported by staff
- News as reported by AP Wire
- Feature as reported by staff
- Feature as reported by AP Wire
- Weather articles
- Plant commodities
- Livestock commodities
- Agriculture market or economy
- Crop planting
- Crop harvests
- Cotton ginning
- Crop pests
- Government policies
- Agricultural meetings or conferences
- Genetics
- Textile or fashion
- Special interest
- Texas Department of Agriculture information
- Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation information
- Texas Cooperative Extension information
- Columns by Texas legislators/commissioners
- Plains Cotton Cooperative Association information
- Plains Cotton Growers information
- Pictures that are not accompanied by a story
- What other agricultural topics do you routinely publish?

24. What are the top three most important topics for publication in your newspaper?

25. Focusing specifically on agriculture, what are the top three most important agricultural topics your paper publishes?

26. How do you determine newsworthy topics?

27. How does your newspaper determine story importance, in terms of length and layout?

28. How do you gather news and research your topics?

Newspapers with no Cotton Articles

Please complete this section if your newspaper did not publish any cotton-related articles from September 2004 to June 2005. If your newspaper did publish cotton-related articles, please proceed to question 33.

29. Why did your newspaper choose not to publish any cotton-related articles this year?

30. Would you be interested in cotton articles covering specific topics?

31. Would you be more likely to run these articles if you had access to press releases, sources and other resources?

32. What could cotton industry members do to increase the coverage of cotton in your newspaper?

Ending Question

This question is for all newspapers.

33. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about agricultural reporting or newsgathering techniques?

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT

Transcription of interview with XXXXXXXX, Groom News

Let's start off; tell me your name, job title and number of years of experience in the journalism field.

Okay, um, my name is XXXXXXX.

Uh-huh.

My title is, I'm the senior managing editor of, I guess you'd need to clarify that as the Groom News, the McLean News and the Claude News.

Okay.

The man here owns all three papers and, and I'm the senior editor.

Okay.

Um, I have, um, let's see, like 15 years experience.

Okay, great. What beats do you and other reporters typically cover?

Well, in little small town newspapers like what we have, you pretty much cover everything from babies births to presidential elections. You know, everything; everything is our beat. Uh, we, you know, we just cover everything. Everything the community is interested in.

Okay, great. What topics come to mind when you think of agricultural news?

Uh, anything that's connected to the kinds of agriculture that we have in our areas. Um, for instance, when I say that, you know, we have only recently become interested in cotton at all in this part of the country. Mostly it's been, uh, wheat, cattle, that type of thing, corn.

Great. Now, do you recall receiving the CottonLink media resource guide in August 2003 from Texas Tech?

Now say again what was the name of it?

It was call the CottonLink media resource guide. It was a CD-ROM.

You know, it seems like I do remember. Did it, uh, did it come, was there kind of a little booklet that came out with it?

You know, I'm not sure if there was or not.

It seems like, it seems like I do.

Do you recall if anyone used it?

No, really I don't right off the top of my head.

Okay, well no problem. Um, I wanted to ask you some general questions about media resource guides, and you can draw from your experience with any of them.

Um, are industry-specific media resource guides useful for preparing or researching articles?

Uh, somewhat. .

And why do you feel that way?

So much of the time it is so generic; the information is so generic, and usually in a small town like what we have, we, we really anticipate that most of the farmers and ranchers are going to get that, the um, detailed information from the either their own publication that they subscribe to or the extension office or whatever. And so when we write stories, they're generally a lot more generic and a lot more specific to our area.

Okay.

In other words, like the last story I did about wheat was the actual wheat harvest that was taking place right here.

Sure.

And so, uh, what I'd normally do is I'd call our local grain elevators and interview their managers about what kinds, uh, of weights were coming in, et cetera.

Okay, great. What information and general topic areas should media resource guides include in order to increase your likelihood of using the resource?

Um, for the most part, it would need to be specific; uh, information, such as, um, like training classes and, um, courses that would be specifically interesting to our local farmers and ranchers.

Uh-huh.

Uh, that's really the only thing that I can think of right off the top of my head. I mean, you know, there's always research papers coming out. Uh, they're generally so long and wordy that we can't include them. It needs to be kind of really specific information, and short, you know.

Uh-huh. Great.

Not, not too many words.

Sure. I can understand that.

About a particular, you know, and a lot of times uh, I don't know how well this would work, but a lot of times if we know what it's about the, uh, press release can make a local hook, as talk to a local farmer or include information about a local farm or ranch or whatever. You know, that sometimes help too. We're always interested in our own people.

Sure. Sure. Um, what media resource guide format would be the best for your publication to receive information?

Well, I guess I'm telling my age, but I still like to see things in black and white. I am getting better about, uh, e-mail. You know, it's always good to get an e-mail alert when something's coming your way.

Uh-huh

Whether it comes CD-ROM or hard copies or whatever, it really doesn't matter, but a lot of times it is good to get that e-mail alert that it's on, you know, it's coming our way.

That's a real good idea; I hadn't thought of that. Um, now I have some general news questions about how they relate to your publication. What types of cotton-related articles do you routinely publish?

Uh, mostly just harvests; uh, harvest stories in general. We just, like I said, we're so new to the cotton market, we haven't got into a lot of specifics. I think, um, I have published some alerts from the extension office about training courses and, uh, maybe something about some chemical application or something. I'm not a farmer, so I don't even know what I'm talking about.

Sure.

I just kind of have to hope somebody else knows what I'm saying whenever I repeat what someone else has told me.

Sure. Are there any cotton-related topics that you'd like to report on, maybe if you had some more information about them?

Uh, not that I can think of off the top of my head. But there's always going to be something new that we probably should be reporting; probably more about marketing might, might be of interest around here.

Okay, great, and what would you say is the approximate monthly percentage of agriculturally related articles published in your newspaper?

Uh, percentage?

Um-hum.

Probably, maybe, 20 percent. That may be high, I'm not sure. I'm just guessing.

That's okay; we're just looking for what you think it might be, and, um, of that 20 percent, what would you say is the percentage of cotton articles would be?

Uh, probably a third. We pretty much go, uh, with, you know, cotton, wheat and cattle, the cattle industry.

Okay.

And a little corn thrown in and sorghum now and then. It's pretty much what people raise around here.

Great. What sources do you routinely consult to find ideas for agricultural articles?

Uh, we use the extension office a whole lot.

Okay.

Uh, we use the, the, um, let's see, I don't exactly know the name of it; well it's Kay Ledbetter, whoever she went to work for. I think that's the extension office.

Okay.

Um, I get a lot of information from her. Uh, the, uh, Texas Cattle Feeders Association sends out quite a bit of information that I use from time to time.

Uh-huh.

Um, uh, soil conservation sometimes will send some interesting stuff that's related. I mean, you know, there's all, I just try to. It's unfortunate, but we get so many press releases from so many different groups that I try to disseminate them and use the ones that are most interesting that fit the amount of space we have from time to time; but there's just all kinds.

Sure. Are there any additional sources you use for general news stories?

Oh, like for what do you mean? Give me a for instance.

Just types of organizations, people, you know.

Yeah, well, we consult with the, uh, Texas Association of School Boards, the Texas legislature, uh, the attorney general's office, I mean all those places; we're always getting information about one thing or another.

Okay, great. Um, what I am going to do now is list some types of agricultural articles, and if you'll please tell me if your newspaper routinely publishes these types.

Okay

News as reported by your staff?

Well, that would be me, but yeah. Yeah.

News as reported by the A-P Wire?

No.

Features stories as reported by your staff?

Yeah.

Features as reported by the A-P Wire?

No.

Weather stories?

Yes.

Okay. Plant commodities?

Um, well, yeah, yeah; let's go ahead and say yes.

Livestock commodities?

No.

Ag market or economy?

Uh, ag market, is that what you said?

Yes, ma'am.

That's probably what I should have said yes to originally. You might say no to that first one.

The plant one?

Yeah.

Okay, um, crop planting?

Uh, yeah.

Okay. Crop harvests?

Yes.

Cotton ginning?

Yes.

Uh, crop pests?

No, not too much.

Government policies?

Uh, occasionally.

Ag meetings or conferences?

Yes.

Genetics?

Not a lot, no.

Okay. Textiles?

No.

Okay. Special interest?

Um, no.

Texas Department of Agriculture information?

Yes.

Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation information?

Uh, occasionally. More so in the last couple of years. That's still pretty new to us.

Sure. Um, Texas Cooperative Extension information?

Um, yeah, some.

Columns by Texas legislators or commissioners?

Not too much. Occasionally. So much of the time, those things are so political that we try to not give them the format.

I understand.

If they want to advertise, they can advertise.

There you go. Um, Plains Cotton Cooperative Association information?

I'm not familiar with that.

Generally, that's Cotton Market Weekly.

No, no I pretty much get all of our cotton information from our local ginner.

Okay.

And he's having to educate me.

Do you do anything from Plains Cotton Growers?

Um, not that I recall. That name is sounding familiar though, so maybe I've gotten something from them from time to time.

They generally send out a column called Cotton News.

I don't really remember it.

Okay, not a problem. We'll mark that as a no. Um, Pictures that are unrelated to a story?

No.

And are there any other ag topics that were not mentioned that you do routinely publish?

No.

What would you say are the top three most important general topics for publication?

Uh, about agriculture?

No, just news in general.

Uh, local government, local school information, and then agriculture.

And now specifically on agriculture, what would you say are the top three most important ag topics?

Uh, I would say crop specifics – in other words, you know, topics, articles about the specific crops – education and I'm really not even sure what the third one would be. It would be a toss up between, like, new government laws or programs: things, things policies dealing with specifics in that area.

Okay, great. How do you determine newsworthy topics?

Uh, good question. Mainly what the, uh, community is thinking about, in general. What is going to be the next most important thing to them. Does that make any sense?

Yeah, it does.

Kind of what people are interested in right at that moment.

Do they pretty much freely tell you what they're interested in?

Yeah, well in a town as small as Groom is, you know, if it's football season, you know everybody's interested in what the football team is going to be doing. I mean, if it's time to harvest wheat, people are interested in how the wheat harvest is going. So, you know, it just kind of is what is the big topic of interest right at that moment. That's kind of how we do it.

How does your newspaper determine story importance, in terms of length and layout for the articles?

Uh, that's another good question. There is no formula. It's just kind of, uh, what seems to be the most pressing matter at the time is what gets the most, uh, front page space.

Okay, great. How do you go about gathering news and researching your own topics?

Well, generally we try to, uh, interview people who are in the know or have some authority over that particular topic.

Uh-huh.

Um, and we generally try to verify that information with another source; although sometimes, you know, in these small towns you only have one or two sources that would be able to verify something like that. I guess that's really about it.

Okay, great. Well, those are all of the questions I have for you.

Good! They were getting too hard for me.

Is there anything else that you'd like to share with me about agricultural reporting or newsgathering?

Well, like I said. Anytime we can provide a local hook to it, we're always more interested in printing it. Um, so, you know, I don't know if that will affect how you will present your information, but generally that does make a decision as to what's newsworthy and what isn't. So anything like that that ya'll can do would be more likely that we would be able to print it for you.

Okay, well, Ms. Burton, I really appreciate you taking the time to speak with me.

Well, you're most welcome.

Have a nice afternoon.

You too.

Bye-bye.

APPENDIX E
AXIAL CODING OF DATA

1. Information Sources

- a. Extension Service agent (19)
 - i. I-5, I-11 and I-19 mentioned 2 times
- b. Personal Knowledge (5)
 - i. I-21 mentioned knowing trends happening in markets
- c. Texas Department of Agriculture (1)
- d. Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation
- e. Plains Cotton Cooperative Association
- f. Plains Cotton Growers (3)
- g. Personal Interviews (25)
 - i. I-5, I-9, I-14, I-19, I-17, I-25 and I-7 mentioned 2 times
- h. Telephone Calls (2)
- i. Internet (17)
 - i. I-3, I-13, I-18, I-20, I-25 and I-32 mentioned 2 times
 - ii. I-12 mentioned 2 times, and specifically the High Plains Water District
 - iii. I-14 mentioned 4 times
- j. E-mail (3)
 - i. I-30 mentioned 2 times
- k. Farm Service Agency (2)
 - i. I-18 mentioned 2 times
- l. Colleges/Universities (3)
 - i. I-24 mentioned 2 times
- m. Other Media (9)
 - i. I-20 and I-21 mentioned 2 times
- n. Press Releases (10)
 - i. I-5 and I-16 mentioned 2 times
 - ii. I-32 mentioned all ag news run is e-mailed in ready-to-use format and used on a space available format
- o. High Plains Cotton Producers (1)
- p. Newspaper Morgue/Back Issues (3)
- q. Community Members/Organizations (9)
 - i. I-9, I-29 and I-32 mentioned 2 times
 - ii. I-24 mentioned local organizations 3 times and news tips 1 time
 - iii. I-4 mentioned livestock markets and grain companies
 - iv. I-25 mentioned timber companies and timber landowners, and research/trade organizations
- r. Meeting Attendance (4)
 - i. I-30 and I-32 mentioned 2 times
- s. City/County Officials (8)
- t. Government Entities (2)
- u. Texas Cattle Feeders Association (1)
- v. Soil Conservation Organizations (1)

- w. Texas Association of School Boards (1)
- x. Fax (1)
- y. Wire (2)
 - i. I-14 mentioned 4 times

2. Cotton Articles Published

- a. Extension Information (6)
- b. Harvest Stories (5)
- c. Weather stories, relating to crop (4)
 - i. I-11 mentioned heat units and rain
- d. Ginning (13)
 - i. I-18 mentioned 2 times
- e. Crop Damage/Disaster (4)
- f. Planting/Replanting (4)
 - i. I-15 mentioned conditions of crops
 - ii. I-13 mentioned general crop outlook for year and status updates
- g. Government/Legislation (3)
 - i. I-11 mentioned legislation and bills
 - ii. I-12 mentioned WTO discussions
- h. Farm Loans/Subsidies (2)
- i. Boll Weevils/Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation (17)
 - i. I-5, I-15 and I-7 mentioned 2 times
 - ii. I-9 mentioned 3 times
- j. Plains Cotton Cooperative Association (4)
 - i. I-16 mentioned 2 times
- k. Plains Cotton Growers (5)
- l. Texas Department of Agriculture (2)
- m. Market/Prices (1)
- n. Associated Press Articles (2)
- o. Chemical Application (1)
- p. Stalk Destruction (1)

3. Cotton Articles Desired

- a. Boll Weevil Information (2)
- b. Industry Trends (1)
- c. New Technologies/Improvements/Breeds (6)
- d. Types of Farming in Specific Areas (1)
- e. Information About/Reference to Local Growers (3)
- f. Feature articles (3)
 - i. I-22 mentioned finding how cotton fills a niche in a community
- g. Major Stories (1)
- h. Marketing (2)
- i. Harvest/Product Production Process (2)
- j. Statistics (1)

- k. Production Levels (2)
- l. Weather information (1)
- m. Any (1)
- n. Beneficial programs to local producers (1)
- o. Basic information (1)
- p. None (1)

4. Ag Articles Published

- a. News by Staff (24)
- b. News by AP (8)
- c. Features by Staff (26)
- d. Features by AP (7)
- e. Weather (23)
 - i. I-16 said only if it results in local damage; no generic
 - ii. I-32 mentioned 2 times
- f. Plant Commodities (10)
- g. Livestock Commodities (15)
- h. Ag Market/Economy (18)
 - i. I-30 said if was part of an employment outlook
- i. Crop Planting (17)
- j. Crop Harvesting (19)
 - i. I-16 mentioned sorghum and wheat
 - ii. I-17 mentioned peaches, pecans, pasture hay and peanuts
- k. Crop Pests (15)
- l. Government Policies (21)
 - i. I-4 mentioned through FSA and rural development organizations
- m. Ag Meetings/Conferences (22)
- n. Genetics (7)
- o. Textile/Fashion (5)
- p. Special Interest (21)
 - i. I-30 said only if local person is mentioned
- q. Texas Department of Agriculture (21)
- r. Texas Cooperative Extension (24)
- s. Texas Legislators/Commissioners (15)
 - i. I-12 stated only if it affects his area
- t. Pictures (16)
- u. Livestock Industry/Ranches (6)
 - i. I-16 mentioned beef and dairy industries
 - ii. I-12 and I-24 mentioned dairy
 - iii. I-15 mentioned both
- v. Farm Loans (1)
- w. Quarantine Information (1)
- x. Community Ag Organizations (2)
 - i. I-29 mentioned Master Gardeners

- y. Fishing/Hunting (1)
- z. Farmers' Markets (1)

5. Most Important News Topics

- a. Local Government (10)
- b. School News (13)
- c. Local News/Community Events (16)
 - i. I-4 mentioned youth rodeo and local fair
- d. Sports (5)
- e. Area Agriculture (6)
- f. Crime (2)
- g. Local Impact (2)
- h. New Information (1)
- i. Economy/Economics (6)
- j. Timeliness (1)
- k. Not very long (1)
- l. Meetings (1)
- m. Youth organizations (1)
 - i. I-4 mentioned 4-H
- n. Oil (1)
- o. Breaking News (2)
- p. Water Issues (1)

6. Most Important Ag Topics

- a. Weather (8)
- b. Crop Status(4)
- c. Crop Harvest (12)
 - i. I-5 and I-14 mentioned cotton specifically
 - ii. I-31 mentioned wheat specifically
 - iii. I-22 mentioned hay
- d. Farm Service Agency Information (2)
- e. Planting (3)
- f. Preparation for Planting (1)
- g. Insects (3)
- h. Livestock/Cattle Industry (6)
 - i. I-22 mentioned cattle industry and livestock auctions
- i. Losses (1)
- j. Quarantine (1)
- k. Grants/Loans (1)
- l. Ag Organizations (3)
- m. Extension Information (4)
- n. Market Information (2)
- o. Government Policy (3)
- p. Land-Rights Issues (1)

- q. Education (1)
- r. Government Programs (1)
- s. Ranching (1)
- t. General Living tips (1)
- u. Meetings (4)
- v. Human Interest (1)
- w. New/Breaking news (2)
- x. Timber (1)
- y. Land Control/Maintenance (1)

7. Newsworthy Topic Determinants

- a. Proximity to Readers (8)
- b. Interesting to Readers (8)
- c. Impact/Effect on Readers (15)
- d. Informative (2)
- e. Timeliness (2)
- f. People Involved in News (1)
- g. Space Available (1)
- h. Everything goes in, unless libel (1)
- i. Generate Readership (1)
- j. Importance (2)

8. Story Importance Determinants

- a. No Limitations (1)
- b. Interesting/Catch Readers' Attention (6)
- c. Unusualness (1)
- d. Thefts/Crime (2)
- e. Space Available/Length (6)
 - i. I-15 mentioned number of ads supporting the newspaper
- f. Impact on Readers (13)
 - i. I-16 mentioned impact on commerce and people
- g. Editors Decide Story Placement (1)
- h. Good Art (2)
- i. Timeliness (4)
- j. Proximity (6)
 - i. I-30 mentioned stories about local people
- k. Money (1)
- l. Meetings (1)
- m. Subject matter (1)
- n. Well-written (1)
- o. Amount of information (1)

9. Topics Desired in Media Resource Guides

- a. Chemical Usage (1)

- b. Specific, localized information (6)
 - i. I-30 mentioned geographic information 2 times
- c. Categorized by Industry (1)
- d. Source Contacts/Information (7)
 - i. I-12 and I-17 mentioned with name, phone, and e-mail
 - ii. I-32 mentioned local contacts
 - iii. I-30 mentioned that he needs to know locations of people mentioned in the guide and source phone numbers/e-mails
- e. Statistics and Figures (6)
- f. Environmental Topics/Requirements for Industries (3)
 - i. I-13 mentioned effects of weather
- g. Local training courses available (1)
- h. Brief (1)
- i. Specific Crops (1)
 - i. I-9 mentioned cotton and wheat
- j. History of subject (2)
- k. Meeting Procedures (1)
- l. Subject Overview (2)
 - i. I-30 mentioned 2 times
- m. Information from Research Groups (1)
- n. Terminology/Jargon Used (1)
- o. Well-indexed (1)
- p. Easy to Read (1)
- q. Livestock (1)
- r. Technical Information (1)
 - i. I-13 mentioned in general and seed varieties
- s. Basic information/5W and H (1)
- t. Timber industry (1)
- u. Tourism/Property topics (1)

10. Media Resource Guide Format Desired

- a. E-mail (8)
 - i. Can e-mail back with questions (1)
 - ii. Faster (2)
 - iii. Alert to copy coming to newspaper (1)
 - iv. Format/cut and past (2)
 - v. Can print out if desire (2)
 - vi. Most portable (1)
- b. CD (6)
 - i. Faster (2)
 - ii. Easier to Use (3)
 - iii. Takes up Less Space (1)
 - iv. Reduces amount of retyping necessary (2)
 - v. Keyword searches (1)

- c. Online (9)
 - i. Takes up Less Space (1)
 - ii. Easier to Use/Access (3)
 - 1. I-24 mentioned Web is more searchable
 - iii. May be more up to date (1)
 - iv. Timesaving (1)
 - v. Pull text directly from source (1)
- d. Fax (5)
- e. Press Packet/Binded Copy (8)
 - i. Can look at it and get an overview (1)
 - ii. Fast facts (1)
- f. Mail (1)
- g. Outline (1)
- h. PDF file (1)
 - i. Indicate where to go for information (1)

11. Media Resource Guide Opinions

- a. Useful because provide users with hard-to-find or hard-to-access information (2)
- b. Doesn't use because information doesn't pertain locally (4)
 - i. I-32 cited this as to why CottonLink wasn't used and why media resource guides aren't used overall
- c. Doesn't use much because most information is available on the Internet (2)
- d. Useful because provides story ideas (2)
- e. Provides users with useful information (3)
- f. Provides a broader scope of the issue/industry (1)
- g. Provides Sources for Articles (2)
- h. Useful because you can't rely on the Internet for all information (1)
- i. Useful, but rarely used because readers aren't engaged in ag activities (1)
- j. Timesaving (1)
- k. Doesn't use because no need for out-of-area resources (1)
- l. Useful for background information/starting point (2)
- m. Help give a historical perspective to the topic (1)
- n. Useful because helps writers/readers understand it better (1)

12. Why Newspapers didn't Publish Cotton-Related Articles

- a. Did not receive information (2)
 - i. I-29 said they rely on other organization to provide ag news
- b. No cotton in area (5)

- i. I-31 said cotton industry is moving closer and will publish as it reaches his immediate area
 - ii. I-25 said makes it not of local interest
- c. Limited Space in Newspaper (1)

13. Would run Cotton Articles if had Access to Resources

- a. Yes (5)
 - i. I-27 mentioned press releases
 - ii. I-31 mentioned interest as cotton gets closer to area
 - iii. I-25 mentioned must have very local flavor to it
- b. No (2)

14. Suggestions for Industry to Increase Coverage

- a. Need to Localize Information/Articles (2)
- b. Improve News Release Leads (1)
- c. Adhere to Associated Press Style (1)
- d. Prove to newspapers that readership would be interested in cotton stories (1)
- e. Make cotton important to people in the area (1)

APPENDIX F
SELECTIVE CODING OF DATA

1. Information Sources

- Personal Interviews (25)
- Texas Cooperative Extension agent (19)
- Internet Resources (17)
- Press Releases (10)
- Community Members and Organizations (9)
- Other Media (9)
- City and County Officials (8)
- Personal Knowledge (5)
- Meeting Attendance (4)
- Colleges and University Resources (3)
- E-mail (3)
- Newspaper Morgue (3)
- Plains Cotton Growers (3)
- Farm Service Agency Sources (2)
- Government Organizations (2)
- Telephone Calls (2)
- Wire Reports (2)
- Faxes (1)
- High Plains Cotton Producers (1)
- Soil Conservation Organizations (1)
- Texas Association of School Boards (1)
- Texas Cattle Feeders Association (1)
- Texas Department of Agriculture (1)

Media:

Very High:

- Personal Interviews (25)
- Internet Resources (17)
- Press Releases (10)

High:

- Community Members and Organizations (9)
- Other Media (9)
- City and County Officials (8)

Medium:

- Meeting Attendance (4)
- Colleges and University Resources (3)
- E-mail (3)

Low:

- Government Organizations (2)
- Telephone Calls (2)
- Wire Reports (2)
- Faxes (1)

Individual Source:

High:

- Texas Cooperative Extension agent (19)

Medium:

- Personal Knowledge (5)
- Newspaper Morgue (3)
- Plains Cotton Growers (3)

Low:

- Farm Service Agency Sources (2)
- High Plains Cotton Producers (1)
- Soil Conservation Organizations (1)
- Texas Association of School Boards (1)
- Texas Cattle Feeders Association (1)
- Texas Department of Agriculture (1)

2. Cotton Articles Published

Sources:

- Extension Information (6)
- Plains Cotton Growers (5)
- Plains Cotton Cooperative Association (4)
- Texas Department of Agriculture (2)
- Wire Articles (2)

Topics:

Planting: Planting or Replanting (4)

Growing Season:

Crop Damage or Disaster (4)

Pest: Boll Weevil: Boll Weevil Information (17)

Chemicals: Chemical Application (1)

Weather: Weather (4)

Harvest: Harvest Information (5)

Post Harvest: Ginning (13)

Stalk Destruction (1)

Economics/Policy/Marketing:

Government or Legislation (3)

Farm Loans or Subsidies (2)

Market or Prices (1)

3. Cotton Articles Desired

High:

- New Technologies or Improvements (6)

Medium:

- Local Grower Information or Reference (3)
- Feature Articles (3)

- Boll Weevil Information (2)
- Harvest or Product Production Process (3)

Low:

- Marketing (2)
- Production Levels (2)
- Any Articles (1)
- Basic Cotton Information (1)
- Beneficial Programs for Local Producers (1)
- Industry Trends (1)
- Major Stories (1)
- No Articles (1)
- Statistics (1)
- Types of Farming in Specific Areas (1)
- Weather Information (1)

Topics:

Planting: None

Growing Season:

Pest: Boll Weevil Information (2)

Weather: Weather Information (1)

Harvest: Harvest (1)

Post Harvest: Product Production Process (3)
Production Levels (2)

Economics/Policy/Marketing:

Marketing (2)

Statistics (1)

Technologies: New Technologies or Improvements (6)

Industry Basics:

Local Grower Information or Reference (3)

Feature Articles (3)

Any Articles (1)

Basic Cotton Information (1)

Beneficial Programs for Local Producers (1)

Industry Trends (1)

Major Stories (1)

Types of Farming in Specific Areas (1)

Not Interested:

No Articles (1)

4. Agricultural Articles Published

Very High:

- Features by Staff Writers (26)
- News by Staff Writers (24)
- Texas Cooperative Extension Information (24)

- Weather (23)
- Agricultural Meetings or Conferences (22)
- Government Policies (21)
- Special Interest Topics (21)
- Texas Department of Agriculture Information (21)

High:

- Crop Harvest (19)
- Agricultural Market or Economy (18)
- Crop Planting (17)
- Pictures Unaccompanied by Articles (16)
- Crop Pests (15)
- Livestock Commodities (15)
- Texas Legislators' or Commissioners' Columns (15)

Medium:

- Plant Commodities (10)
- News by the AP Wire (8)
- Features by the AP Wire (7)
- Genetics (7)
- Livestock Industry or Ranching (6)
- Textile or Fashion (5)

Low:

- Community Agricultural Organizations (2)
- Farm Loans (1)
- Farmers' Markets (1)
- Fishing and Hunting (1)
- Quarantine (1)

Topic:

Weather (23)
 Agricultural Meetings or Conferences (22)
 Government Policies (21)
 Special Interest Topics (21)
 Crop Harvest (19)
 Agricultural Market or Economy (18)
 Crop Planting (17)
 Crop Pests (15)
 Livestock Commodities (15)
 Genetics (7)
 Livestock Industry or Ranching (6)
 Textile or Fashion (5)
 Farm Loans (1)
 Farmers' Markets (1)
 Fishing and Hunting (1)
 Quarantine (1)

Creative Source:

Features by Staff Writers (26)
News by Staff Writers (24)
Texas Cooperative Extension Information (24)
Texas Department of Agriculture Information (21)
Pictures Unaccompanied by Articles (16)
Texas Legislators' or Commissioners' Columns (15)
Plant Commodities (10)
News by the AP Wire (8)
Features by the AP Wire (7)
Community Agricultural Organizations (2)

Topic:

Planting: Crop Planting (17)

Growing Season:

Pests: Crop Pests (15)

Weather: Weather (23)

Harvest: Crop Harvest (19)

Post-Harvest: Textile or Fashion (5)

Economics/Policy/Market:

Government Policies (21)

Agricultural Market or Economy (18)

Farm Loans (1)

Industry Basics:

Special Interest Topics (21)

Livestock:

Commodity: Livestock Commodities (15)

Industry/Ranching: Livestock Industry or Ranching (6)

Genetics: Genetics (7)

Meetings: Agricultural Meetings or Conferences (22)

Other: Farmers' Markets (1)

Fishing and Hunting (1)

Quarantine (1)

5. Most Important News Topics

- Local News and Community Events (17)
- Local Schools (13)
- Local Government (10)
- Local Agriculture (6)
- Local Economy (6)
- Sports (5)
- Breaking News (2)
- Crime (2)

- Meetings (1)
- New Information (1)
- Oil (1)
- Short Length (1)
- Timeliness (1)
- Water (1)
- Youth Organizations (1)

News determinants identified seem to be proximity, timeliness and length. Proximity has three sub categories:

Local News

- Local News and Community Events (17)
- Local Schools (13)
- Local Government (10)
- Local Agriculture (6)
- Sports (5)
- Breaking News (2)
- Crime (2)
- New Information (1)

Local Announcements

- Meetings (1)
- Youth Organizations (1)

Local Economy

- Local Economy (6)
- Oil (1)
- Water (1)

6. Most Important Agricultural News Topics

- Crop Harvest (12)
- Weather (8)
- Livestock (6)
- Crop Status (4)
- Meetings (4)
- Texas Cooperative Extension Information (4)
- Agricultural Organizations (3)
- Government Policy (3)
- Insects (3)
- Planting (3)
- Farm Service Agency Information (2)
- Market Information (2)
- New or Breaking News (2)
- Education (1)
- General Living Tips (1)
- Government Programs (1)

- Grants or Loans (1)
- Human Interest (1)
- Land Control (1)
- Land Rights Issues (1)
- Losses (1)
- Preparation for Planting (!)
- Quarantine (1)
- Ranching (1)
- Timber (1)

Sources:

- Texas Cooperative Extension Information (4)
- Agricultural Organizations (3)
- Farm Service Agency Information (2)
- New or Breaking News (2)

Topics:

- Planting:* Planting (3)
Preparation for Planting (1)
- Growing:* Crop Status (4)
- Pests:* Insects (3)
- Weather:* Weather (8)
- Harvest:* Crop Harvest (12)
- Economics/Policy/Marketing:*
 - Government Policy (3)
 - Market Information (2)
 - Government Programs (1)
 - Grants or Loans (1)
 - Land Control (1)
 - Land Rights Issues (1)
 - Losses (1)
- Livestock:* Livestock (6)
- Industry/Ranching:* Ranching (1)
- Other:* Human Interest (1)
Quarantine (1)
Timber (1)
- Meetings:* Meetings (4)
- Rural Living:* General Living Tips (1)
Education (1)

7. Newsworthy Topic Determinants

- Impact/Interest to Readers (21)
- Proximity to Readers (8)
- Timeliness (2)

- Importance (2)
- Informative (2)
- Everything is Published, Unless Libelous (1)
- Generates Readership (1)
- People Involved (1)
- Space Available (1)

8. Story Importance Determinants

- Impact/Interest to Readers (17)
- Interesting or Attention Grabbing (6)
- Space Available (6)
- Proximity (6)
- Timeliness (4)
- Thefts and Crimes (2)
- Quality Artwork (2)
- Amount of Information (1)
- Editors Decide Story Placement (1)
- Meetings (1)
- Money (1)
- No Limitations (1)
- Quality of Writing (1)
- Subject Matter (1)
- Unusualness (1)

9. Media Resource Guide Topics Desired

High:

- Source Contacts and Information (7)
- Specific, Localized Information (6)
- Statistics and Figures (6)

Medium:

- Environmental Topics and Industry Requirements (3)
- Subject History (2)
- Subject Overview (2)

Low:

- Basic Information (1)
- Brief (1)
- Chemical Usage (1)
- Categorized by Industry (1)
- Easy to Read (1)
- Livestock (1)
- Local Training Courses (1)
- Meeting Procedures (1)
- Research Group Information (1)
- Specific Crops (1)

- Technical Information (1)
- Terminology or Jargon (1)
- Timber Industry (1)
- Tourism or Property (1)
- Well-Indexed (1)

Topic:

- Source Contacts and Information (7)
- Specific, Localized Information (6)
- Statistics and Figures (6)
- Environmental Topics and Industry Requirements (3)
- Subject History (2)
- Subject Overview (2)
- Basic Information (1)
- Chemical Usage (1)
- Livestock (1)
- Local Training Courses (1)
- Meeting Procedures (1)
- Research Group Information (1)
- Specific Crops (1)
- Technical Information (1)
- Terminology or Jargon (1)
- Timber Industry (1)
- Tourism or Property (1)

Format:

- Brief (1)
- Categorized by Industry (1)
- Easy to Read (1)
- Well-Indexed (1)

10. Media Resource Guide Format Desired

- Online (9) because ...
 - o Easier to Use and Access (3)
 - o More Up-to-Date (1)
 - o Pull Text Directly (1)
 - o Takes up Less Space (1)
 - o Timesaving (1)
- E-mail (8) because ...
 - o Faster (2)
 - o Format or Pull Text Directly (2)
 - o Printable (2)
 - o Alert to Mailed Information (1)
 - o Most Portable (1)
 - o Respond to Sender (1)

- Press Packets or Binded Copy (8)
- Compact Disk (6) because ...
 - o Easier to Use (3)
 - o Faster (2)
 - o Reduces Retyping Required (2)
 - o Keyword Searches (1)
 - o Takes up Less Space (1)
- Fax (5)
- Mail (1)
- PDF File (1)
- Outline Format (1)

Active Format:

- Online (9)
- Press Packets or Binded Copy (8)
- Compact Disk (6)
- PDF File (1)
- Outline Format (1)

Passive Format:

- E-mail (8)
- Fax (5)
- Mail (1)

11. Media Resource Guide Opinions

Used:

Good Information:

- Useful information (3)
- Provides hard-to-find or hard-to-access information (2)
- Provides ideas for articles (2)
- Provides sources for articles (2)
- Provides useful background information or article starting point (2)
- Helps writer and reader understand the topic more completely (1)
- Provides a broad scope of the industry or issue (1)
- Provides a historical perspective to the topic (1)
- Can't rely on the Internet for all information (1)

Saves Time:

- Timesaving (1)

Not Used:

Proximity:

- Lack of local information (4)
- No need to use out-of-area resources (1)

Readers are not engaged in agricultural activities (1)

Other Sources Available:

Most information is available online (2)

12. Why Newspapers Did Not Publish Cotton-Related Articles

- No Cotton in Local Area (5)
- Did not Receive any Cotton-Related Information (2)
- Limited Space in the Newspaper (1)

13. Likelihood to Run Cotton-Related Articles with Resource Access

- Yes (5)
- No (2)

14. Suggestions to Improve Cotton-Related News Coverage

Journalist Training:

- Localize Information and Articles (2)
- Adhere to Associated Press Style (1)
- Improve News Release Leads (1)

Ag Literacy:

- Make Cotton an Important Topic to Local Readers (1)
- Prove to Newspapers that Readers Would be Interested in Cotton Topics (1)

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