



# Characterizing Website Traffic Driven by Different Media Types

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## Abstract

The audience for KSU Ag Extension services consists of crop managers across Kansas; traditionally reached through face-to-face events and delivery of paper-based materials. The myFields program is an alternative, online approach for delivering information; important in light of budget cuts that reduce face-to-face events and paper publications. The extension of myFields has been defined by social media, newsletters, and the radio. Our goal is to look at the analytics of the site and to determine which extension outlet is the most effective for driving user traffic to the website. We want to know; how do different media outlets drive user traffic to myFields.info? Using new data available on the site, we will track site analytics after pushing the data release on 1) social media (Twitter), 2) the agronomy department's newsletter (eUpdates), and 3) KSU's ag radio show (Ag Today). Specifically, we used the release of 2018 corn performance data on our *Demonstration Plot Data* tool to audiences as a driver to the site. The results suggest that the eUpdate article was the most successful extension resource considering the length of time people spent on the site, but the Radio spot was extremely successful as a jump in page views.

## Purpose

This study was used to determine which forms of extension media are most beneficial to engagement with myFields.

## Questions, Hypotheses, and Predictions

**Question:** What is the best form of media to use to drive traffic to new tools on myFields?

**Hypothesis:** How can we find the best combination of media to improve the page views and average time spent on the site?

**Prediction:** The radio ad is the best way to promote myFields.

## Study System

Finding the best way to push out new data to the public is critical so that farmers all over Kansas continue getting the information they need in a convenient way for them. Here, we explore multiple forms of media to find what works best for Kansas farmers to get extension information. Exploring newer forms of extension such as social media has already proven to be beneficial. "Extension's presence on social media is a necessity" (1). The current forms of extension have been Twitter, newsletters, and a radio ad. The greatest peak in page views, according to figure one, was three days after the eUpdate, but the day the radio spot released date also shows a large jump in views. Studying these methods can save much time and money when it comes to extension, especially for a department that constantly has budget cuts. "Extension professionals have embraced the use of technology to reach large numbers of audiences, including new audiences." (2). This type of research can tell us how to improve our outreach tremendously, starting with which extension forms to end, which ones to improve, and even which ones to start. "As more Extension professionals seek to integrate social media use into their daily work, measuring impacts becomes more important" (3).

## Methods and Experimental Design

Once the new tool, the Demonstration Plot Data tool, was released on the live myFields.info site, we made a media push to drive user traffic to the new tool. On October 10<sup>th</sup>, the myFields twitter page pushed information on the new tool, including a link to the tool page. On October 12<sup>th</sup> the KSU eUpdates Ag Newsletter was published featuring an article on the myFields tool, also including a link. On October 26<sup>th</sup> the radio spot went out about myFields. Google Analytics was the tracking tool used to find the best driver of site traffic to the new tool. Using the Analytics tools, we were able to track page views, behavior, the average time spent on the site, user location in Kansas, the bounce rate, and the number of pages visited per session. The metrics were compared by the dates of media releases, which allowed for insight into which was best for traffic to the tool page.



An example tweet calling for action to view the newly released data.



## Results

Figure 2. Location Metrics of pageviews from across Kansas

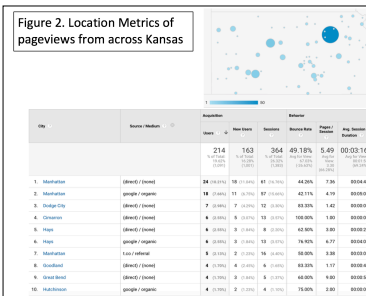
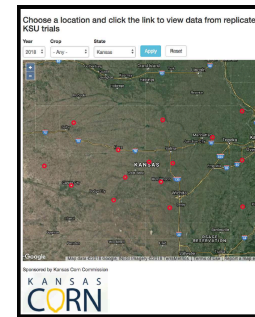
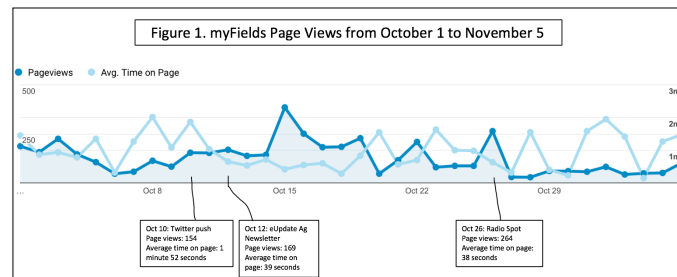


Figure 1. myFields Page Views from October 1 to November 5



Year	County	State	Seed company	Planting system	Field Flag	Harvest Temperature / Year	Planting density	Substrate
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	35	County	15.3	90 KSU
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	42	Top 3	15.3	90 KSU
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	41	Top 3	15.3	90 KSU
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	41	Top 3	15.3	90 KSU
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	40	Top 3	15.3	90 KSU
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	40	Top 3	15.3	90 KSU
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	40	Top 3	15.3	90 KSU
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	40	Top 3	15.3	90 KSU
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	40	Top 3	15.3	90 KSU
2018	Kansas	Sheets	DeKalb	US County	40	Top 3	15.3	90 KSU

Screenshots of the tool and data, the Demonstration Plot Tool, we pushed across media types.

## Conclusions

According to the data, the radio ad is the best way to promote myFields. Although the data lines up with my prediction, there is a random jump in pageviews that does not directly correlate to any of the extension efforts. It is possible that the highest peak in views resulted in users opening the eUpdate article within a few days after receiving it. Tracking location on the site allowed us to determine which efforts are best for different parts of the state. Since most of the page views come from the Manhattan area, we know that the radio spot was successful near campus. In the future, tracking whether the site visits stemmed from links used in either media type will help determine how successful it was.

## Future Directions

The next step in research should be testing even more forms of media that highlight extension information. In a follow-up experiment, I would track page views over a longer period of time to see which extension effort truly has the greatest jump in views. Starting new social media accounts would be a simple and cost free way to introduce myFields to new people. Extension is extremely important; reaching new audiences through media releases will help drive users to our valuable information.

## References

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3. Gharis, Laurie W. and Hightower, Mary F. 2017. A Practical Method for Collecting Social Media Campaign Metrics. *Journal of Extension* 55: 1

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