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Florida Consumers' Perceptions of Messaging & Media Channels

FDACS Specialty Crop Block Grant

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For More Information

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Executive Summary

Florida Consumers' Perceptions of Messaging and Media Channels
DECEMBER 2014

Introduction

The PIE Center, in partnership with the Florida Specialty Crop Foundation, conducted research to better understand the types of messages and media channels Florida consumers prefer related to buying local food. The research was funded by a specialty crop block grant from the United States Department of Agriculture/Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The research project sought to understand and test consumers' perceptions of messages and media channels used to deliver information about locally grown foods and then share the information with the public. This report outlines and discusses the findings from the first portion of this research, which utilized focus groups around the state of Florida in March and April of 2014.

Findings

- When Florida consumers think of words to describe food grown in Florida, they think of specific commodities such as *citrus* and *strawberries*, *fresh*, and *supporting their local economy*.
- When Florida consumers think of words to describe Florida farmers they think of them as *hard working*, *working for big business*, and *hard to relate to*.
- When evaluating the message “Fresh from Florida,” consumers liked the catchy alliteration of the message. They also equated the message as trustworthy, but there was skepticism in the truth of the message.
- When evaluating the message of “Fresh to you from Florida Farmers,” consumers liked the personal reference and focus on farmers. They also thought it could be limiting in its use.
- When evaluating the message “Why I buy food from Florida,” consumers thought the message was vague and could vary based on each person. They also thought it lacked trustworthiness.
- When evaluating the message “Florida food, local and nutritious,” consumers thought it was repetitive and not completely positive.
- Consumers thought print advertisements were effective at visually depicting a message with few words. However, some consumers mentioned not paying attention to print advertisements.
- TV advertisements were seen as entertaining and could provoke thought and discussion when the advertisement was memorable. When watching TV advertisements consumers mentioned wanting a personal connection to the product.
- The consumers mentioned even though a TV advertisement was entertaining, they may not be able to recall the specific product associated with the advertisement, and mentioned fast forwarding or skipping commercials all together as disadvantages to using TV advertisements.
- Interactive websites allowed consumers to interact and engage with the content and use relevant information. The consumers mentioned interactive websites were relatable and preferred for receiving information. Also, the consumers who viewed websites were invested in searching for the information.
- The consumers thought when creating a message about buying Florida-grown food, communicators should put a face with the farmer, focus on freshness, and emphasize supporting the local economy.

Recommendations

The recommendations from this study are:

The message:

- The message should help connect consumers with those responsible for growing and producing their food. The participants appreciated being able to put a face with the person responsible for their food.
- The message should be short and concise; however, communicators should be careful about how consumers will interpret a word within the message. The participants in this study, overall, did not appreciate the word “nutritious” being used in a message because they thought they were smart enough to figure out if a particular food was nutritious without being told.
- The chosen message should be able to be visually depicted in a variety of settings. The participants stressed the importance of a visual appeal when choosing whether or not to pay attention to an advertisement; therefore, the message should lend itself to a variety of settings and visual aids.

The media channel:

- The selected media channel should lend itself to visually connecting consumers with Florida producers. The participants preferred receiving information about their food through face-to-face communication; however, since that is not always possible, a media channel that simulates a face-to-face communication may serve as a bridge for consumers and producers.
- When choosing a media channel to convey a message, communicators should be cognizant of the assets and limitations each media channel possesses.
- If using a print media channel, it is recommended for communicators to include an incentive (coupon or recipe) within the picturesque print design to encourage consumers to keep the advertisement and refer to it in the future.
- If using a TV advertisement, it is advised that video should focus on the picturesque scenery of Florida, while showing consumers who, where, and how their food is produced.
- If using an interactive website, it is recommended that web designers not include too much information on one page. Rather, include links to additional information within the content to allow the consumer to explore the content at their own need and pace.
- Websites should be visually appealing and easy to read and use for information.

It is recommended that future research explore consumers’ perceptions about specific Florida commodities. Also, research using specific media channels using Florida-grown food as the focus should be explored in the future.

Background

The way in which consumers receive and engage with content related to the food they purchase is ever changing in relation to available technology. The changing and diverse technology landscape has expanded the way communicators and consumers can interact and share information with each other. While technology has opened a two-way communication channel between consumers and communicators of food production, it has also added to the number of media channels available for communicators and consumers to use. Choosing the most effective media channel to share information with consumers is imperative for properly communicating an organization's message. Research has shown that consumers evaluate and choose media channels based on the benefits associated with that channel, such as providing trustworthy and detailed information, being easy to use, and giving the user the feeling of being personally connected and engaged with the media channel (Wendel & Benedict, 2005)¹.

Deciding which media channel to use when disseminating information about food grown in Florida is an important decision for producers and marketers in order to ensure the message is well received by consumers in the specific target audience. However, it is unknown which media channel Florida consumers prefer to receive information about food grown in Florida and what features of those media channels appeal them.

Also of interest when discussing which media channel is most effective for promoting food grown in Florida is the message highlighted on a given media channel. While the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumers Services (FDACS) has previously used the slogan "Fresh from Florida" in marketing efforts, it is unknown how consumers currently perceive this message and its effectiveness across different media channels. This research sought to understand consumers' perceptions of the "Fresh from Florida" message, as well as other messages, to determine consumers' perceptions of the messages with regards to its impact on their buying intentions of food grown in Florida.

This research also sought to understand consumers' preferences and perceptions of attributes associated with specific media channels. This research builds upon previous research related to understanding Florida consumer perceptions and buying intentions of locally grown food. The results of this study will be used to develop and test different media channels and the impacts on Florida consumers' buying intentions of locally grown specialty crops.

Methods

This study was conducted using six focus groups. The focus groups were conducted in West Palm Beach, Orlando, and Tallahassee, Florida. The focus groups were used to gather a comprehensive understanding of Florida consumers' perceptions about Florida-grown food and about various marketing strategies used to promote food grown in Florida. The participants were targeted to be representative of Florida consumers; however due to the qualitative nature the findings from this study cannot be generalized to the entire population of Florida. A team of researchers familiar with focus group procedures and the marketing of local food developed the moderator's guide used in the focus groups. The moderator's guide addressed what participants' perceptions were of several messages related to purchasing locally grown food, media channels, Florida farmers, and purchasing Florida-grown food.

The moderator's guide and protocol for the focus groups were reviewed by focus group and marketing experts to ensure the focus groups would address the issues related to marketing Florida-grown food. The same trained moderator conducted all six focus groups, and the same assistant moderator and note taker were present. The focus groups were

¹ Wendel, S., & Benedict, D. G. C. (2005). Situation variation in consumers' media channel consideration. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 33(4), 575-584. doi: 10.1177/0092070305277447

audio recorded and an external transcriptionist transcribed the recordings verbatim to ensure accuracy of the participants' responses. The audio transcripts were analyzed to determine common themes based on the participants' responses.

Results

Demographics

In Table 1, the demographics for the participants are shown. A total of 51 participants were included in the six different focus groups. The participants were approximately evenly split in gender, with 58% female and 42% male. The majority of the participants had an income between \$20,000 - \$39,000 (27%). The majority of the participants identified themselves as white (80%). The majority of the participants also indicated they lived in a subdivision in town (53%). Also, 86% of the participants indicated they were the primary purchaser of food in the household. Table 2 shows the participants listed by group, their assigned pseudonym for the report, sex, and occupation.

Table 1. Demographics for participants

	<i>f</i>	%	<i>M</i>
Sex			
Male	21	42	-
Female	29	58	-
Age	-	-	48.25
Income*			
Below \$20,000	8	17	-
\$20,000 - \$39,000	13	27	-
\$39,0001 - \$59,000	7	15	-
\$59,001 - \$79,000	10	21	-
\$79,001 - \$100,000	3	7	-
Over \$100,000	7	15	-
Race			
White	41	80	-
Black or African American	8	16	-
Hispanic	3	6	-
Other	2	4	-
Residence			
Downtown Area	5	10	-
Subdivision in Town	27	53	-
Outside of City Limits	14	27	-
Rural – not on a farm	5	10	-
Primary Purchaser of Food	43	86	-

* Note. Indicates there was at least one person in the category who declined to answer the question.

Table 2. Focus group participants by pseudonym, sex, and occupation.

Group	Pseudonym	Sex	Occupation
1	Alice	Female	Retired
1	Ann	Female	Retired
1	Ashley	Female	Retired
1	Audrey	Female	House Care
1	Allison	Female	Retired
1	Adam	Male	Engineering Consultant
1	Anastasia	Female	Health Insurance Agent
2	Bob	Male	Retired
2	Betty	Female	Retired
2	Barbara	Female	Message Therapist
2	Burt	Male	Lawyer
2	Brittany	Female	Child Care
2	Beth	Female	Home Care
2	Brenda	Female	Retired
3	Carl	Male	Food service
3	Chris	Male	Unemployed
3	Candy	Female	Retired
3	Christina	Female	Retired
3	Camry	Female	Retired
3	Claire	Female	Sales Rep
3	Caleb	Male	Unemployed
3	Chloe	Female	Retired
4	Dale	Male	Retired
4	Deidra	Female	Accounting
4	David	Male	Graphic Design/Printing
4	Drew	Male	Receiver/Film & Photography
4	Damien	Male	Retired
4	Danielle	Female	Actress/Substitute Teacher
4	Danny	Male	Retired
4	Dominic	Male	Retired
5	Elizabeth	Female	Retired
5	Esther	Female	Retired
5	Eileen	Female	Policy Director
5	Edward	Male	Retired
5	Ethan	Male	Retired
5	Emily	Female	Student
5	Earl	Male	Policy Director
5	Evelyn	Female	Retired
6	Fiona	Female	Teacher
6	Faith	Female	Retired
6	Felicia	Female	IT
6	Frank	Male	Retired
6	Felix	Male	Engineering Technician
6	Finn	Male	Lawyer
6	Farah	Female	Retired
6	Fay	Female	Message Therapist
6	Fran	Female	Teacher
6	Fred	Male	Communications Consultant

Introduction

The results from the focus groups are presented as the questions were posed to the participants. The responses are grouped by response themes. Sample quotes from the participants for each theme are given.

Top Words to describe food grown in Florida

In this section, the focus group participants were asked to write down the top three words that came to their minds when they heard the words “food grown in Florida.” The common themes represented in the words written down included specific commodities, freshness, and less transportation.

Specific Commodities

The participants often mentioned specific commodities grown in Florida when thinking about food grown in Florida. Citrus and strawberries were the primary commodities mentioned by the participants.

- Earl: “Citrus, which covers a variety of fruits. Beef, Florida’s a bigger beef state than most people know, and winter vegetables. When we were flying our hot air balloons south of Miami, we were over tomato fields and all kinds of stuff during the winter months.”
- Danielle: “I got strawberry and that’s because strawberries are the best from Plant City.”
- Barbara: “Tomatoes, beans, and oranges. I always liked tomatoes, so now I’m growing my own. Trying to anyway. Beans, I used to go pick beans down here. And oranges of course, because it’s, you know, my children love the oranges. I made fresh orange juice. That’s about it.”

Freshness

The participants mentioned equating food grown in Florida with freshness, quality, and taste.

- Arthur: “I took you literally and I searched quickly for three specific words that I could put together and I put down tasty, juicy, fruity.”
- Felicia: “I can say that the quality of the food that we eat here is much better. I feel like it’s much better, especially the vegetables and fruits. I’m a vegetarian. So, I’m always trying to make sure my food is good food and I want to make sure where it’s grown and all that stuff. So, I think the quality is better.”
- Ann: “And fresh, it’s nice to have fresh fruit. And one good thing about being in Florida is a lot of the Fresh Market’s and a lot of the Publix and a lot of the people are opening up what they call whole food fresh markets.”

Less Transportation

When discussing food grown in Florida, the participants mentioned supporting the local economy and the benefits of less transportation.

- Ann: “You start with a great product because you are in Florida and everything is fresh and it’s not a long haul.”
- Edward: “Yeah, I find that sometimes the fresh, organic, local food doesn’t look as nice as the stuff in Publix because it doesn’t have all the chemicals and preservatives on it. But after you get over that little psychological issue, you obviously start thinking about how much healthier it [local food] is and better it is. And you’re not burning all that fuel to get it here.”

Influences of thoughts on food grown in Florida

As a follow up to their top three words to describe food grown in Florida, the participants were asked to reflect on what influenced their thoughts on food grown in Florida. The participants' responses were categorized into the themes of advertising, respected officials, and home gardening/personal experience.

Advertising

The participants mentioned several forms of advertisements, both paid and unpaid, that promoted local food as an influencer on their thoughts on food grown in Florida.

- Alice: "The ad with the man's hands [referencing the Florida's Natural commercial]."

Ann interrupts: "Right, the one with the oranges and the man. How about the one she pulls out of the ice, right the man's hand, fresh orange juice or something."
- Beth: "TV. For me, commercials. Commercials showing the large fields of the business, you know? The Green Giant commercials."

Respected Officials

During the conversations in the focus groups, participants mentioned the impact certain health care or political officials have had on their thoughts on food grown in Florida.

- Evelyn: "It's mostly my daughter, she's thirty-nine now, but she had a touch of Asperger's so we had to watch very carefully the chemicals that she would eat and she's just wonderful, she has an amazing job and grew up. But it all goes back to my pediatrician telling me what I [fed her] was going to help her functioning. So, she watches her food too, but makes sure that she can find out as much as we can [about] what chemicals went on it [food]."
- Earl: "Well, I've listened to Charles Bronson and Adam Putnam a lot."

Home Gardening/Personal Experience

Many of the participants mentioned that their thoughts on food grown in Florida were shaped by their personal experiences with home gardening and u-pick farms.

- Emily: "I go out there often and eat from her [grandmother's] garden. So she only grows a few things, but it made me more aware of what's being put in the foods sold in stores and things like that."
- Faith: "A homegrown tomato just has so much more flavor than one that you've bought in the store. It could look the same, but it tastes different to me. And my family, we all feel the same way. And like you, my mom's family grew up in North Carolina and so they always had big gardens and we learned to appreciate fresh food. Even I used to grow bell peppers and tomatoes outside the door of our house. Not a big old garden. You don't have to have a big garden just to grow fresh vegetables."
- Allan: "Well, my parents influenced me a lot in that regard of the fresh vegetables. I'm second generation removed from Mexico and my parents actually grew up as migrant farm workers. They were actually in the fields picking the vegetables and things of that nature."

Thoughts on Florida Farmers

Building upon the participants' top three words to describe food grown in Florida, they were asked to write down the top three words that came to their minds when they thought of Florida farmers. The common themes represented in the words written down included heritage, hard working, big business, un-relatable, and media portrayal.

Heritage

When describing what Florida farmers are to them, the participants commonly mentioned that Florida farmers were generational, family operations, and the land was passed down from one generation to the next.

- Ann: “I’m thinking that you’d have to be born to it or want to escape from life and go to it. I don’t know, you know, because I can’t imagine it [farming]. With developers today and land and everybody wanting to get taxes and the money from the developers. I mean, you got a hundred million dollars in the land and how’s a farmer going to compete with that?”
- Anastasia: “And I wrote down generations because most of the larger farms I know are now generations old. It would be pretty impossible to try to start to be a farmer.”
- Danny: “And the other one was small family farms which are being, you know, kind of moved aside.”

Hard Working

The participants described Florida farmers are dedicated and hard working individuals.

- Audrey: “Okay, I said sweating, strong willed, and hard workers. Cause they have to be very strong willed to work in this heat all day long. I mean, it would take a special kind of a person to be able to do that. I’m complaining after I’m out there five minutes when it’s really hot. And there’s very hard workers, you know.”
- Allan: “They’ve got a rough, rough road ahead. I’m sure it’s not going to get any better in the future.”
- Brittany: “It’s a hard working, they’re underpaid, they get underpaid. I mean, they can barely support their own family, you know, with what they have to do and they’re not respected for it, they really aren’t. I mean, they’re barely hanging on to what they have. If they didn’t have Farm Aid to help them along, the independent farmer, you know, the man that’s out there doing the hard work everyday.”
- Esther: “I think they’re hard working and I think they’re at the mercy of weather. Many seasons they struggle to make ends meet because of that. And I always think of them in terms of honesty.”

Big Business

The participants also mentioned big corporations or big agriculture when they thought of Florida farmers.

- Bob: “First thing I think of when I [think] about farming in general, is corporate.”
- Eileen: “My first thought was big sugar and not just big sugar, but there are a ton of very large farming enterprises in Florida that make a ton of money.”
- Beth: “You had asked us about Florida farmers and at first I couldn’t think of anything because now I realize I never really look at Florida farmers as small time. To me, it’s agribusiness and migrant workers.”

Un-relatable

Some of the participants were unsure who Florida farmers were, and as a result were unsure of how to describe Florida farmers.

- Danielle: “Well, really I haven’t thought about them [farmers] for a long, long time. Okay, so, because I’ve been into gators, birds, wildlife, and nature, but these are my three. I said who are they [farmers]? Where, where are they? And they’re extinct for me.”
- Candy: “And then I thought it was rare to see one [a farmer].”
- Burt: “But the first thing I think of with farmers is vanishing.”

Media Portrayal

Often, participants mentioned media stereotypes for describing Florida farmers because that was the first thing they thought of.

- Drew: “I put country. I put barn. My third one, I think it might consist of two words, but I put Old McDonald.”
- Faith: “Well, I can’t help it, I heard farmer and I heard Willie Nelson. Y’all, I’m sorry, it just happened. He supports a lot of farming and things.”

Message Perception for Promoting Florida Grown Food

The focus group participants were given four different messages related to buying local food. The participants were given one message and then asked to reflect on their perceptions and overall attitude toward the message related to buying food grown in Florida. The messages that were tested were selected to determine the participants’ attitudes to certain qualities within each message.

Message 1: Fresh from Florida

The message of “Fresh from Florida” was given to the participants to determine their familiarity and overall perception of the popular message used by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). The themes of catchy, trust in the quality of the product, and skepticism emerged from the discussion of this message.

Catchy

The participants often mentioned the alliteration of the message was catchy. The participants appreciated the simplicity and feel of the message.

- Caleb: “Fresh from Florida rolls off your tongue so well.”
- Fiona: “I think it’s catchy. And it’s, I believe, an alliteration.”
- Ann: “So, that’s really catchy. I mean, it’s going to get your eye.”

Trust in quality of product

When the participants discussed the Fresh from Florida message, they often talked about the trust they associated with the quality of the product. The participants also mentioned their confidence in the product being fresh.

- Felicia: “Just reminds me of sunshine. Everything ready to go and a little bit of dew all over it, you know, it’s picturesque when you think of Fresh from Florida.”
- Arthur: “The word fresh, absolutely, that’s the key. That’s the key.”
- Candy: “I feel confident in the quality of the fresh, whatever’s Fresh from Florida.”
- Esther: “I think that it goes to the roots of wanting to support the local economy, support the local farmers, and that it’s going to taste better. I think the big thing about fresh is the fact that it’s going to taste better. And that’s why you want to buy it.”

Skepticism

When discussing the message, some participants noted having some skepticism about the message.

- Danielle: “Also, it’s a lie. Because we really don’t have that much from Florida coming to us, we ship it out to California.”

- Fay: “I think when I see the word, when I see that somebody felt the need to label it fresh, I start wondering why they needed to label it fresh. Isn’t it obvious to my eye if it was really fresh? I just think I’m being hoodwinked. Sorry.”

Message 2: Fresh to You from Florida Farmers

The message of “Fresh to You from Florida Farmers” was tested to determine if the word “Farmer” was important to the participants for identifying food as locally grown in the message. The message was designed to be similar to “Fresh from Florida,” while incorporating the word “Farmer” into the message. The themes of personal connection and limiting emerged from the discussion of this message.

Personal connection

The participants mentioned this message provided them with a personal connection to the food they were buying. Also, they mentioned the message had the ability to add a “face” (of the farmer) to the message.

- Beth: “I just never put the two together that there were individual farmers. But, that would help me believe that it’s a local person.”
- Dominic: “I think it’s nice to remind people that it’s actually coming from a farm. If you think about it enough you can make the assumption that if it says Fresh from Florida it’s got to be coming from a farm. But I don’t know that people necessarily make that connection. This emphasizes the connection that we still have farms in Florida.”
- Candy: “Fresh to You from Florida Farmers seem like they’re trying to tell me, ‘Listen, as a farmer, I’m trying to give you my best quality.’” So, that one is the one that I would focus on more.”
- Fay: “Oh, now I understand why they need to put the word fresh there because they’re not hoodwinking me. They made this effort, as a gift to me. I’m thrilled.”

Limiting

Some of the participants mentioned the message was too wordy and may limit its usability in certain situations. Also, some participants questioned the authenticity of the message.

- Dale: “Too involved. Too much, too many words. You know, Fresh to You from Florida Farmers, it’s going to come from a farmer, not an accountant, you know, Fresh from Florida accountants. *(laughter)* You know it comes from the farm.”
- Faith: “Yeah, it’s unbelievable. It’s like, yeah, it’s a nice thought, but come on. Mr. farmer man, you really know me? I don’t think so. You know what I’m saying?”

Message 3: Why I Buy Food from Florida

This message was created based on the video movement of “Why I Farm” (<http://www.whyifarm.com/>), and its usability with consumers. The participants were told upon receiving this message that the message would be accompanied by an individual’s statement as to why he/she buys food from Florida. The themes of vague, personal differences, and lacks trustworthiness emerged from the discussion of this message.

Vague

The participants mentioned the message was vague and was not a stand-alone message in their eyes.

- Farah: “It really is not going to sway me. That’s just me. Things like that don’t affect me because I know what I like and what I see, and I can figure things out for myself. I don’t have to have somebody else.”

Personal Differences

The participants mentioned that buying food from Florida means something different to everyone and therefore the message would not be applicable for everyone.

- Eileen: “I think having the others explain it for you takes away the thought process for yourself. It kind of gives you a reason perhaps that you haven’t have thought of or maybe just ties it together for you.”
- Ann: “His experience to me might be interesting. I don’t know if it would promote my buying.”

Lacks Trustworthiness

The message raised many questions with the participants as to whether or not the specific person was trustworthy and the freshness of the food.

- Farah: “If I know somebody’s getting paid to say that, that kind of [is] a turn off for me.”
- Christina: “I was just [thinking] local. Local foods that are either grown or produced in Florida. But I wasn’t thinking fresh. I mean, it could be something canned but if it’s canned in Florida, is it still local?”

Message 4: Florida Food, Local and Nutritious

This message was created to determine consumers’ perception of a message with the focus on the nutritional aspect of buying food from Florida. The themes of repetitive and skepticism emerged from the discussion of this message.

Repetitive

The participants mentioned that the message was repetitive in that if the food is from Florida, it is local. Also, the participants mentioned that food from Florida was assumed to be nutritious.

- Claire: “Well, you know, I guess they’re trying to get across that this is food from Florida and it’s local and it’s nutritious but, you know it’s good it’s nutritious and if it’s Florida then of course it’s local, so it seems repetitive.”
- Christina: “Yeah, nutritious jumped out of the page at me as like whoa, what do we need that word for? You know, really it just jumped out at me. Nutritious, what the heck is that? Of course it’s nutritious.”

Skepticism

The participants did not view the message as completely positive, in that the message was degrading to the quality and nutritional aspect of other states’ food. Also, some of the participants viewed the message as being “preachy” and offensive.

- Felicia: “I’m not a big fan of people labeling things nutritious. That’s for me to decide not for you. And I find the word just bothers me. Oh, is it [nutritious] now? Yeah, well I don’t need that. I’ll make my own decision.”
- Eileen: “I don’t like it at all. I think to me local is south Georgia, north Florida, not Florida. And so I don’t think that’s an accurate description for me. Nutritious, [is] a tomato from here really more nutritious than a tomato somewhere else? It creates some skepticism to the campaign to make it broad.”

Perceptions on Advertisements

The focus group participants were shown three types of advertisements, a print ad (see Appendix A), a TV ad, (see Appendix B) and an interactive website (see Appendix C), to determine their preferences and perceptions about the types of advertisements. The print ad, TV ad, and website were from the same campaign by the California Milk Processors Board of “Got Milk.” The advertisement campaign focused on the benefits of drinking milk. The participants were given a copy of the print advertisement, shown the TV advertisement, and a video clip of one page for the interactive website was created and shown to the participants as if they were navigating the website. A video simulation of the interactive website

was used for the focus groups to ensure consistency among focus groups and the amount of information shown to each group. The milk ads were chosen for testing in the focus groups due to their consistency of message across the three media channels of interest. A specialty crop example could not be found for the three media channels of interest. The respondents were encouraged to focus on the media channel used and not the message or milk.

Print Advertisement Perceptions

The participants had mixed responses to the print ad; however, they frequently mentioned how print advertisements could be personally valuable to individuals. The themes of visually appealing message, personal relevancy, personally valuable, not personally valuable, and significant attributes emerged from the discussion of this message.

Visually Appealing Message

The participants appreciated the fact that print advertisements have the ability to visually depict a message with few words. They also appreciated that print ads could be visually appealing and interesting.

- Eileen: “I think this [print ad] is beautiful in its simplicity and it appeals to me a lot more than having a lot of information or a lot of different images. I mean, just picking an iconic image or on the flip side showing us things that maybe we don’t normally think of. Instead of using an orange, use something that is not normal. We have a lot of beef in Florida but, seeing a cow here and saying, you know, “Got Florida Beef?” wouldn’t be something that most of us would think of.”
- Dominic: “I’d like to see some specificity on what exactly [the ad is for], not just all fruits and vegetables. This is an orange grove, this is a strawberry field, [and] these are the things that are from Florida specifically, rather than just a generic ad.”

Personal Relevancy

The participants mentioned that print advertisements could be tailored to specific audiences based on the publication outlet more easily than other forms of ads.

- Fred: “It gives you a little more time maybe to digest what’s there rather than a flash like a TV commercial, thirty-seconds then it’s gone.”
- Earl: “And I tend to think there’s so many different kinds of print media. Magazines that if you want to address a particular audience, if you want guys, maybe Sports Illustrated or Playboy or something. If you want to attract, you know women, there are a number of women’s magazines and you can vary the approach depending on the niche you want to address.”

Personally Valuable

The participants mentioned many ways print advertisements could be made personally relevant by including recipes, coupons, or other sources of interesting information.

- Farrah: “If it had a coupon on it, it would get my attention.”
- Anastasia: “I’m a sucker for a single recipe. Like if I’m in a magazine and there’s an ad and it has a recipe, I rip it out, unless it’s really something I know I’d never eat. So, you know if there was a picture of the things from Florida and then a little recipe for a smoothie or for a green smoothie, or for something. And, you know, even in the recipe [if] it said, “Use Florida celery,” I would probably rip it out and keep it longer than just a page that had nothing.”

Not Personally Valuable

The participants discussed how they generally do not pay attention to the majority of print advertisements and they are not buying the sources in which print ads are seen.

- Edward: “I’m sure there’s a subconscious thing that you see it and then maybe it gets stuck back there in the recesses of your mind. But I’m the same way, the magazines I get, I sure don’t look at the ads. The newspaper I don’t [look at the ads], the first thing I do is put it in the recycling. My junk mail, first thing I do is make the big stack of recycling and the two things that are worthwhile and get rid of all that. So, subconsciously maybe there’s something that sticks, but I try my best to get rid of it the quickest I can.”
- Fred: “I can’t remember the last time I saw a print ad. You know, I mean, that’s a disadvantage because I don’t know how many people [access them]. I mean, maybe I’ve seen them and I just don’t remember or maybe they’re not as memorable. But that would be a disadvantage for me. That’s why I was scratching [my head] sort of, I knew what a print ad was but I was sitting there thinking, is it a billboard?”

Significant Attributes

The participants mentioned that benefits of print advertisements are that they have a long life span, cannot be turned off or excluded as easy as other forms of advertising, and that consumers are forced to see the print ads to some extent.

- Earl: “Some print ads have a scratch and sniff, too. You could do orange blossoms or something.”
- Edward: “A lot of things have QR codes on them these days.”
- Felix: “It gives you a little more time maybe to digest what’s there rather than a flash like a TV commercial, thirty-seconds then it’s gone.”

TV Advertisement Perceptions

The participants were shown a selected video of a TV advertisement that complimented the print advertisements. The participants shared their thoughts and perceptions about TV advertisements in general. The themes of entertaining, discussion/thought provoking, limitations, and personal connection emerged from the discussion of this message.

Entertaining

The participants mentioned that they enjoyed catchy or clever TV ads. They also mentioned that the TV ads must be well made and visually appealing for the ad to be memorable or catch their attention.

- Evelyn: “The farmer reaching in that’s really very fun. I don’t know about beef, I would have to think about them killing the cow and that’d just totally freak me out. *(laughter)*”
- Candy: “I do watch some [TV ads]. I do watch some like especially if I see one that’s pretty funny. And if [I] see it again, I’ll rewind it and show it to people.”

Discussion/Thought Provoking

The participants often mentioned how specific advertisements were memorable to them for specific reasons. The Florida’s Natural orange juice commercial that featured the farmer’s hand reaching through the grocery aisle’s refrigerated section handing a carton of juice to the woman was mentioned in several of the focus groups. The participants also mentioned how they used certain commercials to educate themselves prior to purchasing.

- Earl: “You know all the fuss about the Superbowl TV ads indicate they do have some power to illicit discussion and have a second life as people talk about them in the break room or whatever. If they’re [TV ads] grabbers.”

- Farrah: “And then I find myself having a conversation with somebody trying to figure out what is that product. So it still sells, even though it’s not obvious.”
- Fiona: “Well, there’s a commercial on TV currently for orange juice that I think’s kind of neat. They’re in an orange grove and then a hand comes out through the orange tree, you don’t see the person at all, all you see is a hand, it looks like it would be a farmer person and then there’s the juice box.”

Limitations

The participants mentioned several limitations to TV advertisements such as lacking personal connection, lack of memorability, avoiding watching the commercial and/or the commercial being annoying to the viewer.

- Anastasia: “It’s getting less and less for us. We have one TV in our house. We usually use Apple TV or Netflix anymore. I only see commercials if I turn on the Today Show once a week in the morning or that’s like it. We never watch movies that have commercials so I see very, very few commercials.”
- Fay: “They need to make sure you get the word of whatever, you know, whatever the product is. Because a lot of times you watch it and you have no idea what it is. You might love the commercial, but what was that for?”

Personal Connection

The participants mentioned they wanted to have a personal connection to TV advertisements; however, they recognized that everyone has different preferences for obtaining the personal connection. Some participants described personal connections they had to TV advertisements.

- Candy: “The commercials I remember are the ones that make me hungry. The Publix commercial with that salad that has the fruit and vegetables. It looks so good.”
- Anastasia: “Well, right now there’s some kind of Florida commercial that’s a mom cooking dinner and she shows what she is using and says it’s Florida and then they sit and I kind of like that commercial. I remember it and I think, oh yeah, I want to be as organized as that woman and make it look simple to put food on the table and make it look like no-one is fighting.”

Interactive Website Advertisement Perceptions

The participants were shown a simulated video clip of the accompanying interactive website for the “Got Milk” campaign. The video showed how the website loaded, the interaction of information selection, and the ability to click on a link for additional information. After viewing the message, the participants indicated that they wanted usable information, liked getting to interact/engage with content, could relate to the information, would be invested in the information, and found the message to be visually appealing/engaging.

Want Usable Information

The participants mentioned they wanted just the basic information to be made available to them on an interactive website. The participants discussed that websites with too many words or information were unusable or cumbersome for them to use.

- Eileen: “I’m thinking about what makes me go to a website. It’s not usually the research articles, although I like to find factual information, but it’s things I can use. Recipes for food, absolutely.”
- Elizabeth: Responding to Eileen Elizabeth said, “And some things to me don’t have to be organic, but I’d like to know what goes into them [foods]. There are some foods I won’t buy any other way but organic.”

Get to Interact/Engage with Content

The participants discussed how they enjoyed being able to interact and engage with the content on interactive websites at a pace they were comfortable with receiving information. The participants mentioned how they felt more in control of the information they received when using interactive websites and that they appreciated having different options for finding information.

- Earl: “Well, I think people like being in control. And about all I can do with TV is fast forward it or something, or mute, but this you interact.”
- Fred: “I like the fact that I can share it. Like sometimes I get something interesting and I can forward it to my son. Like, as I saw there, I know there’s a recent thing I found out that chocolate milk actually helps you recover faster than like Gatorade and stuff. So [I would share it] if I saw something like that, because he works out all the time. So the fact that there’s something I think my wife or something my mother, [or] anybody, that I think would be interested in, I can forward it to them and then boom, I’ve shared the information quickly with them. I just send them the link. So I like that.”
- David: “I think it’s the way of the world right now. I mean, everything is pointing through the computer and how we get our information. Plus the ability to table it. If we can’t read it right now, we can set it aside and come back to it. Can’t do that with a commercial on TV. I mean well, with the right tool you can.”

Relatable

The participants mentioned that they felt more comfortable with the interactive website advertisement because they had past experience using websites.

- Anastasia: “I’ve even gone to like local markets looking for CSA’s and different things just looking about that. I would use a website more than I care about a TV ad [to find this information].”
- Earl: “On a website there are different ways of presenting the information so that people don’t have to necessarily read it. You can have someone, you know, something animated or filmed or taped or whatever that speaks to them.”

Invested in Information

Participants mentioned that the individuals who choose to visit interactive websites were more invested in the information because they were actively searching for information. They mentioned that the readers want the information, but that it must be easily accessible.

- Anastasia: “The nice thing about the Internet is if somebody, like with commercials, you’re spending all that money and you’re putting it to all the TV’s and you got all these people that maybe aren’t interested. But if somebody finds your website, it’s usually cause they’re looking. It’s usually cause they’re interested. So, you might get fewer viewer hits but they’re real hits.”

Visually Appealing/Engaging

The participants discussed that an interactive website advertisement must be eye catching and visually appealing to encourage them to utilize the site. They also mentioned that they appreciated website free of clutter or useless information.

- Eileen: “I like the appeal of that particular interactive style when you first get into it, clicking the study and I glance at it, but I’m not going to spend a lot of time on it. I spend a lot of time on Pinterest and if the graphics are appealing to me, I think that that’s reaching a market that likes that sixty-second, show me, really quickly.”

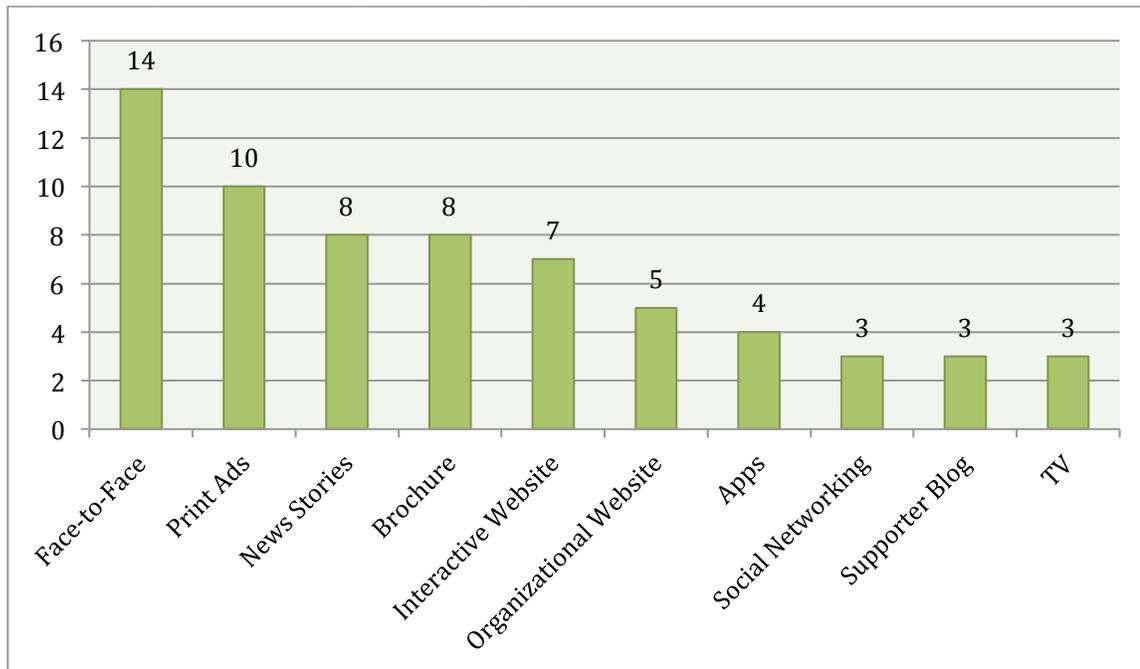
Preferences for Receiving Information

The participants were given an illustration with multiple methods of receiving information (see Appendix D). The participants were asked to circle their most preferred methods of receiving information. Then the participants were asked to rank the methods they circled. They were then asked to place an “X” on any of the methods of receiving information they did not like. In addition to completing these activities, participants were also asked to discuss their preferences.

Most Preferred Methods of Receiving Information

Below are the participants’ most preferred methods of receiving information with frequencies given. In addition, some supporting quotes are seen below the results.

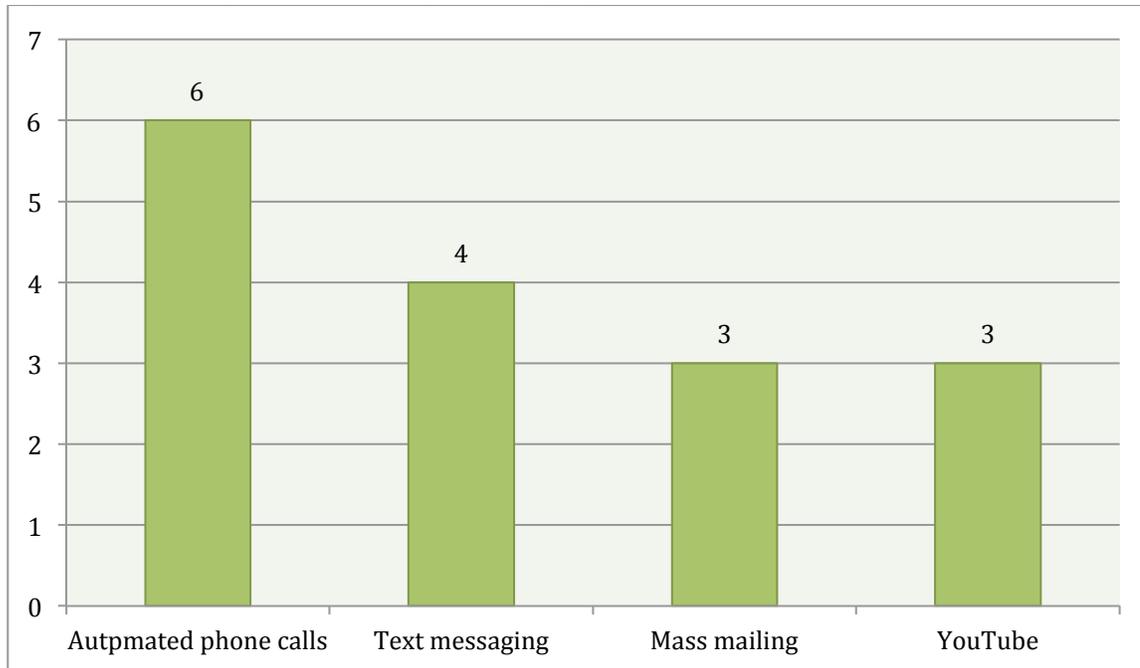
Figure 1. Preferred Methods of Receiving Information



- Fay: “I really prefer face to face information. I trust it more.”
- Eileen: “The website number one, and I did for print ads I specified billboards just because I’m more inclined to see something there repeated. And then the organizational websites, just because I tend to go there if I’m interested in something, I’m going to go find a resource for it online.”
- Christina: “News stories. I like to listen to the news. I’m a PBS fan and I listen to a lot of radio. All the time.”

Least Preferred Methods of Receiving Information

Below are the participants’ least preferred methods of receiving information with frequencies given and a supporting quote seen below the results.

Figure 2. Least Preferred Methods of Receiving Information

- Claire: “Emailing me, absolutely. That’s as bad as calling me on my cellphone.”

Thoughts on Message Focus for Food Grown in Florida

The participants were asked to give their thoughts on what a message encouraging consumers to purchase food grown in Florida should focus on. The participants mentioned that a message should focus on freshness, give a face to the farmer, and show consumers where their food was coming from.

Freshness

The participants mentioned that a message encouraging consumers to purchase food grown in Florida should focus on the taste, freshness, nutrition, and appeal of the food.

- Adam: “I think fresh produce from Florida farmers.”
- Alice: “I think the taste, you know, and that it’s fresh.”

Supporting Local Economy

The participants discussed the importance of a message showing consumers where their food is coming from and creating a connection between the farmer and the local economy.

- Brittany: “People actually working on their farm supporting our community.”
- Ann: “Let’s meet a farmer, you know, how he’s doing and what is happening and take pride in your state. To take pride in what we produce.”

Put a Face with the Farmer

The participants mentioned adding a face of a farmer to any message to encourage consumers to purchase food grown in Florida. The participants discussed the value of knowing who produces the food they buy.

- Beth: “Yeah, farmers are they’re faceless to me in Florida.”

- Edward: “When you see the lady picking the white acre peas and putting them in a bag, those, I’ll take those.”

Quality of the Food

The participants mentioned wanting to see the safety and variety of the food grown in Florida in a message. The participants added that knowing the variety and seasons food is available in Florida would be of value to them.

- Dale: “The less hands it passes through the less chance that [the food] will be contaminated.”
- Danny: “That it hasn’t been loaded with preservatives and things designed to give it a shelf life of six years.”

Key Findings

The key findings from this study are split into two sections: the message and the media channel. Both components must be addressed in order to successfully reach consumers in a manner they find appealing.

The Message:

- Consumers appreciate a personal connection with messages related to buying food grown in Florida. This personal connection can be simple or detailed; however, the message must be tailored for a specific audience. The idea of connecting consumers with those who produce their food was well received, but consideration must be given to different background and experiences with Florida farmers when including that connection in a message.
- The concept of a “Florida farmer,” in general, conjures a positive association for consumers; however, some consumers do not connect with the idea of Florida farmers, and a message connecting a Florida farmer and local food may be beneficial to forming a connection between consumers and their intent to purchase food grown in Florida.
- Consumers value information in a message; however, too much information can feel degrading or repetitive to consumers. As in the case of the word “nutritious” being included in a message, consumers did not want a message to determine what was nutritious for them; however, they did want to know where the product was grown (local). The message must also be comprehensive, yet simple to resonant with consumers.

The Media Channel:

- Consumers are interested in receiving information about food grown in Florida through media channels that give them usable and relative information. The information about food grown in Florida must be easy to access and given in a context that can easily be integrated into their lives.
- Florida consumers preferred to receive information about food grown in Florida in a way that allows them to determine how and when they use that information. Consumers want to have the ability to recall information or search for given information when necessary. Websites give consumers the ability to search and recall information when necessary as well as interact with information beyond what they were originally searching for. In the case of print and video advertisements, the information should be accessible beyond viewing the video on a television commercial or the print advertisement in a magazine. The video and print advertisements, in order to have maximum use to consumers, should be searchable and retrievable for later use by the consumer.
- Interactive websites allow consumers the ability to control the amount and type of information seen by the consumer. Consumers appreciate the ability to determine what type and the amount of information they were exposed to in interactive websites as opposed to print and video advertisements that dictated the information given to the consumer. With that in mind, consumers also appreciated the entertainment aspect of video advertisements and the portability of print advertisements.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this research, it is recommended that communication practitioners thoroughly understand their audience prior to deciding which media channel is best for communicating information about Florida-grown food. Specific to the message of buying food grown in Florida, consumers are receptive to messages that highlight a personal connection between buying food grown in Florida and the person responsible to producing that food or product. The recommendations from this research are in two separate sections. One section is concerned with the message, while the other section focuses on the media channel.

The Message

1. Use a message that connects consumers with the individual, or individuals, who are responsible for growing and producing the food or product. The participants in this study held more favorable attitudes toward messages that connected them, or reminded them, about the person providing the product. Also, the participants most preferred receiving information in a face-to-face manner; however, it is not possible for a farmer to talk with every consumer about the food they produce. Therefore, a message that simulates this face-to-face contact through a message and advertisement may serve bridge the need consumers have to talk and learn about their food in a typical “face-to-face” setting.
2. When determining which message to use for marketing a product grown in Florida, the consumer is more receptive to a message that is short and concise, yet informative. However, it is important to note that the consumers do not want to be “told” information about a product that they can infer or make a decision about for themselves. In this research, the term “nutritious” was not well received because the participants thought the decision to determine whether or not the food was nutritious should be left to them. They did not want a company or organization telling them what was nutritious. Also, the language should not imply the obvious in a message. Again with the word nutritious, the participants thought it was redundant to say fresh food was nutritious. Communicators should be cautious of unintended connotations of words and phrases when constructing a message. This research showed that some phrases, while unintended, made consumers feel uneducated or that they were not smart enough to determine the merit of the food.
3. The message should lend itself to be visually depicted. The participants mentioned several times in the different focus groups that they like messages that could show them the information. The participants wanted to see where and how their food was being grown in Florida. Several of the participants mentioned Publix’s advertisements in that they were always picturesque and conveyed a feeling of home. The visual aspect of a message should not be overlooked with constructing a message about buying local food.

The Media Channel

1. Building upon the first recommendation from the message, communicators should focus on visually connecting consumers with the individuals responsible for producing the foods they purchase. The participants in this research often mentioned, without prompting, the orange juice commercial with the farmer handing the orange juice to the woman through the grocery store shelf.
2. As discussed in the third recommendation of the message, the participants appreciated the picturesque quality of Publix advertisements. Choosing the correct media channel in order to visually communicate a message is important. Communicators must choose a medium that will most effectively help the consumer visualize the message. As discussed, print, TV, and interactive websites each have their own merits and limitations when connecting with consumers; however, communicators must be cognizant of the benefits and limitations, as viewed by the consumers, when constructing and choosing a media channel for delivering a message.
3. When utilizing a print media channel, it is recommended that communicators consider including an incentive, such as a coupon or recipe, to entice consumers to save and pay attention to a print advertisement. In addition to

making sure a print advertisement is visually appealing, the incentive gives the consumer usable information to be referred to or used at a later time.

4. If a communicator is using a TV advertisement, based on the findings from this research, it is advised to use a picturesque setting that connects viewers with Florida agriculture in an interesting manner. The participants appreciated and related to advertisements that included a personal connection to the people and places where their food was grown. The participants also appreciated seeing how their food was processed and how buying locally grown food was beneficial to them, their community, and the world.
5. The medium of the interactive website showed that consumers appreciate the opportunity to engage with the information and content about their food at their own pace and time. It is recommended that communicators utilizing an interactive website pay special attention to the attributes of a website that allow and encourage participants to share the website with friends and loved ones by including usable information, coupons, recipes, videos, and print versions of the advertisements. Many of the participants expressed an interest in sharing or engaging with the content if it were visually appealing and easy to use; therefore, it is recommended that communicators and web designers use relevant, simple images and graphics to supplement the information. The information should also be presented on separate pages and eliminate superfluous information by including links within the page (for coupons, scientific information, specific nutrition information, or video links) allowing the consumer to further explore the sight if they are interested.

Future Research

It is recommended that future research explore consumer perceptions about specific Florida commodities. When conducting this research about a specific specialty crop, the researchers should utilize media channel examples specific to that commodity; however, using media channel examples from the “Got Milk” campaign in this research allowed the researchers to gather consumer opinions about media channels that may not be currently being utilized by all Florida specialty crop growers.

Also, future research should incorporate other media channels as well to explore the merits and limitations presented when sharing information about locally grown food. Radio advertisements and the difference between traditional print advertisements and billboard advertisements should also be studied in the future. The participants in this study did not always equate print advertisements and billboards to be the same type of media channel; therefore, a study that examines consumers’ thoughts on what they typically equate as a print advertisement versus what type of advertising billboard advertising is, could be valuable information when trying to determine the merits of all types of advertisements used in promoting local specialty crops.

Another area of interest for future research would be related to determining the best way to encourage consumers to visit websites to glean more information about the food they purchase. By nature, websites allow communicators to give more information and provide more content than print or video; however, it is still uncertain how communicators and marketers can effectively direct consumers to websites for more information. Currently QR codes and website URLs are being used on both print and TV advertisements, but it is uncertain as to the effectiveness of either method for increasing consumer visits to the site.

Finally, future research should explore different levels of interaction and engagement of interactive websites. The participants in this study reported varying levels of comfort using and interacting with content on websites; therefore, identifying the extent that content and interaction should be utilized is important for communicators when moving forward on using interactive media channels in the future.

Appendix A: Print Advertisement



IT'S TIME *for* THE BEDTIME DRINK

got milk?

1-(855) milk-ZZZ

Appendix B: Video Advertisement



Click Audio Image to Play



Appendix C: Website Advertisement



Click Audio Image to Play

got milk?

HOME
TV COMMERCIALS
Health Benefits
RECIPES
NEWS & EVENTS

THE GREAT AMERICAN
MILK DRIVE
GIVING TO YOUR LOCAL FARMER TODAY

CHECK OUT OUR
NEW RADIO ADS.

MUSICLES • PMS • BONES • SLEEP • HAIR, SKIN, & NAILS • TEETH

You must work out.

Muscle tends to break down after exercise, which is why iron-pumping, body-bronzing, workout machines such as yourself need to supply the body with the right kind of protein to help muscles recover fully. Good news: milk contains proteins like casein and whey that can help muscles rebuild after physical activity. Plus it's got minerals that are important in preventing muscle cramping ([Read Study](#)). And in case you're wondering, fair Adonis, whey is the most common form of protein found in bodybuilding supplements.

Still too vanilla? All good. Try chocolate milk for an even tastier post-workout aid. Because of its high carbohydrate and protein content, chocolate milk is an excellent alternative to sports drinks ([Read Study](#)).

Appendix D: Media Channel Preference Grid

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TV PSAs • Paid TV ads • YouTube • Supporter blog [blogs controlled by supporting groups, not affiliated directly with organization] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-Face • Organization blog • Online social networking • Apps • Interactive Website [a responsive website used to encourage user engagement with the information] • Organization Website
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print PSAs • Print ads • News stories • Automated organization phone calls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochure • Mass Mailing • Text message • Email