

Abstract

In today's marketplace, consumers have a plethora of options when it comes to purchasing beef, whether that be conventional, all-natural, organic, or any other feed-based labeling. They also have the freedom to make that purchasing decision based on the brand, packaging, and price just to name a few. However, the supply of beef that is on the shelves for consumers changed since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak. This poster reveals that no significant differences were recorded with purchasing decisions nor marketing decisions; however, data were analyzed for themes that are present during this pandemic. The purpose of this study is to find out how the purchasing behaviors of consumers have changed since the COVID-19 outbreak in terms of beef purchasing. Are specialty labels less important? Does brand loyalty still matter? In order to evaluate this, we asked consumers several questions to better understand current behaviors and trends for the marketing of beef products. The poster will provide the coded data and summaries of the total population of 55 participants. SPSS was used for statistical analysis.

Materials & Methods

The survey was conducted during Spring Semester of 2020, and was implemented via Facebook using a Google Form Survey. The survey data was collected for 24 hours. The total number of participants was 55. The survey was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. This research study was considered descriptive in order to collect a "snapshot" of current consumer trends based on the survey questions designed and implemented. The limitations of this survey design reflects only the response to the questions asked based on importance of environmental and social factors related to marketing and the rankings of value of purchases. The questions were not designed to create any biased indicating the beef industry is not responsible for social or environmental resources.

Introduction & Results

Beef consumption is predominant in a majority of balanced diets and it is critical to be maintained as part of our food chain and food security. Nevertheless, it is important to remark that since energy and protein transformation efficiency in ruminants is very low, at times many companies need to promote what environmental benefits they are contributing to in order to assist with improved standards of production. In times of pandemic, which occurs less frequently in the United States and more often in other countries faced by tragedies such as natural disasters, there becomes more demand on food sourcing and supply. Approaching food security becomes more centered for maintenance of health more than marketing of food items. Food security is a complex sustainable development issue, linked to health through malnutrition, but also to sustainable economic development, environment, and trade. Thus, the goal of this project was to get a general understanding of what consumers value and see as important to them during this "brief snapshot" of purchasing power or decisions given the questions asked in the survey discussed within this poster.

Table 1: Summary of Consumer Choices, means with the same letter are not significantly different from each other (p>0.05 ANOVA).

Before COVID-19-			
RANKINGS	Groups	Means	Significance
1	Brand Labeling (e.g. All Natural, Grass-Fed, Organic, etc.)	4	a
2	Visual Appearance of Packaging	3.3	b
3	Price	2.3	c
4	Availability	2.2	c
During COVID-19-			
RANKINGS	Groups	Means	Significance
1	Brand Labeling (e.g. All Natural, Grass-Fed, Organic, etc.)	3.92	a
2	Visual Appearance of Packaging	3	b
3	Availability-Count	2.83	b
4	Price	2.75	c
5	Availability	2.5	c

Results Continued

Table 2: Survey responses from 55 respondents regarding environmental or social commitment to brand and marketing.

Yes, No or Maybe	Would you be willing to buy a product from an unknown brand if it had a strong social or environmental commitment?	Since the COVID-19 Crisis do you feel like your opinion to the above question as changed?	Would you be willing to pay more for a socially or environmentally responsible product? Please answer yes or no.	Since COVID-19 Crisis do you feel like your opinion to the above question as changed?
YES	24	16	24	13
NO	7	37	19	39
MAYBE	24	2	12	3

Conclusion and Implications

Table 1 displays the ranking responses (1 to 5) with 1 being the most important factor. Thus, before COVID-19 purchases were based on brand, labeling & visual appearance for the top 3 reasons, where during COVID-19, brand, visual appearance & availability ranked as the top three reasons to select beef purchases. The consumers also reported that meat quality, buying locally and price considerations were critical during the start of COVID-19. Also, it was very important that the meat was USDA grade as well as labeled locally or nationally. There was many concerns of beef being imported for consumption and COVID-19 would be difficult for farmers to maintain organic or grass-fed standards due to supply chain and the barriers related to those standards. Table 2 reinforced that no changes occurred with consumers perspective relative to environment and social standards of brand identity. In conclusion this study was limited but does contribute to our current situation and potential barriers for the beef industry regarding the food security issues related to COVID-19.

About the Presenter

Dr. Lori Unruh Snyder is an Associate Professor within the Department of Crop & Soil Sciences and teaches CS 312, Grassland Management & Natural Resources to the College of Agriculture & Life Science students.

"Supporting Local Farmers' & Availability are critical issues we need to address"



About the Co-Author

Melanie Fishel majored in Agr. Bus. Managt. & has minors in Animal Science & Economics. This poster was part of her CS 312 Honor's Project. Melanie serves as the 2020 National Hereford Queen.

