



Pilot Study: Factors Affecting the Millennial Generation's Perception of Beef Labeling

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Objectives

Cattle production is an important industry in the United States; it represented \$67.4 billion in cash receipts in 2013. On average, Americans consumed 30.0 kg of beef annually per person in 2015. However, purchasing can be influenced by factors such as labeling, demographics, or price. A clearer understanding of what effects consumer's buying habits could allow the beef industry to better appeal to consumers and increase beef sales. Therefore, the objective of this study was to investigate factors that affect the millennial generation's perception of beef labeling.

Materials and Methods

A questionnaire survey was distributed to Tarleton State University students between the age of 18 and 32 who were enrolled in the fall 2015 semester using Qualtrics (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). There were 9 total questions asked related to factors that affect the millennial generation's perception of beef labeling; three demographic variables (gender, age, and community size) and 15 various label attributes were evaluated. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographics, consumption and purchasing habits of the population. Multiple regression analysis was employed to complete the numerous correlations needed to examine relationships between the demographic variables against consumption, purchasing habits, label perception, and willingness-to-pay.

Results

Of the population surveyed, 182 (49.6%), indicated they consumed beef three or more times a week,

while 94 (25.6%) consumed beef twice per week. Gender, age, and community size had a significant ($p < 0.05$) effect on consumption habits; however, demographics did not indicate an effect on purchasing habits. Males consumed more ($p < 0.05$) beef than females, and younger participants (age 18 to 20) consumed more beef when compared to older participants (age 21 to 32). Participants from rural communities consumed more ($p < 0.05$) beef than participants from suburban or urban communities.

Females perceived that label attributes such as: hormones, antibiotics, nitrates and animal handling as more important ($p < 0.05$). Females were also more willing to pay a premium ($p < 0.05$) for beef when labels included "raised without additional hormones" and "no GMO feeds". Participants from urban communities perceived that beef label attributes were more important ($p < 0.05$) than participants from rural communities. Urban communities were also more willing to pay a premium ($p < 0.05$) for labels that included "raised without additional hormones" and "raised without antibiotics".

Conclusion

The millennial generation's consumption habits, perception of label attributes, and willingness to pay were affected by demographic variables. Males 18 to 20 yr of age consumed more beef, however, females perceived a higher level of importance on beef label attributes. Millennial generation consumers from rural communities consumed more beef, whereas, consumers from urban communities perceived a higher level of importance on beef label attributes and were also more willing to pay a premium.