



MAKING AGRICULTURE RELEVANT

Categorizing Texas Consumers' Food-Related Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behavior

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Introduction

- Consumer-driven marketing
 - One-way v. two-way communication
 - Consumer decision-making is a cyclic process (Court, Elzings, Mulder, Vetvik, & Jorgen, 2009)
 - Requires message variations accounting for message context, past consumer behavior, and real-time assessment of company, organization, and/or industry promotional needs



Introduction

- Audience characteristics play a major role in how individuals consume and process information
 - Need to tailor messages to specific beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Krueter & Ray, 2003)



Introduction

To provide relevant information to consumers about U.S. food and fiber production, we need to understand our external audiences.



Purpose of the study

- To describe the perspectives of agriculture among individuals in Texas
 - Categorize Texas consumers based on their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to food and fiber production
 - Identify factors that influence those beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors



Methods

- Part of a graduate-level research design course
- Focus groups
- Personal interviews
 - Adult participants at central Texas farmers markets



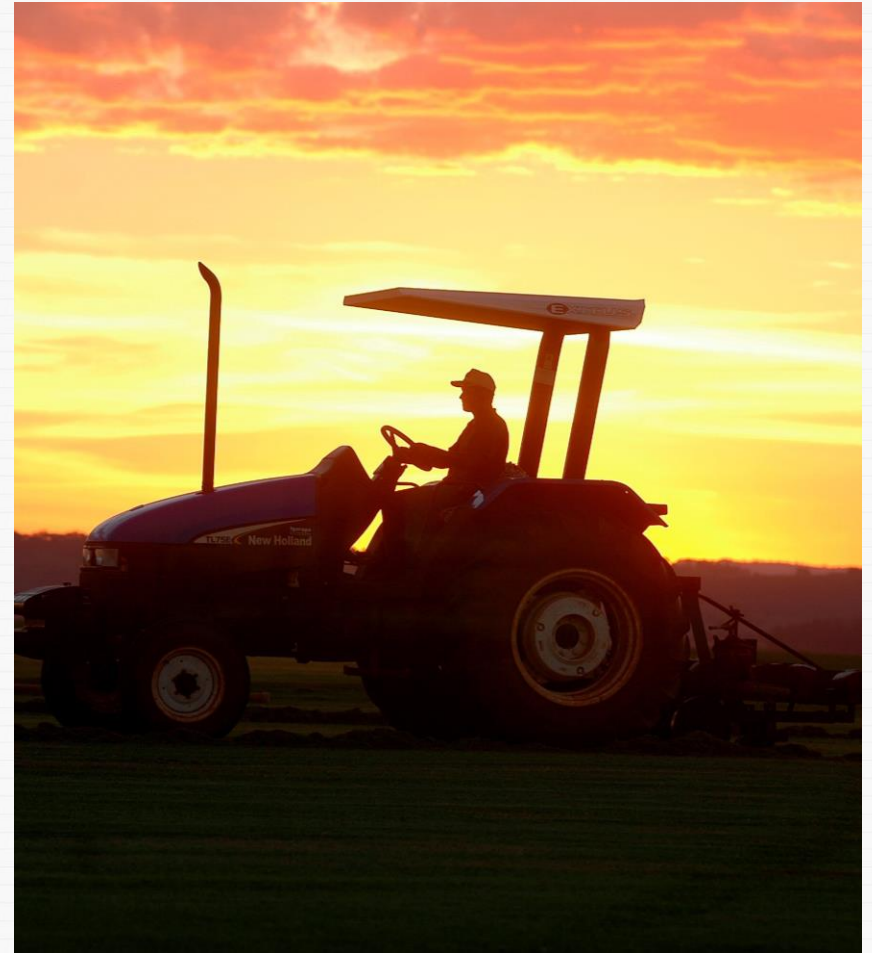
Methods

- Data analyzed using constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)
 - Reflexive journals and debriefings used to establish confirmability and credibility



Findings: Consumer Categories

- **Traditionalist**
 - Grew up in FFA and 4-H
 - Live, breathe, and love everything that is agriculture
 - Surrounded by it at a very young age and cannot see their lives without it
 - Possibly their job or career



Findings: Consumer Categories

- **Health conscious**
 - Very concerned with wellbeing
 - Make health-oriented food choices and avoid highly processed products; high fat, high sodium, high sugar, and high starch foods
 - Like to know where their food comes from and how it was made



Findings: Consumer Categories

■ Indifferent

- Don't think about agriculture on a regular basis or at all
- Ag info doesn't affect them or change their actions
- Don't really care about how their food was made or where it comes from
- Buy cheap food because they have to eat



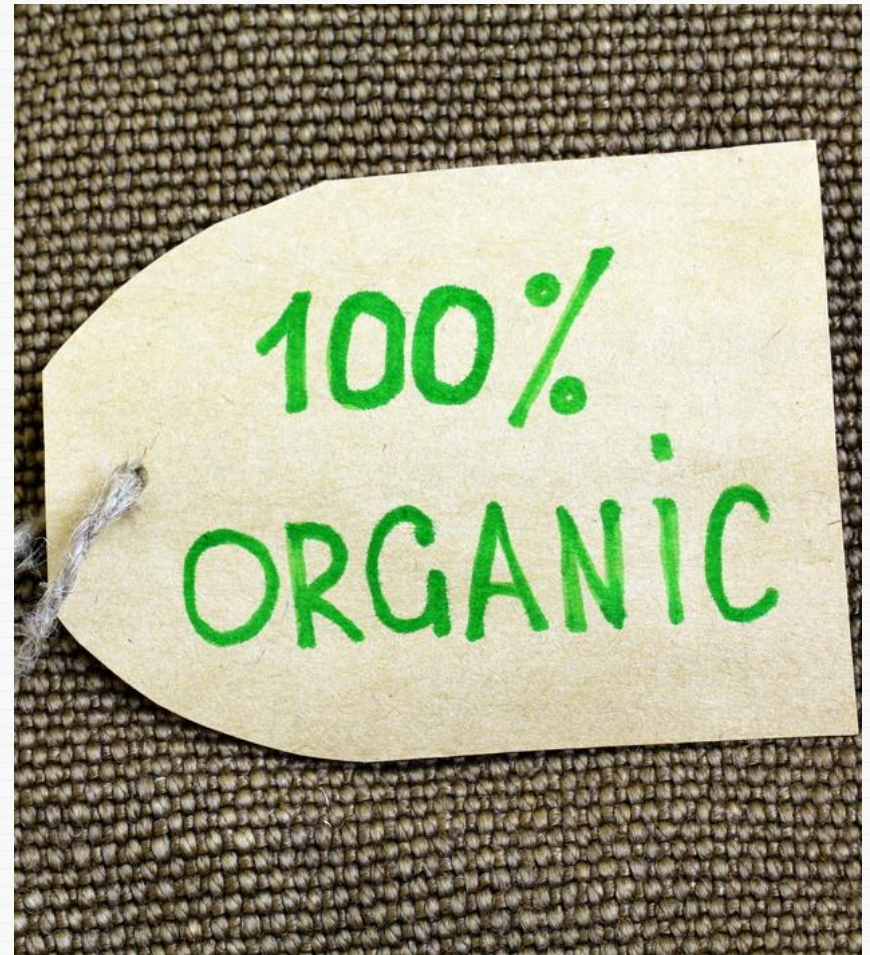
Findings: Consumer Categories

- **Opinionated learner**
 - Know agriculture is there, but don't know enough about it
 - Aware of knowledge gap and willing to learn
 - Read a lot of articles online and once something is learned they form very strong opinions



Findings: Consumer Categories

- **Organic believer**
 - Consume strictly organic products
 - Against conventional agriculture, concerned with environmental and personal health
 - Don't believe in use of pesticides, herbicides
 - Organic production is how it should be done



Findings: Factors



Media Influence



Involvement



Production Efficiency



Uncultivated



Land Health



Family History



Long-term Thinker



Financially Unstable



Findings: Factors



Media Influence



Financially Unstable



Long-term Thinker



Financially Unstable



Conclusions

- A deeper understanding of audience characteristics is necessary to develop effective messages for consumers
 - Livelihood and relation to agriculture
 - Education and/or desire for information
 - Information sources



Conclusions

- A deeper understanding of audience characteristics is necessary to develop effective messages for consumers
 - Financial status
 - Technology and media use



Implications

- First step in developing effective messaging for adult Texas consumers
 - Study improves understanding of consumer perceptions, behavior, and decisions related to agriculture, food, and natural resources
 - Study identifies factors that interest and motivate consumers



Implications

- Consumer categories and factors used to create a questionnaire
 - Distributed to nearly 30,000 homes in 7 states in Summer and Fall 2014
 - Survey data used to build a consumer prediction model to better understand factor effects



Recommendations

- For researchers and academics
 - Continue to study consumers in disparate regions
 - Work with industry to disseminate and use results
 - Instruct students in importance of consumer-driven marketing and audience analysis



Recommendations

- For communications professionals
 - Customize messages to reach specific sub-audiences
 - Avoid “one size fits all” approach to messaging





THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Are there any questions?
