

Local Meat Brands Attract Consumer Demand

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Abstract

Research has shown that good value for money is the top attribute driving consumers to choose one meat product over another from among the products on retail shelves (Wolf and Thulin, 2000). The aim of this research was to determine how consumers define “local,” examine whether local is an important driver of meat purchase decisions, and profile local consumers.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 defines as local any product that is transported less than 400 miles from its place of origin (Martinez et. al, 2010), but consumers define local differently. Adams and Adams (2011) found local to be less than 100 miles from the home, while the Hartman Group (2008) indicated less than 100 miles was considered to be local, followed by within the consumer’s state.

To examine local meat attitudes, this research conducted personal interviews in San Luis Obispo County in 2012 among 290 meat consumers. Respondents rated the desirability of seven features of meat. Fifty-two percent of respondents indicated *a local brand* is an extremely or very desirable meat characteristic and were therefore identified as local meat consumers. The local meat consumers were more likely to be Baby Boomer females who purchased meat in locally owned retail markets. They spent more in a typical month on meat, particularly beef, making them a valuable market segment. Local consumers rate good value as their top attribute, which is tied with local.

What does local mean to consumers? Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated that local meant more to them than mileage. Eighty-one percent of meat purchasers defined local to be grown and/or raised within their city or county. When respondents were asked to define local in

a sense of mileage, almost 75% said grown and/or raised less than 50 miles from home. When asked to rate the importance of local food products, consumers rated fresh fruits and fresh vegetables as very important. Local meats were somewhat to very important and local wines were somewhat important.

This research shows that local brands are important to a large consumer group. It is recommended that retail food outlets include local products on their shelves and identify them based on geographic area rather than mileage.

Keywords: local, meat, purchasers

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