

FLORIDA COLLEGIATE MILLENNIALS' PERCEPTIONS OF LOCALLY PRODUCED
BEEF

By

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To: John "The Duke" Wayne & Coffee

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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FLORIDA COLLEGIATE MILLENNIALS' PERCEPTIONS OF LOCALLY PRODUCED
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By

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Millennial consumers are the next generation of decision makers and consumers. A knowledge and communication gap exists between cattle producers and consumers this knowledge seeking generation. An emerging organization, the Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC (FCR), was formed to produce and market Florida-produced beef to Florida consumers. This study focused on Florida millennials' perceptions of locally produced beef. This study also examined their thoughts and opinions about the national beef industry, the Florida beef industry, and communication material created by and for FCR.

The purpose was to use focus groups to describe Florida millennial consumers' perceptions of locally produced beef. To achieve this purpose, focus group discussions addressed the following objectives: 1) Determine which characteristics and features of the beef industry the millennial generation finds important when purchasing beef, 2) Determine which characteristics and features of beef products the millennial generation finds most important when purchasing beef, 3) Determine Florida millennial's perceptions of the Florida beef industry and Florida-raised beef, 4) Determine millennial

consumers' preferences of information provided by current communication pieces by and for the Florida Cattle Ranchers.

The research design was qualitative in nature. Participants associated the beef industry and beef products with the environment, management practices, treatment of animals, human health concerns, retail, experience with the Florida beef industry, experience with Florida beef, and transparency. Participants were particularly asked about their experience with the Florida beef industry and Florida beef products, and had little to no knowledge of the either topic. Results of this study showed participants had minimal knowledge of the industry and relatively negative perceptions of the industry and beef products. Participants viewed the communication material with both positive and negative perceptions.

Participants mostly viewed cattle ranching to have a negative effect on the environment and human health. In general, the participants associated management practices with the quality of the beef product. Participants' discussion of the treatment of animals revealed negative perceptions of rancher's practices. Overall, participants recognized the treatment of animals affected the ultimate beef product. Participants revealed a knowledge and communication gap between producers and consumers.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to analyze the perceptions of Florida collegiate millennial consumers regarding locally produced beef products. This study was specifically interested in the perceptions of consumers as it pertains to the Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC (FCR) communications, values, and practices. Chapter 1 describes the history of the beef industry in the state Florida, the background of FCR, the background of communication in the beef industry, product labeling, and consumer perceptions of local food.

Consumer Connection

United States consumers are changing the way they define and view beef quality (Lovelace, 2016). Consumers are beginning to consider beef labeled with distinctions, such as local, natural, or certified, to be of greater quality than beef without those distinctions (Lovelace, 2016). In recent years, an increase has been seen in consumer interest in purchasing locally grown produce and animal products (Carpio & Isegildina-Massa, 2009). The rise in consumer interest in local agricultural products has correlated with the number of state departments of agriculture and branding programs participating in promotion of locally grown food (Carpio & Isegildina-Massa, 2009). Consumers have perceived purchasing local food as supporting the economy and encouraging environmental benefits (Zepeda & Leviten-Reid, 2004).

Understanding a new generation of consumers' perceptions is essential for the beef industry to be able to meet the needs of those buying beef products. Consumers prefer local and national food to imported products, which researchers attribute to their belief in the idea that local and national foods are of higher quality and fresher than their

imported counterparts (Becot, Conner, Nelson, Buckwalter, & Erickson, 2014; Chambers, Lobb, Butler, Harvey, & Traill, 2007; Jefferson-Moore, Robbins, Johnson, & Bradford, 2014). While consumers prefer to purchase local food, studies have shown that their behavior does not always match this mindset (Chambers, et al., 2007; Yue & Tong, 2009; Zepeda & Levitan-Reid, 2004). Discovering what is important to consumers when purchasing beef products will aid in the marketing of the product.

In 2015 cattle production accounted for about \$861 million in cash receipts for the state of Florida (USDA, 2015). Florida is a unique state in that it specializes in cow-calf operations (Florida Cattle Ranchers, 2016). According to the Florida Beef Council (2017), Florida ranks ninth overall for cattle numbers nationwide. Over one million head of cattle are located in the state of Florida and about 15,000 beef producers across the state (Florida Beef Council, 2017).

Florida cattle producers care for thousands of acres of native range and pastureland (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services [FDACS], 2012). Lands used for cattle production provide “green space” for wildlife and native plant life, aquifer recharge, and carbon recovery and can be considered to aid in protecting the native Florida environment (FDACS, 2012). According to FDACS (2012), biologists concluded that bird and wildlife populations survive and thrive on cattle operations.

FCR Description

In 2015, Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC was formed by a group of Florida cattle ranchers to honor Florida’s early ranching heritage by producing a product specifically for Florida residents (Florida Cattle Ranchers, 2016). FCR intends to produce beef born and raised in the state of Florida to be sold in Florida grocery stores (Florida Cattle

Ranchers, 2016). The products are currently sold in select Publix Supermarkets. FCR has established protocols and best management practices for its ranchers to aid in the production of quality cattle (Florida Cattle Ranchers, 2016). According to FCR (2016), the organization focuses on reducing the carbon footprint, making environmental strides, increasing safety, reducing costs, sustaining the economy, protecting family ranchers, humanely treating animals, conserving land, protecting green space, preserving heritage, protecting endangered specie's habitats, safeguarding the Florida wildlife corridor, and conserving water supply. The beef produced by FCR is certified by the USDA to assure the integrity of the beef program (Florida Cattle Ranchers, 2016).

The beef will be labeled as "Fresh From Florida" and marketed as a local product (Florida Cattle Ranchers, 2016). Florida has over 47,000 agricultural producers who are small farmers and do not have the funding to be able to market their products individually (FDACS, 2017). Once producers join the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign (FAPC), they can benefit from the "Fresh From Florida" program (FDACS, 2017). The program focuses on marketing Florida agricultural products. The FDACS program helps identify food considered local to the state of Florida by labeling the product packaging with a "Fresh From Florida" logo (FDACS, 2017).

Beef Consumption Patterns/Purchasing Behavior

Understanding the beef consumption trends and habits of consumers is essential to effectively marketing beef to the right audiences. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, Americans ate an average of 55.6 pounds of beef in 2016 which is an increase from 54 pounds in 2015, meaning that consumer's beef consumption is slightly increasing (2017). In the U.S., meat is consumed at a rate of three times more than the global average (Daniel, Cross, Koebnick, & Sinha, 2011).

According to Technomic (2014), beef consumption among 18- to 34-year-old consumers is higher than that of those over the age of 35.

The target audience for beef marketing is the group of about 80 million consumers born between 1980 and 2000, also known as the millennial generation (Beef Checkoff, 2014). According to Beef Checkoff (2014), the millennial generation consumes the most beef in both the home and restaurants of any generation, and will be the next influencers of demand for the next several decades. While 54% of millennials say they would rather cook a meal at home than go out to eat, 54% also say it is hard to know which cuts of meat to choose (Beef Board, 2015). Fifty percent of millennials say they would buy more beef if they knew more about the cuts they were purchasing (Beef Board, 2015).

The average U.S. household consumes 3.8 home-cooked meals a week that include meat (Food Marketing Institute and American Meat Institute [FMI & AMI], 2014). The differences between higher and lower income households are significant. Lower-income households, on average, prepare 3.2 meals that include meat where as higher-income households prepare, on average, 4.2 (FMI & AMI, 2014). Throughout all income groups, consumers who prepare meat at least once weekly was steady during the 2007 to 2009 recession. The number of consumers preparing meat at least three to six times a week has decreased from 2010 to 2017 (FMI & AMI, 2014). Price is one major factor that affects consumer trends; however, others include nutrition and health, natural and organic trends; and social conscience concerns (Harsh & VanOverbeke, 2014).

Communication Strategies in the Beef Industry

Within the agricultural communications field, it has been suggested that U.S. citizens do not have accurate knowledge or proper perceptions of the agricultural

industry as a whole, including the beef industry. According to Rumble and Buck (2009), the public is somewhat knowledgeable about livestock production; however, a knowledge gap exists between producers and consumers. Their study suggested that while consumers have some knowledge, their perceptions and justifications for their beliefs are sometimes inaccurate (Rumble & Buck, 2009). It is the responsibility of agricultural communicators and producers within the industry to bridge this knowledge gap.

Organizations within the beef industry are interested in and working to better communicate with consumers, particularly the millennial generation, as they will be the driving force for demand of beef in the next several decades. The millennial generation has more access to technology and information than any generation before them. According to the Beef Board (2015), more than 86% of millennials own a smart phone. The technology is used to make shopping lists, look for coupons, find recipes, and post pictures of meals (Beef Board, 2015). Forty-four percent of millennials reported posting a picture of food or drinks on social media (Beef Board, 2015). The use of this technology points to the need to connect with this generation via digital technology and encourage with educational information regarding the beef industry (Beef Board, 2015).

The beef industry communicates internally with producers and other commodity organizations; however, communicating with the general public can often present challenges. One way to accomplish could be through social media. According to the Pew Research Center (2017), in 2016 68 percent of United States adults use Facebook; 28 percent of U.S. adults use Instagram; 21 percent of U.S. adults use Twitter. Of U.S. adults ranging from 18- to 29-years old, 86 percent of them use at least one form of

social media, more than any other age range (Pew Research Center, 2017). Social media has been a platform for communication for some time now and is an avenue to bridge the farm-to-plate gap between producers and consumers.

One way beef producers are working to communicate with consumers is by funding the Beef Checkoff Program that aids in the education of the general public and helps to increase the demand of U.S. beef. Along with the passage of the 1985 Farm Bill, Congress created the Beef Promotion and Research Act or the “Beef Checkoff Program” (Cattlemen’s, n.d.). State Beef Checkoff Programs exist to specifically to communicate and educate consumers on the beef industry. The programs are funded with producer dollars and aim to increase public awareness of the beef industry in their respective states. The efforts of the checkoff programs include, but are not limited to, promoting U.S. beef in foreign countries to grow the beef demand, investing in beef-safety and product-technology research, and identifying management practices through Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) to strengthen consumer confidence in beef products (Cattlemen’s, n.d.).

Product Labeling

Product Branding Programs

Product branding programs have become an increasingly popular way market select beef to consumers. Those in the beef industry recognized the importance of providing the consumer with what they are looking for in order to increase their consumption of beef products. The realization of consumer-eating satisfaction ensuring future sales growth, led to the development of branded beef programs (Harsh & VanOverbeke, 2014).

Certified Angus Beef (CAB), created in 1978, was the first USDA-certified beef program and gave way to the 91 other branding programs, which are increasing in popularity (Harsh & VanOverbeke, 2014). Zimmerman and Schroeder (2013) found CAB demand held steady through the downturn of the stock market in 2002 and has even doubled since then. Seventy percent of the branded programs are classified as “Angus” (Harsh & VanOverbeke, 2014). The “Angus” trend has since affected breeding programs of ranchers and cattle genetics over the years causing an increase in Angus production (Harsh & VanOverbeke, 2014).

According to Jekanowski, Williams, and Schiek (2000), state-funded programs aimed at promoting or identifying agricultural products produced within the state are increasingly desirable in the consumer market. The programs are expected to grow in popularity as agricultural markets become increasingly global, and as U.S. producers face greater competition from foreign markets (Jekanowski et al., 2000). State promotion programs are becoming increasingly popular, and are aimed at building consumer awareness surrounding local agricultural commodities (Jekanowski et al., 2000).

Quality and consistency are two major factors associated with the beef branding programs and encourages brand loyalty from consumers (Harsh & VanOverbeke, 2014). According to Harsh and VanOverbeke (2014), brand loyalty for these programs has increased since the US recession for both fresh and processed meat products.

Product branding programs have also been utilized for other commodities. According to a study conducted by Howlett, Burton, Newman, and Faupel (2012), there was a significant decrease in fruit and vegetable consumption between the years of

2000 and 2005 coinciding with the absence of a marketing and branding campaign. However, in states with fruit and vegetable commodity marketing campaigns the consumption levels remained the same or increased (Howlett et al., 2012). In particular state-sponsored agricultural branding programs had positive effects on the consumption of both fruits and vegetables (Howlett et al., 2012).

Consumer Connection

Consumers look to packaging to help them decide which products to purchase. “A product’s packaging can act as a stimulus; the packaging will sometimes visually stand out to the consumer or show that the product will provide what the consumer desires” (Lovelace, 2016, p. 4). Several components affect consumers’ attention, including display size, color scheme, familiarity with the label and the labels location on the package (Lovelace, 2016). Bialkova and Van Trijp (2010), as cited in Lovelace (2016), found that the number of labels, the location of the labels, and the color scheme of the labels had an effect on consumer purchasing decisions. For instance, participants recognized the label faster when it was larger and placed in the top right corner of the front of the package (Lovelace, 2016). Participants also recognized labels quicker when the logos were presented in a monochromatic color scheme rather than a polychromatic color scheme; meaning they identified labels that consisted of hues of the same color rather than a label with multiple colors (Lovelace, 2016).

Local Food

The idea of purchasing and consuming locally grown food has become appealing to consumers (Giovannuccie, Barham, & Pirog, 2010). While consumers indicate a preference to purchase “local” food, their definitions of the term are inconsistent (Conner, Colasanti, Ross, & Smalley, 2010). Depending on the product, consumers

interpret the definition of “local” differently (Rumble & Roper, 2014). The U.S. does not have a standard definition for food defined as “local” (Zepeda & Li, 2006). Though the term “local” has no universal definition, consumers prefer to purchase food produced as close to their location as possible (Rumble & Roper, 2014).

The federal and state governments also support the idea of buying local (USDA-AMS, 2013). The state of Florida has recognized the consumer interest in buying local and begun to capitalize on engaging the public to buy local products (Holt, 2014). Local sales of agricultural products (Florida grown/raised products) have largely influenced Florida’s economy by contributing \$8.3 billion in 2011 (Hodges & Stevens, 2013). Nearly one-half of Florida’s agricultural land is involved in cattle production (FDACS, 2012). Carpio and Isengildina-Massa (2009) found that consumers had a slightly higher willingness-to-pay for locally grown plant products than for local animal products as opposed to non-local alternatives.

Significance and Problem Statement

Understanding of consumer interests and perceptions can aid in the development of agricultural campaigns and communication efforts in an effort to bridge the farm-to-table gap that is present within the industry (Holt, 2014). FCR is an emerging organization in the beef industry with a need to understand the preferences of the Florida millennial generation regarding Florida beef products. FCR began selling their beef products in select grocery stores in the state of Florida and has been branded as a Florida beef product marketed specifically to Florida residents. In order for products such as this Florida beef product to be successful, knowing consumers’ perceptions of the product and communication efforts are vital.

While investigations of millennials' perceptions of beef (Beef, 2014) have been conducted, none have focused on local beef products and more specifically on Florida. Broadly, consumers because of the benefits it provides to the environment, local economy, tastes, nutrition, quality, and safety (Ruehle & Goldblatt, 2013; Bond, Thilmany, & Bond, 2008) prefer local food. Millennials currently have more purchasing power, compared to other generations when they were their current age: 15 to 29 (Hais & Winograd, 2011). From a producer's standpoint, understanding how the millennial generation responds to information related to beef the beef industry is vital to the future success of their operations (Beef, 2014). Millennials make choices regarding their personal food consumption behavior and will be the next generation of influencers regarding the food and agricultural industry.

The two focuses of this study were to discover what millennial consumers looked for when they purchase beef products and what was most attractive to them about the Florida Cattle Ranchers current communication platforms/strategies. With this information, agricultural communicators, specifically within the beef industry, will be able to better attract and communicate with the millennial generation of consumers. Understanding preferences of the millennial generation when purchasing beef products will help cattlemen to better market their products. Determining the aspects of beef production that are most important to the millennial generation will help beef producers build loyalty with consumers.

Millennials are considered to be an important generation of consumers because they are the next generation of consumers. According to a 2011 study conducted by the Beef Checkoff program, millennials enjoy beef, but have little education surrounding

beef and how to cook it (The Beef Checkoff, 2013). According to the 2011 study, 54 percent of millennials say it is hard for them to know which cuts of meat to choose and 56 percent of them report disappointment after consuming the beef meal they prepared (The Beef Checkoff, 2013). Millennials are considered a knowledge seeking generation and 75 percent of them are interested in information about steaks and how to prepare them (The Beef Checkoff, 2013). The knowledge gap is an important factor when considering millennials' perceptions and understanding what information in particular they are seeking. Twenty-four percent of millennials say they would look for information from different avenues, such as brochures, recipes, and at the meat counter (The Beef Checkoff, 2013).

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine University of Florida millennials' perceptions of Florida-produced beef.

This study sought to investigate the following objectives:

1. Determine which characteristics and features of the beef industry the millennial generation will find important when purchasing beef.
2. Determine which characteristics and features of beef products the millennial generation will find most important when purchasing beef.
3. Determine Florida millennial consumers' perceptions of the Florida beef industry and Florida-raised beef.
4. Determine the Florida millennial consumers' preferences of information provided by current communication pieces by Florida Cattle Ranchers.

Definition of Terms

Cow-Calf Operation- the first stage of the beef production process where an average of about 2.2 years elapses between the breeding of beef cows and heifers and the time their offspring are ready for slaughter (Beef, n.d.).

Local- (for the purposes of this study) the state of Florida.

Millennial generation- people born from 1982 to 2004 (Bump, 2014; Horovitz, 2012; Monaco & Martin, 2007)

Media Source- an individual or institution where the information receiver receives content or expertise of interest (Tucker & Napier, 2001)

Limitations

Several limitations were presented as this study was conducted. One limitation was the population and the ability to obtain the perceptions and opinions of the entire millennial generation in the state of Florida. The participants in the study were recruited from AEC3410: Fostering Innovation through Leadership offered within the University of Florida's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (UF CALS). Only UF students had the opportunity to participate in this study. Only three focus groups were conducted with 18 total participants. Another limitation of this study was that the results could not be generalized because of the small sample size and qualitative nature of the study.

Assumptions

For the completion of this study, several assumptions were made with regard to the outcomes. The researcher assumed all participants had an opinion regarding the Florida beef industry. Also, the researcher assumed the moderator would be unbiased in all of the proceedings. It was also assumed the participants would be truthful and forthcoming with their thoughts and opinions regarding the Florida beef industry and FCR communication materials.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 described the history of the beef industry in the state Florida, the background of FCR, the background of communication in the beef industry, product

labeling, and consumer perceptions of local food. The purpose of this study was to determine Florida millennial consumers' perceptions of locally produced beef. Gaps in understanding and knowledge about the agricultural industry between producers and consumers are continuing to broaden (Hurt, 2002). The millennial generation is an important collection of consumers that will be the driving force in demand for the next several decades (Beef, 2014). With an emerging sector of the agriculture and beef industry taking the stage, it is important to understand the unknown consumer preferences of the Florida millennial generation.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter 1 background information, the need of the study and the significance of the study were given. The chapter discussed the relevance and timeliness of the research as it relates to the Florida beef cattle industry and emerging organizations within the industry. Chapter 2 focuses on the history of the beef industry, the theoretical perspective and provided a literature review of research done regarding millennial perceptions of beef and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Additionally, previous research exploring these topics are also assessed throughout Chapter 2. Finally, the research questions directing this study are presented.

History of the U.S. Beef Industry

Beef cattle production has been a major sector of American agriculture since its inception in the 1850s (Beef Industry Statistics) and has remained an essential part of the U.S. economy and agriculture industry. The first cattle were brought to the state of Florida in 1521 (Florida Cattle Ranchers, 2016; Florida, 2002; Yarlett, 1985). While Native American Indians raised cattle, the industry did not gain significance until European settlers arrived in North America and began raising cattle as a commodity (Hurt, 2002). Even still, beef did not become a significant portion of the American diet until after the Civil War. Until then, cattle's primary use was for milk, butter, and hides (Hurt, 2002). Some of the meat was sold as salt-packed beef; however, most of it often ended up discarded because of inadequate storage and transportation (Wilson, MacDonald, Mayo, & Drewry, 1965).

Cattle were considered low maintenance to producers because they did not require feed, shelter, or fenced-in area to survive (Hurt, 2002). Open-range cattle

grazing continued until the invention of barbed wire in the 1870s (Boundless, 2016). Overgrazing began stressing the open-range public land in the norther U.S. and, by the 1890s, barbed wire fencing became the standard in the northern plains (Boundless, 2016). Commercial livestock production began to surface around the time of the American Revolution (Hurt, 2002). As a result, farmers began providing food for more than just their family and the “commercial mentality” was born (Hurt, 2002, p. 34).

By the 1900s, new illegal practices such as cattle rustling began to shape new legislation and laws to protect the cattlemen and their herds (Hurt, 2002). Fencing became a widespread practice and helped to designate land divisions and provide more control over individual cattle operations (Hurt, 2002). The 20th century began a time of new technology and industrialization, laying the foundation for the “commercial mentality” to become a widespread view of agriculture (Hurt, 2002). During this time period, growing tension began to form among farmers, consumers, and food processors concerning cattle by-products, other food safety concerns, and unethical practices (Hurt, 2002).

Events like the Great Depression and Dust Bowl had a major negative influence on most Americans, including cattlemen. Throughout this time of hardship the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) assisted cattlemen who were experiencing extreme economic loss by buying beef for programs like the military and school lunches (Hurt, 2002). With the hardship came the migration of people from farms to cities leaving rural life in the past (Hurt, 2002). After the 1920s, more of the population became employed by industries other than agriculture, and the shift from small family farms to larger specialized productions began (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005).

The 21st century came with its own set of challenges for the general population, as well as cattlemen. Feed and water quantity for cattle, along with new technological advancements like biotechnology, began to present obstacles for cattlemen (Hurt, 2002). Consumers and the government became concerned with technology and environmental issues, such as water and air pollution (Hurt, 2002). Cattle producers began to face stricter regulations and court conflicts between themselves, the government, and consumers (Hurt, 2002).

Today, the beef cattle industry is still a major player in U.S. agriculture, represented by \$67.4 billion in cash receipts in 2013 (United States Department of Agriculture, 2015). According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2015), Americans consume an average of 55.6 pounds of beef per person annually. However, beef production decreased by about 453,592,400 kilograms from January 2013 to November 2014 (USDA, 2015). Only 1.4 percent of the workforce works directly for a farm, and 11.1 percent of all employment is related to agriculture and the food sector (USDA ERS, 2017a).

History of the Florida Beef Industry

Florida was the first territory in North America to have cattle production and, as such, cattle production is a part of the state's pride, heritage, and tradition (Florida Cattle Ranchers, 2016). In 1521 Juan Ponce De Leon arrived on the shores of Florida with seven Andalusian cattle and are believed to be the ancestors of the Texas Longhorns (Florida, 2002). Prior to 1700, there were dozens of ranches throughout north Florida (Florida, 2002). By 1700 sufficient tax records were being kept and revealed for the year of 1698/1699 25 rancheros existed with a total of 1,620 head of cattle (Yarlett, 1985). The largest operation was located in the Gainesville area near

Paynes Prairie with 770 head (Yarlett, 1985). In 1792 the English commenced armed attacks on Spanish garrisons in an effort to possess Florida, which ended ranching and disrupted the next 70 to 80 years of peace in the state of Florida (Yarlett, 1985).

In the 1800s the Seminole Indians possessed a large number of cattle (Florida, 2002). As both Indians and settlers moved south in search of new pastureland, so did the cattle (Florida, 2002). Cattle ranching became a major part of Florida settler operations by the year 1820 (Yarlett, 1985). The first evidence of cattle rustling in Florida occurred in 1865 when officers of the garrison smuggled cattle to Cuba (Yarlett, 1985). Cattle raising thrived during the Civil War because the Confederacy needed to feed their armies and beef was their meat of choice, so cattle were brought from Florida and trailed north for the men (Yarlett, 1985). When the Confederate army could no longer pay for the beef in Georgia, Alabama, and other southern states were depleted, Confederate agents were authorized to seize food and cattle (Yarlett, 1985). The seizure of cattle had a major impact on the Florida cattle industry, which did not show signs of recovery until about 1920 (Yarlett, 1985). The 1920s began an era of improved pasture and the open range until 1949, when the fence law was passed in Florida; the law stated that landowners were required to fence in their cattle (Yarlett, 1985; Florida, 2017). From 1945-1985 calf crop percentages rose from 40 to 50 percent for a 600-pound native cow to as high as 80 to 85 percent for a 1,100 to 1,200-pound crossbred cow (Yarlett, 1985).

Attitudes

“Attitude” is defined as “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6). Allport’s (1935) definition of “attitude” is “a state of mind of the individual

toward a value” (p. 6). According to Petty and Cacioppo (1996), “attitude” is defined as “a general and enduring positive or negative feeling about some person, object, or issue” (p.7). Another definition of “attitude” is defined by McQuail (2010) as “underlying dispositions or mental sets toward some objects that are generally measured in terms of verbal responses to evaluate statements” (p. 515).

These definitions have shaped the way attitudes are viewed and studied by researchers as they relate to persuasion and social psychology. Since Gordon Allport (1935) claimed attitudes were one of the most important concepts in contemporary social psychology, the study of attitude change has become a major focus relating to persuasion factors (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). In the late 1940s, studies evaluating the effects of wartime documentaries on public attitudes showed evidence that communication could influence attitudes (Perloff, 2014). Attitudes are formed over time through various individual situations and experiences (Perloff, 2014).

A person’s behavior is impacted by his/her attitude about and object or situation. In most cases, a person’s attitude can aid in the prediction of his/her behavior (Perloff, 2014). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1977), behavior can be predicted; however, consideration must be given to a person’s attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control (Perloff, 2014). Behavioral predictions based in attitudes are formed from the general notion of consistency (Ajzen & Fishbien, 1977; Perloff, 2014). Over time, however, researchers have found that attitude is not always a predictor of behavior, and people are not always consistent in their actions in accordance with their attitudes (Perloff, 2014). In addition to attitudes, norms and scripts play a major role in the way people react to situations (Perloff, 2014). A norm is a person’s belief of the appropriate

way to behave in any given situation (Perloff, 2014). A script is the “mindless” reaction a person gives in a given situation in relation to the factors surrounding it (Perloff, 2014, p. 128).

Characteristics of a person can also have a major impact on his/her attitude and behavior. The two main moderating factors determining a person’s consistency are self-monitoring and direct experience (Perloff, 2014). Self-monitoring is described as “self-observation and self-control guided by situational cues to social appropriateness” (Snyder, 1974, p. 526). The two groups of self-monitors are high and low self-monitors (Snyder, 1987). High self-monitors look to others in order to determine how to react to a situation, whereas low self-monitors look to their inner feelings and attitudes to develop a reaction (Perloff, 2014; Snyder, 1987). According to Fazio and Zanna (1981), direct experience leads to attitudes that “are more clearly defined, held with greater certainty, more stable over time, and more resistant to encounter influence” (p. 185; Perloff, 2014). Those attitudes formed from direct experience in real-world situations are more likely to predict a behavioral reaction than those that are formed from an indirect experience (Perloff, 2014).

Persuasive Communication

Since attitudes are developed over time and through direct experiences, they are subject to change; however, it takes time to affect this change. According to Petty and Cacioppo (1996), the process of changing attitudes can also be referred to as persuasion. Persuasion is defined as “a symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their own attitudes or behaviors regarding an issue through the transmission of a message in an atmosphere of free choice” (Perloff, 2014, p. 17). Persuasion has led to historical events of major proportion and changed attitudes

and ultimately the behavior of the general public throughout the past. As time passes and technologies change, persuasion will continue to evolve (Perloff, 2014). As persuasion evolves, more research will need to be conducted regarding persuasive techniques. The more information made available to people, the more complex persuasion and messaging becomes. Digital and interactive technological advances have begun to blur the lines between information, entertainment and influence (Perloff, 2014). Additionally, cultural diversity and contemporary technologies make it more challenging to connect with an audience and determine its reaction to a message (Perloff, 2014).

In order for persuasion to occur, each of the following five elements must be present (Perloff, 2014). The first element of persuasion argues persuaders utilize symbols as a form of language to connect the audience with a concept or idea. Another element to consider is the persuader's attempt and intention to influence is an individual's conscious decision. The third element that must be present is the belief that individuals persuade themselves; a message or argument is presented to them and they are responsible for forming or reforming their attitudes or behaviors. Fourth, the transmission of a message is involved and disseminated by the persuader. Finally, individuals are ultimately free to choose to be persuaded or not. The result is individuals make up their own minds as to whether they will change their attitudes about issues, people, and ideas (Perloff, 2014).

According to Miller (1980), persuasion is effecting attitude in three different ways: shaping, reinforcing, or changing the attitude. Shaping often involves the ideas of socialization and cultural norms (Perloff, 2014). For example, Apple is a well-known

brand around the world. This brand attracts innovators and those who are high self-monitors and shapes their attitudes toward innovation, sophistication, and intelligence. Reinforcing is persuading individuals to stand firm in the position they already hold (Perloff, 2014). Persuaders take on the “join ‘em, not beat ‘em” attitude (Perloff, 2014, p. 34). When it comes to reinforcing, health and safety experts try to reinforce individuals’ decision to quit smoking. Persuaders create messaging to help remind individuals to maintain a healthy lifestyle. According to Perloff (2014), “communications can and do change attitudes” (p. 35). Changing is possibly the most important persuasive effect of the three presented by Miller. Persuaders create messaging that influence individuals’ attitudes and behavior in either a negative or a positive way.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion is a framework for understanding the effects of sources, messages, and receiver factors in regard to both active and passive processors of information (Petty, Brinol, & Priester, 2009; Perloff, 2014). ELM is a theory of attitude change modeled through cognitive processing and persuasion (McQuail, 2010; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; 1996). This model predicts the times when people will be most likely to elaborate or not on persuasive messaging through one of the two distinct forms of processing communications (Perloff, 2014). ELM is based in three basic principles: elaboration, likelihood, and route. Elaboration is considered the extent to which an individual thinks about the information presented (Perloff, 2014). Likelihood refers to the probability an event will occur (Perloff, 2014). Additionally, route is a metaphorical term for the mental processing facility of an individual.

There are two routes to persuasion through the human mind according to ELM: the central route and the peripheral route (Perloff, 2014; Petty & Cacioppo 1996). The central processing route occurs when an individual utilizes a detailed thought process and gives information careful consideration, often resulting in long-term retention of the information (Perloff, 2014; Petty et al, 2009). The peripheral processing route utilizes less thought and relies on peripheral cues to make a decision; this route can lead to attitude change; however, the change is only for a limited time (Petty & Cacioppo; Perloff, 2014).

Petty and Cacioppo (1986) identified seven postulates of ELM and are as follows:

1. "People are motivated to hold correct attitudes.
2. Although people want to hold correct attitudes, the amount and nature of issue-relevant elaboration in which people are willing or able to engage to evaluate a message vary with individual and situational factors.
3. Variables can affect the amount and direction of attitude change by: (A) serving as persuasive arguments, (B) serving as peripheral cues, and/or (C) affecting the extent or direction of issue and argument elaboration.
4. Variables affecting motivation and/or ability to process a message in a relatively objective manner can do so by either enhancing or reducing argument scrutiny.
5. As motivation and/or ability to process arguments is decreased, peripheral cues become relatively more important determinants of persuasion. Conversely, as arguments scrutiny is increased, peripheral cues become relatively less important determinants of persuasion.
6. Variables affecting message processing in a relatively biased manner can produce either a positive or negative motivational and/or ability bias to the issue relevant thoughts attempted.
7. Attitude changes that result mostly from processing issue-relevant arguments (central route) will show greater temporal persistence, greater prediction of behavior, and greater resistance to counterpersuasion than attitude changes that result mostly from peripheral cues." (pp. 128-175).

Central Processing Route

The central processing route consists of a detailed thought process where careful consideration is given to the information presented to an individual (Perloff, 2014). This route is impacted by an individual's previous knowledge and experiences and works to determine the "central merits of the position advocated" (Petty et al., 2009, p. 132). While the accuracy or rationality of a decision may not be rational or accurate, the central processing route results in an attitude (Petty et al., 2009). Attitude change is persistent through this route and highly resistant to change until challenged by "cogent contrary information" (Petty et al., 2009, p. 134).

When individuals utilize the central route, they carefully analyze the central information and position of the communication (Petty et al., 2009). What is central to the position can be perceived differently from person to person and situation to situation due to their past experiences (Petty et al., 2009). For example, some individuals think about social issues like capital punishment in a moral sense, whereas others view it in a strict legal sense. Research suggests when the media gives a topic a large amount of coverage, the problem is rendered highly accessible, causing them to think about more when determining their attitude about a subject or situation (Petty et al., 2009).

Once individuals have some cognitive thoughts about an issue or message, they must then integrate the new thoughts into their overall cognitive structure in order for them to be committed to memory and easily accessible (Petty et al., 2009). Individuals must think about the issue multiple times and internally relate it to past personal experiences in order to form their attitude about it. Sometimes attitudes are changed by a thoughtful process and examination of information in relation to relevant experiences and knowledge (Petty et al., 2009). The central processing route is considered more

persistent, resistant, and predictive of behavior of the two routes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Peripheral Processing Route

The peripheral processing route suggests an individual accepts or rejects a persuasive message without carefully thinking about the issue (Petty et al., 2009; Perloff, 2014). The peripheral route often occurs when an individual's motivation or ability to process information is low and they use simple cues to influence their attitude (Petty et al., 2009). McGuire (1969) suggested in order to participate in society at times, people act like "lazy organisms" (p. 198) and utilize simpler means of evaluating an argument and forming an attitude (Bem, 1972).

Persuasive messaging often includes language to lead the listener to believe the majority of people have a certain attitude about a situation; this type of "validity cue" can lead to the "bandwagon effect" wherein individuals change their attitude because they believe others feel a certain way (Petty et al., 2009, p. 135). Perloff (2014) defines "heuristic" as a simple decision making strategy. Heuristic cues include anything individuals encounter in their environment that lead them to use a mental shortcut. For example, celebrity endorsements of a product are a cue to individuals suggesting that since an influential person supports the idea, they should too. Other heuristic cues include authority, commitment, reciprocation, liking, scarcity, and social proof (Lundy, 2017). Heuristic cues can be different for different people according to their past personal experiences.

While peripheral processing can lead to effective attitude change, the change only lasts for a limited amount of time because the attitude is not incorporated into the overall cognitive structure of the individual's mind (Petty et al., 2009). Over time an

individual's feelings about a source can change, and the simple cues initially associated with the issue dissociate from the message (Petty et al., 2009). Attitudes formed through the peripheral route "tend to be less accessible, enduring, and resistant to subsequent attaching messages than attitudes based on careful processing of message arguments" (Petty et al., 2009, p. 135; Petty & Krosnick, 1995).

Motivation and Ability

The two main factors in determining which processing strategy will be used are motivation and ability (Perloff, 2014). Motivation is the motive behind the type of processing that will occur. If the message up for consideration is a serious matter and individuals are therefore motivated to seriously consider it, they will process the information through the central route. However, if an individual lacks the motivation or ability to process a message carefully he/she will process it through the peripheral route. Both motivation and ability must be present for elaboration to occur (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996). Prior knowledge and personal relevance are two variables that can influence an individual's motivation to process information.

Prior Knowledge

Within postulate six of ELM, an important variable exists pertaining to information processing; this variable is the organized structure of knowledge a person has about an issue within their mind or prior knowledge (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Preexisting information within a person's schema tends to be biased in favor of one side of the issue or another (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). While sometimes it is possible for prior knowledge to help produce more objective processing, the previously conceived opinion can have an effect on the outcome of the new opinion and attitude formation (Petty &

Cacioppo, 1986). Individuals who are well informed on a topic are more likely to process information more thoughtfully leading to central processing of the message.

Prior knowledge allows individuals to consider the issue-relevant information and identify the arguments presented aside from the information less central to the issue presented to them (Wood, Rhodes, & Biek, 1995). Typically, those with prior knowledge about a topic will have a high amount of elaboration regarding it and will, therefore process the information via the central route (Wood et al., 1995). Those with less knowledge on the issue are likely to process the message through the peripheral route. Those who possess less knowledge on the topic are less likely to determine the weaknesses and strengths of the arguments and will have less confidence in their formed attitudes and opinions (Perloff, 2014).

Personal Relevance

Petty and Cacioppo (1986) described personal relevance to possibly be the most important variable regarding the motivation an individual will have to process a message. Personal relevance is the importance and connection an individual feels toward a message. The more an individual feels connected to an issue the more likely he/she will be to process the issue-relevant arguments within the information presented (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In other words, as personal relevance increases, the motivation to process increases. When individuals are considering a message with personal relevance, persuaders should guide them through the central processing route by utilizing clear and logical arguments (Perloff, 2014).

ELM and the components related to this research has been discussed and explained in depth. The following sections will discuss related studies that have used ELM, as well as those relating to perceptions of the beef industry.

ELM Research: Agriculture

ELM research in agriculture has played a major role in understanding consumers' perceptions and attitudes of the industry and the commodities within it. In 2005, Verbeke conducted a literature review describing information about how agriculture and food is communicated to the public. Verbeke (2005) identified information processing as a major component pertaining to consumers' food purchasing choices; the ELM is one of two major models listed as relevant to food quality and safety.

In addition, the literature review by Verbeke (2005) reviewed a study conducted by Frewer, Howard, Hedderley, and Shepherd (1997) regarding food risks. The study utilized the ELM to investigate the impact of source credibility, persuasive content and personal relevance on attitudes on food risk. Using an experimental design, the study consisted of two categories of food risk messages including high and low risk. Medical sources were identified as a favorable source of information that produced positive attitudes from participants. Further results showed credibility did not have much impact on the amount of risk-relevant thoughts participants had. An increase in persuasive information had more of a tendency of participants to process the message in an elaborative manner and were seen as more favorable, possibly because they were perceived as more relevant. The participants' level of personal relevance correlated with information that contained high-persuasive information. The authors of this study found the ELM is a useful tool in determining how to effectively communicate risk information with consumers (Frewer et al., 1997).

Meyers (2008) looked at the ELM as a dual model with message testing and message frames to examine how the media and communication can influence attitude.

Meyers examined how persuasive messaging influenced attitudes toward argument quality and the likelihood of publishing agricultural biotechnology information. The results of the study showed prior knowledge and preexisting attitudes played a major role in attitude formation about agricultural biotechnology. Issue involvement was also a large factor in attitude determination related to agricultural biotechnology. Meyers found that the way persuasive messages are framed has an impact on attitudes toward argument quality and is related to an individual's ability to process information and the route to persuasion as it relates to the ELM.

Similarly, Lundy (2004) examined what frames are capable of affecting the cognitive processing and attitudes for agricultural extension agents. Lundy presented extension agents with persuasive messaging suggesting the benefits of internationalizing the extension service. The two frames used were mutual benefit and moral norms. This study specifically looked into issue involvement and need for cognition, and found the significant differences reinforce the role they play within the ELM. The results showed the frames in question did not have a significant effect on extension agents' attitudes toward internationalizing extension or the quality of the message presented. The study concluded frames affect message elaboration differently and pre-existing attitudes and prior knowledge about issues should be taken into consideration when developing persuasive messaging.

A study conducted by Goodwin (2013) employed the ELM to assess the effects of transparent communication and personal relevance on the attitudes of college students as it pertains to livestock production. The study found that while personal relevance was not found to be significant, both transparent communication and

perceived transparency had a significant impact on the participants attitudes. While the ELM suggests personal relevance impacts an individual's motivation to process information, Petty and Cacioppo (1986) also suggested prior knowledge may be confounded by personal relevance. In this case, it is plausible that transparent communication was more salient to the participants and, therefore had more of an impact on their attitudes. The findings of the study indicated that a lack of transparency within communication can have a significant impact on the amount of elaboration consumers exhibit concerning agriculture messaging.

Ruth (2015) used the ELM and Shannon and Weaver's communication model to examine the influence of persuasive communication on consumers' attitude change. The study also examined consumers' risk perception of genetically modified food. The study suggested source credibility was effective in influencing attitude change while prior knowledge was not. This study also found that message sources were associated with attitude change while risk perception was not. Risk perceptions and changes in attitude were found to be processed differently. Additionally, risk perception was not found to conform to the ELM.

In general, past ELM research conducted within an agricultural context has demonstrated consumers process information related to the industry through the peripheral route (Ruth, 2015; Goodwin, 2013; Verbeke & Ward, 2006; Frewer et al., 1997). Studies also concluded the use of framing can be beneficial in providing a connection to ELM and ultimately to communicating about agriculture (Goodwin 2013; Meyers, 2008; Lundy 2004).

ELM Research with Beef Perceptions

Verbeke and Ward (2006) looked at Belgian consumers' attitudes about a beef traceability and labeling campaign. In conjunction with a mandatory beef labelling regulation, informative beef campaigns were introduced to consumers. The study consisted of a pre and post-campaign survey to measure the impact of the information cues. Prior to the campaign, 40% of the participants were interviewed and 60% were interviewed after the information event occurred. The campaign consisted of a quarter-page colored advertisement, which included a phone number for participants to call in order to receive an information packet regarding traceability and labeling, in 20 national newspapers and four women's magazines. An estimated 15,000 people were exposed to the information, but only 304 calls were received from consumers. The lack of participation from consumers reinforces the assumption that consumers had a low ability or motivation to process the information, and the likelihood for elaboration was limited.

The Millennial Generation

The millennial generation has grown up in a world filled with continuously expanding technology and media. Information is at their fingertips and are considered to have access to more information than any other generation in history (Considine, 2009). According to Considine (2009) even though millennials have access to such a wealth of information, they are still lacking in literacy skills that are the foundation of success in both an academic environment and life.

Millennials have constant access to information, but one issue seems to be getting them to process and retain the information they are consuming. Identifying the forms of media they are engaging with is also an important factor. According to Kilian

(2012), there are three groups of millennial media consumers, including the Restrained Millennials, the Entertainment-Seeking Millennials, and the Highly Connected Millennials. The Restrained Millennials are those who are generally content with traditional media products and only look to the internet every once in a while (Kilian, 2012). The Entertainment-Seeking Millennials are the group who uses social media most often; however, the use is in a casual mode, where they only consume the content created by others (Kilian, 2012). The Entertainment-Seeking group could be assumed to seek comfort and convenience when consuming media and information. The Highly Connected Millennials are considered to be the leaders of this generation because they use social media both actively and passively (Kilian, 2012). In order to reach this group, traditional forms of media are less important and social media should be employed in order to engage them (Kilian, 2012).

Consumer Perceptions of Beef

Verbeke and Vackier (2004) examined how consumer involvement in an issue or their personal connection could affect attitude formation pertaining to perceptions of fresh meat. The sample of participants was divided into four groups: meat lovers, meat consumers, cautious meat lovers, and concerned meat consumers. The study found that cautious meat lovers and concerned meat consumers had strong perceptions of meat risks. However, straightforward meat lovers focused mainly on taste as a major component of their attitude formation. Indifferent consumers relied mainly on price. Verbeke and Vackier found that meat lovers, or those who were highly involved, focused on intangible qualities, as well as the other qualities each group focused on to form their attitudes. This research supports the view that personal relevance is

connected to an individual's motivation to process persuasive communication and can lead to high levels of elaboration.

Millennial Perceptions of Beef: Industry Research

In 2014, Shugoll Research conducted a study funded by and for The Beef Checkoff program regarding millennials' attitudes about beef. According to the study, millennials typically eat beef about twice a week, which is about the same as non-millennials, and it is usually in the form of ground beef (Shugoll, 2014; Neuman, 2013). Millennials are cost conscious when shopping for beef and the five most important factors to millennials when deciding what to eat include: "great taste, good value, feeling comfortable and confident preparing the dish, being a food they feel good about and having an ideal balance of taste and nutrition" (Shugoll, 2014, p.9). The study also found that only about one third of millennials are concerned about how cattle are raised and treated and about four in ten say their concern impacts the food they consume (Shugoll, 2014). According to Shugoll (2014), when purchasing steak, millennials look to be sure the fat is trimmed from the outer edges, but still want some marbling for flavor. Millennials primarily look to websites, friends and family, Pinterest and cookbooks for cooking ideas; they typically look for meal ideas that are easy to prepare and last more than one meal (Shugoll, 2014).

Another study conducted by The Beef Checkoff (2015) found "millennials are frustrated about the contradictory information about whether or not beef is good for you" (p. 20). Production issues are considered an emotional issue and not easily resolved once brought up in discussion (The Beef Checkoff, 2015). The same study found millennials associate eating beef with certain emotions including anticipation, excitement, satisfaction, comfort, and nostalgia (The Beef Checkoff, 2015). Millennials

are considered an “and” not an “or” generation of people, meaning they feel as though they can have more of everything (The Beef Checkoff, 2015).

One study conducted by The Beef Checkoff (2014) examined millennial perceptions of beef production. The study explored the most effective means of positively communicating to millennials about the feedyard as well as debunking the myths about the idea of “factory farming” (The Beef Checkoff, 2014, p. 3). The other main objective of the study was to utilize the information gained to develop communications strategies to address the negative outlook the public has of the industry (The Beef Checkoff, 2014). Forty-four percent of the participants associated the entire production process with “factory farming” (The Beef Checkoff, 2014, p. 8). The study found millennials associate “factory farming” with inhumane treatment of animals and negative perceptions (The Beef Checkoff, 2014, p. 7). Along with an emotional response to beef, “millennials express high levels of suspicion, worry, and uncertainty about factory farming [and] positive emotions are very low” (The Beef Checkoff, 2014, p. 12). The participants were also exposed to a variety of educational and informational stimuli related to the beef industry (The Beef Checkoff, 2014). “The initial stimuli had a positive impact; in fact, many even claimed to have a more positive view on the beef production process from simply hearing a brief description of the beef production process” (The Beef Checkoff, 2014, p. 14).

Research Questions

This study conceptually explores the attitudes and perceptions Florida millennials have pertaining to beef within the framework of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The primary question guiding this study is

“What are the perceptions of Florida collegiate millennial consumers toward locally produced beef?” Several objectives also guided this empirical investigation.

- Determine which characteristics and features of the beef industry the millennial generation will find important when purchasing beef.
- Determine which characteristics and features of beef products the millennial generation will find most important when purchasing beef.
- Determine Florida millennial consumers’ perceptions of the Florida beef industry and Florida raised beef.
- Determine the Florida millennial consumers’ preferences of information provided by current communication pieces by Florida Cattle Ranchers.

Summary

Chapter 2 introduced attitudes and persuasive communication. Following the introduction of these two items, the Elaboration Likelihood Model was examined. The central and peripheral processing routes were explained. Further elaboration took place through the discussion of motivation and ability, prior knowledge, and personal relevance. The ELM was then looked at from a research standpoint and recent studies utilizing the model were examined. The studies examined were related to agriculture and looked at individuals’ abilities to process persuasive messaging. Most studies found a relatively low degree of cognitive thought when it comes to persuasive messaging in agriculture. Two studies were presented regarding the beef or meat industry as it relates to the ELM. Finally, the research questions for this study were presented.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS

Social science research can be conducted in several different forms. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are important for social science research. Considering the two types of methods, a qualitative approach was identified to be the most appropriate methodology for this study. This section will focus on supporting the case for the research method chosen. Three focus groups were conducted to gain the perspective of Florida collegiate millennials. The population was University of Florida millennial students and the sample was from a course offered at the university called Fostering Innovation through Leadership. Researcher biases, details of the research design, data collection and analysis will be presented. Reliability and validity of the study will also be discussed.

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

The purpose of this study was to identify how millennials perceive the Florida beef industry and how they process the information and communication material they are presented with regarding the industry. In order to gain a robust understanding of millennials' perspectives on the issue, a qualitative method of research was employed in the form of focus groups. Qualitative research is further defined by Flick (2009) as:

[Qualitative research is] research interested in analyzing the subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images rather than numbers and statistics. (p. 472).

Qualitative research most often results in narrative descriptions from participants that give comprehensive details regarding their personal perceptions (Ary et al., 2014).

Observing how subjects react to situations is equally as important as understanding how they think and feel (Ary et al., 2014). Understanding phenomenon from participants'

perspectives is a vital component of qualitative research. Instead of the use of empirical results, words and descriptions are used, along with direct citations and original words from the participants. The guiding ontological belief in this study was that millennials' perceptions are based on their past experiences and the personal relevance the issue has to them. The guiding epistemological belief was that millennials' perceptions and opinions are understood through which processing route they utilize.

Instrumentation

Qualitative research focuses on the big picture rather than the breakdown of each individual variable. Understanding the full picture is important to qualitative research because it helps the researcher to paint the picture of the phenomenon. Focus groups were the qualitative method for collecting descriptive data. One advantage of utilizing focus groups as a form of data collection is the participants are interviewed all at the same time and are able to respond to both the moderator as well as the other participants (Ary et al., 2014). The participants were free to share their thoughts and opinions pertaining to beef on a local and general level as well as their purchasing behaviors. Another advantage of using this type of data collection is participants may reveal more of their points of view because others' thoughts may encourage a reaction or depth of thought (Ary et al., 2014).

An interview protocol was created in the form of a moderator's guide, which included instructions for the moderator/focus group facilitators, questions, and probes. A researcher's journal was also utilized to record common themes and reactions from the participants. Each of the focus groups were audio and video recorded and transcribed by the principle investigator.

This study consisted of three focus groups with 18 participants total. The focus groups consisted of both male and female participants. The groups ranged from five to seven participants. According to Morgan (1998), smaller groups give participants more time to speak and interject personal anecdotes and experiences. With a study such as this one, it is important to gain an in-depth understanding of each participant's opinions (Morgan, 1998). Emotionally charged and controversial topics benefit from smaller groups because the moderator is able to pay close attention to each participant and their needs (Morgan, 1998).

The first phase of each focus group consisted of the participants being asked about their personal experience with beef and the Florida beef industry. The participants were asked a series of questions focused on their prior knowledge of the beef industry and their personal relevance to the issue. The second phase of each focus group prompted the participants to look at several communication materials created by an emerging sector of the industry, focused on local beef production and sales. The participants were then asked to create a thought listing of each of the pieces. They were also prompted to share their thoughts with the rest of the group. In each phase of the study, the participants were encouraged to share their genuine thoughts and opinions regarding the issue.

Population and Participants

The population of interest in this study was the Florida collegiate millennial generation. The participants were volunteers from a course at the University of Florida ranging in age from 18- to 21-years-old. This generation is of interest because of their potential buying power and decision-making skills. This generation is of collegiate age and older; therefore, they are likely making independent decisions about their food

purchasing behavior and beginning to form more solid opinions about issues. Millennials think differently than generations who came before them and are, therefore, a population of interest concerning their thoughts and opinions on issues like food and purchasing behavior (Smith & Nichols, 2015).

Sampling Procedure

Non-probability sampling was utilized when selecting the sample of participants for this study. Both purposive sampling and convenience sampling were used to compile the sample of participants. Purposive sampling was one of the factors preventing the generalizability of results. Purposive sampling was utilized because of the specific need for millennial participants as they have a large amount of purchasing power and consume information differently than other generations. Convenience sampling was implemented because UF students were easily accessible to the principle investigator and the course utilized provided a diverse group of the population. These modes of sampling allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the thoughts and views of Florida millennial collegiate students.

The sampling frame of this study consisted of students attending the University of Florida who were a part of the millennial generation. From this grouping of students, a convenience sample of students enrolled in AEC3410: Fostering Innovation through Leadership were asked to participate. The participants represented a variety of academic majors enhancing the diversity of thought and opinion. The students were recruited to participate in the focus groups through a class visit from the lead researcher as well as a Canvas e-learning announcement. The participants were also provided with incentives of extra credit and gift cards.

Focus Group Descriptions

Focus Group 1

The first focus group took place on July 25, 2017, and involved six participants. Five of the six participants identified as female, with one identifying as male. Two of the participants identified as “White,” one as “African American,” one as “African American/Caribbean American,” one as “Hispanic,” and one as “Other.” The age range for this focus group was 20-21 years old. The participants reported majoring in the following: Anthropology, Sociology, Political Science, Business Information Systems, and Telecommunication-News.

Focus Group 2

The second focus group took place on July 26, 2017, and involved five participants. Three of the five participants identified as female, with two identifying as male. Three participants identified as “White,” and the other two identified as “Asian” or “African-American.” The age range for the focus group was 19-20 years old. The participants reported majoring in the following: Marketing, Finance, Computer Science, and Journalism.

Focus Group 3

The third focus group took place on July 27, 2017, and involved seven participants. Three of the seven participants identified as female, with four identifying as male. Three participants identified as “White,” three identified as “Hispanic,” and one identified as “Asian.” The age range for the focus group was 18-21. The participants reported majoring in the following: Sustainability and the Built Environment, Industrial and Systems Engineering, Psychology, Animal Science, Visual Arts, and Chemistry.

Validity

A panel of focus group experts specializing in agricultural communication and public opinion reviewed the moderator's guides for the study prior to data collection. Data were collected directly from the participants via audio and video recording. The researcher then transcribed the recording verbatim in order to ensure the validity of the findings. The audio transcripts were analyzed to determine common themes based on the participants' responses. Validity is one of the most important components of a research study because in order for the results to be valid they must be truthful and plausible (Tracy, 2010). In order to further ensure the validity and reliability of the study "thick descriptions" were utilized (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). From the transcription of the focus groups, in-depth descriptions of the participants' perceptions and opinions will be conveyed throughout the results section of the study.

Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research relies on two main principles. The first is the data must be explicit in defining what the participant said and what the researcher's interpretations were (Flick, 2009). The second is the procedures of the interview process and the text need to be explicitly checked and rechecked and the moderators must be consistent (Flick, 2009). In order to address the temporal issue, the focus groups were all conducted within the time span of three consistent days, at the same time of day, and for the same amount of time. Reliability procedures for this study also included double-checking the focus group transcripts to be sure they matched the audio and video recording. Peer debriefing was utilized to ensure the reliability of the data collection and analysis. The transcripts were co-coded for common themes to ensure the reliability of the researcher. Any discrepancies were addressed between the coders

in order to ensure the most accurate results. An audit trail can be conducted to verify the trustworthiness of this study.

Data Collection

The collection of data occurred on the University of Florida campus in a computer laboratory. The Institutional Review Board of the University of Florida approved the study and instruments prior to data collection (IRB # IRB201701443). Note takers and an assistant moderator were present for all three of the focus groups. The focus groups were recorded digitally with participant permission, in order to create transcripts. All thought listings were also collected for analysis.

A moderator's guide was developed for the focus groups with two sections. The first phase of the guide focused on gaining an understanding of the participants' views of the beef industry as a whole, as well as the Florida beef industry. The first phase also focused on the participants' views on the beef industry and its relationship to other factors. The second phase focused on gaining participants' thoughts and opinions about communication pieces created for an emerging sector of the beef industry focused on Florida beef products. The moderator's guide was modified during the first focus group because of time restrictions. A portion of the communication questions, as well as some of the concluding questions and discussion was excluded.

In order to ensure the strength of the moderator's guide, a pilot study was conducted of millennial students within the Agricultural Education and Communication Department at the University of Florida. The focus groups were recorded and a note taker was utilized. There were five participants, four females and one male. One of the participants was also an experienced focus group moderator, who provided insight at the conclusion of the experience. Due to the length of the guide, most participants were

only able to test the first phase of the guide. Because of this pilot study, some of the questions were modified to better fit the goals of the research objectives.

Communication Material

The video showed to participants was a promotional piece about FCR featuring two interviews of ranchers, their families and the organization's Chief Executive Officer. A single ranch was featured and included shots of cattle in pastures, families mingling and eating, cooking on the grill, and different shots of the ranch. The mission and values of the organization were discussed throughout the video as well.

The website has tabs including about, sustainable Florida, our ranchers, products and recipes, news, media, and contact. The website serves as FCR's go-to information platform. The two social media platforms viewed were Facebook and Instagram; both serve to promote FCR beef. The logo/labels presented to participants appear on every medium and on FCR beef products. The recipe card features one of the FCR members and a steak recipe. The blog post features an FCR member and their practices. The rack card serves as a snapshot of FCR's mission and values. Each of these pieces can be found in the appendix for reference.

Data Analysis

The recorded focus group discussions were transcribed, summarized, and divided into categories that emerged from the groups. The transcriptions were created by the principal investigator and reviewed by a third party. Triangulation was employed through the documents provided by the note takers of each focus group. The transcripts of the note takers were analyzed to verify the attitudes of the statements within the transcripts. The transcripts were also examined and coded by a co-coder in order to prevent researcher bias and further ensure the reliability of the results. The categories

were defined through the use of codes. Themes and findings relating to the beef industry and the communication pieces were explored.

Subjectivity Statement

As the researcher, I must address the facilitator bias that is present within this study. I was born and raised in the state of Florida; however, I did not become a part of the agricultural industry until the age of 13. My experience with cattle production did not begin until I was a junior in high school at the age of 16. I showed cattle for two years in high school and began learning about the industry. I furthered my education as an agricultural education and communication major at the University of Florida as an undergraduate student. In the summer of 2016, I worked at Buck Island Ranch, gaining more knowledge and experience of cattle production.

I am currently an agricultural education and communication master's student at the University of Florida. My career interests lay within the Florida beef industry, which is what prompted the idea of this study. I am currently working with the Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC (FCR) to create a communications plan for the organization. This plan will be targeted toward the millennial generation and relies on their preferences when buying beef. I have personally worked within the beef industry and directly with producers, so I am biased toward the good nature of the beef industry. My career goals include working within the beef industry as a communicator; therefore, it is my goal to conduct this study with as little bias as possible in order to ensure viable results that can be used to better the industry as a whole.

My studies and experiences have provided me with a specific view of the beef industry. Through careful reflection and consideration throughout this study, I have worked to set aside my own perceptions and biases to the best of my ability. However, I

understand experiences could potentially influence data interpretation; therefore, it is my intention to present my biases here and consciously keep them from influencing the participant responses and final results of this study. One note taker was employed specifically to take notes on the reactions of the participants. Two assistant moderators/observers were utilized to make observations and ask additional questions; one of the assistant moderators served for the first and last focus group and the other was only employed for the second focus group. In order to avoid my personal bias, a panel of experts were asked to review the moderator's guide and note takers and observers were utilized in the focus group process.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research design and methodology for this study. The population of interest for this study was Florida millennials, and the sample was University of Florida millennial students. The design of the study was qualitative, using structured focus groups for data collection. Focus groups were utilized in order to gain in-depth data on the perceptions of the participants. The data was further analyzed to develop specific themes and categories that exist among them. Reliability and validity were also given consideration throughout this chapter and the study as a whole. Finally, the researcher's bias was addressed.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents findings for three focus group sessions. The purpose of this study was to determine University of Florida millennials' perceptions of Florida produced beef. To achieve this purpose, focus group discussions addressed 1) determining which characteristics and features of the beef industry are most important to participants when purchasing beef products, 2) determining which characteristics and features of beef products are most important to participants when purchasing beef products, 3) determining participants perceptions of the Florida beef industry and Florida raised beef, and 4) determining participants' preferences of information provided by current communication pieces by the Florida Cattle Ranchers. The results are presented in order of the research questions in narrative format based on the participants' discussion.

Participants' demographic information contribute to the understanding of the findings. Participants filled out an open-ended questionnaire at the start of the focus group. Participants were asked their age, gender, ethnicity, and major in college. Each participant was asked to introduce him or herself and tell a little bit about him or herself resulting in them telling the groups where they were originally from. The majority of participants were originally from the state of Florida, however, not all of them were.

Table 4-1. Participant demographics

Group	Age	Race	Gender	Major	Eats Beef	Pseudonym
One	20	Other	Female	Anthropology	No	Ashley
One	20	Hispanic	Female	Telecommunication-News	Yes	Jessica
One	20	African American	Female	Business Information Systems	No	Peyton
One	20	African American	Male	Political Science	Yes	Jeremy
One	21	White	Female	Sociology	Yes	Bella
One	21	White	Female	Anthropology	Yes	Tiffany
Two	20	African American	Male	Journalism	Yes	Levy
Two	20	Asian	Male	Computer Science	Yes	John
Two	19	White	Female	Marketing	Yes	Kara
Two	19	White	Female	Finance	Yes	Taylor
Two	20	White	Female	Marketing	Yes	Kylie
Three	20	Asian	Male	Chemistry	Yes	Gordon
Three	21	Hispanic	Female	Visual Arts	No	Anne
Three	19	Hispanic	Male	Animal Science	Yes	Wallace
Three	21	Hispanic	Female	Psychology	No	Charlotte
Three	20	White	Female	Sustainability	No	Natalie
Three	18	White	Male	Industrial Engineering	No	Case
Three	20	White	Male	Sustainability	Yes	Dalton

Important Characteristics and Features of the Beef Industry

In order to explore this research objective, participants were asked questions related to their thoughts regarding cattle production in relation to a series of topics, including the environment, land conservation, water quality and quantity, wildlife, the rancher, and the care of animals. The participants were then asked if any of the connections had an influence on their decision to purchase beef. Themes discovered surrounding the “environment” were mainly negative regarding the industry as a whole, however there were some mentions of “land conservation” efforts in a positive sense. “Sustainability” was also a common thread throughout the focus groups. Themes discovered surrounding “management practices” were also revealed mainly in a negative context and stereotyped in either a “local” or “corporate” context. The themes discovered surrounding the “treatment of animals” were related to “animal health” or “corporate farming.”

Beef Industry and the Environment

Each group expressed their concern for the effect cattle ranching is having on the “environment.” Some participants were particularly passionate about the negative effects cattle ranching has on “climate change,” “global warming,” and the “methane” production of cattle. However, one participant with specific knowledge of the beef industry raised conflicting views of the effects. The participant discussed “regulation” of “the waste of the animals” as well as the idea that the ranchers “find a way to re-implement the manure.”

With respect to “deforestation,” one respondent discussed how the beef industry as a whole is contributing to damaging the environment:

The beef industry in general, not in Florida has been caused to reduce like the rainforest and stuff because they're tearing it down for livestock. Specifically, primarily beef. So, in a sense it's almost ruining, not only ecosystems, but people's like livelihoods because like they can't farm or the environment is being ruined.

Water

One participant expressed concern for the quality of water affected by “pesticides, antibiotics, hormones” that “seeps into the aquifer.” Participants were concerned about the effects of “runoff” on water quality caused by cattle ranching and the beef industry.

Participants in all three groups brought up concerns for the quantity of water used to produce beef products. Each group viewed water as a major environmental concern because of the amount of water beef production uses. One participant said, “to make one hamburger it's like 15 days' worth of showers. Like it wastes a lot of water to produce cows like beef and stuff.” Participants in group two never quantified exactly how much water they believed was used in the production; however, they said, “a lot of water.” One participant in group three said, “I read actually to produce one pound of beef it takes like 70 pounds of water.”

Sustainability

Group one discussed their perceptions on “sustainable” agricultural practices and viewed “becoming a vegetarian” as “more sustainable” than “the beef industry.” One participant specifically said, “It's still really expensive, but I think it's more sustainable for the environment than the beef industry is.”

One participant implied the beef industry was not necessarily “agriculture” in this statement:

I mean the company he works for does not sell any like meat products or anything like that, it's strictly agriculture.

Land conservation was an important topic of discussion amongst the participants. While some believed cattle ranching was having a "negative" effect on the environment others believed cattle ranching was beneficial to land conservation efforts as seen in this quote:

You know, if there weren't all the cattle and the ranchers, you know, that land would, you know, probably be buildings and cities and, you know, their preserving different species. So, I thought that was pretty cool and something I never really thought about before.

Beef Industry and Management Practices

Each group discussed the management practices of the beef cattle industry and continuously referenced "corporate" or "local" types of farming or ranching to categorize their thoughts and beliefs. One participant from group two expressed the thought that "cattle ranchers...the big ones" are solely focused on "proficiency" and only see the cattle as "numbers." Another participant said, "They just want to be efficient." Another participant said "perception" of a corporate operation is that "higher-ups...don't really work on the farm, they own it" and someone else does the work resulting in a disconnect.

Overall, the groups deemed "corporate" farming or ranching as negative and generally found "local" or "small scale" operations to have positive connotations. One participant from group two said, "I think the size really probably makes a difference." A participant said ranchers "treat their animals well, when it's on a small scale." Another participant said, "if it's more local they'll have less cows so maybe that's something that they truly care about."

One participant from summed up the perceptions of “large scale corporate” operations and “small scale” operations with this statement:

I would say [farmers] do good like treat their animals well, when it’s small scale like that. When it gets large scale, corporate speaking I guess, it begins to become more inhumane, in terms of like forcefully impregnating the cows to reproduce

The participants also joked about the “stereotypical” farmer or rancher, but generally agreed it was an “older man” in “jeans” and “cowboy boots” with a “cowboy hat” or “ball cap.” While their descriptions of the ranchers are “stereotypical,” they mentioned that this is a “sugarcoated” version of reality.

Beef Industry and the Treatment of Animals

Another common thread present in all of the groups was the “treatment of animals.” “Animal health” and “humane” practices were referenced throughout each of the groups. “Corporate farming” was also a major theme present within the discussion of “treatment of animals.” The beef products specifically were also referenced within each group discussion in reference to this topic.

Animal Health

Participants related poor treatment of cattle to competition and potential profit stating that because “they’re just competing with the next guy” their “standards” for “conditions just get worse and worse.” The “standards” are referenced again as “regulations” and participants do not perceive these “regulations” to be followed by producers nor enforced. A participant from group two said, “They just want to be efficient.” A common idea was that the producers only care about their bottom dollar and “don’t care about like the care of the animals that much.” One participant believed

that “conditions” would be “better” if there were more regulations, resulting in the “prices of meat” rising. One participant stated:

They’re kind of like at the point “We’re just going to do enough to have them survive,” and I guess in an idealistic world, we’d hope that the regulations put in place...were actually followed and were humane or ideal, but in realistic like they’re not.

Corporate Farming

The theme of “corporate farming” was also widely present in the participants’ discussion of the “treatment of animals.” One participant from group one referenced “corporate” farming as a negative and further explained “individual” operations were not “that bad and probably treat their animals better” because they view each animal as “their responsibility.” A participant from group three explained that the larger the operation gets the more “inhumane” it becomes.

When discussing the beef cattle industry as a whole, the “Midwest” was discussed as a geographic region associated with the production process. The participants viewed the “Midwest” to be a representation of corporate farming. One participant from group two said, “Um, yeah uh, the whole Midwest big cattle farms, um that’s yeah, that’s really sad...It’s not a lot of concern for the cattle or care for the cows.”

A participant from group three referenced the retail store “Wal-Mart” as a corporation saying that they believe the corporation treats the cattle “well enough” to “survive.” One participant summed up this theme, saying:

I also feel like the bigger the cattle ranch, maybe the harder it is to take better care of all the cows because there is so much more to pay attention to and there would be less time to, you know, spend individually with all the cows.

Beef

While the majority of participants viewed the treatment of cattle to be less than ideal, the groups tended to agree that the treatment of cattle would affect the quality of meat produced. An example of the participants' responses was, "Um I think a lot of like how good the meat is or how fresh it is, has a lot to do with what the rancher feeds the cow and how well they take care of them." One participant from group three with a differing opinion of how well the cattle were treated said:

I feel like a lot of these animals are actually treated fairly well even in the big corporations just because animals, if they don't produce well or if they aren't raised well they aren't really going to produce well.

One participant from group one referenced the same idea saying, "So, I guess um if they're treated better, the quality of meat would be higher." Another participant from group two also said, "great care for your cattle, you get great product."

In every group, comments were made concerning the health of cattle in reference to "pesticides," "hormones," and "antibiotics." However, the only concern for the meat product was in reference to pesticides, for example one participant said, "cows are eating pesticides and stuff because they're trying to put pesticides on the crops to keep the insects away and then it goes into the meat."

Important Characteristics and Features of Beef Products

In order to explore this research objective, participants were asked questions related to their thoughts regarding beef products in relation to a series of topics including, the environment, health, and the care of animals. The participants were then asked if any of the connections had an influence on their decision to purchase beef. When discussing the environment, the participants said they did not make the connection with the beef product. However, themes were discovered surrounding the

“treatment of animals” including, the correlation of how an animal is treated and quality of the product, the meat as well as “animal health.” Themes discovered surrounding human health were “fat content,” “food safety,” and “diseases.” The themes discovered surrounding “retail” were “cost,” “labeling,” and “trust.”

Beef and Human Health Concerns

Each group was concerned with beef products and their relation to human health mainly in reference to “fat content,” “food safety,” and “disease.” Questions were asked in reference to their purchasing behavior and health was always a factor in their decision making process of whether or not to buy a beef product. Specifically the cut of meat they wanted and how they wanted to prepare the product played major roles in the process. Human health, overall, was agreed to be the most important factor in the participant’s decision to purchase beef. A participant in group one said, “I think about probably health the most.” The rest of the group agreed with this statement by either nodding their heads or stating their approval.

Fat Content

According to the participants, the “fat content” of beef plays a major role in their decision to purchase beef and what kind of beef to purchase. One participant said, “When I eat beef, I want it to be like filet mignon like no fat because fat, just eww.” Other cuts of beef participants mentioned they were willing to purchase include “flank steak,” “prime rib,” “T-bone,” and “ground beef.”

The participants in each group tended to compare beef products to other meats in reference to how healthy they were, how much fat the contained, and how they tasted. A participant summed up this idea when by referencing “turkey” when discussing fat content when they said:

I noticed the ground turkey is healthier for you than beef, so um I thought I'd try it out and it's really good. I really like it. You can even buy like 99% lean and like 1% fat ground turkey, which I notice you can't do that with beef. But, I don't remember the exact numbers, but I think it tastes better too.

Food Safety

A major concern for every group was “food safety” factors surrounding beef.

Food preparation is one aspect that each group discussed. A participant from group three said they would rather purchase “frozen prepackaged meat” because they believe there is “less of a risk of contracting” a disease or getting sick in comparison to purchasing “raw meat.” The same participant discussed the shelf life of beef items after they are cooked; the participant said, “They go bad fast and like you have to prepare them pretty much that day and then after you prepare them, they go bad quickly.”

Participants' concerns for “food safety” affect the way they cook and order beef products. One participant stated they like meat “really well done” because “when it's all red” in the center, it “freaks” them out. A participant from group one expressed their concern for not cooking the meat “correctly” referring to the “steroids” in beef being a “danger.” Another participant from group one said, “Like I will burn my meat like I'm so worried that I'm going to get sick or something.” The participants expressed serious regard for their personal health when it comes to cooking the meat products.

The participants discussed the risk of consuming beef products from a restaurant and mentioned the warning displayed on menus concerning the risk of consuming raw meat. The following sum up the participants' views:

I think if you don't have anything that's not like well-done like I feel like if you can see the pink in it, you're technically putting yourself at risk even if it's not. I mean it's not extremely common, I think a lot of people eat medium or medium rare and that's completely, it turns out completely fine

for them, but I think, you know, there's always a risk if you haven't cooked it all the way through.

One participant from group three expressed positive minority perception of "food safety" in the beef industry. He said, "I think that the food safety in meat or pretty much any meat animal is like very, very strict. I've heard of like uh cattle having one thing wrong with them and a like a tiny port of their body just cause their cows...and that has caused like the entire carcass to be like we can't use this for human consumption." Overall, however, most of the participants were hesitant when it came to "food safety" and beef.

Diseases

Some participants' perceptions revealed the idea that "red meat" is related to "cancer" and "gout." One participant stated, "Red meat's said to cause cancer for basically everybody." A participant from group one said "red meat" can cause "gout" to "flame up." Participants from group one and three mentioned that beef was "high in cholesterol."

In reference to both "food safety" and "disease," one participant shared a perception that ground meat and the potential harmful effects. The participant from group one said, "Um in a hamburger, there can be like a thousand different cows. Cause they like shred it up, like if one has something then it can be transferred, I guess, to a bunch of different people to a bunch of different burgers." Participants largely gained their perceptions of "food safety" and "disease" from past experiences and interactions with other individuals. For example, a participant from group one referenced a teacher of a friend of hers contracting "mad cow disease" in 2016. The same

participant discussed that her mother would not allow them to eat beef from McDonalds or other outside venues when they lived at home.

In one instance, a participant from group one discussed a positive effect of eating beef. The participant stated that when she was younger her family switched from ground beef to “ground turkey,” but have since became eating “more beef.” The reasoning for the change was summed up by this statement:

My mom has like some hair loss, so she’s just like eating beef because it’s something that’s really helping like trying a whole bunch of stuff. Plus, they’ve just taken a liking to steaks that they didn’t have before.

Beef and Retail

Cost

Overall, the majority of participants agreed that price was a factor in their decision to purchase beef products. In some cases, the participants said they considered how many meals they can get out of a piece of meat before purchasing it. Throughout the discussion of a connection between cost and beef products, most participants had this perception of beef, “Beef can be expensive.” One participant from group three said, “...meat and cost was probably the priciest thing on my grocery list.”

Each group of participants said they try to purchase the “cheapest” beef option or shy away from buying beef products because they are “expensive.” One participant discussed “buying within a budget” stating that “cost is a very important thing.” Another common theme was the participants’ habit of purchasing beef that is more expensive when their parents are involved. For instance, one participant stated when she shops with her mother, they will purchase beef from “Ward’s” grocery store because it is “fresh and local.”

Labels

A consistent perception of the participants was that the more labels a package of beef has, the more the meat will cost. One participant said, "I think, usually, beef the more labels it has the more expensive it is. Like no hormones, grass fed and all those other labels make it more expensive for some reason." A participant from group two offered, "I always find it ironic when it comes to beef...that says grass fed. You expect it to be grass fed. It's a cow...If they're recently putting on, if grass fed has become a buzz word on packaging...so that's one thing to look out for." The participant went on to say "I look for what says grass fed" when purchasing beef products because of the recent focus on the idea. Several labels were associated with being a "healthier" option including, "grass fed," "no preservatives," and "local."

On the other hand, the participants expressed their interest in knowing where their beef comes from and mentions "local" production as a positive label. One participant from group two discussed "pump[ing] money back into the local economy" as a positive side effect of purchasing local beef.

Trust

In terms of food preparation, the word "trust" was mentioned in every group. The participants in group one expressed their concerns with trusting the food preparation process when responding to a question regarding generational differences. For example, one participant said:

I think now people are like more willing to like wait in line at Publix to get a pub sub than to just like go through McDonalds to just like get a burger. You're just like more willing to take the time to actually get out of your car and order something that is healthier that you actually see them making in front of you rather than just buying what's cheap and quick.

Another participant agreed with this statement and supported it by saying, “Yeah, I definitely feel as more trust involved because I’m more willing to trust like waiting my turn to see my food being prepared.”

Participants from group three discussed “trusted sources” and referenced retailers such as “Publix” and “Winn-Dixie.” One of the participants said in references to the trusted sources, “you’re not too concerned ‘Oh where exactly did this come from,’ because you already trust it. So, you kind of have to trust the company so they wouldn’t sell something bad.” Participants were concerned about where exactly their food, not just beef, comes from. Other grocery stores referenced were “Trader Joes,” “Wards,” and “Wal-Mart.” “Farmer’s markets” were also referenced as a meat retailer. One participant from group one compared their “trust” level between “Wal-Mart” and “Publix” saying, “Publix just has like a higher name” and is a more trusted source.

Perceptions of the Florida Beef Industry and Florida Beef

When asked specifically about the Florida beef industry and Florida beef, participants continuously reverted to referencing the national industry and exhibited minimal to no knowledge of the state industry. Participants had slightly more knowledge of the overall, broad idea of the Florida beef industry than they did of Florida beef products specifically. Most of the participants experience with the Florida beef industry came from driving down the road and seeing cattle in pastures. The participants had almost no experience with the Florida beef product and only a small number had actually purchased “local” beef products. A result of this section of the questioning was the participants’ definition of “local” which was “within the state of Florida.”

Experience with the Florida Beef Industry

The cattle the participants have experienced have only been in pastures they see from the side of the road or have viewed from afar. Most of the participants mentioned their experience driving to “south Florida” on the interstate and seeing cattle in “fields.” One participant mentioned some cattle are not to be used for “consumption” because they did not specifically have a “tag on them” that says they are “for consumption.” Another participant offered, “when I drive down to south Florida...I see a lot of cows like on the way...They look like really fragile, really skinny, and just like there. So, I feel that they’re not taking care of them well, but I don’t know if they’re for consumption.”

Another common perception is that the Florida beef industry has “been around for quite a while.” After being told some facts about the Florida beef industry, the participants picked up on the statistic that “Florida ranks 9th in overall cattle production numbers nationwide.” Overall, each group mentioned they see cattle when they are driving down the highway. One of the participants made the connection that they see cattle in “a bunch of open space” when “driving.” Another participant referred to seeing cattle “wandering through the meadows” in Florida, but stated this was not the case for “big productions.” Another participant in group two offered, “we can pretty much raise them like anywhere in the state of Florida.”

One participant from every group mentioned the climate in Florida was “too hot” for cattle to be raised in. While the majority of participants viewed Florida as a hot climate for the cattle to live in, one participant had a different perception.

There are some beef cattle that we just can’t use here in Florida because it’s too hot for them...So, we have to make some sacrifices in terms of like the tenderness and the quality in order for these cattle to be able to like survive.

Participants were also asked specifically about Florida in relation to the environment and the cattle rancher. When discussing the environment, one group discussed “predators” that could potentially affect the cattle as well as the “water” in Florida. One participant said discussed a worry about “runoff” and “fecal matter” getting into the water supply. The perceived age of Florida ranchers is “older.” Generally, the participants had little to no knowledge or perceptions of Florida cattle ranchers specifically.

Experience with Florida Beef

When asked specifically about Florida beef products, the participants said they could not differentiate it from other beef. One participant said, “I don’t know anything that would tell me that it’s different than like meat you would buy in a different state if you’re traveling.” The rest of the comments made by participants referenced meat they saw in the grocery store, but did not have knowledge of where it came from. The comments were all geared toward beef on a national level or the packaging of the meat product.

Preferences of Information

In order to explore this research objective, participants were asked probing questions about where they get their information and in many cases the information was offered within a statement made with no prompting. This research objective was also explored through a series of communication materials from FCR presented to each group. Discussion and thought listings aided in the exploration of this objective. The communication materials included a promotional video, a website, two social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram), the FCR logo and label, a recipe card, a blog post, and a rack card. In many cases, throughout the groups, documentaries were referenced

for information participants based their thoughts and opinions on. Three main themes emerged from this portion of the discussion including “transparency,” “attractive information,” and “information desired.”

Transparency/ trust

A common theme that surrounded transparency was “trust.” Particularly when it came to the communication material provided, the groups liked the idea of “transparency,” but did not see it in all the material provided. Some sources were more trusted than others were. For example one participant said, “I would say that I immediately trusted the website much more than the video because the video was just, it was just too perfect and you could see how it could all, they could just take out the nice parts of the things and put it in the video.” One participant said, “I like how they kind of market their transparency.” The participants discussed that they were only “getting one side” of the information. Some participants thought the video was “too scripted” and “very forced” creating mistrust among the views.

In some cases, FCR’s “transparency” was found and trusted by participants. One participant referenced the FCR “mission” statement and liked the emphasis the organization placed on “wholesome humane practices.” The same participant said, “they’re not trying to hide what they do, because everybody know um what they’re doing um, but that they’re like trying to show that they do it in an ethical and most humane manner possible, I guess.” Another participant said FCR is “not just like any other farmers” because “you can trust” that they are doing what they say they are.

Information Desired from the Beef Industry/Florida Cattle Ranchers

At the end of each group sessions the participants were asked what other information they would like to see regarding FCR and their practices. Themes that

surrounded this topic were “treatment of the animals” and the “management practices” of ranchers. One participant said, “What they vaccinate with, what medicine they’re cause they say they’re vaccinated and their they become healthy. Well what do they do to make them healthy?” Another participant pointed out FCR “vaccinates” the cattle and wanted to know what “medicine” the ranchers are using. Another participant said they wanted to know “what they feed them.”

One participant summed up the questions about “management practices” with this statement:

I think to elaborate on what methods they use cause they say like we do this and we do that, but there aren’t any specifics. So, like what we talked about, the details that would be really helpful and like um you know what they do with the cows if they’re really sick or if they just can’t use them anymore and that stuff.

The participants also mentioned “transparency” again within this section of the conversation. One said, “I definitely think it’s better than their competitors. I would just like to see more transparency and facts.” Another participant addressed “the elephant in the room” and said, “I would like to hear more about the end process.” The “environmental effects” of beef production and human “health implications” were also brought up again as information participants wanted to know more about. One participant said they wanted to see a “quick video” about “their daily lives.” Other important factors included the price of the beef product and where to purchase it.

Communication Pieces

Video

None of the groups trusted the video and the message being shared. Every group said the video had a nice design and was a “feel good” video; however, they said it was “sugarcoated,” “glamorous,” and “too perfect.” The participants also stated the

video did not show enough of the actual “beef cattle.” A participant said, “There was no human interactions with them [the ranchers] and the animals.”

One participant said the video was “perpetuating stereotypes” and gave viewers the “picture perfect” view of the cattle industry. Several of the participants mentioned the lack of “diversity” stating that there should be more “people of color,” and the participant could not “identify with the video” because they did not see anyone that looked like them in it. The participants noted that the video shied away from discussing the “slaughter” process and stated that it is “the elephant in the room” that they should “talk about.” One participant said, “I feel like I feel being confident, I feel talking about something that people would rather, people that try to avoid in that sense further proves that you’re doing your doing something right, you’re doing something you know to benefit the people.”

One participant summed up the consensus of the video with this comment:

It just seems very very unrealistic to what it actually is and they’re just trying to paint this picture so that this is what you see when you’re buying beef instead of what corporations would want you to see.

Website

Each group found the website easy to read and the design to be aestatically pleasing. Most participants found the information they were looking for to be easy to find. However, participants in group three wanted more “transparency” as far as “pictures,” “videos,” and “facts.” The participants, overall, believed the website did a good job of showing the “ranchers,” but did not show as much of the production process, as they would have liked.

One participant summed this idea up when they said:

There's just really no actual like footage of their cattle and things like that. And then they're like oh we're transparent about where your beef comes from and everything and you can go back to the source, but all I've tried to look in every place about like the actual cows, but instead they have like our ranchers and I mean it's just not transparent in terms of like actual beef.

A comment was also made regarding the photographs, saying that the participant would have liked to see more than just "green space" because he believe that to be unrealistic and stated it was the "angling of the photographs." The participant said, "what you don't see are any buildings or anything you know like farms or homes in the background."

Social Media

The posts the participants gravitated toward the most were the ones containing information about Publix and FCR's partnership with them. The participants wanted to see more about "raising the cattle" and "the beef." Participants shared conflicting views on the content of the posts; some believed the posts to be cliché and others liked that they were not "trying to sell something." One participant said both Instagram and Facebook were "lacking in content" meaning they wanted to see more posts and more information from the organization. Participants did like the section containing the organizations mission; the felt as though it made them more "open." Participants also discussed wanting to see website links other than their own FCR page on their social media platforms for informational reference.

"Consistency" was a theme that hovered within the social media conversation. Participants liked the idea of a themed day dealing with facts or informational content, for example, "Fun Fact Friday." Participants also called for the social media handles to

be consistent along with the profile pictures. They wanted the profile pictures to consistently match the logo.

Another aspect of Facebook participants noticed was the amount of comments and reviews on the page. One participant said, “They need more commenters.” One participant’s comment sums up the group’s opinions on the reviews:

On the reviews on the Facebook page, they only have three reviews so like it gives them five stars. So, you like go on the page and you’re like wow five stars, but they only have three reviews and like no one commented on them. They just put five stars it’s not like this and this happened and the beef was amazing and blah, blah, blah like there’s just no background.

Overall, they want to see more posts in general and specifically posts more focused on how cattle are cared for and health facts about beef products.

Logo/Label

The participants viewed both versions of the logo as positive; however, they liked the label more and some suggested using just the label. On the logo every group stated that the two Floridas were “repetitive” and there was no need to include both the Florida on the cow and in the shadow. Overall, the participants noticed the Florida shadow before they noticed the Florida on the cow. They also wanted the logos to stay consistent on all branding platforms, in other words, only use one of the two labels they were shown.

While in previous conversations, the participants mentioned “extra labels” to be in direct correlation with price, they did not believe that in the case of this label in reference to the “Fresh From Florida” and “USDA Certified” additions. One comment made was, “I think it emphasizes like this is so local and then like homegrown beef,

raised right. So, it gets their message across that is kind of a more superior kind of beef than anything else you'd want to buy."

Recipe Card

Overall, the groups did not like the design of the recipe card. While they did like the idea of a recipe card, they did not like the rancher's picture on the front of the card. One suggested making a connection between the rancher and the recipe. Most of the participants wanted to see a picture of the recipe on the front. They did like the two cooking options of a gas grill or a charcoal grill. Another participant said, "A lot of people uh, don't know like, I cook steak, but I don't know if I want it well done or how to even get it medium and they tell me if you're using charcoal or gas, X amount of minutes for this medium taste. So, we like it how you want it."

Blog Post

Every group liked the blog post and found it to be informative and trustworthy, for the most part. They found it "relatable," but said they would like to hear from the rancher specifically more. One participant said, "I like when they talk about the direct facts with the um irrigation and water usage. I always think it's better when news include facts cause like no one can argue with those." The participants appreciated the mention of the "environment" and stated, "Don seems to really care about ranching and the environment." Another participant mentioned posting a "video" of the rancher because "you can tell how genuine someone is" through this medium.

Rack Card

The participants did not like the watercolor look of the picture on the front of the rack card and would have preferred it to be clear to portray their transparency. In reference to their transparency on this source of information, one participant said, "And I

like the stuff at the bottom where it said, 'tour a ranch near you' so that it shows that they feel comfortable like you coming to the ranch and like seeing how their doing these things. Like they're not just gonna say it and just hide their ranch away. They like welcome you to come and see it for yourself."

Overall, however, they liked the information presented and liked the simple facts presented on the card. One participant summed up the overall view in this statement:

They're trying to show their transparency and commitment to the Florida beef industry and they did that really well. Uh I like how, I enjoyed, I really enjoyed what they're trying to prove with the facts and such is tied back to their slogan, you know 'homegrown beef, raised right.'

Summary

Throughout this chapter, each research objective was explained and results relating to them were revealed. The common topics and themes that emerged throughout this investigation were centered on the "environment," "management practices," "treatment of animals," "human health," "retail beef," "transparency." Another major result of was the evidence of a lack of knowledge of the Florida beef industry and Florida beef products. Each piece of FCR communication material was examined by the groups and both positive and negative aspects were discovered from the participants' points of view.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter explains the key findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations drawn from the results of the three focus group sessions. The purpose of this study was to determine University of Florida millennials' perceptions of Florida produced beef. The following objectives helped to explore this purpose: 1) determining which characteristics and features of the beef industry are most important to participants when purchasing beef products, 2) determining which characteristics and features of beef products are most important to participants when purchasing beef products, 3) determining participants perceptions of the Florida beef industry and Florida raised beef, and 4) determining participants' preferences of information provided by current communication pieces by the Florida Cattle Ranchers.

Key Findings

Overall, the participants approached the topic of the beef industry with skepticism and a negative perception of both the national and state industries. However, not all of their perceptions were wholly negative. When discussing the "environment," the participants associated the beef industry with negative effects, however made note that the land used for cattle ranching would likely be developed if not used for this purpose. Participants separated "beef industry management practices" into two categories: including "corporate" and "local" operations. Participants associated "local" operations with positive perceptions and "corporate" operations with "inhumane" and "careless" negative perceptions. The "treatment of animals" was also discussed extensively and broken down into two sections: "animal health" and "corporate farming." Participants

perceived cattle health to be neglected because “regulations” and “standards” are not being followed nor enforced.

Participants also perceived “treatment of animals” to have an effect on meat quality. The overall perception participants had on beef products and human health was negative due to factors such as “fat content,” “food safety,” and “disease” potential. When purchasing beef products, participants mostly purchased beef, but were concerned with “cost,” “labeling,” and “trust” in terms of meal preparation. Participants were attracted to specific types of labeling, but also associated it with the price of the product. The majority of participants’ only experience with the Florida beef industry is what they see driving down the road. Their perceptions were associated with older operations and the cattle roaming in “a bunch of open space.” Participants had little to no knowledge of Florida beef products specifically.

Overall, the participants expressed their interest in “transparency” from the beef industry and from FCR and their communication material. Participants liked the idea of “transparency,” but wanted more of it. Every participant had both positive and negative perceptions of the communication material presented to them and mainly wanted to see more of the process of cattle ranching and beef processing.

Conclusions

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Central Route

Participants utilized their central processing route to discuss ideas and perceptions already present in their schema. Participants entered the study with prior knowledge of the beef industry and utilized this information to share their perceptions of both the national and Florida beef industries. Over the course of their lives, participants

have interacted with family, friends, and peers as well as had their own personal experience with the beef industry or beef products in some way. Individuals must think about the issue multiple times and internally relate it to past personal experiences in order to form their attitude about it. Sometimes attitudes are changed by a thoughtful process and examination of information in relation to relevant experiences and knowledge (Petty et al., 2009).

Prior Knowledge

Experiences are what shape an individual's perception of an issue or topic. The experiences are compounded and help an individual to decipher what they believe about the beef industry and beef products. According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), preexisting information within a person's mind tends to lend bias to their decision-making process and perceptions. Participants drew on their previous experiences with cattle, documentaries, and other sources of information to express their perceptions of the beef industry and beef products.

Personal Relevance

Participants did not feel much of a connection to the FCR video because they did not see people that looked like them, they thought it was too perfect, and they did not see the entire process that the ranchers were discussing. According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), the more an individual feels connected to an issue the more likely they will be to process the issue-relevant arguments within the information presented. In order for the participants to process the video or other material, they needed to feel some sort of connection to it. Participants felt a connection to the rack card in particular because it said "tour a ranch near you," showing that they processed this information and liked it.

Peripheral

Participants viewing the communication material made quick judgments and stuck to them throughout the discussion of each piece. The peripheral processing route suggests an individual accepts or rejects a persuasive message without carefully thinking about the issue (Petty et al., 2009; Perloff, 2014). In particular, they referred to how the video made them feel and discussed how trusting or mistrusting they were of the other pieces utilizing their emotions to generate their immediate perceptions of FCR.

In each group there was a slight “bandwagon effect;” however, in the last group there were “validity cues” that led to the persuasion of several participants. For example, one participant began the group discussing their positive perception of the beef industry and by the last half of the group; they were speaking more harshly about the industry as well as the communication material presented. According to Petty et al. (2009), certain language can lead a person to change an attitude about a subject if that person is not fully rooted in the idea.

While the participants related some of the communication material to their prior knowledge and central processing route, there was a significant amount of peripheral processing related to what they encountered. On the logo presented, the participants were attracted to the cow as a visual and were immediately drawn to the colors. In general, past ELM research conducted within an agricultural context has demonstrated consumers process information related to the industry through the peripheral route (Ruth, 2015; Goodwin, 2013; Verbeke & Ward, 2006; Frewer et al., 1997).

Important Characteristics and Features of the Beef Industry

As in a study conducted by The Beef Checkoff (2014), participants perceived the “Midwest” to be associated with “corporate” farming practices. The study found that 44%

of participants associated the entire production process with “factory farming.” Participants defined a connection between “corporate” farming and “inhumane treatment of animals” along with negative perceptions, which supports the results from The Beef Checkoff (2014) study.

Participants expressed their skepticism of the beef industry and the picture perfect version of cattle ranchers. Participants had minimal positive comments about the beef industry as seen also in a study conducted by The Beef Checkoff (2014). That same study found that after a short education stimuli was presented to millennials, some had a more positive view of the industry. Some participants had similar reactions after interacting with communication material from FCR.

Important Characteristics and Features of Beef Products

Of the participants, those who consumed beef on a regular basis were concerned mainly with the taste or palatability of the product and less with outside factors as supported in Verbeke and Vackier (2004). Participants discussed some of the most important factors when choosing to beef to be “fat content,” “food safety,” “cost,” and “trust” among others. Another factor the participants discussed was how many meals they would get out of their beef purchase. Shugoll (2014) noted that the five most important factors to millennials concerning beef products are “great taste, good value, feeling comfortable and confident preparing the dish, being a food they feel good about, and having an ideal balance of taste and nutrition.”

Perceptions of the Florida Beef Industry and Florida Raised Beef

Participants had minimal knowledge of the Florida beef industry and minimal to no knowledge of Florida beef products. As seen in Verbeke and Ward (2006) there has been low motivation for participants to process information related to the beef industry.

However, due to the information being discussed many of the participants suggested they were motivated to do research when the focus group ended.

Preferences of Information

As found in a study of millennials, attitudes about beef (Shugoll, 2014), the participants look to Pinterest and websites for cooking ideas that are easy to prepare and last more than one meal. Some participants were hesitant to cook beef because they do not know how to do it. Some of the participants liked that the recipe on the recipe card was simple and easy to follow.

Participants perceived beef to have negative health implications, but felt as though they were only getting one side of the story from the communication material. As found in a study conducted by The Beef Checkoff (2015), the millennial generation is “frustrated” with the “contradictory information” about the health of beef products. Participants had a negative view of the way “red meat” affects the human body.

Participants picked up on the word “transparency” utilized within the FCR communication material and discussed how they wanted more of it in the form of videos, facts, and photographs. The same is seen in a study conducted by Goodwin (2013) where it was found that transparent communication and perceived transparency had a significant impact on participants’ attitudes. The study also found that a lack of transparency within communication could have a significant impact on the elaboration consumers exhibit concerning agricultural messaging. Participants did not feel as though FCR was being completely transparent in their communication and therefore did not believe all of their messaging.

Implications

The Beef Industry

Millennials

Collegiate millennials are not the only consumers of beef; however, they are currently the target audience for beef marketing in part because there are about 80 million consumers in this generation (Beef Checkoff, 2014). The millennial generation consumes more beef in the home and restaurants compared to any other generation; they are also considered to be the next influencers of demand for the next several decades (Beef Checkoff, 2014). Millennials currently have more purchasing power, compared to other generations when they were their current age: 15 to 29 (Hais & Winograd, 2011).

From a producer's standpoint, understanding how the millennial generation responds to information related to beef the beef industry is vital to the future success of their operations (Beef, 2014). Participants from these focus groups were all a part of the millennial generation meaning their perceptions of the industry and their peers perceptions are important for those in the beef industry to hear. Millennials are currently and will continue to have a major influence on the products in demand. Understanding what this generation is looking for will aid the industry in making strides to please consumers. By understanding the perceptions of this generation, the industry will be able to tailor messaging to fit the needs of the millennial consumer generation.

Health implications were a major concern for the participants of this study. It was one of the main, if not the number one factor they consider when deciding whether to purchase beef products. Participants felt as though they were receiving contradictory information from the beef industry when viewing the communication material provide.

Participants are curious about both the positive and negative aspects of human health implications.

Knowledge Gap

According to Rumble and Buck (2009), the public is somewhat knowledgeable about livestock production; however, a knowledge gap exists between producers and consumers. Their study suggested that while consumers have some knowledge, their perceptions and justifications for their beliefs are sometimes inaccurate (Rumble & Buck, 2009). The results of this research imply millennial consumers lack knowledge of the beef industry as a whole. The knowledge gap between producers and consumers is a result of where they get their information from and the type of media they are consuming. The participants gained most of their industry knowledge from documentaries that only present one side of the argument.

The Florida Beef Industry

Knowledge Gap

Participants in this study revealed a major knowledge gap between consumers and producers when it came to the Florida beef industry. An even larger gap was presented when discussing Florida beef products as the participants had almost no knowledge whatsoever. Participants were largely unaware that there were Florida specific beef products. This information presents an opportunity for consumer education. The results of this study also show that consumers would be receptive to transparent marketing material that in turn educated them about the industry.

Environmental

According to FDACS (2014), Florida ranchers aid in keeping the state's environment in its natural habitat. Participants from this study acknowledged that cattle

ranching played a role in “land conservation.” This study indicated the participants’ major concerns regarding the environment to be “water,” “land conservation,” and “sustainability.”

Local

According to Lovelace (2016), consumers are becoming increasingly concerned with “local” and “certified” products because they believe them to be “better quality.” The U.S. does not have a standard definition for food defined as “local” (Zepeda & Li, 2006). Though the term “local” has no universal definition, consumers prefer to purchase food produced as close to their location as possible (Rumble & Roper, 2014). Participants of this study defined “local” as “within the state.” This study resulted in an understanding that participants want to know where their food comes from and knowing that it is “local” makes them feel better about purchasing the product because they are supporting the “local economy” and their “local producers.”

According to Jekanowski, Williams, and Schiek (2000), state-funded programs aimed at promoting or identifying agricultural products produced within the state are increasingly desirable in the consumer market. The program in the state of Florida is called “Fresh From Florida” and was recognized by participants when they viewed the communication material. In a study by Lovelace (2016), participants recognized labels quicker when the logos were presented in a monochromatic color scheme rather than a polychromatic color scheme; meaning they identified labels that consisted of hues of the same color rather than a label with multiple colors. Participants commented on the coloring of the labels, some were for the bright different colors and others’ statements agreed with the results of Lovelace (2016).

Cost

Carpio and Isengildina-Massa (2009) found that consumers had a slightly higher willingness-to-pay for locally grown plant products than for local animal products as opposed to non-local alternatives. Participants in this study were split in this regard. Some said if they had the money, they would purchase “local” products over non-local alternatives. Others said they always purchase the cheapest option.

Recommendations for Researchers

This research yields recommendations for both practitioners as well as further research. By determining Florida millennials’ perceptions of locally produced beef, further research can be conducted regarding the entire population of Florida millennial consumers and their perceptions. Future studies should focus on quantitative data regarding all of the topics discussed. Studies should utilize participants from the millennial generation, as well as those from other generations, specifically the Baby Boomer generation as they also have major purchasing power as consumers.

The future study should also be broken into several parts in order to focus each topic of the study. Every piece of this study is of equal importance and should be given careful consideration from researchers and participants. Perceptions ultimately affect consumers’ decision to buy beef products.

After the recommendations are implemented for the communication material, it should be tested again in a quantitative and qualitative setting. Furthermore, by understanding these preferences, beef producers will be better equipped to market their products. This research will also help beef producers to build loyalty with consumers by helping them to communicate about what is most important to millennial consumers.

Recommendations for Industry Representatives

Communication outreach is essential to the success of the beef industry on a state and national level. Consumers need to be educated on what cattle ranching is. Participants of this study recommended going out into the community to schools, community events and even grocery stores in order to educate consumers about the industry. They also mentioned reaching consumers via social media through different types of media including videos and photographs. The participants wanted to see transparency from the industry for every step of the process from the ranching to the processing. Education can begin at the most basic level of showing consumers the difference between dairy cattle and beef cattle. The education can also reach farther into the industry, by sharing breeds that do better in the Florida climate and other management practices that ranchers are doing to take care of their cattle.

Agricultural communicators within the industry should consider social media and blogs as a form of communication outreach to the millennial generation specifically. The participants liked hearing from the rancher when it came to the blog, but were hesitant to believe the video. Millennials are consuming media via social media and even get their news from platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Communicators should also consider a documentary campaign or miniseries that could be aired on platforms like Facebook or Netflix. According to the participants of this study, schools are showing documentaries featuring one side of the story, but not telling the rancher's side. Participants are also looking to these documentaries as sources of trusted information causing their mistrust of the beef industry. It is also important to reach community leaders and influencers as the "bandwagon" effect can affect the way the public views the beef industry.

Legislators must also play a role in educating the public as well as listening to what they want. Participants revealed that they did not believe many regulations were in place for the cattle industry and in some cases called for higher standards and more regulations. The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services on the state and national level should disseminate information regarding the cattle industry more often and in laymen's terms. Legislators should make a stronger effort to communicate what the government is doing to protect them from food safety issues within the industry. Transparency is not only needed from the cattle ranchers, it is also needed from the government.

Recommendations for Florida Cattle Ranchers

Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC

Participants' main call to action for FCR was more transparency. The organization makes claims of transparency, which is seen in some of their communication material, but not enough. FCR needs to show the day-to-day side of cattle ranching by producing videos and photographs that document both the hard times as well as the good times. Participants found some of their communication to be unrealistic, which is a call for education as well as action. Presenting their ranchers on a day-to-day level by interviewing them on video in one way to engage the millennial generation. Another way to engage this generation is to find other ways for them to hear from the ranchers such as blog or social media posts. Participants also recommended that the organization stay consistent with their labeling, logos, and social media in order for them to be easily recognizable.

Communication Pieces

Video

Participants noted that the video did not show any actual cattle handling. While they viewed it as a promotional piece, every group agreed that it was too perfect and seemed to be scripted. The video is also not diverse as far as ethnicity; one way to fix this would be to add people of different backgrounds who work in the industry to the video. The women were also noted as dainty and the stereotypical rancher's wife, one way to combat this view would be to show more cowgirls working with cattle.

The video also shied away from talking about the processing of the cattle and participants would have rather heard them discuss the process in order to build their trust in the organization. Participants wanted to see footage from each step of the process. The processing of cattle is a controversial issue that FCR could utilize a promotional or educational video to help consumers understand. FCR should further investigate the potential in adding a processing piece to their video or creating an educational video dedicated to their particular process.

Website

Overall, the design of the website was well received by participants. The majority of the information was also well received. Participants called for more facts and statistics regarding the claims the organization makes on their website. Participants also recommended continuously updating the news section of the website. Transparent health facts were also of interest to the participants.

Social Media

The social media pages should be more current and posted on consistently in order to keep followers informed of what the organization is doing. Facebook and

Instagram are the platforms in which the participants recommended posting videos of cattle ranchers' daily lives and practices. Participants want documentation and proof that the ranchers are caring for the animals correctly. Another recommendation was to make all of the social media handles consistent. Some other recommendations for posts were links to other informational websites, educational videos, and beef health facts.

Logo/Label

Participants liked the tagline of "homegrown beef, raised right." Participants found the logo to be very Florida oriented. Participants called for all the logos and labels to remain consistent and to not have more than one version in order to stay easily recognizable. Participants found the two pictures of Florida to be repetitive and recommended only using one or the other. The majority of participants noticed the shadow prior to the one on the cow. Participants also generally liked the affiliation of "Fresh From Florida" and the "USDA" on the label.

Recipe Card

Participants did not like the picture of the rancher on the front of the card and suggested it be changed to a picture of the recipe. Some suggested the recipe was too fattening because of all the butter and type of cut the meat was and called for a healthier recipe. Another suggestion was to create a recipe for a side item to go along with the meat. Participants also suggested the recipe should have some sort of ending such as "enjoy."

Blog Post

Overall, participants liked the blog and believed in Don's commitment to the environment and water conservation. Participants suggested adding a video of Don working or doing an interview. Participants want to hear relevant fun facts about the

rancher. Overall, the participants liked the design and the pictures, but suggested the subheading be a more recognizable color.

Rack Card

Participants recommended a clear picture for the front of the card and not the “water color” version of the photo. They thought the back of the card looked clean and the front looked disorganized because of the effect. They also suggested to put both the “Fresh From Florida” and “USDA” logos on the card. Overall, they liked the back of the card and all of the facts and information presented.

Summary of Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Participants generally had skeptical and negative perceptions of both the national and state beef industries. However, they did view Florida as less of a “corporate” landscape for farming. In regards to “transparency,” participants expressed a preference for it accompanied with their skepticism of humane industry practices. FCR would benefit from creating communication pieces that showed every aspect of the industry from ranching to processing.

Previous experience and prior knowledge were present within the discussions had by the participants. Participants entered the study with prior knowledge of the beef industry and utilized this information to share their perceptions of both the national and Florida beef industries. Participants drew on their previous experiences with cattle, documentaries, and other sources of information to express their perceptions of the beef industry and beef products. FCR should work harder to make a connection with the diverse population because personal relevance is a factor in the processing route. While the participants related some of the communication material to their prior knowledge and central processing route, there was a significant amount of peripheral processing

related to what they encountered. In some cases the “bandwagon” effect was exhibited, so it is important to reach community leaders and influencers.

Participants expressed their skepticism of the beef industry and the picture perfect version of cattle ranchers. Participants had minimal knowledge of the Florida beef industry and minimal to no knowledge of Florida beef products. Their preferences of mediums and information were social media, health, and transparency. Human health is a major concern for these millennial consumers. Other important factors when choosing to beef included “fat content,” “food safety,” “cost,” and “trust.”

Participants in this study also revealed a major knowledge gap between consumers and producers when it came to the national and Florida beef industry. An even bigger gap was present between consumers and producers concerning the beef product. Environmental factors are important to consumers and should be a focus of communication material. The idea of local products was appealing to the millennial participants because they felt that by buying local, they would be supporting the local economy. Cost was another major factor in purchasing behavior.

Communication outreach is vital to the success of the beef industry on the state and national levels. In order to accomplish the outreach, different types of media, agriculture communicators and legislators should be employed. Transparency is the major theme that should be taken from this study especially for FCR. Participants expressed their desire to know more and see more of what the ranchers are doing and this can be accomplished through their communication material.

APPENDIX A IRB APPROVAL



Behavioral/NonMedical Institutional Review Board
FWA00005790

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DATE: 6/22/2017
TO: Shelby Oesterreicher

FROM: Ira Fischler, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus
Chair IRB-02

IRB#: **IRB201701443**

TITLE: Florida Collegiate Millennials' Perceptions of Locally Produced Beef

Approved as Exempt

You have received IRB approval to conduct the above-listed research project. Approval of this project was granted on 6/21/2017 by IRB-02. This study is approved as exempt because it poses minimal risk and is approved under the following exempt category/categories:

2. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures, or the observation of public behavior, so long as confidentiality is maintained. If both of the following are true, exempt status can not be granted: (a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that the subject can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subject, and (b) Subject's responses, if known outside the research, could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employability or reputation.

Special notes to Investigator (if applicable):

In the myIRB system, Exempt approved studies will not have an approval stamp on the consents, flyers, emails, etc. However, the documents reviewed are the ones that should be used. So, under ATTACHMENTS you should find the document that has been reviewed and approved. If you need to modify the document(s) in any manner, then you'd need to submit to our office for review and approval prior to implementation.

Principal Investigator Responsibilities:

The PI is responsible for the conduct of the study. Important responsibilities described at the above link include:

- Using currently approved consent form to enroll subjects (if applicable)
- Renewing your study before expiration
- Obtaining approval for revisions before implementation
- Reporting Adverse Events
- Retention of Research Records
- Obtaining approval to conduct research at the VA
- Notifying other parties about this project's approval status

Should the nature of the study change or you need to revise the protocol in any manner please contact this office prior to implementation.

Study Team:

Lisa Lundy Other

The Foundation for The Gator Nation

An Equal Opportunity Institution

Confidentiality Notice: This e-mail message, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s), and may contain legally privileged or confidential information. Any other distribution, copying, or disclosure is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and destroy this message immediately. Unauthorized access to confidential information is subject to federal and state laws and could result in personal liability, fines, and imprisonment. Thank you.

Title: Florida Collegiate Millennials' Perceptions of Locally Produced Beef

Dear participant,

We are researchers at the University of Florida and we are interested in your opinions regarding the Florida beef industry. You will be asked to participate in a focus group that will last approximately 2 hours and will be audio and video recorded. Questions will relate to your experience with the Florida beef industry and communication material related to it.

Risks and Benefits:

We do not anticipate your will incur any risks or direct benefits as a result of your participation in this research.

Compensation:

You will receive a gift card and extra credit for your course.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by U.S. law. Your name will not be recorded anywhere and only the researchers will have access to the audio files. A fictitious name will be used to present your data. Your name will not be used in any report.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:

Shelby Oesterreicher, Email: , Phone:

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:

IRB02 Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; phone 392-0433.

Agreement:

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Principal Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello, my name is Shelby Oesterreicher. I am a graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication here at the University of Florida. For my thesis, I will be conducting research on millennials perceptions of the Florida beef industry and communication related to it.

I am here today to ask you to participate in focus groups I will be conducting concerning your opinions on the topic of Florida beef. Gift cards and extra credit will be provided to those who participate in one of the three focus groups. Your options for participation are:

Tuesday, July 25th
Wednesday, July 26th or
Thursday, July 27th

These focus groups will last no longer than 2 hours. You can only participate in one of the three focus groups.

Here is a link to sign up to participate in the focus groups.

Hand them a piece of paper with the link that looks like this:

Beef Focus Group Sign Up Link:

<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e094eaba729a4fd0-beef>

In the near future, you will also receive an email with the link to sign up. Please sign up as soon as possible so we can be sure to have enough gift cards for the participants.

You will have until Friday, July 21st at 5pm to sign up.

Thank you for your time and I appreciate your attention.

APPENDIX C RECRUITMENT EMAIL

To whom it may concern,

I recently spoke with your class regarding your participation in a research focus group concerning your opinions on the Florida beef industry. The questions asked will relate to your experience with the beef and communication material related to the industry. The focus groups will last approximately 2 hours and will be audio and video recorded. You have three options to participate in this study.

Your options are:

- Tuesday, July 25th
- Wednesday, July 26th
- Thursday, July 27th

Each focus group will be conducted from 10 AM to 12 PM in Bryant Hall 107. You may not participate in more than one focus group. Below you will find a link to sign up for a day slot.

You have until Friday, July 21st to sign up for one of the afore mentioned focus groups.

As I previously stated, you will receive a gift card and extra credit for your participation. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

If you have any questions, please contact me, Shelby Oesterreicher, via email or phone.
<http://www.signupgenius.com/go/30e094eaba729a4fd0-beef>

Sincerely,

Shelby Oesterreicher

APPENDIX D MODERATOR GUIDE AND QUESTIONING ROUTE

WELCOME/GROUP PROCESS & PURPOSE (5 minutes)

Moderator reads: Hello and welcome to our focus group session. Thank you for taking time to join our discussion today. My name is Shelby and I will be moderating this session. This is Dr. Lisa Lundy and she is my assistant moderator. This is Brittani Kirkland and she will be a note taker and observer today.

You have been invited here today because we are interested in having a general discussion with you about Florida produced beef. We are very interested in knowing what you think about locally produced beef.

My role here is to ask questions and listen. I won't be participating in the conversation. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Please speak up and only one person should talk at a time. I'll be asking around 25 questions, and I'll be moving the discussion from one question to the next. Sometimes there is a tendency in these discussions for some people to talk a lot and some people not to say much. But it is important for us to hear from each of you today because you have different experiences. So if one of you is sharing a lot, I may ask you to let others respond. And if you aren't saying much, I may ask for your opinion.

We welcome all opinions and will keep them confidential, so please feel free to say what you think. Additionally, we encourage you all to keep this discussion confidential. However, we cannot guarantee that you all will do so. There is no particular order for the responses, and there are no correct or incorrect answers to any of the questions. This session will be recorded so that we are able to consider your views later. For the sake of clarity, please speak one at a time and be sure to speak loudly and clearly so that our recorders can pick up your comments.

You can see that we have placed name tags on the table in front of you. That is because we will be on a first-name basis, but in our later reports, there will not be any names attached to comments. You may be assured of confidentiality.

Our session will last about two hours, and we will take a break half-way through. If you have your cell phone with you, we would appreciate it if you could turn it off while we are in the discussion.

I hope that everyone will feel comfortable with the process, and will feel free to share their opinions as we proceed. If you did not fill out a waiver when you arrived, please see Dr. Lundy and complete this form before we begin our discussion. Are there any questions before we begin?

ICEBREAKER/GROUP INTRODUCTIONS (5 minutes)

Let's find out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Tell us your name and a little about you, including your major.

Now that everyone has been introduced, let's begin our discussion.

DISCUSSION SESSION (10 minutes)

GENERAL

- To begin our discussion today, I would like you to describe what you know about beef.
- Think back to the last time you bought beef, whether that be at a grocery store, restaurant, or other venue, describe your experience purchasing beef.
- Tell me about your personal consumption of beef.
- What do you know about the beef cattle industry?
 - Describe any personal experience you have had with the beef cattle industry?
 - If you know someone who works in the beef industry or owns beef cattle, describe your relationship with them.
 - Describe any interactions you may have had with beef cattle, perhaps through 4-H, FFA, or other youth programs.

FLORIDA (10 minutes)

- Please describe what you know about cows raised in Florida.
- Please describe what you know about Florida cattle ranches.
- Describe what you know about Florida ranchers, in other words people who raise cattle for a living.
- Describe what you know about the Florida cattle industry.
- Describe what you know about beef raised in Florida, more specifically the meat product.

Probing Questions:

- Please describe how you formed that opinion.
- Please describe why you think that. Can you tell me why you think that?
- Please describe how you came to that conclusion. Can you tell me how you came to that conclusion?

RELATIONSHIP (20 minutes)

I am going to ask you to think about beef cattle production, which is the process of raising cattle in relation to a series of topics and describe what you think.

- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef cattle production and the environment.
- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef cattle production and land conservation.
- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef cattle production and water quality and quantity.
- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef cattle production and wildlife.
- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef cattle production and the rancher.
- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef cattle production and the care of animals.

- Of the topics we have discussed describe any influence these topics have on your decision to purchase beef.

I am going to ask you to think about beef, the meat, in relation to a series of topics and describe what you think.

- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef, the meat and the rancher.
- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef, the meat and the care of animals.
- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef, the meat and food safety.
- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef, the meat and cost.
- Describe your thoughts about the relationship between beef, the meat and health.
- Of the topics we have discussed, describe any influence these topics have on your decision to purchase beef.

BREAK (10 min)

COMMUNICATION PIECES (40 min)

We will be looking at communication pieces intended to be shared with consumers and developed by the Florida Cattle Ranchers, an entity that sells Florida beef products. After observing each piece, please make a “thought listing” on the paper provided to you. A “thought listing” is the stream of thoughts that comes to mind as you view each piece of material. These are the thoughts that instantly come to mind; no prior experience is necessary for this process. Between each of the pieces, we will discuss your thought listings. Use this question to guide your thoughts:

What are your responses to the content of the media? What are your responses to the design of the media? What are your responses to what you heard or saw?

- Video – You would find this on social media as an informational piece.
- Website – You would find this on the internet for informational purposes.
- Social Media (Facebook & Instagram) – Informational and promotional platforms.
- Logo/tagline – This would be found on any FCR product and promotional material.
- Recipe Card – This would be found on social media and in store near the product.
- Blog – This would be found on the Website and shared on social media.
- Rack Card – This would be found in store near the product as well as at promotional events.

QUESTIONS (10 min)

- What further information do you need to know about this organization or product in order to make a decision of whether or not to purchase their beef product?

Concluding Questions (10 min)

- After today’s discussion, how would you summarize your thoughts about the Florida beef cattle industry?

- If you had 15 seconds to talk to the organization of the Florida Cattle Ranchers, what recommendations would you give them to promote and increase sales of Florida beef?

Concluding Discussion (10 min)

Thank you for taking time out of your day to share your opinions. Now that we have finished, I can now tell you I am a part of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department here at the University of Florida. This research is being conducted for my thesis regarding Florida millennials' perceptions of Florida beef and will be used to develop communication material for the Florida Cattle Ranchers. Your participation is greatly appreciated and has provided valuable insight into this topic.

APPENDIX E
DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic Information

1. What is your age?

2. What ethnicity do you identify with? (White, Hispanic, African American, etc...)

3. What is your gender?

4. What is your major?

APPENDIX F
FCR MATERIAL

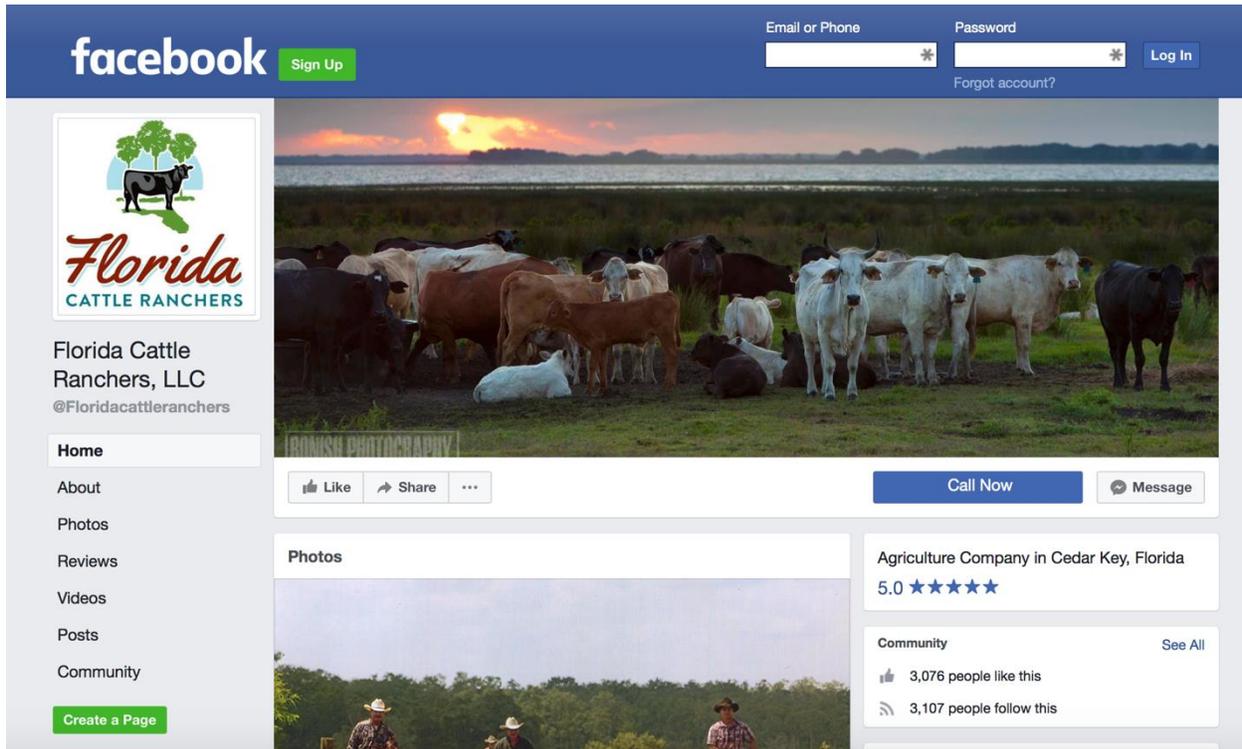
FCR Video Screen Capture



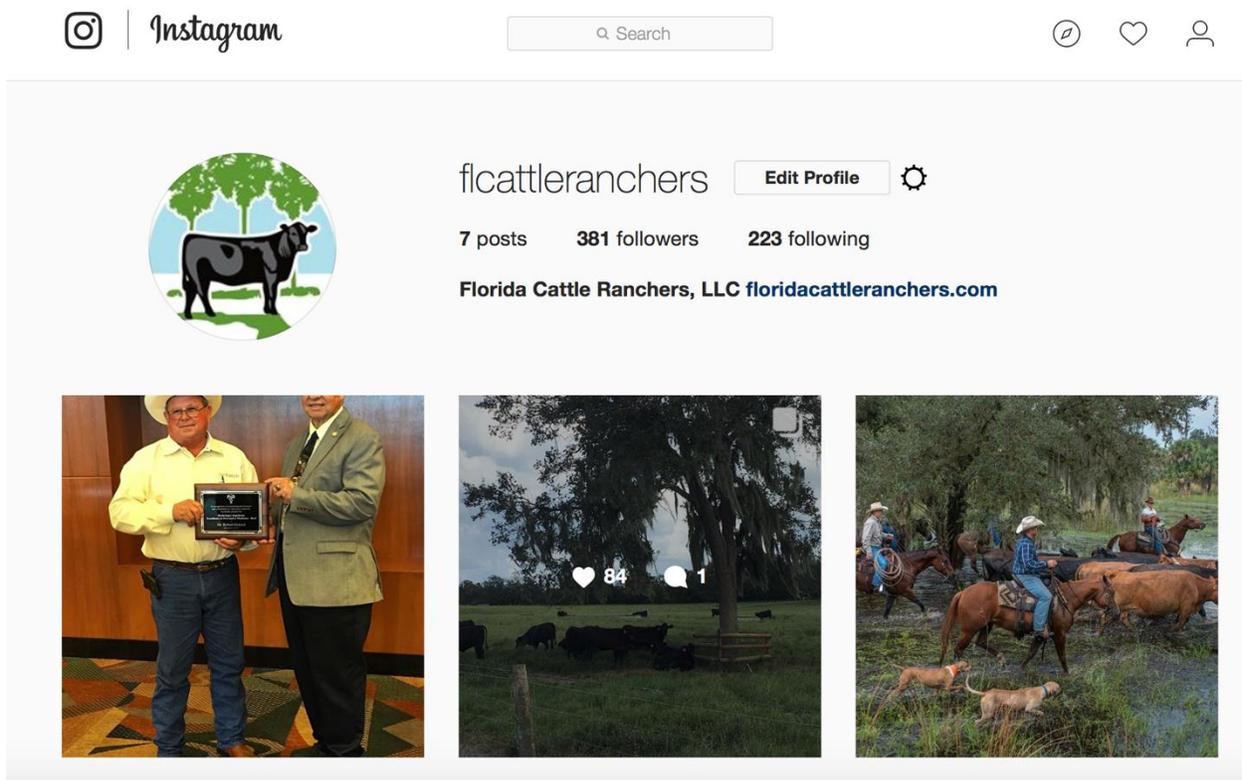
FCR Website Homepage Screen Capture and Link

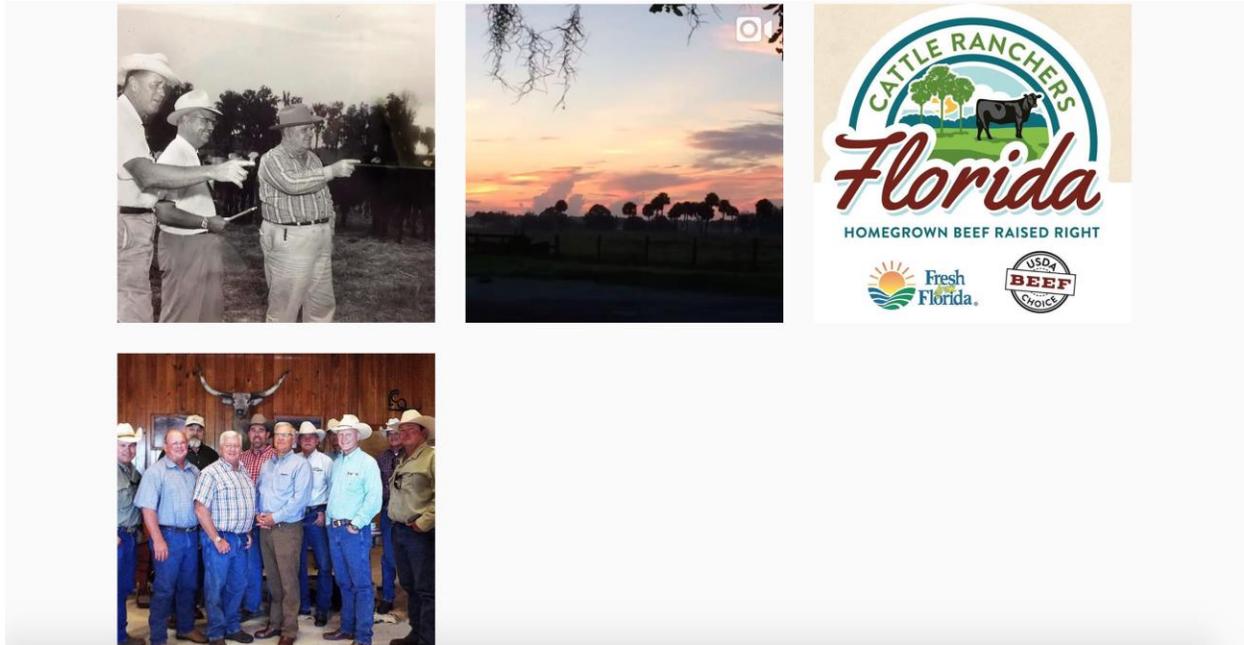
A screenshot of the Florida Cattle Ranchers website homepage. At the top left is the logo for Florida Cattle Ranchers, featuring a cow and the text "Florida CATTLE RANCHERS HOMEGROWN BEEF RAISED RIGHT". To the right of the logo is a navigation menu with links: "ABOUT SUSTAINABLE FLORIDA OUR RANCHERS PRODUCTS & RECIPES NEWS MEDIA CONTACT". The main content area features a large image of a herd of brown and white cattle in a green field. Overlaid on this image is the text "FLORIDA CATTLE RANCHERS" in large white letters, and "HOMEGROWN BEEF - RAISED RIGHT" in smaller white letters below it. At the bottom of the page, there is a teal banner with the text "WELCOME TO FLORIDA CATTLE RANCHERS" in white, followed by a paragraph: "We are Florida family cattle ranchers, proud of our state's ranching heritage, its values and traditions. We are a diverse group with experience in all areas of producing cattle – from animal health, nutrition, production and marketing to processing and sales. We've joined together to bring you homegrown Homegrown Beef –".

FCR Social Media Screen Captures and Links



<https://www.facebook.com/Floridacattleranchers/>





<https://www.instagram.com/flcattleranchers/>

FCR Logos



Florida
CATTLE RANCHERS

HOME GROWN BEEF RAISED RIGHT



Florida
CATTLE RANCHERS

HOMEGROWN BEEF RAISED RIGHT



FCR Recipe Card



Cowboy's Bone-In Ribeye

Ingredients:

FCR 22 oz Bone-In Ribeye Steak Freshly Ground Black Pepper
Kosher Salt 1 oz Butter

Directions:

1. Season steak with salt and let rest at room temperature for 40 min.
2. Lightly spray the grill rack with vegetable oil cooking spray.

Charcoal

3. Coals should be medium-hot.
4. Season steak with pepper.
5. Grill steak for 10 minutes.
6. Turn using tongs.
7. Grill the other side for 10-12 minutes for medium rare, or to taste.
8. Drizzle with melted butter.

Gas

3. Burners should be on high.
4. Season steak with pepper.
5. Grill steak for 7-8 minutes.
6. Turn using tongs.
7. Grill other side for 6-7 minutes for medium rare, or to taste.
8. Drizzle with melted butter.





Don Quincey

July 24, 2017



Don Quincey's love of the land and raising cattle stem from when his father began a cow/calf operation years ago in Chiefland, Florida. Quincey Cattle Company was founded in 1992 as a cow/calf operation and has expanded in scope and size ever since. In 2013, Don started a small scale feed yard at his ranch. The company has grown rapidly over time and serves as one of the finishing operations in Florida. Finishing cattle means to slightly alter their diet at the tail end of the production process in order to ensure the meat develops the characteristics needed for high quality standards.

"We contract with people all over the United States who buy cattle in Florida and we bring those cattle in and our job is to get them started eating, get them all vaccinated, get them all healthy and then for them to go to the next phase of their life," Don says.

Don and his wife, Donna, and a team of cowboys work their ranch. Donna says that ranching and cattle are Don's passion. She describes him as a "visionary" and a "risk taker." Because of Don's visionary attitude FCR is able to make Florida a more sustainable state.

Don's operation is a major component of the Florida Cattle Rancher's program. In order to keep the full production process of FCR cattle in Florida, operations like Quincey Cattle Company are essential. The cattle stay on his operation anywhere from 45 to 90 days depending on what the customer needs and the weight of the animal. Quincey's job is to make sure the cattle are ready to start their next phase of life no matter where they are shipped.

Don describes one of his favorite things about ranching as the magical moments when cattle are moved to a new field, heads down, grazing on fresh pasture, the sound of a meadow lark on the fence post, and the smell of fresh cut hay. Establishing relationships with "the finest cattlemen around the country" is another favorite of Don's. Building relationships with others in the industry is one of the many attributes that led to the formation of FCR.



Where the environment is concerned Don expresses his passion for water conservation; he understands the importance of balancing the demand for food with the demands of the growing population. Don served on the Suwannee River Water Management District (SRWMD) Board for almost a decade. Because of his work with SRWMD, he learned new ways to conserve water on his ranch. Don said water conservation is natural to a rancher because it is a necessity. Quincey Cattle Company's current irrigation uses **30% less** water than the old high pressure irrigation systems, and **50% less** water than the traditional hard hoses. "We know how important it is to a sustainable Florida and to keeping ranching viable," Don said.

Fun facts about Don:

His favorite movie is Top Gun

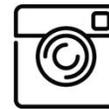
His favorite meal is FCR ribeye steak and stone crab claws

Don's Creed: "A good life is when you assume nothing, do more, need less, smile often, dream big, laugh a lot, and realize how blessed you are."

FOLLOW FCR



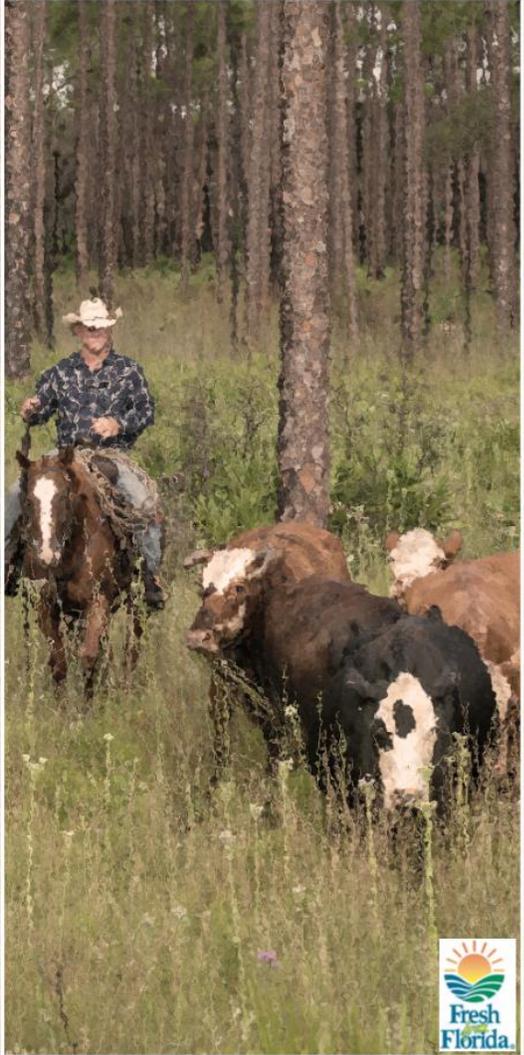
Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC



@FICattleRanchers



@FICattleRanchers



**Fresh
Florida.**



Florida

CATTLE RANCHERS

HOMEGROWN BEEF RAISED RIGHT



**HOMEGROWN
BEEF**

- Cattle raised solely in the state of Florida
- No long distance rides out west
- Building a sustainable Florida

- Humane and stress-free ranch environments
- Sustainable and transparent practices
- USDA and Fresh From Florida Certified



RAISED RIGHT

FOUNDING MEMBERS

13

500

YEARS OF CATTLE RAISED IN FLORIDA

STRONG HERITAGE AND COMMITMENT



FOLLOW FCR





Florida Cattle Ranchers, LLC @FCattleRanchers @FCattleRanchers

Tour a ranch near you!

www.FloridaCattleRanchers.com

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Shelby Lynn Oesterreicher lived in Bartow, Florida, until she moved to Gainesville to pursue a degree at the University of Florida. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural education and communication from the University of Florida in May 2016. This thesis is the culmination of her Master of Science degree in agricultural education and communication at the University of Florida. In December 2017, she will join the agricultural community as a communicator.