Understanding the Support Local Movement from the Perception of Generation Z in the NWA Region

Daniela Medina
*University of Arkansas-Fayetteville*

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Understanding the Support Local Movement from the Perception of Generation Z in the NWA Region

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Agricultural and Extension Education

by

Daniela Medina
Texas A&M University
Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Communications, 2021

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University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

__________________________________
Jill Rucker, Ph.D.
Thesis Chair

__________________________________
Jefferson D. Miller, Ph.D. Casandra Cox, M.S.
Committee Member Committee Member
Abstract

The support local movement is a growing trend within Generation Z, with that comes the need to understand marketing strategies Generation Z responds to best. As Generation Z is entering the workforce and purchasing their groceries there is a need to understand how this generation perceives the term local beef. There is currently little research in regard to Generation Z and their perceptions of local beef. This study aimed to fill a gap within research by conducting a qualitative study to gather rich data to understand Generation Z’s perception of the term local beef and what marketing strategies impacted them most. Participants were within Generation Z and were residents of the Northwest Arkansas area, were also asked questions in regard to their purchasing habits, what terms motivated them to purchase, and their understanding of the beef industry. Researchers identified that the largest driving factors in purchasing proteins such as beef for Generation Z is price, quality, and there is an openness to purchasing local beef. In addition, participants shared their level of understanding of the beef industry.

Keywords: purchasing habits, generation Z, social cognitive theory, local beef, support local movement
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If you know me you know that I am driven by my core values of faith, community and education, I am thankful to be surrounded by people who give me undivided support. I am a firm believer that everyone I encounter is there to make an impact on my life, with that I know I will not be able to list everyone.

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Local

Community

Unknown

Community Engagement

Advertisements

Support Local Beef

Purchasing, Promotion, Consciousness, and Word of Mouth

Research Question Two: What marketing tactics impact Generation Z?

Grocery Stores

Price, Quality, and Origin

Health, Nutrition, and Promotion

Promotion

Sustainability, Community, and Uncertainty

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

There is limited research on how consumers perceive marketing tactics from beef producers. This in turn does not allow producers the ability to affectively market it to their targeted consumer. The limited research in understanding this topic, creates a lack in understanding how to support local producers. A fast-growing food trend within the US is consumers want to consume local foods (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA], 2010). There is a movement within the agricultural industry that calls for consumers to support their local producer whether it is beef, pork, or lamb.

Need for the Study

The term “local foods” has different definitions and meanings to different people depending on where they are from and how they are raised (Zepeda et al., 2004). The shop local movement has grown over the years but not in the areas of beef production. Consumers are interested in the quality and safety of beef production and the product themselves (Oesterreicher et al., 2018). As the next generation of consumers are actively purchasing their own groceries, the beef industry needs to understand how to market to the upcoming generation.

Consumers buying decisions are influenced by price, convenience, and trust in the producers (Goodwin, 2013). Consumers want to support local beef producers but are unsure how to support local producers. As consumers are constantly being bombarded by different marketing tactics, it is important to find what consumers respond to best for beef producers to affectively market to consumers (Holt, 2014). It is important to understand how consumers perceive certain marketing messages as, consumers are impacted by their different emotions (Webster & Ksiazek, 2012).
According to the USDA (2013), there three categories of local beef: very local, local-independent, and regional-aggregated (Gwin et al., 2013). Very local, is within the same or neighboring county: typically, red meat which is frozen and sold as a whole- half- or quarter carcass (Gwin et al., 2013). The market is direct pre-sale to the consumer (Gwin et al., 2013). The role in which the producer and consumer plays is the consumer pays for the processing fee.

In local-independent, the geography is highly variable, ranging from one county to multistate (Gwin et al., 2013). Here, the product is sold in individual cuts and cooked meats, typically labeled as fresh or frozen (Gwin et al., 2013). These products retail in farmers markets and community supported agriculture, restaurants, and wholesale. In this category the beef would need state or federal inspection (Gwin et al., 2013). The farmers and ranchers handle the marketing and distribution of the local-independent beef. The final type of local beef is similar to the local-independent, except it has fixed-weight-portion cuts and typically is delivered through fresh vacuum packaging. The marketing is wholesale and typically to retail and foodservice (Gwin et al., 2023). The beef needs federal or state inspection. Typically, marketing is done with a coalition of farmers and manages supply chain (Gwin et al., 2013).

**Statement of the Problem**

Some barriers discouraging the participation in the purchasing of local foods are consumers tend to be more conscious in their spending efforts and may not always preplan food (USDA, 2010). Current research on how consumers perceive marketing tactics from producers are focused on farmers markets and do not focus on the beef industry. This study will explore how consumers perceive marketing tactics from local beef producers and how consumers react to the support local movement. This research will also benefit local producers in giving them new tactics in marketing. This, in turn, will allow producers to better reach their targeted consumers,
which help build a bridge between the farm and the table (Holt, 2014). As Generation Z is emerging into the workforce and purchasing their own groceries, it needs to be understood how they perceive marketing strategies. Generation Z enjoys shopping with ease and convenience, according to a study from the Path to Purchase Institute. This generation consists of engaged shoppers who want the ability to have hands-on interactions and instant gratification (Path to Purchase Institute, 2022). Generation Z wants the ability to have affordability and convenience when it comes to shopping, and according to previous research, this generation prefers one-stop-shops such as Walmart and Target (Path to Purchase Institute, March 2022). There is a need to further understand Generation Z and marketing strategies which entice them to purchase local farmers and ranchers.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand what “support local beef producers” means to Generation Z consumers in the Northwest Arkansas Region. The purpose is to understand how consumers define “supporting local beef producers” to understand how consumers perceive marketing strategies to better equip beef producers and agricultural communicators to better market towards Generation Z.

1. How does Generation Z interpret the marketing phrase "support local beef"?
2. What marketing tactics impact Generation Z?
3. What is Generation Z perception of support local campaigns?
4. How does Generation Z define purchasing beef locally as?

Limitations

In qualitative studies, there is a researcher bias, with that the researcher’s bias needs to be stated and understood (Glesne, 2011, p. 9). In this qualitative research, the researcher was used
as a tool for data collection and analysis, the researcher can implement bias on to the project (Cassell, 2018). This qualitative study on the consumer perceptions of marketing tactics in the beef industry. This study focused on the marketing tactics of beef producers in an effort educate agricultural communicators to better market their beef products. This studied focused on the geographic area of the purposed subjects which can make the findings not applicable to other areas in the state. While the research focused on subjects within, the Northwest Arkansas area, this research should be continued into the areas with a focus of support local.

The researcher can impact, the collection of data with their presence as subjects may not always answer truthfully or they may be worried for their confidentiality (Allen, 2017).

Assumptions

This study worked with the social cognitive theory and its application of consumers perceptions and understandings of marketing tactics from beef producers. In the nature of this qualitative study, the researcher assumed participants answered questions truthfully.

Definitions of Key Terms

1. Support local refers to the purchasing of local food and or the sharing of social media messages (Agrimag, 2020).

2. Local food can be defined in multiple ways but commonly referred to as food grown within a county and or within a state (Zepeda et al., 2004).

3. Direct marketing is when farmers grow or raise their product and sell their product directly to consumers through farmers markets, online marketing such as social media and or farm sales (Abrams & Sackmann, 2014).

4. Northwest Arkansas area is known as the top western area of the state of Arkansas including the cities of Bentonville, Rogers and Fayetteville (NWA Travel Guide, n.d.).
5. Generation Z was born between 1995 and 2012, the generation has key characteristics and is an upcoming generation of consumers (Selingo, 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2019; Lear et al., 2019).
CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This chapter will review literature in the “support local movement” and discuss key topics necessary to understand the content of this study. The start of agricultural communicators came from agricultural journalists in the 1920’s. The field has grown to the academic levels as journalist and communicators saw the need of communicating agricultural issues to audiences with little understanding of the industry (Cartmell & Evans, 2013). The term “local foods” has different definitions and meanings to different people depending on where they are from and how they are raised (Zepeda et al., 2004). The shop local movement has grown over the years but not in the areas of beef production. Consumers are interested in the quality and safety of beef production and the product themselves (Oesterreicher et al., 2018). As the next generation of consumers are actively purchasing their own groceries, the beef industry needs to understand how to market to the upcoming generation. In this chapter, there will be a review of the conceptual and theoretical framework and review of key terms.

Conceptual Framework

Marketing Tactics in Beef Production

The support local movement is on the rise, there are clothing, social media posts and billboards that call consumers to support local food production (Goodwin et al., 2011). Support local food is typically referred to as farmers markets and produce even roadside food stands. Current marketing tactics within the industry are to target consumers to show them the direct impact the purchase makes (Zepeda, L., & Leviten-Reid, C., 2004). As consumers are further removed from the farm, marketing tactics can make a great impact on their buying decisions (Goodwin et al., 2011).
In Figure 1, this social media post from the online boutique, Wandering Maverick Boutique, is an example of marketing tactics consumers see that may impact their decisions in purchasing local (Wandering Maverick Boutique, 2022). Clothing with messages such as this can make an impact on consumers, for those outside of the beef industry this does not paint a clear picture of how they can purchase or support local beef (Goodwin et al., 2011).

**Figure 1**

*Wandering Maverick Boutique Advertisement*
Note: Wandering Maverick Boutique [wanderingmaverickboutique]. (2022, May 1). May means that is in Beef Month [meat emoji] Who is involved in the beef cattle industry?? [downward arrow]. [Photograph]. Instagram.
https://www.instagram.com/p/CdBIe2B0lzy/?igshid=MDJmNzVkJxY=.  

Figure 2

Seven Creek Beef Social Media Post

[Image of Seven Creek Beef Social Media Post]

Happy Sunday y'all! Our passion is to bring you the highest quality protein source available! That means giving our cattle the very best in nutrition and care daily, even on a Sunday!

#happysunday #localbeef #beefitswhatsfordinner #texasrancher #cattletales #oklahomarancher #dailychores
Note: Seven Creek Beef [sevencreekbeef]. (2021, Dec 19). Happy Sunday y’all! Our passion is to bring you the highest quality protein source available! That means giving our cattle the very best in nutrition and care, even on a Sunday! #happysunday #localbeef #beefiswhatsfordinner #texasrancher #cattletales #oklahomarancher #dailychores. [Photograph]. Facebook.
https://www.facebook.com/114511713613560/posts/451412766590118/?d=n

Figure 2 is an example of a direct-to-consumer marketing tactic from a beef producer. In this post, the producer is trying to build the bridge between the consumer and the producer in their social media posts (Goodwin et al., 2011). While this post is advocating for the beef industry and has appropriate captioning and hashtags, and a high-quality photo, this post generated little engagement, with one “love”, one comment and one share. If the consumer does not follow this producer directly the consumer may never find the producer’s product.

Figure 3

Seven Creek Beef Holiday Post
Note: Seven Creek Beef [sevencreekbeef]. (2021, Dec 12). Gift guides but make it beef! What do you get for the person on your list that has everything? How about some grass-fed, grain-finished beef! We've got an assortment of beef boxes that can be shipped or picked up anywhere in the DFW area! [meat emoji] Rancher's Choice Box [meat emoji] Butcher's Choice Box [meat emoji] Slow and Steady Cooker Box**Orders to be shipped will need to be in by this week to ensure delivery before Christmas!**[Photograph]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/114511713613560/posts/446892693708792/?d=n

Figure 3 is another example of a social media post from Seven Creek Beef, that not only advocates to consumers to shop their beef but to shop locally during the Christmas season (Seven Creek Beef, 2021). This is another post that received little engagement and leaves consumers with a call to action.

**Figure 4**

*Beef Producer Post*

*Note: Jefferson Miller [jeffersonmiller]. (2021, Dec 14). Friends in NWA, I have half of a beef available. The processing date is Dec. 22. If you would like a share of him, message me and I’ll*
give you the details. This photo is from September. He has been on feed since July and should weigh about 1100 pounds now. [Photograph]. Facebook.

https://www.facebook.com/20615343/posts/10106012582563347/?d=n

This social media post is from a local producer, within the NWA region (Miller, 2021). This post had little engagement, and leaves consumers unsure of some messaging if they are unaware of beef production. This post is an example of what this research studied in the learning of consumer perceptions, as consumers do not have a full understanding of what “half a beef” means. This producer is marketing directly to the consumer through a social media post. If consumers do not follow the producer on a certain platform, then they are unable to affectively support local beef producers.

**Figure 5**

*McClendon Farms Social Media Post*
Figure 5 is an Instagram post, from a family of beef producers in the Dallas Fort Worth the post was informative with the different pricings of their beef; however, the consumer may not understand fully the products.

There is little research on how consumers perceive the marketing messages from producers. Because of the inconsistency of producers and their marketing messages, consumers are unable to successfully support local beef (Goodwin et al., 2011). Consumers use their pre-existing thoughts and ideas about support local and support local beef in their purchasing of these products (Baldwin et al., 2003).

**Direct-to-Consumer Marketing**

Recently farmers have been using tactics, such as direct-to-consumer marketing, which is the producer marketing directly to the consumer. In this approach, the producer is using social media and websites to reach the consumer (Abrams & Sackmann, 2014). It is argued that this
mode can be successful, but it is in the way that the producer uses this medium. This way of marketing does provide a way for the producer to reach its direct network of people. There are benefits such as providing emotional support to producers, as it entices farmers to continue their practices (Williams & Durrance, 2008). The producers that are more likely to market on the social media platforms are younger people; the ones closer in age to those of Generation Z (Thayer & Sukanya, 2006).

**Generation Z**

Generation Z was born from 1995-2012 (Selingo, 2021; Rodriguez et. al., 2019; Lear et al., 2019). Established characteristics of Generation Z include familiarity and comfortability with technology both in their personal life and educational environment. As Generation Z is entering into early adulthood, they are starting to purchase their own groceries for the first time, typically purchasing things that are familiar to them. Like the previously younger generation of Millennials, they seek out meals that are easy to prepare (Oesterreicher et al., 2018). This grows the need to understand how the consumers perceive messaging specifically in beef production. Consumers are looking for the ability to create a connection with their producers (Hamilton, 2004). The term local has different has definitions and connotations depending on the consumers past experiences and feelings towards local (Rumble et al., 2015).

**Theoretical Framework**

Social Cognitive Theory began from observational experiments with a Bobo Doll and learning about children who were exposed to an aggressive and nonaggressive adult to see which the child would imitate. Social Cognitive Theory, started in the 1960s, by Alberta Bandura which originally began as the Social Learning Theory (Vinney, 2019). This led to the introduction of Social Learning Theory, which is based off observational learning and modeling (Vinney, 2019).
In 1986, Social Cognitive Theory was introduced as the influence external social factors and the environment have on decisions and behaviors (LaMorte, 2019).

There are six aspects of Social Cognitive Theory:

1. Reciprocal Determinism: The interactions between the person and the environment, and their behavior (LaMorte, 2019).

2. Behavioral Capability: The person’s abilities to perform a certain behavior through the knowledge they have acquired. This is also people’s ability to learn from their previous experiences (LaMorte, 2019).

3. Observational Learning: People learn through their observations of others and the world around (LaMorte, 2019). The behaviorist B.F. Skinner made a major component of the social cognitive theory is the observational learning. Observational learning occurs through four processes:
   a. Attentional Processes: This is where people observe real-life models or what the person will encounter through media (LaMorte, 2019).
   b. Retention Processes: This is the process where information is successfully recalled by the person and can be used later (LaMorte, 2019).
   c. Production Processes: In the production process, the person will modify their behavior to fit in a certain context. The person will reconstruct memories of certain behaviors so what they learned could be applied to certain situations (LaMorte, 2019).
   d. Motivational Processes: Motivation is key in these processes if a person sees that they have been rewarded for a certain action then they will be more likely to complete the task later and if not better (LaMorte, 2019).
4. Reinforcements: Is the responses to a person’s behavior that enables them to either continue or discontinue the behavior (LaMorte, 2019).

5. Expectations: Anticipated behaviors has consequences and can create expectations for the person. When people anticipate expectations, this drives their decisions, especially previous experiences (LaMorte, 2019).

6. Self-Efficacy: This is the person’s level of confidence to perform their certain behaviors (LaMorte, 2019).

**Figure 6**

*Social Cognitive Theory Model*

The Social Cognitive Theory relates to “shop local” as the consumer is influenced by their understanding and awareness of a product, their behavioral choices or what is understood to be their own purchasing habits, and finally their environment to purchase products.

**Conclusion**

The key concepts in the literature guided this study included direct-to-consumer marketing, Generation Z, and marketing perceptions. The purpose of this research was to better understand the perceptions of marketing tactics by producers and how consumers use this information to support local beef producers. This study can be understood through the lens of the Social Cognitive Theory because it provides an explanation of how consumers understand information and how they might use it to make purchasing decisions. The participants’ reactions to the questions can impact the way producers make marketing decisions. The literature in this chapter provided a better understanding of this study’s basis.
CHAPTER 3

Restatement of the Problem

Through the exploration of marketing tactics of beef producers, there is a need to understand how consumers view marketing messages and their impact on purchasing decisions (Goodwin et al., 2011). This research supports one of the research priority areas of the American Association of Agricultural Education (AAAE) National Research Agenda: Sufficient Scientific and Professional Workforce that Addresses the Challenges of the 21st Century, by trying to understand how the consumer understands and perceives the shop local movement and how this might affect producers’ marketing decisions (Roberts et al., 2016). When producers are a simple family farm, they must understand that their marketing decisions make an impact on consumers’ purchasing decisions. Producers must understand their market and how consumers perceive marketing messages and how that can impact their decision to purchase local.

Purpose and Research Questions

This research intended to understand consumers’ perceptions of producers’ marketing tactics, and how that can impact their decisions in purchasing local beef. Producers need to understand how to effectively reach their targeted audience through direct-to-consumer marketing tactics.

The following questions guided this study:

1. How does Generation Z interpret the marketing phrase "support local beef"?
2. What marketing tactics impact Generation Z?
3. What is Generation Z perception of support local campaigns?
4. How does Generation Z define purchasing beef locally as?
Design of the Study

This qualitative study was guided by the ontology of relativism and an epistemology of constructionism; the paradigm that comes from these two is constructivism-interpretivism (Jordan, 2022). The purpose of constructivism-interpretivism is to understand a group or occurrence (Jordan, 2022). The purpose of this qualitative research was to understand consumers’ perceptions of marketing tactics of beef producers, and the impact it will make on the support local movement. Qualitative research hopes to “interpret cultural, political, and historical phenomena,” this is an appropriate approach to the research of inquiry (Glesne, 2011 p.9). This is the methodology that best supported this research, due to the continuous analysis of the data and the ability to continuously analyze the hypothesis to create richer data. The researchers sought to understand the phenomena of the knowledge presented through the research gathered (Charmaz & Bryant, 2008). This methodology allowed the researcher to better understand the evolution of data, through the process of the coding. The continuous analysis of the data allows for questions and comments to arise through the memos written by the researchers. The research sought to understand consumer perceptions in the beef industry. Participants answered questions during the interview process and themes arose throughout data collection and analysis.

Subjects

Participant Selection

Proposed participants for this study were members of Generation Z; people born from the time frame of 1995-2012, who are also grocery shoppers in the Northwest Arkansas area (Lear et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2019; Selingo, 2021). The rationale for selecting these participants was to learn more about consumers’ perceptions of marketing tactics from beef producers. For
this research, network recruiting was the appropriate method of choosing participants, as it gave
the researchers the opportunity to purposefully find participants (Patton, 2002). In doing this, the
researchers sought to understand how marketing tactics impacted consumers in their buying
decisions, and their want to support local beef producers. The gender of the participants does not
matter, as the scope of research was focused on understanding the impact of marketing tactics on
this generation of consumers.

Demographics of the Subjects

For this study, the participants needed to be conscientious in their purchasing decisions,
fit within the Generation Z group, and have a want to purchase local foods, however, they did not
need to be tied to the beef industry. Participants were representative of the Northwest Arkansas
Area and were representative of Generation Z. Since Generation Z has over a ten-year age gap,
the participants were representative of the sub-age groups in the generation. For this research
participants were between the ages of 18-26.

While in-person interviews are the norm for qualitative research, as research expands
over geographical areas, participants may not always be able to meet in person. Recorded video
interviews can provide the opportunity to have convenient and cost-effective opportunity to
generate a larger number of participants (Gray et al., 2020). For this study, the researcher used
this video interview format to conduct semi-structured interviews to address the research
questions. Generation Z thrives in their interest and informal learning, which will allow the
participants to feel engaged during the interview (Rodriquez et. al., 2019).

Recruiting

Network recruiting was used to select the participants of the study. The researcher
contacted representatives from the local farmers markets, to reach out to consumers who were
not tied to the beef industry. Network recruiting provided the research with rich data from various participants (Patton, 2002).

Human Subjects Protection

In qualitative research it is necessary to anticipate any ethical issues that could arise. Due to the nature of the research, human relationships are at the core, as such, a level of protection needs to be established for the participants. Anticipating any issues that could arise during the interviews. In qualitative research, the need to be ethical is of great concern, the researcher must ensure that participants have no obligation, and the researchers will be good in ethical decisions.

In terms of this research at the University of Arkansas, the research must comply with the Institutional Review Board, IRB, which has regulatory practices for researchers (Jones et al., 2013). All subjects participating in this study were protected from harm as a result of the study by the University of Arkansas Internal Review Board (# 2211437144). A copy of the approval letter can be found in Appendix A. In this research, the participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. Each participant signed a consent form, which described what participation in the study entailed, the procedures, any risks that they could endure, and the insurance of their confidentiality (Jones et al., 2013).

Instrumentation

Instrument Development (Semi-Structured Questioning Route)

Basic characteristics of qualitative research is it studies people, thoughts, experiences, social structures, cultures, interactions and behaviors in their environment. A few basic ideas to qualitative research are the small sample sizes that give the great data. Qualitative research also allows for flexible research questions and the ability for multiple data generations. Other characteristics of qualitative research are seeing the participants’ views, context is important,
there is a flexible writing structure, there is a complex picture, inductive data analysis and the flexible writing structure. Along with the conceptual and theoretical framework, interview questions guided this study. Data generation in qualitative research is the way the researcher arranges situations and scenarios to produce data in the most useful way for the data analysis that follows the methodology (Goldkuhl, 2019). Common data generation methods are interviewing, questionnaire study, observation study, focus group study, and more (Goldkuhl, 2019). Interviewing is known as a key qualitative method (Myers, 1997). In interviewing, the data generation is separated by the participant, or otherwise known as the informant’s, everyday life of reality. The life reality of a participant influences the data generation. The participant’s reality influences the data generation. During the data generation, the researcher asked the participant a question, and the participant answered the research question, and then the data generation became generated data. The research gave the participants the ability to answer questions with free range, due to the nature of the open ended questions (Goldkuhl, 2019).

**Pilot Study**

The pilot study served the researcher with the ability see any flaws, limitations, and/or weaknesses within the interview design (Crossman, 2019). The pilot study allowed for the research committee to refine questions, as well ensure that the researcher was prepared to conduct the main interviews. These were done with cognitive interviews to ensure that the questions were well written and understood. The researcher conducted eight cognitive interviews revising interview questions after each one to ensure that they were easily understood (Yin, 2014). The researcher chose participants that closely aligned with the demographics of the participants, the only difference was location.
Data Collection

The research utilized this format to conduct semi-structured interviews. As the proposed participants were in Generation Z, this generation has a limited attention span; the use of the semi-structured interviews via Zoom allowed for the participants to stay engaged throughout the interview (Rodriquez et. al., 2019).

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and then coded line-by-line, with data was first open coded (DeCuir-Gunby, et al. 2011). Axial coding followed; the researcher made connections between codes, which were derived from the open coding process, the researcher then made connections between ideas and concepts. The researcher engaged in the process of open coding, which explored the ideas of that are contained in raw data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). After the open coding, the researcher developed themes from the data. The development of categories and axial codes were present throughout multiple transcripts that were reviewed (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). While developing the data-driven codes, then began the analysis of the data. The codebook contained code, subcode, description, and an example. Two independent researchers analyzed the data and met multiple times to discuss code names, definitions, and examples (DeCuir-Gunby, et al. 2011).

Qualitative Rigor: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Conformability

This qualitative study on consumers’ perceptions of marketing within the beef industry ensured trustworthiness and rigor. Lincoln and Guba (1985) redefined the concept of trustworthiness through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Nowell et al., 2017).
In qualitative research, rigor is a way to create consistency within the methods of the research, as well as the establishment of trust and confidence within the findings. Rigor was confirmed, through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (author name, 2020).

Credibility is the relationship between the participant’s views and the researcher’s representation of them (Tobin & Begley, 2004). There are several degrees of credibility, such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, data collection triangulation, and research triangulation. An external check of the research project from peer debriefing is recommended from Lincoln and Guba (1985). Data collection triangulation is a cross examination from two to three different checks from results. There are different types of triangulations, such as methodological and theory. A benefit of data collection triangulation is that it increases the validity of the researchers’ findings (Naeem, 2020). Data triangulation was used by each member of the research committee to validate the findings of this study.

Dependability is the audit of the steps within the research process (Nowell et al., 2017). The steps of this research are transparent, which allowed for the judgement of dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Members of the research committee went through the process of an audit to ensure the dependability of this research (Nowell et al., 2017).

Confirmability is establishing that the interpretations and findings derived from research data, demonstrated from the conclusions, are reached (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Confirmability is also known as neutrality in qualitative research (author name, 2020). In confirmability, the researchers create and include their reasons for their research decisions through the process (Koch, 1994). This research was validated through citations, which impacted the decisions made throughout the research project.
Transferability, in qualitative research, is the generalization of the question (Nowell et al., 2017). Transferability is the rich data that can be applicable to use by other researchers. It is not about proving whether it will be applicable to others but providing the evidence that it could be applicable. The research created thick data, through interviews and experiences; this rich data was carefully analyzed through a code book data analysis (DeCuir-Gunby, et al. 2011).

Summary

This study was qualitative, with the use of semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions. Ground theory was used to compare the data, as collected, in order to analyze and organize field note memos and transcribed data Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Following the practice of coding, developed through grounded theory, results and conclusions were found (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).
CHAPTER 4

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study in the form of themes that emerged during the analysis of the data. The goal of this study was to develop a clear understanding of Generation Z and their perception of marketing strategies involving local beef. This research sought to find the gap for communicators and local farmers and ranchers to better market towards the emerging grocery shoppers. The following research questions guided these goals:

5. How does Generation Z interpret the marketing phrase "support local beef"?
6. What marketing tactics impact Generation Z?
7. What is Generation Z perception of support local campaigns?
8. How does Generation Z define purchasing beef locally as?

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is the review of transcripts and observation notes to understand the data generated. Creating categories and coding information is done during data analysis. The researcher explored the relationship between the various categories (Wong, 2008).

The members of the research committee each made interpretations of the data then cross-referenced them to the other members of the committee. A data codebook was created and used to analyze themes an understanding of the data and was cross referenced by the committee members. Members of the committee reviewed the presented codebook and themes, cross-referenced them after analyzing the transcribed data. The research and committee member met with four times, in hour long meetings to discuss the themes as well as cross-reference for accuracy.
Demographics

The interview transcripts of the study represented perspectives of the Generation Z participants. All participants purchase their own groceries and do not have a direct impact on the agricultural industry. All participants were assigned a number and their perspectives are presented consistently using the label “Participant and their respective number”. Results are presented in order of the research questions they tie back to. For a full list of interview questions, refer to Appendix F. Table 1 presents the demographics of this study with a total number of 20 participants, in the age range of 18-26, there were four participants that were not UA students, and all deemed they did not have an impact on the agricultural industry.

Table 1

Demographics of the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>U of A Student</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
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<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
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<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
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<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participant 9    Yes    Female
Participant 10   Yes    Female
Participant 11   Yes    Female
Participant 12   No     Female
Participant 13   Yes    Female
Participant 14   Yes    Female
Participant 15   Yes    Female
Participant 16   Yes    Female
Participant 17   Yes    Female
Participant 18   No     Male
Participant 19   Yes    Male
Participant 20   No     Male

Research Question One: How does Generation Z interpret the marketing phrase "support local beef"?

The interview questions that corresponded to the first research question were:

- What comes to mind when you hear the term “support local”?
- Where have you seen the term “support local”?
- What do you consider actions that contribute to “support local beef”?
- What are ways you can support local beef?
Themes which emerged through this research question were local, community, advertisements, and unknown. These related to recognition and understanding in social cognitive theory, as these are components of the theory with one’s personal behavior in purchasing decisions and where they shop as well as their environment which would be one’s recognition and understanding of a product.

When participants were specifically asked to describe their initial thoughts when they hear the term “support local,” participants described businesses, produced/grown, produce, and co-op.

Local

Businesses were described as “local” or “small businesses”. Participant 6 described supporting local as, “When I think of it, it's usually a term used by a lot of local businesses, uh, especially shops and restaurants.” The description of businesses ranged from shops and restaurants to boutiques.

The term produced/grown related to where the product was made, whereas produce related directly towards fruits and vegetables. Through the answering of this research question, participants presented a theme through the terms produce and if products were produced locally. Some participants initially thought of traditional produce, such as tomatoes and other greens. Participant 19, instantly responded with, “kind of random, but a really good selection of tomatoes, locally grown,” in the context of purchasing from the “co-op.” Produced/grown locally was also described as local farmers, and the act of purchasing not from a large grocery store. “You're buying from predominantly local farmers, local producers rather than Walmart,” stated Participant 5. The difference between the codes produce/grown and produce is in the description. Participant 8 stated, “I think of produce more than other things.” In addition,
Participant 20 stated, “farmers, just uh, things that are produced locally, I guess.” The theme of local was interpreted with different definitions, ranging from participant to participant.

Lastly, the “co-op” was referred to as a coalition of farmers, as well as a grocery store in Fayetteville. As Participant 1 stated, “the co-op probably... it’s supposed to be a coalition of local farmers and I like that”. Participant 15 described the co-op as, “farms”. The co-op could have different definitions to others, but in this study the term co-op was described as a coalition of farmers.

Community

This group of participants had a sense of community when describing the term local and the term local beef. The participants described community as helping out or being an engaged member of their community. Participant 2 described community as engaging within the community, “just being an engaging community in your local community where you are and just helping out where you can.” Community also described how the participants had seen the term “support local”. Participants had seen support local regarding a business being owned by someone within the community, or as engaging or participating in the community. Participant 12 stated, “owned by people in the community”. A sub-code which emerged from community was “helping out” or “being an engaged member”; the term helping out was typically described through monetary value. Participant 2 stated, “just being an engaging in community in your local community where you are and just helping out where you can.” Furthermore, financial stability and monetary values were discussed by Participant 8, “need your money” and by Participant 17, “whenever you have the financial ability.”
**Unknown**

It is important to note a theme emerged in different questions regarding support local and local beef, some participants were unsure of where, and if they had even heard of the term. This will be discussed as it related to other research questions as well. Participant 7, said they were unknown about the term, “It's not a term that I'm familiar with.” Community and advertisements were codes that emerged when participants were asked where they had seen the support local term.

**Community Engagement**

Community engagement is where participants observed the term support local at farmers markets. Participant 3 stated, “…farmer's markets, I've seen those terms on like community centers, like the Jones center that's in Springdale. I've seen their sign all the time.” The term “farmers markets” was used to described community and engagement, and the city of Fayetteville was mentioned as well.

**Advertisements**

Participants observed the term “support local” through advertisements around Northwest Arkansas, in marketing media, online/social media presence, promotions, and businesses. Participants observed the term through marketing media including billboards, company fliers, or a marketing campaign. “I feel like I have, that seems like a pretty common phrase, then it's coming from our local media,” said Participant 15.

Based off the transcriptions, the participants described the city of Fayetteville as having a recognizable amount of marketing based on the term support local. “City of Fayetteville, advertisements. They're really big on that stuff, which is great,” stated Participant 1. Through online and social media presence and promotions, participants observed the term. “Online bases
like really promote that it is local like in their ads and stuff like that,” described Participant 8. In addition, Participant 18 stated, “I feel like I see it on social media a lot umm tax-free weekend.”

Businesses were identified as a sub-code for advertisements. Participants described businesses in regard to smaller businesses within the area, such as local businesses, local grocery stores, or places that were not chain restaurants or businesses. Participants 4 described businesses as, “support local businesses supporting local schools”. In addition, Participant 19, described businesses as, “I always see it in regard to like local businesses, like boutiques”.

Some participants observed the term support local “everywhere”, while there were some participants who felt like they were unsure of where, or if they had seen the term. “Everywhere?... stickers...advertised... campaigns... bandwagon kind of thing,” described Participant 5. In addition, Participant 15 stated, “I feel like I have, that seems like a pretty common phrase, then it’s coming from our local media.” This was a reoccurring theme which arose and participant described the term support local; however, overall participants were unsure how to answer in a specific way.

Furthermore, some participants were unsure of the term support local, if they had ever seen it, and if they have, they could not remember. “I don't know that I have, or like, not that I know of,” Participant 7 stated. Participant 19 stated, “I never really see it in regards to food... I feel like there isn't really a huge push to support local.”

**Support Local Beef**

Participants described supporting local beef as purchasing beef as a direct support or with uncertainty. Participant 8 stated, “obviously purchasing it is like a huge one cause you're actually like directly funding the organization or the family”. In addition, Participant 17 stated, “easiest one is just buying local beef whenever I can”. Participants had uncertainty with how to
support local beef as they felt as though they did not know where to find it or where if it was really advertised. Participant 1 stated, “It’s not like really advertised”.

**Purchasing, Promotion, Consciousness, and Word of Mouth**

Participants mainly described the best way to support local beef was through purchasing, promotion, consciousness, and word of mouth. Participants described purchasing as a direct impact to supporting local beef. “Not buying the name brands... aware of like the packaging and seeing if it says local,” said Participant 13. Consciousness or awareness of purchasing habits was another way participants described supporting local beef. “Just being conscious of what the message is... of what I eat... paying attention to local businesses,” said Participant 2. Word of mouth was another impact of supporting local beef the participants described. “Telling other people like, by, it's better if you buy local.... Quality of the meat will probably be better and your money will be worth it,” said Participant 3.

Research Question One, involved many themes regarding the purchasing habits of Generation Z in regard to local beef.

**Research Question Two: What marketing strategies impact Generation Z?**

The interview questions used to address the second research question were:

- Where do you purchase groceries most frequently?
- If a product is labeled as "local" does this impact your decision to purchase? If so, how?
- How do you make decisions towards purchasing proteins such as beef?
- In what ways have you seen the term "support local" being used?
- Describe the impact you believe purchasing "local beef" has?

Themes which emerged through this research question were grocery stores, price and quality, health and nutrition, promotion, sustainability and community, and uncertainty. These
related to the purchasing habits of the consumer and in social cognitive theory, as these are components of the theory with one’s personal behavior in purchasing decisions.

**Grocery Stores**

Codes which emerged through this interview question were purchasing habits including large grocery stores, smaller grocery stores (farmers markets and dining halls). The large grocery store in the NWA referenced primarily was Walmart. Participant 9 stated, “Most frequently, Walmart, usually I really like Aldi too”. A few of the participants still lived in dorms, so they purchased their food from the dining hall, while some participants noted that they go to the farmers market for products such as produce. Participant 4 described they purchased food most frequently, “Dining Halls usually”. Participant 17 added that they purchased food at the farmer’s markets, “Fayetteville Farmer’s Market, for produce and seasonal goods. Harps for shelf stable stuff”.

**Price, Quality, and Origin**

Primarily, participants stated the term local would impact their decision to purchase. Some participants specific yes or indifferent responses regarding local as impacting purchasing decisions. Purchasing decisions were also driven by price, sustainability, quality, origin, and community. Participant 8 stated, “Yes... I’ve it at the farmer’s market also at the co-op”. Participant 5 determined that the term local would make no difference in their purchasing decisions, “It definitely would not be a negative impact”.

Price was the most dominant factor in purchasing decisions; however, participants stated that purchasing local is something they would like to do if the price difference was minimal. “Yes, I would love to shop more local, but as a college student that's not always feasible for me;” stated Participant 11. While some participants believe they are unable to do so at the time, some
participants found that it is something they would like to do, but price is a major factor. “Depends on price...for me, kind of hard to trust the branding you know, everything is marketing thing at this point...supporting local beef is something that you, know I would really want?,” Participant 1 stated.

Participants described that purchasing local products could impact their area and be more sustainable in the long run. “Yes, I think, because of my knowledge of like the beef industry, I'd rather buy something that I know has grown probably in a more sustainable factory or production area,” described Participant 3. Participant 10 stated they purchased from large grocery stores due to price, “from Walmart, as a poor college student”.

Quality also impacted the label of local. Participants stated that local would improve the quality of beef and be fresher than beef from the grocery store. “I'll say yes... because I feel like it'd be fresher to me,” stated Participant 18. To further explain quality, Participant 3 described that the term as, “I feel like it would improve the quality of the beef.”

Origin is an impact from the label of local, and participants would maybe even purchase local foods at a higher price point, if they knew where the product was coming from stated Participant 19, “I probably will, even if the price is a little bit higher... cause I know where it is coming from.”

Participant 13 stated, “No... I usually don’t go for local”. It is also important to note that many of the participants stated that they do not believe that the label of local would impact their decision to purchase a product, as price and proof in the label would be considered as well. Participant 17 stated, “it takes the label and the presence of the producer or farmer to really solidify that for me.” Participant 5 described that the label of local would not entice them to purchase, but it would not have a negative impact either, “it definitely would not be a negative
impact.” Price is, however, still a determining factor whether the label of local would impact a consumer decision to purchase. Participants were conscious in their purchasing decisions, Participant 12 stated, “If it’s more expensive, then probably not.” It is also important to note that consumers within Generation Z believe to have their own consciousness of knowledge of a certain industry such as beef.

**Health, Nutrition, and Production**

Participants’ main factors towards purchasing proteins such as beef were price, nutrition (protein and healthier options), quality, and production (ethical). Consistently, participants described the most important factor of purchasing protein, such as beef, as price. Participants described their purchasing habits as reaching for the cheapest choice first, or recalled they were inexperienced in purchasing products such as beef. Participant 19 described their purchasing habit as, “I probably often go for the cheapest... I don't have a lot of experience.” In addition, Participant 9 described their purchasing habit as, “cheapest, whether that's like the Walmart brand or at Aldi, picking the cheapest one.”

The next factor which contributed towards purchasing decisions in regard to beef, was nutrition. Participants mention protein as a determining factor. Participant 4 mentioned “amount protein and nutrition”. Participant 3 stated, “I eat a lot of protein like beef”. Health factors and nutritional values when purchasing beef emerged, and would even go as far as not purchasing beef due to health concerns. Participant 4 stated, “I try not to buy as much beef... poultry products just because it's healthier.” Participant 13 went on to describe their thought process as if they were getting the correct calories for the protein they were consuming, “Usually protein sources, I look at the fat content... getting a good amount of protein for the calories that you are eating.”
Promotion

Four themes emerged from my inquiry of ways participants had seen the term “support local” being used: *businesses, promotion, economy, and uncertainty*. In terms of businesses, participants primarily described small businesses, “restaurants around and within town, uh boutiques... like mom-and-pop place of business,” stated Participant 6. Regarding businesses, farmers markets were also described, and marketing with the Fayetteville farmers market was described. “I've been to the farmer's markets, um, in Fayetteville and I've seen people wear like, support local shirts and that kind of thing,” Participant 9 stated.

*Promotion* was heavily emphasized by participants. when discussing the term support local and where participants have seen the term. Participant 5 described, “around campus... billboards... sometimes the menu... if I see that I will likely buy it”. A participant even described they had seen promotion on social media such as Instagram. In terms of *promotion*, the economy was also mentioned as Participant 3 stated, “selling products and improving the local economy”. Businesses were also described as supporting local businesses. Participant 4 stated, “supporting local businesses, supporting local restaurants and supporting your community”.

Sustainability, Community, and Uncertainty

Participants described the impact they believed “local beef” had with three emerging themes including sustainability, helping out/giving back (community and economy), and unaware. Many participants believed that the impact that purchasing local beef had been within sustainability. They found that transporting in a smaller radius would be more beneficial for the environment. Participant 1 said, “emissions and all that type of stuff... responsible in terms of how we, treat the environment and beef is of course pretty good... ability to have it be closer, you know lowering the transport and that kind of thing.” In addition, Participant 13 said, “Better for
the environment ... smaller scale, so it's not producing as much harm to the environment.” The sustainability factor is one that participants find to have a great appeal.

Another impact people believe with purchasing local beef, is in **helping out/giving back**. Within this theme, participants described helping out/giving back to your community and helping with the local economy. Participants found helping with the community served their local community and allowed them to know where their food comes from. Participant 4 said, “organizations that are selling local beef, it'll keep them in business and keep local beef in the community, and it brings the price up for local beef if it has a higher demand.” Participants described the impact beef has with the community in regard to the economy. There were multiple participants that addressed that local beef would support local economies and boost businesses in their area. A couple of participants referred to local businesses and farmers as the backbone of America. Participant 6 stated, “smaller businesses are kind of like the backbone of our country and not just in ways like boutiques and restaurants but also through produce and our food.” In addition, Participant 17 stated, “Farmer are still the backbone of American society, especially when you get into rural states like Arkansas.”

Community made an impact on participants, as they believed that they were contributing to their local community. “I like helping out my community, and if putting money into the community would help circulate it, that's something I'd like to do,” Participant 4 stated. The label of local had more of an emotional buy-in for some participants, as Participant 9 stated, “Probably make me more likely to purchase... I like to support local... more like that I would buy it.”

It is important to note that there was lots of uncertainty towards the impact of local beef. Participant 7 stated, “I'm sure a lot of benefits that I'm just unaware of”. Some participants
stated that in regard to local beef there needed to be proof of the term local. Participant 17 stated, “it takes the label and the presence of the producer or farmer to really solidify that for me”.

The themes of grocery stores, price and quality, health and nutrition, promotion, sustainability and community, and uncertainty, emerged from the different interview questions. These themes revealed that the participants have an awareness to purchasing decisions but rely on their previous purchasing habits from how they were raised.

**Research Question Three: What is Generation Z perception of support local campaigns?**

The interview questions that corresponded to the third research question were:

- Have you ever seen the phrase “local beef”?
- Do you know anyone who promotes “local beef”?
- Describe how you would determine a product to be considered local?
- Do you believe you take actions to “support local beef”?

The third research question emerged with different perspectives and themes, such as uncertainty, branding, and location.

**Branding**

Regarding seeing the phrase “local beef,” there was uncertainty while some participants referred to marketing strategies from Fayetteville farmers Market. Participants were unsure whether they had seen the phrase “local beef.” It was interesting to see that some participants believed they had seen the phrase at large grocery stores, and others believed they did not believe they would ever see it in large grocery stores. Participant 10 stated, “I think I have seen some at Walmart, but not much,” while Participant 9 stated, “I don’t think at Walmart, potentially at Aldi.” Some participants believed that they did not think they had seen it, Participant 13 stated, “Not that I can think of off the top of my head.”
In terms of promoting “local beef,” participants were unsure, and if they did know people who promoted “local beef” they knew very few people. Most participants stated that they did not know many off the top of their head. They were unsure, or even referred back to the researcher, based off the previous interview questions. Participant 14 stated, “um, not that I know of.” In addition, Participant 6 stated, “not around here.” Some participants believed that they did know people who promoted “local beef,” but were unsure of who. Participant 4 believed mainly with chicken brands, “maybe chicken brands and stuff like that, not specifically local beef.” Participant 8, referred to professors within the college of agriculture, “I feel like a lot of professors in the Ag College are on like supporting local farmers.” Some participants specifically referred to friends, family, and professors. Participant 16 referred to, “uh, yeah. My sister-in-law.” In addition, Participant 2 referred to acquaintances, “Yes, my boyfriend’s roommates.”

**Location**

Participants reference location in terms of proximity in terms of a products proximity to them as well as branding and packaging. Location was described within time, distance, mileage or even surrounding states. Some participants were aware that their description of local could be different than others, which could make an impact on branding. Participant 15 stated, “somebody’s interpretations of what local is... that could be Tennessee or Springdale.” Mileage description ranged from 30 to potentially 100 miles within the participant’s vicinity. Participant 19 even went as far to discuss whether a product was frozen or not, “30-50 miles...travel long distances while frozen.” Participant 11 added, “it wouldn’t be transferred over a long distance.” Another emergent sub code which came from this interview question was small, “in your area...
not a big company... more of a small-town business.” stated Participant 7. Some participants even described location as time, “within a few hours”, stated Participant 8.

Another code which emerged is branding subcodes, including the name of the brand as well as the packaging which determined a product to be considered local. The company label, or how it was branded impacted participants. “How it is labeled and like the brand that it is,” stated Participant 12. Additionally, Participant 2 stated, “brand name of a local company,” is how participants would determine a product to be determined local. Packaging also made an impact on the participants, if the packaging described that it was local in some way. Participant 15 stated, “packaging might say it... trusts the regulations... I would assume that someone had looked into that and like made sure that it was local.” In addition, Participant 14 stated, “if it said it on the packaging.” Brand labeling and packaging made an impact on the participants determining if a product is local.

Uncertainty

Three major themes emerged if the participant took actions to support local beef: probably not, yes, and uncertainty. Many participants believed they did not engage in actions which contributed towards supporting local beef. Participant 9 stated, “not right now, I’m focused a lot on the cheapest cost available and most convenience.” In addition, Participant 1 stated, “probably not actively.” Participants did have an openness to supporting local beef, as Participant 10 stated, “I'd say currently right now, um not as much as I'd like to... something that I value and will when I am financially stable and able to ... right now, I'd say no.” In addition, Participant 4 stated, “Umm not as much as I should... I feel like that's something that I'm gonna start doing for sure.” While some participants had an openness to taking actions to support local beef, some participants believed they do not take any actions to support local beef. Participant
19 shared that they did not believe they have had the chance to support, “not local beef; I've never tried, I've never had the opportunity to...I would definitely.” In addition, Participant 18 stated, “no, unfortunately.” Lastly, some participants believed that they did take actions to support local beef, but there were some participants that were unsure if they have or not. Participant 8 shared, “I think... price is a big factor... feels good knowing that you can support.”

**Research Question Four: How does Generation Z define purchasing beef locally as?**

The interview questions that corresponded to the first research question were:

- In your own words, how would describe “local beef”?
- Does the label “local” influence your choice of restaurants?

There were two interview questions that were related to the final research question. Within this research question there were five themes which emerged: uncertainty, location within a state, sustainability, quality, and not big business.

**Uncertainty, Location, and Quality**

Interviews found that participants struggled in defining purchasing beef locally, as they were unsure if they understood what, or how to purchase local beef. Participant 7 said, “I don’t know. I don’t know that I would know where to find local beef to have an opinion on it.” Participant 1 added, “I don’t really have a picture of what that means.”

Location was a factor in which participants defined local beef; this was understood with proximity sold, proximity raised, and within a state. Participant 13 defined it as, “beef is coming from cows... within a decent mile radius from where you’re purchasing it.” In addition, Participant 10 stated, “raised near the area... city... there’s not much area for cows, I’d say giving pretty good hour or I guess 60-to-100-mile radius would be more local.” Some participants defined local as terms of sustainability, such as proximity, in which the product was
raised as well as processed. Participant 3 described proximity, “within the state in a more sustainable area... organically... grazing on the grass and they look healthy.” In addition, Participant 17 stated, “been produced from an animal that has been cared for, raised, um, and then slaughtered and processed within the area.”

Quality is the final theme which emerged from this interview question. Participant 3 continued to share on their definition of local beef in describing, “if somebody were to slaughter one of those cows, I'd probably buy their meat cause I know that they're probably their beef is probably good quality.” Regarding freshness, participants shared that local beef, in their eyes, was fresher. Participant 11 shared, “probably fresh and has not been frozen, isn’t transported over a long distance.” Participant 14, continued with “beef that is local probably more fresh.” Participants also shared small businesses defined local beef as opposed to larger businesses, “They’re not going through some like bigger corporation.”

Not big business

The label “local” impacted participants’ choice of restaurants, as a majority of participants actively tried to eat at local restaurants. Some participants defined local regarding items on the menu, or if the restaurant was only found in a certain area. Participant 9 stated, “Yeah, I think so... I like trying new restaurants... I would say it like influences.” In addition, Participant 12 stated, “sometimes yeah, I typically like to go somewhere that’s like considered local.” Participants believed that the label “local” influenced their choice of restaurants, as they believed it was fresh, they would pay more money or it was locally sourced. Participant 4 described that in a tourism aspect, they would try to dine at a local restaurant, “if I’m visiting someplace, tourism aspect... depends on where I’m at really... fresher if it’s local.” Participant 11, added that they would prefer local over chain restaurants, “like I may not have the money to
purchase local all the time... the prices... but yes, I would choose to eat someplace that says it's a local place as opposed to, um, like a chain restaurant.” Participant 14 added “sometimes I definitely like trying out local restaurants for sure”.

Research Question 4 emerged the overall themes of quality and understanding which relate to the observational aspects of learning in the Social Cognitive Theory. The consistency in answers throughout the interview questions, of uncertainty but price is a driving factor in purchasing decisions for Generation Z.

**Researcher Reflection Summary**

Overall participants were unsure of local beef but enjoyed the idea of local beef and an openness to the idea of it. Observations of Generation Z and the participant when answering the interview questions, participants had an overall confidence and sense of knowledge when it came to their answers. Participant 19 discussed that there is a decrease in farmers and ranchers and this was a result of large grocery stores doing the same thing. “We’re losing farmers at like a drastic rate.[A] huge percentage just because why would people need to farm? And there's something like Walmart right around the corner”. Participants also conducted their own level of self-efficacy which relates to the Social Cognitive Theory. Participant 3 affirmed her knowledge of the beef industry as they stated, “because of my knowledge of the beef industry, I’d rather buy something I know has grown... in a more sustainable factory or production area”. When asked to describe their knowledge of the beef industry, Participant 3 stated, “I’ve seen like documentaries, where a lot of cattle are grown... on like large amount of lands that look very bad”. There is understood a disconnect in what local beef is or the different areas of production or have the beef industry is structured.
Conclusion

Each research question presented rich data and understanding of different contexts within local beef. Overall Generation Z is driven by price and the overall feel-good factor. They have an openness to the idea of local beef and the impact that it could make not only in the economy but also in sustainability initiatives. These participants were driven by the understanding of their purchasing habits from their upbringings and understood there was a sense of disconnect but had an overall understood knowledge of the industry.
CHAPTER 5

Introduction

Conclusions and recommendations for this study were based on the 20 semi-structured interviews and their responses. This chapter seeks to summarize how local farmers and ranchers, as well as the “support local” movement, should market towards Generation Z. The semi-structured interviews were organized by research question and coded into thematic groups to determine the conclusion of the study and recommendations for the Social Cognitive Theory Model. The findings were organized around the following four research questions where the summary and findings, as well as conclusions, were drawn directly from the study itself:

1. How does Generation Z interpret the marketing phrase "support local beef"?
2. What marketing strategies impact Generation Z?
3. What is Generation Z perception of support local campaigns?
4. How does Generation Z define purchasing beef locally as?

**Research Question One: How does Generation Z interpret the marketing phrase “support local beef”?

Within this research question, the premise was in recognition and understanding of the phrase support local beef. Studies have shown that consumers have a desire to purchase locally grown and sourced food (Carpio & Isengildina-Massa, 2009). Through this research question, there are many uncertainties around supporting local beef, particularly around, who, what, why, how? An overwhelming number of participants revealed that they were unsure of where to purchase local beef. There is little research currently on the perceptions of local beef, however according to Goodwin et al. (year), there is inconsistency within marketing messages, which in turn, makes consumers unable to successfully support local beef. According to previous research,
the belief that foods, such as organic, were more nutritious increased a consumer's probability to purchase (Zepeda et al., 2004). This was confirmed by this study, as many participants agreed that they would be more inclined to purchase local beef for health reasons, but price made the overall influence of whether to “support local beef” through purchasing.

**Research Question Two: What marketing strategies impact Generation Z?**

Generation Z is impacted by different marketing strategies and purchasing decisions. Participants discussed that their purchasing decisions were driven by price, convenience, as well as impact when discussing local products. Participants were heavily influenced by branding and marketing strategies. The use of the word local impacted the participants to purchase, as participants believed that it would make a direct impact into their communities, but price was still a large factor if they would purchase or not. Participants also noticed very few marketing strategies, such a print medium when discussing shirts, stickers, or billboards, while other participants found that they had seen marketing strategies everywhere. Participant were more inclined to purchase if they knew some background in the product, and the ethics behind the production. Overall, participants felt inclined to purchase a product at a higher value if they could see a direct impact. It was found that participants saw the marketing term “support local” in correlation to local businesses, farmers markets, promotion and the economy. The impact that participants believed that the impact purchasing local beef has been sustainability and giving back to the community.

These findings are proven through previous research that Generation Z, are engaged shoppers and they are purchasing food and grocery products the most (Rebhoiz, 2022). Generation Z is inclined to purchase products to have a hands-on interaction, which also supports
the findings from participants as they enjoyed purchasing from farmers markets in order to have an instant conversation and purchasing experience.

**Research Question Three: What is Generation Z perception of support local campaigns?**

Participants revealed an openness in supporting the “support local campaign,” but there was confusion on where participants had truly seen the term support local. Participants perceived local as something that was within a certain proximity or milage from their current location. Participants’ perception of support local campaigns includes giving back to the community and the intrinsic value of helping others. This is supported by previous research with other generations, such as Millennials. Previous research with Millennials during their college years discovered that they had little knowledge of local beef (Oesterreicher et al., 2018). As students entered into their college years their understandings are based off their relationship with beef product which is dictated by their parent's understandings and purchasing choices.

**Research Question Four: How does Generation Z define purchasing beef locally as?**

As previous research states, the term local has different connotations to many people and with different values to others. The current term local has been seen with predominately farmers markets, and it is where most of the participants recognized it. (Morris and Buller, 2003). Seeing the term local influenced participants and some participants were more inclined to spend a little more if they understood the impact their decision would make. Participants were confused with how where they had seen the term of beef and how to purchase local beef. Previous research states, consumers find it difficult and tedious to purchase locally sourced foods (Roy, 2022).

**Recommendations for Agricultural Communicators**

There are three important takeaways that Agricultural Communicators must understand:

- Generation Z participants had no real idea of how to access local beef
- Location and proximity were key factors in defining local, so be sure the origin of products is clearly communicated.

- Price was important, so how do you cultivate those who would purchase in the future into “not forgetting” to support local when they can.

Generation Z was unsure of where to purchase local beef, as the Social Cognitive Theory states, a person goes through observational learning and in this occurs four aspects. In regard to purchasing and understanding local beef Generation Z there is a disconnect in the attentional and production process of the observation aspect of the Social Cognitive Theory. As Agricultural Communicators, this means that there needs to be a creation of materials which grab Generation Z, to motivate them as well as have them retain the information.

Location and proximity were key factors to Generation Z in their purchasing decisions. In the Social Cognitive Theory, learning and understanding comes from a person’s expectation of something. Generation Z has a different understanding of the location and proximity of beef products. Generation Z would often determine that a product was considered local if it did not have to travel a far distance or even be frozen. As communicators there needs to be educational materials to explain further understanding of the different areas of beef production. Whether this is in the farmers markets or on packaging labels. There needs to be a better description of products to increase awareness and expectations of products.

Price is a driving factor for other generations as well, in relation to the Social Cognitive Theory there needs to be a connection to a person’s Behavioral Capability. This is accomplished through observational learning, if Generation Z learns and understands more about local beef there could be an increase retention of determinism as described in Reciprocal Determinism of the Social Cognitive Theory. Generation Z needs hands on interactions between them and their
environment as well as the behavior or act of purchasing local beef. These aspects of the Social Cognitive Theory, are vital to retain and enable Generation Z to further purchase and promote local beef.

Based on participant feedback, it is recommended that industry professionals need to create engaging marketing tactics involving local beef. In the NWA area, there is recognition for the push to support local campaigns through farmers markets. Creating engaging material and social media pages will assist consumers with opportunity to purchase. Add examples of how they can do this – what marketing materials would be effective? What can be done to widen the shop local movement to expand beyond farmers markets?

Based off participant engagement, the researchers would recommend to create engaging marketing tactics involving local beef. In the NWA area, there is recognition for the push to support local campaigns through farmers markets. Creating engaging material and social media pages will assist consumers with opportunity to purchase. Engaging with county extension agents to create workshops covering social media trainings for local farmers and ranchers. Working with the local farmers markets, assisting with the marketing of local beef or even create print materials to engage consumers in the understanding of local beef and the production. As agricultural communicators, there should be a push in sharing the production side of beef while the farm to table process to entice consumers to purchase. As communicators with knowledge of agricultural practices there is a need more than ever to share how beef producers are implementing the best practices. As Generation Z’s primary source of news gathering is from social media pages, creating enticing information based off new and upcoming trends within social media.
Arkansas Grown, which is a statewide program administered through the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, to support and promote agricultural products from around the state (Arkansas Grown, n.d.). The program is to create a further connection between the producer and the consumer. Arkansas Grown can be found across the state of Arkansas with a distinct label (Arkansas Grown, n.d.). No participant referenced Arkansas Grown, which is important for the program to create engaging social media and consistent branding to increase recognition between the consumer and producer. This brand recognition program tries to bring cohesiveness to local foods but there is not enough recognition to those within the state, especially from the pool of participants in Generation Z.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

In the future, researchers should further this research of this population in order to develop more generalized results. Research projects based off this research should include in the areas of self-efficacy, knowledge, branding materials as well as overall perception of the beef industry and the impact on sustainability practices. Further research would be to research the consumers own self efficacy when discussing where their food comes from specifically in proteins such as beef. During this research participants rated their own understanding of the beef industry through their own research through documentaries and social media. Research to understand how Generation Z, understands agricultural practices, communications strategies particularly when it comes to sustainability practices. Many participants are concerned with the overall sustainability and quality in regard to beef. This has caused a number of companies as well as the USDA to conduct research or implement initiatives towards better sustainability practices. The next steps in research should be to discuss with Generation Z what packaging labels impact them the most and how a labeling makes an impact on their purchasing decision.
Participants of this study had an interest in quality and freshness, further research should involve the packaging and label of not only beef products but other proteins such as poultry or untraditional protein sources. With new wave of interest in untraditional protein sources it is crucial to understand and learn why consumers chose other products as opposed to traditional protein sources. Finally, there would be benefits to understand the consumers consciousness when purchasing traditional protein sources especially with reasons in regard to health and nutrition.
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Seven Creek Beef [sevencreekbeef]. (2021, Dec 19). *Happy Sunday y'all!* Our passion is to bring you the highest quality protein source available! That means giving our cattle the very best in nutrition and care, even on a Sunday! #happysunday #localbeef #beefishowsfordinner #exasrancher #cattletales #oklahomarancher #dailychores. [Photograph]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/114511713613560/posts/451412766590118/?d=n


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Appendix A

Human Subjects Protocol Approval Letter

To: Daniela Medina
From: Douglas J. Adams, Chair
IRB Expedited Review
Date: 02/14/2023
Action: Exemption Granted
Action Date: 02/14/2023
Protocol #: 2211437144
Study Title: Understanding the Support Local Movement From the Perception of Generation Z

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Jill Rucker, Investigator
Appendix B

Pre-Qualifying Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Question 1 Are you between the ages 18-26?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey if Are you between the ages 18-26? = No

Question 2 Do you purchase your own groceries and or meals?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey if Do you purchase your own groceries and or meals? = No

Question 3 Do you reside in the Northwest Arkansas Area?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey if Do you reside in the Northwest Arkansas Area? = No

Question 4 Would you describe yourself as someone with no ties to the agricultural industry?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey if Would you describe yourself as someone with no ties to the agricultural industry? = No
Question 5 Would you be willing to have a 20 - 30 interview to discuss “local food” through Zoom?

   ○ Yes (1)
   ○ No (2)

   Skip To: End of Survey If Would you be willing to have a 20 - 30 interview to discuss “local food” through Zoom? = No

Q6 Are you willing to be contacted at a later date to answer additional questions in a Zoom interview? If yes, you will be entered into a drawing to win a $35 VISA gift card.

   ○ Yes (1)
   ○ No (2)

   Skip To: End of Survey If Are you willing to be contacted at a later date to answer additional questions in a Zoom interview? = No
   Skip To: Q8 If Are you willing to be contacted at a later date to answer additional questions in a Zoom interview? = Yes

Q8 Please provide your email address.


End of Block: Default Question Block
Appendix C

Initial Email

4/27/23, 6:27 PM
Mail - Daniela Medina - Outlook

Daniela Medina - Thesis
Daniela Medina <dm067@uark.edu>
Fri 2/17/2023 4:30 PM

Good afternoon!

Thank you for agreeing to a follow-up interview for my study on local beef in the Northwest Arkansas Area!! Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Please select the dates and times you are available in the Sign-up Genius, these are for next week 2/20 - 2/24/23, I will have more time available the next week please let me know if that is better! The interview will last 30 minutes or less. I will email you with a confirmation of the time and date of your interview. If your schedule changes and you can no longer make that time, please let me know and I will re-schedule it based on your availability.

Additional information on this study, including what you will be asked to do, options for stopping participation, and confidentiality, can be found in the attached document. At the conclusion of the interview, your name and email will be added to an Excel sheet for the $35 VISA gift card drawing. This excel form will be stored on a password-protected server according to state and federal guidelines (more information can be found in the attached document). Winners will be selected using a random number generator and contacted at the conclusion of the data collection period.

I look forward to interviewing you!
https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4EAAA82CA0FFCF8-daniela

Daniela Medina Thesis
Please review the available slots below and click on the button to sign up. Thank you!
www.signupgenius.com

Daniela "Dani" Medina
AFLS E206 | dm067@uark.edu
Appendix D

Second Email

Possible $55 Gift Card  Zoom Interview
Daniela Medina <dm067@uark.edu>
Tue 3/7/2023 2:08 PM

Good afternoon!

This is truly the last time I will be bothering you, but this is the last chance to sign up for an interview! Thank you for agreeing to a follow up interview for my study on local beef in the Northwest Arkansas Area!! Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Please select the dates and times you are available in the Sign-up Genius, these are for next week 3/6 3/9 Please let me know if the times available do not work with you, I will make it work with your schedule, just reach out! The interview will last 20 minutes or less, most have been about 15 minutes. I will email you with a confirmation of the time and date of your interview. If your schedule changes and you can no longer make that time, please let me know and I will re schedule it based on your availability.

Additional information on this study, including what you will be asked to do, options for stopping participation, and confidentiality, can be found in the attached document. At the conclusion of the interview, your name and email will be added to an Excel sheet for the $55 VISA gift card drawing. This excel form will be stored on a password-protected server according to state and federal guidelines (more information can be found in the attached document). Winners will be selected using a random number generator and contacted at the conclusion of the data collection period.

I look forward to interviewing you!

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/AOC0F4EAAA82CA0FFCF8-daniela2

Daniela “Dani” Medina
AFLS E206 | dm067@uark.edu
Graduate Assistant
Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences

https://outlook.office.com/mail/sentitems/id/A/AQkAGh3MzQxOTAzLTg4NDI1MDQ4My1hZVhlTA3MzRmYzBhOOGAQAGC16jpoAT1OGZIFoKX… 1/1
Appendix E

Interview Scheduling

Daniela Medina

To:

Mon 2/20/2023 10:07 AM

Good morning

Thank you for signing up for an interview at 4:00 this afternoon, below is the information for the Zoom link.

Daniela Medina is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Thesis Interview
Time: Feb 20, 2023 04:00 PM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting
https://uark.zoom.us/j/5949129266?pwd=eUpXMXB1WXQxWHdyOU9OMVpTV1hVQT09

Meeting ID: 594 912 9266
Passcode: 6&ul@KHU

One tap mobile
+16469313860,5949129266#,,,,,*48425436# US
+19292056099,5949129266#,,,,,*48425436# US (New York)

Dial by your location
+1 646 931 3860 US
+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)
+1 301 715 6593 US (Washington, DC)
Appendix F

Interview Questions

Question Guide for the Semi-Structured Interviews:

1. When you hear the term "support local" what comes to mind?
2. Where have you seen the term "support local"?
3. Where do you purchase food most frequently?
4. Have you ever seen the phrase "local beef"?
5. If a product is labeled as "local" does this impact your decision to purchase?
6. How do you make decisions towards purchasing proteins such as beef?
7. In your own words, how would you describe local beef?
8. Do you know anyone who promotes "local beef"?
9. Describe how you would determine a product to be considered local?
10. What do you consider actions that contribute to "support local beef"?
11. Does the label "local" influence your choice of restaurants?
12. Do you believe you take actions to "support local beef"?
13. In what ways have you seen the term "support local" being used?
14. Describe the impact you believe purchasing "local beef" has?
15. What are ways you can "support local beef"?
Email to Professors

Dear <Name>,

My name is Daniela Medina and I am a master’s student in the Dale Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food and Life Sciences. I am writing to let you know about a research study that you have the option of sharing with your students. The study is being conducted by myself and my advisor, Dr. K. Jill Rucker, at the University of Arkansas for the completion of my master’s thesis.

I am researching what "support local beef" means to Generation Z in the Northwest Arkansas Area. My target demographic is members of Generation Z who are attending the University of Arkansas.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would provide this link, <link>, to the students in your courses and invite them to participate. I have also attached a QR code to the study that can be added to a PowerPoint slide for students to scan if that method of distribution is preferred. If students follow this criterion:

1. Are you between the ages 18-26?
2. Do you purchase your own groceries and or meals?
3. Do you reside in the Northwest Arkansas Area?
4. Would you describe yourself as someone with no ties to the agricultural industry?
5. Would you be willing to have an interview to discuss “local food” through Zoom?

There will be no monetary cost for your students to participate in the study. If your students answered YES to the previous questions, please share them this link for the students will then be asked to participate in a 20–30-minute interview. From the participants of the interview will be entered into a random drawing for a $35 Visa gift card.

Taking part in research is voluntary for them and sharing the link is voluntary for you. If you decide not to share the link or your students decide not to take part in this study, those decision will have no effect on you or your class.

Please do not hesitate to email us if you have any questions as you read over this material. We are happy to review any of this with you and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Daniela "Dani" Medina
AFLS E206 | dm067@uark.edu
Graduate Assistant
Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences

Appendix G
Appendix H

Informed Consent

Understanding the Support Local Movement From the Perception of Generation Z

Principal Researcher: Daniela Medina
Faculty Advisory: Dr. Jill Rucker

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE
You are invited to participate in a research study about food and culture.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY

Who is the Principal Researcher?
Daniela Medina, a Master’s Student at the University of Arkansas
Phone Number: 940-597-4761

Who is the Faculty Advisor?
Dr. Jill Rucker, a Professor of Agricultural Communications at the University of Arkansas
Phone Number: 479-283-0086

What is the purpose of this research study?
The purpose of this study is understand what "support local beef" means to Generation Z in the Northwest Arkansas Area and the impact marketing tactics have on their purchasing decisions. This research will include the qualitative interviews to discover themes across Generation Z.

Who will participate in this study?
For this study, the participants will need to be conscious of their purchasing decisions, classified as Generation Z group, and have a want to purchase local foods. Participants should not have ties to the beef industry. Participants are representative of the Northwest Arkansas Area and are members of Generation Z. Since Generation Z has over a ten-year age gap, the participants are representative of the sub age group of 18 -26 in the generation. Gender of the participants is not considered for this research to create a balanced sample. There are an expected 40 participants max for this study.

What am I being asked to do?
Your participation will require participation in an interview via Zoom, as well as a review of the information after the interview to ensure accuracy.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?
There are no anticipated risks associated with this study; however, there may be some discomfort in answering questions over your general lifestyle.

What are the possible benefits of this study?
Participants can choose to be entered into a giveaway for a $35 VISA Gift Card.

*How long will the study last?*
Your participation will only be necessary for one interview that is estimated to take 20-30 minutes. This can be set up at your convenience.

*Will I receive compensation for my time and inconvenience if I choose to participate in this study?*
No, there is no anticipated compensation for this study.

*Will I have to pay for anything?*
No, there will be no cost associated with your participation.

*What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?*
If you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. Also, you may refuse to participate at any time during the study. You will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

*How will my confidentiality be protected?*
All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by applicable State and Federal law.
Your name will be changed in the reports of the study, as well as any information shared that could reveal your identity or anybody you spoke about. Recordings will be transcribed anonymously and then deleted.

*Will I know the results of the study?*
At the conclusion of the study you will have the right to request feedback about the results. You may contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Jill Rucker, or Principal Researcher, Daniela Medina. You will receive a copy of this form for your files.

*What do I do if I have questions about the research study?*
You have the right to contact the Principal Researcher or Faculty Advisor as listed below for any concerns that you may have.

Daniela Medina  
Phone Number: 940-597-4761  
Email: dm067@uark.edu

Dr. Jill Rucker  
Email: kjrucker@uark.edu

You may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Integrity and Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant, or to discuss any concerns about, or problems with the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP
I have read the above statement and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the investigator. I understand the purpose of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that significant new findings developed during this research will be shared with the participant. I understand that I can print or save a copy of this consent form for my records. By participating in this interview, I am giving my consent for my responses to be used in this study.