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LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA TO AUGMENT *CERTIFIED*

***SOUTH CAROLINA*™ BY MILLENNIAL CONSUMERS**

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Final Report

to

Federal–State Marketing Improvement Program

Agricultural Marketing Service

United States Department of Agriculture

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INTRODUCTION

In 2007, research by Richard Quinn and Associates was completed in partnership with the South Carolina Department of Agriculture to explore the potential benefits of various themes for branding campaigns that could be developed (Quinn, 2007). From the research, the *Certified South Carolina*[™] (CSC) brand was developed which contained four functional components...*Certified SC Grown*[™], *Certified SC Produced*[™], *Certified SC Seafood*[™], and *Fresh on the Menu*[™]. Following from this, research in 2010 at the University of South Carolina's Moore School of Business focused on economic impact of the recently created CSC brand. The study determined that an increase demand of \$335 million for the state's economy and \$558 million economic impact could be reached through the CSC program, with a possible 10,000 jobs added (Woodard, 2010).

A recent focus on Millennial consumers has come to pass as there will be a continued need for future generations to support the CSC program and create economic stability within the agriculture sector. Millennials, defined as consumers between the ages of 18-35 years of age (born between 1980-1996), comprise about 74.3 million members in the U.S. (about 30% of the population) and yield a significant influence over the nation's economy (Pew Research Center, 2014). Unlike other age demographics, research has shown that: 1) Millennials eat out more often, 2) Their definition of "healthy" is different from other age cohorts, 3) They increasingly want food with ethics, 4) They are embarrassed to eat fast food, and 5) Fast-casual restaurants are the preferred format for Millennials (Lutz, 2015). While their eating habits are different, they also respond differently to social media and marketing, as fewer than 3% said traditional media sources influence their purchases and it has been suggested that in lieu of traditional advertising, brands must learn to publish authentic content to build trust and loyalty for Millennials (Metinko, 2015).

With the challenge of social media evolving constantly and becoming a necessary means to communicate and connect, brands such as CSC must consider the most successful messaging content, delivery method, and timing to properly engage Millennials. The current study seeks to help with this issue by identifying key issues relating to the selection and use of the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand, while creating best practices for social media engagement with Millennial consumers in the state of South Carolina. It is believed that the study will help to create a loyal and lasting connection with Millennials both now and as they grow older, which can help grow the CSC brand and keep agribusiness buoyant for the state in the years to come.

HOW THE PROBLEM WAS ADDRESSED THROUGH THE RESEARCH – GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The **overall goal** of the project was to develop for implementation a comprehensive and strategic research study to determine the best practices for Millennial consumers, so that the *Certified South Carolina*[™] program staff may ensure effective marketing efforts are taken to engage these consumers and increase the amount of locally grown foods purchased. The results of the study should lead to the creation of a new consumer relationship model for use in the appropriate development of the *Certified South Carolina*[™] program marketing strategies over the next five to ten years for Millennials.

In order to achieve this goal, the research highlighted the following specific **objectives**:

1. Establish baseline data of current consumer recognition and acceptance of the CSC program
2. Determine differentials affecting consumer purchasing habits in relation to the various products covered within the CSC program
3. Aggregate consumer characteristics to identify demographic points most prevalent and purchase trigger points
4. Evaluate and compare potential marketing strategies for greatest impact among younger consumers
5. Develop a strategic plan for the CSC program to implement to Millennial consumers

To address the research problem, the **plan of work** was created and followed throughout the study (and is listed below in detail in the “Executive Summary” section):

1. Six focus group interviews of Millennials were completed across five campuses within the state of South Carolina to better understand Millennial view and acceptance of *Certified South Carolina*[™] branded items and their use of social media
2. From the interview data, and with the help of C&T Marketing Group, surveys were developed and distributed to residents across the state of South Carolina
3. Survey data was analyzed using QDA Miner software (Qualitative Focus Group Data) and SPSS/AMOS Structural Equations Modeling package (Quantitative Data for Survey Analysis)
4. Academic reports (manuscripts) were created as well as presentations for academic conferences related to Retailing and Food Marketing/Agribusiness

5. Initial findings were discussed with South Carolina Department of Agriculture
6. A marketing plan related to Millennial consumers was created with a focus on social media usage

CONTRIBUTION OF PROJECT PARTNERS

All of the research work has been completed by the research team within the Department of Retailing at The University of South Carolina. Some of the data was collected in collaboration with C&T Marketing Group, a market research company able to utilize research panels across the state of South Carolina to help broaden the reach and scope of the survey. Interviews with the South Carolina Department of Agriculture also helped to frame the study.

FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **overall goal** of this project was develop and implement a comprehensive and strategic research study for determining the best marketing practices to Millennial consumers, so that the *Certified South Carolina*[™] program staff may insure effective marketing efforts to engage these consumers and increase the amount of locally grown foods purchased. To achieve this goal, 6 stages of the project were progressively completed with the outcome of a newly developed marketing plan for Millennial consumers to be utilized.

Stage 1 of the project included completion of focus group interviews of Millennial participants around the state of South Carolina (October-December 2015). Student government organizations at seven initial SC universities were contacted to help with recruiting of the focus group participants, with five universities agreeing to participate. These universities included Clemson University, Wofford University, The University of South Carolina Aiken, The University of South Carolina Beaufort, and The University of South Carolina Columbia. Interviews lasted approximately one hour for each focus group, and 39 total Millennials participated. Participants were provided lunch for their time. (Appendix 1).

Stage 2 included an analysis of the focus group data. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed line-by-line by the researchers as well as at paragraph level to ensure contextual meaning. Interview data transcriptions were then imported into QDA Miner, a statistical software package used to interpret qualitative data through which various “themes” emerged relating to locally produced food (locally produced food definition, users/consumers, access, experiences, and marketing/branding) while four themes emerged from the discussions on social media (social media applications, activity, advertising, and information flow/communication). Number of mentions of social media types (e.g., 98 mentions of Facebook, 67 of Instagram) were also tallied.

Results of the focus group data analysis suggested that for Millennial consumers, five key themes related to locally produced foods emerged (locally produced food definition, users/consumers, access, experiences, and marketing/branding) while four themes emerged from the discussions on social media (social media applications, activity, advertising, and information flow/communication). Social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter continue to be of prime importance to Millennials as does the importance of pictures, videos, and product/place reviews when making decisions. The use of multiple social media applications simultaneously along with the importance of timing in social media views and posts were also noted.

Stage 3 included survey creation and deployment using information and data from stage 1&2 along with academic and industry literature support. Surveys were deployed at the end of February 2016 until end of June 2016. Questionnaires were created in the Qualtrics survey platform, pilot tested for validity and reliability, and subsequently

distributed in two ways: 1) through the help of C&T Marketing Group, which was able to utilize panel data and distribute to residents across the state of South Carolina, and 2) student workers who were also hired to distribute to South Carolina residents. Overall, 2,499 respondents took the survey with 1,905 questionnaires validated and usable as part of the final analysis (76.6%). The sample included 870 Millennials (18-35 years of age), 577 Generation X (36-51 years of age), 403 Baby Boomers (52-70 years of age), and 55 respondents 71 years of age or older. The complete survey questionnaire is listed in Appendix 2 of the final report.

Stage 4 of this project included the analysis of the survey data (Appendix 3 for survey results). Factors such as attitudes, purchase intentions and behavior, as well as consumer perceptions related to product availability, connectedness to local food vendors, factors affecting product choice or selection and questions relating to perceptions of advertising related to the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand were evaluated. Section 2 of the questionnaire also included questions relating to social media outlets used, hours spent on social media daily (and by type), where respondents are most likely to stop and read marketing or branding messages, time period on social media, and other social media related questions. Survey data results suggested strong attitudes by Millennials towards locally produced foods, and that access was identified as highly important in creating purchase intentions and subsequent behavior. Facebook was mentioned most frequently by users, followed by Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter although Facebook was less popularly used than the other three applications. Time spent on social media also had a significant impact on converting purchase intentions to behavior for Millennials.

The use of multiple social media applications simultaneously along with the importance of timing in social media views and posts were also noted. Results of the survey data suggested that strong and significant positive relationships existed between attitudes and purchase intentions ($\beta = .850$) for Millennials toward locally produced foods as did the relationship of perceived product availability and purchase intentions ($\beta = .409$) and purchase intentions and purchase behavior ($\beta = .529$). This highlights prior research that supports a strong view of local and healthy foods by Millennial consumers along with the need to ensure that various product categories (e.g., Meats/Poultry, Fruits, Vegetables, and Seafood) are readily available and easily accessible in places such as farmers markets, South Carolina tourist attractions, restaurants and to a lesser extent grocery stores and at sporting events. Further analysis of potential “group” differences between Millennials and other age demographics in South Carolina suggested that the relationship of product availability and purchase intentions was stronger for Millennial consumers, also supporting the above findings of the need for easy access. Finally, the relationship of purchase intentions and purchase behavior was strengthened by the amount of time spent on social media, as Millennials with greater time spent on social media showed stronger purchase behavior. This finding supports the importance of a unified social media campaign to attract Millennials to the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand.

Stage 5 of the project included development of two academic conference presentations as part of the outreach and dissemination of results. The academic presentations are included in the Appendices of the final report as Appendix 4 and Appendix 5. Subsequently, journal manuscripts to be submitted (or submitted and approved) for publication within a Retailing/Marketing journal and an Agribusiness journal are included as part of Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 respectively.

Stage 6 was the development of a newly revised marketing plan geared toward Millennial consumers that focused on various social media platforms and ways in which the South Carolina Department of Agriculture can better utilize those platforms to highlight and enhance the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand.

In summary, we were able to identify how Millennials view locally produced food and the *Certified South Carolina*[™] program, as well as better understand how Millennials use and leverage social media for information gathering, sharing of experiences, viewing of advertising and brand messaging. We also determined that the importance of ‘timing’ in social media usage and posting cannot be understated. Our analysis and subsequent recommendations highlight the importance of creating a “pull” effect for the Certified South Carolina brand by Millennials (rather than a “push down” effort). This may be accomplished through a series of coordinated social media marketing efforts which may include, but are not limited to, development of a “Did you Know?” campaign to provide more information to Millennials about access to and the benefits of the *Certified South Carolina*[™] program and support sharing of information between users, potential utilization of brand “Ambassadors” or brand “Influencers” who can help to better manage campus events related to the CSC program, use of updated social media platforms such as Snapchat which have captured current Millennial attention, and the coordination of social media “posts” by the SC Department of Agriculture to ensure optimum timing, viewing and response from target Millennials. Given the ever-changing scope and reach of social media, it is also recommended that CSC focus on application-based contests (e.g., Instagram pictures from CSC promotional events) as well use of humor or emotionally-driven promotions to help connect Millennials to the products they support as Millennials continue to demand healthy and sustainable products and share their experiences across social media platforms.

OUTLINE OF ISSUE AND PROBLEM

In 2007, in cooperation with the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, Richard Quinn & Associates conducted a survey of South Carolinians ages 18 and over to better understand attitudes toward agricultural products, prior knowledge of agribusiness, to determine how “committed” residents are to local agricultural products and to explore potential branding “themes” for possible development. The results from this sample of 500 adults suggested that:

- 73.6% believed that agriculture was “very important” to the future of South Carolina
- 66.6% suggested they were NOT able to identify which agricultural products were raised or grown in South Carolina, and only 20.6% believed these products were “widely available” in stores
- About ½ (49.6%) shop for produce or animal products once a week. 48.6% also report spending \$50-\$100 per trip with 27.2% suggesting an expenditure of \$100-\$300 per trip
- 50.2% noted that South Carolina products were “about the same quality” as produce from other states and approximately 89.4% said, given equal price, they would select South Carolina grown fruits and vegetables. For South Carolina raised animal products, this number was 82.2%.
- South Carolinians would pay more for locally grown agricultural products, with 51.1% suggesting they would pay up to 20% more for these items
- Reasons for these increased expenditures included “better quality” (21.2%), “to support the state economy” (27.8%) and “to help the South Carolina farmer” (27.0%).
- A branding effort for South Carolina products could be effective (Quinn, 2007).

From the data, efforts began for the development of a Certified South Carolina program. In response to the study, four separate and distinct brands (plus the primary *Certified South Carolina*[™] logo) were created to address this opportunity. They include *Certified SC Grown*[™], *Certified SC Produced*[™], *Certified SC Seafood*[™], and Fresh on the Menu[™] (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Certified South Carolina™ brands/logos



Three years after the branding campaign and introduction to the South Carolina consumer, The University of South Carolina Moore School of Business (2010) completed an economic impact report of the program. The study reviewed other neighboring states in terms of potential economic impact if the *Certified South Carolina*™ program was successful. Estimates suggested a possible increase in farm product demand of \$335 million to the South Carolina state economy that would otherwise not exist, with an overall impact to the greater economy of \$558 million. Employment would also be positively impacted with a projected addition of 10,000 jobs within the South Carolina economy (Woodard, 2010).

Since 2010, one focal group of consumers that has received a large amount of interest from companies and agencies seeking to create brand loyalty is that of Millennials. Compelling research on Millennials has revealed a number of key differences from other consumer groups; first, Millennials are primarily immune to traditional advertising such as television, magazines, books or radio. Fewer than 3% said traditional media influences their purchases, and only 1% said a “compelling” advertisement would make them trust a brand more (Schawbel, 2015). As noted by Dan Schawbel, founder of Millennial branding in a combined study with Elite Daily, “Instead of traditional advertising, which they ignore, brands have to publish authentic content as a way of building trust and loyalty with this extremely important and influential demographic”

(Metinko, 2015). Second, Millennials have drastically different eating habits from their parents or grandparents, whereas they eat out more often and are more concerned about food that is fresh, with fewer ingredients, and with less processing or chemical production. Third, they increasingly want food with “ethics” and are sometimes embarrassed to eat fast food or endorse fast food establishments. Finally, fast-casual restaurants are a preferred format of Millennials which make up approximately 51% of the fast-casual customers (Lutz, 2015).

To establish and grow the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand promise and offerings, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture has determined the importance of finding new and innovative ways to market to this growing and more important demographic in terms of size and market influence. Through the creation of innovative message content techniques, use of non-traditional marketing methods across platforms such as social media including Twitter, Instagram, blogs, Facebook, Snapchat, and other emerging platforms, as well as understanding how Millennial consumers in South Carolina may differ from older consumers, it is expected that this analysis and report will help to provide a platform and set a direction for state agriculture marketers and others seeking to support the brand in a transitioning economy with technology at the forefront.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Millennial Consumers

The primary focus of the study is to better understand how younger consumers of the *Certified South Carolina*[™] branded products, referred throughout the report as “Millennials”, “Generation Y”, or “Gen Y”, can be enticed through social media and unique marketing efforts to continue to support local foods across the state of South Carolina. Within the literature, Millennials have been defined as consumers between the ages of 18-35 years old, born between the years of 1980-1996 (Pew Research Center, 2014). Research about the habits and spending traits of Millennials continues to evolve over time, as increased access to social media platforms and new distribution for local food channels (e.g., direct-to-consumer) impact their food choices.

There are about 75.4 million members of this demographic, or about 30% of the U.S. adult population (Fry, 2016). They are highly influential in terms of marketing and advertising, and with the first cohort of Millennials entering into the early to mid-thirties, many are still in the early stages of their work careers and being on their own (Cloud, 2015; Presidential Council of Economic Advisors, 2014). In the 2017 survey by Deloitte on Millennials, involvement with businesses and social impact were considered very

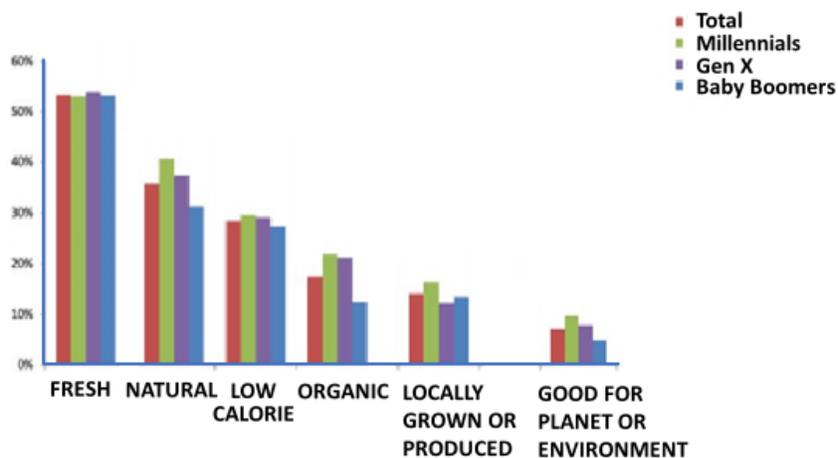
important for Millennials (Deloitte.com, 2017). Millennials reflect a wide range of attributes important for businesses and brands; they are the most educated demographic (1/3 having a 4-year degree or more), they are ethnically diverse (approximately 43% identified as ‘non-white’), they are the first generation to have access to the Internet during their formative years, and are slower to marry than previous generations (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Given that Millennials have grown up with connectivity on both a local and worldwide stage, they are likely to share experiences both good and bad. A large student debt has created a sense of frugality with money and a carefulness of purchasing, with choices often made based upon values such as compassion, loyalty, acceptance, social responsibility and social equality (Pew Research, 2014). Brands that attract these customers such as Toms, Starbucks, Patagonia and Chipotle often include statements of values within their company vision, mission statements, or organizational goals.

Of note for Millennials, more than previous generations, is that their eating habits are vastly different as is their view of healthy food at restaurants. In comparing Millennials versus other age demographics such as Baby Boomers or Generation X, Lutz (2015) used data from Morgan Stanley research on Millennials which reflected the following key differences between the groups (Figure 2):

Figure 2: View of “healthy” in restaurant by age groups

Within a restaurant, What does “healthy” mean?



Data in graph taken from: Lutz, 2015: <http://www.businessinsider.com/millennials-dining-habits-are-different-2015-3> (Morgan Stanley Graph)

While food items being locally grown is more important for Millennials than other age demographics, factors such as “natural” and “fresh” appear to be perceived as more “healthy”. They also want, to a lesser degree, food that is good for the planet and organic (and hopefully lower calorie). It should also be noted that while Millennials frequent fast food places often due to cost concerns, these restaurants are not highly endorsed by Millennials (Lutz, 2015) which provides an opportunity for brands such as *Certified South Carolina*™ to highlight the healthy aspects and create future demand.

Baby Boomers & Generation X

Baby Boomers (ages 52-70) and Generation X (ages 36-51) are also important key demographics when considering marketing and branding efforts. While Boomers were the largest generation in the late 1990's, with a peak of 78.8 million in 1999 (Fry, 2016), Generation X infants were born during a time when less births were occurring nationwide (Fry, 2016). Boomers, based upon a 2010 Pew Research Study, noted that their uniqueness stemmed from internally strong perceptions of factors such as work ethic, respect, and values/morals while Generation X identified factors relating to technology use, work ethic and conservatism. Millennials, contrarily, considered their technology use, music/pop culture and liberalism and identifying factors that make this group unique (Taylor and Gao, 2014).

In terms of technology, Generation X persons were often considered as “stuck in the middle” in terms of technology adoption and uniqueness as an age cohort (Taylor and Gao, 2014). They are also considered as a bridge demographically between Millennials and Boomers, in terms of race (Boomers being predominately white while Millennials more diverse) and in marriage (36% of Generation X married by age 32 compared with 48% of Boomers and 26% of Millennials) as well as factors relating to educational status and religion/politics (Taylor and Gao, 2014).

Baby Boomers, given the time of their formative years, focus on accomplishments, are considered active and competitive, and are generally believed to be optimistic (Sox et al., 2016; Fenich, Scott-Halsell, and Hasimoto, 2011; Frandsen, 2009). Boomers are generally less receptive to technology, less comfortable in using it, and stick to traditional methods such as e-mail, Internet search, and some Facebook usage (Sox et al., 2016; Fenich et al., 2011).

Generation X individuals are highly employed, have more disposable income, are more technologically assured and utilize the internet for online lifestyle purposes more so than social media communications (Fenich et al., 2011; Perine, 2012; Keene and Handrich, 2011). Giang (2013) noted key differences of Generation X persons versus Millennials in that Generation X individuals are more entrepreneurial, more adaptable, better problem solvers and greater collaborators than either Boomers or Millennials. They

also score high in relationship building characteristics which might suggest that efforts to brand *Certified South Carolina*™ using a greater “co-creation” approach might not only help attract Millennials who value trust but also Generation X individuals who value relationships with their brands as well.

Generational Cohort Theory

The attempt to understand the sociology of different generations first became an academic endeavor in Mannheim’s 1923 essay “The problem of generations” (later published in 1952). His work was subsequently popularized as the General Cohort Theory (GTC) in Strauss and Howe’s (1991) study of social cycles by generation in which they found a repeat of cycles every four generations. At its basic core, the Generational Cohort Theory suggests that persons within each generation have been exposed to similar notable, emotional, and cultural experiences and due to this exposure, often reflect in similar attitudes, values, perceptions or traits of persons within that cohort which creates a unique experience for each age group (Sox et al., 2016; Meredith et al., 2002).

As the values during these formative years are projected as stable, they help to shape future decision-making and predict behavior (Sox et al., 2016; Codrington, 2011). From this, it is projected that marketers can get a better understanding of certain age groups through the times in which they grew up (Meredith et al., 2002). For example, Millennials have grown up with technology and computer access for much of their lives. Expecting them to behave or perform in the same way as Boomers, for example, who spent most of their adult lives without technology is unrealistic. The key then becomes understanding and reaching each demographic across the platforms that are most meaningful to them. In the case of Millennials, this becomes social media and the internet.

While the theory has been used within a number of academic studies to help explain certain patterns of behavior across various age groups, it is not without its critics. It is often difficult to expect a one-sized-fits-all approach to predicting behavior, particularly across age groups, as other key demographics may have a larger impact on an individual’s decision making across a number of choices. This would be especially true for brands, as some consumers are more in-tune with the brands they choose to engage with while other consumers may be less loyal. Issues such as cost consciousness may also take priority given their current situations in life. Some trends, like ease and convenience of food options, may cross generational cohort groups. Other trends, such as a lessening of home-cooked meals, may be more specific to younger consumers than those in the Boomer demographic.

Finally, application of the Generational Cohort Theory within our research setting may be less about the specific products being sold but more about “how” they are sold. Understanding the best platform to reach each target group (like Millennials) could be the key to increasing patronage in retail stores and restaurants and connecting or engaging with the consumers. Within the current study, therefore, the importance of social media as a way to connect and engage with younger consumers becomes most important given the current social environment and opportunities that exist.

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, & LESSONS LEARNED

RESULTS:

METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION - INTERVIEWS

A two-part process was employed as part of the data collection using both qualitative and quantitative methods. As part of qualitative research, focus-group interviews were completed during a two and one-half month timeframe between October of 2015 and December 2015. Multiple college/university institutions were contacted via e-mail and by phone to determine whether focus group interviews, comprising of 5-10 Millennial students, could be completed on their respective campuses. Student government organizations were specifically contacted to help coordinate the efforts and to help enlist participants, with the interviews being completed during lunchtime on all of the participating campuses.

Based upon schedules and availability, five different locations across the state of South Carolina were visited by the research team. These included Clemson University (Clemson, SC) and Wofford College (Spartanburg, SC) which are considered as part of South Carolina’s “upstate”, The University of South Carolina (Columbia, SC) and The University of South Carolina Aiken (Aiken, SC), as part of the “midlands”, and finally The University of South Carolina Beaufort (Beaufort, SC) as representative of the “low country” (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3. Data collection sites (interviews)

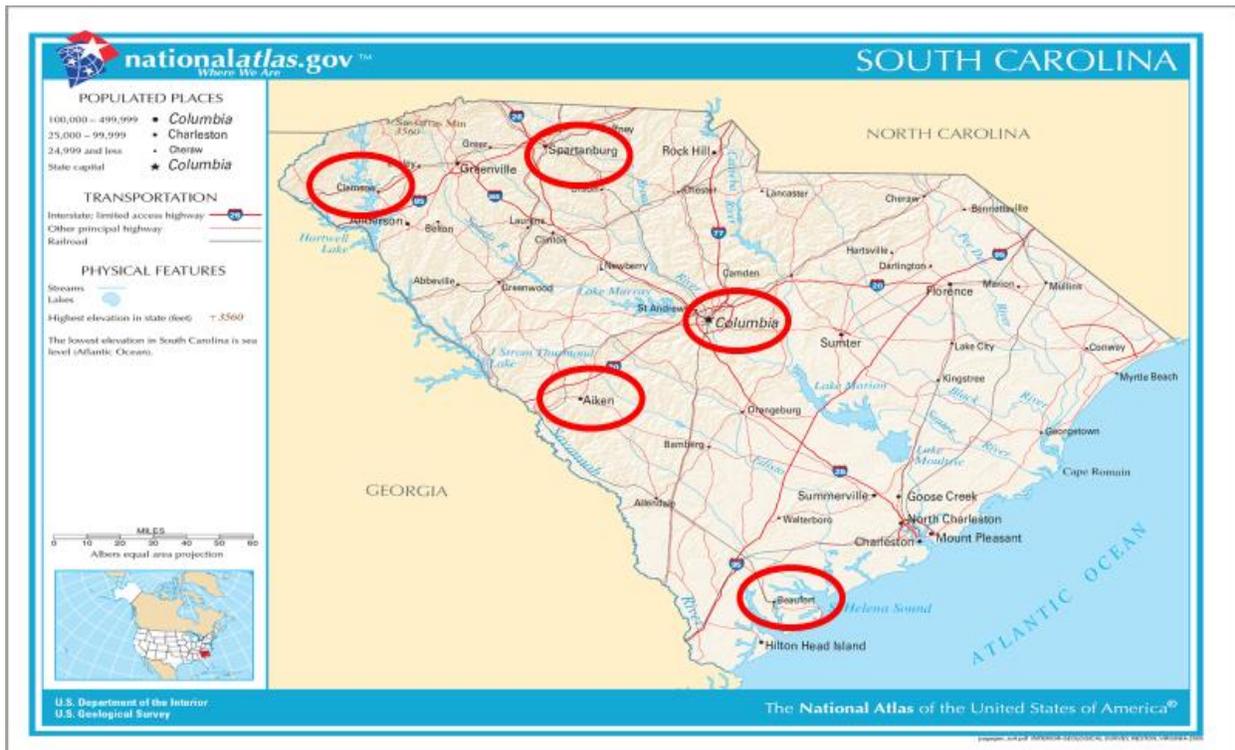


image taken from as part of public domain (and altered): [nationalatlas.gov, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b7/Map_of_South_Carolina_NA.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b7/Map_of_South_Carolina_NA.png)

In all, six focus-group sessions were completed lasting from 45 minutes to one hour in length. From a phenomenological and grounded theory approach to understanding concepts such as “locally produced” or “social media”, a baseline set of questions and topics were developed and further questions evolved from the responses provided by the participants. Using phrases such as “What does that mean to you?” or “How much would this affect....”, data were provided about topics related to branding, social media, locally produced, marketing, shopping channels, product reviews, and Millennial habits related to such (see Appendix 1 for a sample list of interview questions).

All focus group sessions were audio recorded to ensure accuracy and were hand transcribed by the research team during the winter break of 2015. Lunch was also provided for all focus-group participants to encourage dialog and keep a relaxed environment so that information would be shared freely. A listing of the demographics relating to the focus-group participants is provided in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Interview participant demographic information

Demographics (N = 39)		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	19	48.7
	Male	20	51.3
	Total	39	100.0
Age	20-21	23	59.0
	22-23	10	25.5
	24-25	1	2.6
	26-27	1	2.6
	28-29	2	5.1
	30-31	1	2.6
	32-33	1	2.6
	Total	39	100.0
Race most identified	White	30	76.9
	African American	8	20.5
	Hispanic	1	2.6
	Total	39	100.0
Born in State?	Yes	31	79.4
	No	8	20.6
	Total	39	100.0
Farm Family?	Yes	19	48.7
	No	20	51.3
	Total	39	100.0
Know about State Brand Program?	Yes	22	56.4
	No	17	43.6
	Total	39	100.0
College Major	Business	17	43.6
	Psychology	3	7.6
	Interdisciplinary	1	2.6
	History	1	2.6
	Education	2	5.1
	Interdisciplinary	1	2.6
	Biology	2	5.1
	Communication	1	2.6
	Sport Science	1	2.6
	English	1	2.6
	Human Services	1	2.6
	Agriculture	4	10.2
	Non-Student	4	10.2
Total	39	100.0	

Upon completion of the transcriptions, data were imported into QDA Miner, a statistical analysis software package that is used to identify themes or important concepts identified within the interview data. Line by line coding was completed of the data and from this initial process, a total of 300 codes across 20 general groupings were formed within the software package. Continued analysis of the data suggested that the 20 general groupings could be paired into five primary themes for questions relating to locally produced foods and four themes relating to social media and Millennials. The local themes included *local food definition* (What), *local food purchasers* (Who), *local food access and outlets* (Where), *local food experiences* (When & Why), and *local food branding & marketing* (How). For social media, the themes developed included *social media applications* (What), *social media activity* (When), *social media advertising* (Who & Where), *social media information flow & communication* (Why & How).

METHODOLOGY OF DATA COLLECTION - SURVEYS

For the quantitative portion of the research, surveys were created utilizing an online format and distributed between February and June of 2016. Prior to the deployment of the main survey, a pilot/pretest survey was developed and tested between January and February 2016 by distributing to students at the University of South Carolina Columbia. Questions were analyzed for clarity, order and scale development along with responses analyzed using SPSS Statistical Software to determine reliability and validity of the measures. Upon completion of the pilot test, a main survey was distributed using the Qualtrics platform and with the help of both students at the University of South Carolina as well as students from the universities/colleges in which the focus groups were completed (e.g., Clemson, Wofford). The research team also distributed the survey to South Carolina residents. Each person distributing surveys as part of the data collection was assigned a different survey “link” to distribute to participants. Overall, 6 survey links (all referencing the same final survey) were created in order for the research team to monitor data collection results. C&T Marketing Group, a market research company that utilizes a Worldwide Panel of consumers, was contracted and similarly distributed the survey across the state of South Carolina to residents 18 years of age or older.

The final survey was comprised of 131 individual measurement items (see Appendix 2 for complete survey). These included 10 questions related to demographics (e.g., age, years in South Carolina, farm family, gender and ethnicity, etc.) as well as 79 items related to the ‘Certified South Carolina’ program and local foods (e.g., attitudes, perception of the brand, etc.) and 42 measures relating to social media use (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, blogs, advertising on social media, etc...). Respondents of the survey were also asked if they wish to be included in a random draw for five

Amazon \$50 gift cards and were asked to leave a contact e-mail for follow-up. To reach the consumers of state agricultural branded products and to ensure qualification for our sample, the question, “Do you live or work in “.....” in which the location of interest (South Carolina) was inserted at the beginning of the survey. Those who did not qualify were directed automatically to the end of the survey. Respondents were also asked their age group in order to assign them one of the three primary cohort groups.

During the span between February and June 2016, a total of 2499 surveys were completed by participants. After accounting for missing data, incomplete surveys, and those who opted out of the final survey, a total of 1905 completed surveys were utilized as part of the analysis. These participants spanned the three generations to be tested (Millennials; Generation X; Baby Boomers) plus a small group of respondents (n = 55) who were outside of the range for the proposed cohorts (71 years of age and older...also known as the “Silent” Generation).

The final sample characteristics included demographic breakdowns by age (n = 870 for Millennials; n = 577 for Generation X; n = 403 for Baby Boomers, n = 55 for respondents 71 years or older) as well as by gender (Millennials = 690 female, 180 male; Generation X = 461 female and 116 male; Baby Boomers 295 female and 108 male). A listing of the complete demographics of the survey respondents is listed in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Survey participant demographic information

Demographics (N = 1905)		Millennials	Generation X	Baby Boomers	Silent Generation
Gender	Male	180	116	108	18
	Female	690	461	295	37
	Total	870	577	403	55
Family Ties to Agriculture	Yes	204	124	73	14
	No	586	421	307	40
	Unknown	80	32	23	1
	Total	870	577	403	55
Years in South Carolina	< 10 years	349	138	88	17
	10-20 years	205	108	78	7
	21-30 years	239	81	64	9
	31-40 years	77	113	36	3
	41-50 years		126	26	3
	51-60 years		11	72	3
	61-70 years			38	1
	71 years or more			1	12
Total	870	577	403	55	

Race (Ethnicity) You Most Identify With	White-Caucasian	720	472	331	49
	Black - African American	101	73	60	5
	Hispanic – Latino or Spanish	14	6	2	0
	Asian – Pacific Islander	16	11	3	0
	American Indian	5	1	3	0
	Multi-racial	12	11	2	0
	Other	2	3	2	1
	Total	870	577	403	55
Area in Which You Live	250,000 people or more	146	67	35	4
	100,000 – 249,999 people	220	83	57	8
	50,000 – 99,999 people	187	130	81	10
	2500 to 49,999 people	198	172	118	21
	Less than 2500 people	119	125	112	12
	Total	870	577	403	55
Current Occupation Status	Full-time Employed	350	293	116	1
	Part-time Employed	119	94	47	5
	Unemployed	113	145	58	2
	Student	285	22	15	0
	Retired	3	23	167	47
	Total	870	577	403	55
Highest Level of	Less than High School	20	10	5	0

Education Completed	High School Diploma or GED	143	115	88	10
	Some College or Associates Degree	355	229	177	20
	Bachelor's Degree	246	130	87	14
	Graduate or Professional Degree	104	89	45	11
	Other	2	4	1	0
	Total	870	577	403	55
Work Ties to Agriculture	Yes	78	34	16	3
	No	758	524	378	51
	Unknown	34	19	9	1
	Total	870	577	403	55

ANALYSIS & RESULTS – QUALITATIVE DATA

Upon completion of the transcriptions for the focus group interviews, data were imported into QDA Miner, a statistical analysis software package that is used to identify themes or important concepts identified within the interview data. Line by line coding was completed of the data and from this initial process, during a four-month process in late 2016 to early 2017. From the data, a total of 300 codes across 20 general groupings were formed within the software package. Continued analysis of the data suggested that the 20 general groupings could be paired into five primary themes for questions relating to locally produced foods and four themes relating to social media and Millennials. The local themes included *local food definition* (What), *local food purchasers* (Who), *local food access and outlets* (Where), *local food experiences* (When & Why), and *local food branding & marketing* (How). For social media, the themes developed included *social media applications* (What), *social media activity* (When), *social media advertising* (Who & Where), *social media information flow & communication* (Why & How).

Locally produced food themes

Local food definition (What)

Through the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that... “the total distance a product can be transported and still be considered a locally or regionally produced agricultural food product is less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the state in which it is produced” (Martinez, 2010). While no specific industry standard for U.S. businesses exist for defining local, Millennial respondents considered the concept across two frames of reference in defining “what” is local. Similar to the USDA, the first frame is ‘geographical’ as noted:

I'd say local to me is within a certain mile radius...how the states divide up into districts I would say that within your district or the one directly next to me is local”

I would say up to 45 or 50 miles

I would say within the state of South Carolina

Above geography, Millennials also considered ‘local’ from a broad definitional perspective, noting that local means:

I took it (local) in a different sense of the word. The noun and how you meant the person. I was thinking someone who grew up there

I associate local with people from the area so maybe someone I would trust more

I think of something, honestly, like something that's artisan when you talk about being locally grown

Where you are actually pulling straight from the farm and you're going to sell them (products) to the Fresh Market that aren't straight to Wal-Mart and that aren't processed

However, Millennial consumers still consider locally produced and organic in the same light or as similar concepts, as noted:

I feel like people associate local and organic in the same boat

I would pay between normal prices and organic prices

When describing factors influencing local food selection, one respondent noted: *“I'd say price, whether it's organic or not”*. This is not uncommon within the U.S., where 30% of retail grocery shoppers considered locally produced and organic as similar concepts (Campbell, 2011).

Local food purchasers & producers (Who)

When discussing local food purchasers (who) and producers, Millennials often reflected that older adults (e.g., parents) were likely to buy and produce locally produced foods, in part because of cost constraints, as reflected:

My Dad's really big on stuff like that. He looks at where stuff's grown all the time. He basically tries to buy from as close to home as possible. He's real weird at that.

I don't grocery shop but knowing my Mom...probably

I know of course the aging demographics of farmers now are pretty old but if you see a younger person as the producer of the product it always changes the mental image of what people would think of the product. When people think of farmers they think of 60-year old guys

I try and go local if I can. I mean it really depends on my budget since I am in College

If it's going to be only a couple of cents difference then it's not that big of a deal

Local food access and outlets (Where)

With the increase in distribution channels for locally produced foods, Millennials are recognizing these opportunities for access. For example:

I go to the farmers' market occasionally

Actually, what I've dealt with was more roadside stands and small convenience stores. So back home we have several producers that won't sell to large chains however they will sell either on property, on site or to smaller non-franchise non-corporate areas

Our family participates in a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program and they have a local stand as well. And there's a farmers' market nearby

Back home I shop at the Fresh Market, but that's not really around here

When asked specifically about retail grocery outlets for locally produced foods, however, only a few mentioned purchasing local items there:

What I've found is when you do go shop at the farmers' market or something along those lines a lot of the time the produce is cheaper. Produce at least is less expensive and is better quality than if I were to go to the grocery store and buy it

And I would say in a grocery store setting if I'm looking at the local brand versus the regular milk is the quality higher? Is there any difference in quality? And then to

pricing I would say 20-30% is the breaking point where I would say 'Oh No, I'm gonna' go for the chain product versus the local one'

If I were wanting to buy something with that (locally produced) label on it I'd probably go to like Publix (U.S. regional grocery chain), Whole Foods (specialty food chain), Fresh Market (specialty food chain) or Earth Fare (specialty food chain) type place

We are probably shopping (for local) at Publix or Whole Foods. I don't know if a majority of people do shop that way. A lot of them are shopping at Wal-Mart to buy their meats and things. I don't think the people shopping at Wal-Mart really care about local or care about organic

If you're at Wal-Mart you're there for the price. Not for quality

Of interest was the minimal lack of mention by Millennials of national grocery stores or desire to patronize large grocery outlets for local foods, such as Wal-Mart or Kroger. Wal-Mart has pledged to source \$4Billion in product from 1.2 – 1.4 million small and medium-sized farmers (Wal-Mart.com, n.d.), while Kroger markets their selling of locally produced food across various state branding programs and using various products such as dairy to fulfill these customer needs (Kroger.com, n.d.). However, Millennial consumers did not reflect cognizance of these marketing efforts in their discussions of grocery chains and local foods.

Local food experiences (When & Why)

Above the simple task of shopping for food, experiences related to local food shopping for Millennials seem to matter, particularly when tied to farmers markets. As noted by respondents:

It definitely is a different personal level (farmers' markets), and you make a little bit extra effort to go. So you have to have the initial interest, but once you're there you get a better experience than you do at a grocery store

I mean, at the farmers' market you can go right there and green beans and all sorts of stuff like trash bags full of stuff for like \$3

I go to the farmers' market occasionally

I like the fact that we have the farmers' market on campus but it's just always the wrong time

The only reason I don't go to the farmers' market is that it's not very convenient. You can't get everything necessarily that you need so you have to go to two places instead of one

The interaction with the vendors. If they're rude I wouldn't want to return. I don't like pushy

I go to see my friends at the farmers' market

Local food branding and marketing to Millennials (How)

Respondents were asked to recall branding messages by the state department of agriculture and how the branding might be improved, particularly to Millennial consumers. Key factors to the improved branding campaign included interaction with Millennials, better access to Certified products, free products with the brand logo or samples, and telling an educated 'story' that connects with consumers:

T-shirts. With the logo. I think if the logo is more known and more prominent...I'm sure I've seen it. I probably just haven't noticed. Like walking around with the t-shirt logo. Maybe it's like on a local restaurant or menu just so you can see the logo

I think more information like education...this is the symbol and this is what it means

If you're putting out a "Did you know?" kind of thing. "Did you know this was there?" or "Did you know you can get this for the same amount" to push that out for College students. Maybe the importance of "Why" eating local or giving back to the community, supporting where you are at

I agree with the "Did you know?" thing. I guess if you're trying to convince me to buy a certified local product I wanna' know why I should buy this product instead of you kinda telling me what it is but I don't know the benefits yet. If I knew then maybe that would sway me if I knew exactly what my money was going towards. What is the benefit? What benefit am I getting out of this? So being educated on what exactly Certified local is and how I benefit from that. That's important to me

I'd find some interesting articles with information on how buying stuff locally produced what the effects are. The individual farmers or it helps the state or helps me indirectly...some insights or information on why it matters. Who it helps and who it hurts. I would find that stuff interesting

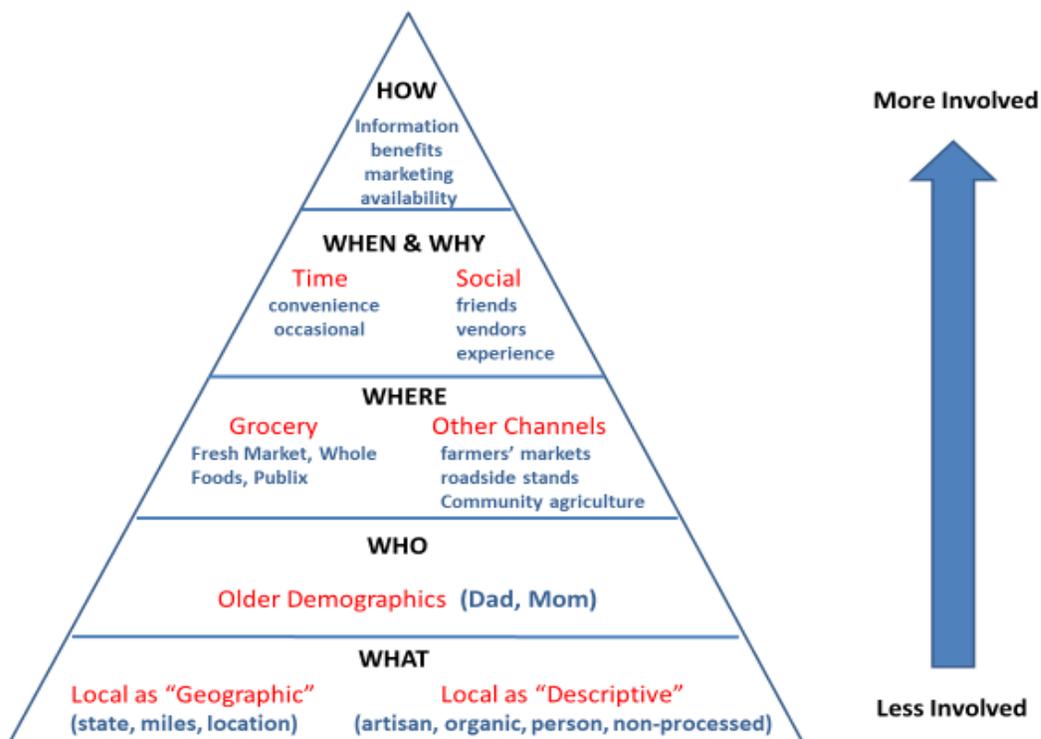
I like when it is emotionally stimulating in regards to it being from the state. People feel like they are part of that community in a close-knit environment

Physical marketing. Getting away from social media is taking food to where people are. Make it local. Even micro-local for college students if it's right there within walking distance. Bringing it in. If you did community supported agriculture (CSA) with a delivery service I think people are much more likely to receive that

I think it's important to play off of...there's big demand for niche market products right now and to say "locally grown" it's the same type of hype that organic gets...that's a pretty big pull for Millennials right now. You have people who are starting to be really concerned about what they are eating and where their food comes from and to be able to say locally grown that could be a really big selling point if people knew about it

Using the above information/data, Figure 4 (shown below) includes the graphical depiction of each locally produced food theme and conceptualizes a hierarchy of importance, with factors such as the definition and description of locally produced foods at the bottom and the role of marketing, information, and benefits of local items at the top. Results indicate that a number of involvement ‘levels’ of engagement opportunities exist for reaching Millennial consumers. The view of local and sustainable foods and the importance to younger consumers will dictate that Marketers consider more than just describing how local is defined, where to find local items and who should shop for these products (less involved process). Rather, the hierarchy suggests moving deeper and higher in creating a connection by explaining benefits such as health and food security, providing information about the farms, growing process, and ways to use local foods, as well as marketing in a meaningful but not obtrusive manner as part of creating a greater involvement between Millennial consumers and the marketing efforts of the *Certified South Carolina*™ program (more involved process).

Figure 4: Locally produced food hierarchy (less involved to more involved)



Social media and the Millennials (themes)

Social media applications (What)

The continuous evolving of social media and the applications within can create a hurdle for marketers who may work to get messaging through one medium, only to have another application developed that Millennials (or other users) find more important. While previous research (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016) has noted that the top social media applications include Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, other social media applications are being used by Millennials. For example, the American Press Institute in a 2015 survey on how Millennials receive their news found that Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Reddit, and Tumblr all were important outlets for communication to Millennials. Table 3 lists the social media keyword (e.g., Facebook, Google, Twitter, etc...) and the number of mentions by Millennials during the focus group interviews.

Table 3: Social media keyword mentions

Keyword	Respondent Mentions
Facebook	98
Picture(s)	71
Instagram	67
Snapchat	62
Text(ing)	60
Post(ing)	57
Twitter/Tweet	54
Videos	32
Reviews	23
Google	16
Vine	9
YouTube	8
Amazon	4
Emojis	4

Similar to the API report, Facebook and Twitter were important outlets for Millennials. However, within the data collection, Pinterest, Reddit, and Tumblr were only mentioned once time each by Millennials suggesting that the manner by which social media outlets are used may differ by need, generation, or by intent of communication. Examples of each of these social media outlets used for information and communication to Millennials are listed below:

I like Twitter. It's shorter, short, sweet, and a lot of stuff I can look at

I think it's the simplest way for all generations to use one platform (Facebook) because it's so easy to use

Snapchat is becoming more of its own form of social media with the whole "my story" thing but I'd definitely say that Instagram is kind of a glimpse into what you're doing, Facebook is more of a broad perspective of everything

I know a little of the younger Millennials aren't as engaged on Facebook because so much of the older generation, the parents...the parents are always on there. I cared then, but Instagram has certainly caught up and I'm even on Snapchat and things like that a good bit but even Twitter has picked up and I know Twitter and Snapchat and Instagram have been for the younger Millennials

I think Snapchat is something I never really think about social media because I feel like its communication but it's definitely...it's totally social media

Instagram is just easier to filter out what you want to see. Facebook you see a bunch of junk half the time and the same people posting stuff

Social media activity (When)

While academic research has noted the factors such as content, timing, and frequency of social media messages has shifted from management control (push) to more consumer driven control through pull factors (Mangold and Faulds, 2009), recent practitioner research on 'timing' of social media communication has suggested that 'when' messages are communicated is as important of 'what' is being communicated. For example, Forbes magazine has noted that 1-3pm for Facebook, 5pm for Twitter, and 2-4pm for Pinterest were considered high traffic 'sweet spots' for marketing message communication (Conner, 2015). However, other research provides slightly different times. Using a combination of 16 different studies, CoSchedule.com found that 1-4pm for Facebook, 12-3pm for Twitter (with a peak at 5pm), Mondays and Thursdays for Instagram anytime (except 3-4pm) and 8-11pm on Saturdays for Pinterest were key times for optimal views and messaging (Ellering, 2016).

Many Millennial consumers within the focus groups had to contend with job and school related demands which may cause a shift in the timing of these messaging strategies or when they access social media:

You gotta post around 12ish. Most people will see something at mid-day. You gotta wait until after 12 but before 2. You get the most likes between those hours

I feel like I don't use my social media for long periods of time anymore. I check it out throughout the day but I transition from being on Facebook for maybe an hour to looking at everything so I'll just check it quick and check notifications

The worst time to post is Friday at 5". If you're going "marketing" for College students or if you're going for people who work more than a 9-5 shift the messaging really kind of sways

Like 9:20 at night were like "Oh yeah, this is perfect. People are just finishing up studying, they're about to go out, just finish dinner, there's definitely times when this is prime posting period

Two big ones are like 9ish at night because no one has gone to bed yet and people are finishing dinner and sitting down to hang out with friends

We have found with our social media usage that our PR Director has said 10pm at night

I'm on roughly 10 hours a day, on my laptop, checking phone, social media

Throughout the day...but mostly around 9 or 10pm. I feel like it's spread out by the chunks get larger when you get later

I think I catch up late at night. You don't have any more responsibilities so you don't feel rushed so your able to just use that

Social media advertising (Who and Where)

Advertising across social media to Millennial consumers is generally a difficult proposition. Research suggests that Millennials are generally distrustful of many companies and marketing efforts (Schawbel, 2015a; McCarthy Group, 2014). Millennials are also exposed to advertising more than ever across a variety of mediums and applications:

I heard a radio ad and they said on there "We have over 12,000 likes on Facebook" as validation. They said that just 'cause they can

There's just so many ads I hardly see other people's posts

Online advertisements have been tailored to people so it'll see what you've searched or something like then and then on Facebook...what you've looked at is on advertisement on the right of your screen

It saves everything when you Like certain pages that will also bring in ads and stuff...which makes me not want to search anything because the ads are just gonna' pop up everywhere

I probably don't have any advertisements that I pay attention to

Growing up you would never see a commercial where you're outright saying our brand is better than competitors or this specific brand right here. They may be kind of obscure but now commercials are completely backlashing each other

They've started doing it on pretty much every platform (social media). It used to be only on Facebook but now things that you looked up 10 minutes ago are popping up and now Snapchat has advertisements and Instagram will pop-up. Sponsors and Twitter does too. I think it's really annoying. So annoying!

Social media information flow & communication (Why & How)

Finally, it is important to understand why and how Millennials are using social media for both communication and information flow. It appears to be more 'process' in nature, where either 1) multiple applications are being used simultaneously or 2) when something needs to be communicated, it is done through an orderly process depending on the event or timing necessary. The role of social media for product reviews and information gathering cannot be underestimated, as users consider factors such as product reviews, Google Search, Urban Spoon, TripAdvisor, and other applications to help in their decision-making process:

I go from platform to platform

I run multiple things on social media

I think a lot of people use it (social media) as a way to message other people. I don't ever Tweet but I follow other people. I take pictures of something funny and send it to my friends on Snapchat

I feel like students get on their phone and Snapchat and I'll get maybe on Facebook. Spend a couple of seconds there then go to the next one. And then I'll go to the next one so I feel like it's not just one app. Or the other but it's more like a consistency of a couple of different ones that can actually be used to get information out

During a live event I'll do Snapchat and then after the event then I'll post a picture on Instagram

And during (the event) it's like Snapchat. Before (the event) Twitter, during Snapchat, after Instagram. It's kind of a process

Snapchat it's kind of a cool way to see behind the scenes type stuff that companies will put out

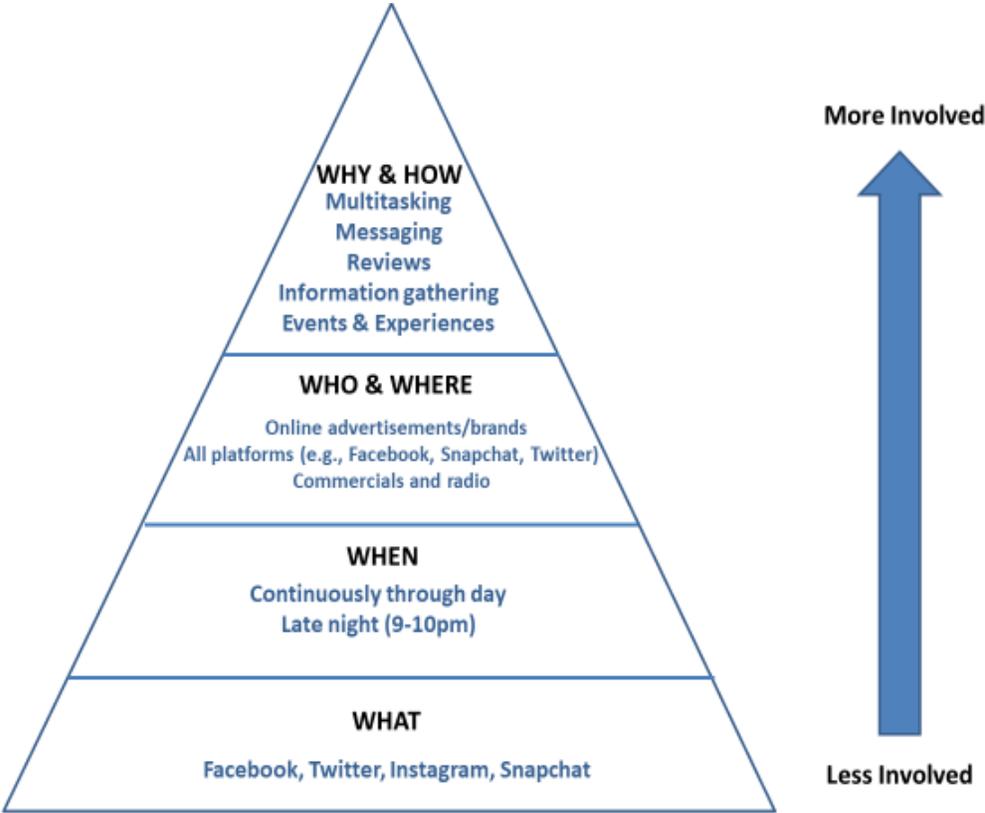
If you're going to buy a car you're gonna want to know what other people think about it so I think reviews from other customers are definitely big

The less information I have the more important the review is

I'd probably say the two key factors that go with purchasing a product go with a product review, yeah it's a strong factor, but I think price is another strong factor

Similar to the hierarchy for locally produced food topics, the responses relating to the topics for social media were groups and ordered from bottom to top, based upon factors such as what was being used, when Millennials were more likely to be on social media, and why certain advertising campaigns resonate with Millennial consumers over other groups. Specifically, how Millennials see effective advertising campaigns and those campaigns that could reach them on a deeper level and across multiple platforms was also highlighted. This is depicted in Figure 5 below:

Figure 5: Social media hierarchy for millennials



SUMMARY OF QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

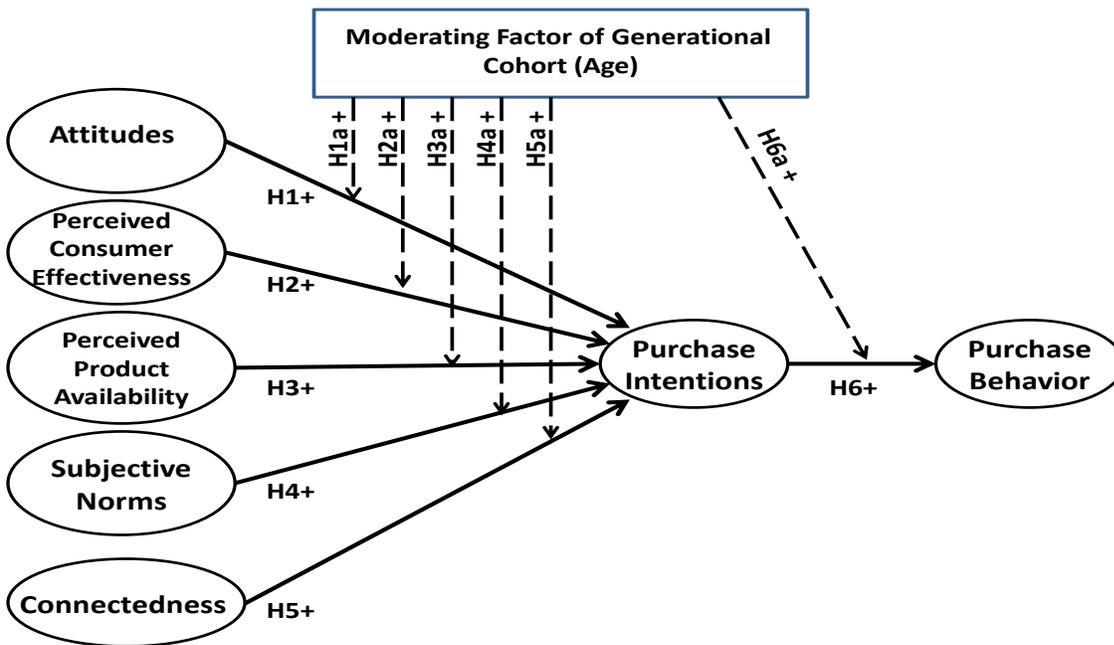
To summarize, the qualitative data suggested that complexity of how Millennial consumers think about food, particularly locally produced food, and the need for marketers to reach them on a deeper level. Not just explaining what locally produced food is, and where to find it (inform), but rather using unique messaging to ‘connect’ the producers/farms and the consumers through multiple platforms. Millennials are more-

than-ever aligned with social media platforms such as Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Being able to utilize these platforms to provide a consistent, unique, and compelling reason to not only buy locally produced items through the *Certified South Carolina*™ brand but to also “experience” the brand provides an opportunity for state agricultural teams to build multi-platform social media marketing efforts that are lasting. While technology is guaranteed to change, the continued focus on messaging that can be created cross-platform becomes even more important as respondents indicated the ability to multi-task and use multiple social media applications simultaneously.

ANALYSIS & RESULTS – QUANTITATIVE DATA

From the academic and industry literature on factors important for locally produced food purchasing, specifically those factors which may have strong significant relationships with purchase intentions for local items, a conceptual model was created which considered constructs such as Attitudes (AT), Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE), Perceived Product Availability (PPA), Subjective Norms (SN), and Connectedness (CON) with Purchase Intentions (PI) as well as the relationship of PI to Purchase Behavior (PB). Attitudes suggest an individual’s feelings about locally produced foods. Perceived consumer effectiveness has been defined in the literature as “The extent to which the **consumer** believes that his/her personal efforts can contribute to the solution of a problem” (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006, p.175) while Perceived Product Availability is defined as the ability of the consumer to believe they can find the products they seek. Subjective Norms suggests the effects of family, friends, and significant others on an individual’s purchasing behavior while Connectedness is how the respondent connects with the environment, the farms, and other consumers of locally produced items. Each of these constructs has been tested in the academic literature relating to local and organic foods, with various degrees of success. To determine if Millennial consumers vary from other generational cohorts such as Baby Boomers or Generation X, proposed moderating factors of ‘Generational Cohort’ were also tested. The initial model can be seen below in Figure 6:

Figure 6. Local food purchase behavior with generational cohort as moderator



Given that the academic and industry literature has suggested that cohort (Generational) differences existed in attitudes, social networking and behavioral consumption, we believe that group differences will occur between the three cohort groups such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Generation Y) with relationship to purchasing intentions and behaviors for state agricultural branded products. We therefore created the following hypotheses to be tested empirically (with *Certified South Carolina*™ being substituted in the survey as “agricultural branded products”):

H1a: The relationship between attitudes toward agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will differ by generational cohort.

H2a: The relationship between an individual’s perceived consumer effectiveness toward agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will differ by generational cohort.

H3a: The relationship between perceived product availability of agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will differ by generational cohort.

H4a: There relationship between subjective normative influences relating to agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will not differ by generational cohort.

H5a: The relationship between connectedness to agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will differ by generational cohort.

H6a: The relationship between purchase intentions for agricultural-branded products and purchase behavior will differ by generational cohort.

For analyzing the data, the quantitative statistical package SPSS 23.0 was utilized along with AMOS structural equation modeling following the methodology of Byrne (2010) as well as Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) process of a two-step approach. In step one, a confirmatory factor analysis was completed followed by creation of a structural model to test the path relationships. Group invariance testing was also completed using Byrne's (2010) procedures. Reliability scores for the primary sample of $N = 1905$ ranged from .770 to .932 and scores for the Millennial sample ($n = 870$) of .750 to .919 also suggested good reliability of the measures using Cronbach's alpha statistic. In completion of the confirmatory factor analysis, it was determined that three questions on the survey (one for 'attitudes' and two for 'perceived product availability') reflected low standardized regression weights ($\beta = .204$ to $.259$) and were removed from further analysis. A final measurement model was created that reflected a good fit of the data ($\chi^2 = 1369.99$; $df = 424$; $\chi^2/df = 3.23$; $CFI = .95$; $RMSEA = .051$). All regression weights, variances, and covariances were significant at $p < .05$. Next, as part of step two, a structural model was created that tested the hypothesized path relationships for the Millennial group of consumers ($N = 870$) as well as the total group of respondents ($N = 1905$). For the total group ($N = 1905$), the model reflected good estimated fit of the data ($\chi^2 = 2787.66$; $df = 431$; $\chi^2/df = 6.47$; $CFI = .95$; $RMSEA = .054$). For the Millennial group ($N = 870$), good estimated fit of the model data was also indicated ($\chi^2 = 1584.10$; $df = 429$; $\chi^2/df = 3.69$; $CFI = .94$; $RMSEA = .056$). Results of the hypotheses testing suggested that three of the paths were of significance, indicating that the constructs related to one another. For the total set of respondents ($N = 1905$) as seen in Table 4, these included Hypothesis 1 ($AT \rightarrow PI$, $\beta = .921$), Hypothesis 3 ($PPA \rightarrow PI$, $\beta = .278$), and Hypothesis 6 ($PI \rightarrow PB$, $\beta = .445$). H2, H4, and H5 were found insignificant and therefore rejected. Similar to the total group, for the Millennial sample of 870, positive relationships were found for Hypothesis 1 ($AT \rightarrow PI$, $\beta = .850$), Hypothesis 3 ($PPA \rightarrow PI$, $\beta = .409$), and Hypothesis 6 ($PI \rightarrow PB$, $\beta = .529$). H2, H4, and H5 were found insignificant and therefore rejected. Results of the hypotheses testing for the Millennial sample can be seen in Table 5 below. Finally, Table 6 indicates the results of testing for non-Millennial respondents ($N = 1035$). Again, results suggested that of the six proposed hypotheses, three (H1, H3, and H6) showed significant relationships between the constructs with the strongest relationship being that of "Attitudes toward *Certified South Carolina*TM products and Purchase Intentions". In all three groups tested, the standardized estimate of $> .9$ suggests that respondents have strong positive attitudes toward the *Certified South Carolina*TM product groups which bodes well for enhanced marketing efforts moving forward. Strong positive relationships with purchase "intentions" for CSC products and purchase behavior also supports the notion that once a shopper decides to buy *Certified South Carolina*TM, they are able to execute that behavior and will ultimately select CSC products instead of other brands. This was, however, strongest for Millennial respondents ($\beta = .529$) than the other groups tested.

Table 4. Structural model path estimates for total sample (N = 1905)

Structural Path (Hypothesis)	Standardized Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	Result*
Attitudes → Purchase Intentions (H1)	.921	.066	13.982	Significant
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness → Purchase Intentions (H2)	-.070	.137	-0.512	Not Significant
Perceived Product Availability → Purchase Intentions (H3)	.278	.028	10.064	Significant
Subjective Norms → Purchase Intentions (H4)	.031	.013	2.390	Not significant
Connectedness → Purchase Intentions (H5)	-.099	.079	-1.261	Not Significant
Purchase Intentions → Purchase Behavior (H6)	.445	.028	15.732	Significant

Table 5. Structural model path estimates (millennial sample = 870)

Structural Path (Hypothesis)	Standardized Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	Result*
Attitudes → Purchase Intentions (H1)	.850	.267	3.872	Significant
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness → Purchase Intentions (H2)	-.392	.538	-0.886	Not Significant
Perceived Product Availability → Purchase Intentions (H3)	.409	.061	6.876	Significant
Subjective Norms → Purchase Intentions (H4)	.063	.036	1.533	Not significant
Connectedness → Purchase Intentions (H5)	.083	.245	0.351	Not Significant
Purchase Intentions → Purchase Behavior (H6)	.529	.037	11.856	Significant

Table 6. Structural model path estimates non-millennial groups (N = 1035)

Structural Path (Hypothesis)	Standardized Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	Result*
Attitudes → Purchase Intentions (H1)	.910	.070	12.938	Significant
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness → Purchase Intentions (H2)	-.057	.118	-0.484	Not Significant
Perceived Product Availability → Purchase Intentions (H3)	.194	.030	6.424	Significant
Subjective Norms → Purchase Intentions (H4)	.015	.014	1.052	Not significant
Connectedness → Purchase Intentions (H5)	-.084	.069	-1.211	Not Significant
Purchase Intentions → Purchase Behavior (H6)	.493	.043	11.389	Significant

Group Moderation Testing

Upon completion of the hypotheses testing for the Millennial sample, invariance testing was subsequently performed to test for differences between the three cohort groups following Byrne's (2010) process. Groups were tested in pairs (e.g., Millennial and Generation X; Millennial and Baby Boomers) by first completing independent confirmatory factor analysis for each cohort group and then creating a 'stacked' model where the two groups could be reviewed simultaneously. Final measurement models for the Generation X cohort ($\chi^2 = 1051.20$; $df = 426$; $\chi^2/df = 2.47$; $CFI = .95$; $RMSEA = .050$) and the Baby Boomers cohort ($\chi^2 = 900.56$; $df = 429$; $\chi^2/df = 2.10$; $CFI = .95$; $RMSEA = .052$) also suggested a good fitting models for comparison where all regression weights, variances, and co-variances were significant. Group models were compared using a chi-squares difference testing procedure as part of the statistical analysis. Differences in the chi-squares values of the two compared models provided insight as to the possible differences between the cohort groups being tested and if further testing/analysis was warranted.

Results of the between group cohort testing in support of H1a – H6a suggested that between Millennial and Baby Boomer cohorts, only the relationship of perceived product availability (PPA) and purchase intentions (PI) varied by group ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.5(1)$; $p = .033$) thereby accepting H3a. For H1a, H2a, H4a, H5a, and H6a all other relationships showed insignificant (no) differences between the Millennial and Baby Boomer cohort groups as well as the Millennial and Generation X cohort groups.

Testing of Effects from Social-Media Usage

As a post-hoc test on the Millennial cohort group, the influence of 'social media usage' on the strength of the hypothesized relationships was investigated. It was believed that higher use of social media might help to strengthen the relationships between factors like attitudes, intentions, influences from family/friends and outcomes such as purchase intentions or behaviors as Millennial consumers like to share opinions and experiences through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat (Sago 2010; Pate and Adams, 2013). Similar to the procedure used to test generational cohort groups, a chi-squares difference test was completed and social media usage groups were defined by asking "Approximately how much time (in HOURS) do you spend on social media each day?" A median split of the Millennial data reflected 491 respondents on social media 6 hours or less each day, with 379 users on social media 7 hours or more each day. Of the six previously hypothesized paths, the path of PI → PB differed by social media usage ($\Delta\chi^2 = 16.682(1)$). For the 'High' usage group, the relationship was stronger ($\beta = .582$) than for the 'Low' usage group ($\beta = .463$). The remaining paths did not differ statistically by social media usage amounts.

SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Given the various testing completed on the data which considered relationship effects of key factors such as attitudes, consumer perceptions of their own behavior and of product availability, influences from family and friends, and their purchase intentions and behaviors, it can be summarized that local food/product consumers in the State of South Carolina, for both Millennial respondents and the other cohort groups tested, have positive attitudes toward the local items. These positive attitudes in turn have a significant and positive relationship with future purchase intentions, as do the perceptions of product "availability". Given that many local items are seasonal in nature and that consumers may demand products all year round that are technically "out-of-season" in the state of South Carolina, it becomes important for agricultural marketers within the state to maximize their advertising and marketing efforts when the products are available. Continued work should be done to alert consumers when products will become available, particularly for Millennial consumers who may not be fully aware of the growing seasons for the *Certified South Carolina Grown*[™] products. Having featured *Certified South Carolina Produced*[™] items and promotion of where these items can be found, across multiple outlets including farmers markets and throughout retail grocery, will be necessary to ensure Millennial consumers in particular are aware, given that they reflected a greater importance of this than the other cohort groups in relationship to their purchase intentions. A good finding for agricultural marketers across South Carolina is that once a local food consumer creates an "intention" to buy local items, either locally grown, produced, *Fresh on the Menu*[™], etc...there is a strong relationship to their final purchasing "behavior" where sales dollars and units sold matter. This supports the need to continually address supply chain factors and ensure

that the right products can be found that consumers want, at the right price, at the right locations, and in the right quantities.

Finally, while there were little differences between the cohort groups across most of the hypotheses tested, Millennials did factor the importance of “product availability” as more important. Given that Millennials tend to dine out more than other cohort groups, desire quick options for meals, and that they factor costs as the most important factor in selecting their grocery stores (Convenience Store Decisions, 2016), along with their continued use of product reviews and digital research (Knutson, 2017), it becomes especially important that agricultural marketers understand that it cannot be just one form of marketing. Rather, an “Omni-Channel” experiential approach where information about South Carolina products and farms can be found in-store via website links on the displays, recipes highlighting the South Carolina products can be included online or in-store, highlights of products reviews and values associated with the brand are created, and that the phone for Millennials will continue to be a valuable tool for shopping for food that is unlike in years past. Those Millennials who spent more time online across social media platforms reflected a stronger positive relationship of purchase intentions to purchase behaviors, perhaps because the internet acted as a means to confirming their desires given positive reviews, recipes that were easily accessible, or pricing that was deemed appropriate for the values obtained.

CONCLUSIONS:

Based upon the results of the focus group interviews and the subsequent survey results (contained within the summaries of qualitative and quantitative analysis shown above), the ability of Millennial consumers to multi-task and utilize multiple social media platforms is evident, as well as the importance of social concerns related to food choices. Millennials want to be part of the marketing process, rather than being a group to be marketed “to”. While a strong positive relationship was found between attitudes toward the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand and purchase intentions for all of the groups tested, the perceptions of product availability and purchase intentions was stronger for Millennials as was the relationship of purchase intentions to actual purchase behavior. This suggests that Millennials emphasize ease and accessibility of CSC products over other possible factors. Once they make up their minds however about CSC products, they often are able to seek out and purchase the CSC brand at their chosen outlets. Spending more time online for Millennials serves to strengthen their resolve to purchase items, perhaps because Millennials are used to sharing activities and experiences on the internet with their friends, family, and social networks. Millennials become more involved with the food process during information gathering about farms, about benefits, and about ways they can utilize the CSC brand (e.g., recipes). They also utilize the internet on a greater scale than other consumers to purchase, and spend a large amount of time utilizing product or place review applications/platforms (e.g., Urban Spoon, YouTube ratings, Trip Advisor) to help with their decisions. This highlights the importance of restaurants, farmers markets, and online farm-to-consumer websites to be even more diligent of the products and services offered.

LESSONS LEARNED:

A number of lessons can be learned from the research gathered. While the amount of time Millennials spend on social media is not a novel finding, it speaks to the ways in which marketing efforts can be adjusted to better capture views and/or Likes on social media. Millennials' preferred use of social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and especially Snapchat brings to the forefront the need to be active on social media consistently and timely to ensure that the marketing efforts are beneficial. As mentioned previously, the need to integrate Millennials into the marketing efforts (input) rather than being an output of marketing efforts might suggest an opportunity to have Millennials tell their own story of *Certified South Carolina*[™] (e.g., "I am *Certified South Carolina*[™]"). The manner in which Millennials respond to advertisements is such that humor, something unexpected, or something emotionally driven related to social causes might work well when devising a marketing campaign.

Brands that are easily identifiable and easily available help when Millennials have choices to make. Millennials also respond highly favorably to brand influencers. Repetition is the key as well, and given that many Millennials have cost constraints they prefer giveaways, samples, or partnerships with charities as they believe it is important to "give back" through their purchasing efforts. It was also learned that it is difficult to "group" all Millennials into one set (much like other ages) as unique backgrounds such as farm families impact purchasing decisions related to products, restaurants, and patronage at places like farm markets. Similarly, those who are working full-time jobs or have families will have different priorities and respond differently to marketing efforts. Finally, with 38.5% of the Millennial respondents not recalling seeing the *Certified South Carolina*[™] logo, the lesson becomes a continued focus on adding CSC to restaurants, menus, food trucks, university dining centers and other places that consumers may dine.

CURRENT AND FUTURE BENEFITS DERIVED FROM PROJECT

With the completed project, The South Carolina Department of Agriculture and other states with agricultural brands will have information about Millennial consumers that can be used to help plan marketing campaigns, social media efforts, and branding ideas to create future demand for products. The provided marketing plan at the end of this report can also be used in the short term as a guide to help determine which type of marketing efforts or social media efforts (e.g., use of Snapchat and Instagram over Facebook) would be most appropriate. Some suggestions within the plan may have already been undertaken by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture (or other state agriculture departments). Other suggestions may be new and completely different than the current marketing efforts employed around the state. Future benefits of the revised marketing plan include using the plan as a template to updating social media marketing efforts. Changes in the type of social media analytics platforms considered,

the timing of social media posts, or inclusion of Millennials as part of the development of new marketing efforts are also potential benefits.

It is also anticipated that future benefits will include the added demand of *Certified South Carolina*[™] products across places such as restaurants, retail grocery, farmers markets food trucks, and events like food festivals. While the CSC log is already present in these locations to some degree, an increase in unique social media messaging will help to attract new consumers and create a new level of brand loyalty not currently attained. This new brand loyalty and outreach to Millennials is also expected in the future to create economic benefits as more demand over a longer period will benefit the farms around the state of South Carolina, particularly if these consumers remain loyal over an extended period.

FUTURE (ADDITIONAL) RECOMMENDED RESEARCH – NEXT STEPS

Future recommended research includes the analysis of the “next” generation of consumers, known as Generation Z. This will give researchers the ability to determine how social media has evolved between Generation X, Generation Y (Millennials), and those young persons who have grown up with social media such as Instagram and Snapchat all of their lives. Determining variances between groups could provide beneficial when new technology or social media applications evolve. It may also help to create a brand image in a new and more exciting way if state departments of agriculture are able to, in effect, “rebrand” and debunk the misconceived notion that agriculture is for older generations and not pertinent to younger individuals.

Aside from research on Gen Z, it is also recommended that a deeper look into Millennials take place, dependent upon their life stages. For example, working Mom Millennials may contain specific and unique traits that improved marketing efforts could capture. Delineating added characteristics within the Millennial group, such as students versus working professionals, and using an experimental design methodology to capture preferences within would also be of interest. Survey work at various locations that Millennials frequent, such as restaurants, festivals, and farmers markets would also be useful to determine the best marketing opportunities to utilize and to better learn what social media platform is used to communicate the event.

Finally, continued analysis of new and developing social media applications will always be important in understanding how these platforms are being used and how to attract “attention” to the state agricultural brands. If traditional advertisements will not work for Millennials and Generation Z, then newly developed social media campaigns need to become the norm rather than the exception. To this end, a reduction in radio and television advertisements could then be supplemented with a viral campaign similar to those effectively used by charities as younger consumers continue to see social causes as important and worthy of support.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Beneficiaries of the project and research include the State of South Carolina Department of Agriculture, who can review the data from the research and utilize it along with the proposed marketing plan to develop a more integrated marketing effort for Millennial consumers. Other potential beneficiaries include state agricultural marketing personnel who can integrate some of the suggestions into their own current plans or begin to develop new marketing plans around a social media focus versus the traditional advertising channels of television, radio, or print media.

Most importantly, the key beneficiaries of the research include South Carolina growers and producers of *Certified South Carolina*[™] items that are seeking to expand sales and economic viability/sustainability through a better understanding of Millennial consumers and marketing techniques. For these beneficiaries, particularly those who operate within farmers markets or sell direct-to-consumers, the marketing plan highlights factors such as information about the farm or products and emotional connections as important for attracting younger consumers. The same would be true for restaurant operators or grocers in South Carolina, who could benefit from improved signage and visual displays of the brand to keep younger consumers aware. Understanding that social media is a cost-effective tool to reach a broad audience, these beneficiaries can now begin to consider marketing efforts that can create a “viral buzz” across platforms like Instagram or Snapchat popular for Millennials.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION GENERATED BY PROJECT

In addition to the final report, other applicable items including a listing of the focus group questions, survey questionnaire, survey results (separated by the total sample of 1905 and Millennial sample of 870), two academic presentations, a white paper manuscript ready for journal submission, and a published manuscript in the *International Journal of Food and Agribusiness Marketing* all as part of Appendices 1-7 (attached at the end of the report).

PROPOSED MARKETING PLAN SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



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OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED MARKETING PLAN

In January of 2016, after completion of the qualitative data collection (Millennial focus groups), the lead researcher at the University of South Carolina met with the Viral Communications/Social Media Coordinator from the South Carolina Department of Agriculture to better understand how social media marketing was currently being used effectively to communicate to the targeted audience of consumers across the state. During the conversation, discussions continued about the primary forms of social media used (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) along with specific events that are frequently marketed or promoted such as the local farmers markets and/or producers. During that time, it was learned that funding for much of the advertising and promotion within the Department was done on a case-by-case project-based system, whereby project initiatives that needed more funding could be evaluated as such instead of a “set” pool of allocated funds. Given this model, it allows for more flexibility in funding new initiatives and allows for greater investment into initiatives such as targeting Millennial consumers around the state (and still keep a consistent message to other demographic groups and consumers across the state).

Further research regarding the proposed plan was done through discussions with the Communications and Marketing team within the College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sport Management at The University of South Carolina in 2017. Discussions regarding implementation, importance, and timing of the proposed suggestions including short-term, mid-range, and long-term efforts were noted. In particular, conversations regarding the “how to implement” certain suggestions (e.g., those relating to social media filters, tagging, and timing of posts) were also considered and implemented into the plan as necessary.

Finally, and most importantly, the plan is built upon the data collected via the focus group discussions as part of the qualitative data analysis, discussions with students on a weekly basis over the two years of the research project, and the quantitative data collected via the online survey to both Millennial consumers and those of other age groups around the state. In some cases, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture may have begun to implement some of the suggestions into their current social media marketing efforts over the past two years. The cost of implementation and timing of implementation (e.g., short-term versus a longer range in focus) were also considered prior to including as part of the plan. Most importantly, this plan provides a current basis for implementing ideas while understanding the fluidity of technology and changes that will continue to occur as technology evolves. To this end, there is room for continued improvement to the proposed suggestions as state agriculture departments seek to optimize funding for projects that yield improved results and greater reach of their brands across multiple platforms.

SHORT-TERM IMPLEMENTATION

1. CONTINUITY AND TIMING OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM POSTS

A wealth of research over the past five years has considered the effects of “timing” related to social media posts and the type of influence the timing will have on outcomes such as “retweets”, “Likes”, and responses from users. In trade articles such as: *“For brands and PR: When is the best time to post on social media”* (Conner, 2015), best-practice times of posting on social media platforms were discussed. As Conner noted, “For Facebook the times to avoid are before 8am and after 8pm. The sweet spot, however, is 1-3pm with activity, engagement, and happiness highest on Thursday and Friday and peaking on Friday afternoon”. Other suggested times within the article for various platforms include the following:

For Twitter: “Best time for retweets is after 3pm. The very best time of all? 5pm”

For YouTube: “The time to avoid is 5-6pm, The time to catch on is noon to 3:00pm”

For Pinterest: “Pinterest gets most engagement from 2-4 in the afternoon. The worst time to pin: 5-7pm.” It was also noted that “Pinterest is a bonanza for retail engagement, particularly for women consumers – the average time on site is 89 minutes, surpassing Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn”

Other articles also note the importance of timing and days-of-the-week with respect to platform posts and the opportunity to reach maximum efficiency. Using a combination of 16 different studies, CoSchedule.com (Ellering, 2016) found the following peak times for posting on various social media platforms:

Facebook: 1-4pm for Facebook, late week or weekends

Twitter: 12-3pm for Twitter (with a peak at 5pm)

Instagram: Mondays and Thursdays for Instagram anytime (except 3-4pm); best times 8-9am and 5pm

Pinterest: 8-11pm on Saturdays for Pinterest were key times for optimal views and messaging

Data from the focus group research on Millennials as part of this project also suggested that timing of postings need to be well defined for best optimization and created with a

specific strategic intent in mind rather than of “convenience”. From the focus groups, the following times/days were also considered important for social media posting:

Mid-day from 12-3 pm during lunch or in-between classes

After 9pm as students take time to update/view/check social media activity

As part of the analysis and suggested implementation, a four-month review of social media posts from the SC Department of Agriculture was completed for the time period of March – June 2017 for both Facebook posts and Twitter posts. The accounts searched were the *Certified South Carolina*™ accounts across social media. Using the suggested 1-4pm time period for Facebook as the optimum time period, a review was done by month to determine the amount of posts that fall within the suggested optimum. Of the 105 total posts (27 March, 23 April, 27 May and 28 June), a total of 27 posts (26%) occurred during the optimum time period which suggests some of the posts may not have been seen by the intended target or may have become lost in the social media maze of posts and advertisements. For Twitter, the percentage that occurred within the proposed “optimum” by industry recommendations (approximately 12-5pm per the CoSchedule.com study and other studies combined) equaled 49% (56 Tweets /114 total Tweets), a much higher percentage within the recommended range. NO analysis was completed on Instagram.*

*This is NOT to say that every post needs to only occur during the optimum time as analytics software such as Google Analytics may indicate that the intended target (Millennials in SC) may be online at different times/days of week. To that end, the improved use of analytics would be of greater importance in determining the right time/day of posting messages. In support of this, it should also be noted that some of the posts/Tweets outside of this optimum time range (e.g., contest, recipe, or posts related to a specific function or event such as a sporting event) continue to have a large amount of views/Likes/or re-Tweets and support the notion that posting during a certain time period will not necessarily guarantee greater social media traffic.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION ON IMPROVEMENT OF CONTINUITY AND TIMING OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM POSTS

It is suggested that the SC Department of Agriculture and all agricultural marketing efforts consider the importance of “timing” as it relates to social media posts. While typical workdays may be from 7-5pm Monday thru Friday, Millennials have shown that their timing differs based upon schedule and need. To optimize views of Millennial consumers, marketers should first consider the

message to be communicated and better determine if the timing of the post is appropriate. For example, communicating an upcoming event at the optimized/suggested time period may help to garner additional views while similarly creating “post-event” social media posts could also help to create engagement, particularly if reviews by attendees can accompany the posts. For Facebook, it is suggested that additional posts within the 1-4pm time period be created. For Twitter, additional posting efforts later in the day (after 3pm) or at night may prove beneficial as well.

2. CREATION/CONTINUATION OF OMNICHANNEL MARKETING EFFORTS

The rise of Omni-Channel marketing has provided marketers an opportunity to engage their targeted audience in a more impactful manner than ever before. Omni-channel marketing is broadly defined as businesses who create a consistent and uninterrupted messaging across multiple platforms in order to create a brand experience across any of the platforms in which a customer may use (Newman, 2015). Consider for example the customer who goes to a grocery store to purchase a food item, utilizes their phone to find a manufacturer’s coupon then scans a QR code on the display to search the internet about the farm or producer. Each of these “Channels” provides information to the shopper/customer about the product. In an Omni-channel environment, the brand experience for that customer should be consistent and reflect the same attributes to the shopper no matter the channel selected by the customer.

Taken further, this Omni-channel experience allows the customers to take control over the information and the messaging received. In this case, it becomes even more important that a customer who chooses, for example, to seek information about the *Certified South Carolina*[™] program on Facebook also experience the brand in a similar fashion if they choose to go to a farmers market, purchase through retail grocery outlets, access stories about the products via Instagram, or utilize Snapchat and/or Twitter to communicate with others.

What might this “Omni-channel” perspective look like for improving contact with Millennial consumers for the *Certified South Carolina*[™] program? It begins with the many marketing channels currently available for the products. To this end, the SC Department of Agriculture and other state programs have done a good job in expanding access to state branded products across channels such as grocery, farmers markets, restaurants, CSA’s, farm stands and in many cases online direct-to-consumer sales. Communication across multiple platforms should support these various channel options for purchase and allow for the messaging to be consistent. The messaging can take whatever form is most appropriate for the channel selected. The following model, taken from Rosenblum’s (2015) article in Supermarketnews.com titled “Omni-channel by any other name” suggests one manner by which an Omni-channel approach may be taken at a retailer (grocer) level to promote sales (Figure 7):

Figure 7. Omni-channel model



Image Source: Rosenblum (2015), "Omni-channel by any other name", Supermarketnews.com; Originator source: Rosenblum, C. (2015). Willard Bishop, an Inmar Analytics Company.

The use of text messaging, email, social media applications, and microsities (often temporary websites embedded into larger sites that can be used for special promotions, seasonal activities or more information about a product or service) help to create a level of experience or "personalization" for the shopper that impacts perception of the brand. This allows engagement on multiple levels across both Millennial consumers and other generations such as Gen X, Baby Boomer, or the Silent Generation that may be less adept at social media but more comfortable with platforms such as email.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION ON CREATION/CONTINUATION OF OMNICHANNEL MARKETING EFFORTS

It is important for the SC Department of Agriculture to continue to work with outlets such as retail grocers who carry the *Certified South Carolina*[™] product, as well as farmers markets, restaurants, and farms who sell direct-to-consumers to utilize an Omni-channel approach. From the "Retail Millennial Grocery Report" study of 2016, whereby grocery shopping trends for Millennial shoppers were analyzed, factors such as cost/value were most important, and 52% used a mobile device prior to their grocery shopping trip to help assist them. Clipping mobile coupons and helping to find recipes were also highly valued by Millennial shoppers, and the ability scan a product on the mobile device to get product

information was also highly important. (Convenience Store Decisions, 2016). As an opportunity for the SC Department of Agriculture and other marketing entities, when promotions or special events are upcoming, the creation of an integrated approach to social media, opportunities within the store or event itself, and use of multiple platforms (in-store and social media) simultaneously can prove effective.

One successful example is the Palmetto Series baseball event in SC. Clemson University and the University of South Carolina hold a three-day baseball series across the state in different locations (e.g., Clemson, Columbia, and Greenville/Charleston). While posting about the event on different platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have proven successful, the opportunity to utilize these locational venues for giveaways, branding enhancements and/or samples could leverage this Omni-channel experience. The same could hold true for contests or “check-ins” where attendees of each of the Palmetto Series events (e.g., baseball, basketball, football, soccer, etc...) accrue “points” similar to how memberships work in the University of South Carolina Gamecock Club. Points at the end of the Palmetto Series could be utilized for *Certified South Carolina*[™] branded items or free local food giveaways at restaurants, farmers markets, or on campuses. Participants would be able to “opt-in” using their phones at various locations which could then be utilized to gain insight into the attendees/potential consumers. Restaurants in particular have a unique opportunity with Millennials, where signage, mobile coupons, or QR codes which lead consumers to added information about the farms may prove beneficial. Information about places that Millennials can purchase the CSC branded items would also prove relevant as Millennials have indicated that access to local foods is highly important. When products or events related to the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand get placed on one platform such as Facebook, ensuring that other platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat and even Pinterest also see similar messaging at a relevant time remains important. Marketing efforts at the point-of-purchase need to tie back to the postings on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to ensure consistency as well will create an enhanced sense of engagement and relevance to the Millennial consumer.

Finally, the Omni-channel experience suggests that implementation of EZ pay functions such as “mobile payment” at places that carry CSC products such as farmers markets may prove more relevant to Millennial shoppers who have adopted this functionality. As noted by a recent study from Deloitte (2015) on Omni-channel, “45% of smartphone owners are making purchases using a smartphone device every month”. Given this opportunity, retail outlets like restaurants or local food markets should be encouraged to adopt smart pay functionality such as Square, Apple Pay or other technologies to streamline the shopping process.

3. IMPROVED USE OF DATA ANALYTICS

The rise of importance in data analytics cannot be minimized, given the continued emphasis of social media and need to better understand how and why consumers behave in identifiable patterns. A number of companies have entered the social media data analytics market, to help users better understand how and why their target audiences are leveraging social media platforms to buy, discuss, and communicate with friends and others. Five of the key analytics programs considered are the following:

- Instagram Analytics – Iconosquare
- Google Analytics 360 + Salesforce
- Twitter Analytics
- Snaplytics
- Hootsuite

Programs such as Instagram Analytics help to measure factors such as number of followers, impressions “reach” on posts, engagement patterns related to “Saves”, “Likes”, and/or “Comments”, and the effects of filters or Hashtags on user engagement (Pro.Iconosquare.com, n.d.). Google Analytics recently partnered with Salesforce to create and connect analytics related to advertising, sales, and marketing under one platform (Google.com, n.d.) while also allowing marketers availability to the data via desktop or mobile applications. Twitter Analytics and social media management dashboards from companies like Buffer are sometimes used in combination to most effectively manager internet traffic, particularly for Millennials. A number of useful statistics can be pulled from Twitter Analytics, including the following that can be found from a Twitter profile (Lee, 2017)

1. Monthly performance overview
2. Trend insights
3. Average tweet performance for benchmarking
4. The top 10 interests of your followers
5. Type of engagement
6. Your most significant sharers
7. Engagement rate
8. Twitter Like rate
9. Tweet length vs. engagement
10. Tweet reach percentage
11. Tweet reach, including your retweets
12. Hashtag comparison
13. Impressions by time of day
14. Clicks, retweets, & replies by time of day
15. Engagement rate by time of day
16. Best days for total engagement and engagement rate
17. Video completion rate

Each of these statistics can have various levels of importance to the marketing team at the SC Department of Agriculture and others, depending upon the need and type of analysis to be completed. For example, the “most significant sharers” might evolve into Brand Champions/Influencers or Ambassadors for the *Certified South Carolina*™ brand if the Department of Agriculture can utilize these services properly. Time-of-day statistics, which may already be utilized, might help to better identify which tweets to Millennials have the greatest reach and which ones become lost in translation (as noted in the ‘timing of social media posts’ section of recommendations). Hashtag comparisons might also become useful as certain Hashtags or “Multiple Hashtags” may be useful on various platforms. Analytics programs such as Snaplytics allows marketers to view analytics on social media applications such as Snapchat and Instagram in one tool, which may be important as Millennials continue to utilize Snapchat as one of their favorite applications. This provides an opportunity for the SC Department of Agriculture to pursue an additional avenue of ‘reach’. Finally, Hootsuite has been recognized as a useful and principle tool for social media monitoring as it allows marketers to monitor many different social network applications within one location as well (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and FourSquare).

Cost of each application is generally free for initial signup, with increased prices as more features are requested. Some services such as Hootsuite charge a little over \$100 a year (or about \$9.99 /month) to help manage access to the social media sites being analyzed. The basic version of Google Analytics is free. Instagram Analytics – Iconosquare is listed as \$9 / month. Snaplytics basic service runs approximately \$19 per month. Finally, Facebook Analytics is a free powerful tool often used to help manage activity on the website.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION ON IMPROVED USE OF DATA ANALYTICS

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture uses some analytical tools to help assess online traffic across platforms such as Facebook. It is recommended that analytical tools selected be utilized to help determine not only the number of retweets, time of online traffic, or numbers of persons engaged...but rather to better analyze more precise features of the specific consumer. For example, tools that can help gauge the interests of the followers (as noted above) can be useful in using targeted posts such as new recipes or posts related to the healthy aspects of the *Certified South Carolina*™ products (e.g., for Millennials with young children). Having multiple analytics services may also be beneficial to better identify key activity on the social media sites. A combination of tools (e.g., Facebook analytics and Snaplytics or using Hootsuite to monitor multiple applications) is suggested. Along with the creation of dashboards to monitor activities, it is also suggested that weekly reports be created/reviewed to better

determine which marketing activity is resonating with certain populations such as Millennials versus other marketing efforts in which Millennials may be less responsive. With over 11,200 followers on Facebook, nearly 10,000 followers on Twitter, and close to 3,300 followers on Instagram...it would be of interest in knowing how many of these individuals are following CSC on all (or just part) of the social media platforms, how many are Millennial in age range, and determining which type of “post” creates the greatest appeal across each of the platforms rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach where the same post may show up on each of the three primary platforms.

4. DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF SNAPCHAT PLATFORM



Source image from: <https://accounts.snapchat.com/accounts/snapcodes>

One of the most engaging social media platforms for Millennial consumers is Snapchat. Started in 2011 as a private person-to-person photo sharing application, it has evolved into a multi-featured application with expected advertising revenue of \$935.5 Million in 2017 and \$1.76 Billion in 2018 (Slone, 2016). Using technology that allows friend-to-friend sharing of videos (which disappear) as well as pictures, statistics from Snapchat.com reflect daily users of 178 million (globally), with each Snapchatter opening the application 25+ times a day, spending 30 minutes or more with 60% creating content with the camera function (Snapchat.com, n.d.). Snapchat has long been considered as an important and principle platform for reaching and engaging Millennials, as Snapchat has been found to reach 41% of 18-34-year-olds on a daily basis (Perlberg, 2016).

There are a number of important ways that brands and advertisers can use Snapchat to leverage brand awareness. They include the following:

- Short 10-second video ads can be integrated into “Live Stories” (which are a grouping of similar pictures (a.k.a. “Snaps”) taken at functions such as events, concerts, sports or other entertainment-based locations)
- Advertisers can use “Snapchat Discover” to place ads into stories (BusinessWire.com, 2015)
- Sponsored filters or “Geofilters” can be created to overlay an advertisement or brand image on a user created picture or video (Perlberg, 2016)

Within the social media platforms mentioned during the focus group interviews for this project, Snapchat ranked third behind Facebook and Instagram by Millennial respondents (but ahead of Twitter). Snapchat's often defined "Fun" and "Humorous" application allows users to take pictures or videos and transform them with content that they create or others create. It is this "lighthearted" approach to the application that appears to engage Millennials on a more emotional level as they are very much "involved" in the marketing process and they serve as great spokespeople (albeit the application transforms the marketing into "person-to-person" via social media versus the well-utilized word-of-mouth approach). As noted by Deen (2016) on *'Socialnomics.net'*, Snapchat's appeal to Millennial consumers is that 1) it is an interactive platform for sharing content and updating friends/family with fun moments, 2) it is perceived as more authentic than big companies creating promotional content, 3) it is a way for users to connect with brand influencers/celebrities on a more engaging level, 4) there is a sense of privacy to the material shared as content becomes deleted when encrypted on the Snapchat servers, and 5) most importantly, it is perceived as fun and interactive while enhancing creativity from the users.

Of the Millennial respondents who were asked what they liked most about Snapchat as a social media platform, "Creating my own stories" was ranked the highest followed by "Video Chatting" and also "Drawing, Stickers, and filters for snaps". All of this highlights the importance of users creating their own content and messaging, especially Millennials who often use filters to block advertisements and to stay away from undesired brands or messaging (Wallenstein and Ault, 2016).

Geofilters are a unique and highly utilized method for Millennials and others to creatively take and share pictures with others on the Snapchat platform. More than simply "drawing on a Snapchat picture or post", a geofilter is free for places such as communities, parks, or farmers' markets (upon approval by Snapchat) and cost \$5.99 for personal creations (e.g., birthdays, weddings, tailgates) and can be customized for businesses using various designs, dates to be applied, and/or locations to be applied for an increased price (Snapchat.com, 2017; Moscaritolo, 2016). The two-step process for setting up a geofilter is as such: 1) Defining an "area" in which you want the geofilter to see (also known as a geofence) and 2) determining how long the geofilter will stay active, which may increase the price to \$100 (based on amount of time and dates selected). While posting geofilters requires a charge, the use of them by others such as Millennials would be free (Graham, 2016). With Snaps containing geofilters being viewed "hundreds of millions of times each day" (Moscaritolo, 2016), this low-cost method of promoting a brand or location could be of great value to marketers.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF SNAPCHAT PLATFORM

The increased use of the Snapchat platform is highly recommended to the South Carolina Department of Agriculture and others wishing to promote their state brands in a unique and fun way. The platform allows a great deal of flexibility to create a little (or large) number of filters and geofilters to highlight and promote not only the various Certified South Carolina™ or Fresh on the Menu™ logos, but also the places where CSC is sold and events that highlight the brand.

While the cost of embedding advertisements into “Live Stores” or via “Snapchat Discover” will prevent many brands/companies from being able to afford such options, the use of “Geofilters” may be an appropriate and cost-effective way to promote the Certified South Carolina™ brand into user-created pictures or videos. For example, Millennials who visit a farmers market in South Carolina may find a location-based Geofilter with the CSC logo that could be included on any picture or video taken at the market. Similarly, a filter/sticker can be developed to overlay the locally grown/locally produced or *Certified South Carolina*™ brand moniker with the South Carolina state outline to accompany the picture (as shown below in Figure 8). Geofilters can be created at the various farmers markets, landmarks, or restaurants that carry CSC products and users can be encouraged through signage or small giveaways to “share” their content. Typical cost begins around \$5.99 per Geofilter dependent upon size of area and length of time to be used. As users share the picture or video with friends and family, the *Certified South Carolina*™ brand or logo will also increase in reach. Filters are as unique as the persons creating them. The SC Department of Agriculture could develop one primary filter with the *Certified South Carolina*™ logo or have multiple filters representing the four primary CSC brands (CSC Grown, CSC Product, CSC Seafood, and Fresh on the Menu). Use of Snapchat filters may also be successful to create attendance at local events or to restaurants, such as: “Come to Soda City this weekend for...” where *Certified South Carolina*™ products can be found.

Figure 8: South Carolina Statehouse with *Certified South Carolina*™ logos



Photo by: J Campbell

MID-RANGE IMPLEMENTATION

5. CREATION OF A BRAND AMBASSADOR (BRAND INFLUENCER) PROGRAM

A 2015 article in AdWeek, titled “Why influencer marketing is the new content king”, outlined a bridge-effect of using brand influencers to connect with consumers in hopes of building greater trust and commitment (Morrison, 2015). In noting that bloggers are the third most consulted platform by shoppers, greater than even social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and others, the article suggested that “influencers” are able to create a greater level of trust than the brand content itself. Given the multifaceted ways in which an influencer can affect the market, such as teaching about products, counteracting negative publicity with positive reviews, explaining product features and most importantly having a positive influence on sales increases through development of a connection to users and their content (Morrison, 2015), the “influencer” or ambassador can have a larger impact than typical push-level marketing efforts.

This isn't to say that creating an ambassador or influencer will guarantee success. How are influencers defined? A recent Forbes article defines an influencer, citing the Cambridge Dictionary, as "a person or group that has the ability to influence the behavior or opinions of others." (Escobedo, 2017). What makes a good influencer for a brand? The article outlines four key characteristics that may help determine success or failure. They include:

- 1) Professional background and knowledge
- 2) Ability to produce and improve creative output
- 3) Skills in defining, tracking, measuring contribution to the brand's growth
- 4) Strength of character to weigh in on issues that matter

While these characteristics suggest an "expert in the field" whose voice can lead others to following certain brands, these traits may not apply to how Millennial consumers view brand influencers and to what extent they themselves become influenced. While influencers may, according to Escobedo (2017), encourage dialog and positive change for social and community issues, the brand itself has a similar responsibility. Dahan (2017) noted that, for brand influencers to work, 1) Customers need to trust your brand or product before they buy or try it, 2) Cool factor, lifestyle or status are all important factors for your brand, 3) Your industry is homogenized, commoditized or very competitive, and 4) Marketing is a driver for your business.

How might these work with a state agricultural brand programs such as the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand or *Fresh on the Menu*[™]? Based upon the above points, and research on the project that shows a strong positive relationship between attitudes and purchase intentions for locally produced foods such as those in South Carolina, there is a strong trust in the brand currently. 'Local' and 'locally produced' food items (as well as organic) have become less specialized and more mainstream to many lifestyles and many consumers who can now find these items in retail grocery or online, which bodes well for a "Cool factor". Similar support from the Agriculture as a whole is very homogenized and commoditized, where margins are often very small in places such as grocery which requires "marketing" as a key driver to help with product and brand differentiation.

Brand Ambassadors, or "Spokespeople" who represent the uniqueness and positive aspects of the brand, can act as influencers to those within the market. Gallup in a 2017 report has suggested that the economy has moved away from a materials economy to an experience economy, whereby evaluation of brands takes place through experiencing the brand first and then sharing it with others via social media platforms and through first person accounts of those experiences (Dvorak and Gabsa, 2017).

No greater example of the importance of brand influencers on consumers, Millennials in particular, can be found than that of a 60-Minutes television broadcast in October of 2016. During the segment, it was reported that a core group of young people, in their 20's, through postings on Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat, have become social media

influencers that brands can count on to help reach target markets. One particular influencer featured within the story utilized what was described as “no-budget, low-quality postings – shot with his cell phone camera – (which) have attracted more than 30 million followers on all his platforms” (Whittaker, 2016). Low-budget videos or pictures uploaded to YouTube or Snapchat can lead to thousands (and often times millions) of views, with an often times unlimited target reach.

As noted in the feature, one Millennial Influencer said it best:

“The biggest companies in the world and brands have come to me to help sell their product to the younger generation. And I speak the language of millennials, and they respond to my content.” Logan Paul

Who are the best Brand Ambassadors? In trying to reach Millennials, it is important to try and utilize those within the same age demographic that have a large visible presence within a community or a large online presence. College students in particular often make good Brand Ambassadors, as would those persons who are active on social media outlets such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or Snapchat (Brown, 2016). Entrepreneur (2015) suggests that Millennial Brand Ambassadors make good spokespeople because it allows them to be an expert whose opinions will hold greater weight with other persons in the same demographic. The article also noted that Millennials “are 262% more likely to be influenced by smartphone apps and 247% more likely to be influenced by blogs and social networks than the average shopper”. Given these statistics, using Millennials as Ambassadors gives them the freedom to connect on their terms and platforms, using sharing, hashtags, and reviews, with those who are important. Finally, the article argues that Millennials are more connected with their peers than other Generations, and therefore to reach them requires a key understanding and level of communication that is found within their own language (Entrepreneur, 2015). This suggests that Millennials as Ambassadors may become the best option when considering how to better reach this target demographic.

Finally, Brand Ambassadors aren’t for store brands or national brands only. Ambassadors can be found in food-related places such as food festivals or via restaurants where Millennials often dine out. Taylor (2015) in discussing food trucks and food festivals suggested that Millennial attendees would make great potential Ambassadors, as many Millennial attendees frequent multiple festivals within a given year and are also more likely to search for/select foods (including beer and wine) at other outlets (such as restaurants or other retail establishments). Almost all (99%) would recommend their favorite items from the festival to their friends or family, and would similarly keep in touch with the brand and/or follow the brands on social media (Taylor, 2015). This suggests that finding key consumers could have a positive impact on promoting the *Certified South Carolina*[™] and/or *Fresh on the Menu*[™] brands, and help to spread awareness across the Millennial Generation at places they are more likely to notice, such as food festivals, food truck events, sporting events and within restaurants.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION FOR CREATION OF A BRAND AMBASSADOR (BRAND INFLUENCER) PROGRAM

Given the broad appeal for the *Certified South Carolina*[™] and *Fresh on the Menu*[™] brands for a wide demographic of South Carolina consumers, it is suggested that multiple Brand Ambassadors be developed that can speak to a wide variety of audiences. For example, leveraging college campuses is a great way to promote the brand and get Millennials more involved. Who should be approached as potential Brand Ambassadors for the universities or colleges? One suggestion might include the University Presidents who are quite active in the South Carolina communities. University Presidents quite often have a large number of Followers on social media websites (e.g., The President of the University of South Carolina has 56.5K Followers on Twitter, the President of Clemson University has 32.9K Followers, The College of Charleston has 1300 Followers) yet currently they are NOT Following the “Certified SC Grown” handle which promotes agriculture within their state. It is recommended that the SC Department of Agriculture contact these influential figures to help extend reach of the brand. This would be especially easy since the University of South Carolina and Clemson University participate in the Palmetto Series which highlights CSC.

Along with university figureheads, coaches may also be supportive of the Certified South Carolina brand initiative. Football coaches tend to have a large social media reach, as do basketball and baseball coaches within the State of South Carolina. Leveraging these relationships may help to increase followers and especially reach to Millennials.

At the university and College level, selecting one to two representatives (e.g., Student Body Presidents or those involved in highly visible student organizations) would also prove beneficial. One event not often considered as a place to promote the State of South Carolina is that of Freshmen Orientation at universities or colleges around the state. Freshmen are eager to learn about the campus and location in which they will reside for the next four plus years. Having activities on campuses that are geared around the promotion of the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand at this early level, when students will be making food and grocery choices on their own, might prove highly beneficial in creating brand awareness and loyalty toward CSC products. It may also allow the South Carolina Department of Agriculture to find key social media users who might make great brand spokespeople or influencers at various campus events.

Continued leveraging of celebrity “chefs” who utilize *Certified South Carolina*[™] branded products such as Sean Brock will be important for expanding reach to Millennials. The SC Department of Agriculture currently utilizes this approach as it helps to connect Millennials with restaurants. It is suggested that this

continues along with the identification of other possible key restaurateurs or chefs who can promote the product to a large number of followers.

Food festivals or restaurants frequented by Millennials may also be a good place to find potential Brand Ambassadors or Brand Influencers. In a food festival setting, getting interested Millennials to sign up as Ambassadors in exchange for a small gift (e.g., gift certificate to restaurants that utilize South Carolina products) could be one effective way to connect Millennials to the brand. Many food festivals around the state promote local foods and restaurants who support the *Certified South Carolina*™ brand. By utilizing these locations as venues to help attract and screen potential Brand Influencers/Ambassadors, the SC Department of Agriculture can obtain at one location a core group of Millennials who are engaged with the brand and willing to share their experiences on social media. As an example, New York-based festivals use social media to leverage the events, and as noted in an AdWeek article by Johnson (2015),

"Millennials are definitely going to food festivals and events where they find value." "They are more attuned than the generation before them in terms of really trying to take the best of what culture and lifestyle marketing offers. They get their information digitally, which is why we have big digital campaigns going on".

Finally, Johnson (2015) also noted the importance of leveraging food “trucks” who often participate in the festivals. Identifying key food trucks (e.g., in Columbia “2 Fat 2 Fly” or “Pawleys Mobile Eats” or in Blythewood “Casey’s Big Dawg BBQ”) and having the South Carolina Department of Agriculture link into the Followers of each truck may also prove beneficial when identifying possible Brand Ambassadors.

LONG-RANGE IMPLEMENTATION

6. CREATION OF ‘PULL MARKETING’ OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH USER-DEVELOPED CONTENT FOR THE *CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA*™ BRAND

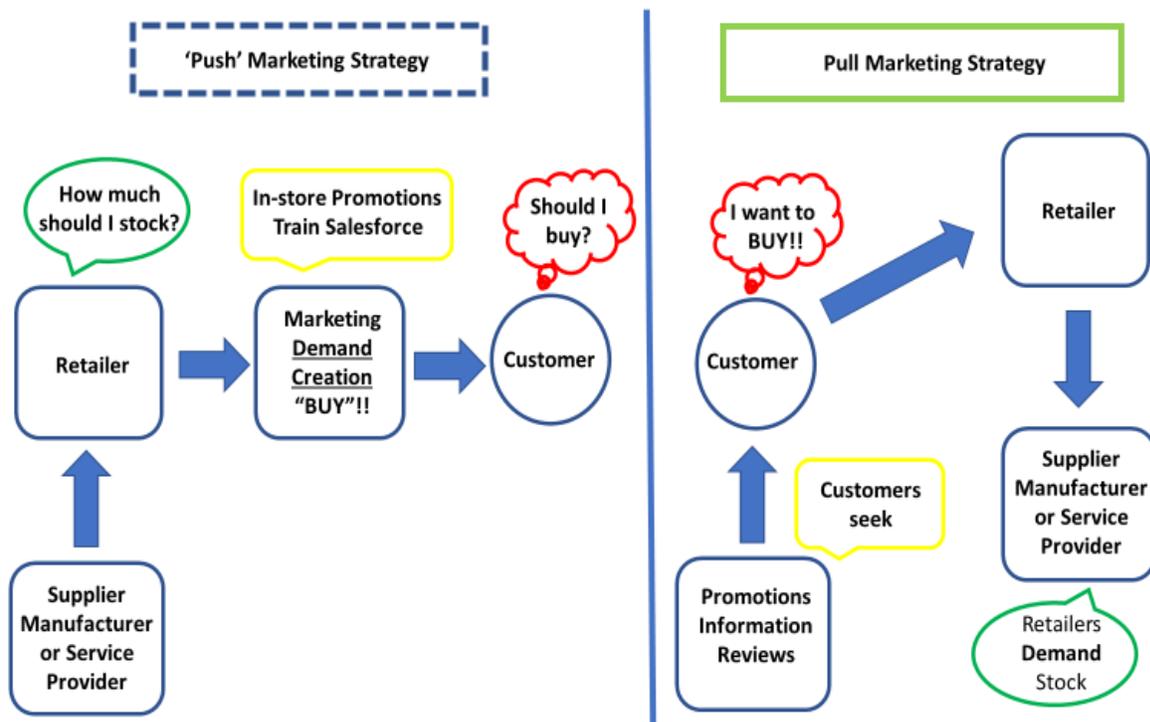
While many brands or companies continue to utilize a “push” strategy for their marketing and branding efforts, some research has suggested that creating more of “pull” strategy might be more beneficial, especially when trying to market to Millennial consumers. As noted by Newman (2015) in an article for Forbes.com, “Millennials have turned the traditional marketing strategy on its head, requiring an entirely new approach. The same old advertising techniques will not always work on the new generation.” More

specifically, Newman sums up the manner in which Millennials view advertisements through the following:

“Millennials don’t want to be talked at. They are used to having control over the information at their fingertips in their day to day lives, and their interactions with brands online is no different. They want to control their messaging. They also are easily incentivized. They expect to be rewarded for their loyalty, for their follows or likes. They want coupons. They want to be among the first to receive updates. They want to be included in a brand’s communications efforts.”

This type of approach suggests that Millennials don’t want to be the end result of the marketing or advertising efforts, trying to determine “Should I buy?”, but rather the beginning of the efforts and integrated throughout the process. Consider the following traditional way of marketing versus the recommended pull strategy as illustrated in Figure 9 below:

Figure 9: Push versus pull marketing differences



Data taken from: Source image from: Gibson, J. (2017). Push pull marketing strategies. Marketing-made-simple.com. <http://marketing-made-simple.com/push-pull-marketing-strategies/>

In this illustration, it is noted that the “pull” aspect to customer marketing begins with the promotional campaigns which entice the customer to research and seek information relating to the brand, product, or service and subsequently look for the products at their favorite retailers. This differs from traditional marketing efforts in which traditional marketing of a brand “pushes” the stores to carry/stock selected items. Subsequently the stores or retailers promote the products/brands in hopes that the customers, at the end of the process, purchase the goods or services.

So how can brands begin to uncover the potential of the Millennial market? First, as recommended by Brenner (2015), “Sixty-four percent of the millennials studied said that they respond more positively to brand messages that are tailored to their cultural interests (music, movies, sports, entertainment), and 62 percent felt similarly about messages that are useful and help them solve their unique everyday problems.” While a number of articles and studies suggest that Millennials want to engage with brands and be part of the process versus being advertised ‘to’ (e.g., Lang, 2016; BCG Perspectives, n.d.), Lang noted that much of the difficulty in traditional advertising versus one where the end consumer has more of a conversation (or relationship) with a brand stems from that of “control”. As mentioned, “Advertising allows you 100% control of the message. But giving young people what they want would mean giving up control of that message”. To this end, marketers and brands must understand that the beginning of the marketing process should include the target market like Millennials, whereby the message is created and derived by the users themselves.

Of difficulty in creating a ‘pull type’ of marketing platform is the time necessary to get the message communicated. The harder part is that, according to a recent study by comScore and reported on CNBC, the Millennials attention span of 5-6 seconds for advertising does not allow much time to engage with potential consumers of a brand (Castillo, 2017). Access to a wide-range of social media platforms simultaneously also affects the speed in which Millennials want their information. Demers (2016) suggested that to earn Millennial loyalty and become the brand in which they select, marketers must present thorough, fast, and informative messages that create a level of meaning to the end-user.

Can social media be utilized effectively to create a pull-marketing effect? As suggested by Conversion Uplift Ltd (2016), a company specializing in leveraging digital and social media marketing to improve sales rates, the following differences and opportunities exist between traditional push and recommended pull-marketing efforts using social media and other key categories (data for Table 7 taken and adapted from Conversion Uplift online website 2016):

Table 7: Push vs. Pull marketing categories

Category Type	Push Marketing	Pull Marketing
Social Media	Advertising	Memes, Blog Posts
Product	Location signage, flyers, push notifications, endorsements	Product interaction opportunities
Email	Promotions, emails advertising	Content and links to content
Search	PPC	Organic
Referral Marketing	N/A	Word-of-Mouth, Shares & Likes
Ratings/Reviews	N/A	Rating & review sites
Guest Post	Advertorial	Blogs, infographics
Co-Creation	Influencer Marketing	Round-up posts, interviews
Live Event	Conference presentations, sponsorship	Demonstrations, meetings

Data taken and adapted from: Source image 'Conversion-Uplift.com (2016)'.

<https://www.conversion-uplift.co.uk/glossary-of-conversion-marketing/pull-marketing/>

Pull marketing in the “Web 2.0 World” encourages target audiences to go out and seek information about the products and services being highlighted (Cavedon, 2017). The use of social media to highlight the brand is just step one of the process. Providing content relevant to the consumer is equally important, as this drives the consumer to seek more information and look for benefits that may help them solve every day take time, and pull marketing efforts do not sometimes lead to immediate results given the investment necessary to monitor and follow-up on social media, blogs, and review-based sites (Hawlk, 2017). Creating pull marketing opportunities through user-created content can pay big dividends thru increased engagement and an ability of the Millennials to help co-create the message related to agriculture brands such as *Certified South Carolina*™.

**FINAL RECOMMENDATION FOR CREATING ‘PULL MARKETING’
OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH USER-CREATED CONTENT FOR THE CERTIFIED
SOUTH CAROLINA™ BRAND**

To enhance the pull marketing effect for Certified South Carolina™ products, it is recommended that the South Carolina Department of Agriculture continue to leverage the use of videos and pictures of Millennials and their interaction with the products or farmers markets. Research suggests that videos and pictures are used by 8 of 10 Millennials before making purchase decisions (Jefferson, 2015). Videos can help Millennials understand the benefits to the *Certified South Carolina*™ products, highlight the South Carolina farms in which the items were grown, or also highlight the locations in which CSC products are sold such as grocery stores, roadside stands or farmers markets. Millennials are also more engaged with brands that use video on a frequent basis. Jefferson (2015) also notes that over 6 in 10 Millennials will comment on videos posted on social media platforms such as Facebook or YouTube. To capture their attention, it is recommended that the SC Department of Agriculture continue to focus on videos with Millennials being featured (e.g., filming at a local farmers market or having a Brand Influencer visit a location with CSC products and videotape their experience). In lieu of doing an “occasional” video, it is recommended that opportunities be sought to utilize short video content with more posts on a regular basis. Videos completed at key events such as the Palmetto Series for Clemson and South Carolina have shown success as have videos highlighting celebrity chefs. It is recommended that each of the state farmers markets utilize video clips, if not being completed currently, to highlight their vendors and products, particularly highlighting the “atmosphere of family and friends” and “health and community aspects to support of locally produced foods”.

To also enhance pull marketing efforts, it is recommended that the South Carolina Department of Agriculture ensure that multiple hashtags (#) be utilized when appropriate across the various platforms such as Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and others. For example, the Department may use on “generic” type of hashtag such as #localfood in addition to a more specific hashtag #AikenFarmMkt to highlight the same event. Social media Examiner (2013) suggests to “Use multiple hashtags if the topic is right” (Sprung, 2013). Research also suggests that use of a number of popular hashtags, or “strategic hashtagging” can be done to enhance a food brand such as Certified South Carolina™. For example, popular hashtags such as: #foodie, #Chefmode, and/or #cleaneating (Hofmann, 2016) are often used and, as noted by the website “finedininglovers.com”, “Lovers of health food tend to use just a few, fresh, seasonal ingredients and then fill their posts with food hashtags like #healthyfood, #organicfood, #localfood, #farmerfood, #valuefood, and

#ethicfood”. Pairing these hashtags with specific outlets in South Carolina for farm fresh products or South Carolina farms/events can prove beneficial to Millennials following via platforms such as Instagram or Twitter.

Pull marketing efforts can also uniquely utilize an Omni-channel approach when multiple platforms are being leveraged to communicate a story to a target audience. In short, taking Platforms already developed such as Snapchat, YouTube, Facebook or Instagram and creating a level of engagement through a focus on things that customers may not often see. A “behind-the-scenes” if you will. As an example for South Carolina Agriculture, doing a “behind-the-market” short story on getting the farmers markets ready for operation may be of interest to Millennials. Similarly, creating a sponsored event where attendees of farmers markets, or patrons of sponsored restaurants where CSC products are sold, can become involved might create an added level of interest. Millennials taking pictures at a local farm market or restaurant and posting them to Snapchat, Instagram, or Pinterest while strategically tagging the posts creates engagement and a pull effect to their friends, families, and followers.

Pull marketing efforts can also be enhanced through unique ways to include Millennials in promoting the *Certified South Carolina*™ brand. One opportunity exists to create a contest where one Millennial (or a team of 3 or 4) are selected to participate in a social media “Takeover” of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture for a day or possible week/weekend period. Allowing the individual or team to go to the various farmers markets or restaurants and “document” their own experiences through their own eyes would create a sense of excitement which would subsequently be passed along to their friends, families, and other followers. This would allow the CSC brand to, in some ways, transition into how Millennials currently view its importance and how it is perceived. While stipulations would need to be put in place as to boundaries and potential appropriate/inappropriate activities so as NOT to negatively impact the brand, this unique approach would create potential unique opportunities not previously considered. One example may be the group highlighting their own “social responsibility” efforts and how they utilize *Certified South Carolina*™ items to support their cause. Videos and social media posts may be created by the Millennials as to how CSC is being used in their own lives versus having the SC Department of Agriculture highlight the benefits. From this approach, new slogans or marketing opportunities may develop (e.g., “Care about your coffee with CSC” or, “Me, Tea, and CSC”) and become catchphrases that resonate with Millennials. This take-over approach also highlights the ability of Millennials to define and share their experiences/emotions with *Certified South Carolina*™. Implementation could be done at various campuses as part of a statewide initiative, or an online contest could be developed which allows different take-over events (e.g., ‘Working Millennials’ takeover versus ‘Student Takeovers’).

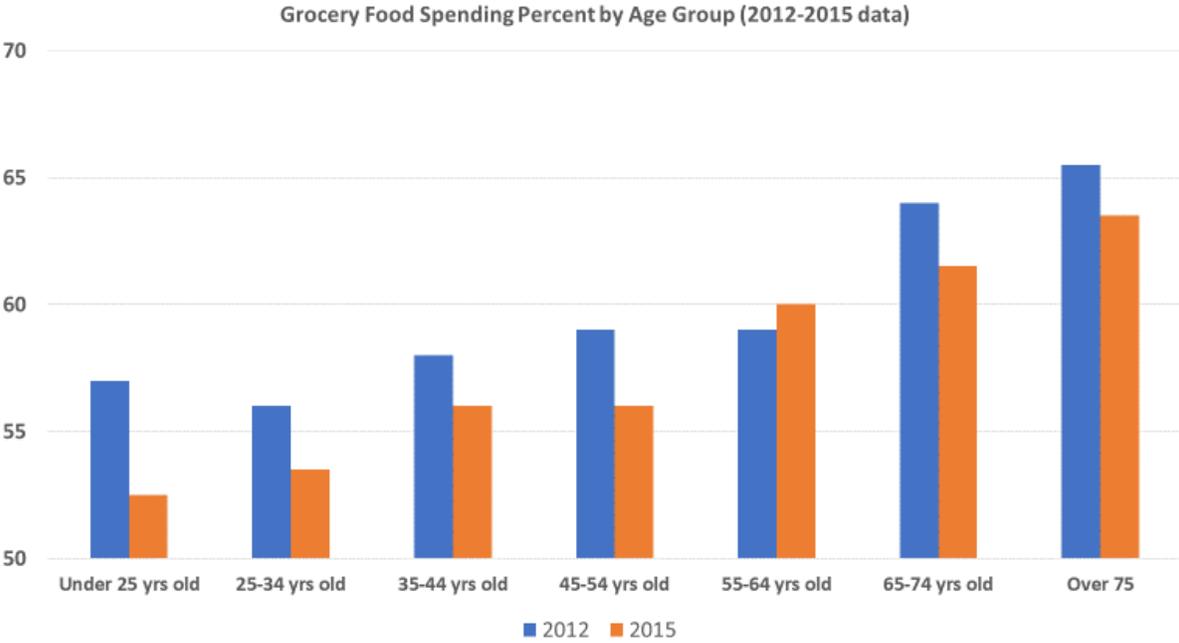
It is also suggested that a pull-marketing campaign be developed specific to working Millennial Moms and have their stories be told from their own unique personal experiences. Research has suggested that like never before, Millennial Moms have unique characteristics that make them attractive to the “right” type of marketing efforts. Millennial Moms are generally older than first-time mothers and more highly educated, thereby making them more informed about products and services (Steadfast Creative, n.d.). With their extreme connectivity to media to help advise decisions and their focus on company “values” over prices, Millennial Moms have a unique view of products and prefer safe, wholesome ingredients and high-quality products versus cheaper versions. They also have a large influence over one another through outlets such as social media (e.g., Pinterest, Blogs, etc...) and look to each other for parenting and product advice (Steadfast Creative, n.d.). They also spend more time online than other age groups, averaging over 8 hours a day on social media (Carter, 2017). With this in mind, it is suggested that the South Carolina Department of Agriculture find key “Mom Bloggers” or active social media Moms who can experience *Certified South Carolina*[™] products through recipes, trips to fresh or local markets, and through their own use and experiences given that Millennial Moms want to be considered as “individuals” versus grouped as one particular target market (Steadfast Creative, n.d.). Similar to the Brand Influencers discussed in an earlier section, Millennial Moms in South Carolina can become important supporters of the CSC brand and efforts should be made, either through free product samples or gift certificates, to identify and leverage these influencers to a larger population and across multiple online social media platforms.

7. CREATION OF “DID YOU KNOW?” CAMPAIGN RELATED TO BENEFITS OF CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA[™] AND MILLENNIALS

Although much research has attempted to predict how Millennials will react to social media marketing efforts and use of various social media platforms, many experts agree that a resurgence has occurred with Millennials regarding the importance of information and food. At the end of 2016, Forbes highlighted the movement of Millennials toward healthy, eco-friendly, sustainable and nutritious food and the desire by Millennials to really feel, smell, and taste the quality of food that they are consuming (Williams, 2016). Creative advertisers Saatchi & Saatchi in New York also suggested that this food movement is mirrored by the notion of the “you are what you eat” concept. For many this suggests that food becomes an extension of an individual’s personality and that Millennials, in particular, will share this personality trait on social media as they would other dimensions of themselves with friends, family, and other followers (Williams, 2016).

Not surprising and previously highlighted throughout the literature and within this report, the options for Millennials and other consumers of healthy and sustainable foods has greatly improved, so much that younger shoppers are visiting grocery stores less and using alternative means such as online delivery, restaurants, convenience stores and farmers’ markets to purchase their food (Williams T., 2016). As seen below in Figure 10, this trend is not only for Millennial consumers but other age groups as well with the exception of 55-64-year-old consumers who are spending a greater percentage in 2015 at the grocery store than in years past:

Figure 10: Grocery Spending by Age Group (2012-2015)



data taken from: Haddon, H. (2016, Oct 27) “Grocers feel chill from Millennials” in Wall Street Journal, U.S. Labor Department and Willard Bishop LLC.

What are Millennials looking for as part of their dining moving forward? Mealey (2017) in a review of Millennial dining trends noted that 1) local foods, 2) communal dining, 3) healthy foods and 4) connecting through technology are some of the key factors in deciding what to eat as well as having food “adventures”, where individuals can have unique and adventurous food stories and share them with family and friends through various social media platforms. As part of the desire for more local foods by Millennials, they seek to know not only where the products are coming from but also how the products are harvested, how they are financially impacting their communities, and what kind of farm-to-table opportunities are available in their areas (Mealey, 2017). Information about where products are grown is not a new concept, as many retailers

have highlighted local farms from where products are sourced or incorporated various food information as part of signage that products are organic, local, or designate health scores (or other key attributes). Examples of these, from restaurants such as Chipotle (Figure 11), and grocers such as Lowe's Foods, Walmart, Whole Foods, and Earth Fare (Figures 10-13) are listed below:

Figure 11. Sustainable signage at Chipotle



Photo by: Ashley Benson @ ashleybensonfitness.com (reproduced with permission)
(<http://www.ashleybensonfitness.com/uncategorized/healthy-fast-food-chipotle-mexican-grill/>)

Figures 12-16: Retail grocery signage support for local, healthy foods

Figure 12.



Photo by @ J. Campbell

Figure 13.



Photo by: @ J. Campbell

Figure 14.



Photo by @ J. Campbell

Figure 15.



Photo by @ J. Campbell

Figure 16.



Photo by @ J. Campbell

Along with in-store signage, companies such as Chipotle utilize their company website to communicate information regarding their distinct offerings and highlight food-related issues such as food safety, food integrity, and sourcing initiative around local food growers (Chipotle, n.d.). Whole Foods utilizes multiple web pages to highlight factors such as quality standards, food safety, organic farming and GMO issues for customers who search their sites (WholeFoodsMarket.com, n.d.). Online reviews are also popular among restaurant patrons to gain information about the restaurants themselves, and key websites such as TripAdvisor.com, Urban Spoon, Zomato or Yelp.com have grown in popularity as they provide information about various aspects of the restaurants including food variety and quality aspects.

Finally, a resurgence in the availability and use of QR (Quick Response Codes) or similar technology has provided another means to communicate information about agricultural services or products to the consumers. Once thought as dead because of perceived "misuse" by marketers and lack of technology built into smartphones by Apple or Samsung, as well as a lack of connectivity (Strout, 2013), the technology has made a comeback in large part of Snapchat's incorporation of "Snapcodes" into their platform

and subsequent use by businesses and marketers in packaging and retail efforts (Walker, 2017). Apple has also recently built QR code readers into the new technology for their iOS platform within the camera application, which is projected to dramatically affect use in a positive way (Armstrong, 2017). While currently used extensively Asia, QR Code use has risen in the U.S. as 34% of Smartphone users in 2016 and 46% of tablet users have scanned QR Codes (Armstrong, 2017). So how can QR codes be leveraged properly to increase product awareness, Armstrong (2017) suggests the following means to utilize this renovated technology:

- In-app purchases
- Coupons
- Click-to-Tweet functionality
- Voting and polling
- Direct link to social media websites and accounts
- App downloads
- Tracking purposes (Google)

All of these informational and social media avenues provide opportunities for marketers to reach their audiences and highlight key salient features and support increased knowledge about the products or places important to Millennials and other groups.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION FOR CREATING 'DID YOU KNOW?' CAMPAIGN RELATED TO BENEFITS OF CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA™ BRAND AND MILLENNIALS

For the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, a number of opportunities exist to increase both information communicated to Millennials and other key consumers but also enhance engagement opportunities. As identified from the focus group research within this study, participants noted that 'humor' in marketing or advertising as well as quirky or odd messaging content is of interest and would help to attract Millennials:

"I think it's the advertisement that is just completely bizarre. A lot of times stuff that advertised does not go with the message at all. Say you're trying to market, like Chick-Fil-A...they've done a great job of marketing because it's got bunch of cows and you don't think about it but it's like, Oh, obviously the cows are wanting them to eat more chicken because they don't want you to eat them, but that's the type of stuff you think about later...it took me about five or six years to realize that but it's pretty cool because it's the stuff that's just like juxtaposed to each other, that stands out more to me"

Effective advertisements were identified as noted below:

“It has to be funny or emotional but it has to be something important to me”

“It has to have some sort of emotion to it”

My favorite ones are funny ones. Ironic ones...especially with funny animals. Like Chick-Fil-A. I specifically like this”

How might this look for the South Carolina Department of Agriculture and the *Certified South Carolina*[™] brand program? Possible utilization of perceived “stereotypes of the South” with food being unhealthy and showing via video the quality and images of healthy *Certified South Carolina*[™] products might be one effective method. Play on the stereotype but offer something visually different and appealing would capture the attention of Millennials that would show the stereotype as being untrue. Pictures and videos of upscale South Carolina restaurants carrying CSC products may be one means. A series of YouTube videos showing the transformation of a stereotyped ‘South Carolina meal’ versus one with CSC ingredients may also work. Creating a fictional character whose physical transformation is linked to increase use of *Certified South Carolina*[™] products may equally be effective in capturing the Millennial audience (example, “Weak performance to peak performance”). These recommended examples highlight the transformation of the CSC brand to a certain level. Not to contradict the current brand perception/marketing efforts but rather to build on them and introduce the CSC brand in a unique and fun way to a younger audience who crave humor and information in their social media exchanges and brand communications.

While humor may be one way to connect with Millennials via marketing campaigns, use of emotion in the “Did you Know” campaign can be leveraged to create connections. Additional stories of South Carolina farms are encouraged across all social media platforms to help create an “experiential and giving back” mentality of the CSC purchase for Millennials. Equally important is to create heightened awareness of how easily CSC products can be accessed and purchased. In the campaign, highlighting WHERE PRODUCT IS AVAILABLE has been identified as important to Millennials as has information about prices being similar (in many cases) and HOW IT HELPS THE SOUTH CAROLINA ECONOMY. A series of social media posts to describe the benefits and the entertainment value of South Carolina farmers’ markets have also been highlighted by Millennials as important. For example, “Did you know the South Carolina Farmers Markets are a great place for two family members to get healthy at the same time (you and your pet)?” ...then show a video of persons and their pets at the local markets. An additional possibility is to, as part of the campaign, highlight what South Carolina does better than their surrounding states (such as Georgia, South Carolina, or Florida). For example, with poultry being one of South Carolina’s leading agricultural export (Melvin, 2015), using that information within an advertisement could help promote the demand for such products. As

an example of a possible advertising slogan, “Fair or fowl, our chickens reign supreme!”. As noted by the focus group participants when discussing the need for information about *Certified South Carolina*™ and a “Did you know?” campaign:

If you're putting out a "Did you know?" kind of thing. "Did you know this was there?" or "Did you know you can get this for the same amount" to push that out for College students. Maybe the importance of "Why" eating local or giving back to the community, supporting where you are"

I agree with the "Did you know?" thing. I guess if you're trying to convince me to buy a certified local product I wanna' know why I should buy this product instead of you kinda telling me what it is but I don't know the benefits yet. If I knew then maybe that would sway me if I knew exactly what my money was going towards. What is the benefit? What benefit am I getting out of this? So being educated on what exactly Certified local is and how I benefit from that. That's important to me"

I'd find some interesting articles with information on how buying stuff locally produced what the effects are. The individual farmers or it helps the state or helps me indirectly...some insights or information on why it matters. Who it helps and who it hurts. I would find that stuff interesting.

8. INCREASING AWARENESS OF *CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA*™ BRAND THROUGH UNIQUE PLACES OR IN UNIQUE WAYS

Finally, as with any brand, continued recognition and recollection is key in creating a bond with consumers as they have increased choices across multiple platforms. Agricultural brands such as state brands are no different, as these logos can be both highly identifiable and useful for shoppers who are often time constrained. A total of 38.5% of the Millennial survey respondents did NOT recall seeing the *Certified South Carolina*™ logo in traditional places such as retail grocery, restaurants, or farmers markets. While this suggests that a majority has found the logo across various channels, there is still room for improvement. Of the Millennials surveyed, having *Certified South Carolina*™ menu options in places like bar/restaurants as well as fine dining restaurants were considered important as were family-based restaurants.

Within the focus group interviews, many respondents suggested the need to have the *Certified South Carolina*™ logo in “unexpected” places such as bars/nightclubs, university dining services, food trucks or at festivals. It was also mentioned to have it more visible within places like retail grocery. As suggested:

I think what would be nice if grocery stores...it was more visible...yes you can look and try to find the tiny logo and it's a bright logo it's on this bag right here and I love it and actually have it on one of my bottles but it's not visible. Easily visible. So if there was a section in the grocery store in Publix like...this is all the SC Grown.

I think you should increase point of sales advertising. I don't think a lot of people know about it. If you were to have a logo on a sign, say you're selling heads of lettuce or you walk up to the little island that a bunch of lettuce is on...have a sign in the middle that has South Carolina or South Carolina grown thing.

Lunch of some sort (like Smokin' Pigs) has been doing. A truck on campus if there was something like that two days a week that visit one college campus two days a week and another college campus another day of the week and something where students could run in and grab something really quick.

FINAL RECOMMENDATION FOR INCREASING AWARENESS OF CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA™ BRAND THROUGH UNIQUE PLACES OR IN UNIQUE WAYS

It is suggested that the SC Department of Agriculture try and find unique places to advertise the *Certified South Carolina*™ brand. Samples of products at university events or at bars/festivals/university dining or even shopping malls/areas may help to attract new Millennial consumers who may not be aware of the benefits of the brand. Contests and partnerships with food trucks appear to be highly recognized opportunities to leverage the brand as well as restaurants surrounding campuses across the state. Given that Millennial respondents of the survey noted that beef and poultry as well as vegetables were the most highly demanded type of *Certified South Carolina*™ items, it is suggested that these products would be useful in creating a larger demand. Sporting events as a way to utilize small giveaway prizes (e.g., basketball or baseball events) would also be suggested. Partnerships with a local charity might also help to raise awareness of both the charity AND the *Certified South Carolina*™ brand. Finally, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture might consider utilizing the local farmers markets to hold special events geared toward Millennial Moms, such as a "Mothers Morning Out" social event whereby moms could bring their children to the markets and take part in healthy eating discussions from nutritionists, cooking demonstrations with samples and recipes, and tips on food choices utilizing CSC products. To this end, as Millennial consumers who continue to demand social responsibility efforts within their brand can see that future purchase of CSC items would help socially, environmentally, and help to maintain economic sustainability for South Carolina farms moving forward.

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR *CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA*™
BRANDING EFFORTS**

- 1. IMPROVEMENT OF CONTINUITY AND TIMING OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM POSTS**
- 2. CREATION/CONTINUATION OF OMNICHANNEL MARKETING EFFORTS**
- 3. IMPROVED USE OF DATA ANALYTICS**
- 4. DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF SNAPCHAT PLATFORM**
- 5. CREATION OF A BRAND AMBASSADOR (BRAND INFLUENCER) PROGRAM**
- 6. CREATE ‘PULL MARKETING’ OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH USER-CREATED CONTENT FOR THE *CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA*™ BRAND**
- 7. CREATION OF “DID YOU KNOW?” CAMPAIGN RELATED TO BENEFITS OF *CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA*™ AND MILLENNIALS**
- 8. INCREASING AWARENESS OF *CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA*™ BRAND THROUGH UNIQUE PLACES OR IN UNIQUE WAYS**

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Focus group interview questions/topics

1. When I use the term “social media”, what does that mean to you?
2. How much time do you typically spend on social media in a 24-hour period?
3. Where are you most likely to read a marketing/brand message or product advertisement?
4. How do “product reviews” / testimonials affect your intentions to buy something?
5. Have you ever purchased a “*Certified South Carolina Grown*TM/Produced” item?
6. Where do you typically see the “*Certified South Carolina Grown*TM/Produced” logo?
7. How might price affect your intentions to buy a “*Certified South Carolina Grown*TM/Produced” item?
8. What are your favorite social media sites that you use frequently?
9. What kind of advertising appeals to you?
10. What types of products/categories do you most associate with being “*Certified South Carolina*TM”
11. When I use the term “locally grown”, what does that mean to you?
12. If you were interested in buying something as “*Certified South Carolina*TM”, where might you find it?
13. How much would pictures/images depicting the product or service affect your choice of that product or service?
14. What functionality do you most often use with your smartphone? (photos, web search, texting, calling, games)
15. If you had to create a brand campaign for a “*Certified South Carolina*TM program”, what would be most meaningful to customers like you?

NOTE: Remaining questions would be follow-up to answers from above or via other topics brought up by the focus group participants during the 60-minute session.

Appendix 2. Survey questionnaire

SC Department of Agriculture 1

Thank you for your participation in this survey, sponsored by the State of South Carolina Department of Agriculture and the Department of Retailing at The University of South Carolina. The purpose of the survey is to learn about consumer perceptions of the Certified South Carolina program as well as consumer use of social media. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and will also include general demographic questions that will be aggregated at a total. Your participation is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. All individual survey response data will be anonymous and held in confidence by the researcher, Dr. Jeffrey Campbell. If you wish to withdraw from the survey before data collection is completed, your data will be destroyed. If you have questions at any time about the survey or procedures, you may contact the researcher, Dr. Jeffrey Campbell, at the College of Hospitality, Retail, and Sport Management (Carolina Coliseum Dept. of Retailing, Room 4005-B, Columbia, SC 29208 or by phone 803-777-5469). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, contact the University of South Carolina Office of Research Compliance at 803-777-7095.

DO YOU WISH TO CONTINUE WITH THE SURVEY?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Do you live or work in South Carolina?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Which age range best describes you?

- 18 - 35 years of age (1)
- 36 - 51 years of age (2)
- 52 - 70 years of age (3)
- 71 years of age or older (4)

Please answer the following regarding your food purchasing habits:

I consider "LOCALLY PRODUCED" foods to be (Please select ALL THAT APPLY):

- Foods produced by my neighbors (1)
- Socially responsible foods (2)
- Foods that are environmentally safe (e.g., low pesticides) (3)
- Foods that are organically grown (4)
- Foods grown with support from local government (5)
- Sustainably produced and distributed foods (6)
- Other (Please specify) (7) _____

To what extent will the following characteristics affect your choice (selection) of locally grown/produced items?

	Never (1)	Very little (2)	Somewhat (3)	Occasionally (4)	Often (5)	Almost all of the time (6)	Always (7)
Price (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Quality (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Social Concern (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Vendor Knowledge (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Uniqueness of 'Local' (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Product Selection (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Economic Support of Community (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Environmental Concern (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Taste (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					

Through which advertising channels have you viewed any information provided by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture? (Please select ALL THAT APPLY):

- Television (1)
- Radio (2)
- Website (3)
- Social Media (4)
- Blogs (5)
- I have not viewed any information from the SC Dept. of Agriculture (6)

Please answer the following regarding the "Certified South Carolina" brand:

Please rank in order of importance by dragging and dropping to the appropriate place (1 = Most important; 5 = Least important) the importance of each Certified South Carolina option to YOU:

- _____ Certified South Carolina Product (1)
- _____ Certified South Carolina Grown (2)
- _____ Fresh on the Menu (3)
- _____ Certified South Carolina Seafood (4)
- _____ All are equally important or unimportant to me (5)

Where do you typically see the "Certified South Carolina" logo? (Please select ALL THAT APPLY):

- I do not recall seeing the "Certified South Carolina" logo (1)
- National grocery stores (e.g., Kroger, Publix, Bi-Lo) (2)
- Specialty grocery stores (e.g., Whole Foods, Earth Fare, Rosewood Market) (3)
- Supercenters / Warehouse clubs (e.g., Wal-Mart, Target, Sams, Costco) (4)
- Farmers' markets (5)
- Restaurants (6)
- Farm Stands (7)
- Work or school cafeteria (8)
- Advertisements (e.g., Billboards, Radio/TV, Internet) (9)
- Other (Please specify) (10) _____

Please rank in order of importance by dragging and dropping to the appropriate place (1 = Most important; 8 = Least important) the reasons why you MIGHT SELECT a "Certified South Carolina" item over a comparable other item?

- _____ To know where the product has come from (1)
- _____ Higher quality (2)
- _____ Better taste (3)
- _____ Help support the local farm/community (4)
- _____ Influence from family/friends (5)
- _____ Equally or less expensive (6)
- _____ State pride (7)
- _____ Reduce food miles / help the environment (8)

Please indicate your level of importance related to the following statements about South Carolina Grown/Produced items:

	Not important at all (1)	Very little importance (2)	Somewhat not important (3)	Neither unimportant nor important (4)	Somewhat important (5)	Important (6)	Highly important (7)
Items sold in my local grocery store are grown/produced in South Carolina (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Items sold in my local restaurants are grown/produced in South Carolina (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Items sold at the local farmers' markets are grown/produced in South Carolina (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Items sold at my favorite South Carolina tourist attractions are grown/produced in South Carolina (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Items sold at sporting events are grown/produced in South Carolina (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please rank in order of importance to you by dragging and dropping to the appropriate place (1 = Most important; 11 = Least important) the different categories of Certified South Carolina products.

- _____ Meat & Poultry (1)
- _____ Dairy (including milk & cheese items) (2)
- _____ Coffee or Tea (3)
- _____ Eggs (4)
- _____ Fruits (5)
- _____ Vegetables (6)
- _____ Seafood (7)
- _____ Candy/Snacks/Nuts (8)
- _____ Bread (9)
- _____ Jam/Jelly/Sauces (10)
- _____ Beer or Wine (11)

In considering menu options, how important is it to have "Certified South Carolina" items in the following restaurant types:

	Not important at all (1)	Very little importance (2)	Somewhat not important (3)	Neither unimportant nor important (4)	Somewhat important (5)	Important (6)	Highly important (7)
Bar / Restaurant (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family owned / operated (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buffet / Cafeteria style (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family oriented (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fast-casual (e.g., Chipotle, Moe's) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fast-food (e.g., McDonalds, Chick-Fil-A, Wendy's) (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fine dining (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please indicate your level of DISAGREEMENT or AGREEMENT with the following statements regarding Certified South Carolina items:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Neither Disagree nor Agree (4)	Somewhat Agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly Agree (7)
I intend to buy Certified South Carolina items in the near future (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am certain I will buy Certified South Carolina items in the future (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I buy Certified South Carolina items, I try to consider how my use of them will affect the environment (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe I can acquire Certified South Carolina items (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There is little chance that I will buy Certified South Carolina items in the future (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My purchase behavior of Certified South Carolina items can have a positive effect on society (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buying Certified South Carolina items is wise (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My individual purchasing behavior of Certified South Carolina items cannot have an effect upon natural resource problems (8)	<input type="radio"/>						
Certified South Carolina items are easily available (9)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying Certified South Carolina helps me to connect with the environment (10)	<input type="radio"/>						
It is important to me that Certified South Carolina items are available (11)	<input type="radio"/>						
I cannot find Certified South Carolina items in my local area (12)	<input type="radio"/>						
It is highly likely that I will buy Certified South Carolina items in the future (13)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying Certified South Carolina items is beneficial (14)	<input type="radio"/>						

Buying Certified South Carolina helps me connect with other consumers (15)	<input type="radio"/>						
It is important that I have Certified South Carolina items all year long (16)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying Certified South Carolina items is positive (17)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying Certified South Carolina items is useless (18)	<input type="radio"/>						
I cannot afford the prices charged for Certified South Carolina items (29)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying Certified South Carolina helps me connect with society (19)	<input type="radio"/>						
I am willing to spend more for Certified South Carolina items (26)	<input type="radio"/>						
I am worried that not enough Certified South Carolina items are available (20)	<input type="radio"/>						

I can help solve environmental problems by buying Certified South Carolina items (24)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying Certified South Carolina items is important (21)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying Certified South Carolina helps me connect with farms or producers (22)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying certified South Carolina items will positively affect ecological issues (23)	<input type="radio"/>						
Buying Certified South Carolina items will help to keep farms from disappearing (25)	<input type="radio"/>						
I usually shop at more than one location to compare prices for Certified South Carolina items (27)	<input type="radio"/>						
I will go to extra effort to find low prices for Certified South Carolina items (28)	<input type="radio"/>						

Certified South Carolina items are available in my favorite places to shop and eat (40)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Where are you MOST LIKELY to purchase a "Certified South Carolina" brand item? (PLEASE SELECT ONE OPTION)

- Restaurant (1)
- Grocery store (2)
- Sporting event (3)
- Roadside stand or farm stand (4)
- Farmers' market (5)
- Work or school cafeteria (6)
- I do not purchase Certified South Carolina brand items (7)

We will now ask you a few things related to your experiences with social media...

What social media outlet(s) do you use on a weekly basis? (Please select ALL THAT APPLY):

- Twitter (1)
- Facebook (2)
- Instagram (3)
- Pinterest (4)
- Snapchat (5)
- Vine (6)
- LinkedIn (7)
- Other (Please specify) (8) _____

Approximately how much time (in HOURS) do you spend on social media each day?

Please indicate your level of Disagreement or Agreement with the following statements regarding your PURCHASE BEHAVIOR:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Slightly disagree (3)	Neither disagree nor agree (4)	Slightly agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Customer testimonials about the product or service influence my purchases (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coupons sent to my phone or tablet influence my purchases (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pictures or images depicting the product or service influence my purchases (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The store environment influences my purchases (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The overall shopping experience influences my purchases (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product reviews influence my purchases (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social media influences my purchases (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Through which outlet are you MOST LIKELY to stop and read a marketing/brand message or product advertisement? (PLEASE SELECT ONLY ONE):

- E-mail (1)
- Twitter (2)
- Snapchat (3)
- Facebook (4)
- Pinterest (5)
- Instagram (6)
- Vine (7)
- Tumblr (8)
- Other (Please specify) (9) _____
- I skip all of the marketing/advertising messages (10)

In any 24-hour period, how much time (in HOURS) do you spend on social media using the following (Please slide to the appropriate location in approximate hours):

- _____ Twitter (1)
- _____ Facebook (2)
- _____ Pinterest (3)
- _____ Instagram (4)
- _____ Snapchat (5)
- _____ Youtube (6)
- _____ Vine (7)
- _____ Reddit (8)
- _____ Tumblr (9)
- _____ Other (Please specify) (10)

During what time period(s) are you most often on social media? (PLEASE CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):

- 6am - 9am (1)
- 9am - 12(noon) (2)
- 12(noon) - 3pm (3)
- 3pm - 6pm (4)
- 6pm - 9pm (5)
- 9pm - 12(midnight) (6)
- 12(midnight) - 6am (7)

Do you have your own blog or follow someone else's blog? (Please select ONE OPTION):

- I have my own blog (1)
- I follow someone else's blog (2)
- I have my own blog AND follow someone else's blog (3)
- I do not have a blog and do not follow a blog (4)

Approximately how many times a day do you Tweet or "Re-tweet" a message via Twitter? (Please enter "0" if you do not use Twitter)

How likely are you to "Tweet" or post something on social media about the following activity:

	Never (1)	Very Little (2)	Somewhat (3)	Occasionally (4)	Often (5)	Almost all the time (6)	Always (7)
Attending a sporting event (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Going to a restaurant (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Going to a movie (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Going to a concert (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Going to a farmers' market (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					
Going shopping (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					

What functionality do you MOST OFTEN use with your phone? (Please rank by dragging and dropping to the appropriate place with 1 = Most often used, 8 = Least often used)

- _____ Telephone (1)
- _____ Texting (2)
- _____ Taking / Sharing photos (3)
- _____ Web surf / search (4)
- _____ Social media (5)
- _____ Music (6)
- _____ Maps (7)
- _____ Gaming (8)

How IMPORTANT are the following groups in helping to affect your INTENTIONS TO BUY a product or service?

	Not at all important (1)	Low importance (2)	Slight importance (3)	Neutral (4)	Moderately important (5)	Very Important (6)	Extremely Important (7)
Your family (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your friends (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your peer groups (e.g., classmates) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other consumers (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your co-workers (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

You are almost finished!!!! Just a few more questions about you...

How long (in YEARS) have you lived or worked in South Carolina?

Do you have any family ties (e.g., parents/children/siblings/grandparents/aunts/uncles) to the agricultural industry?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Uncertain (3)

Do you have any work (job) ties to the agricultural industry?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Uncertain (3)

How would you best describe the area in which you live?

- Metropolitan Area with population above 250,000 people (1)
- Metropolitan Area with population between 100,000 to 249,999 people? (2)
- Urban Area with population between 50,000 to 99,999 people? (3)
- Urban Cluster that has at least 2,500 people but fewer than 50,000 (4)
- Small city or town with less than 2,500 people (5)

How would you best describe your CURRENT occupational status? (Please select BEST answer)

- Full-time employed (1)
- Part-time employed (2)
- Unemployed (3)
- Student (4)
- Retired (5)

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

With what race/ethnicity do you MOST identify?

- White (Caucasian) (1)
- Black (African American) (2)
- Hispanic (includes Latino or Spanish) (3)
- Asian (includes Pacific Islander) (4)
- American Indian (5)
- Multiracial (more than one race) (6)
- Other (Please identify) (7) _____

What is your highest level of education completed?

- Less than high school graduate (1)
- High school (diploma or GED) (2)
- Some college or Associates degree (3)
- Bachelors degree (4)
- Graduate or Professional degree (5)
- Other (Please specify) (6) _____

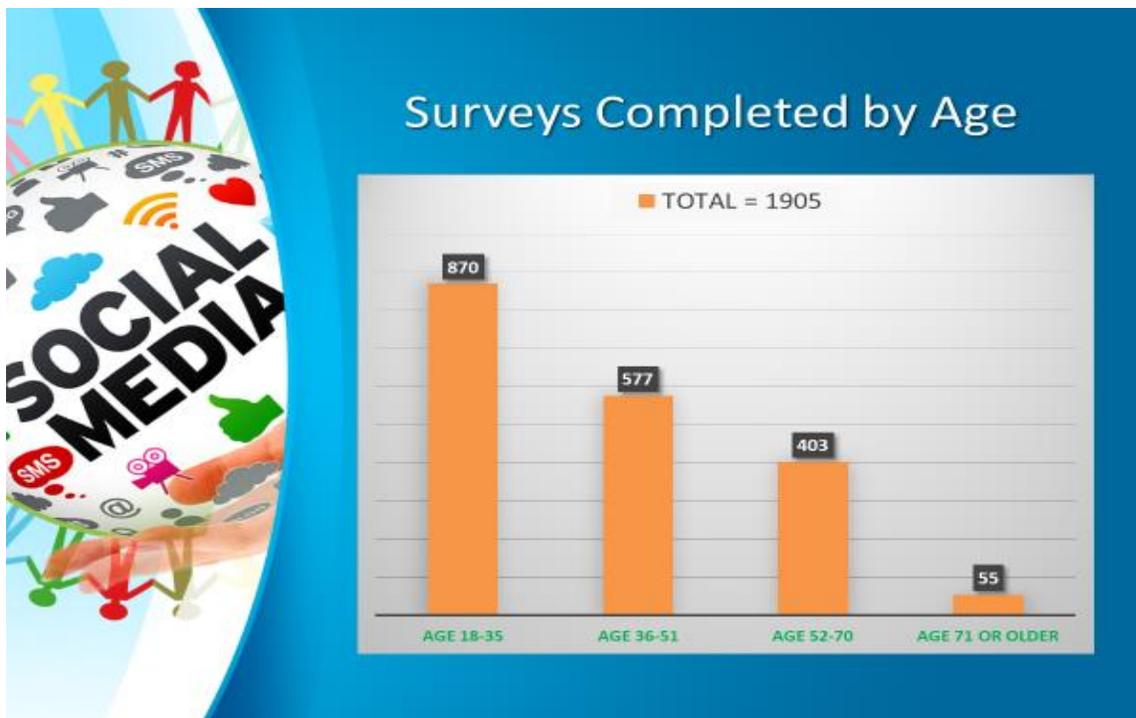
Thank you for your participation. PLEASE HIT ARROW TO FINISH.

Appendix 3: Survey results (total sample N =1905 and millennials N = 870)



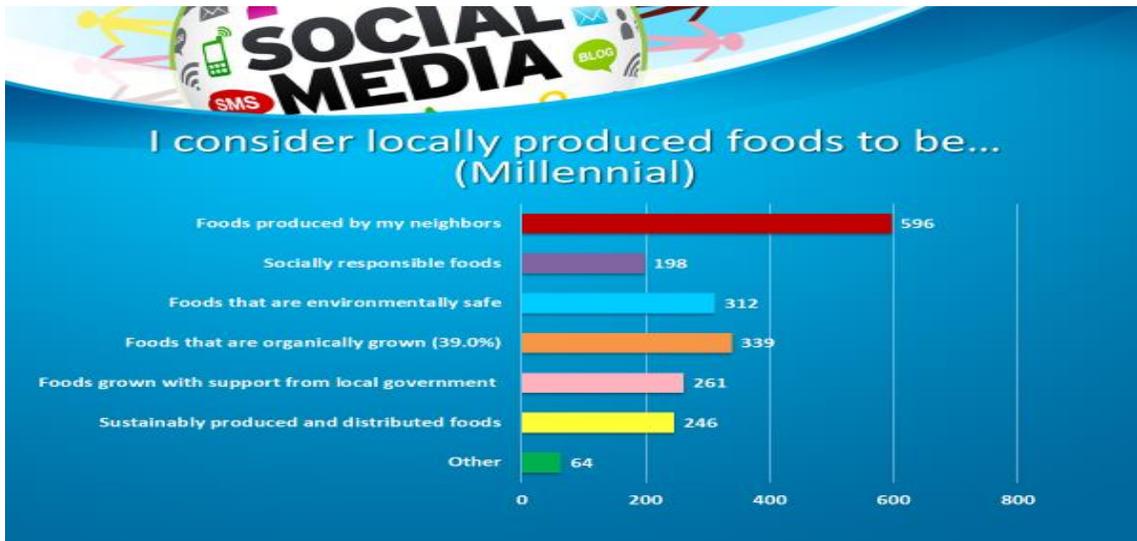
**LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA
TO AUGMENT CERTIFIED
SOUTH CAROLINA™ BY
MILLENNIAL CONSUMERS**

Dr. Jeffrey M. Campbell & Dr. Marianne C. Bickle
University of South Carolina College of HRSM





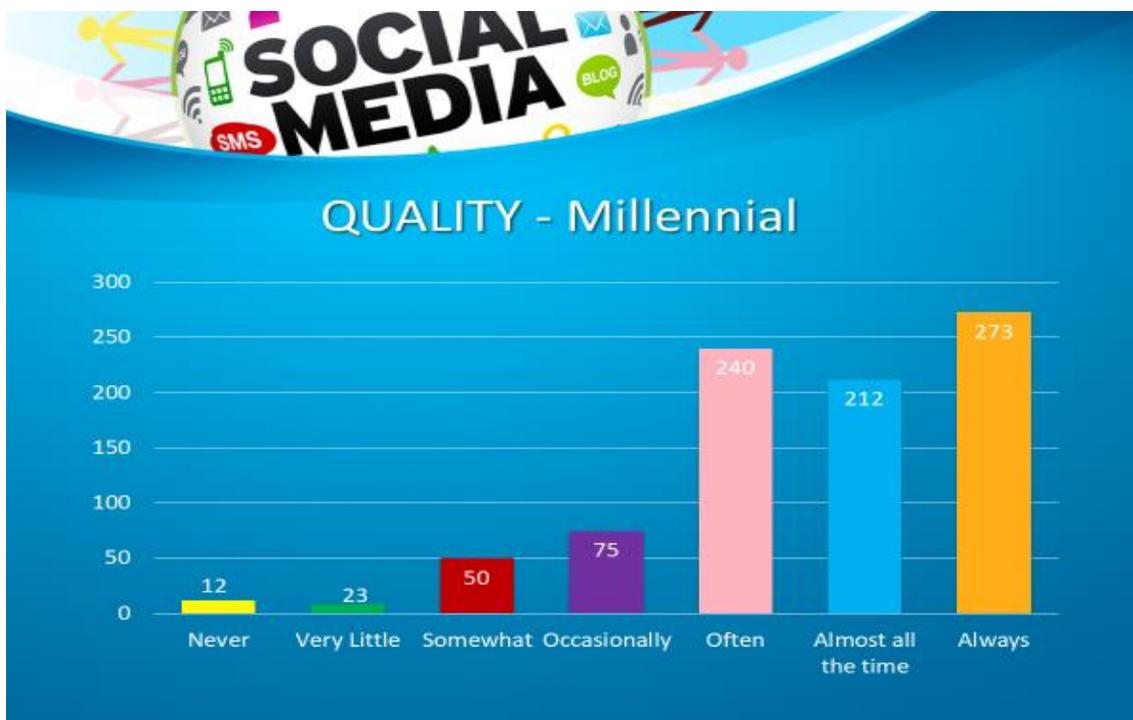
LOCALLY PRODUCED FOOD:

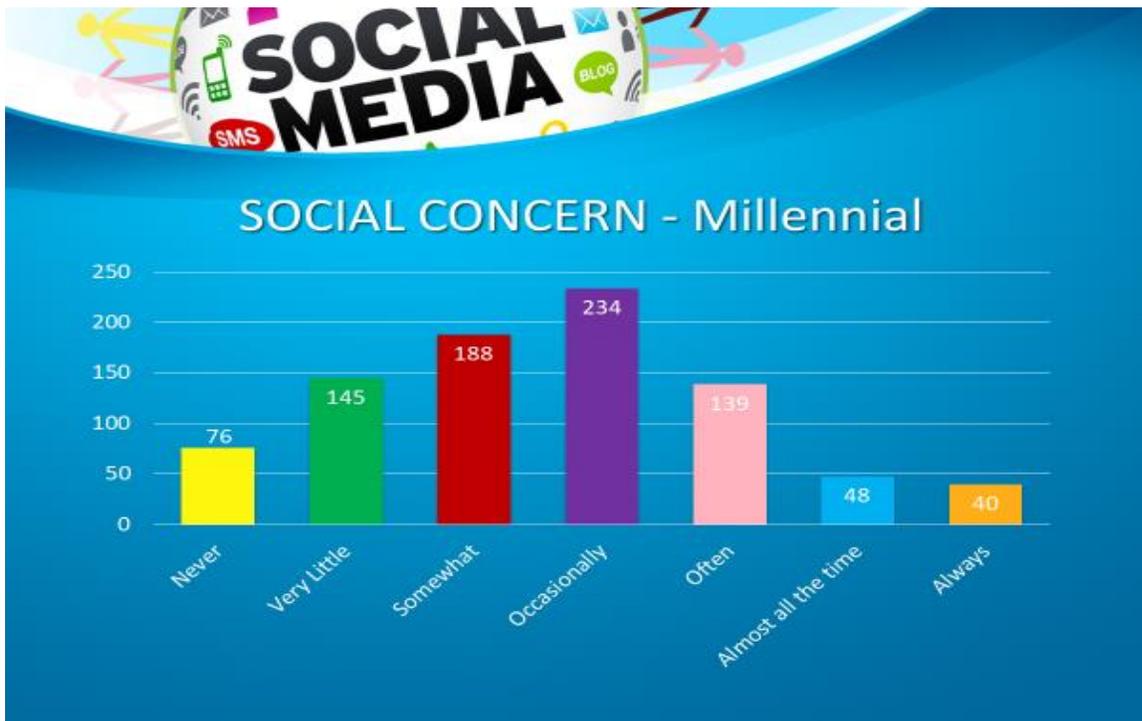
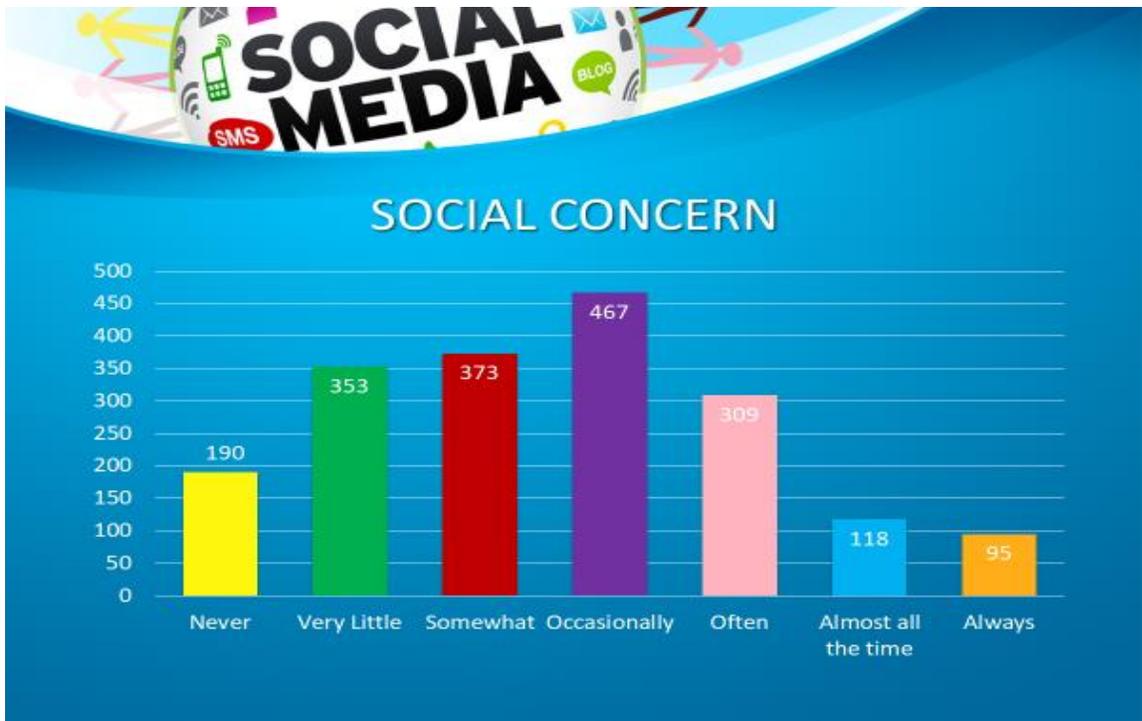




To what extent will the following characteristics affect your choice of locally grown/produced items?

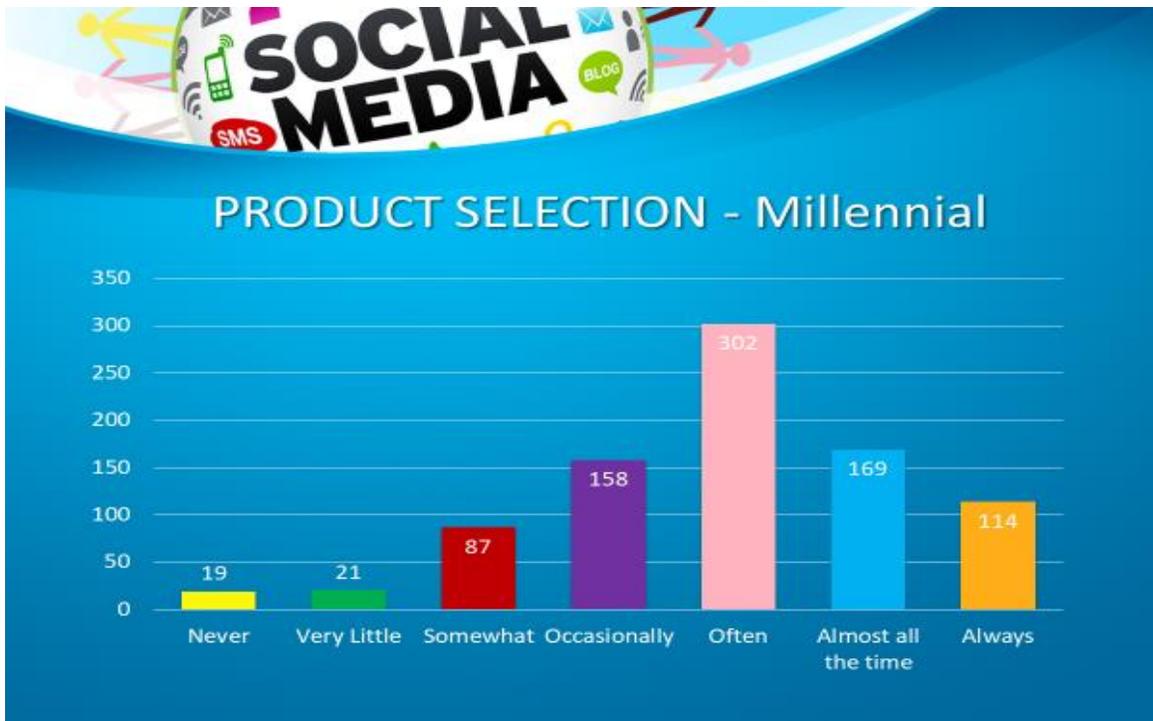


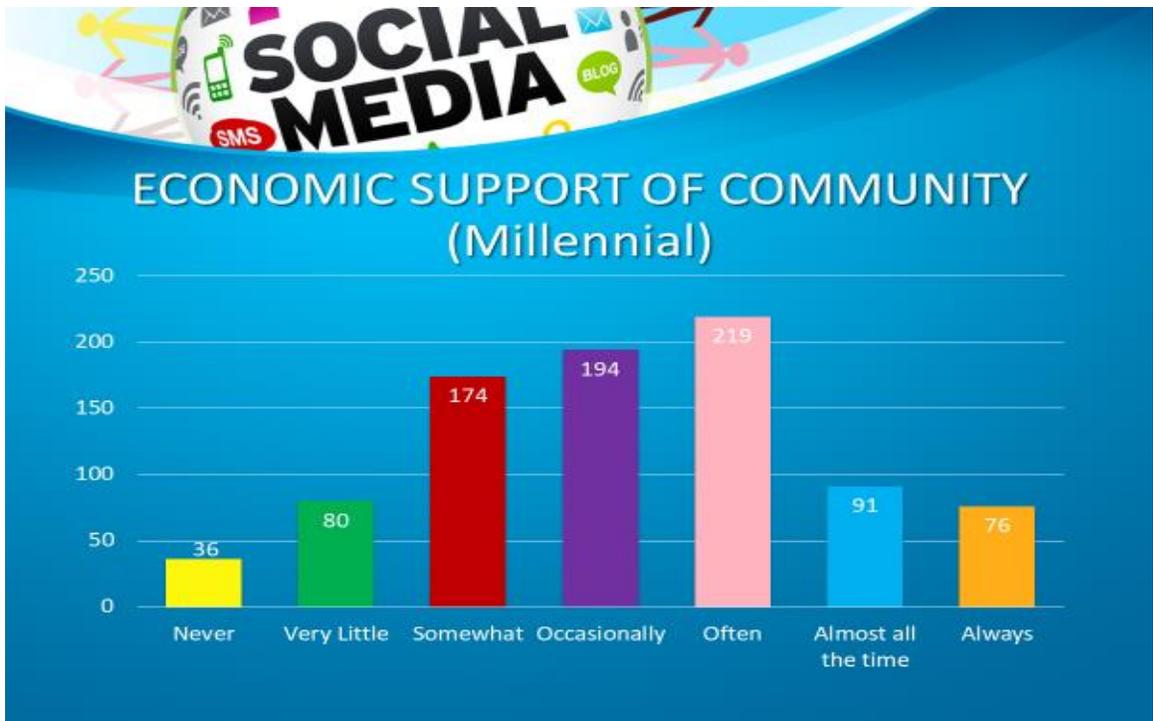
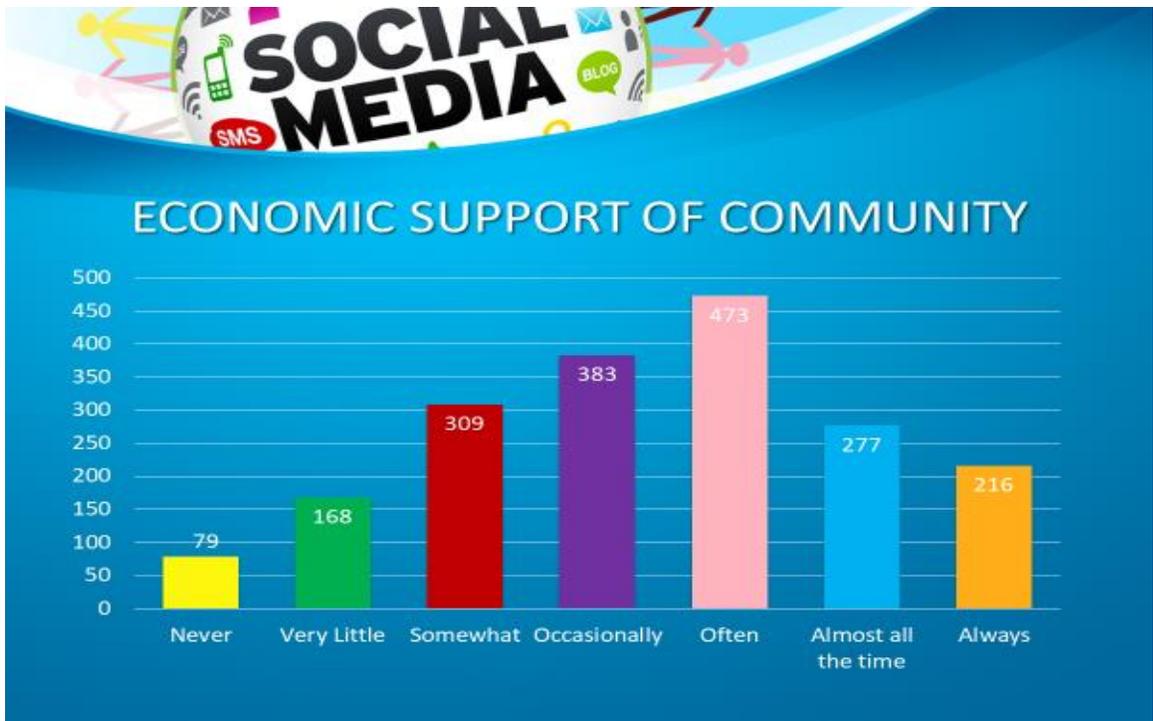


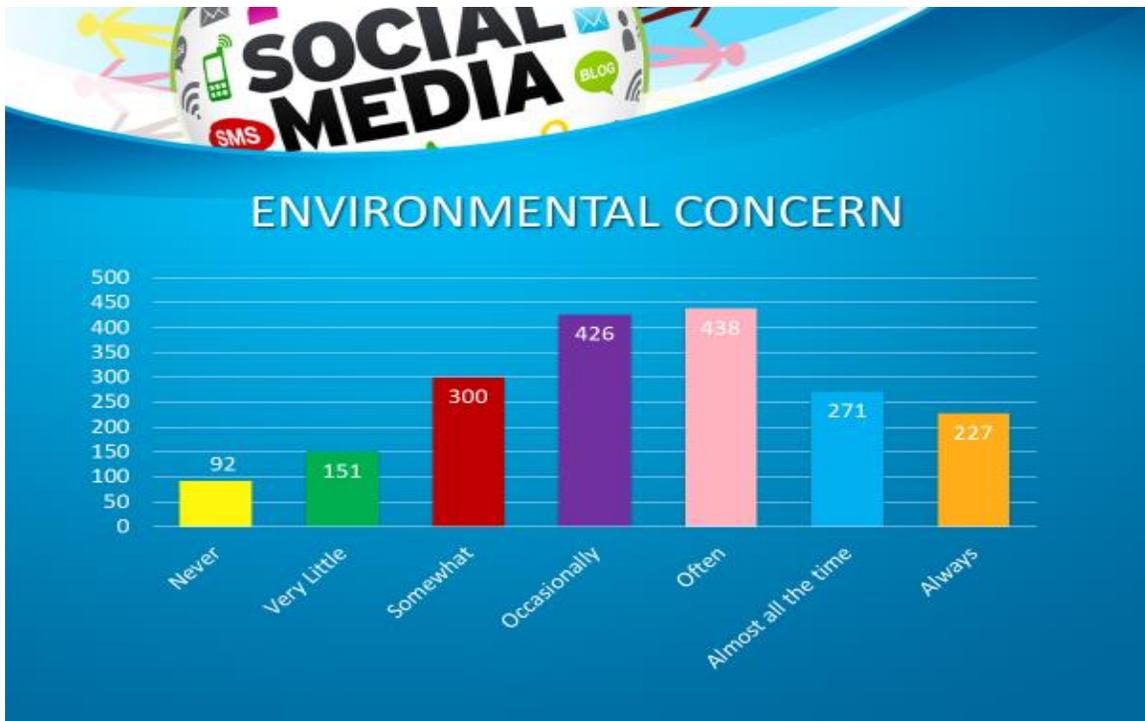


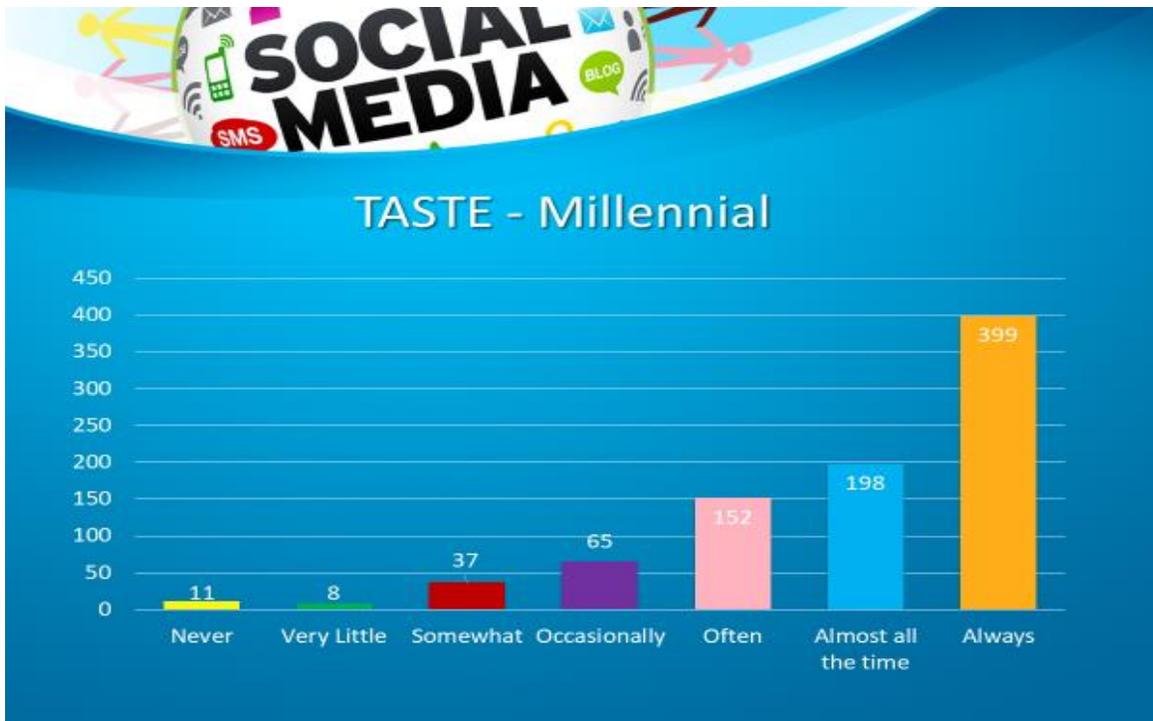
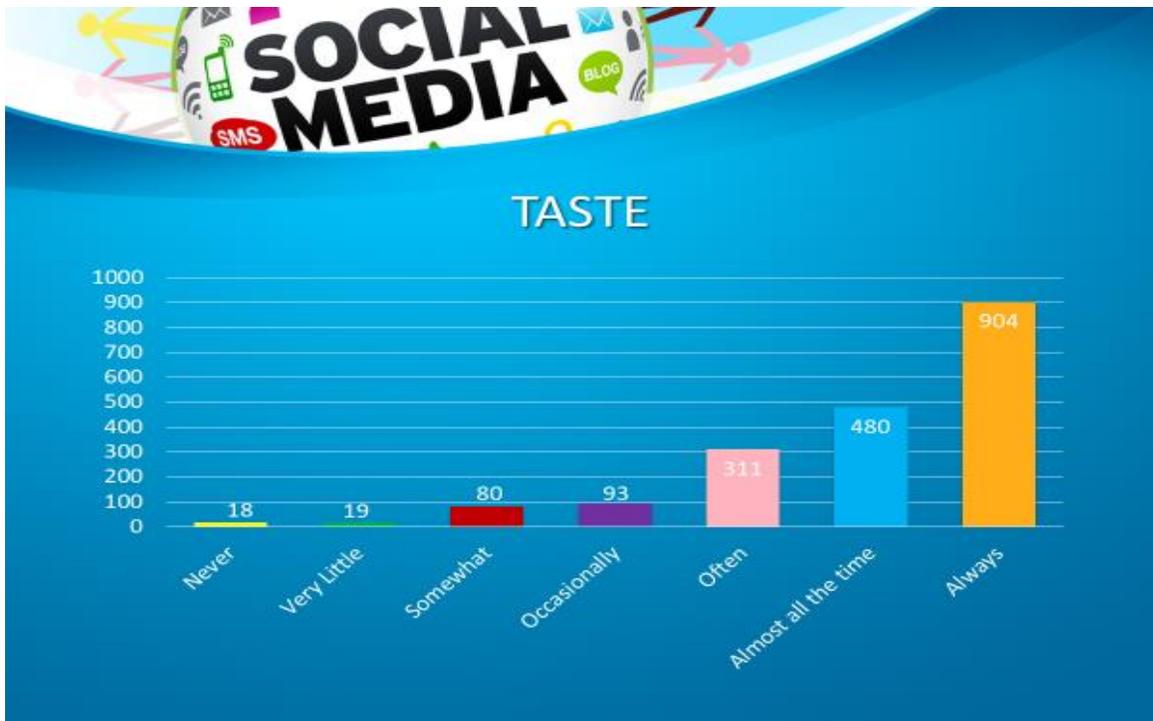






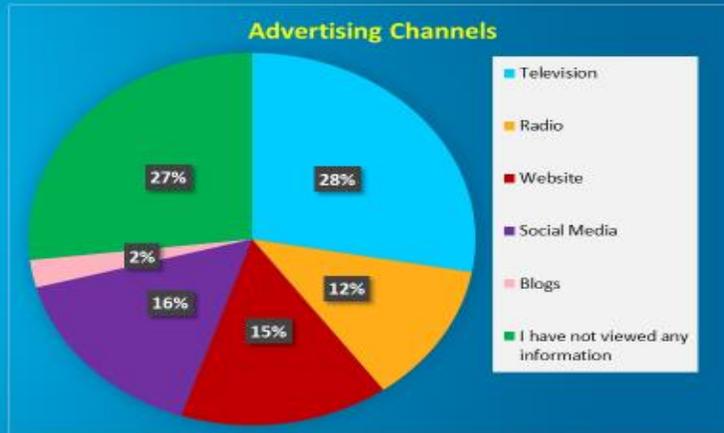




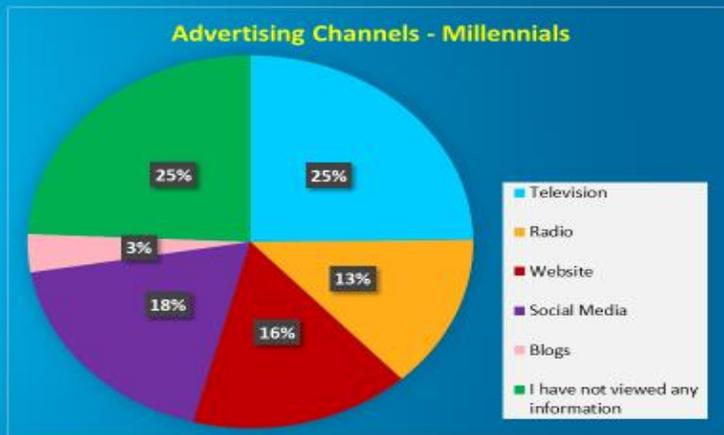


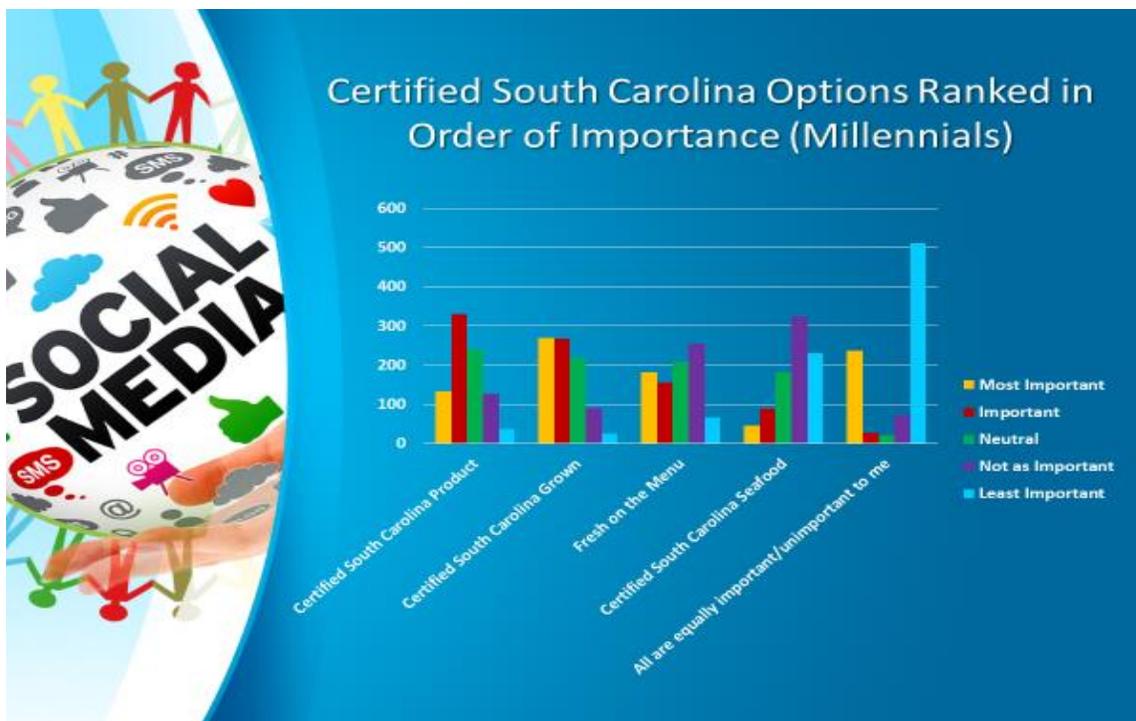


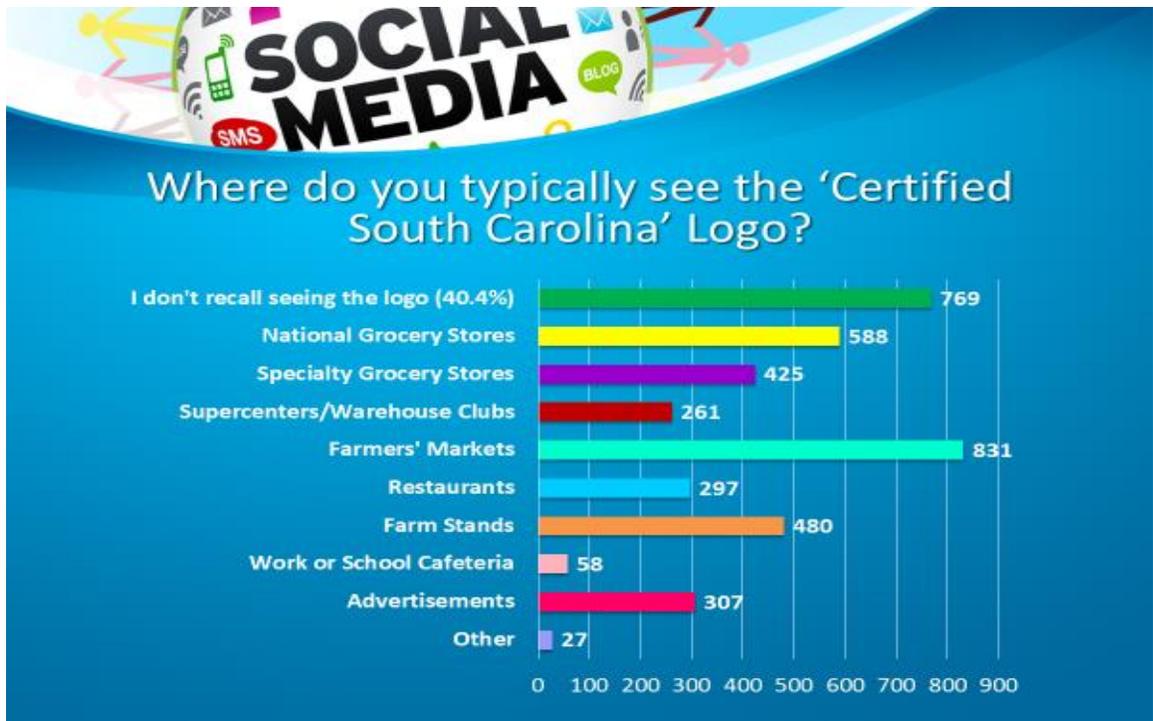
Which advertising channels have you viewed information provided by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture?



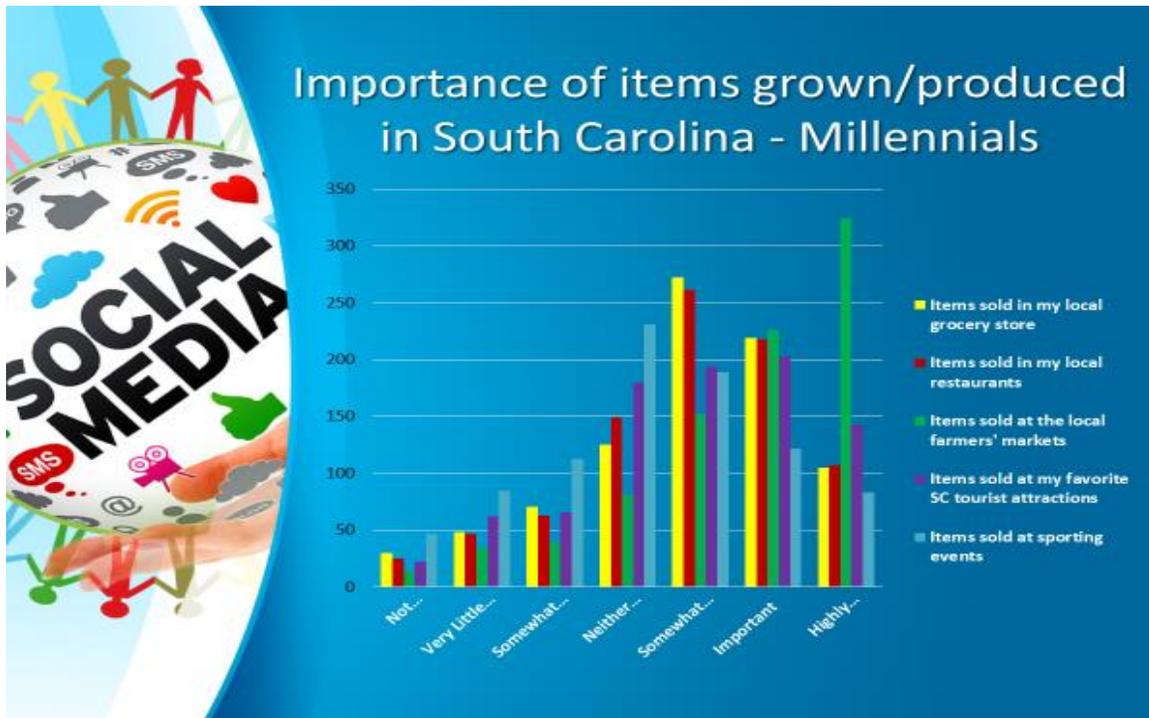
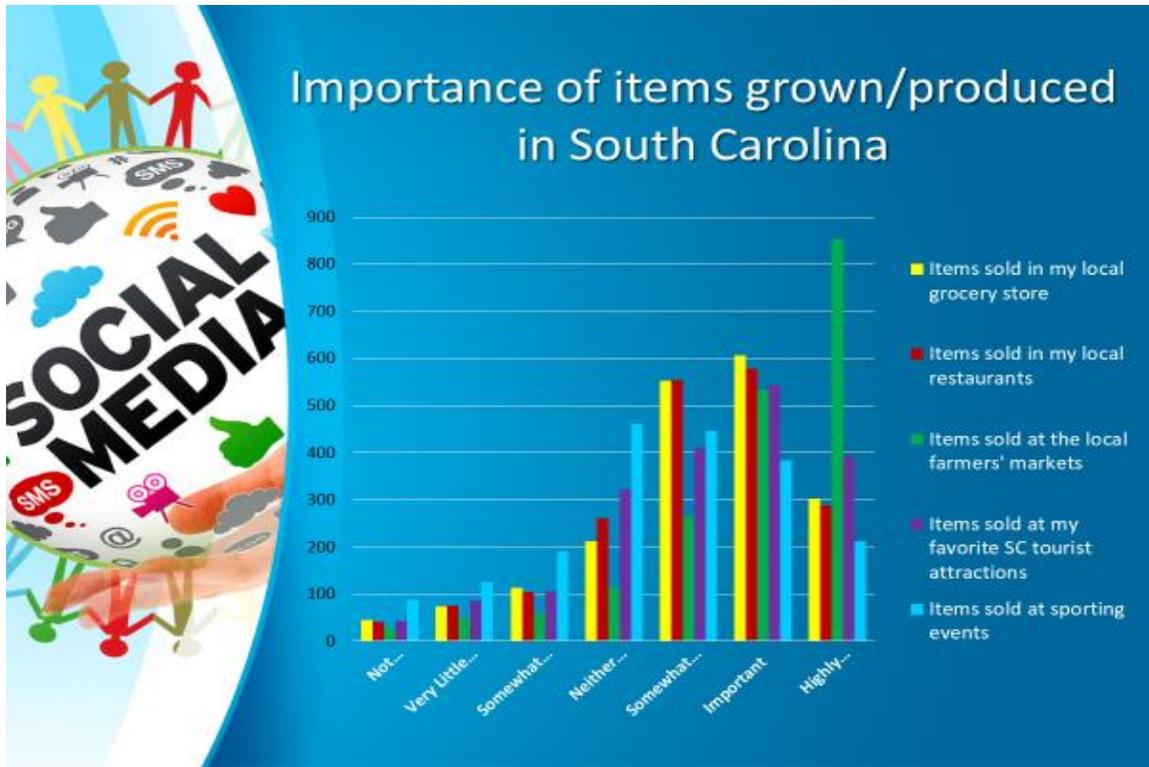
Which advertising channels have you viewed information provided by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture?

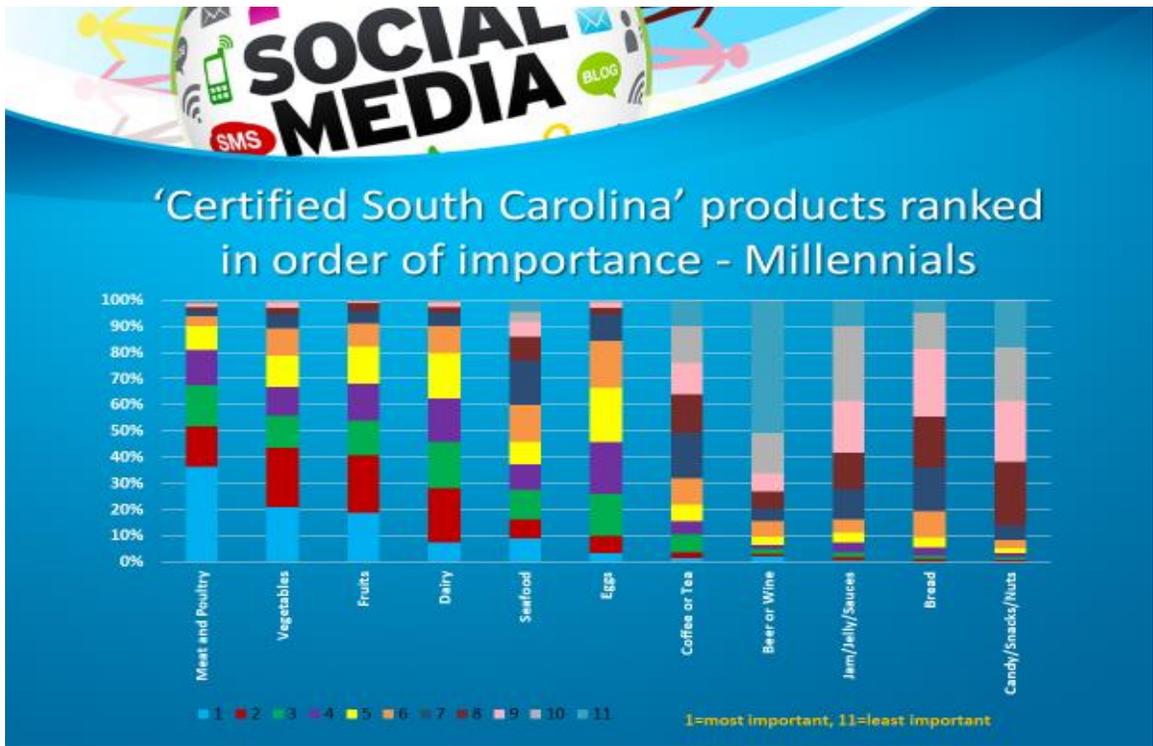
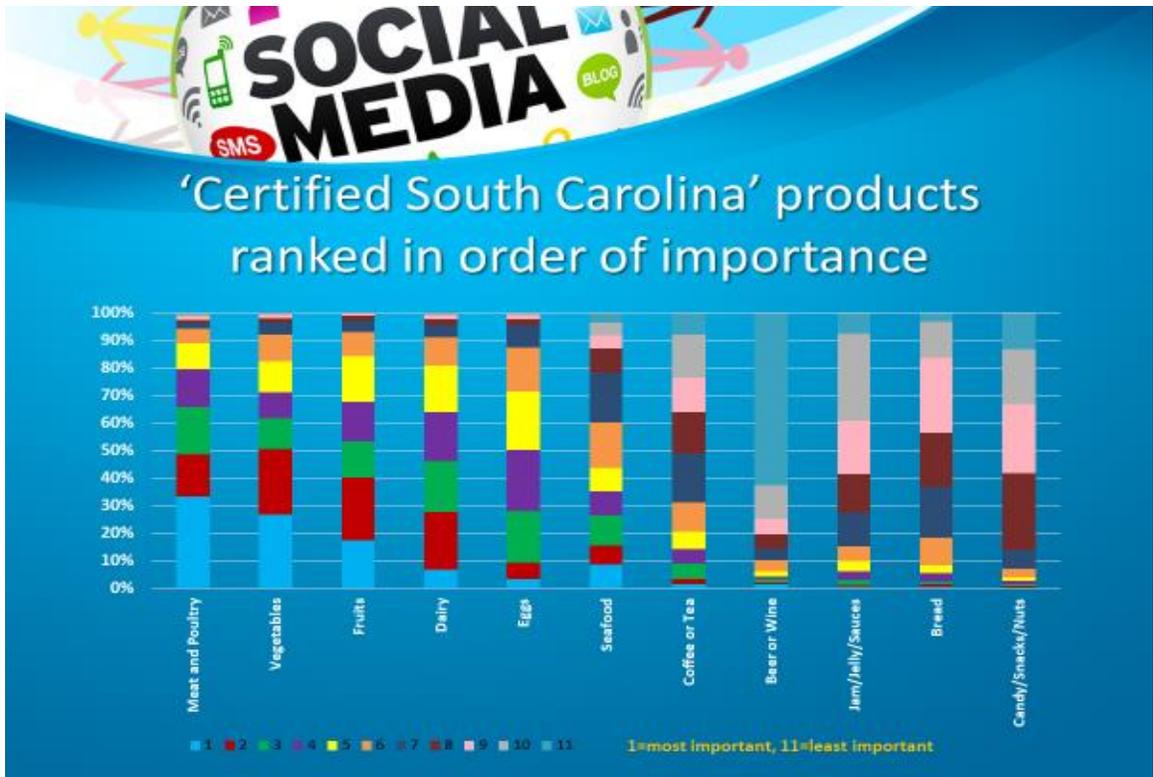


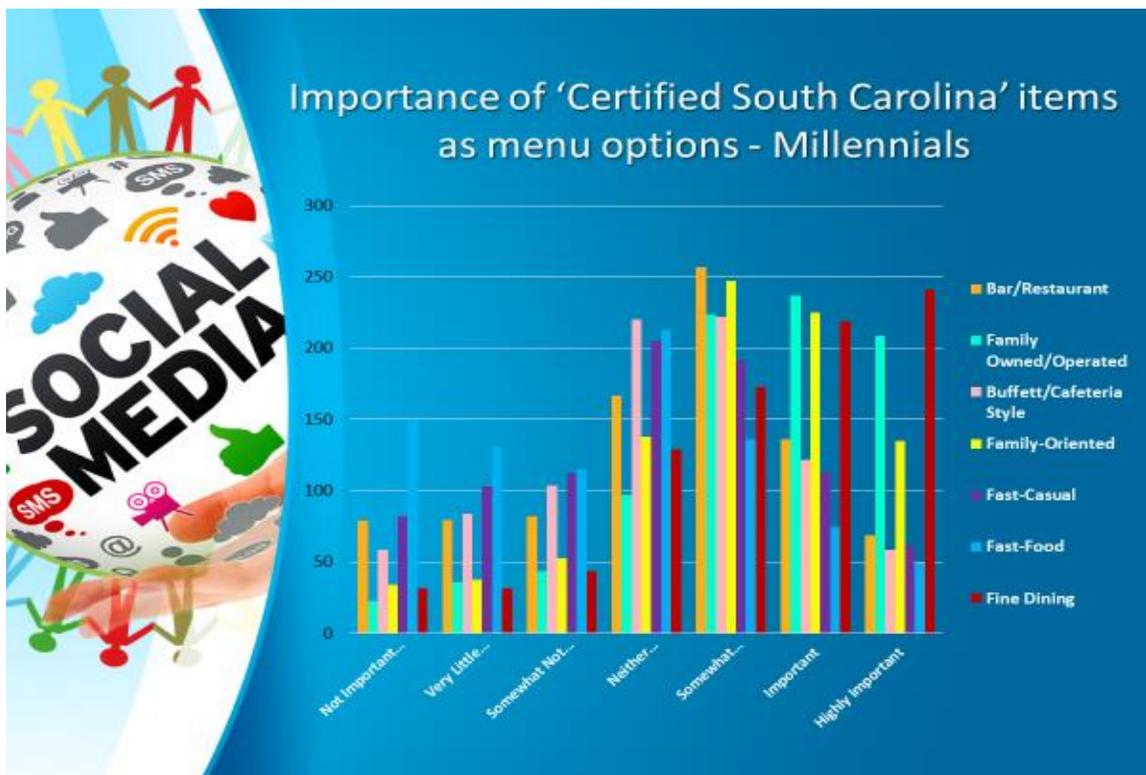
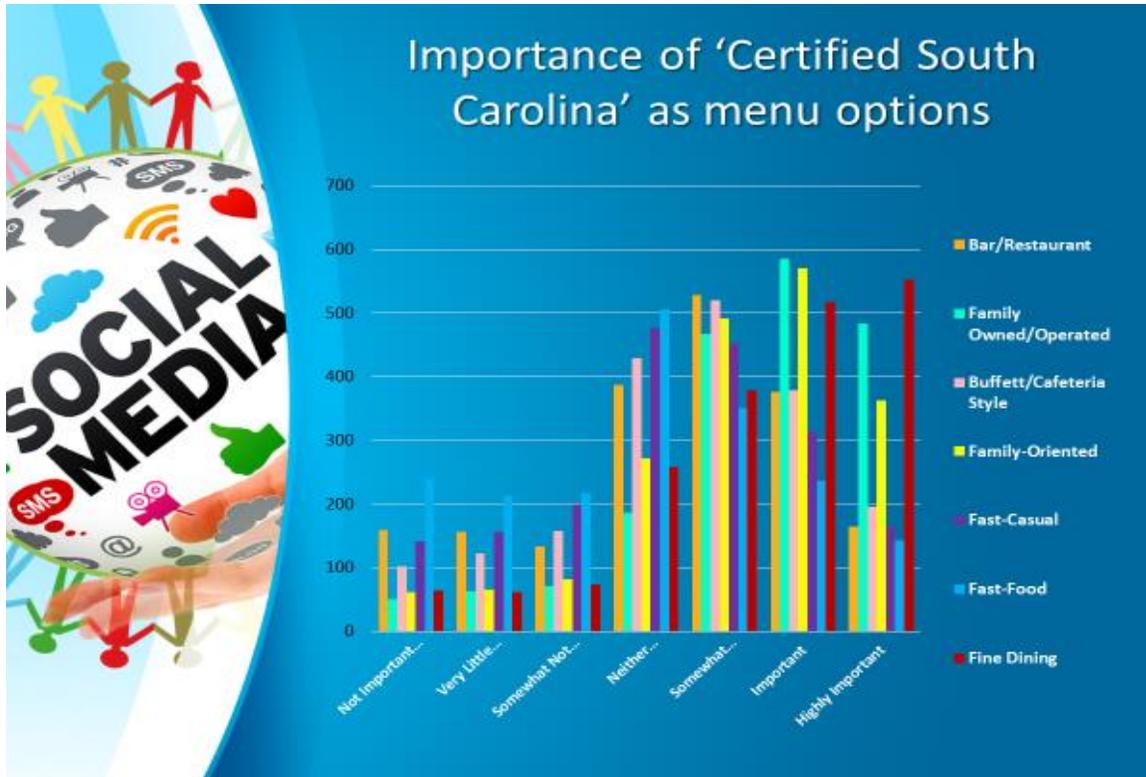






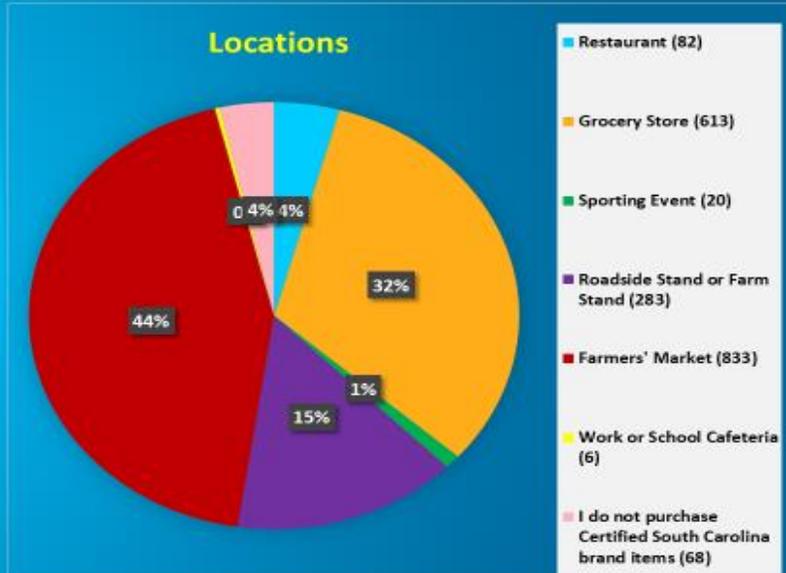




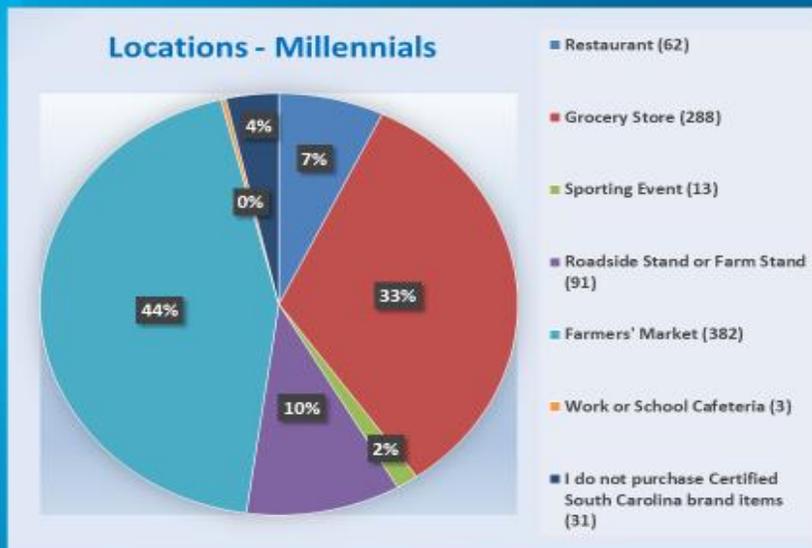




Where are you most likely to purchase a 'Certified South Carolina' brand item?

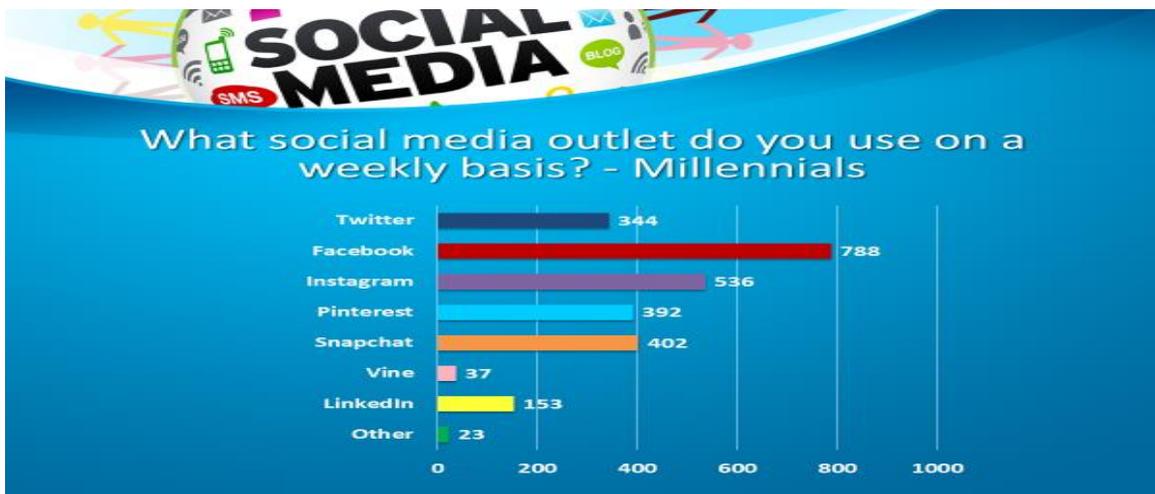
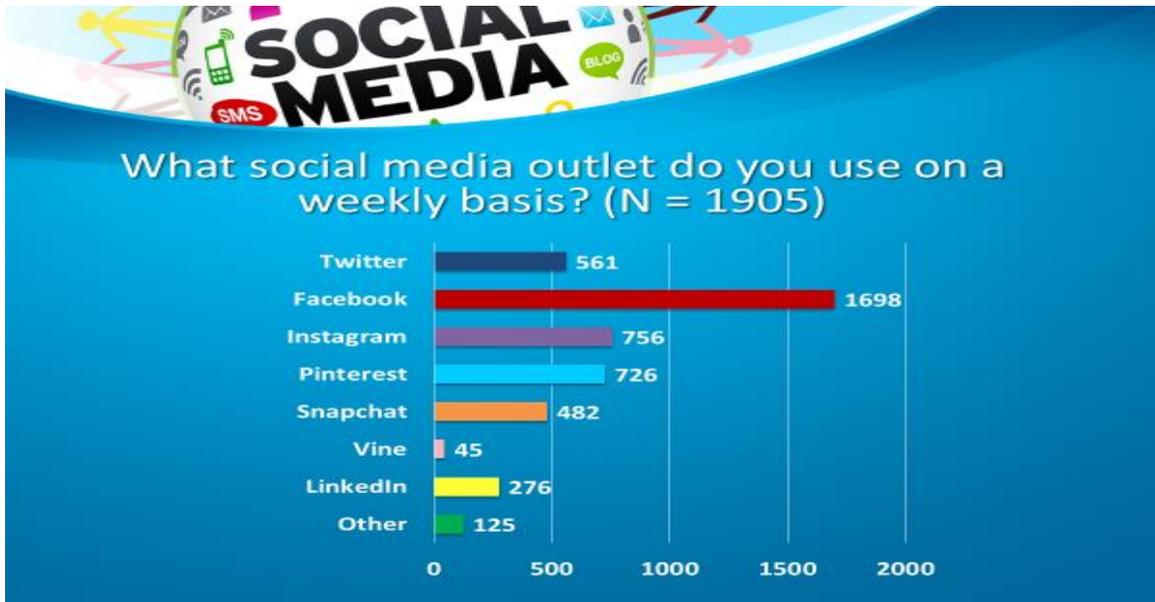


Where are you most likely to purchase a 'Certified South Carolina' brand item?



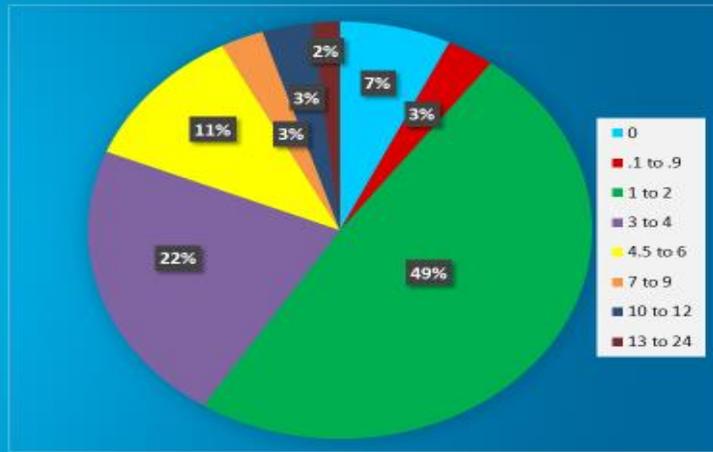


SOCIAL MEDIA:

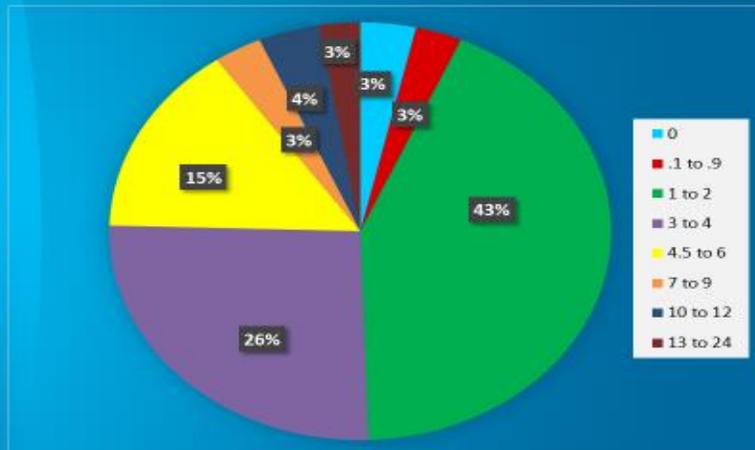




Hours Spent on Social Media Each Day (N = 1905)



Hours Spent on Social Media Each Day – Millennials (N = 870)





SOCIAL MEDIA

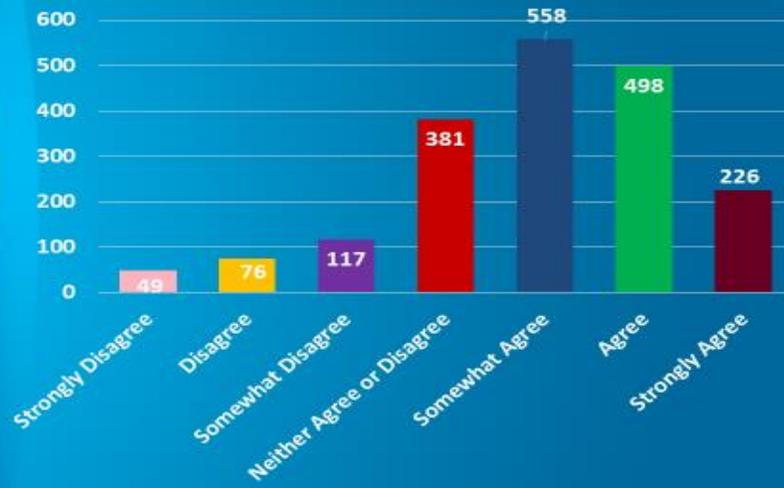
Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding **PURCHASE BEHAVIOR**.



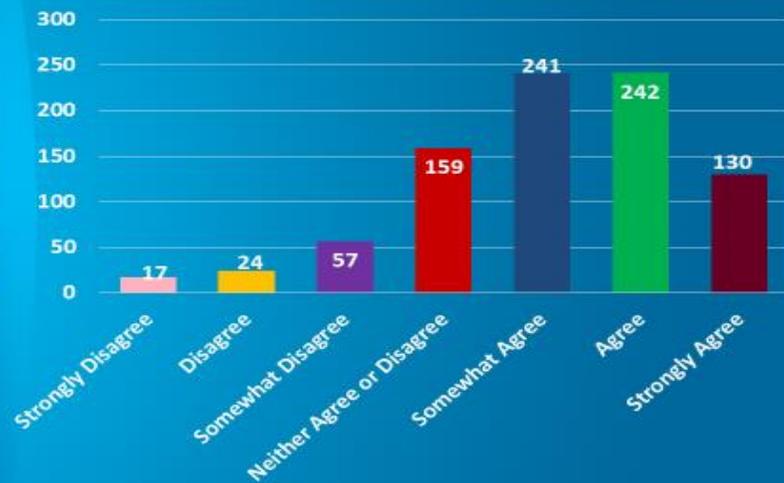




Pictures or images depicting the product or service influence my purchases. (N = 1905)



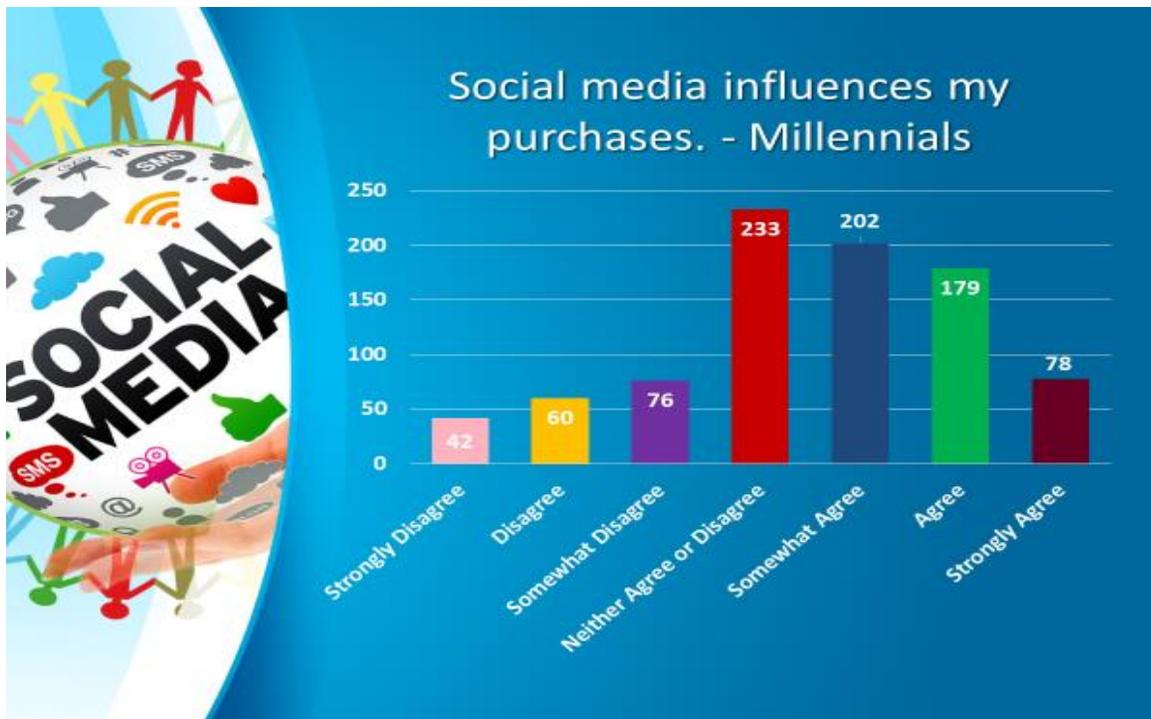
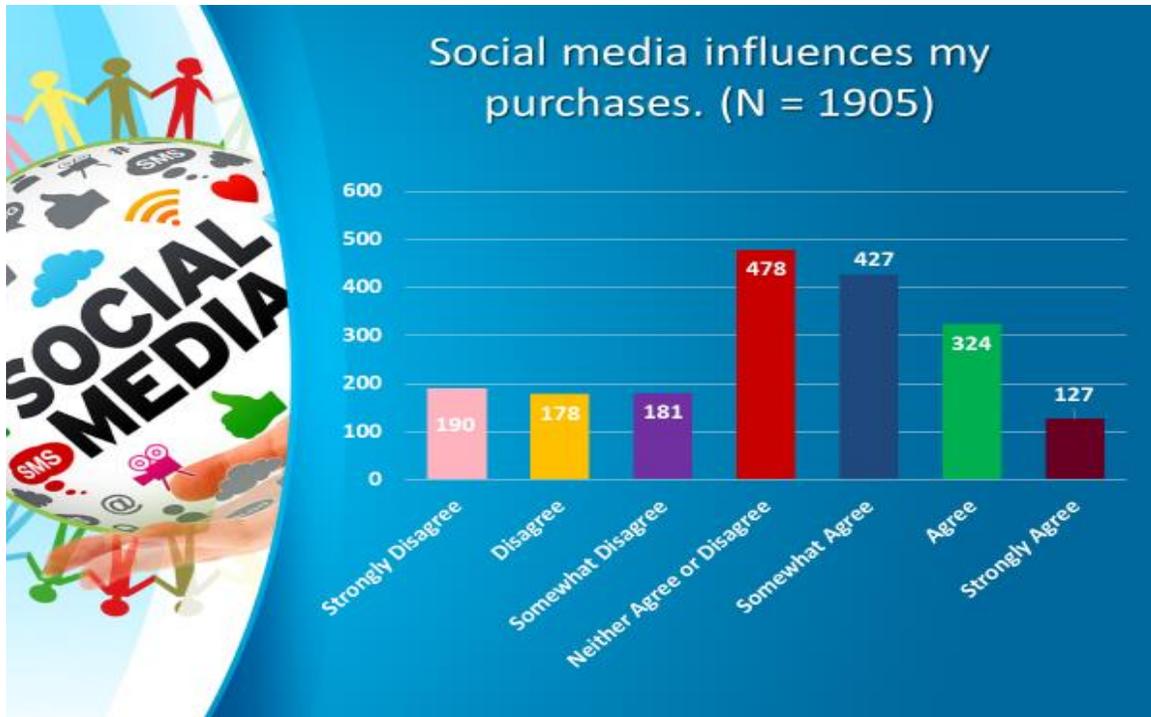
Pictures or images depicting the product or service influence my purchases. - Millennials

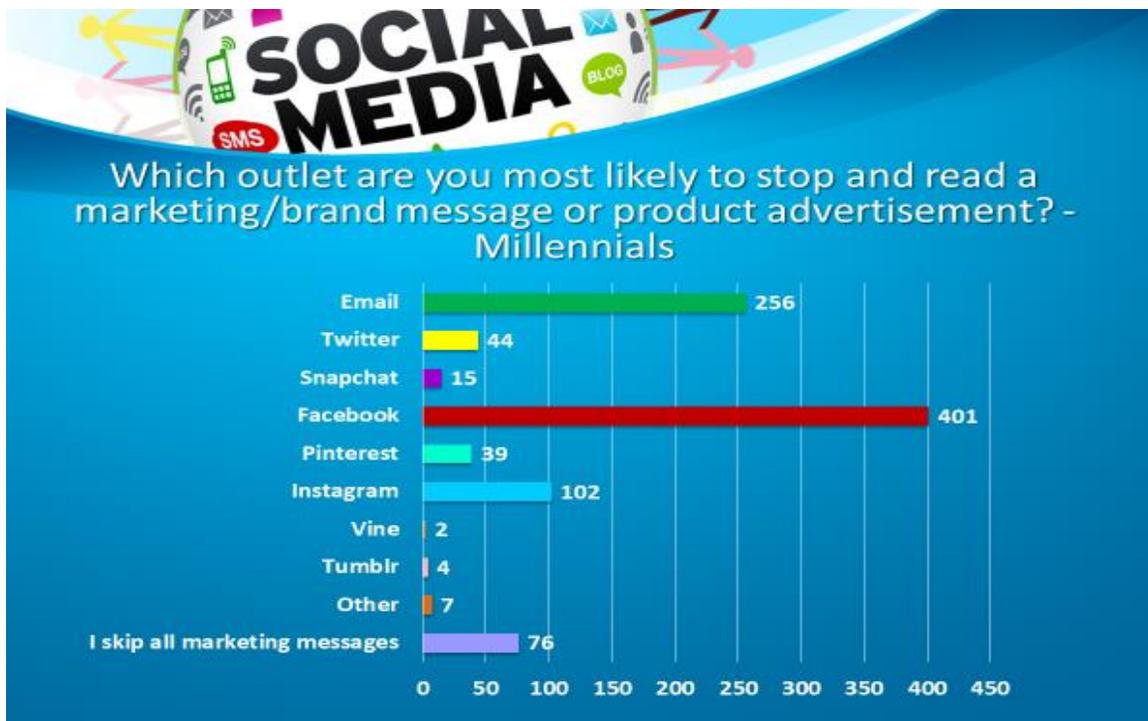
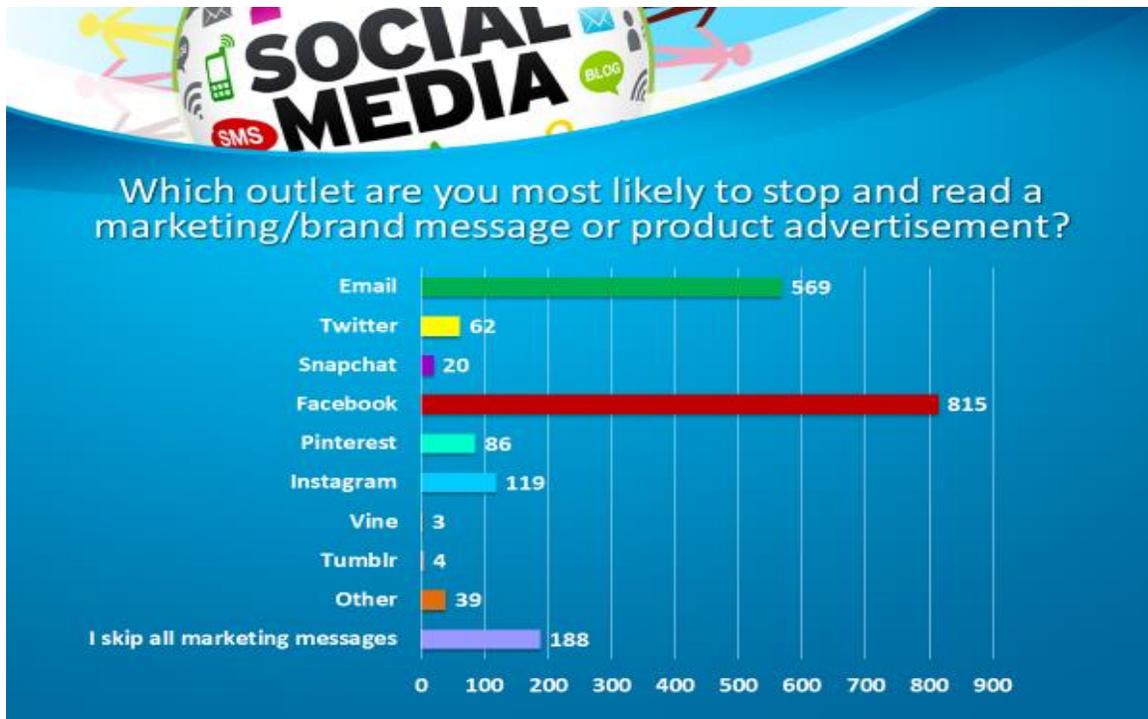


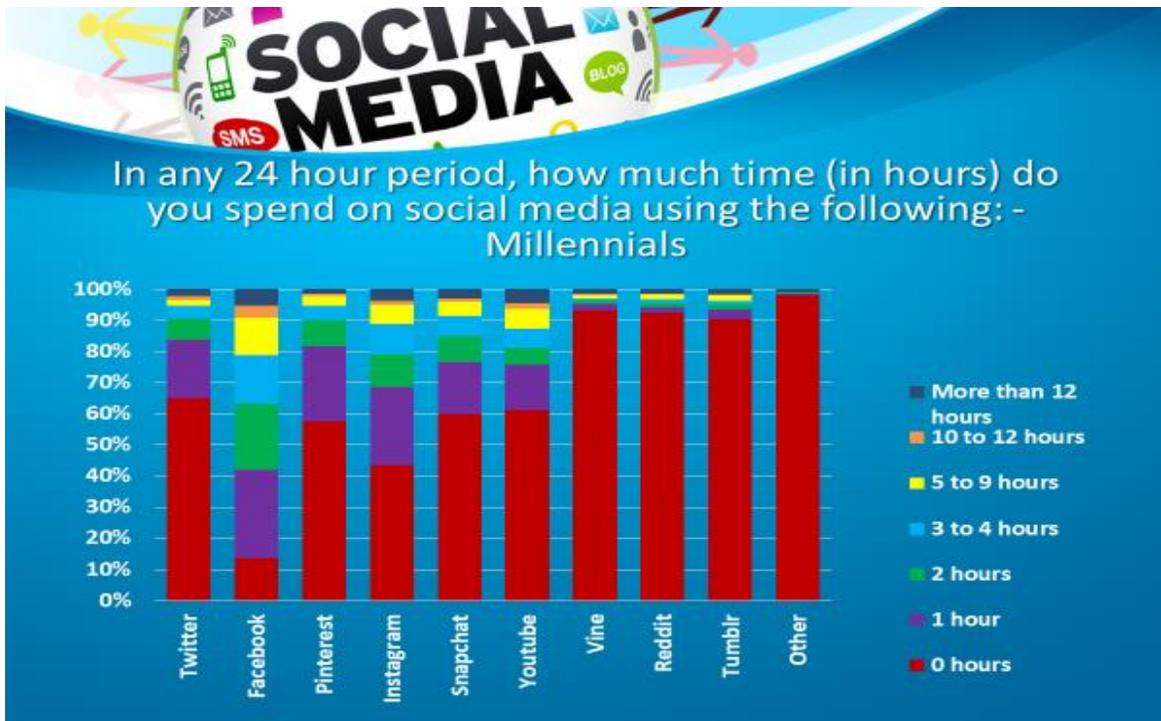
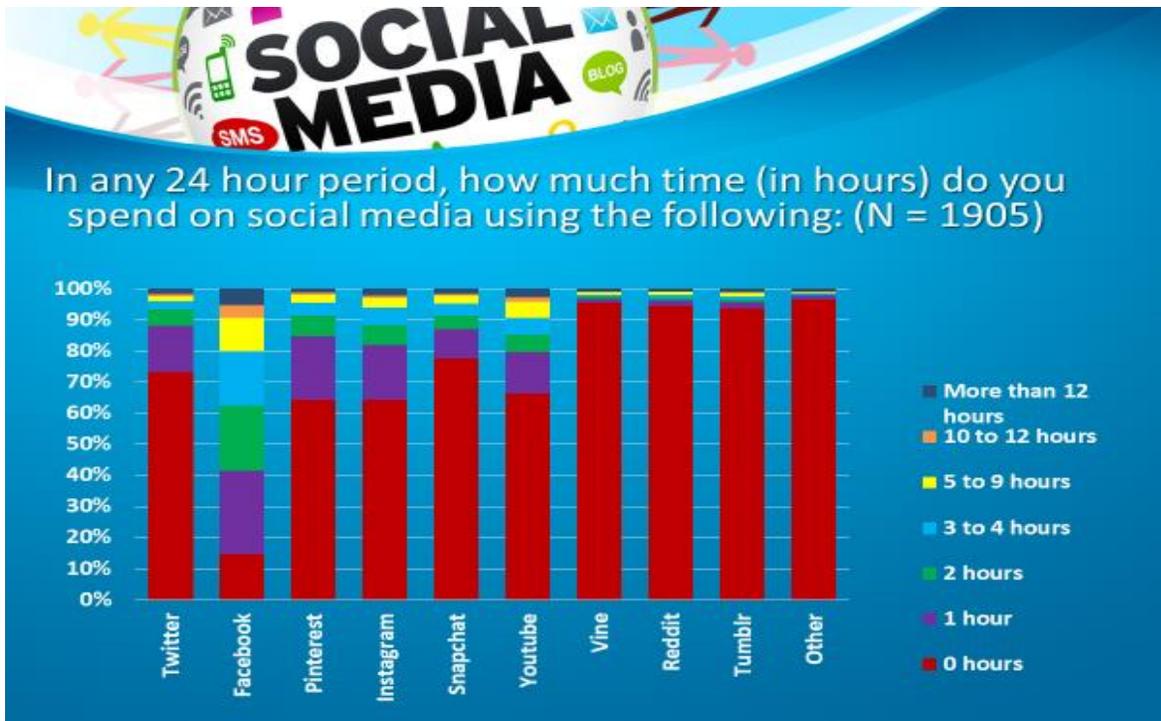


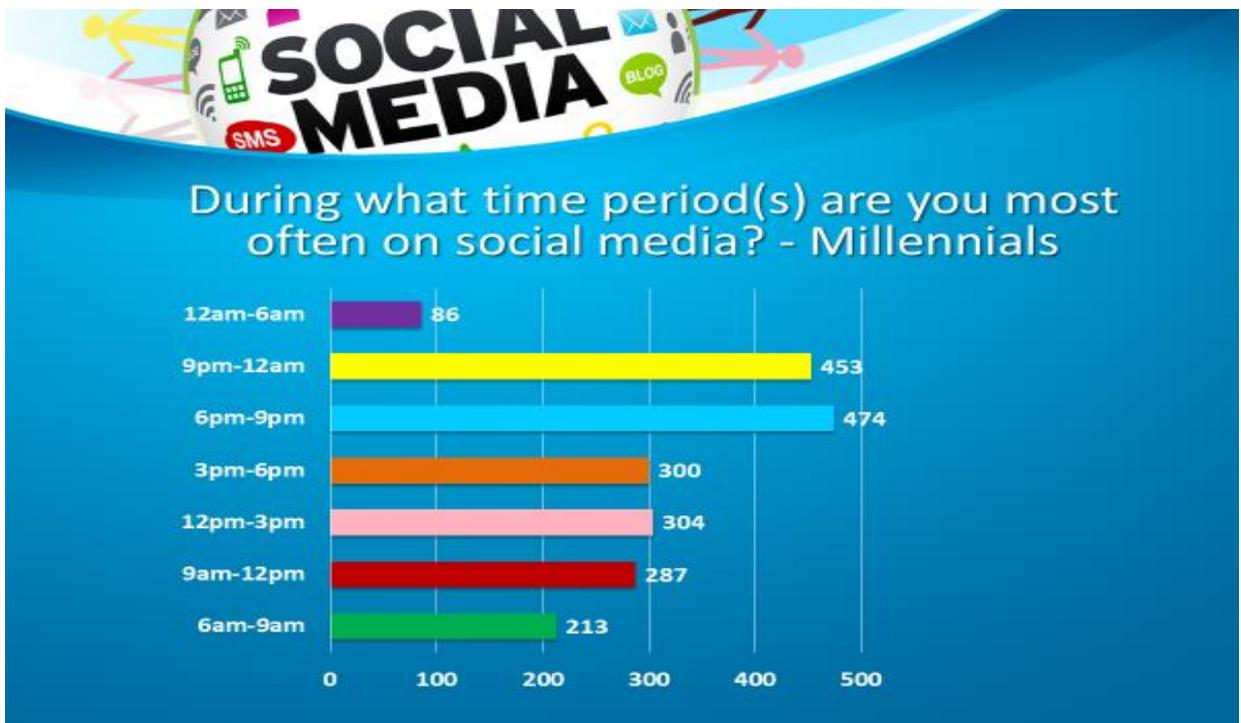
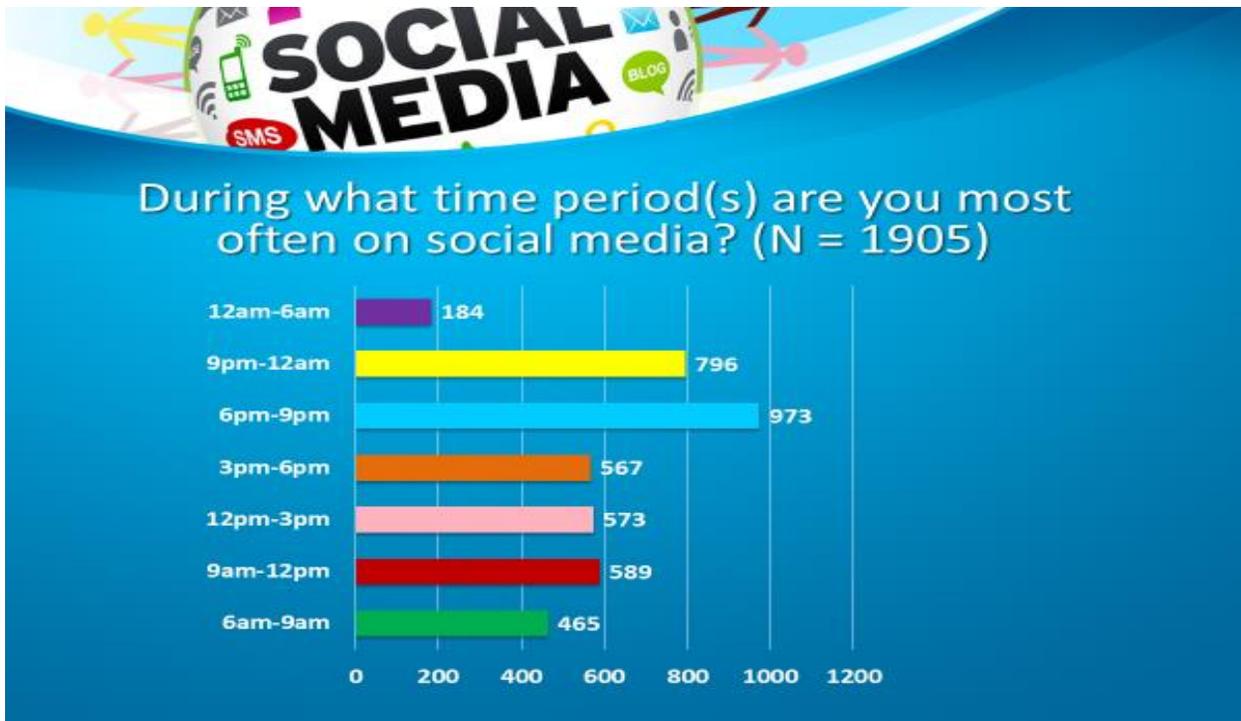


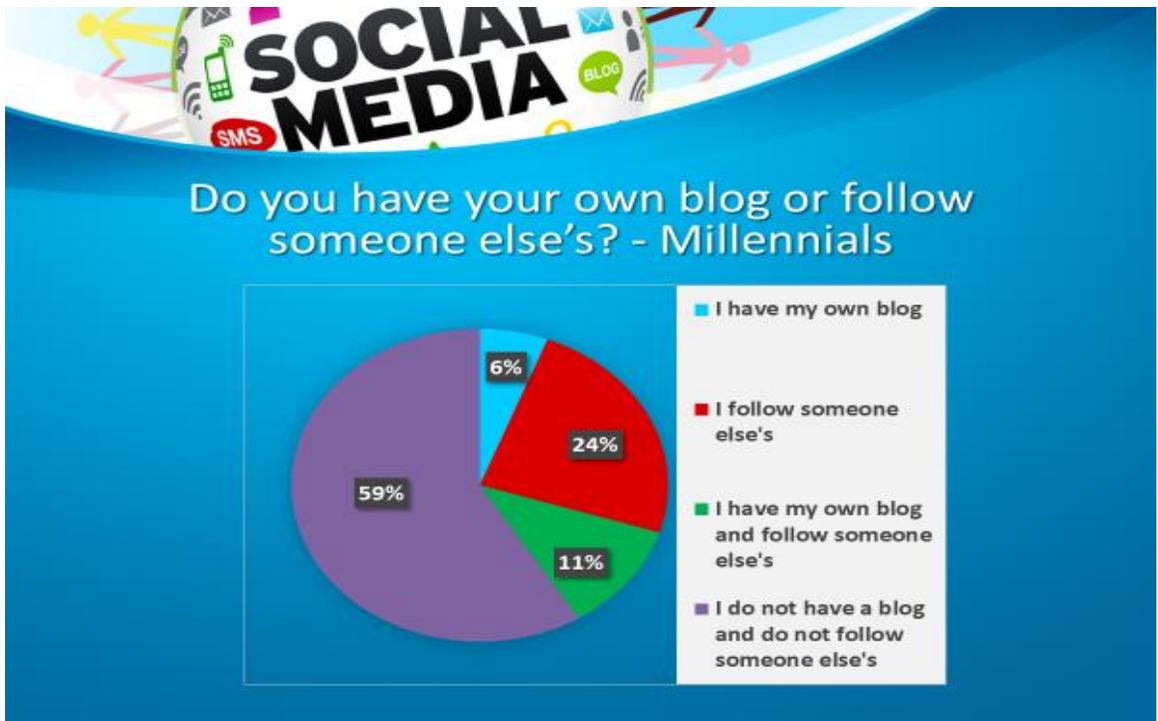
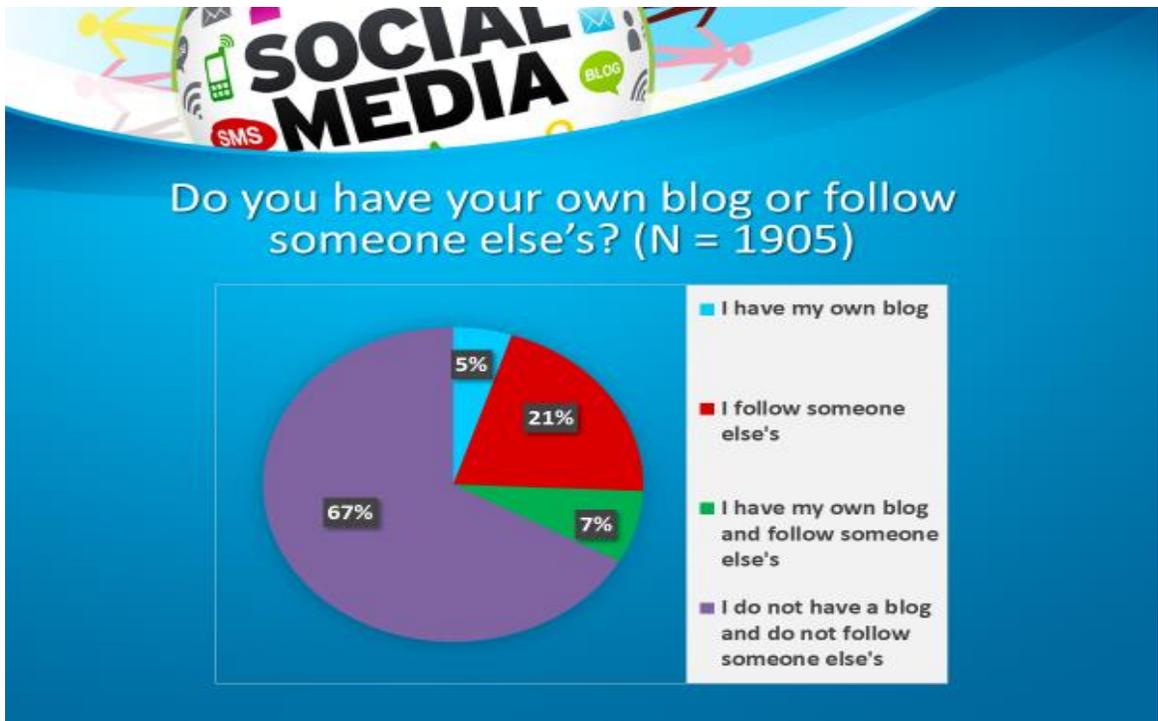


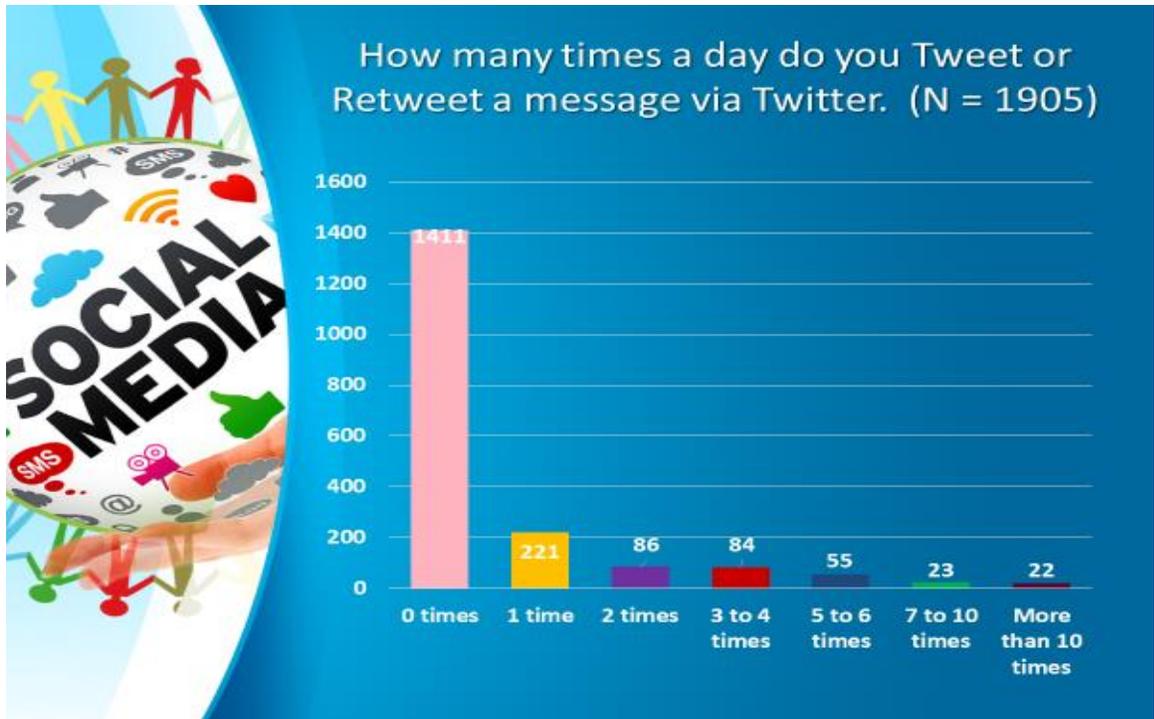


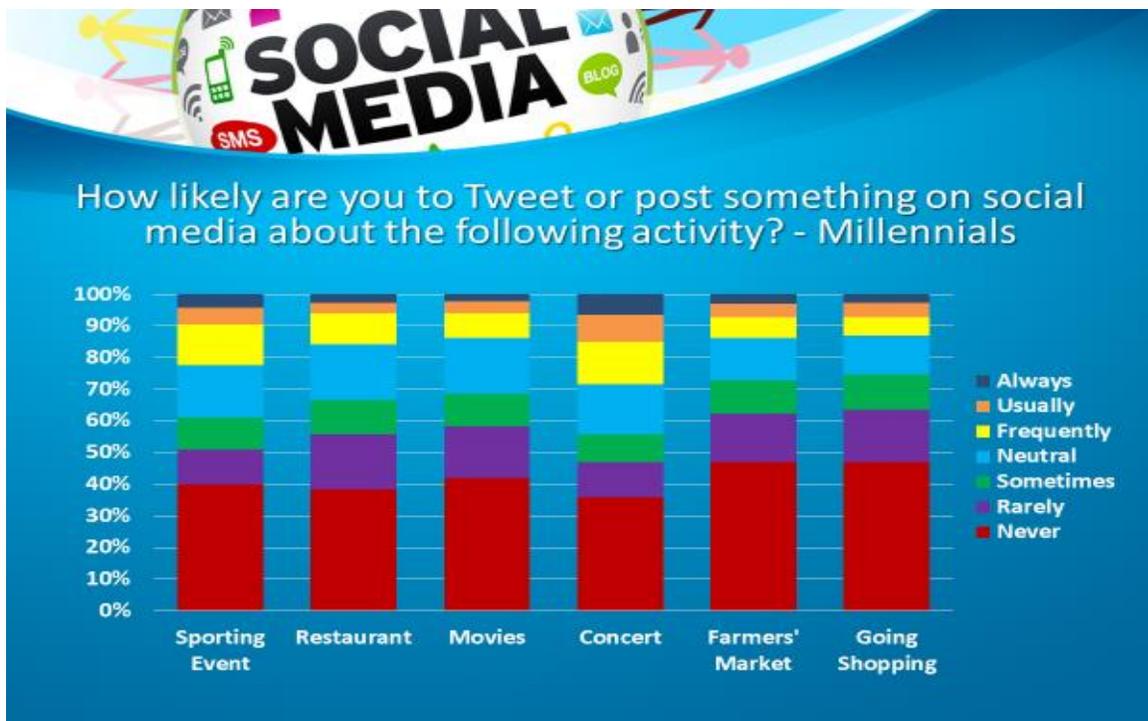
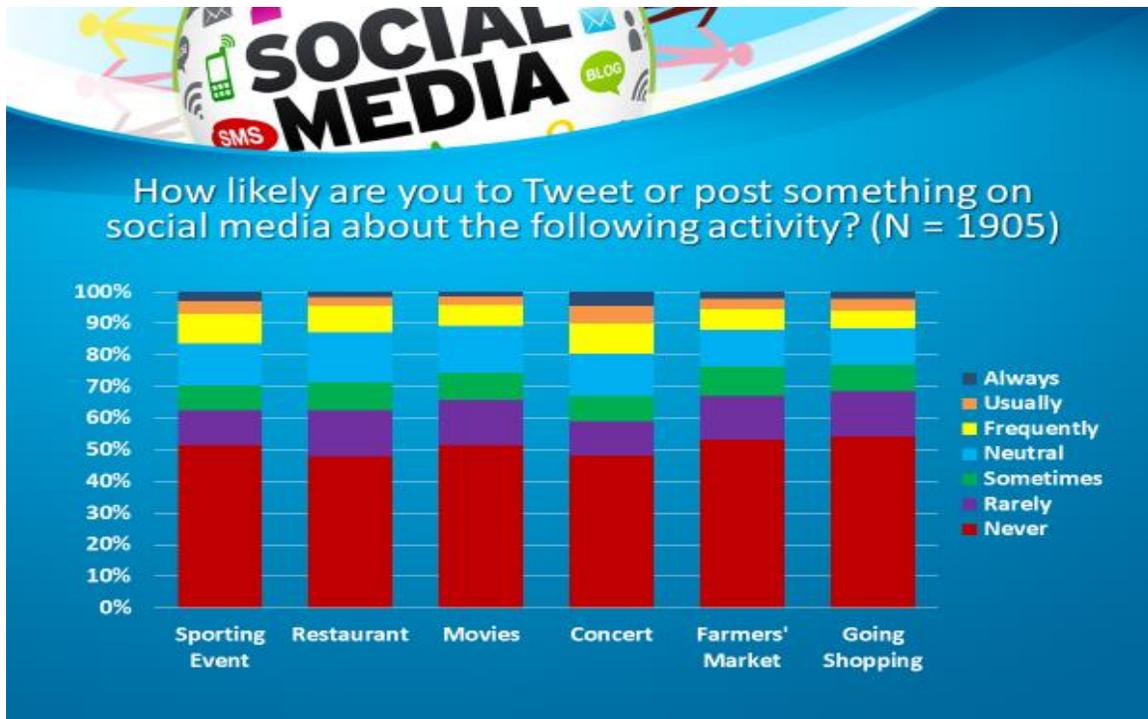


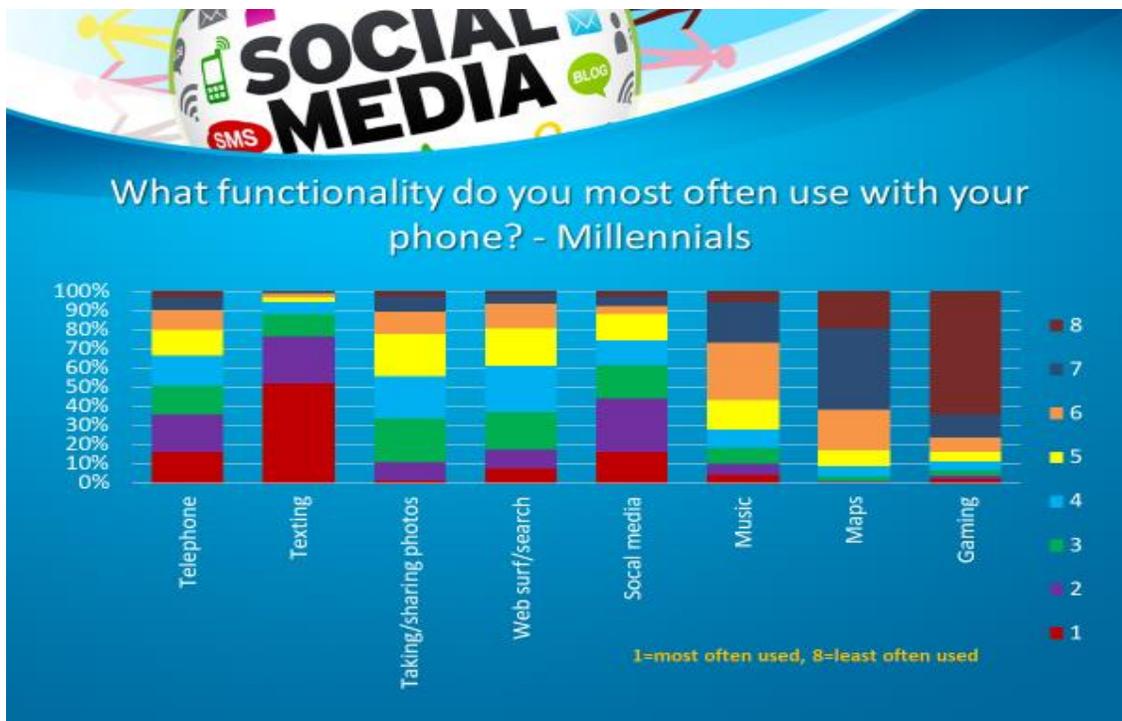
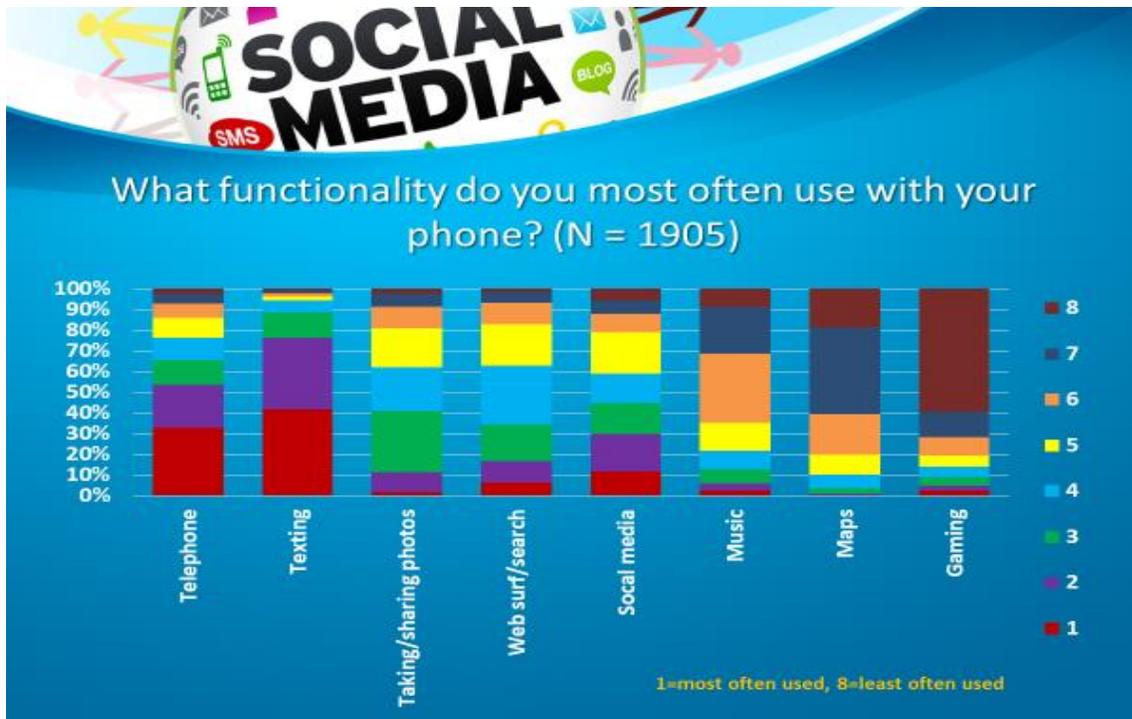






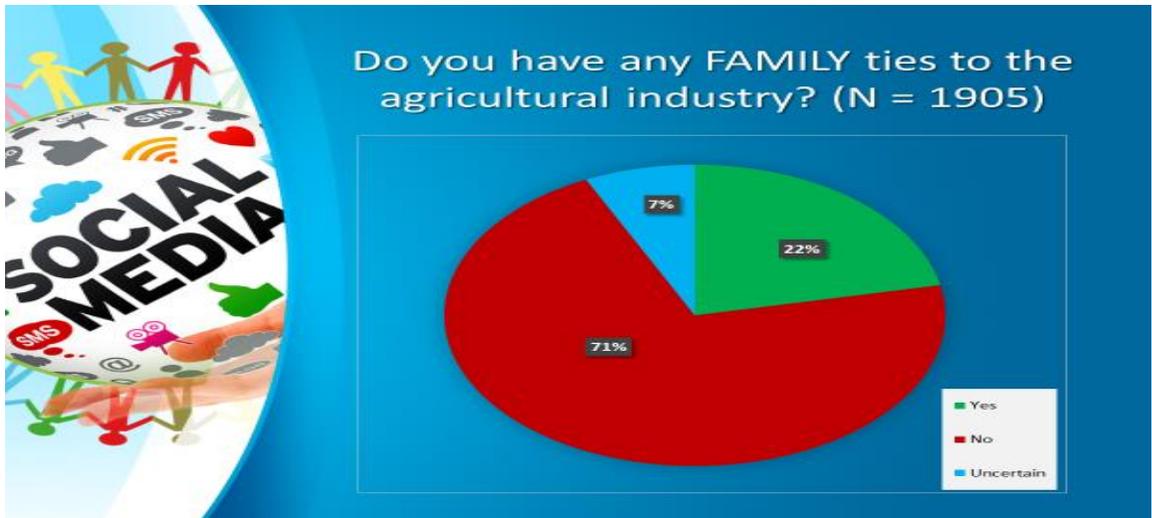






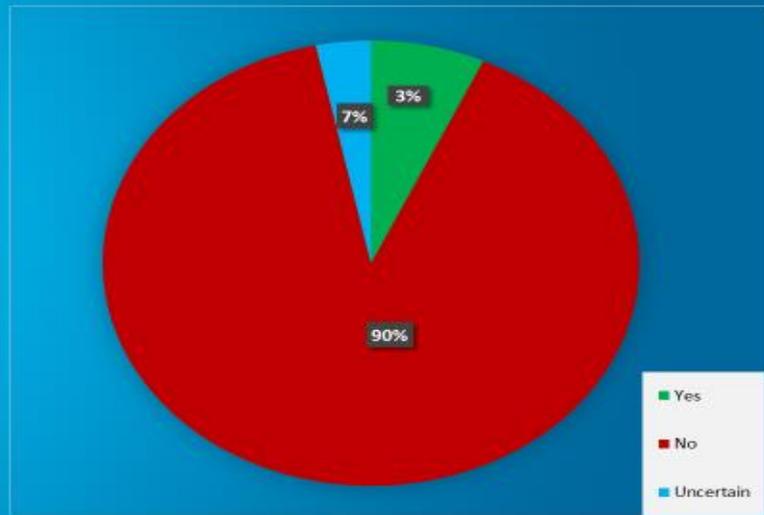
SOCIAL MEDIA

KEY DEMOGRAPHICS:

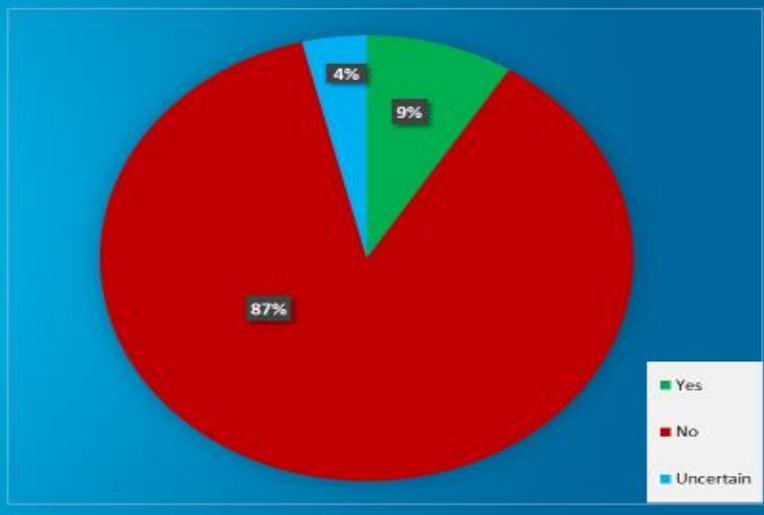


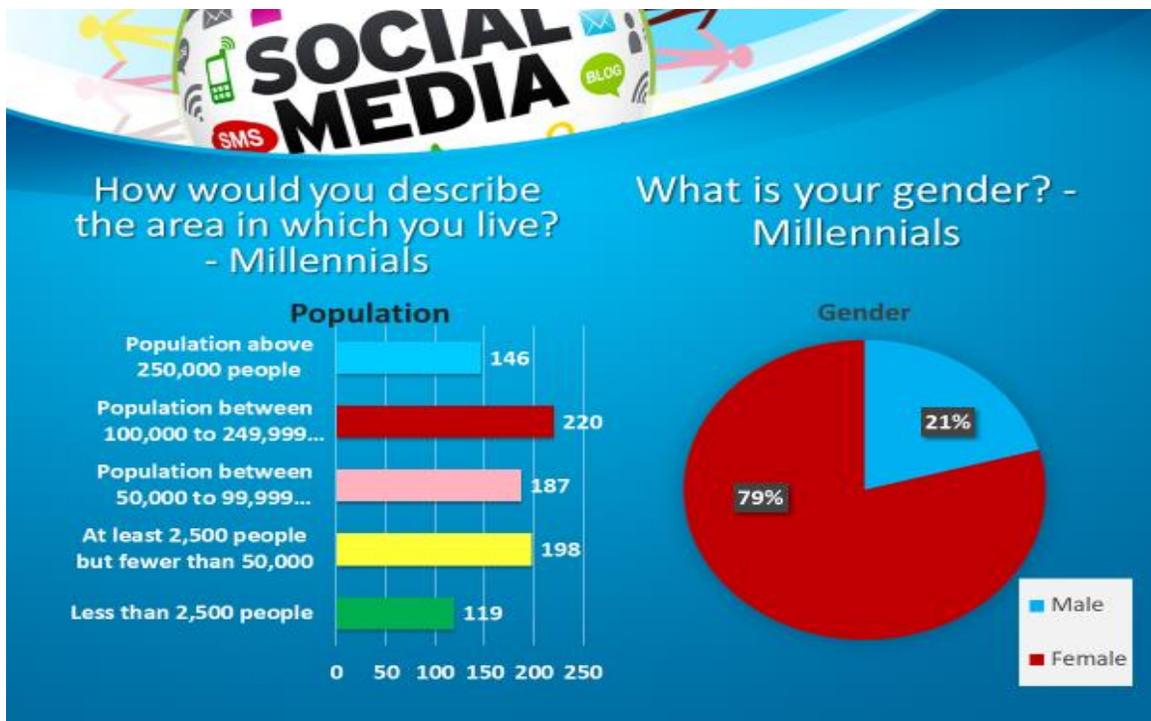
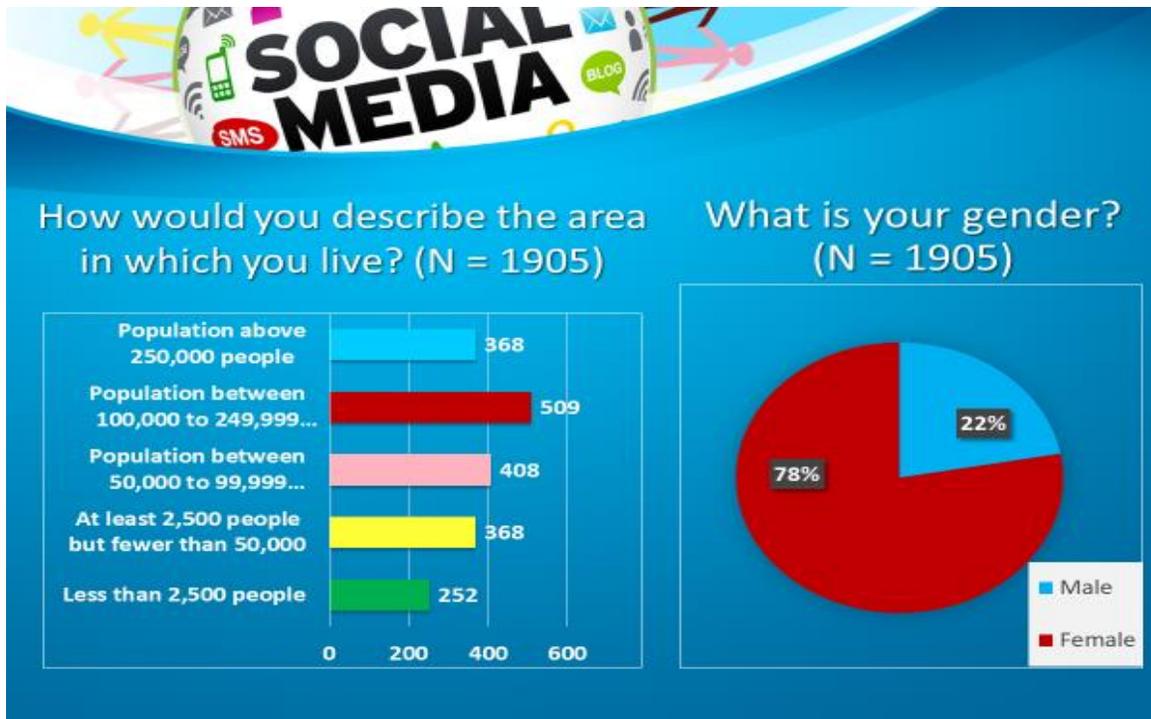


Do you have any WORK ties to the agricultural industry? (N = 1905)

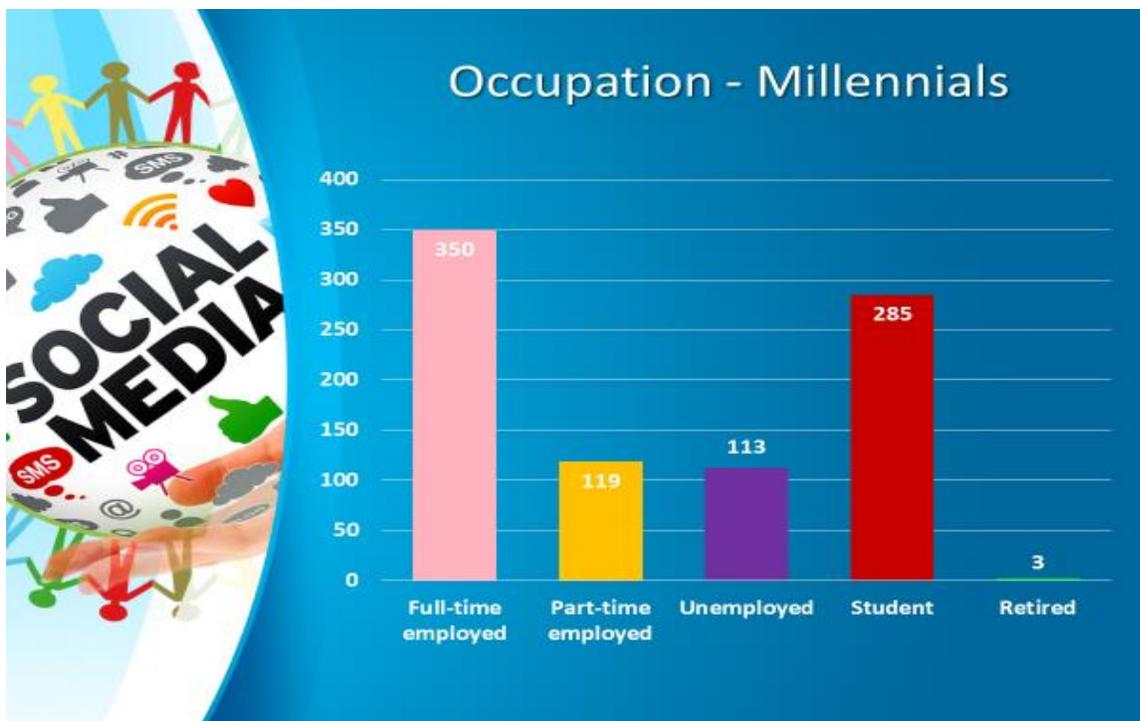
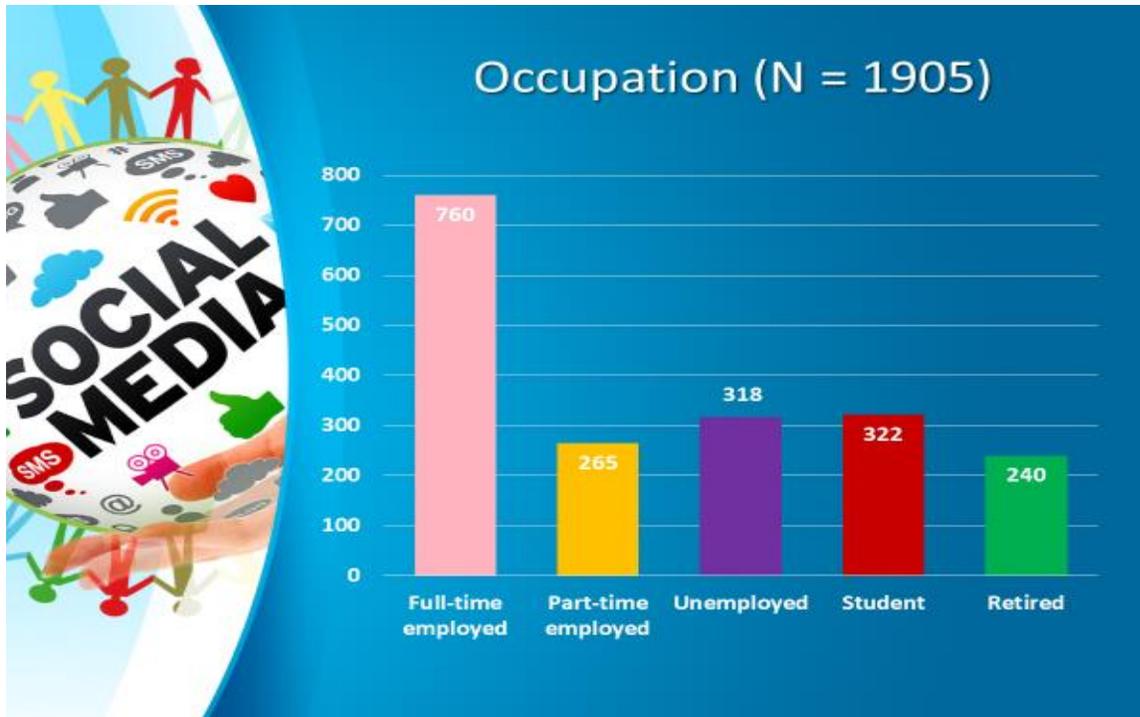


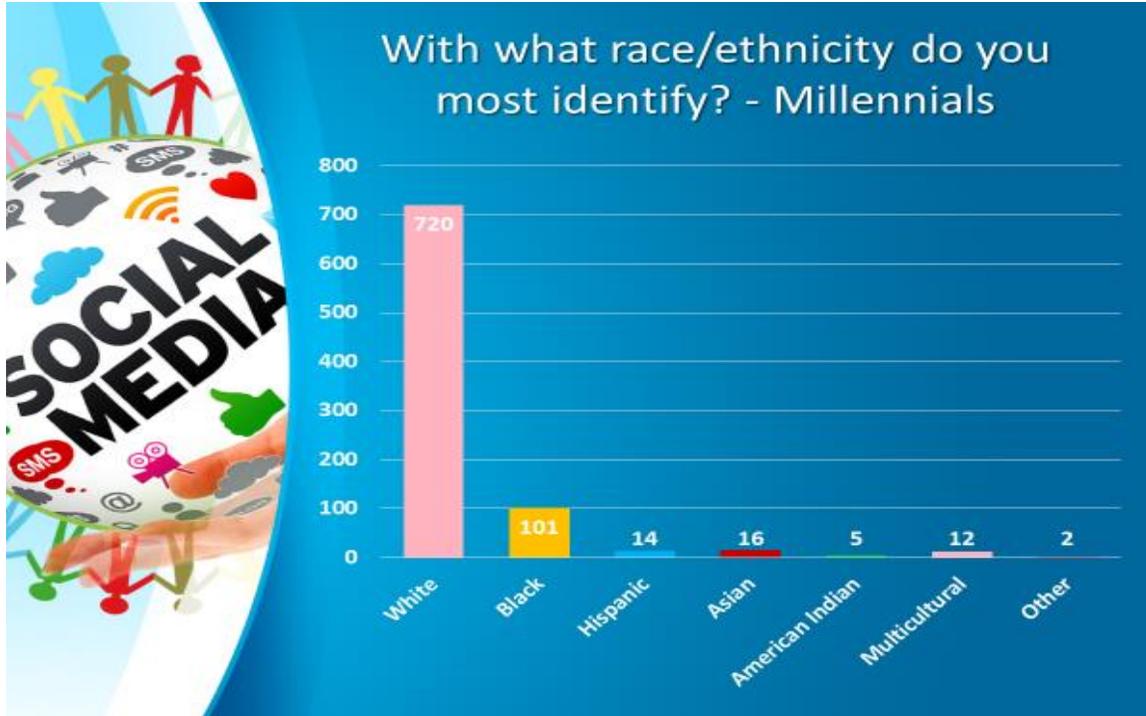
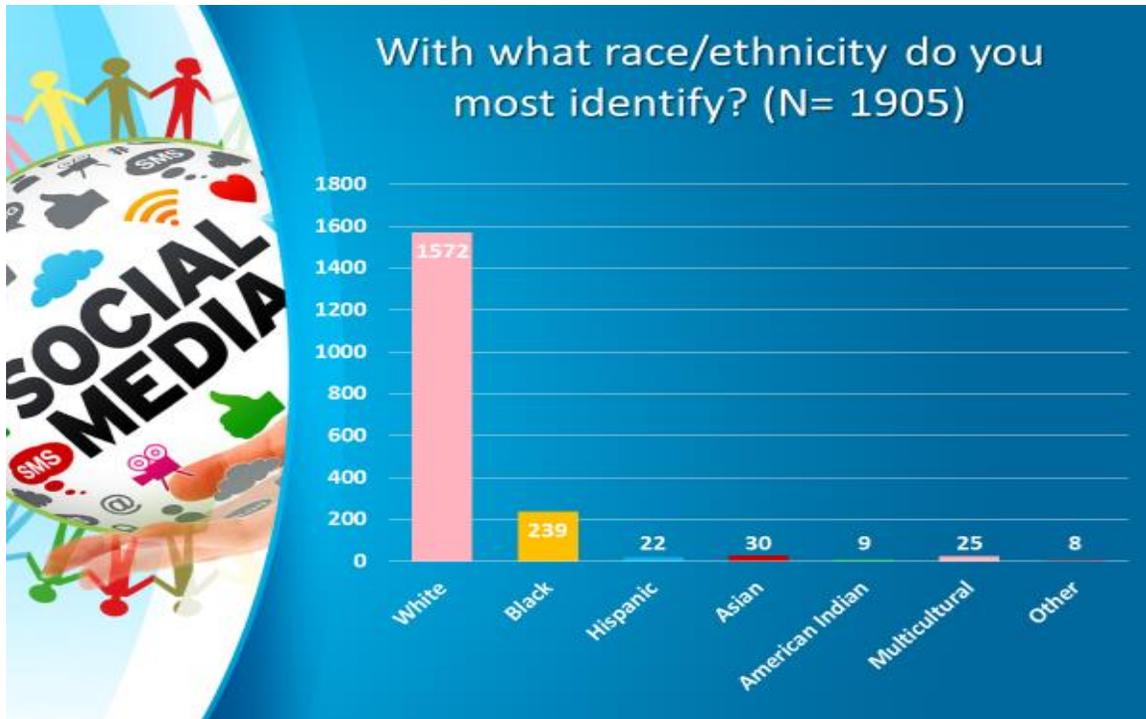
Do you have any WORK ties to the agricultural industry? - Millennials

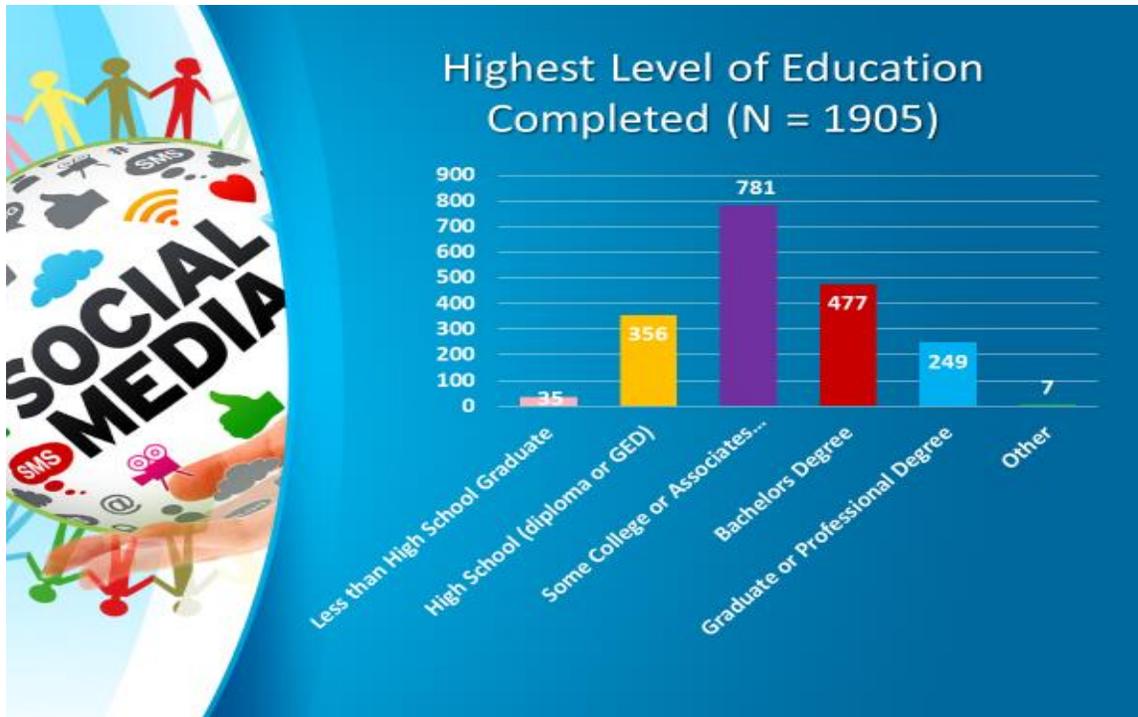










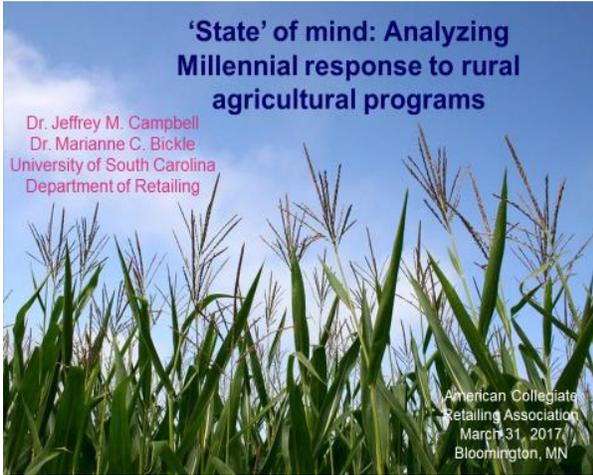


Appendix 4: Presentation for American Collegiate Retailing Association (ACRA)

'State' of mind: Analyzing Millennial response to rural agricultural programs

Dr. Jeffrey M. Campbell
Dr. Marianne C. Bickle
University of South Carolina
Department of Retailing

American Collegiate Retailing Association
March 31, 2017
Bloomington, MN



What is happening to U.S. farms?

- Large multinational companies have greater control over food production and marketing more than ever
- Average age of farm operators in U.S. has increased past three decades, now @ 58.3 years of age
- Younger farmers in short supply
- Distribution channels are increasing (bulk, grocery, direct-to-consumer, online)



The increase in "state" or regional agricultural brands

- State brands (e.g., "Minnesota Grown", "Pick Tennessee Products", "Certified South Carolina") have begun to market cross-channel on a meaningful basis
- Started in 1983 in New Jersey with "Jersey Fresh"
- Current focus on Millennial consumer base
- Words such as "Pick", "Fresh", "Certified", "Local", and "Grown" highlighted in packaging and marketing efforts



The image displays five agricultural brand logos. At the top left is the 'CERTIFIED SOUTH CAROLINA' logo, featuring a map of South Carolina. Next to it is the 'CERTIFIED SC GROWN' logo, also with a map of South Carolina. To the right is the 'JERSEY FRESH' logo with the tagline 'FROM THE GARDEN STATE'. Below these are the 'PICK Tennessee PRODUCTS' logo, which includes a barn and sun icon, and the 'MINNESOTA GROWN' logo with the tagline 'Fresh From Your Neighbor'.

Why focus on Millennials?

- They are expected to overtake Baby Boomers in purchasing power and effect on food systems
- High focus of this group on responsible and sustainable retailing
- They associate themselves with their purchasing behavior, even for food
- They communicate their experiences more frequently which is good for marketers (and sometimes bad!)
- Active social media users as part of daily lives

Purpose of Current Study:

- How are Millennial attitudes, perceptions, and intentions to buy local/regional foods affected by rural agricultural branding programs?
- How might these factors differ across age groups (generational cohorts)?
- What role does social media play in how Millennials respond to state agricultural brands?

Theoretical Framework/Review

- **Theory of planned behavior**
 - Ajzen (1985)
 - attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and purchase intentions highlighted
 - Used in prior food related research on local and/or organic foods (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2006; 2008; Campbell & Fairhurst, 2014; 2016; Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005)
 - Theory extended to include concepts of “perceived consumer effectiveness”, “perceived product availability” and “connectedness” (particularly for Millennials)

Theoretical Framework/Review continued...

- **Generational Cohort Theory**
 - “Generational Cohorts are people born over a relatively short and contiguous time period that are deeply influenced and bound together by the events of their formative years” (Ryder, 1965, p. 843). Later expanded by Strauss & Howe 1991.
 - Help to explain attitudes or beliefs about specific issues and/or explain variations in behaviors between groups (Jackson et al., 2011)
 - Three cohort groups reviewed (Millennials: 1981-96; Generation X: 1965-80; Baby Boomers 1946-64)
 - (Pew Research Center, 2014)

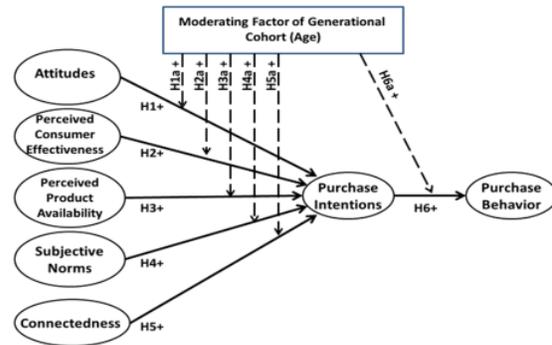
Proposed Hypotheses:

- H1: Attitudes toward state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H2: Perceived consumer effectiveness toward state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H3: Perceived product availability of state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H4: Subjective norms relating to state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H5: Connectedness to state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H6: Purchase intentions → purchase behavior for Millennials (+)

Proposed Hypotheses (H1a-H6a)
(Relationships WILL DIFFER by generational cohort)

- H1a: Attitudes toward state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H2a: Perceived consumer effectiveness toward state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H3a: Perceived product availability of state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H4a: Subjective norms relating to state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H5a: Connectedness to state agricultural branded products → purchase intentions for Millennials (+)
- H6a: Purchase intentions → purchase behavior for Millennials (+)

Conceptual Model/Framework:



Methodology/Sample

- Survey completed across one U.S. state (South Carolina) during two-month period
- Total of 1905 respondents
- Millennials = 870 complete; Gen X = 577; Baby Boomer = 403
- 35 measures across seven constructs; Structural Equation Modeling using AMOS 23.0 employed to test path relationships and chi-squares difference ($\Delta\chi^2$) testing to check for cohort group differences

Analysis

- Reliability scores from .770 to .932 for overall sample (.750 to .919 for Millennial sample)
- Average Variance Extracted (AVE) above .50
- Squared correlation coefficients of constructs above AVE values with exception of PCE/Attitudes (.850) which may call into question PCE construct as "different" than that of attitudes for Millennials.
- CFA for Millennial group ($\chi^2 = 1369.99$; $df = 424$; $\chi^2/df = 3.23$; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .051). All regression weights variances and covariances significant @ $p < .05$.

Structural Path Analysis

- ($\chi^2 = 1584.10$; $df = 429$; $\chi^2/df = 3.69$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .056)
- Of 6 proposed hypotheses, 3 found significant @ $p < .05$:
 - H1: AT → PI ($\beta = .850$)
 - H3: PPA → PI ($\beta = .409$)
 - H6: PI → PB ($\beta = .529$)
- All other path relationships (H2, H4, H5) NOT significant

Group Invariance Testing

- Differences in path relationships between cohort groups
- Followed Byrne's (2010) process for comparing "stacked" models (e.g., Millennial vs. Gen X, Millennial vs. Baby Boomer)
- Additive process for fixing equal constraints for model comparison and using chi-squares difference testing
- Only relationship of perceived product availability (PPA) and purchase intentions (PI) varied by group between Millennials and Baby Boomer cohorts ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.5(1)$; $p = .033$); **H3a**

Group Invariance Testing (effects from social media usage?)

- Post-hoc test to see if 'social media usage' would affect relationships (e.g., connectedness and purchase intentions)
- Time on social media (in hours) asked on survey and median split of groups used for comparison of Millennial respondents
- 6 hours or less on social media ($n = 491$); 7 hours or more ($n = 379$)
- Of six hypothesized paths, $PI \rightarrow PB$ differed by social media usage ($\Delta\chi^2 = 16.682(1)$; $p = .000$).
- High usage group ($\beta = .582$); Low usage group ($\beta = .463$)

Key Findings

- Attitudes toward state agricultural brands are important to Millennials when forming purchase intentions... particularly when the brand message connects environmental and sustainability causes
- Product availability is also important to Millennials as they don't want to "have to look for it"...state brands need to be OBVIOUS
- A strong relationship between purchase intentions and behaviors indicate that once their mind is made up to buy...they will do so
- No influence of "social norms" (family, friends) on selecting state ag. brands
- "Greenwashing" may impact the desire to make a difference through purchasing of state branded items (does it really matter?)

Key Findings (group testing)

- "Positive" in that lack of variance suggests different age groups may be receiving same "message" and that marketing programs don't have to be tailored as much as previously thought
- Displays, signage, and customer service can be important to all customers for these brands and standardized
- Millennials who spend a lot of time on social media had a stronger "Intention \rightarrow Behavior" link...so encourage the use of social media in-store or at farmers' markets or create social media campaign to highlight items or event

Limitations

- One U.S. state (South Carolina)
- Self-report questionnaire used (social desirability bias?)
- Poor PCE construct that needs further development
- Results may not be generalizable across age demographics (cohort) or location

Future Research

- Role of location/timing factors, given that local foods are seasonal in nature and not found everywhere on consistent basis
- Culture factors, as some cultures place higher value on foods grown within region
- Qualitative approach to gaining insight of Millennial response to agricultural brands
- Other constructs important to understanding Millennial response (e.g., cost)

Thank you to:

U.S. Department of Agriculture / Federal
State Marketing Improvement Program
Grant # 15-FSMIP-SC-0006

South Carolina Department of Agriculture

QUESTIONS?

Appendix 5. Presentation for International Food Marketing Research Symposium



**Bridging the gap between Millennial consumers, social media, and state Agricultural branding programs:
A qualitative assessment**

Dr. Jeffrey M. Campbell & Dr. Marianne C. Bickle,
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The evolving landscape of U.S. farms:

- Average age of farm operators increasing over past 3 decades to 58.3 years
- Avenues for retail distribution increasing (e.g., farm markets, direct-to-consumer, retail grocery, coops and online)
- Young farmers in short supply but desire to appeal to younger consumers
- States and regions evaluating marketing efforts as technology changes



“State branding” within U.S.

- Started in early 1980’s with one state (New Jersey) with “Jersey Fresh”
- Most states in U.S. currently have branding initiatives, using terms such as “Certified”, “Fresh”, “Local”, “Grown”, “Preferred” and/or “Products”
- Similar to “geographical indications” (GIs) in European countries (or “destination of origin” DIs) but less comprehensive
- Current study focuses on marketing and branding efforts for one U.S. state (South Carolina)



Study focal group: "Millennials"

- Ages 18-35 years of age (Pew Research Center); 83 million in U.S., 27% of total population
- They are expected to overtake Baby Boomers in purchasing power and effect on food systems
- High focus of this group on responsible and sustainable retailing
- They associate themselves with their purchasing behavior, even for food
- They communicate their experiences more frequently which is good/bad for marketers
- Active social media users as part of daily lives

Research Questions:

- How do Millennial consumers view the concept of locally produced/grown?
- Where do Millennials shop for locally-produced items?
- What social media outlet/outlets is(are) most important to Millennials?
- How should state agricultural brands market and advertise to Millennials in a meaningful and productive way?



Purpose of study:

To better understand, through qualitative analysis, how younger consumers (e.g., Millennials) view state agricultural brands and the role that social media can play in helping to aid state marketing/branding efforts in becoming more relevant when food choices are being made.



Theoretical support/framework:

- Literature from the Generational Cohort Theory (GHT)
- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (HoN)
- Satter (2007) Food "Hierarchy of Needs"



Generational Cohort Theory

- "An individual's formative years and life experiences during those years can help to formulate their values, priorities, and goals as they progress through life" (Ingelhart, 1997; Jackson et al., 2011)
- Millennial highly responsive to social media and marketing, given they have grown up with it as part of their lives
- Millennials are key technology users, using social media to relate to one another and business for purchasing/consumption (Sox et al., 2016; Parment, 2013)



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943;1954)



(Originally published by A.H. Maslow (1943) in *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396)



Satter (2007) Food Hierarchy



In addressing research questions:

- How do Millennial consumers view the concept of locally produced/grown?
 - Is food simply a 'necessity' that can be accessed (enough food) or is it something more important (instrumental food)?
- How should state agricultural brands market and advertise to Millennials in a meaningful and productive way?
 - How to move consumers from the "enough/acceptable food" to "meaningful/purposeful food" frame of thought?



Methodology

- Qualitative approach
- Focus group interviews (5 Colleges or Universities across state of South Carolina; 6 total group interviews; 1 hour in length, audiotaped and transcribed)
- 39 total participants
- Phenomenological approach (e.g., How do you feel about advertising and social media or "Tell us your thoughts about locally produced foods")
- Follow-up questions to elaborate on feelings related to farming, farmers' markets, social media, advertising, and other topics



Analysis

- Audio files transcribed by researchers
- QDA Miner Qualitative Software used for transcription analysis
- Coding line-by-line then by paragraph to ensure contextual meaning
- Initially 300 codes, 20 groupings
- Reduction of codes to **five** primary "themes" for locally produced foods and **four** primary themes relating to social media and Millennials



Locally Produced Food 'Themes'

- Local food definition (**What**)
- Local food purchasers (**Who**)
- Local food access & outlets (**Where**)
- Local food experiences (**When & Why**)
- Local food branding & marketing (**How**)



Local food definition (What)

- “I’d say local to me is within a certain mile radius...how the states divide up into districts. I would say that within your district or the one directly next to me is local” (Geography)
- “I think of something that’s artisan when you talk about locally grown”
- “I feel like people associate local and organic in the same boat” (Descriptive)



Local food purchasers & producers (Who)

- “My Dad’s really big on stuff like that. He looks at where stuff’s grown all the time. He tries to buy as close to home as possible. He’s real weird like that!”
- “I try and go local if I can. It depends on my budget since I’m in college”
- “I don’t grocery shop but knowing my Mom...probably”
- “When people think of farmers they think of 60-year old guys. If you see a younger person as producer of the product it always changes the mental image of what people would think of the product”



Local food access and outlets (Where)

- “I go to the farmers’ market occasionally”
- “Actually, what I’ve dealt with was more roadside stands and small convenience stores”
- “Our family participates in Community Supported Agriculture and they have a local stand as well”
 - Of interest...lack of mention of national grocery stores or large grocery that carries local (e.g., Walmart)



Local food experiences (When & Why)

- “It definitely is a different personal level (farmers’ markets) and you make a little bit extra effort to go. Once you’re there you get a better experience than you do at a grocery store”
- “The interaction with the vendors. If they are rude I wouldn’t want to return”.
- “I go to see my friends”
- “I go to the farmers’ market occasionally”



Local food branding and Marketing (How)

- “T-shirts. With the logo. I think if the logo is more prominent. I’m sure I’ve seen it, I probably just haven’t noticed”
- “I think more information like education”
- “If you’re putting out a ‘Did you know?’ kind of thing. Did you know this was there? Maybe the importance of eating local and giving back to the community”
- “I like when it is emotionally stimulating in regards to it being from the state. People feel like they are part of that community”



Social Media ‘Themes’

- Social media application (What)
- Social media activity (When)
- Social media advertising (Who & Where)
- Social media information flow and communication (Why & How)



Social Media Keyword Mentions (What)

Keyword	Respondent Mentions
Facebook	98
Picture(s)	71
Instagram	67
Snapchat	62
Text(ing)	60
Post(ing)	57
Twitter/Tweet	54
Videos	32
Reviews	23
Google	16
Vine	9
Youtube	8
Amazon	4
Emojis	4

Social media application (What)

"I like Twitter. It's short, sweet, and a lot of stuff I can look at"

"I think it (Facebook) is the simplest way for all generations to use one platform"

"Instagram is just easier to filter out what you want to see. Facebook you see a bunch of junk"

"Snapchat is becoming more of its own form of social media with the whole 'My story' thing"



Social media activity (When)

Research:	Millennial Response:
PEAK TIMES FOR VIEWING: 1-4 pm for Facebook	"You gotta' post around 12ish but before 2pm. Most people will see something mid-day"
12-3pm for Twitter	"The worst time to post is Friday at 5pm for students"
Instagram anytime M-TR (except 3-4pm)	"Like 9:20pm at night we're like 'Oh yeah, this is perfect'"
Pinterest 8-11pm	"The two big ones are 9ish at night and just after dinner"



Social media platform (Who and Where)

- " I heard a radio ad and they said 'We have 12,000 Likes on Facebook' as validation. They said that just cause they can"
- "They've started doing it (advertising) on every platform (social media). I think it's really annoying. So annoying"
- " I probably don't have any advertisements that I pay attention to"
- "Now commercials (ads) are completely backlashing each other"
- "Snapchat has advertisements and Instagram will pop-up. Sponsors and Twitter does too!"

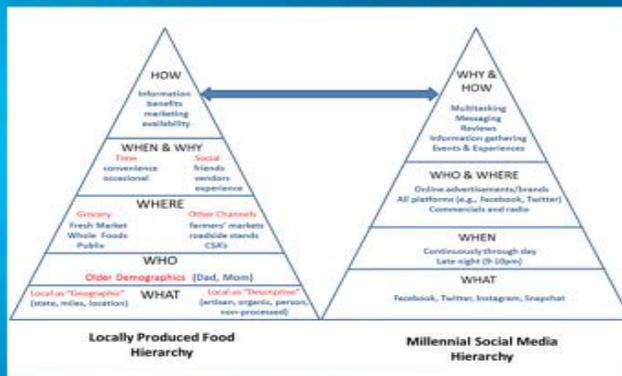


Social media information flow and communication (Why and How)

- “ I go from platform to platform”
- “ I Run multiple things”
- “Students get on their phone and Snapchat and I’ll get on Facebook, spend a couple of seconds there then go to the next one/ It’s not just one app or the other but it’s more like a consistency of a couple of different ones”
- “During an event it’s Snapchat. Before the event Twitter, after Instagram. It’s kind of a process”



Conceptual integrated model:



Key Findings

- ‘One-size fits all’ approach to marketing has been replaced by various social media platforms
- Need to integrate marketing and branding messages into information sources Millennials “trust”
- It’s not enough to just explain “Why and How” what local food is...but rather move to the local food is important to the Millennial, community, environment, and key stakeholders
- Need to use multiple ‘platforms’ of social media in branding and marketing
- Marketing messages should contain something unique so as not to get lost in the “noise”



Limitations & Future Research:

- Convenience sample of one U.S. State
- Many Millennials were students
- Millennials may not be majority of sales within agricultural sponsored brands
- Qualitative research codes/themes could be further investigated
- Research should consider other factors such as accessibility/culture
- Longitudinal study
- Seek to understand direct relationships using a quantitative approach



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QUESTIONS?



Appendix 6: White paper (in progress manuscript)

‘State’ of mind: Analyzing Millennial response to rural agricultural programs

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Abstract:

This study analyzes Millennial consumer response to agricultural branding programs within the U.S. using the theory of planned behavior and generational cohort theories as key foundations. Results from a survey of one U.S. state revealed that significant positive relationships occurred between attitudes, perceptions of product availability, and purchase intentions as well as that of purchase intentions and purchase behavior. No significant differences were found between Millennial cohorts and those within Generation X or Baby Boomers for the proposed relationships. Social media usage strengthened the purchase intentions → purchase behavior relationship for Millennials. Implications and future research directions are provided.

1. Introduction

As the state of rural agriculture in the North American food system continues to evolve, so too, must the consumers within the system. Large multinational corporations within the system through diversification and acquisition strategies have seized greater control of production and food marketing efforts to the point where the “ten largest U.S.-based multinational corporations control almost 60% of the food and beverages sold in the United States” (Lyson, 2007, p.21). While small family farms comprise a large percentage of farm numbers within the U.S. (e.g., 88% as of 2007), large-scale farms are considered more viable in terms of longevity and operating profit margins and continue to influence the options for consumers (Hoppe and Banker, 2010). This suggests a supply-driven issue for consumers, particularly the U.S.-based consumer where both the macro (access to food) and micro (food options within the retail grocery store) are believed to have negative effects on health issues stemming from food choices (Gustafson, et al., 2012).

Aging U.S. farm operators are particularly vulnerable to the shift in perceptions of farming and the ability to stay viable. U.S. News and World Report (2014), in citing both U.S. Labor Department and U.S. Department of Agriculture Census statistics, noted that the average age of principal farm operators has rapidly increased over the past 30 years, reaching an average age of 58.3 years (Kurtzleben, 2014). Younger farmers are in short supply, given a number of barriers to entry including financing, land prices, and investment issues among others (Kurtzleben, 2014). However, while the age of farmers may be increasing, the avenues for retail distribution are also increasing which may provide for a more stable income stream. Trends in distribution outlets such as a \$12 billion direct-to-consumer retail sales market (Gomez and Hernandez, 2013) that includes farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture, and local food demand have

positively affected farms as have retail grocery stores carrying more locally sourced and or/organic foods. States and regions are recognizing this shift, and are attempting to merge marketing efforts with state agricultural programs to increase demand and help keep farming alive within their locales.

Starting in 1983 with the U.S. State of New Jersey to brand “Jersey Fresh” as a way to promote their agriculture (Holstead, 2008), other states have followed. Many states are using terms such as “Certified”, “Fresh”, “Grown”, “Produce or Products” to brand their items and become more relevant to a larger audience of consumers who are seeking alternative food options within retail grocery. One such audience of interest is Millennial consumers, who have been identified as possessing characteristics of community commitment, relationship oriented, they embrace farms as having both a business and entrepreneurial component while promoting social good, and also understand marketing as a new economic activity (Ristino, 2013). Millennials are also expected to overtake the Baby Boomer Generation in both purchasing power and wield stronger effects on the food system marketplace with greater connections to local and sustainable food production (Hoffman, 2012).

Unfortunately, little research has considered the importance of the Millennial consumer as they relate to sustainable agriculture programs and in particular state brands, geographic identifiers, and rural marketing efforts. Unlike their counterparts such as Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964) or Generation X (born between 1965-1980), Millennials (born between 1981-1996) are considered as ‘digital natives’ in which social media has taken place of the traditional marketing platforms (Pew Research Center, 2014). The use of social media has allowed Millennials to stay connected to others, share their personal stories or ‘lives’ on the internet, but somehow trust others and marketing messages less (Pew Research Center, 2014).

To this end, we review how Millennial consumers respond to agricultural marketing programs, specifically state 'brand' programs for retail food products, and if factors relating to their attitudes, perceptions, and purchase intentions/behavior differ from (or are similar to) other groups of consumers.

The purpose of the study therefore is to understand the following regarding agricultural-branding programs and Millennial consumers: How are Millennial attitudes, perceptions, and intentions affected by agricultural programs that promote state-grown or produced products through branding initiatives? How might these attitudes, perceptions, and other factors important to Millennial consumers differ from other age groups such as Generation X consumers or Baby Boomers? Will these relationships between factors be moderated by other potential influences such as social media usage? It is our hope that by understanding this important demographic segment, marketers, retailers, and others involved with agricultural programs can better target Millennial consumers of retail food products who may respond differently than the traditional agricultural supporters of the past. This is particularly relevant given the ever-changing state of agriculture and the need to ensure consumer interest beyond the traditional farming practices of the past and the different usages of marketing messages by various age groups.

2. Literature review

2.1. Ajzen's theory of planned behavior

Constructs taken from Ajzen's (1985) theory of planned behavior (TPB) help to frame our current study. As a means to explaining antecedent factors of human behavior including one's personal attitudes and beliefs, Ajzen also considered factors such as influence from others (social norms), the sense of control one has of their actions (perceived behavioral control), and their influence on intentions and subsequent behaviors. Since then, researchers have successfully

applied the TPB to a number of environmentally friendly activities including green energy purchase (Hansla et al., 2008), willingness-to-pay (WTP) for environmentally friendly hotel rooms (Kim and Han, 2010), and even extended to conservation efforts on farmland and making farmers relevant (de Snoo et al., 2013). It has also been the basis for research on social networking usage by young adults (Pelling and White, 2009) as well as the notion of ‘cyberloafing’, where individuals engage in electronic activities such as surfing the web, checking Facebook and watching Youtube videos in lieu of completing work-related projects (Askew et al., 2014). The wide range of applications for this theory have allowed researchers to extend the original model into previously uncharted territories while still supporting the overall connections in the original model.

Studies relating to food and the theory of planned behavior have also considered the relationships of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and purchase intentions. These included Bissonnette and Contento (2001) and Robinson and Smith (2002). In research by Vermeir and Verbeke (2006; 2008), significant relationships between factors such as attitudes and purchase intentions were found for local and organic food choice by young adults. However, they noted two important differences from the original TPB study. First, they considered the relevance of ‘perceived consumer effectiveness’ (PCE) and of ‘perceived product availability’ (PPA) as functions of the perceived behavioral control concept. Both of these were suggested as important dimensions that may significantly affect a consumer’s intention to behave in a certain manner. Second, they concluded that influence from friends or family was not important in the selection of sustainable products for young adults. This was subsequently tested by Campbell and Fairhurst (2014) who considered the role of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control and their relationship to purchase intentions. All were found

positive and significant. However, a later study by Campbell (2014) that looked at Hispanic consumers and grocery shopping for local items determined that neither subjective norms nor ‘connectedness’, “an attribute of the self that reflects cognitions of enduring personal closeness with the world” (Lee et al., 2001) were found to significantly relate to purchase intentions, thereby showing mixed results when considering the importance of the TPB and local food purchases.

With the above studies, we suggest that Millennial consumers will reflect positive attitudes toward state agricultural programs and their branded products and these will transfer into positive purchase intentions. Therefore, we posit:

H1. There is a significant and positive relationship between attitudes toward agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions for Millennial consumers.

Given the important effect of perceived behavioral control in the TPB Model and the desire by Millennial consumers to ‘make a difference’, we also suggest that each individual dimension of perceived behavioral control as outlined by the Vermeir and Verbeke (2006; 2008) studies (perceived consumer effectiveness and perceived product availability) will also play an important role on consumer purchase intentions, specifically for state agricultural products that are often seasonal in nature. Therefore we posit:

H2. There is a significant and positive relationship between an individual’s perceived consumer effectiveness toward agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions for Millennial consumers.

H3. There is a significant and positive relationship between perceived product availability of agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions for Millennial consumers.

While mixed results have resulted on testing subjective norms and their relationship with purchase intentions (particularly for sustainable foods), it is believed that for Millennials in

particular, who have been found to engage in social media more often and look to friends and peers for approval (Pew Research Center, 2014) a significant relationship would be found between the two constructs. Therefore, we posit:

H4. There is a significant and positive relationship between subjective normative influences relating to agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions for Millennial consumers.

The role of connectedness is also believed to have a relationship with purchase intentions as younger Millennial consumers stay constantly connected to others (Pew Research Center, 2014), are community and relationship driven (Ristino, 2013), and are considered in many ways ‘hyperconnected’ to technology and with their buying habits (Adkins, 2016). Therefore we posit:

H5. There is a significant positive relationship between connectedness to agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions for Millennial consumers.

Multiple studies testing the relationship between purchase intentions and purchase behavior have shown significant positive results, including those for local or organic food products (Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2005; Campbell and Fairhurst, 2016). Therefore we posit:

H6. There is a significant positive relationship between purchase intentions for agricultural-branded products and purchase behavior for Millennial consumers.

2.2. Generational cohort theory

The Generational Cohort Theory (GCT) provides academic context for understanding group differences based upon age and the associated factors important to each segment. It postulates that an individual’s ‘formative’ years and those life events or experiences during those years can help to formulate the individual’s values, priorities, and goals as they progress through life (Strauss and Howe, 1991; Ingelhart, 1997; Jackson et al., 2011). Cohort theory also suggests that

macro-level events such as economic, political, or technological changes can have an impact on a pre-adult individual that may therefore carry onto adulthood and help to shape their behaviors, beliefs, expectations, among other things. While subsequent research has suggested flaws in the theory, including the belief that those formative events may not be seen or interpreted in the same way by groups of the same age (Giancola, 2006), the theory has helped researchers to better understand how age factors may help to affect a person's attitudes or beliefs and to help explain potential variations in behaviors between groups (Jackson et al., 2011).

In relationship to technology, the GCT has been utilized to help explain adoption and usage of technology by Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (Millennials) and found that Baby Boomers do not prefer to use technology while Millennials are lifelong technology users who focus on social media as a way to relate to others (Sox et al., 2016). While previous studies have considered variations in cohort behaviors across fashion retailing (Littrell et al., 2005), other studies have shown that Generation Y associates themselves with their consumption behavior (Parment, 2011) and that Generation Y also utilizes the 'social environment' as part of their purchasing and consumption practices (Parment, 2013). Given these cohort differences in attitudes, social networking and behavioral consumption, we believe that group differences will occur between the three cohort groups such as Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials (Generation Y) with relationship to purchasing intentions and behaviors for state agricultural branded products. We therefore posit:

H1a: The relationship between attitudes toward agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will differ by generational cohort.

H2a: The relationship between an individual's perceived consumer effectiveness toward agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will differ by generational cohort.

H3a: The relationship between perceived product availability of agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will differ by generational cohort.

H4a: There relationship between subjective normative influences relating to agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will not differ by generational cohort.

H5a: The relationship between connectedness to agricultural-branded products and purchase intentions will differ by generational cohort.

H6a: The relationship between purchase intentions for agricultural-branded products and purchase behavior will differ by generational cohort.

2.3. Conceptual framework

In support the proposed relationships, a conceptual framework is included that tests the relationships of Attitudes (AT), Perceived Consumer Effectiveness (PCE), Perceived Product Availability (PPA), Subjective Norms (SN), and Connectedness (CON) with Purchase Intentions (PI) as well as the relationship of PI to Purchase Behavior (PB). Proposed moderating factors of ‘Generational Cohort’ are also suggested and provided in Figure 1 below.

*****INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE *****

3.0. Methodology

To reach the consumers of state agricultural branded products and to ensure qualification for our sample, a survey company was utilized which asked the question, “Do you live or work in “.....” in which the location of interest was inserted. Respondents were also asked their age group in order to assign them one of the three cohort groups. A total of 1905 consumers were ultimately qualified during the two-month collection period which spanned the three generations to be tested (Millennials; Generation X; Baby Boomers) plus a small group of respondents (n = 55) who were outside of the range for the proposed cohorts (71 years of age and older). A total of 35 measures were developed for the seven constructs using prior literature from Vermeir and Verbeke (2006; 2008), Campbell and Fairhurst (2014; 2016), Sparks and Shepherd (1992),

Sparks, Guthrie, and Shepherd (1997), and Roberts (1996). All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale from 'Strongly Disagree' (1) to 'Strongly Agree' (7).

The sample characteristics included demographic breakdowns by age (n = 870 for Millennials; n = 577 for Generation X; n = 403 for Baby Boomers, n = 55 for respondents 71 years or older) as well as by gender (Millennials = 690 female, 180 male; Generation X = 461 female and 116 male; Baby Boomers 295 female and 108 male). For the Millennial group specifically, 204 respondents had family ties to agriculture and 78 had job ties to the agricultural industry. A total of 366 Millennial respondents lived in a metropolitan area of at least 100,000 people or more. The largest amount of respondents (n = 720) identified as white (Caucasian) while 101 respondents identified as Black (African American).

4.0. Analysis

For analyzing the data, SPSS 23.0 was utilized along with AMOS structural equation modeling following the methodology of Byrne (2010) as well as Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) process of a two-step approach. In step one, a confirmatory factor analysis was completed followed by creation of a structural model to test the path relationships. Group invariance testing was also completed using Byrne's (2010) procedures. Reliability scores for the primary sample of N = 1905 ranged from .770 to .932 and scores for the Millennial sample (n = 870) of .750 to .919 also suggested good reliability of the measures using Cronbach's alpha statistic. The average variance extracted (AVE) was also calculated for the Millennial sample to ensure validity for both the constructs and their respective measures. All AVE values were above .5, and five of the seven AVE values were greater than the squared correlations of their individual constructs, thus ensuring good convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs (Anderson

and Gerbing, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981). However, the construct ‘perceived consumer effectiveness’ (PCE) showed a strong squared correlation to both attitudes (.850) and the construct of connectedness (.878) which can suggest that Millennial consumers in particular believe these to be similar in nature. Given that PCE has been tested successfully in prior literature as a separate concept (Vermeir and Verbeke 2006; 2008; Campbell et al., 2015), it was kept within the overall confirmatory factor analysis and subsequent structural model to be tested. Results of the AVE testing are provided in Table 1.

*****INSERT TABLE 1 HERE *****

4.1. *Confirmatory factor analysis*

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was completed on the Millennial group of respondents. Upon model fit improvement where three measures (one for ‘attitudes’ and two for ‘perceived product availability’) reflected low standardized regression weights ($\beta = .204$ to $.259$) and were removed from further analysis, a final measurement model was created that reflected a good fit of the data ($\chi^2 = 1369.99$; $df = 424$; $\chi^2/df = 3.23$; CFI = .95; RMSEA = .051). All regression weights, variances, and covariances were significant at $p < .05$.

4.2. *Structural path analysis*

To test the six proposed hypotheses, a structural model was created that also suggested good data fit data ($\chi^2 = 1584.10$; $df = 429$; $\chi^2/df = 3.69$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .056). Of the six primary hypotheses, three were found significant and were accepted. These included H1 (AT→PI, $\beta = .850$), H3 (PPA→PI, $\beta = .409$), and H6 (PI→PB, $\beta = .529$). H2, H4, and H5 were found insignificant and therefore rejected. Results can be seen in Table 2 below:

*****INSERT TABLE 2 HERE *****

4.3. Group invariance testing

Upon completion of the structural path testing for the Millennial sample, invariance testing was subsequently performed to test for differences between the three cohort groups following Byrne's (2010) process. Groups were tested in pairs (e.g., Millennial and Generation X; Millennial and Baby Boomers) by first completing independent confirmatory factor analysis for each cohort group and then creating a 'stacked' model where the two groups could be reviewed simultaneously. Final measurement models for the Generation X cohort ($\chi^2 = 1051.20$; $df = 426$; $\chi^2/df = 2.47$; $CFI = .95$; $RMSEA = .050$) and the Baby Boomers cohort ($\chi^2 = 900.56$; $df = 429$; $\chi^2/df = 2.10$; $CFI = .95$; $RMSEA = .052$) also suggested a good fitting models for comparison where all regression weights, variances, and covariances were significant. Group models were compared using a chi-squares difference testing procedure. As structural paths, variances, and covariances were found invariant, they were fixed as equal across the groups in an additive process. The result was a final 'invariant' model that could be compared to a model in which no constraints across the parameters were placed and the model could be free to estimate. Differences in the chi-squares values of the two models provided insight as to the possible differences between the cohort groups being tested and if further testing was warranted.

Results of the between group cohort testing in support of H1a – H6a suggested that between Millennial and Baby Boomer cohorts, only the relationship of perceived product availability (PPA) and purchase intentions (PI) varied by group ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.5(1)$; $p = .033$) thereby accepting H3a. For H1a, H2a, H4a, H5a, and H6a all other relationships showed insignificant differences between the Millennial and Baby Boomer cohort groups as well as the Millennial and Generation X cohort groups.

4.4. Testing of effects from social-media usage

As a post-hoc test on the Millennial cohort group, the influence of social media use on the strength of the relationships was investigated. It was believed that higher use of social media might help to strengthen the relationships between factors like attitudes, intentions, influences from family/friends and outcomes such as purchase intentions or behaviors as Millennial consumers like to share opinions and experiences through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat (Sago 2010; Pate and Adams, 2013). Similar to the procedure used to test generational cohort groups, a chi-squares difference test was completed and social media usage groups were defined by asking “Approximately how much time (in HOURS) do you spend on social media each day?” A median split of the Millennial data reflected 491 respondents on social media 6 hours or less each day, with 379 users on social media 7 hours or more each day. A stacked group model with equality constraints imposed was compared to a model where each hypothesized path was allowed to freely estimate. Of the six previously hypothesized paths, the path of PI → PB differed by social media usage ($\Delta\chi^2 = 16.682(1)$). For the ‘High’ usage group, the relationship was stronger ($\beta = .582$) than for the ‘Low’ usage group ($\beta = .463$). The remaining paths did not statistically differ by social media usage amounts.

5. Discussion

Over the past few years, many academic and practitioner studies have been completed to better understand the difference in Millennial consumers versus other cohort groups in order to better tailor marketing messages and understand buying behavior. Directors and leaders of regional (and state) agricultural-based programs are no different in this regard. However, limited research has considered how Millennial consumers view agricultural-branded products and how

factors such as attitudes, influence from family or friends, and the level of perceptions on product availability or connections with others can help to shape intentions and ultimately behavior. This study is the first to consider these relationships at a holistic level and has yielded some surprising findings, particularly when considering similar relationships for other cohort age groups like Generation X and Baby Boomers.

First, and unsurprisingly, attitudes and intentions are significantly and positively related for Millennials (H1), as is the perception of the availability of state agricultural-branded products with purchase intentions (H3). As marketers and agricultural personnel at the state and local levels continue to highlight the importance of local to the community, positive attitudes should continue. Product availability is also important for younger consumers. Research has also suggested that factors such as product availability and having a brand that supports environmental causes and activities (e.g., a state agricultural-branded product) are more important in the relationship to actual purchase intentions for Millennial consumers than are cost issues (Lu et al., 2013). Finally, the relationship between purchase intentions for Millennials and their actual purchase behavior (H6) is strong ($\beta = .529$) suggesting that once a Millennial makes up his or her mind about purchasing a state agricultural branded item, they ultimately are able to execute their behavior. As more and more outlets for agriculturally- branded products become available such as grocery stores, farmers markets, and restaurants, what was once considered a niche market has transitioned into mainstream options for today's consumers. This also provides an opportunity for state agricultural-branded programs to ensure that their products are well recognized and available when demanded.

Surprising was the lack of significant positive relationships between subjective norms and purchase intentions (H2), perceived consumer effectiveness and purchase intentions (H4),

and connectedness with purchase intentions (H5). One explanation might be found in that shopping for food items is quite different than other types of retailing such as clothing-based or technology-based retailing, in which Millennials like to share their shopping experiences online or with others via social media. In this regard, Millennials may be less inclined to discuss their food purchasing habits with family or friends or receive advice on what to buy. Secondly, the lack of relationship with PCE and CONN with purchase intentions may indicate that Millennials, while saying they want to make a difference in their green purchasing behaviors, may suffer from effects of “Greenwashing” where they have become more and more skeptical of environmental and health-based claims of sustainable products (Ottman, 2011). Ottman also suggested that while green has become mainstream, most consumers across all generational cohorts are a ‘shade of green’ whereby some behaviors (e.g., recycling or energy efficient products) are considered more sustainably conscious than others (e.g., natural or healthy food) which may impact how consumers view food product selections.

With respect to group differences across generational cohorts, our lack of significant findings for most of the group invariance testing (H1a, H2a, H4a, H5a, H6a) can actually be considered somewhat positive news for state or regional agricultural programs operating on limited budgets who may struggle to reach a broad base of consumers. In these instances, a broad-based marketing approach that highlighted positive attitudes and product availability would continue to pay benefits, as a significant positive relationship was found between AT and PI ($\beta = .895$) and for PPA and PI (.254) for Generation X consumers while Baby Boomers indicated similar results (AT→PI; $\beta = .874$) (PPA→PI; $\beta = .169$). All three cohort groups exhibited strong relationships between purchase intentions (PI) and purchase behavior (PB), with Millennials showing the strongest relationship ($\beta = .529$) followed by Generation X ($\beta = .510$) and

Baby Boomers ($\beta = .388$). These results allow marketers to highlight the importance of agricultural-branded programs through product displays, improved customer service or increased signage, to help ensure that shoppers who enter into a store, restaurant or visit a farmers' market with the intention to buy these types of items do not leave 'empty handed' or disappointed in their choices.

Finally, results of the 'post-hoc' test of effects from social media usage on the hypothesized relationships for Millennial consumers did indicate that the relationship of PI→PB differed for the two levels of social media use. For the 'Low' social media usage group ($\beta = .463$), results were not as strong as for the 'High' social media usage group ($\beta = .582$) which may support earlier claims that Millennials like to share their experiences and shopping habits and once they have made known their intentions, they are most likely to follow through on their selection behaviors of agricultural-branded items as compared to the other cohort groups.

5.1. Limitations

As with any academic inquiry, a number of limitations must be acknowledged with respect to the findings. A self-report questionnaire was utilized to reach various respondents across the area of study, which limits the sample to only those completing the survey. Also, with many studies that review green behavior or ask persons to consider their own sustainable behavior, the possibility of social desirability bias (Philips and Clancy, 1972; Milfont, 2009) may have a negative influence on the results. The inability for the construct of perceived consumer effectiveness to fully discriminate from that of attitudes or connectedness for Millennial consumers may also limit these findings, although prior research had supported independent testing of the construct. To this end, further development of the construct and review of other dimensions may be necessary. Finally, the use of only one U.S. geographic location (state) for

the context of this study on agricultural-branded items and Millennial consumers may not reflect that of other Millennials around the U.S. and in other countries whose experiences and personal preferences may vary dramatically from item to item.

5.2. Future research

Future research, then should consider the role of state, regional or geographically-based agricultural programs supported by governmental agencies and review if location factors may play a role in the findings, given that foods such as those locally produced are often seasonal in nature and not found everywhere on a consistent basis. Research may also consider the effects from culture, as some cultures may place a higher premium on foods grown within their state or region than others. A qualitative approach may also provide key insights as to the reasons that Millennials may gravitate to certain agricultural products over others or respond in a more positive way to targeted marketing that would enhance their purchasing behavior. As Millennials continue to become an ever-important part of the agricultural landscape, being able to respond to them in an effective way through positive brand messages will help to create positive images of agriculture as “more than food”, while also helping the farms to remain a viable and sustainable enterprise.

Figure 1. Model of local food purchase behavior with generational cohort as moderator

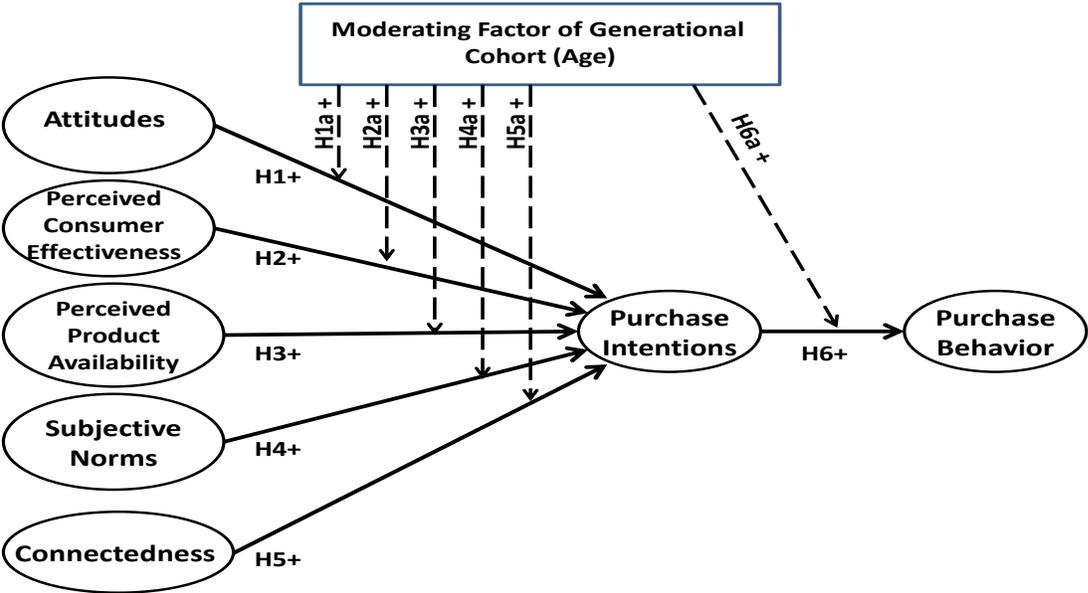


Table 1. Construct validity testing

Construct		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Attitudes	.800						
2.	Perceived Consumer Effectiveness	.850	.702					
3.	Perceived Product Availability	.618	.569	.671				
4.	Subjective Norms	.110	.206	.125	.759			
5.	Connectedness	.627	.878	.425	.171	.775		
6.	Purchase Intentions	.785	.623	.719	.104	.442	.860	
7.	Purchase Behavior	.319	.388	.265	.312	.325	.233	.684

Diagonal entries reflect the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct

Off-diagonal entries reflect the variance (squared correlations) shared between constructs

Table 2. Structural model path estimates (n = 870)

Structural Path (Hypothesis)	Standardized Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	Result*
Attitudes → Purchase Intentions (H1)	.850	.267	3.872	Significant
Perceived Consumer Effectiveness → Purchase Intentions (H2)	-.392	.538	-0.886	Not Significant
Perceived Product Availability → Purchase Intentions (H3)	.409	.061	6.876	Significant
Subjective Norms → Purchase Intentions (H4)	.063	.036	1.533	Not significant
Connectedness → Purchase Intentions (H5)	.083	.245	0.351	Not Significant
Purchase Intentions → Purchase Behavior (H6)	.529	.037	11.856	Significant

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Appendix 7: *Journal of International Food & Agribusiness Marketing* manuscript



Bridging the Gap between Millennial Consumers, Social Media, and Agricultural Branding Programs: A Qualitative Assessment

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ABSTRACT

With a growing trend for geographical branding efforts within the United States, particularly for individual states, the need to better understand how consumer groups respond to these efforts becomes prevalent, particularly for agricultural brands. The current study analyzes Millennial consumer response to agricultural branding programs within the United States and the effects of social media on this process. Using the Generational Cohort Theory (GCT) and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (HoN) as key foundations, a qualitative assessment was completed on Millennial consumers across various university campuses within one U.S. state. Results revealed that five key themes emerged relating to locally produced foods (definition, users, access, experiences and marketing/branding) while four themes emerged from the discussions on social media (applications, activity, advertising and information flow/communication). From these themes, a new conceptual 'hierarchy' is proposed that can be used to explain how Millennial consumers can become better connected with agricultural programs and branding messages moving forward. Implications and future research directions are provided.

KEYWORDS

Agricultural programs; branding; Millennials; social media

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An evolving landscape of US-based farms over the past two decades has created both concern and opportunity within the industry. A 2014 report from US News and World Report, citing both US Labor Department and Department of Agriculture Census statistics, noted that the average age of principal farm operators has rapidly increased over the past 30 years, reaching an average age of 58.3 years (Kurtzleben, 2014). Given this, a shortage in younger farmers has begun to occur with contributing factors ranging from barriers to financing, land prices, investment opportunities, and lack of desire to get into the farming business (Kurtzleben, 2014).

This is not to say, however, that opportunities for US-based farms are similarly decreasing. Avenues for retail distribution are also increasing which may provide for a more stable income stream, particularly for those farms

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who are equipped to sell both in bulk quantity and direct-to-customers. Trends in distribution outlets such as a \$12 billion direct-to-consumer sales market (Gomez & Hernandez, 2013) that includes farmers' markets, Internet opportunities, community supported agriculture, and local food demand have positively affected farms as have retail grocery stores carrying more locally sourced and/or organic foods. States and regions all around the United States are recognizing this shift, and are attempting to merge social media marketing efforts with agricultural branding programs to increase demand and help keep farming alive within their locales. This is particularly important as consumers are becoming more and more dependent on technology within their everyday lives.

One such group being highly affected by social media and technology use are Millennial consumers, defined as consumers between the ages of 18–34 years of age, born between 1980 and 1996 (Pew Research Center, 2014). Unlike previous generations, Millennials show immunity to traditional advertising media forms such as television, magazines, etc., and less than 3% said traditional media sources influence their purchase habits (Schawbel, 2015). Even harder for marketers is that only 1% of Millennials reported that a compelling advertisement would create an increased level of trust in brands (Schawbel, 2015), which makes the initial brand message even more important when trying to cater to this group.

Why is the Millennial group of consumers important to farms, agriculture, and food-based branding programs? Approximately, 30% of the adult US population are Millennials (Cloud, 2015). This cohort group has been shown to reflect vastly different eating habits than generations past, with Millennials more concerned about freshness, less processed, ethical food choices (Lutz, 2015) which are terms traditionally synonymous with locally sourced/produced foods. Millennials generally reflect characteristics of community commitment, are relationship oriented, and they embrace farms as having both a business and entrepreneurial component while promoting social good (Ristino, 2013). They also understand marketing as a new economic activity (Ristino, 2013) and not only as a push-factor, but also a pull-factor where relationships with the companies become important. Millennials are also expected to overtake the Baby Boomer Generation in both purchasing power and wield stronger effects on the food system marketplace with greater connections to local and sustainable food production (Hoffman, 2012).

While state-based agricultural branding programs have been around in the United States since the early 1980s when Vermont chartered the "Vermont Seal of Quality" in 1980 (Onken & Bernard, 2010) and the state of New Jersey in 1983 branded "Jersey Fresh" as a way to promote their agriculture (Holstead, 2008), other states have subsequently followed. Many states are using terms such as *Certified*, *Fresh*, *Grown*, *Produce*, or *Products* to designate their items and become more relevant to a larger audience of consumers who

are seeking alternative food options. Yet, while these states traditionally use standard marketing programs such as radio, television, or print media to get consumers to select state branded items, little research has considered the importance of Millennial consumers and how (if at all) they respond to these focused marketing efforts. It is this gap in the literature that the research seeks to better understand, through qualitative analysis, how younger consumers view agricultural brands and the role that social media can fulfill to narrow the gap and make state brands such as “Certified Fresh” more relevant when food choices are being made. The research therefore seeks to answer questions such as:

- RQ1: “How do Millennial consumers view the concept of locally produced/grown?”
- RQ2: “Where do Millennials shop for locally produced items?”
- RQ3: “What social media outlet is most important to Millennials?”
- RQ4: “How should agricultural brands market and advertise to Millennials in a meaningful and productive way?”

It is believed that findings from the study can help marketers in charge of promoting state or regional agricultural brands to better target consumers within this age demographic and build lasting relationships via various social media outlets, thereby enhancing overall agricultural sales and subsequent farm production.

Literature review

Agricultural branding designations

While US agricultural branding efforts are typically based around individual “states” (e.g., Texas, Florida, California) or in some cases regional (e.g., “the Carolinas”), geographic indications (GIs... or PGIs for protected geographic indications) are most common in Europe and other parts of the world. “Geographic indications (GIs) describe goods from a specific geographic origin with unique characteristics. GI products possess qualities, reputation, or characteristics that is specific to a region” (Dhamotharan, Devadoss, & Selvaraj, 2015, p. 65). Unlike in the United States, where each individual business determines whether or not to use the “Certified” logo or regional brand designation and generally work with their respective state governments to obtain certification via application and licensing agreements, geographic indication status is granted to the “collective” of producers and businesses, whereby everyone in the community may enjoy economic benefits derived from such rights (Dhamotharan et al., 2015). State brands are often used to help customers identify “local” products

(Nganje, Hughner, & Lee, 2011), whereas GIs are the result of trade and intellectual property rights decisions supported by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and thus carry stronger protection through legal and enforcement support (U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, n.d.). A third and important delineation between regional agricultural certifications in the United States and GIs in Europe and abroad is that regional agricultural certifications in the United States typically cover a broad range of products and characteristics (e.g., food items/artisanal products or locally produced/organically produced items) as the focus is on the origin of the product, while GIs (specifically PGIs) “imposes the requirement for a food product to possess only one quality pertaining to a certain area, not necessarily its place of origin” (Krystallis, Chrysochou, Perrea, & Tzagarakis, 2017). Given these distinctions, the need to understand US-based agricultural brands becomes more important in determining whether location or place of origin is the primary driver of economic development or if other qualities relating to the brand become more salient to the Millennial consumer residing with the United States.

Generational cohort theory

Theoretical support from the Generational Cohort Theory (GCT) helps to guide our understanding of Millennial consumers and their behaviors relevant to both purchase factors and social media usage. The theory postulates that an individual’s formative years and those life events or experiences during those years can help to formulate the individual’s values, priorities, and goals as they progress through life (Ingelhart, 1997; Jackson, Stoel, & Brantley, 2011; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Cohort theory also suggests that macro-level events such as economic, political, or technological changes can have an impact on a pre-adult individual that may therefore carry onto adulthood and help to shape their behaviors, beliefs, expectations, among other things.

With relationship to technology, the theory has supported that Millennials are lifelong technology users who focus on social media as a way to relate to others (Sox et al., 2016), associate themselves with their consumption behavior (Parment, 2011), and utilize the “social environment” as part of their purchasing and consumption practices (Parment, 2013). The GCT has also supported findings that Millennials use interactive media (e.g., websites, social media applications, smartphone devices) at a higher rate than other and older age specific cohorts (e.g., Generation X or Baby Boomers) and that this interactive media is important in connecting Millennials with brands and businesses (Moore, 2012). This in part explains the desire to attract this consumer base with messaging specifically targeted around value-based agriculture and how state or regional brands must focus their

energies across a large and ever-changing range of social media outlets and applications.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Seminal work by Abraham Maslow and the development of the Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954) has provided the framework for understanding human need development across the lifespan and the various stages of motivation within. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (HoN) suggests that human needs begin as basic physiological drivers (e.g., satisfy hunger) and once becoming well gratified, matriculate up a pyramid (hierarchy) into newly developed needs on levels such as safety needs, then love (belonging/social) needs, esteem needs, and finally self-actualization (growth needs) at the pyramid top (See Figure 1).

While much research has considered the HoN across various research domains, few have applied this framework to food/brand-related behaviors with Satter (2007) being one such exception. In her work, Satter developed a "Hierarchy of Food Needs" in which the pyramid levels change from having enough food (bottom) to attain instrumental food needs (e.g., variety of food, rewarding food) at the top level (Figure 2).

Food tourism is a second area in which the HoN has been applied, with Tikkanen (2007) in a review of Finnish food tourism utilized case study methodology to segment sectors of food tourism within the country and how they apply to the Maslow Hierarchy. Neither case, however, considered

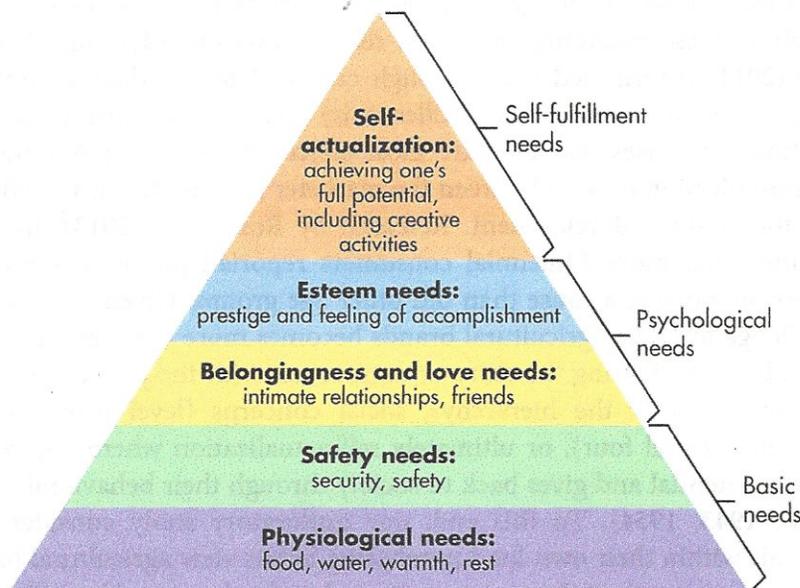


Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (HoN). McLeod (2016).



Figure 2. Hierarchy of food needs. Satter (2007).

sustainable foods within the proposed hierarchy although it has been argued that consumers in the 21st Century have moved up throughout the pyramid from a focus of having enough food (quantity) to a more quality-centered focus (Senauer, 2001).

If one is to take, at face value, current research on Millennial consumers as those with “a desire/ability to become educated consumers and a concern for social causes” (Hyllegard, Yan, Ogle, & Attmann, 2010, p.103), one might think that intertwining cause-related social issues with branding is a natural and logical progression that can bring emotional connections between parties. This would be especially true in trying to get persons to consider food as more than just substance, but rather moving consumers up the hierarchy into food choices as something more meaningful ... either on a community or self-awareness level. Although it is believed that Millennials respond more positively to these marketing messages, research has provided mixed results. Furlow (2011) determined that although cause-related marketing continues to rise, “70% of respondents (Millennials) felt that companies are not supporting the causes that they are most concerned about” (p.62) and that the communication process between the marketer and receiver is not effective within the strategy development. Research by Rozensher (2013), however, determined that more Millennial consumers reported purchasing products that were supporting a cause than did other age groups. Given these studies, the challenge for state agricultural brands becomes more than just selling the product, but highlighting the story or connection with the product and food safety (level two of the hierarchy), social concerns (level three), esteem enhancement (level four), or ultimately self-actualization where one realizes their own potential and gives back to society through their behavioral actions (Maslow, 1943, 1954). To this end, our exploratory study considers how Millennials within their own food purchasing habits view agricultural brands, and more importantly if the social media and technology used by Millennials can be appropriately leveraged by regional or state agricultural brands to help

transition consumers to a higher level of connection with the brands and the farms from which they source the products.

Methodology

During a 2-month period, data were collected via qualitative interviews across five universities or colleges located within the southeastern part of the United States. Six total interviews were completed with 39 participants, all within the Millennial age category. Using a phenomenological approach to understand the complex relationship of social media, local foods, and Millennials, interview questions and subjects such as “Tell us your thoughts about locally produced foods” or “How do you feel about advertising and social media?” were asked of the participants. From these base questions, further questions

Table 1. Participant demographic information.

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Female	19	48.7
	Male	20	51.3
	Total	39	100.0
Age	20–21	23	59.0
	22–23	10	25.5
	24–25	1	2.6
	26–27	1	2.6
	28–29	2	5.1
	30–31	1	2.6
	32–33	1	2.6
	Total	39	100.0
Race most identified	White	30	76.9
	African American	8	20.5
	Hispanic	1	2.6
	Total	39	100.0
Born in state?	Yes	31	79.4
	No	8	20.6
	Total	39	100.0
Farm family?	Yes	19	48.7
	No	20	51.3
	Total	39	100.0
Know about state brand program?	Yes	22	56.4
	No	17	43.6
	Total	39	100.0
College major	Business	17	43.6
	Psychology	3	7.6
	Interdisciplinary	1	2.6
	History	1	2.6
	Education	2	5.1
	Interdisciplinary	1	2.6
	Biology	2	5.1
	Communication	1	2.6
	Sport Science	1	2.6
	English	1	2.6
	Human Services	1	2.6
	Agriculture	4	10.2
	Non-Student	4	10.2
	Total	39	100.0

asking the respondents to detail their feelings about subjects such as farmers market visit experiences or negative impacts of social media were also explored as the data and interviews developed. Interviews lasted approximately 1 h in length and were audio-taped for accuracy and further transcribed by the research team. Demographic statistics of the interview participants are provided in Table 1.

Upon completion of the transcriptions, the files were input into the QDA Miner Qualitative Software package for analysis. The data were coded by the research team using a line-by-line approach first for initial coding, followed by paragraph coding to ensure that contextual meanings were understood. From this initial process, a total of 300 codes across 20 general groupings were formed within the software package. Continued analysis of the data suggested that the 20 general groupings could be paired into five primary themes for questions relating to locally produced foods and four themes relating to social media and Millennials. The local themes included *local food definition* (What), *local food purchasers* (Who), *local food access and outlets* (Where), *local food experiences* (When & Why), and *local food branding & marketing* (How). For social media, the themes developed included *social media applications* (What), *social media activity* (When), *social media advertising* (Who & Where), and *social media information flow & communication* (Why & How).

Locally produced food themes

Local food definition (what)

Through the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act, the US Department of Agriculture has determined that ... “the total distance a product can be transported and still be considered a locally or regionally produced agricultural food product is less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the state in which it is produced” (Martinez et al., 2010). While no specific industry standard for US businesses exist for defining local, Millennial respondents considered the concept across two frames of reference in defining “what” is local. Similar to the USDA, the first frame is geographical as noted:

I'd say local to me is within a certain mile radius ... how the states divide up into districts I would say that within your district or the one directly next to me is local”

I would say up to 45 or 50 miles

I would say within the state of... ..

Above geography, Millennials also considered “local” from a broad definitional perspective, noting that local means:

I took it (local) in a different sense of the word. The noun and how you meant the person. I was thinking someone who grew up there

I associate local with people from the area so maybe someone I would trust more

I think of something, honestly, like something that's artisan when you talk about being locally grown

Where you are actually pulling straight from the farm and you're going to sell them (products) to the Fresh Market that aren't straight to Wal-Mart and that aren't processed

However, Millennial consumers still consider locally produced and organic in the same light or as similar concepts, as noted:

I feel like people associate local and organic in the same boat

I would pay between normal prices and organic prices

And when describing factors influencing local food selection, one respondent noted: "I'd say price, whether it's organic or not." This is not uncommon within the United States, where 30% of retail grocery shoppers considered locally produced and organic as similar concepts (Campbell, 2011).

Local food purchasers & producers (who)

When discussing local food purchasers (who) and producers, Millennials often reflected that older adults (e.g., parents) were likely to buy and produce locally produced foods, in part because of cost constraints, as reflected:

My Dad's really big on stuff like that. He looks at where stuff's grown all the time. He basically tries to buy from as close to home as possible. He's real weird at that."

I don't grocery shop but knowing my Mom ... probably

I know of course the aging demographics of farmers now are pretty old but if you see a younger person as the producer of the product it always changes the mental image of what people would think of the product. When people think of farmers they think of 60-year old guys

I try and go local if I can. I mean it really depends on my budget since I am in College

If it's going to be only a couple of cents difference then it's not that big of a deal

Local food access and outlets (where)

With the increase in distribution channels for locally produced foods, Millennials are recognizing these opportunities for access. For example:

I go to the farmers' market occasionally

Actually, what I've dealt with was more roadside stands and small convenience stores. So back home we have several producers that won't sell to large chains however they will sell either on property, on site or to smaller non-franchise non-corporate areas

Our family participates in a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program and they have a local stand as well. And there's a farmers' market nearby

Back home I shop at the Fresh Market, but that's not really around here

When asked specifically about retail grocery outlets for locally produced foods, however, only a few mentioned purchasing local items there given the following:

What I've found is when you do go shop at the farmers' market or something along those lines a lot of the time the produce is cheaper. Produce at least is less expensive and is better quality than if I were to go to the grocery store and buy it

And I would say in a grocery store setting if I'm looking at the local brand versus the regular milk is the quality higher? Is there any difference in quality? And then to pricing I would say 20–30% is the breaking point where I would say Oh No, I'm gonna' go for the chain product versus the local one

If I were wanting to buy something with that (locally produced) label on it I'd probably go to like Publix (U.S. regional grocery chain), Whole Foods (specialty food chain), Fresh Market (specialty food chain) or Earth Fare (specialty food chain) type place

We are probably shopping (for local) at Publix or Whole Foods. I don't know if a majority of people do shop that way. A lot of them are shopping at Wal-Mart to buy their meats and things. I don't think the people shopping at Wal-Mart really care about local or care about organic

If you're at Wal-Mart you're there for the price. Not for quality

Of interest was the minimal lack of mention by Millennials of national grocery stores or desire to patronize large grocery outlets for local foods, such as Wal-Mart or Kroger. Wal-Mart has pledged to source \$4 billion in product from 1.2 to 1.4 million small and medium-sized farmers (Wal-Mart.com, n.d.), whereas Kroger markets their selling of locally produced food across various state branding programs and using various products such as dairy to fulfill these customer needs (Kroger.com, n.d.). However, Millennial consumers did not reflect cognizance of these marketing efforts in their discussions of grocery chains and local foods.

Local food experiences (when & why)

Above the simple task of shopping for food, experiences related to local food shopping for Millennials seem to matter, particularly when tied to farmer's markets. As noted by respondents:

It definitely is a different personal level (farmers' markets), and you make a little bit extra effort to go. So you have to have the initial interest, but once you're there you get a better experience than you do at a grocery store

I mean, at the farmers' market you can go right there and green beans and all sorts of stuff like trash bags full of stuff for like \$3

I go to the farmers' market occasionally

I like the fact that we have the farmers' market on campus but it's just always the wrong time

The only reason I don't go to the farmers' market is that it's not very convenient. You can't get everything necessarily that you need so you have to go to two places instead of one

The interaction with the vendors. If they're rude I wouldn't want to return. I don't like pushy

I go to see my friends at the farmers' market

Local food branding and marketing to Millennials (how)

Respondents were asked to recall branding messages by the state department of agriculture and how the branding might be improved, particularly to Millennial consumers. Key factors to the improved branding campaign included interaction with Millennials, better access to Certified products, free products with the brand logo or samples, and telling an educated 'story' that connects with consumers:

T-shirts. With the logo. I think if the logo is more known and more prominent ... I'm sure I've seen it, I probably just haven't noticed. Like walking around with the t-shirt logo. Maybe it's like on a local restaurant or menu just so you can see the logo

I think more information like education ... this is the symbol and this is what it means

If you're putting out a "Did you know?" kind of thing. "Did you know this was there?" or "Did you know you can get this for the same amount" to push that out for College students. Maybe the importance of "Why" eating local or giving back to the community, supporting where you are at

I agree with the "Did you know?" thing. I guess if you're trying to convince me to buy a certified local product I wanna' know why I should buy this product instead of you kinda telling me what it is but I don't know the benefits yet. If I knew then maybe that would sway me if I knew exactly what my money was going towards. What is the benefit? What benefit am I getting out of this? So being educated on what exactly Certified local is and how I benefit from that. That's important to me

I'd find some interesting articles with information on how buying stuff locally produced what the effects are. The individual farmers or it helps the state or helps me indirectly ... some insights or information on why it matters. Who it helps and who it hurts. I would find that stuff interesting

I like when it is emotionally stimulating in regards to it being from the state. People feel like they are part of that community in a close-knit environment

Physical marketing. Getting away from social media is taking food to where people are. Make it local. Even micro-local for college students if it's right there within walking distance. Bringing it in. If you did community supported

agriculture (CSA) with a delivery service I think people are much more likely to receive that

I think it's important to play off of...there's big demand for niche market products right now and to say "locally grown" it's the same type of hype that organic gets ... that's a pretty big pull for Millennials right now. You have people who are starting to be really concerned about what they are eating and where their food comes from and to be able to say locally grown that could be a really big selling point if people knew about it

Social media and the Millennials (themes)

Social media applications (what)

The continuous evolving of social media and the applications within can create a hurdle for marketers who may work to get messaging through one medium, only to have another application developed that Millennials or other users find more important. While previous research (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016) has noted the top social media applications including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, other social media applications are being used by Millennials. For example, the American Press Institute (2015) survey on how Millennials receive their news found that Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, Reddit, and Tumblr all were important outlets for communication to Millennials. Table 2 lists the social media keyword (e.g., Facebook, Google, Twitter, etc.) and the number of mentions by Millennials during the focus group interviews.

Similar to the API report, Facebook and Twitter were important outlets for Millennials. However, within the data collection, Pinterest, Reddit, and Tumblr were only mentioned once time each by Millennials suggesting that the manner by which social media outlets are used may differ by need, generation, or by intent of communication.

Table 2. Social media keyword mentions.

Keyword	Respondent mentions
Facebook	98
Picture(s)	71
Instagram	67
Snapchat	62
Text(ing)	60
Post(ing)	57
Twitter/Tweet	54
Videos	32
Reviews	23
Google	16
Vine	9
Youtube	8
Amazon	4
Emojis	4

Examples of each of these social media outlets used for information and communication to Millennials are listed below:

I like Twitter. It's shorter, short, sweet, and a lot of stuff I can look at

I think it's the simplest way for all generations to use one platform (Facebook) because it's so easy to use

Snapchat is becoming more of its own form of social media with the whole "my story" thing but I'd definitely say that Instagram is kind of a glimpse into what you're doing, Facebook is more of a broad perspective of everything

I know a little of the younger Millennials aren't as engaged on Facebook because so much of the older generation, the parents ... the parents are always on there. I cared then, but Instagram has certainly caught up and I'm even on Snapchat and things like that a good bit but even Twitter has picked up and I know Twitter and Snapchat and Instagram have been for the younger Millennials

I think Snapchat is something I never really think about social media because I feel like its communication but it's definitely ... it's totally social media

Instagram is just easier to filter out what you want to see. Facebook you see a bunch of junk half the time and the same people posting stuff

Social media activity (when)

While academic research has noted the factors such as content, timing, and frequency of social media messages has shifted from management control (push) to more consumer-driven control through pull factors (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), recent practitioner research on "timing" of social media communication has suggested that "when" messages are communicated is as important of "what" is being communicated. For example, Forbes magazine has noted that 1–3 pm for Facebook, 5 pm for Twitter, and 2–4 pm for Pinterest were considered high traffic "sweet spots" for marketing message communication (Conner, 2015). However, other research provides slightly different times. Using a combination of 16 different studies, CoSchedule.com found that 1–4 pm for Facebook, 12–3 pm for Twitter (with a peak at 5 pm), Mondays and Thursdays for Instagram anytime (except 3–4 pm) and 8–11 pm on Saturdays for Pinterest were key times for optimal views and messaging (Ellering, 2016).

Many Millennial consumers had to contend with job and school-related demands which may cause a shift in the timing of these messaging strategies or when they access social media:

You gotta post around 12ish. Most people will see something at mid-day. You gotta wait until after 12 but before 2. You get the most likes between those hours

I feel like I don't use my social media for long periods of time anymore. I check it out throughout the day but I transition from being on Facebook for maybe an hour to looking at everything so I'll just check it quick and check notifications

The worst time to post is Friday at 5". If you're going "marketing" for College students or if you're going for people who work more than a 9-5 shift the messaging really kind of sways

Like 9:20 at night were like "Oh yeah, this is perfect. People are just finishing up studying, they're about to go out, just finish dinner, there's definitely times when this is prime posting period

Two big ones are like 9ish at night because no one has gone to bed yet and people are finishing dinner and sitting down to hang out with friends

We have found with our social media usage that our PR Director has said 10 pm at night

I'm on roughly 10 hours a day, on my laptop, checking phone, social media

Throughout the day ... but mostly around 9 or 10 pm. I feel like it's spread out by the chunks get larger when you get later

I think I catch up late at night. You don't have any more responsibilities so you don't feel rushed so your able to just use that

Social media advertising (who and where)

Advertising across social media to Millennial consumers is generally a difficult proposition. Research suggests that Millennials are generally distrustful of many companies and marketing efforts (McCarthy Group, 2014; Schawbel, 2015). Millennials are also exposed to advertising more than ever across a variety of mediums and applications:

I heard a radio ad and they said on there "We have over 12,000 likes on Facebook" as validation. They said that just cause they can

There's just so many ads I hardly see other people's posts

Online advertisements have been tailored to people so it'll see what you've searched or something like then and then on Facebook ... what you've looked at is on advertisement on the right of your screen

It saves everything when you Like certain pages that will also bring in ads and stuff ... which makes me not want to search anything because the ads are just gonna pop up everywhere

I probably don't have any advertisements that I pay attention to

Growing up you would never see a commercial where you're outright saying our brand is better than competitors or this specific brand right here. They may be kind of obscure but now commercials are completely backlashing each other

They've started doing it on pretty much every platform (social media). It used to be only on Facebook but now things that you looked up 10 minutes ago are popping up and now Snapchat has advertisements and Instagram will pop-up. Sponsors and Twitter does too. I think it's really annoying. So annoying!

Social media information flow & communication (why & how)

Finally, it is important to understand why and how Millennials are using social media for both communication and information flow. It appears to be more “process” in nature, where either 1) multiple applications are being used simultaneously or 2) when something needs to be communicated, it is done through an orderly process depending on the event or timing necessary. The role of social media for product reviews and information gathering cannot be underestimated, as users consider factors such as product reviews, Google Search, Urban Spoon, TripAdvisor, and other applications to help in their decision-making process:

I go from platform to platform

I run multiple things on social media

I think a lot of people use it (social media) as a way to message other people. I don't ever Tweet but I follow other people. I take pictures of something funny and send it to my friends on Snapchat

I feel like students get on their phone and Snapchat and I'll get maybe on Facebook. Spend a couple of seconds there then go to the next one. And then I'll go to the next one so I feel like it's not just one app. Or the other but it's more like a consistency of a couple of different ones that can actually be used to get information out

During a live event I'll do Snapchat and then after the event then I'll post a picture on Instagram

And during (the event) it's like Snapchat. Before (the event) Twitter, during Snapchat, after Instagram. It's kind of a process

Snapchat it's kind of a cool way to see behind the scenes type stuff that companies will put out

If you're going to buy a car you're gonna want to know what other people think about it so I think reviews from other customers are definitely big

The less information I have the more important the review is

I'd probably say the two key factors that go with purchasing a product go with a product review, yeah it's a strong factor but I think price is another strong factor

Conceptual model

From the topics analyzed within this study (local produced food items and social media), a model for each using Maslow's HoN paradigm is proposed in Figure 3 under one combined framework specific to Millennial consumers. The “levels” of the Maslow hierarchy are matched to the themes related to local foods (five) and to those for social media (four) related to the issues of what, who, where, when, with the key dimensions of *why* and *how* taking particular importance as marketers seek to understand this demographic.

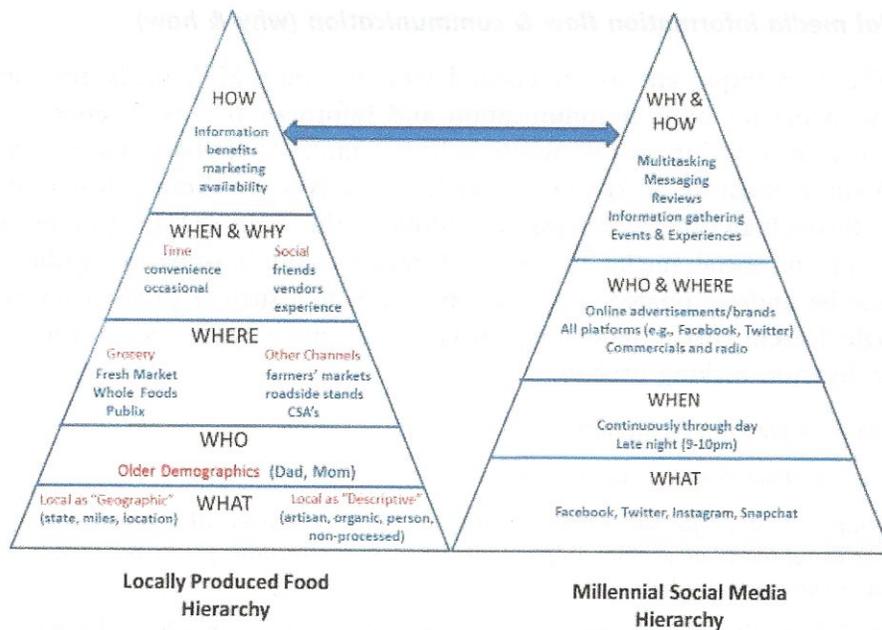


Figure 3. Conceptual framework of local foods and Millennial social media usage.

Discussion

Marketers are continually striving to better understand key demographics that can have a significant impact on their products and services, particularly in areas where there is a large shift in demographics such as ethnicity and age. This is especially true in food-related products and services, with agriculture (and particularly state agricultural brands) seeking to better understand younger consumers in a product area not generally associated with that group but rather older adults from rural areas of the country. Our pilot study is the first to consider the impact of Millennial consumers, those between the ages of 18 and 34 years who comprise nearly one-third of the US population, and how social media is used by this group to inform, communicate, and entertain. Brands, particularly those related to agriculture and food, cannot expect that the marketing messages once communicated to older adults are being received and processed the same way by younger consumers. More importantly, brands need to consider various demographic segments and begin to better tailor their marketing messages to these various segments to reach them successfully. The *one-size-fits-all* approach to marketing, unfortunately, has long been replaced by new social media platforms, differentiated “timing” of marketing messages, and messaging that enhances consumer connection to the products or services being marketed. For state or regional agricultural brands using monikers such as “Certified” “Pick,” or “Fresh”, points of connection with the consumer must also take place and as noted

by The McCarthy Group (2014, p.2), “Companies seeking to expose Millennials to key brand messages should seek to integrate the message into information sources that the Millennials trust that are not actively focused on manipulating selling messages.”

The proposed framework for connecting locally produced foods and use of social media in Figure 3 is one such step to bridge the gap between the two domains. With new and innovative social media applications being developed continually, the key for marketers of agricultural brands is to understand more than just the *What* factors ... what is being used or what something means to consumers but rather moving up in the hierarchy toward the *Why* and *How* factors. Why do consumers shop for locally produced foods? Why do certain social media applications get used over others? More importantly, “How do Millennials view locally produced foods?” or “How should marketers better connect their messaging to Millennials for local foods using the right social media applications?” may be more appropriate questions that continue to challenge both academics and practitioners within the discipline. By continual discourse in understanding how Millennials utilize social media for information, communication, and entertainment purposes, marketers now can begin to tailor their messages in a manner that creates meaning and connection to the brands they are supporting.

Limitations and future research

While the current pilot study takes a new and unique approach to understand the relationship of food brands, marketing, and social media, it is not without limitations that could affect any generalizability across other domains. First, the study utilized a convenience sample and was restricted to mostly students within the Millennial demographic, which may not fully represent others within the age cohort who may have alternative views about local foods or how they use social media. Second, prior research has suggested “that marketers may benefit more from tapping into consumers’ shared values rather than from focusing on age-identified cohorts” (Hyllegard et al., 2010, p. 103; Noble & Schewe, 2003). While this cohort group (Millennials) is of current primary importance to agricultural brands, they may not fully represent the majority of product sales within that category which would necessitate a need to study other key demographic cohorts. Third, as common with qualitative research, data were coded and interpreted via academics who may not have fully understood the implied meaning of the words or phrases used within the interview process. Themes were developed from the data which may or may not fully capture the essence of the ideas and to this end, future study using a more quantitative approach such as surveys might help to support or refute some of the ideas conveyed by Millennial consumers. Finally, it should be noted that the study only considered one US state which may differ greatly from other

states or Millennials within other countries whose culture, value systems, or beliefs might lead to alternative results. The results may also differ greatly from those studies focusing on the impact of geographical indications (GIs) in Europe or abroad which may carry more salience to the consumer based upon value perceptions or unique attributes which the food products under the GI designation may hold.

Future studies, then, may well consider the role of culture, value, and accessibility to local foods on a regular basis. Access to, and cultural support of, various social media platforms would also be of value to future studies to see whether certain platforms such as Snapchat or Twitter could be leveraged cross culturally when marketing state/regional/or national agricultural brands. A longitudinal study might also yield results more impactful to marketers as consumers in a technological world may be less impacted by short-term marketing efforts but more impacted by long-term marketing plans that provide updates, reminders, or cues to Millennials as to why purchasing local products or agricultural brands is important to the community, environment, and to themselves. In the end, as state, local, or regional agricultural brands seek to form a permanent place in the trust and wallet of Millennial consumers, the role of social media will not only become a necessary bridge, but one that can have lasting foundations so as long as marketers can understand and utilize it to its full capacity over an extended period of time.

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