

Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

Episode #6: Ariana Torres

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Announcer: Welcome to the Marketing Munchies Podcast series hosted by Dr. Bridget Behe. Each week Bridget and her guests will share information, insights, research-based findings, and her 30 years of experience to help your horticultural business connect better with current and future customers. Now, let's join our host, Dr. Bridget Behe.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Today I have with me Dr. Ariana Torres who is an assistant professor at Purdue University. Ariana is a recent friend and colleague of mine. She has an appointment in both the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture, as well as an appointment in the Department of Agricultural Economics. Ariana and I have worked on just a couple of projects and I have invited her today to talk about a project that we're looking at that has to do with e-marketing and e-commerce. Welcome, Ariana!

Dr. Ariana Torres: Hi, Bridget. How are you?

Dr. Bridget Behe: I'm good. Thanks for joining me today.

Dr. Ariana Torres: No, thanks for the invitation.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Tell me a little bit about why you're interested in e-commerce and e-marketing. What is important for retailers and other professionals in the Horticulture industry to know about those two dimensions?

Dr. Ariana Torres: Well, there are several reasons why I think these questions are important. I think the first one, I think we all have seen how you can buy plants in Amazon. That's one way for e-commerce. We also have seen businesses diving into social media marketing, getting their websites ready, trying to engage with consumers, especially their retailers. We've seen how important doing any kind of online marketing, which we define as e-marketing, has been for the recent trends in horticulture industry. One reason is we have, as I was saying before, Amazon who is really driving in sales of plants as they were for food and they started with books. I only think that this going to keep going. Businesses that do not, that ignore these trends are going to miss a great opportunity to reach new customers.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Yes, I mean Amazon really is opening tremendous doors for plants sales and I would have to imagine that many businesses are contemplating, "Gosh I'm doing some social media online marketing, maybe I should get into e-commerce and online sales of plants." We don't really have to talk in great detail about the survey that you're taking the analysis from but

maybe you could talk a little bit about some of the indicators that you think are helpful variables for a business to understand and whether they should be e-marketing or doing e-commerce.

Dr. Ariana Torres: Yes, so one of the reasons that we started thinking about this is we've been doing training of social media. It's very easy if you have a Facebook profile, your personal profile and you start and create your Facebook page for your business, or your Twitter, your Instagram. If you're in a rural part of the country, you can draw customers from urban areas or across the state or across the country.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Become a destination.

Dr. Ariana Torres: Exactly. You really have a potential. One of the things we're looking into, first, is to find an e-market. An e-market is businesses are investing money on market strategies that contemplate websites, social media, newsletters, email, contacting their customers via email.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Any kind of an electronic communication really, we're characterizing as e-marketing.

Dr. Ariana Torres: Exactly. We think, like you were saying before, with Facebook or actually Instagram and Twitter you can put a button on their page and they can say "Buy Now" or "Shop Now" and that can lead to a website, that can lead to an online sale. Something that businesses have asked is, "Now I've learned how to manage my Facebook profile, now I've learned how to gain customers attention and bring them to my brick and mortar store, how do i start selling online?"

Dr. Bridget Behe: Yes, for those who don't want to make the drive, how do I meet their needs? Talk a little but about e-commerce, that side.

Dr. Ariana Torres: For e-commerce, from the survey that we're getting the data from, basically we know, we have over 1,500 businesses who are selling online. It's hard to define e-commerce because it can be anything from "I got a contact from a customer via email and then I'm going to ship them some plants" to anything that, "I have a website that customers can pay with their credit card and I'm going to ship them plants."

Dr. Bridget Behe: So you got the button all set up on your website. Anything from an email to "I've got the buttons on the website."

Dr. Ariana Torres: Exactly. We have businesses who are doing either no e-commerce, nothing of it, to businesses who do 1% to 100%. This means that you may be a business who is really

testing the waters to all your sales are via online. It tells us a lot about the industry and how businesses are picking up the trends of e-commerce.

Dr. Bridget Behe: What do you think you'll find in the analysis?

Dr. Ariana Torres: What one of the most important questions that I think we can find is, by businesses starting to do e-marketing, starting to create their Facebook pages, Twitter, start doing the analytics, can they evolve to start making online sales?

Dr. Bridget Behe: Okay.

Dr. Ariana Torres: One of the most interesting questions to me is, okay we have businesses who may do e-marketing, businesses who may do e-commerce and businesses who do both, or nothing actually, are these decisions being taken simultaneously? Let's make a comparison. You're going to the store and you're going to buy a bottle of wine. While you're at the aisle and you're thinking, "Well am I going to have the chardonnay, which is going to be a white wine, or am I going to have the cabernet which is a red wine?" Well that decision you're taking it simultaneously. As economists would call it, conditional independent on what you are going to cook tonight. I wouldn't think that if you're going to make red meat, you're going to pick a chardonnay white wine.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Because it is probably not going to taste good.

Dr. Ariana Torres: For this relation, what I want to compare is this to the decisions, to e-marketing and e-commerce, going to lead to each other. The first question is, by we providing workshops on social media and e-marketing, can we help businesses pass their barriers, their technological or knowledge barriers to start selling online? If that's the case, we need to focus on that because that's the pathway, that's the one step towards businesses in rural counties or rural areas selling online and drawing from a bigger market pull.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Yes, they can serve a larger geographic market area. Did you see more businesses engaging in e-marketing or more businesses engaging in e-commerce?

Dr. Ariana Torres: Definitely more businesses engaging in e-marketing. It's easier.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Yes and so I think this research will also help the businesses who are thinking about getting into e-marketing to understand kind of a pathway to success but also for the many businesses that are doing e-marketing, it can help them weigh the decision about how do they get into e-commerce or do they get into e-commerce.

Dr. Ariana Torres: One of the things that we're going to be able to measure beyond are these decisions leading one to another and are we measuring the right variables, is what drives, or not, a business to do e-marketing only? What may drive or not a business to do e-marketing and jump into e-commerce? Or vice versa. We would be able to measure what influences businesses in the green industry to start doing e-commerce so we can provide as researchers and policy makers and decision makers. We can see what environment is needed to be happening for businesses to engage on a marketing strategy or a sale strategy.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Well that's great, Ariana. I really appreciate you coming on the podcast today and helping my listeners understand a little bit more e-commerce and e-marketing. I'm going to put a link in the transcript so if people want to get on your website and they want to see those tips that you have for social media marketing, that they can easily refer to that. Thanks again for being on today!

Dr. Ariana Torres: Thank you for the invitation! It was a pleasure.

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Announcer: Thank you for joining us on this week's Marketing Munchies Podcast. For more information or to download the transcript of this podcast, please visit, connect-2-consumer.org. That's C-O-N-N-E-C-T, dash, the number two, dash, C-O-N-S-U-M-E-R, dot, C-O-M.