



## Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

### Episode #30

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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:** Hi, and welcome back to the Marketing Munchies Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Bridget Behe. Today I have the privilege of having a returning guest: Melinda Knuth is a doctoral student at Texas A & M University in the Department of Horticultural Sciences. Welcome back, Mel!

**Melinda Knuth:** Thank you, I'm happy to be back!

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Yeah, I'm excited to talk about your third paper that we worked on together with Dr. Charly Hall, Dr. Tom Fernandez, and Dr. Pat Huddleston. What was the title of this paper that we are going to talk about today?

**Melinda Knuth:** This one is called "Consumer Involvement with an Expertise in Water Conservation in Plants affect Landscape Plant Purchases, Importance, and Enjoyment."

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** We've got to come up with some shorter titles. What would be a better, shorter title for that?

**Melinda Knuth:** "People who are Interested in Water Conservation, also Enjoy Plants."

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Great! That is good news for the horticulture industry, but let's first talk about some of the factors that went into the consumer behavior of this study. I think we should talk about some factors related to water conservation. You found four of them, I believe. What were they?

**Melinda Knuth:** They were Expertise, Involvement, Importance, and Impact.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** So, how much they knew about water conservation was Expertise. Obviously, Importance is how important that is to them. And then what were the other two?

**Melinda Knuth:** Involvement and Impact.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** What's Involvement?

**Melinda Knuth:** Involvement is their involvement with water conservation: how much are they active in it? How much are they inactive in it? And kind of their activity related to water conversation.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Okay, and then the last factor was...?

**Melinda Knuth:** Impact: how they feel this contributes or doesn't contribute to their attitude related to water conservation.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** So we have four kind of different perspectives, different attitudinal perspectives from these 1563 subjects. And then, let's talk about the plant factors that went into this particular study. I believe there were two factors?

**Melinda Knuth:** Expertise and Involvement, and those two factors are very similar to the water conservation except related to plants. Plant Expertise is their knowledge related to plants, and their Involvement is, again, their involvement with plants: how much they are active in plants or with plants.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** How much they plant, how interested they are, whether they have plants in and around the home, if they know different names of plants—that kind of thing.

**Melinda Knuth:** Exactly.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Those kinds of things, the Expertise and Involvement, we have used in previous studies. I think one of the really cool new contributions that you were able to develop in this particular paper were the landscape factors. Let's talk about those landscape factors for a couple minutes, because they are really interesting, I think, and we will probably use those in future studies. So what were those landscape factors?

**Melinda Knuth:** The landscape factors that we found, there were five of them. The first one was aesthetically pleasing landscape. This factor is related to how they feel about the landscape, all related to aesthetics. Then active landscape use and enjoyment, non-landscape use and enjoyment—those are opposites of each other. One is, obviously, they are actively enjoying it. The other one is they do it out of obligation. To their neighborhood, they feel that it is good for their neighborhood, but they don't necessarily like to do it for themselves. Then low landscape maintenance desire and response in drought.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** The low landscape maintenance desire was they really wanted to have low inputs. They didn't want to do a lot of maintenance. Then, the fifth one was...?

**Melinda Knuth:** Response in drought. Depending on if there is a drought in their area, they would react to it. If there was no drought in their area, then they would carry forward with what they continue to do.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** We took these five landscape factors, and then we had the two plant factors, and then we had the four water conservation factors. You kind of put this in a statistical program and shake it up and we did a consumer segmentation. You can get anywhere from 1 to 100 different segments. How many segments did you find in this particular analysis?

**Melinda Knuth:** Two.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Do you remember what they were?

**Melinda Knuth:** It was the actively interested in water conservation and the inactive disinterested.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Now, I find it interesting, pun intended, that we only found segments. Which means there is a real polar opposite in the U.S. population. You have these people that are actively interested in water conservation and inactively disinterested. I thought we might find four or five segments, but when you find two, statistically it tells you that they are polar opposites. Without going into all the details about the differences in all those factors, could you give the audience kind of a take-home message for how could we market to the actively interested in water conservation, and how we could market to the inactively disinterested? Let's start with the first one. What is the good news for the industry for the actively interested in water conservation?

**Melinda Knuth:** They are very interested in plants. Based on the analyses that we ran, they spent more in all-plant categories across the board than the people who aren't interested in water conservation. These are the people who are really active in their landscape. They enjoy working with plants. They want to spend money with plants. For those people, it would be best to market the low-water input plants to them as well as indicate messages related to water conservation.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Yeah, and I think that's really good news, because what you are saying is that water conservation and plant use, spending, interest, expertise really go together. It is good news for our industry. With that desire to have low-input landscapes, we really need to think more about the messaging that goes along with those plants that these plants or these particular cultivars would survive a drought, could tolerate lower water input—as opposed to maybe some of the cultivars that are currently on the market today. Mel, what else could we do to target that inactively disinterested in water conservation group?

**Melinda Knuth:** Going back to the low-water input plants to the actively interested, the inactively disinterested spends about half, but they are still spending money on plants. It's just about half of that amount of money as the actively interested. As we are marketing the low-input water plants and the water conserving activities to the actively interested, we could have some accidental spill-over and actually catch some of the inactively disinterested water conservers just by marketing more towards the actively interested. That can be just by happenstance.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** Yeah, so you are saying the industry really should invest their energy in the actively interested. If we do get some of the inactively disinterested it's gravy—it's icing on the cake.

**Melinda Knuth:** Exactly.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** About how big were each of those segments?

**Melinda Knuth:** They were almost perfectly split in half. Half were actively interested and half were inactively disinterested, so it was almost 50:50.

**Dr. Bridget Behe:** I guess for the industry, what that means is with targeting some of these water-saving messages to half of the market, we still might pick up some of that other half—maybe 10 or 20 percent of that other half just accidentally or incidentally. Well, I really think this is good news for the industry, especially as the number and the length of drought occurrences happen. At least we have got some research-based information to reflect back on

and say, you know, these are some strategies that we could use to keep people interested in and buying plants even during periods of drought.

I appreciate you coming on the podcast today! Thank you.

**Melinda Knuth:** You are welcome.

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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](http://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.

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