

Marketing Munchies Podcast Transcript

Episode #34

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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 am delighted to have with me, Dr. Alicia Rihn, data management analyst at the University of Florida Research Center in Apopka. Welcome, Alicia!

Dr. Alicia Rihn: Thank you, Bridget, it is great to be here.

Dr. Bridget Behe: I am happy to have you on the show. I want to talk about a paper that we published a couple of years ago with Hayk Khachatryan, Ben Campbell, Charlie Hall, and you and I worked on this. I want to focus today on the pollinator aspect of it. You want to give us just a little bit of a background on how we collected this eye-tracking data and kind of what the set up was?

Dr. Alicia Rihn: Sure. We had participants coming in to our Mid-Florida Research Center to look at and evaluate some plants. We had some annual landscape plants: pentas, petunias, and hibiscus as well as some fruit-producing plants: some blueberries, kiwis, and then pineapple plants. We showed them images of these plants on a screen with overhead signs indicating if they were pollinator-friendly or not as well as price-production method and then point-of-origin for those products. While we had them look at them, they would vote whether they would be interested in purchasing that product or not. So we asked them on a 7-point scale "how interested are you in this product?" One being "not very interested," seven being "highly interested" in purchasing it. While we had them evaluate those products, we had their eye movements recorded. We could then look and see if there was any correlation between what they fixated on, how long they looked at it, and then the purchase-likelihood for those different plants.

Dr. Bridget Behe: It sounds a little complicated, but actually it'd pretty straight forward from a research standpoint. But let's get to the meat of the matter or the heart of the matter. Let's talk first about pollinator-friendly plants. What were some of the findings from the pollinator-friendly sign? Was that something that caught people's attention, and were they willing to pay a little bit more for that information?

Dr. Alicia Rihn: What we found was that just having some sort of indicator present showing that that product was pollinator-friendly really improved their liking of that plant. With our study it was a pollinator-friendly sign that improved their likelihood of purchase by 0.41. Then if they fixated or if they actually looked at that signage and it improved purchase likelihood substantially more than many of the other different signs that we had available for them to look

at. In terms of willingness to pay, they were willing to pay right around \$2.10 more for the landscaping plants that had the pollinator-friendly signage.

Dr. Bridget Behe: The baseline price for those, so we can think about in addition to the price, was somewhere between \$11-15.00. Pretty substantial in terms of what it would add to the price and potentially the profit of those landscape plants. I guess the take-home message for garden retailers and for growers and wholesalers is we need to mark plants as pollinator-friendly. If they are nectar-producing, if they have a food source for any type of pollinator that consumers, at least the ones that we tested in Florida, really were very interested in that information on a sign. I think that is a great piece of information.

Now we also had in there the state marketing program. What was the effect of the state marketing program, in this case it was fresh from Florida, did that really matter in terms of what the consumers thought about, what they looked at, and what they were willing to pay for that?

Dr. Alicia Rihn: We actually found that regardless of the plant type, people were very interested in having in-state produced product. When we looked at it in terms of visual attention, that didn't seem to have a lot of impact, and what we suspect occurred was that people are very familiar with this logo. They don't have to look at it nearly as long as they have to look at other product features in order to comprehend what it means. This logo itself is available on all sorts of fresh produce. Florida is a very big production state. We suspect there was a lot of recognition among consumers.

Now, in terms of the premium people were willing to pay for these plants with the logo, it was somewhere between \$6-7.00 on top of the base price of that plant.

Dr. Bridget Behe: Yeah, and just again, to refresh the listeners' memory, that was anywhere, a plant that was priced anywhere from \$11.00 in the landscape—\$11-15.00 in the landscape side and \$16-20.00 on the fruit side. Again, I think having the information about where the provenance was for the location of production is an important factor. Now, we know, not everybody reads every sign, but the signs are important. Here we have really sound evidence that marking plant material as pollinator-friendly and using the state promotion campaign—which really implies, infers, and documents that this is a locally grown product—can help and can enhance the profitability.

I will put a link to that publication on the website if people want to read the publication with all the gory details. I really appreciate you coming on the podcast today, Alicia!

Dr. Alicia Rihn: Yeah, thank you for having me, Bridget. It has been a lot of fun!

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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.

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