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Evaluation of Kansas Beef Consumers' Awareness and Understanding of Business-to-Consumer Marketing

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to determine the understanding and knowledge level of consumers purchasing beef in the business-to-consumer (B2C) format within the state of Kansas and identify their purchasing perceptions, concerns, and areas perceived to require additional support. Consumers (n = 174) were recruited from an online social site of Shop Kansas Farms, where members were invited to participate in a survey during a two-week period in March of 2021. Consumers, though some were new to the B2C method of buying beef, had high levels of previous experiences. It was found that 93% of consumers surveyed had purchased local beef previously. Only 5.7% of those who had purchased B2C beef previously had challenges during their experience. Of the consumers who had trouble during their experience, consumers listed “unsatisfied quality,” “unsatisfied portions,” “limited variety,” and “low take-home weight” as areas of concern or complaint. Moreover, 63.1% of consumers reported that their latest purchase was also their first purchase, indicating that the demand for beef in a B2C format is increasing, due largely in part to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, while Kansas consumers have an overall positive experience purchasing beef through B2C channels, there is an opportunity for improvement in consumer-focused resources and education.

Introduction

Consumer demand for local beef has increased over the past few decades and has been further heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic (Hobbs, 2020). While research has been conducted to determine the distance consumers are willing to consider “local beef” and the premium price consumers are willing to pay (Ridley et al., 2014), little information is available as to consumers’ awareness and perceptions of business-to-consumer (B2C) type programs within Kansas. Moreover, a lack of information available to consumers about B2C opportunities has created challenges for producers and consumers navigating the current B2C market. Therefore, the objective of the current study was to evaluate the current consumer views of buying beef in the B2C model within the state of Kansas.

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Experimental Procedures

An online survey (Qualtrics Software, Provo, UT) was created to assess the understanding and knowledge level of consumers purchasing beef in a B2C format within Kansas. Consumers were recruited from an online social media group called Shop Kansas Farms, which has 158,732 members, of which 174 participated in the survey. Members were invited to participate in a survey during a two-week period in March 2021 and all responses were self-reported via the digital survey.

Results and Discussion

Results of the survey showed 93% of consumers ($n = 174$) reported having previously purchased beef products from a local producer or locker. Of these, 63.1% reported that their most recent purchase was their first time purchasing in a B2C format and the same percentage of consumers had been purchasing beef in a B2C format for less than five years. The most common methods of purchasing beef in a B2C format were “portion cuts” (24.5%), followed by “quarter beef” (17.0%) and “half beef” (15.1%), or a combination of at least two of these methods (20.7%). Only 5.7% of consumers experienced challenges while purchasing beef in a B2C format, yet 100% of those consumers still intended to continue purchasing beef in this format. When consumers were given options that would be useful to prevent future complaints, the most selected response was “improved consumer knowledge.” The consumers ($n = 82$) who rated this response as “very effective” or “extremely effective” indicated that “increased state extension resources” would be at least “moderately effective” (82.9%). This indicates that increased state extension resources would be an effective way to improve consumer knowledge. Consumers ($n = 12$) who had not purchased beef in a B2C format had considered purchasing B2C beef 91.7% of the time, while the most common barriers were “lack of freezer space” (25%), “quantity too large” (16.7%), or a combination of freezer space and quantity (16.7%).

Implications

Consumers within the state of Kansas are interested in and have positive experiences with purchasing beef in the B2C format. Moreover, most consumers are new consumers to buying beef in the B2C format, indicating that there is increasing demand for beef available for purchase in this format. Results of this study also show an opportunity for growth within consumer understanding of purchasing beef in a B2C format, leaving room for improvement in extension and other resources for consumers.

Acknowledgments

This project was funded by the USDA, NIFA, Farm Business Management and Benchmarking Program, Award # 2021-05867.

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Table 1. Summary of responses from consumers who previously purchased beef in a B2C¹ format regarding most recent purchase and complaints or concerns (n = 174)

Characteristic	Response	Percentage of consumers
Most recent purchase was first purchase (n = 157)	Yes	63.1
	No	36.9
Method of finding product (n = 154)	Stand-alone website	0.6
	Stand-alone website, other marketplace ²	0.6
	Stand-alone website, social media	1.3
	Farmer's market	3.2
	Farmer's market, social media	0.6
	Farmer's market, social media, other marketplace ²	0.6
	Other marketplace ²	23.4
	Other	11.7
	Recommendations	31.8
	Recommendations, farmer's market	0.6
	Recommendations, other marketplace ²	2.6
	Recommendations, other	0.6
	Recommendations, social media	0.6
	Social media	15.6
	Social media, other marketplace ²	3.9
	Social media, other	1.9
Other method of finding product (n = 22)	4-H animal	4.5
	Personal relationship	54.5
	Local locker/butcher	18.2
	KC Food Circle	4.5
	Shop Kansas Farms	18.2
Experienced trouble (n = 157)	Yes	5.7
	No	94.3
Concern or complaint ³ (n = 9)	Unsatisfied portions	11.1
	Low take-home weight, other	11.1
	Low take-home weight, unsatisfied portions	11.1
	Unsatisfied quality, unsatisfied portions, other	11.1
	Unsatisfied quality, unsatisfied portions, limited variety, other	11.1
	Unsatisfied quality, low take-home weight, unsatisfied portions, other	11.1
	Limited variety	11.1
	Other	22.2
Other concern or complaint ³ (n = 6)	Lack of knowledge regarding cut order	33.3
	Poor workmanship	16.7
	Bad experience	16.7
	Tough meat	16.7
	Issue with locker	16.7

continued

Table 1. Summary of responses from consumers who previously purchased beef in a B2C¹ format regarding most recent purchase and complaints or concerns (n = 174)

Characteristic	Response	Percentage of consumers
Requested bones and organs ⁴ (n = 9)	Yes	33.3
	No	66.7
Requested boneless steaks ⁴ (n = 9)	Yes	66.7
	No	33.3
Producer or locker attempted to resolve issue ³ (n = 9)	Yes	44.4
	No	55.6
Description of attempt made ⁵ (n = 4)	Provided additional beef or other products	50.0
	Provided an explanation	50.0
Consumer satisfaction with attempt made ⁵ (n = 4)	Extremely satisfied	50.0
	Somewhat satisfied	25.0
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	25.0
Intention to continue purchasing B2C beef ³ (n = 9)	Yes	100.0
Reason for continued purchase ⁶ (n = 7)	Pleased with quality	42.9
	Intend to switch producer/locker	28.6
	Support local economy	14.3
	Access to specialty cuts	14.3

¹Business-to-consumer (B2C) is a business model in which consumers purchase products directly from a business.

²Including Shop Kansas Farms and Facebook Marketplace.

³Question appeared only to consumers who responded yes to experiencing trouble.

⁴Question appeared only to consumers who responded low take home weight to concern or complaint.

⁵Question appeared only to consumers who responded yes to attempted to resolve issue.

⁶Question appeared only to consumers who responded yes to intention to continue purchasing.