

THE SHIFT IN CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS BEFORE AND AFTER EXTENSION-LED BEEF CATTLE FARM TOURS



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INTRODUCTION

Research about online education shows that people would like to have discussions about complicated topics in person rather than online (Kemp & Grieve, 2014). That is where transparent in-person discussions and farm tours are beneficial. This study utilized the Elaboration Likelihood Model and found that the ability to process information was lacking because of a lack of prior knowledge. This provides an argument that increasing agricultural literacy among consumers is an effective way to address misconceptions about the agricultural industry.

METHODOLOGY & RESULTS

This study addressed perception, knowledge, and trust through a one group, identical pre-test and post-test design. A Likert scale was used for the first eight questions on the survey. The non-parametric Wilcoxon Rank Sum test was used to determine significant differences.

Question	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>r</i> ^b
I am knowledgeable about agriculture	21.00	< .05	2.33	.777
I am knowledgeable about beef production	36.00	< .05	2.55	.850
I understand the process of how beef goes from pasture to plate	28.00	< .05	2.46	.820
I have a positive perception of the beef industry in Arkansas	21.00	< .05	2.33	.777
The food I buy is healthy, regardless of label	12.50	< .07	.431	.144
The food I buy is safe, regardless of label	10.00	< .07	1.86	.620
I trust America's food system	10.00	< .07	1.84	.613
I trust beef cattle farmers	21.00	< .05	2.33	.777

^a Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree. ^b Interpreted as .02 = small, .05 = medium, .07 = large.

CONCLUSION

This study determined that first-hand experience, in the form of a farm tour, had a positive effect on shifting the perceptions of the participants. All questions that were discussed in the program improved perceptions of participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that data about farm tour effectiveness be collected when farm tours are conducted. This feedback can guide future programs and provide information about what consumers want to learn about most. This study looked specifically at beef cattle operations, a study focused on agriculture in general or other specific commodities - livestock, crops, horticulture, aquaculture, and entomology would be beneficial in determining if the findings are similar across the industry.