

Annual Tracking Study Shows California Avocados Are Still Dominant

For more than 20 years, the California Avocado Commission has conducted an annual tracking study that provides consumer feedback concerning how brand image and consumer attitudes, perceptions and behaviors have changed over time. This study also provides effectiveness measures for the Commission's marketing programs.

The tracking study is conducted by the independent research firm, Bovitz, Inc., in the early fall to coincide with the end of the California avocado growing season and the conclusion of CAC's advertising. The survey is conducted nationally with more than 1,500 respondents. The tracking study is done in conjunction with other market research efforts, such as consumer trends analysis and consumer segmentation to keep a finger on the pulse of the avocado consumer.

The tracking study measures progress toward accomplishing CAC's marketing objectives. The first and most prominent focus of 2013 was to enhance the perception of 'premiumness' for California avocados. California avocados have always stood for top quality, superior taste and artisan craftsmanship. This past year marketing amplified these attributes to reinforce a premium image for which consumers are willing to pay more.

Another objective was to continue to focus on raising the importance and awareness of checking for the country of origin of avocados. This is extremely important because historically, when consumers are aware of country of origin, California has consistently come out ahead. California is the preferred growing region by as much as 10 to 1 over the next highest growing region. Lastly, the longest standing objective has been to expand overall consumption and usage of avocados during the months of the California season.

The results for 2013 show that marketing efforts in the designated ad markets (California, the Pacific Northwest, Arizona, Colorado and Utah) continue to meet the Commission's goals. While the tracking study covers the entire United States, all of the data in this article focuses on the respondents from designated ad markets.

This year, the "Premium" advertising campaign's style evolved to bolster the superior positioning of California avocados in the marketplace. The attributes of *freshness*,



taste and reliability were used to shape the premium image. The tracking study indicates this campaign has successfully built upon the well-established equity of the "Grower" campaign from previous years. The new ads have proven to be even more attention-getting (82 percent) and persuasive (70 percent) with scores that were significantly higher than the previous ads. The attributes of *freshness*, *taste* and *reliability* were used to shape the premium image for California avocados. Sixty-one percent of all respondents in ad markets rated California avocados as having the most premium qualities, while only 22 percent gave the major competitor equally high ratings. The effectiveness of this campaign is demonstrated by the fact that California avocados are rated 30 points higher by those respondents who recalled seeing

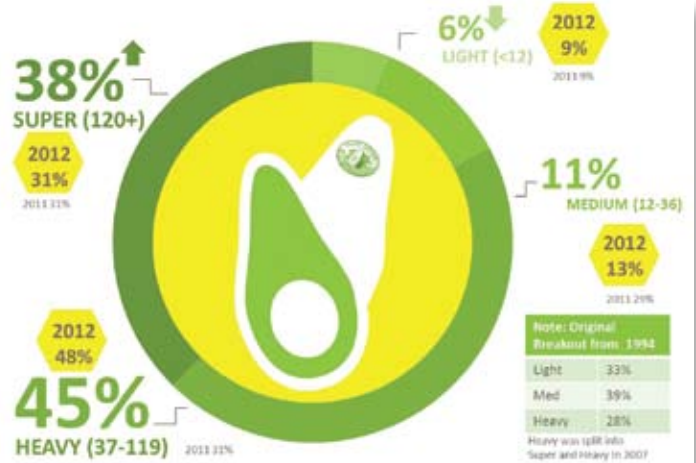


the "Premium" campaign ads versus those who did not see the ads.

The California avocado brand awareness ratings are at an all-time high of 80 percent, which maintains a significant advantage over any of the other countries. The study also revealed that 72 percent of consumers believe it's important their avocados are grown in the United States. In 2008, the year before the "Grower" campaign debuted, that number was 54 percent. People actually checking for country of origin also has reached an all-time high, increasing from 30 percent to 45 percent in just two years. While this is encouraging, 4 out of 10 respondents who do not regularly check for country of origin noted they don't do so because of poor labeling. The challenge remains to develop a labeling system that makes it easier for consumers to identify country of origin.

A long-time, overarching goal has been to expand per capita consumption of avocados. When the study was started in 1994, usage was classified into three categories – *light* (less than 12 avocados per year), *medium* (12 to 36 per year) and *heavy* (37 or more). The percent of users was

almost evenly split between the three groups. Since then avocado usage and consumption has grown by such large margins that in 2007, the heavy group had to be split into two sub groups – heavy (37-119 per year) and super users (120 or more). Today there has been almost a fourfold increase from 28 percent to 83 percent of respondents who now fall into either the heavy or super user categories.



Much of the growth in avocado consumption can be attributed to the Commission's promotions surrounding avocado usage during the summertime. Sixty-five percent of consumers served avocados for their summer holiday festivities in the past year, up from 58 percent in 2012. Summer parties, BBQs, picnics, Cinco de Mayo, Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day all play a significant role in boosting summer consumption numbers.

check country of origin during the purchase process
 % within Ad Markets



Ways More Likely to Serve Avocados vs. Last Summer
 (A lot more/a little more likely)



The results of the 2013 avocado consumer tracking study continue to validate the effectiveness of the Commission's marketing efforts. The tracking study demonstrates the impact advertising has had in bolstering California avocados into the most premium position in the marketplace. The study will be run again in September after the 2014 season to continue the evaluation of California avocado branding and marketing efforts.