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Developing a Social Marketing Plan for Direct to Consumer Agricultural Operations

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Developing a Social Marketing Plan for Direct to Consumer Agricultural Operations

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Dale Bumpers College
of Agricultural Food and Life Sciences Honors Program

by

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Abstract

Since the 1980 farm crisis, the agricultural economy has continued to decline with United States farmers receiving less than 16 cents per dollar spent on food (Dunnun, 2017). As a way of combatting decreased profitability, agricultural producers are turning to direct marketing (Rainey, et al., 2011). Direct marketing exists as a social marketing in which producers develop a personal relationship with their customers (Rainey, McGraw, & Popp, 2011; Weinreich, 2011). In order to be successful in social marketing, the audience with which they are trying to reach must be determined as well as the most effective way to meet the audience's needs (Weinreich, 2011). Focus groups is a method through which qualitative data is collected and used for marketing analysis (Weinreich, 2011). This research project involved conducting two focus groups for a direct marketing dairy farm, Creamy Hills Dairy (CHD), in order to identify the audience demographics and determine the audience preferences for marketing. Nvivo 11 was used to analyze focus group transcripts and emergent themes were identified. Within the focus groups, questions regarding consumer needs, product pricing, branding, communications efforts, and customer service were presented. Analysis of the focus group data revealed direct market consumers prefer simple, transparent marketing which allows individuals to connect with their food source and the individuals who grow that food. While budget was a concern, nutrition and quality came before price in purchasing decisions. These results indicate that CHD should include an integrated marketing plan focused on building consumer relationships with the CHD family in a way that simplifies the lives of the CHD customers. Information regarding food quality and nutrition should be shared in marketing material as a means of strengthening consumer ties to CHD.

Keywords: social marketing, direct to consumer marketing

Introduction and Literature

Dairy Crisis

“After 40 years of dairy farming, I sold my herd of cows this summer. The herd had been in my family since 1904; I know all 45 cows by name. I couldn’t find anyone who wanted to take over our farm - who would? Dairy farming is little more than hard work and possible economic suicide. A grass-based organic dairy farm bought my cows. I couldn’t watch them go. In June, I milked them for the last time, left the barn and let the truckers load them. A cop-out on my part? Perhaps, but being able to remember them as I last saw them, in my barn, chewing their cud and waiting for pasture, is all I have left,” mourns Jim Goodman, an organic dairy farmer from Wonewoc, Wisconsin (Goodman, 2018, p. 1-2).

Goodman recounts that in 1979 he was able to milk his 45 cows, make a decent living and pay the bills. However, in the 1980s, debt loads became impossible for many farmers to handle. Over 250,000 farms died during that decade and 900 Midwest farmers committed suicide. According to Bob Klingenfus, a Kentucky dairyman, his local feed store calls to check on him often and some dairy cooperatives have started sending suicide hotline numbers along with dairy farmers’ milk checks because of where the dairy economy is (McCausland, 2018). According to Goodman (2018), “As devastating as the 1980s were for farmers, today’s crisis is worse.” “Government subsidies are ineffective and insurance programs are worthless to farmers when dealing with plummeting price and oversupply. The new farm bill, passed by President Trump in 2018, provides some relief for large dairy farmers by expanding some subsidies and allowing large dairymen to pay lower premiums when they desire to participate in federal programs that compensate dairy farmers when milk prices drop below a certain level. However, dairy farmers do not desire subsidies; they desire fair prices. Unfortunately, the new legislation will not help the small dairy man, and the loss of the small family farm will continue” (Goodman, 2018, p. 7).

In March 2019, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that 2,731 dairy farms went out of business since 2018 (Dickrell, 2019). As of March, only 37,468 dairy farms were in the United States, a drop of 6.8% from the 40,199 farms reported in 2018. In 2018, Wisconsin lost 590 dairy farms, a drop in the state's dairy farm numbers of 6.5%. Pennsylvania lost 370 farms, a decline of 5.6%, and the most alarming loss occurred in Michigan. With dairy farm numbers only totaling 1,520, the state lost 230 farms, a 13 percent decline. Not a single one of the 50 United States reported an increase in dairy farm numbers (Dickrell, 2019).

In fact, between 1970 and 2006, the number of farms declined steadily from 648,000 operations in 1970 to 75,000 in 2006, or 88% drop. Total dairy cow numbers fell from 12 million in 1970 to 9.1 million in 2006; meaning the average herd size shifted from just 19 cows per farm in 1970 to 120 cows in 2006. Furthermore, milk production per cow doubled between 1970 and 2006 (from 9,751 to 19,951 pounds per year), total milk production rose, and average milk production per farm increased twelvefold. These changes reflect a growing trend toward increased specialization as well as increased farm size (USDA, 2006).

However, like many other sectors of the agriculture industry, dairy farms come in a wide variety of sizes. Large dairy farms in the U.S. have over 15,000 cows, but farms with 1,000-5,000 cows are more commonly found. The large farms account for most of the production in the Western States, and are becoming more common in other areas of the nation as well. The smallest class of dairy farmers who milk fewer than 30 cows still accounted for almost 30% of all dairy operations in 2006, but they comprised only 2% of cow numbers in the nation and produced just over 1% of the total national milk supply. Farms, such as these, as well as the 30-200 cow dairies are rapidly disappearing. In fact, these farm numbers fell 30% between 2000 and 2006. The quantity of farms in the largest size class (those milking more than 2,000 head of

cattle) more than doubled between 2000 and 2006, as did its shares of cow inventory and total milk production (USDA, 2006).

Despite the increased agricultural production, seen not only in the dairy industry but other agriculture sectors in the United States, agriculture profitability for producers continues to decline, resulting in the weakest agricultural economy since the 1980 farm crisis (Dunnum, 2017). In 2017, the median income projected for United States' farmers was negative \$1,400, and agricultural producers earned 15.6 cents per dollar spent on food by American consumers, according to USDA findings (Dunnum, 2017). That was the lowest profit earned by agricultural producers since 2006, during which time they earned 19 cents per dollar (Dunnum, 2017; Rainey, McGraw, & Popp, 2011).

More than 80 percent of the American food dollar is accounted for by the intermediate markets between the producer and consumer (Dunnum, 2017). These intermediate markets include costs such as marketing, wholesale, distribution, and retailing (Dunnum, 2017). Reducing intermediate costs increases farmer's profit margin, "the difference between the cost of the raw product and the retail price" (Rainey, et. al, 2011).

Because of the reduced profit margin within traditional agricultural marketing, producers are finding staying in production increasingly harder (Dunnum, 2017). Resultantly, farmers are finding alternative marketing channels due to the increased costs associated with traditional marketing methods (Rainey et al., 2011). In other words, farmers are exploring ways to market directly to consumers as a way of decreasing the marketing route and increasing the profitability of farm products (Rainey, et al., 2011; USDA, n.d.).

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing proves to be one alternative marketing channel producers are exploring. One Indiana dairy farmer, Alan Yegerlehner, said he transitioned his commercial dairy operation to a direct market entity in order to counteract debt incurred during the 1980s and as a way of giving his children the opportunity to return to their family farm and be a part of the operation if they desired to (Thomas, 2016). “We wanted to make some changes that would allow our children to farm with us later if they wished.” “We structured things so that they could farm with us if they wanted, and if they didn’t, that would be fine, too” (Thomas, 2016, p. 74).

Yegerlehner farm once sold dairy products at farmers’ markets and retail stores; however, because of government regulations his dairy began focusing on marketing primarily out of their farm store and at drop off points (Thomas, 2016). “This has changed the complexion of our marketing. In the process we have taken a hit, during this change, but we felt in our heart that this is what we should do, because of the purity of our product and the desires and needs of customers” (Thomas, 2016, p. 76).

For agricultural producers such as Yegerlehner who desire to market directly to consumers, the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture recommends that producers first evaluate their marketing and production costs (Rainey, McGraw, & Popp, 2011). Secondly, the producer should develop a marketing strategy which evaluates the product, price, promotion and placement (Rainey, McGraw, & Popp, 2011). As part of direct marketing, producers are encouraged to develop personal relationships with their customers (Rainey, McGraw, & Popp, 2011).

Social Marketing

The idea of developing personal relationships is supported by the social approach to marketing. Social marketing originated in the 1970s and seeks to persuade people with more than facts alone and works to overcome social and cognitive obstacles hindering information from getting to the audience (Weinreich, 2011). Rather, social marketing focuses on getting consumers to adopt a behavior or essentially “own” their products (Weinreich, 2011). Social marketing varies from commercial or traditional marketing by placing the marketing focus on consumer benefits (Weinreich, 2011).

However, to be able to develop an effective social marketing plan that benefits the individual, an organization must identify the audience with which they are communicating. “Social marketers know that to create effective programs, they must talk (and listen) to the people in their target audience to find out what they want and need as well as what would have the greatest effect on changing their behavior” (Weinreich, 2011, p. 9). Additionally, social marketing evaluates what product is being marketed and asks how that product will benefit the target audience by looking at price considerations, product availability, and product promotion strategies (Weinreich, 2011).

Social Cognitive Theory

The social cognitive theory provides the theoretical framework behind social marketing by looking at the reciprocal action of the individual, environment, and behavior. Rather than just looking at initiation of a behavior, the social cognitive theory looks at the maintenance of a behavior as an individual sets and takes action toward achieving goals (LaMorte, 2018). According to Bandura (2001), media plays a role in influencing individuals’ behaviors as part of the environmental factors affecting individuals’ decision making and goal setting. Additionally,

individuals self-regulate their goals and actively set higher goals for themselves once one goal has been met, allowing individuals to maintain or further a behavior (Bandura, 2001).

The social cognitive theory often comes into play in individual's health behaviors. Completing a behavior successfully can be influenced by individuals considering the consequences of their choices prior to taking action (LaMorte, 2018). Additionally, individuals base their expected consequences largely on previous experiences (LaMorte, 2018). "While expectancies also derive from previous experience, expectancies focus on the value that is placed on the outcome and are subjective to the individual" (LaMorte, 2018).

Value based purchasing has been found to influence consumers' purchasing choices in regard to local and natural food products. For example, some individuals place value on environmental and health factors (Rytkonen, Bonow, Girard, & Tunón, 2018). "The purchasing decision can have both psycho-social consequences (makes the consumer feel good) and functional consequences (makes the consumer eat healthily and stay healthy)" (Rytkonen, Bonow, Girard, & Tunón, 2018).

Additionally, factors aside from the healthfulness of food can be seen influencing purchasing decisions. Researchers from Sweden's Södertörn University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences conducted focus groups to determine the values behind local food purchasing decisions, and the researchers found that the focus group participants shared a desire to have a personal connection with the individual growing their food as well as witness a sense of agricultural heritage and a symbiotic relationship between the producer and the consumer (Rytkonen, Bonow, Girard, & Tunón, 2018). "Some expressions for the demand for 'food with a farmer's face' are connected to the desire of knowing where the food comes from, a surge for nostalgia or 'grandma's cooking', 'short food chains' and, by the emergence of a

willingness to support the local food producer as a relation based on reciprocity, shared values emerge between producers and consumers” (Rytkonen, Bonow, Girard, & Tunón, 2018, p. 3).

Creamy Hills Dairy

Creamy Hills Dairy (CHD) is a grass based dairy operation with 60 cows and is based in Neosho, Missouri. In 2016, CHD began transitioning to direct marketing of agricultural products as a way of increasing profit margins and strengthening consumer relationships (J. Giebler, September 30, 2018, personal communications). In addition to the sale of raw milk, which they market under the Missouri raw milk statute V.A.M.S. 196.935, CHD also direct markets beef, pork, poultry and eggs (Missouri Department of Agriculture [MDA], n.d.). CHD has attempted to track some customer data using a Facebook survey through their farm page. According to the data collected by CHD, direct sales reached approximately 50 families, with 50 percent of those individuals living within 20 miles of the farm location. An additional 30 percent live within 10 miles of the farm. The largest percentage of the dairy’s customers are 31 to 40 years old, making up 37.5 percent of their customer base. Another 25 percent were within the age range of 41 to 50, and 20 percent were 51 to 60 years old. The largest percentage of households, at 28.9 percent, had two members living in them. Households with four and five individuals came in at 21 percent and 24 percent, respectively (J. Giebler, personal communications, September 30, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

As a small but growing direct market entity, CHD needed a more formal audience and market analysis than the informal inquiry previously conducted by CHD on social media. Because CHD’s business relies on customer relations, understanding their customer’s demographics and marketing preferences is key to reaching those customers effectively.

Purpose and Research Questions

The intent of this research was to collect qualitative data that can be used to guide the development of a social marketing plan for CHD. The qualitative data from this project identified the audience demographics and determined the audience's marketing preferences (Weinreich, 2011). CHD plans to implement the social marketing strategy after the development of the plan is completed. Two objectives have been outlined to guide this project.

1. What are the demographics of CHD's direct market consumers?
2. What are current CHD customer's preferences for marketing materials?

Reflexivity Statement

It must be acknowledged that the researcher had a vested interest in Creamy Hills Dairy as an employee of the dairy as well as a member of the Giebler family. The researcher worked as a marketing and communications specialist as well as participated in day to day farming operations. As communications and marketing specialist, the researcher created all of the communications material used by CHD to date including social media content, website content, and print material. Moreover, the researcher regularly interacts with CHD customers in person and via phone, Facebook messenger, email, and text messaging, and the researcher previously knew all of the customer's participating in the focus groups conducted during this research.

However, the researcher remained unbiased during the focus group development and implementation with the understanding that her personal connections could influence the data results. During the focus group the researcher utilized an outside moderator to lead the discussion and the researcher served as note taker and refrained from engaging in the discussion

Methods and Materials

Due to the nature of CHD's direct marketing operation, which involves personal interaction with consumers, a focus group served as an effective tool to gather data because of its ability to provide personal and meaningful responses (DeVault, 2018). "A focus group is a gathering of deliberately selected people who participate in a planned discussion that is intended to elicit consumer perceptions" (DeVault, 2018, p. 1). University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study; 1812166277 (Appendix A).

Focus groups are structured with a small group of individuals who share common interests (Weinreich, 2011). The group is led through a series of thought provoking questions by a moderator who guides the discussion and keeps all group members engaged (Weinreich, 2011; DeVault, 2018). The purpose of a focus group is to create a relaxed, yet structured atmosphere in which individuals can express deep and meaningful opinions (DeVault, 2018).

The first step in conducting a focus group includes identifying participants. Focus groups need to be small enough that all of the individuals can fit around a table (Weinreich, 2011). Eight to 10 individuals make up a common focus group size and served as the appropriate number for this project (Weinreich, 2011, p. 56). Furthermore, individuals need to share common social and professional characteristics in order for them to remain comfortable when interacting with one another (Weinreich, 2011).

Individuals for this study were selected because they were customers of CHD's direct to consumer marketing efforts (Weinreich, 2011). Two focus groups lasting approximately one and one-half hours each were conducted with 15 total individuals of which 14 were females. The number of females was not a concern, as 85 percent of purchasing decisions in the United States are made or influenced by women (Girl Power Marketing, 2019). Additionally, the average age

of the participants was 40 years old with an average of 5.4 people in their household and an income of \$75,000-\$100,000.

A questioning route was developed by the researcher to determine the marketing preferences of CHD's customers. The focus group discussion was broken into seven sections including logo, social media content, website, brochure, newsletter, purchasing motivation and merchandise. The purpose of each section was to determine the current effectiveness of CHD's marketing material at the time this research was conducted as well as to determine the preferences of consumers regarding marketing material in the future. The questioning route consisted of 51 questions, and was reviewed and approved by a committee of four agricultural communications professionals prior to the focus groups. Additionally, two CHD customers from the target audience, not recruited for the focus group pilot tested the moderator guide before the focus groups were conducted. Adjustments were made based on feedback.

For this project, individuals were recruited from the CHD client list, and they were contacted through a recruitment email (Appendix B). Twenty-five CHD customers were contacted during the recruitment process, and 15 committed to participate. As a means of incentivizing individuals, cash or value items can be given to participants as well as services such as transportation and child care (Weinreich, 2011). Thus, participants were incentivized with a light meal and a 20-dollar product credit within the CHD farm store.

The environment in which focus groups are conducted should be neutral and free of distractions (Weinreich, 2011). The focus group for this project was held at the Newton County Missouri Extension Office on March 29, 2019. A moderator, the faculty mentor, read off of a moderator guide (Appendix C) while the student researcher acted as the assistant moderator, recording and taking notes. The focus groups were recorded for later analysis. The moderator

read a series of questions from a script, asked participants to record initial thoughts on note cards, and allowed participants an appropriate amount of time to develop and communicate their responses (Weinreich, 2011).

During the focus group participants were shown a series of marketing material previously created for CHD. Participants were asked questions to determine their exposure to and the effectiveness of the material based on the participants' desires for marketing and communication. Materials included the CHD logo (Appendix D), sample social media posts (Appendix E), the current CHD website (Appendix F), brochures (Appendix G), a newsletter (Appendix H), and some marketing and promotional material including coffee mugs and t-shirts (Appendix I).

At the conclusion of each focus group, participants were required to fill out a demographic form (Appendix J). The demographics were recorded anonymously, and a secondary student worker, employed by the department who works with confidential data, input the responses into a spreadsheet for the student researcher to utilize in the research analysis. The researcher avoided reviewing the demographic data instruments of the individuals because of her association with the CHD operation.

Data Analysis

Immediately following the focus groups, the moderator and assistant moderator discussed their observations and made notes about the interactions of participants and key themes that emerged (Weinreich, 2011). The two focus groups conducted served as the data for the research project. Both focus groups were recorded and transcribed using REV transcription service. The student researcher then analyzed the transcriptions using NVivo 11 software. With this software, the data was coded into nodes based on the marketing preferences of the various material shown to the participants. For example, the researcher developed a node for the logo, brochure, and

website. As the researcher continued coding, the transcripts other themes began recurring, and additional nodes developed for each of those themes. The results of this study cannot be generalized to the population, and will be used to develop a social marketing plan for CHD. Results of this focus group were expected to provide “robust” qualitative data beneficial in identifying the best way for CHD to meet the demands of their customers.

Results and Findings

Values

As the researcher analyzed the data several recurring themes emerged regarding the participants’ common perceptions of CHD’s values. Values which continued to arise during the discussion included family, work ethic, consideration, transparency and simplicity.

Participants shared CHD’s value of family influenced their buying decisions because they witnessed a family working and spending time together. “The family is wonderful. Just all aspects of it,” one participant said. Another commented, “My personality is driven by loyalty, so when I see... how the family is, I don’t care how much you charge for milk. I’m going to buy it there because your kids are working and you’re working together as a family.”

Additionally, one participant shared that she not only wants to support the CHD family but also other hardworking farm families; however, she believed consumers do not have the ability to do that directly because of the way the industry is structured. “I feel like we don’t always get an opportunity to support farm families because of what they do and the way they farm,” she said. “But we do have an opportunity to do that on this level, to really support hard working farm families, because of the way this business is structured, and that’s really cool.”

The researcher found that beyond the values of family and hard work, participants were aware of a deep consideration by CHD for both their animals and the people they serve. When

discussing social media content one participant commented, “You do get a little sneak peek inside of what they’re business is like, but yet you can relate to it and you think, ‘Oh my gosh, they really do care so much about these animals and about their business that they’re going to great lengths to take care of them.’” To support CHD’s consideration for their customers, one participant said, “They’re clearly more concerned than just selling a product.” The participant continued, “They’re wanting your life to be more sweet and more lovely. They’re concerned about that, not just how can we [CHD] drive sales.”

Consumer’s comments demonstrated that the consideration CHD puts into their customers translates into transparency and trust. The way CHD’s business is set up individuals are required to schedule a first time visit when picking up products. One participant shared the following in regard to the initial appointment: “I was really impressed by that. They go over everything with you, and that was very nice. It made a big impact. They really care.” Another participant echoed those thoughts by sharing they felt personally invested in the first time they came to the farm, “I feel like that makes me think my food’s safe... They’re taking the time to invest in personally meeting that person before they come on their property because it’s our product that we’re trusting.” The participant continued, “If Jason and Sarah [CHD owners] trust them, then why wouldn’t I?”

An overarching theme, which will be shown through all of the following marketing material discussed, proved to be simplicity. The products were repeatedly referred to as simple. “Simple. This is milk,” one participant stated. Another participant shared even the experience of going to the farm was simple, “It’s kind of fun. I always take my dog with me, or if I have a friend that’s over, I’m like, ‘Hey. Go to the dairy with me.’” The participant summarized, “You can bring someone there. It’s not stressful to go to the dairy.”

Logo

The critiques of the CHD logo were somewhat mixed between the two focus groups; however, the majority of participants shared they felt the logo had a classic, simple appearance, reflective of the actual processes used on the farm. “I think it looks kind of classic. It’s simple.” Another participant echoed, “I like that it’s just clean, simple, and pure. You don’t look at it and go, ‘Oh they’re trying to sell me something.’” Additional discussion showed participants felt the logo had a modern, trendy appeal: “It has that classic, vintage, heritage (feel), but it is also weirdly Chip and Jo’ish.”

Other participants felt the logo was complicated. Particularly, the wording “Farm Fresh Since 2000” was wordy in one participant’s opinion- “I mean, the history can come in a pamphlet later when I come to pick up my milk, and I can find out history and information on the farm.”

Additional confusion was voiced over whether or not CHD had two different logos. One logo with a Jersey cow’s head was shown on print material, the website, and social media while a different logo featuring a silhouette of an entire dairy cow was shown on CHD’s coffee mugs and t-shirts. “I’m just going to say that I’m confused now whether that’s the logo or the one on the cup, because the cows are different,” one participant shared.

The researcher found some disparity existed between whether or not CHD had achieved simplicity with the logo; however, the fact that participants wanted the logo to be simple and consistent was evident.

Social Media

Social media proved to be an in-depth discussion point within the focus groups. Six of the seven participants in the first focus group used social media, and six of the eight participants in

the second focus group used social media. Three sample social media posts from CHD were shown to the participants. The first post served as a human interest post with two of the CHD children working outside on the farm. The second post served as an educational post with an image of one of the CHD pastured chicken coops. The accompanying text was several paragraphs long and asked individuals to think beyond the food label. The third post was a picture and recipe of chicken and dumplings.

The posts were shown one at a time to the participants, and participants were asked to record their initial thoughts about the post. After discussion about each post, participants were asked whether or not they would be willing to interact (like, share, comment) with the post on social media. The discussion from each post was finished before the next post was introduced.

The first focus group participants loved the first human interest post, sharing their admiration for the Giebler family and the work ethic being instilled in the children on the farm. In response to initial thoughts on the post, one participant who had seen the post on CHD's Facebook page previously said, "Well I have a couple of hearts, and I have Eli and Emma written in there. I'm sure I made a cuddly post underneath if you go look because I sure love them both." Another participant said the post made her think of her own children when they are doing chores around their farm, and one participant commented, "Just like the logo is drawing back to the farm house decorating and design, I thought this picture also draws me back to when children were just as much as an asset on the farms as the parents were."

The participants in the second focus group also shared that they felt the post reflected hard work and family togetherness; however, two individuals said the post made them think of child labor. Reading off of a notecard, one participant started out positive, but ended with a negative comment- "I put family run, doing life together, team work and child labor." Supporting

the negative perception of the post, another participant said, “I did not read the words. I didn’t see the words. At that speed, I was looking at the picture, and I thought, ‘Are those kids?’” She continued, “And then I thought, ‘If they are kids, it kind of looks like, you know, child labor.’” In defense of the dairy one participant replied, “You know that’s not how it goes there on the farm. That is a family affair, not a kid’s work force.”

The second post regarding food labeling was met with split feelings. Some participants voiced they agreed with the message and would like or share the post with their followers. One participant recorded, “This is why I buy my milk and eggs from Creamy Hills Dairy. They take care of their products and animals in a way that I trust.” Another participant expanded on that comment by saying she shared the post when CHD posted it because she “thought that it was a great piece to share with someone who does just suck in all the stuff they see on the news and let them see that the small farmer really does know what they’re doing, that they are aware of what the media and the news are saying about them, and they take a great deal of pride in what they are doing.”

On the other hand, some participants said they felt the message was written “defensively” or “in response” to something. “I did see that post when it came out, and like it did then, this time it still kind of struck me wrong,” a participant said. “I don’t like marketing that says negative things. ‘We’re not this. We’re not that.’ Just be simple, out with who you are and don’t worry about other things or identifying with this group or that group. Tell me what you are and simple things.”

Not only did some of the participants react negatively to the message, they also voiced they would not share the post with their followers; however, they might talk to individuals about the message in person. “I don’t want to say there was an air of superiority, but I don’t want to do

political stuff. I don't want to do where I'm taking a specific stance on something," a participant explained. "I would do that just talking to you in a room, but not on social media."

The final post, a recipe, seemed to be less controversial. Participants shared they felt a personal connection to the recipe and the person behind the cooking. "The connection-- I mean that they like cookbooks too, the tattered, torn cookbooks. Yeah," one participant reminisced. This theme of connection carried through with other participants too. "It wasn't information. It was a feeling because they're family oriented and it was nostalgic of my grandma's recipe. It was that overall family roots, heritage thing again," a participant shared.

Several participants said they would share the post with their followers, and they appreciated the simplicity of the post in that there were no links to click on. The photo and recipe were right there in front of them. The only negative feedback from the post was that the picture could have been higher quality and the original seller of the cookbook could have been left off. Other individuals shared they liked the photo, however; and in another group someone commented they liked the reference to the cookbook seller because their family enjoyed eating at the restaurant when it was still in business.

Additionally, from a marketing standpoint the researcher found notable that people were inspired by the recipe to cook. "I think I made soup that night after I saw that," one participant commented. According to one participant, recipes help customers utilize CHD's products.

Brochure

Brochures were handed out to all of the participants in both focus groups. All of the participants said they had seen a brochure from CHD before; however, some of them had not seen that latest copy. Everyone agreed they would share the brochure with other individuals "because it gives them the information they need to empower them to make the choice to go buy

the product.” Another participant referred to the brochure as a tool to use when talking to individuals about why they purchase from CHD.

Characteristics of the brochure that participants liked included the professional feel of the cardstock, the layout of the content, the Bible verse on the front of the brochure, the wording of the headings, and the personable qualities of the brochure. Critiques included low quality printing, poor quality images, and distracting backgrounds.

The paragraph individuals first see when they open the brochure stood out to one participant in particular. “The paragraph here on the very first (panel) that says, ‘Our Farm’ is really the selling point that makes the brochure right to the point.” Other participants agreed they liked the content and layout with one participant sharing they liked “that they address safety in their cleaning process” because of the negative perceptions often associated with raw milk.

The Bible verse on the front proved relevant with several customers as they associated the CHD family’s faith with integrity. “My first initial thought... was, ‘I love the verse’ because that makes me feel like they have good judgement, and they’re going to have their customers’ and their family’s best interest at heart,” one participant shared.

Another comment about the CHD family was their willingness to be open on the brochure by sharing about their family and posting their personal phone numbers with their names. “I also love that there’s Victoria and Madelaine’s name by the phone numbers so you know who you’re calling instead of like, ‘Hi, whoever I’m calling.’”

Critiques of the brochure included the wood grain background being hard to read and the print quality being poor. “My thought is, if you are going to use such pricey paper, you need to use a really good printer,” one participant said. Participants also shared they have seen higher

quality pictures on social media than they were seeing in the brochure, and they said they felt higher quality, closer up images could be used.

Website

From there, participants were shown the website from a tablet. The moderator flipped through the web pages and explained each of their functions. The consensus from both groups was that the website was professional and attractive, and they said they felt it served its purpose well. “I feel like if you’re wanting to know about their farm, everything is going to be there,” one participant pointed out. “It’s very thorough. It’s well organized, and if I have any questions, they’re answered. It’s not just an ad. It’s also informative and educational.” Those who had viewed the website liked the functionality and design; however, several individuals shared they had not seen the website before or they had only visited the site for initial information.

One participant from the first focus group suggested better photos showing “cattle in the fields” as well as other livestock, and other participants agreed with that comment. Another critique included the background behind the home page photo collage competing with the photos. One participant suggested fading the background out in order to provide more contrast. Participants did point out they appreciated the photos being from the actual dairy and not stock photos. Participants also appreciated that there were no ads on the website, but one participant said she felt the banner with the farm name at the top of the page looked somewhat like a pop-up advertisement.

At least two participants mentioned the online ordering option. Some individuals were not aware of that option, and one participant said she was aware, but the links were broken when she tried to order. “When I first went looking for the dairy I had attempted to communicate through the links on there and never got a response back,” the participant said. “But when I...

discovered them on Facebook and messaged them, I got an instant response.” Other participants followed up that comment by saying they always order through messenger and appreciate the personal communication. “I love the way that I can place my orders through Messenger. I can just say three jars, please, and she knew exactly who... well, of course she knew because my name was at the top, but I felt like she knew me, and so it was very personable,” a participant shared with the group.

Newsletter

The personal communication discussion about Messenger segued into the CHD newsletter within both focus groups. Individuals were handed an archived copy of the CHD newsletter, and after glancing through the letter they shared the things they liked and disliked about the letter as well as their communications preferences.

Several participants shared they had seen the newsletter somewhere, but they were not sure where. One participant pointed out all of the information was relevant; whereas, another participant shared she would not take the time to read the letter. “Me personally, I was in marketing, and I did newsletters... and this is a lot.” One participant made the point, “In the beginning, when you’re learning about it, you do need it all,” but the majority of participants felt current customers could have the information sent to them in smaller sections and only when timely, rather than on a monthly basis. A few participants said they do not check their email regularly. “I don’t ever look at my email because it’s so full of junk already.” Others said they would read emails from CHD if they were short messages. One participant shared their thoughts:

“If I’m getting an email like once a week or month, just a standard email, I’m probably not going to look at it, but if I get one from them, and it’s like, Okay, I got an email from Creamy Hills Dairy, I need to read it and see what’s going on.

If there's any changes, I need to... I'd be more likely to read it like that, but if it's one I'm getting constantly I'm probably not going to read it, honestly."

One participant suggested CHD utilize a texting service for important messages. "If it's time to order our chickens, I'd rather receive a text through the Remind app. If that were set up that way, I immediately would have been like, 'I want six chickens.'" Participants shared if information "is a short little note, text. Something like a newsletter, email," and if emails are sent out the participants preferred "quick updates, not paragraphs, just boom, boom, boom."

During the discussion of website and newsletters, participants were also asked if they would be interested in reading a blog. Some participants indicated they would be interested in reading a blog, but they felt blog content should be pushed through social media rather than through email. As far as content, participants suggested recipes, how-to demonstrations, CHD life updates, and farm podcasts about CHD's farming practices. "If I'm going to read a blog, I'm going to invest my time into it," a participant summarized the blog discussion. "Probably recipes or farm practices would be something I would invest my time in."

Merchandise

Focus group participants were handed CHD coffee mugs and t-shirts, asked if they recognized the items, and encouraged to provide feedback on the items as well as suggestions for additional merchandise. Those who had purchased the coffee mugs and t-shirts said they did so "because they loved the Gieblers." One participant expanded by saying the items served as conversation starters about the business, "When people do see you out with this shirt on, they'll ask questions."

The researcher also noted the participants felt the items were "high quality" and professional in nature. "It's high quality. It's heavy. It's sturdy," one participant shared. When

asked if the participants had additional merchandise suggestions two participants mentioned ball caps, one participant suggested an insulated mug, and another participant encouraged canvas shopping bags. One participant in the second group suggested a cooler for transporting the milk, and other participants agreed that would be something they would invest in. “If you could find a manufacturer that could make an ice chest with built-in separators, I bet everybody would buy that,” the participant said.

Purchasing Motivation

When asked about purchasing motivation, the researcher found individuals purchasing from the farm because of improved health including eczema and digestion. Moreover, participants shared they appreciated knowing where their food was coming from, and they felt it was important for their children to be educated on where their food was coming from as well. “I love that my kids know where it comes from,” one participant shared.

The researcher found some of the participants valued supporting local business, while others valued supporting the family and the farm. One participant put her purchasing decisions into these words:

“I like keeping my money local. I’d rather it go to my neighbor than big corporate America. I feel good when I go to pick up my milk, and I see their chickens; whereas, I don’t feel good when I drive down the highway and the semi-truck with chickens is blowing feathers on me. I just feel like it (buying local) is supporting what little bit of humanity is left in this world when it comes to mass producing any type of food.”

Even after local considerations were made, price still played a role in many of the participants’ purchasing decisions. “I think price also has to be a consideration,” a participant

pointed out. “If they were six bucks a jar, then it might not be an option.” At least two participants shared, however, that nutrition came before the budget even with a large family. “Nutrition first, then the budget,” one participant shared. Another participant said buying higher quality food is easier now that some of her children are out of the house; however, she would still prefer to eat less but healthier. Another individual shared that eating healthy is an investment.

One participant said purchasing local did not serve as the motivation for buying from CHD; rather, she purchased from CHD because of what the farm does for her family, “Actually I’m not local... I drive here to pick up milk. I believe it’s better for my family. I would rather spend a few dollars in gas to get them something to eat and drink [from CHD] than just run into Walmart.”

Takeaways

The researcher found participants in the focus group wanted CHD marketing to be simple for the same reason they wanted their products to be simple. The reason participants said they purchase from CHD is because “it’s what would have been a hundred years ago without factory farms and all the processes that are involved and that are necessary to implement mass production as opposed to natural, normal processes of raising these products.” Participants said they view CHD products as “pure, simple, and wholesome,” and those individuals want their marketing to reflect the same thing. “There’s just something organic, not the ‘cliché’ organic, but there’s something organic about knowing... where it comes from,” a participant shared.

Conclusions

The data obtained through this research project supported the relationship emphasis of social marketing. The researcher found participants drawn to the personal connection of CHD

and the simplicity of the products being offered. The researcher found direct market consumers want their marketing the same way- simple. At times throughout the focus groups the participants critiqued the marketing efforts of CHD for not being simple enough, while other marketing efforts were praised for being simple, pure, and wholesome.

When looking at CHD from a marketing standpoint, the researcher found that appealing to individual's budgets is important; however, establishing a personal relationship and informing consumers of the farming practices and the nutritional quality of the food in a way those consumers can embody remains key for reaching the target audience of CHD.

Recommendations for Developing a Social Marketing Plan

Based on the research gathered from these focus groups, maintaining a personal connection across all forms of marketing proves essential. Additionally, individuals want their life to be simplified through the marketing efforts of CHD. Providing convenient communication methods and easily accessible information proved important to participants in the focus groups. Continuing with that thought, participants wanted information about farming practices, recipes, and events and dates broken down in such a way they did not have to search for the content.

Because individuals seemed confused by the inconsistency of the primary and secondary logo, one logo should be chosen to represent CHD. Additionally, a more simplified version of the logo with less text should be considered for the future; however, the classic, farmhouse style should be maintained.

Most participants utilized social media, recognized CHD's posts, and responded to the posts positively, indicating social media should be maintained as an effective way to reach audiences and build relationships. Public interest posts should continue as long as the messages are clear and the photos represent the messages appropriately. Consideration should be given to

audience perceptions such as child labor and animal rights. Educational posts should be included in a social media campaign as those posts seemed important to many participants, but care should be given to present who the dairy is and what they are about without appearing superior. Recipes and how-to posts serve as a good way to give back to the audience and inspire utilization of CHD products. Recipes should be kept simple.

Based on the feedback on the brochure the text content and layout should remain the same; however, higher quality images should be considered, and professional printing is recommended in order to maintain the professionalism CHD strives to have across all levels of their marketing. The personal characteristics such as the headings “Know Your Farmer” and “Our Farm” should continue, and the family member’s names attached to the communication options should remain.

The website layout and design were well received by the participants; however, some changes could be made to the photos by making the images represent the farm better. The farm name and the logo on the homepage should be switched in order to create better balance, and the broken links should be relinked on the website. Consideration should also be given to changing the ordering options on the website because that ordering method created confusion for a few participants.

The idea of a blog appeared popular with some participants. Relatable topics including recipes and farm stories should be included. Based on participant feedback, the blog should be pushed through social media more than through email or other forms of communication. As for communication, Messenger should continue to be utilized as the primary form of communication, based on participants’ feedback. A texting service could also be utilized to send out short messages requiring an immediate response. Newsletters should be short and timely, or

replaced by emails sent out with one message, only when relevant. A monthly or quarterly newsletter could be offered in a print version for those not on social media or not wanting emails sent to their inbox.

The merchandise currently being offered by CHD should continue to be offered as participants found the messages relevant and the quality and professionalism of the products to be high. Consideration should be given to making the shirt font less trendy and more classic in keeping with the rest of CHD's communication efforts. Customized milk coolers, tote bags, ball caps, and pens are all products that could be considered for offer.

Most importantly, the style and messages of CHD's marketing materials should be consistent. Content should remain professional. Pictures should be high quality and should represent the farm appropriately. Content should be relevant and designed to build a deeper connection with CHD customers. As with any communications campaign careful thought should be given to the audience and purpose of each marketing and communications efforts.

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Appendix

Appendix A: University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval



To: Casandra Kay Cox

AGRI 205

From: Douglas James Adams, Chair IRB
Committee

Date: 03/27/2019

Action: Exemption Granted

Action Date: 03/27/2019

Protocol #: 1812166277

Study Title: Developing a social marketing plan for direct to consumer agricultural operations

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Madelaine Giebler, Investigator

Appendix B: Recruitment Email

Recruitment Email Text:

Dear XX,

This is Madelaine Giebler from Creamy Hills Dairy. As you may know, I am a senior at the University of Arkansas in the Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology Department. I am working on my honors project relating to our farm, and I will be conducting focus groups to determine customer marketing preferences for Creamy Hills Dairy. I am reaching out to you because I believe you would be able to contribute to our marketing preference discussion.

The process will take about an hour and a half, and will consist of a focus group discussion with 8 to 10 other participants. Participants will receive snacks and a \$20 Creamy Hills Dairy Gift Card.

The focus groups will take place on March 29, 2019, at the Newton County Extension Office. There will be two focus group times available- 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. and 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. If you are able to participate please RSVP by Friday, March 15, 2019, through the following Google form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdOpGWqxXsiNYtCATo8MryiPYArM932vX-kFnm3SPD3UwvMdA/viewform>

You can contact me at this email address or on my cell phone at 417-312-1747. Thank you in advance for your participation. I have copied my honors advisor, Casandra Cox, on this email in case you have any further questions about the project.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, the University's IRB Compliance Coordinator, at 479-575-2208 or irb@uark.edu.

Best regards,

Madelaine Giebler

University of Arkansas '19

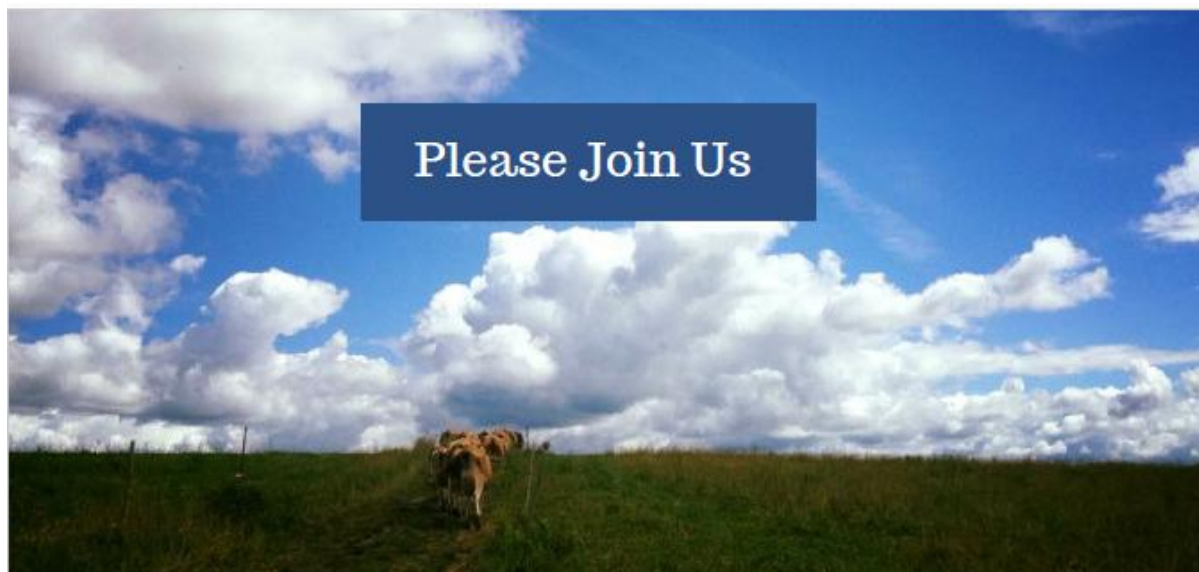
Agricultural Communications and Leadership

Experiential Learning Lab | Communications Specialist

Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow | First Vice President

AR Culture | Graphic Design Staff

Recruitment Email Flyer:



Please Join Us

Creamy Hills Dairy Focus Group

When: March 29, 2019

Time: 2:30- 4:00 p.m.

5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Where: Newton County

Extension Office

18728 Hwy 59

Neosho, MO

Creamy Hills Dairy would like to invite you to participate in a marketing survey to help them assess the most effective ways of communicating with their customers. Knowing your marketing preferences will allow them to better serve you in the future.

To be eligible, participants must be:

- 18 years of age or older (male or female)
- Be a current Creamy Hills Dairy Customer

Participants will receive snacks and a \$20 Creamy Hills Dairy Gift Card.

Please RSVP by March 15, 2019 through the
RSVP form in the initial email you received.

This focus group is being conducted as a University of Arkansas Honors Project entitled Developing a Social Marketing Plan for Direct to Consumer Agricultural Operations.

For questions, please contact Madelaine Giebler at 417-312-1747 or mpgieble@uark.edu or her Honors Advisor Mrs. Casandra Cox at ccrumle@uark.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, the University's IRB Compliance Coordinator, at 479-575-2208 or irb@uark.edu.

Appendix C: Moderator Guide and Consent Form

Participant Information and Consent Form

1. Explanation of what you will do:

You are being asked to participate in a research study of Creamy Hills Dairy conducted as part of a University of Arkansas Honors Project. Participants will be asked questions regarding specific messages and pieces used to target you and individuals like you. We will have you record your initial thoughts and then we will discuss each question as a group. **The focus group will be recorded for data analysis purposes.**

You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this research.

2. Your rights to participate, say no, or withdraw:

Participation in this research project is completely voluntarily. You have the right to say no. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. All information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy.

3. Compensation for being in the study:

You will be served snacks and receive a \$20 Creamy Hills Dairy credit for completion of the focus group. **Please be advised that food served may contain these ingredients: milk, eggs, wheat, soybean, peanuts, tree nuts, fish and shellfish.**

4. Contact information for questions of concerns:

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, the University's IRB Compliance Coordinator, at 479-575-2208 or irb@uark.edu.

5. Documentation of informed consent.

Your participation in this focus group means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Creamy Hills Dairy Communication Evaluations

General Public Focus Groups

Moderator Guide and Questioning Route

March 29, 2019

Moderator reads: Hello, thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and welcome to our session. My name is Casandra Cox and I represent the University of Arkansas Agricultural Education, Communication and Technology Department. Assisting me is Madelaine Giebler also from the U of A Agricultural Education, Communication and Technology Department. The purpose of this discussion is to determine your knowledge and opinion of direct marketing effectiveness for Creamy Hills Dairy.

We've invited people who are part of the target audience for the campaign. You were selected because you have certain characteristics in common that interest us. We are very interested in your views and opinions because other Creamy Hills Dairy customers may feel the same way.

Before we begin, I would like you to know that there are no right or wrong answers. I will have you write your initial thoughts to each question on an index card, prior to discussing each question as a group. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Also, please speak up and only one person should talk at a time. We will be recording this session so that we don't miss any of your valuable comments. Though we will use names throughout the session, there will be no names attached to any of your comments.

My role is to ask questions and listen. I won't be participating in the conversation, but I want you to feel free to talk to one another. I'll be moving the discussion from one question to the next. Sometimes, in these types of discussions, a few people will talk a lot and others will say very little. However, it is important for us to hear from each of you today because you may have different experiences. So, if one of you is sharing a lot, I may ask you to let others talk. If you aren't saying much, I may ask for your opinion.

Our session will last about an hour. If you have your cell phone, please turn it off at this time for the remainder of this session.

Let's begin. We have placed name cards on the table in front of you to help us remember each other's names. Let's find out more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Tell us your name and something about you.

Introductory Information

Moderator reads: Today, we will discuss your knowledge and perceptions of communications and marketing efforts of Creamy Hills Dairy. I will show you a variety of creative pieces from Creamy Hills and ask you to discuss them. A creative piece is an element that can be anything from a logo to a website. Let's begin with our first question.

- When you hear the words "Creamy Hills Dairy," what comes to mind? Write your initial thoughts on index card #1. **Poll Group.**

The first creative piece I'd like to show you is the logo. I'll show you the logo, then I'd like for you to write your initial thought on index card #2. Now, let's discuss your thoughts. I may ask a few questions to drive the conversations.

Show Logo

- Do you recognize this logo?
- What kind of message do you think this logo represents?

Moderator reads: Are there any other comments about the logo?

Great discussion! Ok, let's get a show of hands for how many of you use social media? Ok, great. Let's move on to social media.

- Have you seen Facebook posts from Creamy Hills Dairy before?
 - **Poll Group**
 - Of those who have seen Facebook posts, where did you view the posts?

Show Sample Facebook Content Record your initial thoughts about this Facebook post on index card #3.

- What kind of information do you get from this post?
- How likely would you be to interact (read, like, share) with this post?
- Do you recognize this as Creamy Hills Dairy content when you read the message and view the post?

Show Sample Facebook Content Record your initial thoughts about this Facebook post on index card #3.

- What kind of information do you get from this post?
- How likely would you be to interact (read, like, share) with this post?
- Do you recognize this as Creamy Hills Dairy content when you read the message and view the post?

Show Sample Facebook Content Record your initial thoughts about this Facebook post on index card #3.

- What kind of information do you get from this post?
- How likely would you be to interact (read, like, share) with this post?
- Do you recognize this as Creamy Hills Dairy content when you read the message and view the post?

Moderator reads: Let's talk briefly about Instagram.

- Have you seen Instagram posts from Creamy Hills Dairy before?
 - **Poll Group**
 - If so, do you like the content?
 - What other content would you like to see?

Moderator reads: Are there any additional comments about social media? Let's move on. How do you look for information on the web?

Show website (creamyhillsdairy.weebly.com)/ Navigate through some of the pages Record your initial thoughts on this website on index card #4.

- Have you visited this website before?
- What was your purpose of visiting the website?

- Does the website successfully meet your needs?
- What changes or additions would you recommend for the website?

Moderator reads: Are there any other comments about the website?

Next we'd like to ask you to look at the following brochure.

Pass out brochures from Creamy Hills Dairy Record your initial thoughts about the brochure on index card #5.

- Have you seen this brochure before?
 - **Poll Group**
- What do you like about the design?
- What would you like to see changed about the design?
- What do you like about the content?
- What would you like to see changed or added to the content?
- Would you share this brochure with someone else?
 - **Poll Group**
 - Why or why not?

Moderator reads: Do you have any other comments about the brochure? All right, let's discuss some other communications efforts.

Pass out a copy of a recent newsletter Record your initial thoughts about the newsletter on index card #6.

- Have you received an electronic (email, Facebook, or website) Creamy Hills Dairy newsletter before?
 - **Poll Group**
 - If you received an electronic newsletter where did you access it?
- Have you received a printed Creamy Hills Dairy newsletter before?
 - **Poll Group**
 - If you received a printed newsletter where did you get it?
- Which content from the newsletter did you find useful?
- Would you like to see any additional information in the newsletter?

Moderator reads: Do you have any other suggestions about the newsletter? All right, we have a few more questions to ask.

- What would be the best outlet to reach you with communication from the Creamy Hills Dairy? Record your initial thoughts on index card #6.
 - **Poll Group**
- Would you be interested in reading a blog from Creamy Hills Dairy?
 - **Poll Group**
 - What type of content would you like to read?
- Would you enjoy receiving emails from Creamy Hills Dairy to your inbox?
 - **Poll Group**
 - Why or why not?
 - If you answered yes, what type of content would you like to see in the emails?
- What is your motivation to purchase local products?

- What is your motivation to purchase natural products?
- What considerations do you make when deciding to purchase food products?
- Do you talk to people about Creamy Hills Dairy?
 - **Poll Group**
 - What type of discussions do you have?

Moderator reads: We are passing around some items from Creamy Hills Dairy. Record your initial thoughts about these products on index card #7.

- Does anyone recognize these items?
 - **Poll Group**
 - If so, which do you recognize and where did you see them?
- Would you be willing to purchase any of these items?
 - Why or why not?
- Are there other non-food items that should be offered for purchase from the Creamy Hills Dairy?

Moderator reads: Thank you again for your fantastic discussion during this meeting. We really appreciate each and every one of you. At this time, we would like to summarize what we've talked about during this meeting to see if there are any additional comments.

Summarize and ask for any additional comments.

Moderator reads: We are passing out a short questionnaire so we can better understand who participated in our discussion today.

Pass out surveys.

Moderator reads: Once you complete your questionnaire you can turn it in to Madelaine, and she will hand you your incentive for participation. Thank you again for your time and input.

Appendix D: Creamy Hills Dairy Primary Logo



Appendix E: Creamy Hills Dairy Sample Social Media Posts

Human Interest Post:

 **Creamy Hills Dairy** January 30 · 🌐

Walking in her brother's foot steps. || Sometimes heroes wear Carhartts instead of capes.

-
-

[#creamyhillsdairy](#) [#bigbrother](#) [#farmkids](#) [#hardwork](#)



   Victoria Keith, Eden DeGonia and 50 others 5 Shares

Educational Post:

**Creamy Hills Dairy**

Published by Madelaine Giebler [?] · March 15 at 6:59 PM · 🌐

Free Range | Pastured | Farm Fresh | Organic | Non-GMO | Cage Free |
Antibiotic Free | Hormone Free

We need you all to let go of the buzzwords because what we are doing here goes beyond any label.

Our eggs, our milk, our meat are simply products.

Yes.

But they are also more than that.

They are byproducts of a healthy ecosystem. They are the fruit of a healing land.

In order for food to be healthy, the soil, water, and air from which it comes has to be healthy.

So much of the land in our country is sick, and it produces sick food.

Just like our bodies are designed to heal, land is designed to heal when it is allowed to rest, when it is provided with diverse nutrients, and when it is built to retain water.

Healing is a process though, and what we are doing on our farm is a process. We are continuously growing, continuously improving, continuously healing.

So, if you want to label our products- label them as healing eggs, healing milk, healing meat, and together, we can be better tomorrow than we are today.

[#creamyhillsdairy](#) [#healthyland](#) [#healthyfood](#) [#regenerativeagriculture](#)
[#knowyourfarmerknowyourfood](#)

Recipe Post:

**Creamy Hills Dairy**

Published by Madelaine Giebler [?] · January 9 · 🌐



Do you have one of those fail proof cookbooks? You know, the one where the cover is missing, the pages are falling out, and everything you make from it turns out delicious.

That's what the cookbook looks like for this recipe.

Originally in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, the Victorian Sampler Tea Room shut down a couple of decades ago. Thankfully, we still have their cookbook and can enjoy their favorite recipes.

These chicken and dumplings are always a hit in our home. We love to serve them over mashed potatoes- comfort food at its finest.

Old Fashioned Chicken and Dumplings
From the Victorian Sampler

1 (2 to 3 lb.) broiler-fryer
2 qt. water
2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
2 c. flour
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
3 Tbsp. shortening
3/4 c. milk

Place chicken in large pan or Dutch oven. Add water and 2 teaspoon salt. Bring to a boil, cover and simmer for 1 hour or until tender. Remove chicken from broth and cool. Debone chicken and cut into bite size pieces. Set aside. Bring broth to a boil. Add pepper. Combine flour, soda, and salt; cut in shortening until mixture resembles course meal. Add milk, stirring with a fork until moistened. Turn dough out to floured surface and knead lightly. Pat dough to 1/2 inch thickness. Pinch off in 1 1/2 inch pieces and drop into boiling broth. Cook at medium-low heat and cook 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in chicken. Serves 6 to 8.

Appendix F: Creamy Hills Dairy Website



<https://creamyhillsdairy.weebly.com/>

Appendix G: Creamy Hills Dairy Brochure



Owned and operated by the Gieblers, the Creamy Hills Dairy family shares a passion for dairy farming, Jersey cows, and providing farm fresh milk to local consumers.

At the center of our operation is our Jersey dairy herd which grazes on lush green pastures the majority of the year.

All of our other efforts- our grass-fed beef, pastured laying hens, pastured broilers, and naturally raised pork- compliment the dairy and work together to form a harmonious farming system.

Get in Touch

Phone:
417-850-1101 (Jason)
417-312-1747 (Madelaine)

Email:
creamyhillsdairy@outlook.com

Website:
creamyhillsdairy.weebly.com

Address:
7615 Maple Drive
Neosho, MO 64850



“FOR EVERY BEAST OF THE FOREST IS MINE, THE CATTLE ON A THOUSAND HILLS.”
PSALM 51:10

Our Farm

The first question we often receive is, "Are you organic?"

With organic agriculture comes extensive labeling and regulations.

At Creamy Hills Dairy, we strive to go beyond the labels by managing a natural operation in which our animals' primary consumption includes high quality forage. Additionally, we avoid using any artificial fertilizers and herbicides, and we administer antibiotics only when necessary.

Additionally, we strive to mimic natural ecosystem patterns by operating a bio-diverse farm in which cattle and chickens graze side by side and hogs express their uniqueness by rooting among our woods and wallowing in old dry pond beds.



Fall 2018 Price List

- Raw Milk- \$2.00/ Half Gal.
- Prime Blend Hamburger- \$4.00/ Lb.
- Prime Blend Sausage- \$4.00/lb.
- Nitrate/Nitrite Free Bratwurst- \$9.00/ pkg. of 6
- Pastured Eggs- \$2.00/ Doz.
- Whole or Half Pastured Beef- \$3.00/ Lb.
- Whole or Half Naturally Raised Pork- \$3.00/ Lb.
- Pastured Broilers- \$2.50/ Lb.
- ReCap Pour Lid- \$7.00/ ReCap

Place an Order

We take orders by phone or Facebook messenger.

Orders must be placed by 9 the evening before pick-up, and orders will be filled by 7:30 the next morning. Orders may be picked up throughout the day at the customer's convenience. We are open 7 days a week.

We have to meet with first time customers to get to know them, explain the pickup procedure, and answer any questions they may have.

First time meetings can be arranged Monday through Saturday from 4:30- 6:30 p.m. Customers may pick up an order on their first visit as long as they order by 9 o' clock the evening before.

Please visit our website for more information.



Appendix H: Creamy Hills Dairy Newsletter**ISSUE 3 | April 2018**

Hello current and future customers,

We want to start this month's update with heartfelt thanks to all of you who continue to buy our farm fresh products. Because of you, we are faced with the need to expand our facilities because more days than not, our milk refrigerator is over capacity to serve your daily needs. This is an opportunity that we relish. Please tell your family and friends so that we can serve them as well.

As we did last month, we will provide a quick update to what is going on with our farm and what that means for you. If you are a milk customer and read nothing else, please read the jar policy section at the bottom of the newsletter.

Pork:

All of you who have ordered whole or half hogs for this spring will have your meat the week of April 23rd. You will be getting a call from the processor later next week to discuss how you would like to have your meat cut and packaged. If this is something that you are not familiar with, please contact us so that we can help you with the process so that it gives you time to plan things exactly as you want them.

Whole hog sausage and bratwurst will be available during the latter part of the week of April 23rd also.

We are beginning to put together a list of customers who want half or whole hogs this fall. Please let us know if you want to be on the list and we will make sure that we have one ready for you. These will be processed the last of October or the beginning of November.

Eggs:

The demand for eggs is far greater than our ability to support everyone's needs. We are keeping a waiting list and contacting people as soon as we are able to fill their order. If you would like to be put on the list, let us know. Thank you for your patience and for loving our eggs.

We have more laying hens in the works, but it takes a while to grow them into production age layers.

Chicken:

We have several broilers still available for order. Please let us know if you would like to try

some and we will add you to the list for our first processing day on April 28th. You can pick birds up between 1 and 6 that afternoon. They will be bagged and chilled and we can weigh them when you choose your birds.

Our minimum order quantity is 2 and the price is \$2.50 per pound with an estimated weight of 5 pounds per bird. You can check out the pastured broilers in the coops across the road from the milk barn when you come to get milk.

Our 2nd group of broiler chicks will arrive the week of April 16th. We are planning a June processing date of the 16th. The process will be the same so let us know how many you want and we will put you on the list. We will have another batch of broilers ready to go in October so be planning on your needs for the next few months to coincide with our processing dates and to get enough in October to get you through the winter. Since we believe that grass is a key component of how we raise our chickens to provide you with healthy, nutritious and delicious meat, we have to keep the process rolling during the growing season and want you to have enough information to plan for your needs.

T-Shirts:

Our T-shirts continue to sell like hot cakes. They are \$12 (or \$14 for XXL). You can check out Creamy Hills Dairy on Facebook to see what they look like. We try to keep blue and grey in stock, but have the ability to order other colors if there is a special color that you want.

Dairy Day:

June 9th is our scheduled date for Dairy Day at the farm. Stay tuned for upcoming information. We invite all of you to our farm for the day to see our operation, interact with your farmers, dine with us and have a fun filled day in God's creation. We can guarantee something for everyone. Mark your calendars so that you don't miss it.

Jar Policy

We really need everyone's help. A massive challenge for us in providing milk to our customers is the cleanliness of jars. When we started direct marketing, we committed to providing milk in ½ gallon glass jars. Many of you desire milk in glass rather than plastic due to the health benefits. Getting jars clean is one of our most time consuming, expensive and frustrating tasks. Your jars must come back to us clean. To define this, we need them to come back so clean that you would be ready to put milk in them again. This allows us to wash the jars and lids quickly and efficiently. We do this on every new jar that we add into the rotation and to every jar that is exchanged. We never cut corners on cleaning jars and as such it takes many hours every week to

get the hundreds of jars that go through our system as clean as we need them to be. Many of you do an excellent job and for that we are so grateful. Some of you bring back jars that are so putrid that we have to throw them away or soak them for hours to remove the residue. This makes us lose money and strongly consider 1 of 3 options: 1) staying with glass, but raising milk prices significantly, 2) eliminating glass and going to plastic which will also raise prices, or 3) ceasing to sell milk. Seriously, it is that bad. This past week, we have had jars that smell heavily of cinnamon – not necessarily unpleasant, but not what people want their milk to smell like, jars that smell like apple cider vinegar, and jars that smell so bad or are so badly tea stained that they have been discarded. Very simply, when you purchase milk please treat the jars and lids carefully by padding them to and from our farm, use them for milk only and wash them carefully with soap and hot water and allow them to dry before you bring them back. That is the same care we give to them before we fill them with milk. We are aware that these jars make excellent storage containers for all sorts of things and many of you have your own supply of jars that get mixed into our exchange pool from time to time. Please take the extra time needed to keep your milk jars and lids separated from your other supply and that will eliminate much of the cross contamination that is so time consuming for us to deal with. Our full jar policy is located on our website if you wish to read it.

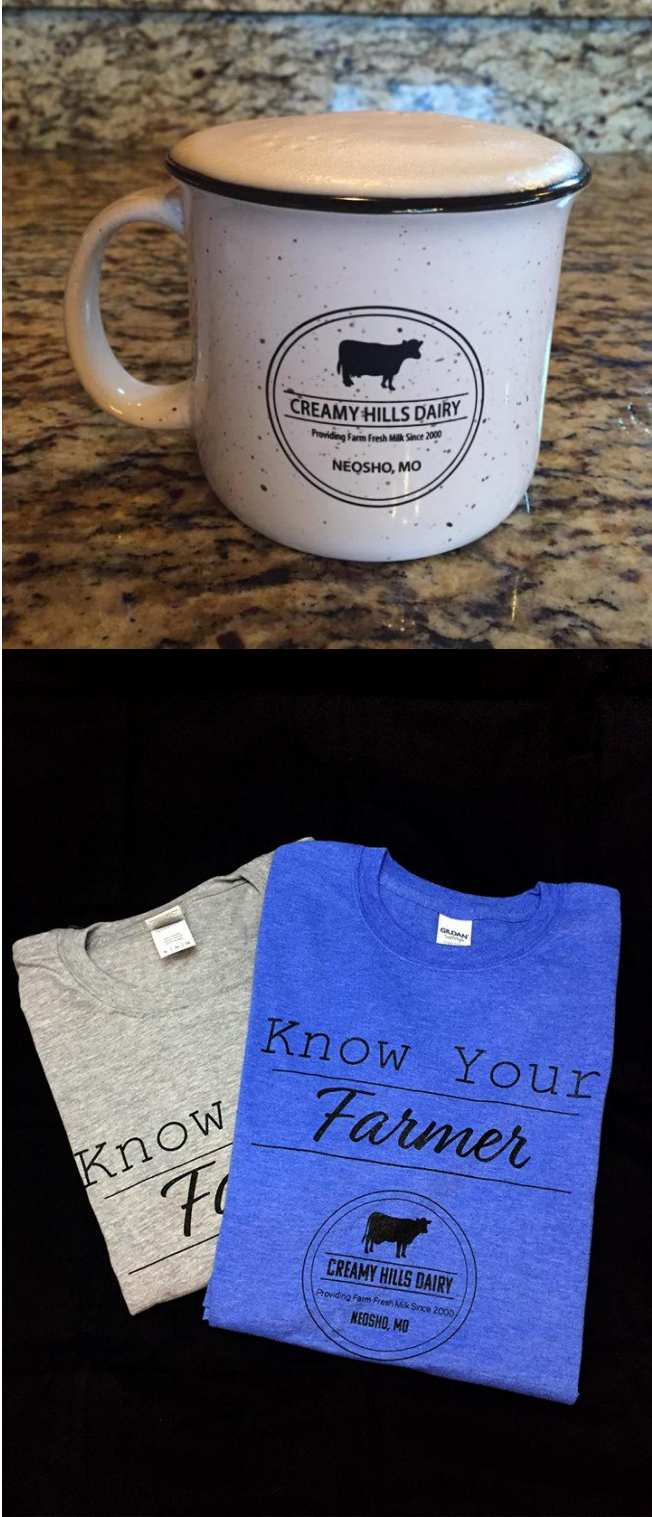
We welcome any questions that you may have and look forward to serving you! Feel free to message us through Facebook or if you would like to talk to us, call Jason at 417-850-1101.

Thank you for your business.

All the best,

Creamy Hills Dairy

Appendix I: Creamy Hills Dairy Merchandise



Appendix J: Audience Demographic Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer the following questions as completely and accurately as possible.

1. What is your current age? _____ years old
2. What is your gender? (Check One)
 - Male
 - Female
3. What is your ethnicity? (Check One)
 - Caucasian
 - African American
 - Hispanic
 - Asian
 - Native American
 - Pacific Islander
 - Other
4. What is your household income level?
 - Under \$25,000
 - \$25,001 to \$50,000
 - \$50,000 to \$75,000
 - \$75,001 to \$100,000
 - \$100,001 to \$125,000
 - \$125,001 to \$150,000
 - Over \$150,000
5. How many people are in your household? _____ people in my household
6. Approximately how many miles do you live from Creamy Hills Dairy?
 - 10 miles or less
 - 11 to 25 miles
 - 26 to 50 miles
 - 50 plus miles
7. Did you grow up on a farm or in a rural community?
 - Yes
 - No
8. What was the size of the community you grew-up in?

- More than 250,000 people
- 100,000 to 249,999 people
- 25,000 to 99,999 people
- 7,000 to 24,999 people
- 3,500 to 6,999 people
- Less than 3,500 people