



UNDERSTANDING THE VERMONT FOOD CONSUMER

CONSUMER PROFILES: HOW-TO-USE GUIDE

THE PROJECT:

In 2014 [Farm to Plate's Consumer Education and Marketing Working Group](#) conducted a target audience analysis to identify and map customers and potential customers of Vermont's food products. The "Understanding Vermont's Food Consumer" project is designed to be a starting point or framework intended to be adapted and modified to fit Network projects and organizational needs.

The project identifies consumer audiences based on lifestyles and values so messages can be developed and then delivered through the communication channels used by each audience to begin to change behavior aimed at increasing local food consumption. The Vermont Consumer Profile grid includes 31 Consumer Profiles, suggested keywords and images that both resonate and repel, and suggested channels each type of consumer may use to communicate.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

The following target marketing principles informed the project and can be referred to when questions arise surrounding why audience segmentation is imperative in successful marketing communications and behavior change outreach:

- ▶ There is no such thing as "my target audience is everyone" or "my target audience is all Vermonters." If you try to be everything to everyone you're nothing to no one. It is neither practical nor feasible to try to reach all Vermonters with the same messages and communication channels.
- ▶ In addition to communicating to a target audience, marketing and outreach needs to relay consistent messaging with a commitment to a consistent timeframe.
- ▶ Mass marketing is last century, micro and niche marketing is relevant and effective now
- ▶ Your message is heard (and potentially acted on) when delivered through media channels used by the target audience/Vermont consumer.

- ▶ Fulfill a need. Think about the benefit that you are providing to your customer/target audience.
- ▶ Create a call to action—drive the consumer to act, decide, or speak up.

"Don't tell me how good you make it; tell me how good it makes me when I use it."

Leo Burnett

- ▶ Focus 80% of your time on 20% of the people (who present the greatest opportunity in alignment with your marketing/outreach goals) for a given timeframe. Then move on to the target audience who presents the next greatest opportunity for change/action (as defined by your goals).

WHO SHOULD USE:

- ▶ Farm to Plate Network groups can use the Consumer Profiles to help inform upcoming projects or campaigns aimed at helping reach Farm to Plate's goal to increase the amount of locally produced food consumed by Vermonters. For example, the Consumer Education and Marketing Working Group will use the Consumer Profiles to help identify the target audiences and develop messaging and media channels for a statewide local food campaign (under development).
- ▶ Nonprofit organizations can use the Consumer Profiles to help inform program and mission outreach. For example, RAFFL and Intervale Center plan to use the profiles to help connect different types of consumers with programs and to refine messages to be most relevant about programs to specific audiences.
- ▶ Businesses and entrepreneurs can use the Consumer Profiles to further develop target marketing or niche marketing campaigns. For example, Vermont Farm Tours plans to use the profiles to identify two new niche market areas to target for group tours.

HOW TO USE:

The Vermont Consumer Profiles provide a framework for the Farm to Plate Network and organizations/businesses within the Network to inform marketing and communication efforts directed towards different types of Vermont food consumers/target audiences. The Consumer Profile tool is a living document and starting point that provides a framework for businesses, organizations, and the Network in marketing, communication, and outreach work. You may choose to alter the Consumer Profiles that have been created to more closely reflect your audiences or you may wish to expand upon the existing profiles and add more details. For the Consumer Profiles to be a useful tool, it must be relevant to your work and reflect your goals. The profiles are in an editable Excel spreadsheet format for you to edit as you see fit.

Farm to Plate Network groups, organizations and businesses are invited to:

- ▶ Use the Consumer Profiles as a marketing tool to help inform messaging and outreach;
- ▶ Further test and edit the profiles to best suit the organization's audience;
- ▶ Incorporate the existing profiles into additional layers of data or research, such as demographic information.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE:

Consumer profiles are not set in stone; rather, they are a framework for businesses and organizations to use, change, edit, and update to be relevant to specific audiences.

STEP 1

AUDIENCE BRAINSTORM: Conduct an Organizational/Business Brainstorm to Review the Consumer Profiles and Make Connections to Your Audiences:

- ▶ Define your marketing, outreach, and/or communication goals and keep these in mind throughout the brainstorm session to keep consumer profile work aligned with your goals.
- ▶ Identify your target audiences – customers, volunteers, members, people served, donors, funders, farmers, etc:
 - Who you are currently reaching?
 - Who you are not reaching?
 - Determine whether you are trying to attract a new audience, deepen relationships with existing members/customers/donors, or re-engage lapsed groups.
- ▶ Think about B to B audiences (your audience beyond consumers such as funders, farmers, local government, and so on) in the consumer profile framework—what motivates them to make decisions? Can a funder also be a wine enthusiast, a farmer also a type of native Vermonter?
- ▶ Do these audiences share attributes with any of the consumer profiles? Do you need to delete or add some profiles to the Consumer Profile Grid to be more relevant to your work?

- Consider adding more descriptive information, messages, and channels to profiles that resonate with your audiences.
 - Identify if there are audiences you communicate with that are not represented in the Consumer Profiles and consider creating a new profile.
- ▶ If you reach multiple target audiences, consider categorizing them by motivations—alter the grid and add in your own notes, descriptions, values, and so on as you see fit.
- ▶ Once you have identified your target audiences and incorporated them into the Consumer Profile grid:
- Determine priority of outreach and match it to your organizational/business goals;
 - Follow the 80/20 rule (see Guiding Principles)—80% of your time on 20% of the people;
 - Further use the Consumer Profiles to help shape how and where you communicate your message and conduct your outreach.

STEP 2

CONSUMER KEY WORDS, MESSAGES, IMAGES & COMMUNICATION CHANNELS: Once you have honed in on your target audiences, it's time to further identify and develop key words, messages, and images that either resonate with or repel them.

- ▶ Think about how your audiences receive information and communications. To effectively communicate with your different audiences, communication and information should be relevant to and easily understood by each audience. Furthermore, this information needs to be communicated using a media channel that each audience actually uses to get information/communicate. For example:
- A young food entrepreneur scraping to get by versus a hobby jelly maker whose husband is a doctor are both food producers, but what is relevant to each of these folks is probably very different based on their lifestyles and values.
 - A young professional trying to make ends meet in a more urban area of Vermont who tries to live a sustainable Vermont lifestyle and a young rural family struggling to pay the bills may both be considered lower income, but the motivations behind how and where they spend their money are very different.
 - A native conservative Vermonter who is interested in being self-sufficient and seeing less people dependent on public assistance and a pregnant mom interested in the health of her baby may both use Facebook, but are going to be interested in very different images and messages.

- ▶ If you communicate with multiple distinct audiences, shape your messaging and outreach to resonate accordingly. While your overall mission, theme, or purpose remains consistent, blanketing the same exact message to everyone leads to the message being ignored or possibly alienating people because it is not relevant to their situation or motivation. Saving time by trying to have mass appeal leads to ineffective communication—refer back to Guiding Principles.
- ▶ To further develop words and images that resonate/repel, more deeply explore where each consumer profile (relevant to your audience) finds value.
- ▶ Just when you are starting to get bored with a message may be when your audience is starting to listen—keep your message consistent.
- ▶ **Test Messaging**
 - Use focus groups with representatives from the different consumer types you will be reaching.
 - Use surveys being sure to match the consumer group being tested to who gets the survey.
 - Incorporate testing “stations” at events to get feedback.
- ▶ **Community Engagement Messaging**
 - Tailor messaging about programs for different types of consumers.
 - Engage community organizations to drive your message to their members.
- ▶ **Behavior Change Messaging**
 - Tailor recruitment and retention messages for different audiences.
 - Challenge the status quo - share up the paradigm.
 - Motivate an audience to act by making the message relevant to that specific audience and clearly define what you are asking them to do - create a call to action.
- ▶ **Marketing/Outreach Materials**
 - Incorporate words, phrases, and images that resonate with your audiences in communication moving forward—newsletters, emails, fliers, brochures, handouts, social media, news articles, and so on.
 - Use clear and concise language.
- ▶ **Channels**
 - Match messaging for your audience to the channels of communication they use. If they read fliers at the local store, use fliers. If they get information through their children’s school, work with the school to reach the parents. If they use phones more

than computers, make sure your online information is available and easy to read on a mobile device.

- Conduct a survey of your members/customers to determine the media channels they use (Facebook, cell phone, local paper, newsletter from kid's school, and so on).

STEP 3

MARKETING/COMMUNICATION/OUTREACH TACTICS:

- ▶ Get measurement tools in place BEFORE implementing outreach/marketing (see Step 4: Measurement).
- ▶ Review your website. Remove words, phrases, or images that might be a turn off and replace with some that may resonate more effectively.
- ▶ Update boilerplate descriptions and messaging documents to be consistent with website changes; update collateral materials to be consistent when it's cost effective (i.e., use older, but still relevant materials first and do a thorough review of all changes needed before you order a new print job).
- ▶ Identify other local and regional partners who reach similar target audiences and discuss collaboration potential.
- ▶ Use the 80/20 marketing rule (see Guiding Principles) by prioritizing your audience outreach in alignment with your marketing/outreach goals. Focus 80% of your time on 20% of your audience for a given time and then shift to the next priority level. Space out the work and focus on an audience segment or similar segments one at a time.
- ▶ Connect with Farm to Plate to see how your organization can be a part of the statewide local food campaign being developed by the Farm to Plate Network.
- ▶ **Additional Online Tools:**
 - **Facebook Ads** (<https://www.facebook.com/advertising>): Facebook allows for highly targeted advertising, allowing you to specify age, location (zip code, town, state, etc.), interest, or even target users on your email list
 - **Google AdWords** (<https://www.google.com/adwords>): You can reach relevant customers on relevant websites across the web. A range of options let you target by website type, audience type or remarketing, when and where it matters.

- **Hootsuite** (<https://hootsuite.com>): With the ability to manage all your social networks and schedule messages for future publish, Hootsuite gives you a wide scope of your social media activity. Hootsuite's social media monitoring platform gives you the tools you need to locate leads, buyers, and influencers while tracking the conversations critical to your business.
- **Lexicon of Sustainability: The Food List** (<http://www.lexiconofsustainability.com/the-food-list>): The Food List is a weekly cross-media messaging campaign that will unite our Food Movement by providing the vital tools and information needed to help fix our food system. The first "year" of THE FOOD LIST will include 52 weekly themes. Each week, partners will coordinate their efforts to deliver content—reports, news articles, blogs, videos, statistics, visual graphics, and art—on the same food and farming theme. Think of it as Talking Points to help organize a national Food Movement. Changing each week, these vital talking points will be delivered in print, in film, across partner websites and via social media outlets to stimulate a highly focused dialog about ideas that matter.
- **Nielsen Segment Explore** (<http://www.claritas.com/MyBestSegments/Default.jsp?ID=30&menuOption=segmentexplorer>): The Segment Explorer is an interactive tool that lets you examine segment groups based on demographics and behaviors. Once you have identified a segment group, you can click on each segment tile to view more details about the segment's traits. If you are a subscribed user, you will be able to download detailed information about each segment.

STEP 4

MEASUREMENT:

- ▶ Incorporate communication, marketing and outreach into the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework.
 - 2 types of accountability: population indicators and performance measures
 - 3 types of performance measures: How much did we do? How well did we do it? Is anyone better off?
- ▶ Tools to track communication - Google Analytics, Facebook insights, bit.ly.
- ▶ Use surveys before and after outreach/marketing campaigns to help track measurement/determine performances measurements.

STEP 5

SHARING YOUR WORK:

We invite you to share your organization's version of this tool so that we may collect information for future use as we collectively move towards reaching the goals of the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan. Please send to Rachel@vsjf.org. Thank you.

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The following research helped inform the scope and content of the project:

Reports

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- ▶ *SNAP Food Security In-Depth Interview Study: Final Report*, U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, 2013, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/SNAPFoodSec.pdf>.
- ▶ "Household Participation in the Food Stamp and WIC Programs Increases the Nutrient Intakes of Preschool Children," Donald Rose, Jean-Pierre Habicht, and Barbara Devaney, *The Journal of Nutrition*, 1998, 128(3): 548-555, <http://jn.nutrition.org/content/128/3/548.long>.

- ▶ *2010 Vermont Seal of Quality Market Research Study*, Rosalie J. Wilson and Louise Calderwood, January 14, 2011, <http://www.vtfoodatlas.com/assets/resources/files/VT%20SEal%20of%20Quality%20Market%20Research.pdf>.
- ▶ *Researching Taste of Place in Vermont*, Jessica Hyman, Center for Rural Studies at the University of Vermont, December 2010, http://www.uvm.edu/crs/reports/2011/TOP_Working_Sessions_Final_Report.pdf.
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- ▶ *Marketing Nutrition: Soy, Functional Foods, Biotechnology, and Obesity*, Brian Wansink, University of Illinois Press, 2007.

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- ▶ "It Takes More Than A Produce Aisle To Refresh A Food Desert," Patti Neighmond, *NPR*, February 10, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2014/02/10/273046077/takes-more-than-a-produce-aisle-to-refresh-a-food-desert>.