

## RESEARCH DIRECTED ADVERTISING FOR CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS

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The advertising fraternity is often suspected of having authored the slogan "It pays to advertise" to build its own business, but there are definite indications that five years of advertising have been profitable for the California avocado industry. The annual report published by the California Avocado Advisory Board points out that for the 5 years preceding the advent of the marketing order, 438,200,000 pounds of California avocados were marketed for a total of \$42,231,000 compared to 437,600,000 pounds which were marketed during the 5 years since the industry advertising program was inaugurated for a total of \$57,556,980 after deducting the advertising assessment. It is indicative to note that although some 600,000 less pounds of fruit were marketed during the 5 years under the advertising program, the fruit enjoyed a marked increase in value of \$15,325,980. The board does not claim credit for all of this gain, but they report their satisfaction that the grower financed program has produced a profit.

In many companies, advertising has become the single largest marketing expenditure, and the Association of National Advertisers, Inc. reveals that total advertising expenditures of all American companies today are nearly half of reported net profits and come close to equaling total dividend payments. Apparently, the judgment of top management in America today accepts the fact that advertising is probably its most potent marketing tool. And much of this judgment must be accepted on faith alone because precise measurements of advertising's contribution are few and seldom definitive.

Antithetical to the lack of precision tools to measure advertising effectiveness is the availability of research techniques to guide the development and implementation of an advertising plan. The Avocado Advisory Board has been research oriented since its beginning and has followed the directions revealed by marketing research. The first such program consisted of a Qualitative identification of avocado users broken down into non-users, light users, and heavy users. The project conducted by Marplan, Inc. clearly identified avocado users and non-users so that advertising could be directed like fire power toward the best target.

Next the national menu census conducted every five years by Market Research Corporation of America was purchased to learn where were the areas of highest and lowest use . . . how avocados were used most frequently . . . with what other foods and when. This study indicated that avocados were used regularly by only 5% (*Current estimates by M.R.C.A. indicate that this percentage may have been raised to 10% by 1968.*) of the U.S. families nationally. But the figures were much higher for the Western United States. The study confirmed industry suspicion that the percentage of non-users was much higher in the Eastern part of the country.

However, all studies contributed to the establishment of a composite avocado purchaser as being the same type of person whether she lived in Schenectady or Sacramento. From these studies, the advertising agency recommended the light user as the best potential target for increased use. Non-users should not be overlooked, but the person who had some familiarity with avocados was a more immediate target than the non-user. Research described the light user as one who had eaten avocados in the past year but not more than once. Certainly this person had ample room for improved consumption. Much of the early board advertising was designed specifically to stimulate heavier use with the light user. The media selected, chiefly women's magazines, was also directed by the consumer profile drawn from marketing research.

During the 1966-67 season, the board purchased continuing reports from Market Research Corporation of America computed from a 2300 store supermarket panel, a mathematical and demographical sample of U.S. super markets. The study revealed how avocados were displayed at the retail level, size of display, condition of the fruit, availability of ripe fruit, placement of avocado store banners, etc. This enabled the board to direct promotions where they were the most needed, where they would be the most effective. A survey of retail ads has also been used extensively to learn which retailers are cooperating with board programs and which ones reject them.

Readership measurement of board ads tells the advertising agency how well avocado ads are being read. It is reassuring to report that California Avocado Ads rated 23% above the average readership norms for all ads of comparable size in the Ladies Home Journal this year and the June avocado ad in this magazine rated number one for all junior color pages in the book. Avocado ad creative quality was recognized this past season through awards from the New York Art Directors and from the American Advertising Federation.

The Advisory Board plans to continue to seek guidance and direction of its marketing plan through research and underway this fall will be a nutritional research seminar, bringing together renowned nutritionists to recommend to the board some new directions in nutritional research which may help erase incorrect impressions of the avocado by dietitians and medical practitioners. There is absolutely no evidence that avocados should be eliminated from low cholesterol diets and yet they are most often on the verboten list for heart patients. This can only be corrected by the proper nutritional research. Such wrong impressions cannot be corrected by advertising without authenticated information which may be communicated to dietitians and medical people as well as to the general public.

It seems most probable that the research techniques employed by the Avocado Advisory Board have improved the efficiency of its advertising dollar. And when competition for attention from the consumer ranges through 1600 to 1700 advertising messages per day which are bombarded on the average American daily, the communications program must be well directed with advertising zeroed in on the right prospect.



A retail store manager suggests Spice Islands wine vinegar as proper company for the housewife pictured who is buying a California Avocado from the special two-product display developed for use during a summer promotional tie-in program between the California Avocado Advisory Board and Spice Islands products.



New avocado merchandiser separates fruit into degrees of ripeness for consumer ease of purchase. The California Avocado Advisory Board recommends cutting a fruit in half and wrapping it with transparent wrap as pictured in order to show the inside of the fruit, particularly with the dark skinned Hass.

The California Avocado Advisory Board knows that it must direct its advertising programs like a football coach runs his team. The consumer keeps developing new defenses to old advertising techniques and they must be shifted constantly inventing fresh approaches, new plays to score with her. This is even more true at the point of sale where the busy housewife does not have the leisure time she has to read an ad. The scrap for attention in the store is even more fierce. It is estimated that 80% of all promotional materials developed for store use never get out of the back room. For this reason, the avocado program has labored to develop materials with considerable utility . . . units like the new Avocado Merchandiser, a bright yellow styrofoam display rack holding approximately 46 avocados. The unit is designed to highlight the avocado display and encourage the retailer to segregate his ripe fruit from the hard avocados so that the consumer can find them immediately. Housewives want avocados which are ready for immediate use. Lack of ripe fruit severely curtails sales. 16,000 of these new units were distributed last season and a rerun is contemplated for next year.

The board has increased consumer interest at the point of sale through tie-in programs with other major food advertisers such as Morton Salt, Kraft Foods, Rath Meats, Spice Islands, and others. Last season, Kraft invested close to a half a million dollars in television, magazine, newspaper, point of sale materials, and manpower in a major tie-in with the California Avocado industry during March and April. Each year, the board has been able to attract a sizeable tie-in advertising expenditure from its advertising partners, an amount often in excess of its own advertising budget.

During a tie-in with the Spice Islands people last summer featuring California Avocados and wine vinegar, special displays were developed and distributed to stores throughout the country showing the two products together.

There will be 6 to 8 tie-in programs planned for the 1967-68 season when the CAAB anticipates that a shorter crop will likely mean lower advertising budgets and greater need for tie-in programs to maintain maximum pressure on the consumer. Already assured is another massive program with Kraft salad dressings, the fifth successive program with these people who have featured California Avocados generously on their nationwide Perry Como Show, Andy Williams Show, and Road West.

Educating the retailer on how to buy, store, and display avocados will also get a big lift this season through a new technique which will allow special representatives to project an industry color film with a small, self contained rear screen projector about the size of a portable television set. The unit is small and light enough for the representative to carry right into the retail store where he can show the produce manager how to handle avocados properly. He can dramatize how to achieve maximum volume, maximum profit. Five of these special units will go into operation during 1967-68 and if they are successful, additional models will be purchased for expanded use.

The program which will be going into its seventh season in the fall of 1967 will be planned and directed through the counsel of the board's two agencies, McCann-Erickson, Inc. for advertising, and Harshe, Rottman, and Druck for consumer and trade publicity.