Marketing water use to consumers

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Plants need water.

- But, do people need plants, especially in times of drought?
- Will they quit buying our products, or will they switch the type of plants they buy?
- What they are thinking will profoundly shape their behavior.
- So, what do consumers think about water, plants, and their landscape?
Water in the landscape

- In residential settings, indoor water usage remains relatively stable throughout the year and is related to household size and appliance efficiency.
- Outdoor water use is most often determined by garden type and importance, social norms, and size.
- Higher water usage is also associated with lifestyle preferences for large gardens, large lawns, color of green home environment, and high enjoyment of gardening.
Attitudes influence behavior

- We have some room for change in attitude and behavior. 25% of Australian homeowners reported watering their gardens three to four times weekly and even disregarded permitted levels of watering during water restrictions in drought.

- At the same time, another 24% of homeowner respondents reported never watering their garden.
Income and gender matter

More income often means more water conservation. One study showed an income tipping point in households > $100,000 practiced water conservation more frequently and were more likely to adopt drought-tolerant plants into their landscape.

Being female is also generally positively correlated with the adoption of drought-tolerant plants and more favorable attitudes regarding water conservation and environmentalism. In fact, male head-of-households were 20% less likely to adopt drought tolerant plants.
Marketing to consumers

- Messages are more likely to resonate with higher income and female consumers (key customer demographics for plant buyers)
- Must understand attitudes to begin to communicate with them where they are.
Information from recent three studies can help us understand consumer behavior

- 2015 study of 1555 respondents nationally, focused on bee health.
- 2016 study funded by SCRI WateR3 with 1477 respondents, focused on water source and plant water use in the landscape.
- 2017 retail garden center study
2015 Online Survey

Included environmental component:

Sustainable potting mix,
recycled container,
recycled water,
traditional practices
Relative importance of four product attributes in online survey in 2015.

Bee friendly or Protecting Pollinators worth up to a $0.25 more than recycled water or sustainable media (7% on $3.49)

Low prices preferred to higher prices

Traditional least preferred, bee-friendly most preferred

Recycled/recaptured water and sustainable potting mix preferred over recycled pots and traditional methods

Bee friendly or Protecting Pollinators worth up to a $0.25 more than recycled water or sustainable media (7% on $3.49)
2016 SCRI Consumer Data

- SCRI grant, sought data set to investigate consumer perceptions in greater detail
- Asked about their water conservation expertise and interest as well as plant expertise and interest.
- Collected data 7 to 13 September 2016 with 1447 complete and useful responses.
Compared three of four consumer groups using U.S. Drought Monitor classification for the area in which they lived, along with their drought perception.

- Experienced real drought/ but it was not perceived ("Head in the Sand" we should be concerned about this group) NP/R
- Experienced real drought/ and was perceived (accurate and in drought conditions) P/R
- Experienced no real drought/ not perceived (normal circumstances) NP/NR
- Experienced no real drought/ perceived (water contentious) P/NR
For this next set of questions, imagine that you are at the beginning of the 2016 planting season (this past spring). We want you to imagine that you are shopping for a perennial plant (one that will persist and flower in your landscape for several years). Fresh water refers to water from a municipality/city or surface water (not recycled). Recycled water means the water was recaptured and used another time or for another purpose.

How likely would you be to buy the plant shown?

Perennial verbena, grown in the nursery with a blend of fresh and recycled water, $9.99, needs no irrigation in the landscape except during years of below average rainfall for the region.

- 6 plants (3 perennials, 3 tree/shrubs)
- 3 prices (low, moderate, high)
- 3 water sources (fresh, recycled, blend)
- 2 landscape water uses (requires irrigation in the landscape, but only for the first season to help the plant become established OR requires irrigation in the landscape for most seasons after establishment.)
What matters most (percent relative importance) in the purchase decision?

Plant most important. Water use importance increases in drought.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Perceived/Real Drought</th>
<th>Not Perceived/Not Real</th>
<th>Perceived/Real Drought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head in Sand</td>
<td>n=645</td>
<td>n=364</td>
<td>n=196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant</td>
<td>45.6 a</td>
<td>43.5 a</td>
<td>49.1 a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water source</td>
<td>18.8 b</td>
<td>19.8 b</td>
<td>18.4 b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water use Landscape</td>
<td>16.1 c</td>
<td>16.8 c</td>
<td>15.0 b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>19.6 b</td>
<td>19.9 b</td>
<td>17.5 b</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lower case letters indicate significant difference in column at p ≤ 0.05.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utility scores for production water source</th>
<th>All (n=1295)</th>
<th>Head in Sand (n=675)</th>
<th>Normal (n=377)</th>
<th>Drought (n=208)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fresh water</td>
<td>0.201 (0.016)</td>
<td>0.240 A (0.021)</td>
<td>0.148 B (0.029)</td>
<td>0.169 AB (0.040)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycled water</td>
<td>0.054 (0.016)</td>
<td>0.050 (0.023)</td>
<td>0.064 (0.029)</td>
<td>0.041 (0.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blend of fresh water and recycled water.</td>
<td>-0.256 (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.290 (0.026)</td>
<td>-0.212 (0.038)</td>
<td>-0.210 (0.057)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lower case letters designate significant differences in rows; upper case letters designate differences in the column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utility scores for landscape irrigation needs</th>
<th>All (n=1295)</th>
<th>Head in Sand (n=675)</th>
<th>Normal (n=377)</th>
<th>Drought (n=208)</th>
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<td>Requires irrigation in the landscape, but only for the first season to help the plant become established.</td>
<td>0.207 (0.019)</td>
<td>0.141 B (0.026)</td>
<td>0.311 A (0.039)</td>
<td>0.224 AB (0.046)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires irrigation in the landscape for most seasons after establishment.</td>
<td>-0.207 (0.019)</td>
<td>-0.141 A (0.026)</td>
<td>-0.311 B (0.039)</td>
<td>-0.224 AB (0.046)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fresh > Recycled > Blend
Especially for HIS group
First Season > All Seasons
Very little difference for HIS
Very big difference for Normal
Moderate difference for Drought
2017 In-store retail study

6 retailers (2 Detroit, 2 Kalamazoo, 2 Grand Rapids)

Displayed sign for 6 weeks (comparable endcaps) and noted sales -, --, nc, +, ++

Approximately how much product did it take to restock endcap (indicate units sold)
Wenke Greenhouse

- May 1-7 with sign ++ (70%) without sign ++ (40%)
- May 8-14 with sign ++ (35%) without sign ++ (31%)
- May 15-21 with sign + (20%) without sign ++ (33%)
- May 22-28 with sign + (18%) without sign + (19%)

River Street Flowerland
A highly visible road sign and simple communication to hundreds of households in South Florida resulted in a 61% decrease in lawn watering. Findings also show that once the initial drop in lawn watering occurred shortly after the signs went up during the test year, the experimental group maintained a wide separation from the control group, at about 41 percent below the control group.

How do we market or communicate water attributes to consumers?

- Do make water part of the communication or conversation.
- Consider communicating more about plant water use in the landscape.
- Concerns over recycled water would suggest this not be a part of the conversation at this time. More work needs to be done.
- Where can you communicate this information? Website, paper communications, delivery trucks, employee uniforms, etc. Help retailers construct and label plant material that uses less water in the landscape.
Feature: What the product is

Benefit: What the product does

People don’t buy features, they buy benefits!
Begonia

$1.99

Color all summer long

Plant

Price

Price Location: T, M, B

Plant, Feature, Benefit

Sign Position: L, M, R
Interaction of price (low, medium, high) and cue type (none, feature, benefit)
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