

Retail Research Offers Insights

This season the California Avocado Commission (CAC) conducted retail surveys using a third-party local software platform that provides real-time observations about retail execution. There were three objectives for these surveys: to gauge the implementation of the California avocado label at retail, to measure California avocado and imported avocado distribution at retail and to obtain visual confirmation of CAC merchandising material and California avocado brand identification at retail in key markets.

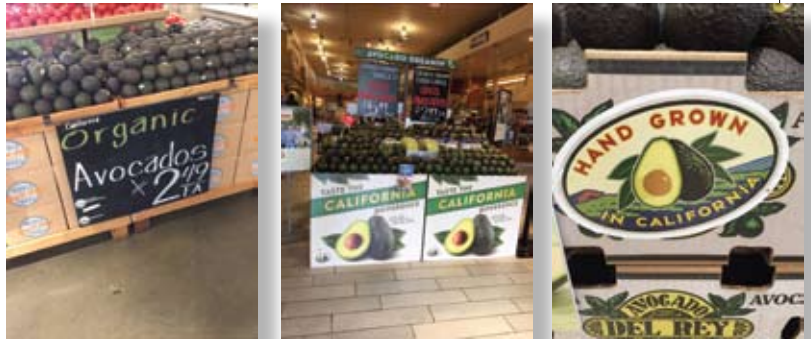
There were three waves of surveys. The first was launched as retail distribution started market-wide, between April 13 and 22. The second was conducted pre-Memorial Day, from May 21 through 29, and the last was held around 4th of July from June 28 to July 5. The first two surveys were conducted in 250 stores in Northern and Southern California. For the third survey Portland was added. For each wave, results were observable at both the market level and the individual store level.

The research is a crowd-sourced information service that uses consumers to take pictures and record information on their smart phones in order to provide businesses with information they need. By using independent consumers to conduct surveys, the cost tends to be lower than conventional survey research. The Commission provided direction on the information they wanted collected as well as input regarding the photos they wanted taken.

Thousands of data points and pictures were collected during the retail surveys, from which CAC's marketing team and retail marketing directors could learn and create presentations for retailers on their actual merchandising conditions. The surveys provided confirmation that in both Southern California and Northern California, California avocados were the dominant origin at retail for all three survey periods.

Portland was added to the third survey in order to measure whether continuing advertising through the 4th of July was warranted. The survey confirmed it was. Eighty percent of the stores surveyed in Portland carried at least one size of California avocados for the week leading into 4th of July.

Observations for all markets surveyed confirmed that distribution of avocados from Peru was limited to a minor presence in the third wave (June 28 – July 5). The surveys pro-



Photos from the retail surveys showed California avocado displays and signage.

vided information about display activity and point-of-sale as well, with visual confirmation of CAC display bins and point-of sale materials being merchandised at retail. Based on survey results, retailer-specific California signage seems to get the most wide-spread usage. The surveys confirmed what was working and also provided CAC's marketing team with ideas for improvement — for example, an opportunity to step up signage for American Summer Holidays / 4th of July.

One of the objectives of conducting the surveys was to gauge the presence of California avocado labels on the fruit, and photographs showed that significant progress has been made. About 50 percent of California avocados had a PLU label with clearly identified California branding on the fruit. About five percent had the California brand label plus a handler label. It is possible that the percentage of avocados with two labels is understated, however, because the photos only showed one side of the fruit.

CAC's marketing team concluded that surveys such as these provide valuable information to validate program implementation and also to provide insight for program improvement. 🥑



Visual confirmation of California avocado labels on the fruit at retail.