Case Study of Strategic Communication Campaigns by Certification Programs

Thesis

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By

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Abstract

Certification programs provide farmers a method to distinguish their products within a commodity group and increase marketability. These programs may create a value chain within the food system to help growers differentiate their product, realize premiums, and create a reliable market. While value chains and certification programs in the food system have been evaluated for market access, quality standards, or sustainability ideals, the strategic communications used by certification programs to engage the buyers in the food system have not been discussed.

This case study explored the strategic communications used by two certification programs. The first was the Certified Angus Beef program, a certification program for Angus beef started by the American Angus Association in 1978 and the second was the Ohio Proud program established in 1993 by the Ohio Department of Agriculture to provide certification for products grown or processed in the state.

The strategic communications implemented by the two certification programs to reach potential buyers in the food system were identified in this study by looking at the principles of strategic communication which consisted of strategies, messages, and tactics to reach the targeted audiences. The identified strategic communications were analyzed in
the context of buyer and seller relationships contained in the relationship communication model developed by Andersen (2001) from channel communication studies in manufacturing. This study extended the theories involved in the model beyond those identified in Andersen’s article (2001), which focused on elements from classical rhetorical philosophy, to communication theories providing more application for the practitioner interested in developing and evaluating strategic communications for value chains and certification programs.

The Andersen (2001) model showed three phases of the relationship-building process as pre-relationship, negotiation, and relationship development with the corresponding communication tasks of awareness, persuasion, and commitment. This study extended the Anderson (2001) model’s relationship-building process to include identified communication theories with each phase of the process: pre-relationship phase and information theory, the negation phase and information-processing theory, and the commitment phase and contingency theory.

Based on the theoretical analysis of the strategic communications, the Ohio Proud program communication strategies were in the awareness, or pre-relationship, phase of the relationship-building process. The communication strategies were unidirectional and indicated the Ohio Proud program started the awareness necessary to start the pre-relationship phase to create an entry point for farmers.

The Certified Angus Beef program communication strategies were in the commitment, or relationship development, phase of the relationship-building process.
The communication strategies were bidirectional and indicated a mature communications relationship with the buyers in the food system regarding their product.

The application of the Andersen (2001) relationship-building process model with the extended communication theories was beneficial to identify and analyze strategic communications for a certification program for potential buyers in the food system. This model with the extended communication theories could be used by agricultural communication practitioners in planning strategic communications for to reach potential buyers in the food system. The long-term benefits could be an established value chain available to farmers to create a reliable market and premiums for their product.
Dedication

This is dedicated to the families who have realized the need for one member to complete a goal for their personal advancement and willingly given, regardless of their own pursuits, to help make sure that goal is completed. This is dedicated to Bob and the entire Folck family.
Acknowledgments

The researcher is indebted to the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program for participating in this study. Their time invested in the interviews and allowance to use documents has been valuable. Additionally, the access to restricted areas of their individual websites was appreciated in conducting the research and essential to the completion of the thesis.

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Vita

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Publications


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*Fields of Study*

*Major Field*

Agricultural and Extension Education

Agriculture Communications
Chapter 1: Introduction

This is a case study of the strategic communications used by two certification program to reach potential buyers in the food system. This first chapter will identify the challenges that face farmers who are selling product into the food system, describe a value chain as an alternative to commodity sales in the food system, and characterize communications between buyers and sellers in the food system.

Connecting Farmers and Buyers

Marketing options for small farmers has often meant selling directly to the consumer through on-farm sales or farmer’s markets. The other option is to sell the product wholesale, as a commodity. But as local foods gain in popularity, small farmers are looking for ways to connect to the chefs, restaurants, and retail outlets in their surrounding areas that want to feature locally-grown products.

Making the needed connection can be a daunting task for a small farmer. Certification programs have been developed as a method to help small farmers make connections to potential buyers for their product. Small farmers could utilize the connections created by the certification program to have recognition in the marketplace and benefit from the program’s infrastructure.
How would these certification programs help small farmers find buyers for their product? How do they make buyers aware of the farmers’ product? How do they help the farmer communicate with potential buyers?

Communicating with potential buyers is an important element in selling product. This is true for any product, including farm products. Certification programs are involved in communicating about agricultural and food products. This study will look at the communication strategies used by certification programs. This study will look at communications used by the certification programs to increase awareness of the certified products to potential buyers in the food system to help farmers sell their product.

**Certification Programs**

Certification programs provide a method to distinguish products within a commodity group. These programs are external to the growers, but are designed to help increase marketability of the commodity product.

Certification programs have been established by groups of growers, produce organizations, and retailers to organize labeling and buying of produce. These programs can develop a niche market that is socially based, to offer an alternative to those that dominate the market (Renard, 2005). Certification programs can also promote certain principles, such as organic, sustainable, or fair labor practices. Other programs have systems used to differentiate growers in the marketplace (Ingenbleek & Meulenberg, 2006). Examples of the latter would be the Free Trade, USDA Organic Label, or USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) program.
Certification programs are usually established by nonprofit or governmental organizations to help growers differentiate from mainstream commodities and receive entry into a market. The goal is for the growers to realize premiums and a reliable market for their products. Some of these organizations have developed rules of conduct, regarding environmental and/or social domains, which producers voluntarily agree to implement (Ingenbleek & Meulenberg, 2006).

The study looked at the Certified Angus Beef program, a certification program for Angus beef started by the farm and ranch members of the American Angus Association in 1978 to differentiate their product from mainstream commodities. The mission of the program is to increase sales of Angus cattle while delivering a high-quality product for the consumer. The program focused on communication to link the network of cattle producers, packer buyers, food service and retail distributors, restaurants, and retail grocery stores in a communication system to drive demand. (“Certified Angus Beef,” n.d.). This communication system allowed Angus cattle producers to become engaged in the buyers’ network through the certification program and eventually drove consumer demand for the product.

In the U.S., some state government agencies are involved with certifying agricultural products grown or processed in their state. Examples of these are Alaska Grown and Jersey Fresh. (Inwood, Bergman & Stinner, 2003). This study looked at Ohio Proud which, similar to Alaska Grown and Jersey Fresh, provides certification for products grown or processed in the state. Ohio Proud was established in 1993 by the Ohio
Department of Agriculture to identify and promote agricultural products grown in Ohio (“Ohio Proud,” n.d.).

These programs communicate the origin of the product through an attached label to encourage consumers to buy local product and support local foods. The focus of the programs’ communication is with the grower, to encourage them to display the label when selling their product. There is also communication with the consumer to encourage them to look for the label when buying products.

**Food System**

The commodity grown on the farm is just the first step of the supply chain of the food system. Commodities become part of the supply chain which is the practices and relationships from the grower to the consumer, which has a wide range of activities that have a combined effect on consumer satisfaction and industry profitability (McEvilly, 2006).

As the products move from the grower and into the chain, they are bought and sold through a network of buyers and sellers before the product reaches the consumer (Inwood, et al., 2003). An Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) study in 2003 found that since the traditional buyer and seller network is established and familiar that restaurants or retail outlets are more likely to use them for purchasing most of their products. The study also found that restaurants owners and chefs are also involved with the food service distributors in other professional ways and have an existing relationship and communication structure.
Likewise, retail outlets have established trust and relationships with their distributors (Inwood et al., 2003). Growers usually don’t have the expertise or time to learn how to communicate with this network, so the certification program becomes a way to bridge this gap.

**Value Chains**

When a certification program becomes involved with the networks, or supply chain, a value chain is formed as described by Stevenson and Pirog (2008): “Value chains are long-term networks of partnering business enterprises working together to maximize values for the partners and end customers of a particular product or service” (p. 120).

Adopted from business literature and ideas such as extended enterprises, virtual integration and strategic alliances, value chains for agri-foods are centered on four aspects according to Bloom and Hinrichs (2010):

1. Product differentiation and added-value
2. Commitment to welfare of all participants
3. Creation of partnerships
4. Recognition of the role of trust and shared governance

The business model of value chains is to create, “close cooperation between strategic partners within the chain and competition between chains doing business in the given product sectors” (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008, p. 122). Essentially, the individual value chains that are created are then able to compete with the established product chains in the food system. The partners potentially involved in a value chain in the food system are growers, food processors, food distributors, and retail or food service outlets. (Stevenson...
The synthesis that brings this value chain together is the certification program.

Value chains are different than current relationships that exist for commodity sales for growers. These relationships are arm’s length, which is a market relationship where the supplier pays the grower the market price for the commodity (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008). However, these arm’s-length relationships don’t foster long-term relationships since the interaction is driven more by price than quality, reputation, or trust. Stevenson & Pirog (2008) also note these relationships can be adversarial as each side of the negotiation is concerned only with their profit margins. The opposite of commodity sales are vertically integrated companies which tend to be inflexible and unable to respond quickly to marketplace changes (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008).

Communication, or information visibility, is essential to enable the value chain to be created and successful as the partners work toward the trust and shared governance that are an integral part of the concept (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008). The relationships in a value chain are a strategic alliance that requires cooperation along the structure (Bloom & Hinrichs, 2010).

The idea of building relationships for mutually beneficial results can be time consuming (Inwood et al., 2003), which could affect the opportunities for growers to enter a value chain. Also, to create a value chain, differentiated products need to be identified and explored with producers and partners who are knowledgeable about the production, markets, and customers. (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008). One of the challenges in developing value chains recognized by Stevenson and Pirog (2008) is to create standards
and consistent quality for the product. Stevenson and Pirog (2008) saw value chains benefitting mid-size agricultural operations when implemented. Clark, Inwood, and Sharp (2011) saw value chains as working for any size grower when implemented co-ops or other existing business structures.

**Certification Program Communications**

Certification programs, such as the Certified Angus Beef program which provides external certification for a specified beef product, could facilitate the grower’s entry into the value chain and the communication and coordination between the partners involved. In Ohio, local foods are certified with the Ohio Proud program, which is a certification for food products that are grown or processed in Ohio (“Ohio Proud,” n.d.).

According to Clark et al. (2011), farmers would benefit from value chains that are built as business relationships based on trust. Value chains require a high level of trust along with high performance of the relationships (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008, p. 120).

Communications is central to providing an understanding among the partners in the relational exchange and is essential to relationship development (Andersen, 2001). Communications is also essential among the exchange partners to establish trust (Anderson & Narus, 1990). With the interdependence of communications with trust in relationships, communications would be essential for certification programs in developing a value chain.
Problem Statement

Growers are seeking ways to differentiate their product from mainstream commodities, realize premiums, and create a reliable market for their products. Value chains offer a model for creating a food system that provides social, environmental, and economic benefits for the participants (Bloom & Hinrichs, 2010). To create a value chain, differentiated products need to be identified and explored with producers and partners who are knowledgeable about the production, markets, and customers (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008).

Value chains also change the communication between sellers and buyers. Discrete transactions are one-sided with little communication between the seller (grower) and buyer; relationship exchanges (such as value chains) require an investment in time and communication (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987).

While value chains and certification programs in the food system have been evaluated for market access (Renard, 2005), quality standards (Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000), or sustainability ideals (Ingenbleek & Meulenberg, 2006), the strategic communications used by certification programs to engage the buyers in the food system have not been discussed. This study explored the strategic communications used by two certification programs to develop these relationships within a value chain. In this study, strategic communications are defined as the intentional communication undertaken by a business or organization with a purpose and a plan (Smith, 2009).
Purpose of the Study

This study looked at the strategic communications implemented by two certification programs in reaching potential buyers in the food system. The study looked at principles of strategic communications, which consisted of strategies, messages, and tactics to reach the targeted audiences.

The study also looked at communication strategies used in business marketing communications that can be utilized by actors in the food system. The strategies mapped by large companies or the manufacturing industry can be utilized by agriculture communication practitioners looking to create value chains with a certification program. By looking at case studies of current certification programs, the dialogue can be started for agriculture communicators to expand to the actors in the food system to create certification programs that provide growers with a reliable market and premiums for their differentiated product.

Research Objectives

The main aim of this study was to explore the similarities and differences of communication strategies used by two certification programs to reach potential buyers in the food system. To do this, the following objectives were developed:

1. Identify and describe communication strategies used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to potential buyers in the food system.
2. Identify the key messages used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to communicate the attributes of their product.
3. Detail the tactics used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to deliver the key messages to potential buyers within the food system.

4. Compare and contrast messages, strategies, and tactics between the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program

Limitations

There was a potential for researcher’s bias as the researcher who conducted this study had a history with the content area. The researcher was employed by Certified Angus Beef more than 20 years prior to the beginning of the study. During the research period the researcher lived and worked on a family fruit and vegetable farm located in Ohio, thus having a connection to an affected commodity.

The strategic communications were only looked at in real time with no historical context. The study focused only on the single moment in time and interviewed current employees, looked at the current website, and current documents. Historical documents would be a suggestion for future research.

The subjects interviewed at the certification programs were suggested because of their positions in working with buyers in the food system. They may not have communication backgrounds or conduct communication duties on a daily basis.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were imperative to this study and thus merit further explanation.

Growers, farmers and ranchers – For the purpose of this study, producers of agriculture commodities will be referred to primarily as growers. However, the term
farmer may be used and could be interchanged with grower. The term rancher is used in reference to growers of cattle.

Valuer chain -- Businesses involved in each stage of the supply chain from field to table. These business relationships are distinguished from traditional supply chains by focusing on value-added products and value-based interactions that add an ethical component to economic exchange (Bloom & Hinrichs, 2006).

Strategic communications -- The intentional communication undertaken by a business or organization with a purpose and a plan (Smith, 2009).

Strategy -- Smith (2009) described the strategy component of an organization’s communication plan as the expected impact of the communication as well as the nature of the communication itself. This fits into the more broad idea of a strategy as how an organization decides on what it wants to achieve with the communications (Smith, 2009). For this study, strategy was defined as the, “determination of how the organization decides what it wants to achieve and how it wants to achieve it” (Smith, 2009, p. 77).

Message -- In the communication process, messages are transmitted from the sender to the receiver. The intention of the communication is critical to the formation of the message and for the receiver to retrieve the message (Fiske, 1990). For this study, messages were identified as the information or ideas the organization wanted the receiver to receive.

Tactic: The visible element of the strategic communication plan is the tactic (Smith, 2009). For this study, tactics were identified and visible strategic communication efforts, whether a meeting, brochure, or website, that were done by the organization.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter seeks to explain the interconnection of marketing and communication theories, models, and concepts in exploring the relationship of seller and buyers in the food system. Once the relationship of the buyer and seller is explained within the context of a relationship communication model (Andersen, 2001), the theories that apply to the various phases within the model will be discussed.

Andersen’s model requires time and change in relationships to evolve from one phase to the next in the three-phase strategy. Each phase individually demonstrates the application of three theories respectively: information, information-processing, and contingency.

Showing the model with supporting theories supports the view of models being a “theoretical and simplified representation of the real world” (Bill & Hardgrave, 1978, p. 28). While theories are considered the ultimate goal of science as they summarize the understandings of how the world works (Severin & Tankard, Jr., 2001), models provide the frame for understanding complex processes and are applied to a problem and help to point out gaps in the knowledge. They also imply a “judgment of relevance” which links
the theory that is being modeled through application to the problem (Severin & Tankard, Jr., 2001, p. 47).

This study’s researcher extended the theories involved in the model beyond those identified in Andersen’s article (2001) to indicate how the application of communication theory changes based on the progression of relationships. Andersen (2001) focused on the classical elements of rhetoric from classical rhetorical philosophy. The researcher determined the communication theories provided more application for the practitioner interested in developing strategic communications for value chains and more useful for evaluating current certification programs.

**Interconnection of Marketing and Communication Channels**

In marketing, channels are used to describe methods of distribution of product. This would be applicable to the food system as well as manufacturing of any product that is being distributed and marketed to the public. Communications becomes the glue that holds these channels together (Mohr & Nevin, 1990).

Mohr and Nevin (1990) explored applying communication strategies to marketing channels to look at current problems in dealer channels that they believed could be addressed with communication strategies that would be developed between manufacturers and resellers. Their goal was to utilize communication strategy to link communication facets to channel conditions which would influence channel outcomes.

The channels of distribution for the food system and other industries consistently involve a seller and a buyer. The exchange relationship between the seller and the buyer has been a focus for the domain of marketing (Dwyer et al., 1987). Historically marketing
has looked at the exchange relationship as a discrete transaction, such as a cash purchase of an unbranded product at a store visited only once. The discrete transaction is characterized by being narrow in content and limited in communication. The identity of the participants is ignored, as knowledge of the other party would indicate some level of a relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987).

Dwyer et al., (1987) looked at relational exchange as an expansion of the transaction that includes participation from the parties involved to “derive complex, personal, noneconomic satisfactions and engage in social exchange” (p. 12). Relationship exchange requires an investment in time and communication for the seller and buyer relationship to develop; contrasted with a discrete transaction that is one sided and requires only limited time (Dwyer, et. al., 1987). The relational exchange that exists between seller and buyer is a similar concept to the value chain described in the previous chapter, which is a long-term network working together to maximize values for the partners and end customers (Stevenson & Pirog, 2008).

Several models have been developed that provide an overview of the relationship-building process. In pulling from these models, Andersen (2001) proposes a compound model that incorporates these ideas for relationship building along with the seller and buyer relational exchange. The three phases in the model (Figure 1) are the pre-relationship phase, the negotiation phase, and finally the relationship development phase (Andersen, 2001).
Andersen (2001) described the pre-relation phase as using two elements of classic rhetorical philosophy: ethos which required knowledge of the buyer’s interests and pathos which required knowledge of the seller’s intent. He identified these as required for building awareness for the seller with the potential buyers (Andersen, 2001). This study extended the theory in the pre-relationship phase to build awareness as the application of information theory that was developed in *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (1949) by Shannon and Weaver. The Shannon and Weaver theory focused on single transmission. The message is sent from a source through a signal and then received at the

![Figure 1: Relationship-Building Communication Model by Andersen (2001)](image)

**Information Theory and the Pre-Relationship Phase**

Andersen (2001) described the pre-relation phase as using two elements of classic rhetorical philosophy: ethos which required knowledge of the buyer’s interests and pathos which required knowledge of the seller’s intent. He identified these as required for building awareness for the seller with the potential buyers (Andersen, 2001). This study extended the theory in the pre-relationship phase to build awareness as the application of information theory that was developed in *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (1949) by Shannon and Weaver. The Shannon and Weaver theory focused on single transmission. The message is sent from a source through a signal and then received at the
destination. The signal is transmitted through a channel, which may contain noise (Severin & Tankard, Jr., 2001). Using this theory, the source is the seller, who transmits a message to the destination and receiver, or the buyer.

The message that is selected by the seller is chosen from a great many possible messages. While messages may be envisioned as spoken or written words, they can include symbols, non-verbal communications, music, pictures, or a host of other possibilities. The form of the message, the chosen signal, and transmission are dependent on the desired destination and receiver for the message (Severin & Tankard, Jr., 2001).

The selection of the message and reception by the destination and receiver indicate more depth to Shannon’s theory than indicated by the linear schematic used to illustrate the theory. Successful application of information theory in research has been sensitive to the realization that the entropy formula requires an intimate link to exist between the source and destination through a shared set of messages before the single message is chosen (Finn & Roberts, 1984).

While the linear schematic is shown in many communication theory books, the diagram obscures the presumption of the existence of a set of messages shared prior to the signal transmission. Since the schematic shows the message only with the source and not travelling through the channel, it implies that the mathematical formula would indicate that a single message had been chosen from many and the receiver would understand which message had been chosen by the signal sent (Finn & Roberts, 1984).

Schramm (1954) expands on the information theory with his models that add the encoder and decoder elements to the source and destination of the message. These show
the interaction and shared experiences between the source and destination of the message. Schramm also adds the feedback loop to the model to indicate the continuous loop and accumulation of information and communication between the source and destination (as cited in Severin & Tankard, Jr., 2001).

Application of Information Theory in the Pre-Relation Phase

Finn and Roberts (1984) contend that Shannon’s information theory had two fundamental orientations, “the relationship between source and destination and the technical characteristics of transmission channels” (p. 459). While information theory has more often been associated with the latter in studies regarding electronic and mass media, the entropy formula can be used to measure the extent of a relationship between the source and destination. The human communication element of information theory can be used to explore connections such as message complexity in relation to the preferences of the receivers of the messages (Finn & Roberts, 1984).

How do we begin to (look at) the relationship between the source and destination? Information theory can be applied through the model of public relations. The four models of public relations established by Grunig and Hunt (1984, p.21) included the press agent/publicist model, the public-information model, the two-way asymmetric model, and the two-way symmetric model. Of the four models, the two-way symmetric model includes relationship building as it strives to react to feedback from the targeted audience to the source, or organization. The feedback provides the start of a dialogue and interaction between the organization and the target audience (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).
Public relations are a component of communications that manages communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig, 1992, as cited in Smith, 2009). The relationships between sellers and buyers are usually incorporated in companies and organizations which would include public relations as a component of their communication efforts. Strategic communications encompasses intentional communications undertaken by a business or organization with a purpose and a plan (Smith, 2009).

The pre-relationship phase demonstrated in the Andersen model denotes the task of creating awareness for the seller to the buyer. Information theory denotes the need to create a relationship between the seller and buyer to begin the transmission of message that will be received and understood by the buyer. The two-way symmetric model would provide an opportunity to begin a dialogue that would include the shared messages and accumulation of information to begin the potential value chain relationship. Strategic communications would be the real-world application of the theory and models to attain the desired relationship.

Strategies are developed for communication plans to make the decisions related to the expected impact and outcome of the communications (Smith, 2009). Strategy is the “determination of how the organization decides what it wants to achieve and how it wants to achieve it” (Smith, 2009, p. 77). Within a strategy, a seller determines the targeted destination to reach with the message and develops strategies for those messages that will become the interaction for the pre-relationship phase.
Tactics are the signals, channels, and transmitters used to reach the destination. When looking at a strategic communication plan, tactics are the visible elements that are seen by the source, destination, and any other parties who may be peripheral to the process (Smith, 2009).

The information theory relies on the message to be the link and source of relationship between the source and destination. This denotes the existence of perhaps more than one message. Information theory doesn’t consider the content of the messages, but rather their linkage from the source to the destination (Smith, 2009). While this is appropriate in the first phase of Andersen’s model, which is focused on awareness, the content of the message becomes central to the second phase, which is the negation phase and involves persuasive communication.

**Information-Processing Theory and the Negotiation Phase**

In marketing there has been confusion on the definition and role of communications. Waterschoot and Van den Bulte (1992) described the prime classification scheme in marketing as the 4P classification: product, price, place, and promotion. They identify that in the past communications was often confused, or termed, as sales promotion or promotion, which implied that the communication was one-way and persuasive. Their model to improve the marketing mix included communications as not just part of promotion, but of product, price, and place. However, Duncan and Moriarty (1998) contended that all parts of the marketing mix were persuasive and persuasion is the common starting point of any product, pricing, distribution, or communications. Andersen (2001) identified the communication task for the negotiation
phase of his model as persuasion. Smith (2009) described persuasion as a communication process that is inherent to all social interaction.

Andersen (2001) applied the classic rhetorical philosophy of logos, or reasoned persuasion, to this phase of his model to identify the communication process. For this study, the information-processing theory was considered as also applicable to the negotiation phase of Andersen’s (2001) model. The information-processing theory also provides communication models that could be utilized to develop the buyer and seller relationship.

Persuasion in communication theory was defined as messages that shape, reinforce, or change the response of the audience (Baldwin, Perry, & Moffit, 2004). One theory in persuasion models was the information-processing theory, developed by McGuire (1968) that involved six steps suggested for attitude change (as cited in Severin and Tankard, Jr., 2001, p. 174). The six steps are:

1. The persuasive message must be communicated.
2. The receiver will attend to the message.
3. The receiver will comprehend the message.
4. The receiver yields to and is convinced by the arguments presented.
5. The newly adopted position is retained.
6. The desired behavior takes place.

While McGuire (1968) recognized independent variables can influence the effectiveness of the steps, he also expanded the steps to include the output, or dependent variable, of persuasion processing (as cited in Severin & Tankard, Jr., 2001). The steps
involved with the information-processing theory would apply to the negotiation phase of Andersen’s model with the establishment of a relationship between the seller and buyer being the desired outcome.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

One model linked with the information-processing theory was the elaboration likelihood model developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). The model described the difficulty of reaching the receiver, or destination, with the message (as cited in Severin & Tankard, Jr., 2001). This would be similar to the noise that was described as a component of information theory that can disrupt the signal’s transmission. (Severin & Tankard, Jr., 2001).

The elaboration likelihood model described two routes to attitude change, which included the central route where the receiver actively processed the information and was persuaded. The peripheral route was when the receiver did not utilize cognitive energy to process the information and relied on peripheral cues (Severin & Tankard, Jr., 2001).

Application of Information-Processing Theory in the Negotiation Phase

Andersen (2001) identified persuasion used in marketing communication as part of the traditional parameter mix approach described by Waterschoot and Van den Bulte (1990) as one-sided. However, Andersen (2001) suggested that the communication between buyers and sellers is not one-sided and identified the process in the negotiation phase as the logos in rhetorical thinking which is persuasion through reasoning. This perspective describes the relationship that develops in a relational exchange and requires
two-way communications that involves informing, listening, and answering (Andersen, 2001).

By extended Andersen’s (2001) perspective of the persuasion communication, information-processing theory develops the focus of the persuasive communication. Duncan and Moriarty (1998) introduced the concept that the buyer and seller relationship was where marketing and communication theories are parallel and intersect at certain points and that theories in both disciplines were having paradigm shifts from production-based models to more relationship-based models. They point to Fiske’s (1990) communications introductory textbook that describes two communicative approaches – functionalist which focuses on the source as production-orientated and the newer, interpretative approach that focuses on the receiver as more relationship-based (as cited in Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). This was echoed in marketing theory that shifted from transaction marketing that is product focused to relationship marketing focused on the customer (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). This focus on the outcome of building a relationship influences the persuasive message to affect the desired result.

Strategic communications can play the role of creating plans that influence behavior by creating consensus. The messages, strategies, and tactics would be focused on fostering more productive and beneficial relationships through the negotiation stage (Smith, 2009).

**Contingency Theory and the Relationship Development Phase**

Andersen (2001) did not address the relationship development phase through the classic rhetorical philosophy. However, there was communication theory that addressed
this phase. Mohr and Nevin (1990) discussed utilizing communication theory to improve channel conditions, which included structural issues such as the pattern of the exchange relationship and behavioral issues such as power and climate. They suggested the use of contingency theory to improve the channel outcomes, which are “contingent on the interaction between communication strategy and given channel conditions,” (Mohr & Nevin, 1990, 37).

The channel conditions can liken to the relationship development described in Andersen’s model. The impact of the relationship can be qualitative outcomes such as satisfaction and quantitative outcomes such as performance (Mohr & Nevin, 1990).

Contingency theory is often used in channel communications because communication needs to be flexible to fit the relationship and enhance the outcomes (Mohr & Nevin, 1990). Contingency theory is used in multiple disciplines including communication, marketing, information technology, supply chain management, and organizational management.

In supply chain management, contingency theory was defined as a firm’s performance that “is attributable to the match between its strategic behaviors and its internal and external environmental conditions” (Van de Ven & Drazin, 1985, as cited in Wong, Lai, & Cheng, 2011, p. 163). The success becomes situational, since the performance outcomes are contingent on external and environmental conditions in addition to a firm’s internal operational characteristics (Wong et al., 2011).

Longenecker and Pringle (1978, p. 680) discussed contingency theory as situational, a theory that was built on “it depends.” They contend that theory should not
be based on variables that change depending on the situation, since these variables can often be infinite. They contended that contingency theory needed to rely less on identifying independent and dependent variables, as was the common practice at that time for the theories they reviewed, and realize there is an interdependence of the variables:

The term ‘contingency’ implies that the structures and practices of an organizational system depend on the way in which the environment becomes relevant to the system, while the reverse situation – the system working on the environment – is usually not considered because the working division between independent and dependent variable would be jeopardized (Longenecker & Pringle, 1978, p. 681).

The evolution of contingency theory reflects the realization of the variables being interdependent. For example, structural contingency theory “claims there are no universally effective ways of organizing or managing but that organizational effectiveness depends on the fit or match between an organization and its environment,” (Cadeaux & Ng, 2012, p.7).

**Application of Contingency Theory in the Relationship-Development Phase**

In communication, contingency theory was often applied to strategic communications that are addressing a crisis or controversial idea or situation for an organization. Cancel, Mitrook, and Cameron (1999) developed the contingency theory of accommodation, which places the stance of an organization and their publics on a continuum, beginning with pure accommodation on one end and extending to pure advocacy on the other. The continuum was more realistic than Grunig & Hunt’s (1984) models of asymmetrical or symmetrical which requires categorization that doesn’t allow
for measuring the stance on a scale. The continuum more accurately showed the distance between the organization and their public (Cancel et al., 1999).

Summary

Andersen’s (2001) relationship-building communication model (Figure 1) introduced a compound model that incorporated the ideas for the relationship-building process between the buyer and seller to create a relational exchange. The model has three phases for the relationship. The first phase, or pre-relationship, includes the communication focus of awareness. The second, or negotiation, phase focuses on persuasion as the communication focus while the third phase, or relationship development, includes the communication focus of commitment.

To describe the communication process with the model, Andersen (2001) used the classical rhetorical philosophy of ethos and pathos applied to the pre-relationship phase that resulted in logos (argumentation) in the negotiation phase as it focused on persuasion as the communication task.

This study extended the theories applied to Andersen’s (2001) model to provide communication theories applicable for communication practitioners. The theory extension also addressed the missing element to the relationship development phase in Andersen’s model which was not addressed through classic rhetorical philosophy. The theories applied were information theory to the pre-relationship phase, information-processing theory to the negotiation phase, and contingency theory to the relationship development phase.
Chapter 3: Methods

Certification programs are used to build the relationship with potential buyers in the food system to help growers differentiate their product, develop a reliable market, and realize premiums for their product. Communications have a direct impact on the central aspects of the relationship exchange (Mohr & Nevin, 1990). While relationship building for this relationship exchange has been explored in manufacturing and other industries, the literature had not looked at the relationship building by certification programs and specifically how strategic communications had been used to build these relationships with potential buyers. This study looked at communication strategies implemented by two certification programs to reach potential buyers in the food system.

A multi-case study was done with the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to explore the similarities and differences of their communication strategies. Data was gathered through focused interviews, document gathering, and website review.
Research Design

The question for this study was how the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program used strategic communications to reach the potential buyers and build a relationship to achieve a relational exchange for growers involved in their programs.

The target word in the question was “how.” When the research question focuses on how or why, the applied method becomes more explanatory which can be addressed with a case study. Rather than focusing on frequencies or incidences, the question deals with operational links (Yin, 2009). Based on this, a case study was chosen to provide a qualitative study. Qualitative research builds on, rather than testing, existing theory and is used to understand situations in their context while also looking at the interactions involved (Merriam, 1998).

The case study approach was also chosen for this study to provide an in-depth description, context for the implementation, and illustrate the process to build relationships in the value chain through the strategic communications used by the certification programs. Case studies are more about the process and the context rather than focusing on a single variable, which provides an opportunity to look for discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1998).

With no supporting literature on the strategic communications used by certification programs, a case study was also needed to provide a baseline of implemented strategic communications. When a task or episode presupposes, or assumes, “an interdependence in the cycle, feedback is a meaningless idea” (Maclellan, 2008, p.
So a quantitative or different qualitative method could not be used to measure outcomes because the interdependence of the cycle needed to be established.

A case study should be intrinsically bound with three primary characteristics, according to Merriam (1998). The case study should be particularistic, which focuses on practical problems or questions that arise in everyday life and the case study should be rich in description of the phenomenon that is being studied. The case study should also be heuristic to bring about not only discovery, but new meaning or confirm what is already known (Merriam, 1998). These characteristics were used in this case study to explore and illustrate the strategic communications of certification programs. The exploration extended the applicability of the relationship-building communication model (Figure 1) created by Andersen (2001) and extends the theory tied to the model’s heuristic goals.

Multiple-Case Study

This was a multiple-case study of two certification programs: the Certified Angus Beef program that promotes the Angus cattle breed through sales of product to consumers (“Certified Angus Beef,” n.d.) and the Ohio Proud program that promotes food and agricultural products grown in Ohio (“Ohio Proud,” n.d.). The multiple-case study is not a methodology, but treated as a design component of a case study (Yin, 2009).

This multiple-case study provided the detail and content to assess the strategic communications of two certification programs that are divergent in the growers that they represent and the different stages of development, as the Certified Angus Beef program began in 1976 and the Ohio Proud Program was established in 1993. These differences could be more easily identified and categorized in a case study which provided the
correlating context for evaluating the communication strategies, messages, and tactics of these two programs.

Having the two diverse certification programs for the case study provided the illustrative evidence to expand and test Andersen’s (2001) model (Figure 1) in real-world situations. The model looks at communications between buyers and sellers in the relationship-building process in real-world situations. Since the model has time as a variable in the relationship-building process, having two certification programs at different stages of development was illustrative to determine if the progression shown in the model was reflected through the certification programs.

**Research Objectives**

The aim of this study was to explore the similarities and differences of communication strategies used by two certification programs reach potential buyers in the food system. More specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Identify and describe communication strategies used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to potential buyers in the food system.

2. Identify the key messages used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to communicate the attributes of their product.

3. Detail the tactics used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to deliver the key messages to potential buyers within the food system.
4. Compare and contrast messages, strategies, and tactics between the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program

Subject Selection

Data was gathered for the case study through focused interviews, document gathering, and website review. Interviews were conducted with personnel from the two programs regarding communication messages the certification program uses to reach these potential buyers.

Selecting the interviewees is a purposive, or theoretical, sampling technique that depends on the information or perspective the researcher is seeking (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998), “Unlike survey research in which the number and representatives of the sample are major considerations, in this type of research the crucial factor is not the number (of) respondents but the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon” (p.83).

The interviews were conducted with current staff responsible for the communication strategies, messages, and tactics to potential buyers for the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program. To discover the potential interviewees, key staff members in the programs were contacted for input on the appropriate staff member to participate in the interview.

To determine the interviewee for the Certified Angus Beef program, Brent Eichar, the senior vice president of operations was contacted and asked about the most appropriate person to interview within his organization. His recommendation was the
vice president for business development as he is responsible for communication with new and current partners in the value chain involved with procurement.

To determine the interviewee for the Ohio Proud program, the researcher talked with Stan Ernst, the marketing specialist for the Ohio State University Extension Specialty Crop/Food Business Program, and Jill Clark, the director of the Ohio State University Center for Farmland Policy Innovation. Both contacts suggested interviewing the senior program manager of the Ohio Proud program with the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

The documents obtained were requested from the interviewees. The researcher requested the documents that each certification program would use to communicate with potential buyers on behalf of the growers their certification program represented.

The individual website pages of each certification program were evaluated on a single day for each. This was used to represent the current communications that were employed by each program in one moment of time.

**Instrumentation – Focused Interviews**

Interviews conducted for case studies differ from interviews developed for surveys. Case study interviews are more like a guided conversation rather than structured queries designed for surveys (Yin, 2009). A list of questions was developed for the interviews to guide the conversation and keep the focus consistent between the two certification programs. Rubin and Rubin (1995) discussed that the inquiry should be consistent, but the actual stream of questions is more likely to be fluid than rigid in a case study interview (Yin, 2009).
A focused interview was chosen with the interview time set for one hour or less. The questions for focused interviews are open-ended, but can be done conversationally using the general set of questions (Yin, 2009). A set of open-ended questions specific about the strategic communications of the certification programs were created. The questions reflected the objectives of the research, to discover the strategic communications actively employed by the certification programs to reach potential or current buyers in the food system.

Figure 2 has the questions outline used for the focus interviews to provide consistency between the two certifications programs.
1. What distributors involved with retail or food service do you try to reach with messages about your certified product?
2. How would you describe this audience?
3. How do you find out information about this audience?
4. What are communication strategies that you use to reach these distributors?
   a. Are there differences in the strategies among different distributors, such as food service or retail?
      i. If so, how do you address these differences?
   b. Are there some strategies that have been more successful than others?
      i. What are those strategies?
5. What are some specific communication messages that you currently use for these distributors?
   a. How does the message meet needs of these distributors?
   b. Have the messages changed over time?
   c. What messages have been used in the past?
6. What tactics or methods do you use to get communication messages to your audiences?
   a. Are there different tactics used for the different distributors?
   b. What tactics have been the most successful with distributors?
   c. Are there tactics that are used differently with the different specific products from the certification program?
7. Do you think the distributors use your communication messages to sell the certified product to their customers?
   a. What tactics do they use to get the communication message to their prospective customers?
   b. What makes these messages beneficial to reach their audience?
   c. Do you encourage them to use your messages?
      i. If so, what tactics do you encourage them to use with your communication messages?
   d. What methods or tactics do you provide for them to communicate with their audience?
   e. Do you see their customers as one of your audiences?
      i. If so, why are they an audience for you?
      ii. What percentage of your communication work is concentrated on this audience?
8. What other audiences are integral to your communication strategies for the certified product?
   a. Why are they part of the strategy for the product
   b. In what ways are the messages to that audience different than the food service and retail distributors?
9. What are the benefits for the producer selling the certified product from the communication strategies?

Figure 2: Focused Interview Questions
The interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy. The written transcription was then analyzed using coding. The coding was done by color-coding the responses of the interviewee to indicate the principle of strategic communications that was identified by the statement. The principles that were identified were strategy, message, or tactic. Strategies were defined as statements about communications the program wanted to achieve. The messages were statements about things, statements, or phrases used to capture the attention or create a response of the target audience. The tactics were defined as the events, media, or other items used to deliver the message to the targeted audience.

Once the strategic communication principles were identified, another coding was done to indicate the target audience that the principles were intended to reach. These audiences were identified based on those described by the interviewee as targets.

**Instrumentation -- Documents**

Immediately following the interview, the researcher requested documents that would be given to potential buyers in the food system. These documents were used to triangulate the information given during the interview on the strategies, messages, and tactics used by the certification programs to reach potential buyers in the food system.

More coding was done in both the graphic and written elements of the documents that were received. The documents were coded using the same process as the interviews. The coding was done this way to enable comparison between the interview and documents to increase the reliability of the information through triangulation. Using
documents to triangulate the information given during case study interviews helps with internal reliability of the case study (Yin, 2009).

**Instrumentation – Websites**

The websites of each certification program were evaluated for pages that were designed to reach the audiences of potential or current buyers in the food system. The Ohio Proud program website was evaluated on a single day to capture the available content at one snapshot of time. Likewise, the webpages on the Certified Angus Beef program website were also evaluated in a single day.

Screen shots were made of web pages that were designed to reach the targeted audience of potential or current buyers. Black and white copies were made of the web pages and the coding was done using the same process as the interviews. The strategic communication principles of strategies, messages, and tactics were coded by looking at both the graphics and written words on the web page.

**Data Analysis**

The constant comparative method of data analysis was used for developing data categories and properties for this study. One unit of information is compared with the next to look for recurring regularities in the data (Merriam, 1998). The categories were the basis of the data because they provided the foundation for cross-case analysis that will be used for this multiple-case study.

“Simply summarizing superficially across some themes or main variables by itself tells us little. We have to look carefully at the complex configuration of processes within
each case, understand the local dynamics, before we can begin to see patterns of variables that transcend particular cases” (Mile & Huberman, 1994, p. 205-206 as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 194).

The researcher used a spreadsheet program to create a database that was relevant to the objectives of the research. The categories for the data analysis were created as database fields that included audience, strategy, message, and tactic. Statements from the interviews, as well as graphic and written elements from the documents and webpages were entered into the database. The respective audience was identified for each element. Also, the elements were categorized as strategy, message, or tactic.

The spreadsheet program allowed the researcher to identify statements by target audience and sort the elements under the target audience to the strategic communication principles. This allowed for similar and/or identical principles to be identified within a certification program. Within each target audience, a similar strategy was identified and the associated message(s) and tactic(s) were also identified.

The use of the strategic communication principles to create the categories for the constant comparative method was formed based on the guidelines offered by Guba & Lincoln, 1981) for developing categories. Their guidelines focused on categories that reflected the importance of the ideas for the audience, the uniqueness of the category, identifying areas of inquiry that would otherwise not be explored and the frequency of something showing in the data or repeatedly mentioned by numerous people (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).
Since the objective of this research was to explore the strategic communications of the certification program, ideas unique to the communication discipline would become logical categories based on the audience of the research, uniqueness of communication research, and how these principles would be identified by evidence used in the case study.

Because this was a multi-case study, the data was identified and analyzed first within each certification program. Each case needs to be treated comprehensively in and out of itself (Merriam, 1998). After the data was analyzed within the individual certification program, a cross-case analysis was done to build analysis across the cases.

**Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability of a case study often rests in the thoroughness of the preparation, data collection, and analysis. Case studies are judged on whether “the interviews were reliably and validly constructed; was the content of the document properly analyzed; do the conclusions of the case study rest upon data?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981 as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 199). The emphasis is to meticulously create the concept of the study, collect the data, interpret and analyze the data, and present the findings. Yin (2009, p. 45) offers “four criteria for judging research design: (a) construct validity, (b) internal validity, (c) external validity, and (d) reliability.”

**Construct Validity**

Using more than one source of evidence for a case study helps increase construct validity and reliability (Yin, 2009, p. 114). Three sources of evidence used for this case
study were focused interviews, documents, and web pages. To increase the construct validity, these sources of evidence were triangulated during the data collection. Data collection is one of four types of triangulations, the others being investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Patton, 2002).

The data triangulation was done by using the same coding mechanism on the three data sources. The results of the coding were compared to see if the principles of strategic communication identified: audience, strategy, message, and tactic were triangulated between the three data sources.

**Internal Validity**

This research used a communication model of relationship building developed by Andersen (1999) to guide the data collection from the certification programs. The data collected and identified focused on communication principles so the model could be applied to the certification program to determine where the programs were on the relationship building continuum. This strategy for the research design improves internal reliability through relying on theoretical propositions. This strategy helps to keep the theory as a central theme for the data collection and gives priority to analytic strategies relevant to the objects of the research (Yin, 2009).

Using the recognized principles of strategic communications of target audience, strategies, messages, and tactics also lent to the internal validity so the data identification was focused with a theoretical underpinning.
**External Validity**

Triangulation was used for external validity by utilizing theory triangulation described by Patton (2002) as different perspectives on the same data set. In the literature review, the idea was formed that Andersen’s (2001) model contained a different communication theory in relation to the three phases of relationship building. The first phase, or awareness phase, employed the information theory. The second phase, identified as the negotiation phase by Andersen (2001), was a form of persuasion and uses the information-processing theory. The final theory is contingency theory which enables the third phase, known as the relationship development phase.

Once the data was collected and identified, the analysis used these three communication theories to determine the relationship building phase to which the certification program’s strategic communications belongs. This triangulation aided in the analysis of the data for reliability with the application of more than one communication theory tied together in one model.

**Reliability**

“The goal of reliability is to minimize the errors and biases in the study,” (Yin, 2009, p. 45). The construct, internal, and external validities were designed to triangulate the data sources and collection and apply a real-world model and communication theories to develop checks and balances on the relevance of the case study. The development of a case study database promotes documentation and detail for external review of a case study (Yin, 2009).
The linking of separate strategic communication principles of targeted audiences, strategies, messages, and tactics was tested in the data analysis. The three communication theories identified were also used in the analysis to increase reliability. The testing first involved plotting the identified communications within the Andersen (2001) model to where the strategy laid on the continuum of building relationships. Separately, the communication was evaluated to determine the applicable theory (information theory, information-processing theory, or contingency theory). The comparison of the communication’s position in the relationship-building model to the applied communication theory will create more reliability for the case study.

Summary

The study focused on how the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program used strategic communications to reach potential buyers in the food system. A multi-case study was used to provide an in-depth description, context for the implementation, and illustrate the process to building the relationships to reach the potential buyers.

Data for the case study was gathered through focused interviews, documents, and website review for each of the certification programs. The constant comparative method of data analysis was used for developing the data categories and properties for this study. Triangulation was used for construct and internal validity. The data sources were compared to see if the principles of strategic communication were collaborated between the three data sources.

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Theory triangulation was used for external validity. The model of the relationship-building process in relation of communications between buyers and sellers developed by Andersen (2001) was used in analyzing the communications of the two certification programs. The corresponding theories for the three phases of the relationship process were used for validity of the model and case study data.
Chapter 4: Results

This multi-case study explored the strategic communications used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to reach potential buyers in the food system. The data was collected from focused interviews, documents, and websites from the certification program. The analysis was done in reference to the objectives that were developed for this study:

1. Identify and describe communication strategies used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to potential buyers in the food system.
2. Identify the key messages used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to communicate the attributes of their products.
3. Detail the tactics used by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program to deliver the key messages and implement strategies to reach to potential buyers within the food network.
4. Compare and contrast messages, strategies, and tactics between the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program.
For this multi-case study, the following descriptions were followed to identify the individual strategic communication principles of strategy, message, and tactic.

**Strategy:** Smith (2009, p. 77) described the strategy component of an organization’s communication plan as the expected impact of the communication as well as the nature of the communication itself. This fits into the more broad idea of a strategy as how an organization decides on what it wants to achieve with the communications (Smith, 2009). For this study, strategy was defined as the, “determination of how the organization decides what it wants to achieve and how it wants to achieve it” (Smith, 2009, p. 77).

**Message:** In the communication process, messages are transmitted from the sender to the receiver. The intention of the communication is critical to the formation of the message and for the receiver to retrieve the message (Fiske, 1990, p. 3). For this study, messages were identified as the information or ideas the organization wanted the receiver to retrieve.

**Tactic:** The visible element of the strategic communication plan is the tactic (Smith, 2009, p. 13). For this study, tactics were identified and visible strategic communication efforts, whether a meeting, brochure, or website, that were done by the organization.

The first three objectives involve looking individually at strategic communication principles for each program. Since identification for each program was done individually for objectives 1-3, the results for those objectives are presented in this chapter together for the Certified Angus Beef program and then the results for objectives 1-3 are presented
for the Ohio Proud program. The chapter concludes with the results of the comparison and contrast described by objective 4.

Messages and tactics were involved in the organization’s communication strategies to help achieve their expected impact. This created an interdependent relationship between these three communication principles. To reflect this relationship, the first three objectives for the Certified Angus Beef program were presented based on the identified strategies. The messages and tactics identified as used by the organization were presented in context of the strategy.

**Certified Angus Beef Program**

The Certified Angus Beef program was a certification program for Angus beef developed and owned by the farm and ranch members of the American Angus Association. The mission of the program was to increase sales of Angus cattle while delivering a high-quality product for the consumer. The program had packers, fabricators, food-service distributors, processors, retail distributors, restaurants, and retail stores licensed to uphold the integrity of the brand.

The case study included an interview with the vice-president of business development for the Certified Angus Beef program, sales brochure documents, the main (publicly-accessible) area of website for the program, and the licensee (password-protected) area of the website for the licensees of the Certified Angus Beef program. A database was used to compile the strategies referenced from the interview, documents, and websites. The strategies were also identified if they were incorporated with a message and used in association with a tactic. The target audience for the strategies,
messages, and tactics was also identified. The communication principles identified as being used by the Certified Angus Beef program were:

Strategies:

1. Helping Certified Angus Beef partners improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand.

2. Marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand.

3. Identifying the recipient for the program’s messages and determining what message to send.

4. Having constant dialogue with licensees to keep them engaged with the Certified Angus Beef program.

5. Helping licensees sell Certified Angus Beef product against competitors selling other brands or commodity beef products.

Messages:

1. The ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products.

2. The Certified Angus Beef program is non-profit so everything we do is for your success.

3. Generations of family farmers and ranchers are committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand.

4. The mission of the Certified Angus Beef program is to create premium for Angus producers who produce high-quality beef.

5. Only one in four Angus cattle qualifies for the Certified Angus Beef brand.
Tactics:

1. Annual conference for licensees and partners.

2. Sales tools section on the licensee area on the Certified Angus Beef program website.

3. Training and education section on the licensee area on the Certified Angus Beef program website.

4. Fact sheets for training or customer questions on the licensee area of the Certified Angus Beef program website.

5. Marketing section on the licensee area on the Certified Angus Beef program website.

6. Certified Angus Beef restaurant licensing.

7. Retail advertising featuring the Certified Angus Beef brand in newspaper flyers.

8. Identification of Certified Angus Beef brand in the retail meat case.


10. Finding prospective licensees for the Certified Angus Beef program.

11. Ways to get messages to recipients.

12. Monthly market reports about the beef market conditions and price forecasts.

13. Food-service division seminars sponsored by the Certified Angus Beef program.

Before starting the discussion on strategies used by the Certified Angus Beef program, the licensees need to be defined. The licensees were defined on the “Brand Integrity” webpage, which was in the publically accessible portion of the website under the corporate tab. The webpage contained the following description of licensees:

The brand’s integrity is maintained by tracking every pound of beef (more than half a billion pounds or 4.3 billion servings a year). Unlike other Angus brands, we have our eye on product all the way down the line. We involve everyone in the process: packers, distributors, exporters, restaurants and retailers. It’s our way of providing an insurance policy for our customers—one that guarantees the brand’s outstanding quality.

- *Certified Angus Beef®* product is clearly labeled by all licensed processors, distributors, restaurants and retail stores.

- Only licensed participants can legally promote the brand. Although non-licensed restaurants and stores may purchase *Certified Angus Beef®* product, they are not permitted to use our trademarks or promote the brand in any way.

- Certified Angus Beef LLC does not own the cattle or *Certified Angus Beef®* product – only the *Certified Angus Beef®* marks.

Partners identified for the Certified Angus Beef program are the non-licensees which may include non-licensed restaurants and people involved in the cattle industry such as seedstock operators, cow/calf producers, backgrounders, stockers, feedlots, and geneticist. For this case study the international division and licensees of the Certified Angus Beef program were not included because the Ohio Proud program did not communicate strategies to reach buyers in the international food system.
**Strategy 1 – Helping Certified Angus Beef partners improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand.**

A communication strategy used by the Certified Angus Beef program is helping Certified Angus Beef partners improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand. These occurrences were identified in the database and included references in the interview, documents, or webpages on the program website. The strategy was identified with two messages: the Certified Angus Beef program is non-profit so everything we do is for your success and the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef product. The tactics identified with this strategy were: the annual conference for licensees and partners, sales tools section on the licensee area on the program website, training and education section on the licensee area on the program website, and fact sheets for training or customer questions on the licensee section on the program website. Table 1 shows the messages and tactics associated with this strategy.
Table 1: Strategy 1 messages and tactics for the Certified Angus Beef program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 1: Helping Certified Angus Beef partners improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Message</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Certified Angus Beef program is non-profit so everything we do is for your success.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tactics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual conference for licensees and partners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sales tools section on the licensee area on the program website.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training and education section on the licensee area on the program website.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact sheets for training or customer questions on the licensee area on the program website.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Message: The Certified Angus Beef program is non-profit so everything we do is for your success.*

The message of the Certified Angus Beef program working for the success of their licensees and partners because they are non-profit was associated with occurrences of the strategy and tactics to help Certified Angus Beef partners improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand. The Certified Angus Beef program is owned by the American Angus Association, also a non-profit organization.

The message was described by the vice-president for business development in the context of delivering messages to businesses who are licensed:
The thing that makes us pretty unusual is that we’re not-for-profit and it’s a lot easier for us to say to the president, ‘Everything that we’re doing, we’re doing for you to be more successful and you don’t have to worry about what’s in it for us.’ It’s a very pure message and the only thing that’s in it for us is our mission statement that tells everybody in the world that our mission is to create premiums for our Angus producers that create an animal that makes it into our ten specifications.

This message was associated with the tactic discussed next.

**Tactic: Annual conferences for licensees and partners**

The tactic of the Certified Angus Beef program annual was associated with the strategy of helping partners improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand. The vice-president of business development with the Certified Angus Beef program described the annual conference as attended by 600-plus licensees and partners with an awards program, key addresses, and break-out sessions.

The vice president discussed the benefit of the conference for the program. “It’s a very expensive for us to put on and yet it’s probably one of the best things we do in terms of communicating the message to all of our partners,” he said.

The message of the Certified Angus Beef program is non-profit so everything we do is for your success was associated with the vice-president’s description of the conference in regards to the licensee audience of food-service distributors and retailers:

It’s not a conference to just go and have fun and relish in the last year. We have an awards night, and awards are given throughout the program. But that’s not the main focus. The main focus is education; how to help you drive your business better. We do some reflecting with the president’s address, but it’s really more visionary and in terms of identifying [for our licensees]: Where are we going? We know what happened last year, but let’s not dwell on it. What do we need to be looking at to help you be better and more successful in your business?
He also described a food-service division seminar at a different time for food-service distributors with educational break-out session keyed around improving their business and retail break-out sessions at the annual conference with specific education programs for retailers.

Message: The ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products.

The message of the Certified Angus Beef brand exceeding other brands and commodity beef because of the ten specifications was associated with many occurrences of the strategy and tactics to help Certified Angus Beef partners improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand.

To become Certified Angus Beef product, the animal and carcass must meet the ten specifications as defined by the program. The specifications were listed by the program in a brochure that was discussed as Strategy 5 in this paper. Briefly, the specifications were grouped by marbling (flavor) requirements, maturity, consistent sizing of product, and quality appearance and tenderness (animal appearance and carcass quality). This message was associated with the tactics discussed next.

Several tactics for the Certified Angus Beef program were contained on the licensee (password-protected) area on the Certified Angus Beef program website associated with the strategy of helping Certified Angus Beef licensees improve their business. The front page of the licensee area (Figure 3) contained tactics available to licensees such as: POS (point-of-sale), marketing, sales tools, training and education, by
the numbers, and brands. Strategy one was associated with the two tactics of sales tools and training and education so these two areas were discussed in this section of the analysis. The other tactics are discussed under subsequent strategies in this analysis.

![Figure 3: Licensee area of Certified Angus Beef program website](image)

**Tactic: Certified Angus Beef Program Website – Sales Tools Section**

The sales tools webpage began with an introduction that said, “Our sales tools empower you and your staff to sell the Certified Angus Beef® brand with confidence. They are designed to grow your business and its reputation for superior-quality beef. Use
these tools to connect with customers and satisfy their demand for reliable, great-tasting beef.” The two target audiences identified were licensed food-service distributors and retailers.

The sales tools available for food-service distributors included a pdf file of a brochure for distributor salespeople to use on restaurant sales calls, a database to compare the quality specifications for competing beef brands, middle-meats toolbox for food-service distributors, fact sheets regarding the Certified Angus Beef brand and the beef industry, product specification sheets for Certified Angus Beef product, beef merchandising and cuts sheets, ideas for sales promotions and contests, restaurant licensing information, and video resources.

An example of these sales tools tactic for food-service distributors was the middle meats toolbox which was targeted to train the food-service distributor salesperson to increase sales of the premium steak cuts. This tactic was associated with the strategy of helping licensees improve their business.

The introduction on the middle meats toolbox webpage said, “Middle meats drive your sales and profitability. Use these programs to train your sales staff to sell premium steak cuts. Each program includes presentations, handouts and supporting materials that effectively train sales staff.”

Figure 4 is one of the sales sheets called flavor counts that showed pictures of marbling in beef rib eyes and the accompanying text explained the flavor and marbling characteristics of meat to help the salesperson communicate with their prospective buyer.
The other tactics for the middle meat toolbox were sales sheets about marbling matters, portion control, effective sampling, and success stories.

Figure 4: The middle meats toolbox

The message of the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand was associated with the tactic of the middle meat toolbox webpage. The flavor counts sales
sheet already discussed (Figure 4) incorporated the message by comparing the Certified Angus Beef brand’s marbling specification to commodity USDA choice beef.

For the retail target audience, the sales tools webpage on the licensee area of the program website included items that were also available for the food-service distributors: fact sheets for training or customer questions, the database to compare the quality specifications for competing beef brands, specification sheets for Certified Angus Beef product, and merchandising and beef cut sheets. The two items different for the licensed retail audience were tactics for shadow marketing and retail cutting tests.

The shadow marketing webpage (Figure 5) opened with an introduction that said, “Use this strategy to improve sales and profits while leading customers to your Certified Angus Beef® brand features. Research shows 20% of consumers will upgrade to the highest level of quality offered.” The shadow marketing tactic was associated with the strategy of helping licensees to be successful. The tactic developed the licensed retailers’ pricing and display to encourage consumers to upgrade to the highest level of quality offered.
Figure 5: Shadow marketing webpage

Tactic: Certified Angus Beef program website – training and education section

The training and education webpage was a tactic for the target audiences of licensed food-service distributors and retailers. This tactic was associated with the strategy of helping Certified Angus Beef licensees improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand.

The training and education webpage began with an introduction that said, “Our proven training programs grow your sales and profits. They give your staff confidence to sell the Certified Angus Beef® brand, leading customers to enjoy its premium quality.”
The training and education tactics available for food-service distributors included upcoming Certified Angus Beef program-sponsored seminar dates, tactics for training food-distributor team members, education opportunities for chefs to receive continuing education credits, training tactics for restaurant wait staff, a specialized-education course, and video-training resources.

An example of these training and education tactics for food-service distributors was a webpage (Figure 6) with training sessions to use in training their sales staff about the Certified Angus Beef brand. The introduction on the team training program called Orbit on the webpage said, “Boost confidence, sales skills and brand knowledge more than ever before. This step-by-step sales message delivers proven results for newly licensed distributors and is a good refresher course for experienced teams.”
The message of the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand was associated with the tactic of training programs offered by the program. An example was described in a question and answer exercise in the restaurant wait staff training program:

What is the Certified Angus Beef® brand?
- The best Angus beef available!
- Beef must pass 10 quality standards to earn the brand’s premium name. These standards ensure exceptional taste.

What makes this beef better?
- Marbling – the flecks of flavor within the beef – is the key to superior taste.
How does the brand compare to USDA grades?

- Ten quality standards ensure the Certified Angus Beef® brand is a cut above USDA Prime, Choice and Select.
- The majority of USDA Choice beef does not have enough marbling to qualify for the brand.

Are all Angus brands the same?

- No! The Certified Angus Beef® brand is a cut above all other Angus beef.
- Our specifications are so strict only 1 in 4 Angus-influenced cattle earn the Certified Angus Beef® brand name. The three that do not meet our specifications may be marketed under another Angus label.
- The Certified Angus Beef® brand is the only brand owned by the American Angus Association and its more than 30,000 rancher members.

Is this beef different in restaurants and grocery stores?

- All Certified Angus Beef® products meet the same high standards and are clearly marked with the logo.
- Products delivered to restaurants are carefully aged and cut to exact portion sizes, adding more value to their preparation.

The strategy of helping Certified Angus Beef licensees improve their business was associated with the tactic of the Masters of Brand Assurance (MBA) course that was targeted to licensed food-service distributors. The introduction on the MBA webpage said:

In today’s competitive market, you need meat experts ready to sell with confidence. The Certified Angus Beef® Master of Brand Advantages (MBA) delivers. This master’s level meat course provides intense product knowledge combined with practical sales skills. It will elevate an experienced sales person to a meat expert. MBA graduates will maximize their sales potential with a new confidence to own center-of-the-plate business and target high-volume, high-profile accounts. Each individual and their company benefits from an increase in Certified Angus Beef® brand sales and profits.

For the licensed retail target audience, the training and education webpage on the licensee area of the program website included the same upcoming Certified Angus Beef program-sponsored seminar dates as the licensed food-service distributors. There was one
other tactic for retailers that was different than food-service distributors which was the retail training kit.

The introduction on the retail training kit webpage said, “Use these tools to train your meat department and deli staff. They prepare your team to discuss the brand’s quality advantages, answer consumer questions and assist with beef purchasing needs.” The training kit included training videos for the meat department and store associates. The kit also contained quizzes and certificates of completion.

*Tactic: Fact sheets for training or customer questions*

Another tactic associated with the strategy of helping Certified Angus Beef partners improve their business to be successful was a set of fact sheets available on the licensee area on the program website. The target audiences were licensed food-service distributors and retailers. The introduction on the fact sheet webpage said, “This series of fact sheets provides insight on relevant industry topics and common questions. Use the sheets to train your team, giving them more reasons to share why the Certified Angus Beef® brand is good for business.”

The topics of the fact sheets included issues specific to the program such as Certified Angus Beef brand advantages, portion control, aging adds value, prime, more than just a black hide, what’s left in the USDA Choice box, grass vs. grain fed, gross profit, Certified Angus Beef brand and Creekstone Farms Black Angus Beef, ground beef, fully-cooked makes “cents”, understanding increasing carcass weights, and meat storage issues. The topics of the fact sheets also included general beef industry issues
such as animal welfare, antibiotics, the cattle industry, environment, and everyday environmentalists.

**Strategy 2: Marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand**

The next communication strategy used by the Certified Angus Beef program was marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand. These occurrences were identified in the database and included references in the interview, documents, or webpages on the program website. The three messages identified with these occurrences were: the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products, generations of family farmers and ranchers are committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand, and the Certified Angus Beef program is non-profit so everything we do is for your success. The tactics associated with this tactic strategy were: the marketing section on the licensee area on the program website, Certified Angus Beef restaurant licensing, retail advertising featuring the Certified Angus Beef brand in newspaper flyers, identification of the Certified Angus Beef brand in the retail meat case, Certified Angus Beef Education and Culinary Center in Wooster, Ohio, and finding prospective licensees for the Certified Angus Beef program. Table 2 shows the messages and tactics associated with this strategy.
Table 2: Strategy 2 messages and tactics for the Certified Angus Beef program.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
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<tr>
<td>The ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generations of family farmers and ranchers are committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand</td>
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<td>The Certified Angus Beef program is non-profit so everything we do is for your success</td>
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<tr>
<th>Tactics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing section on the licensee area on the program website</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certified Angus Beef restaurant licensing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail advertisements featuring the Certified Angus Beef brand in newspaper flyers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification of the Certified Angus Beef brand in the retail meat case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Angus Beef Education &amp; Culinary Center in Wooster, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding prospective licensees for the Certified Angus Beef program</td>
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</table>

The Certified Angus Beef program has promoted the Certified Angus Beef brand since the program began in 1978. The communication strategy of marketing the brand was described by the vice-president of business development at the Certified Angus Beef program:

We’re a long way from where we were, but we have a long way to go. We are the most recognized brand [of beef]. If you ask someone about brands of meat, they would say USDA prime, Certified Angus Beef, USDA choice in that order. And the other two obviously aren’t brands of meat. The next closest branded competitor would be about six percent market share. We’re 90 plus -- which is a wonderful thing. But the other part of it is we still only have roughly ten percent of the whole beef industry in terms of sales.
The following tactics and messages describe how the Certified Angus Beef program continues to promote the brand to the licensees. The program also supplies tools to the licensees so they can promote the Certified Angus Beef brand to benefit their business. The additional promotion through the licensees helps the program capitalize on promotion to a larger audience.

*Tactic: Certified Angus Beef Program Website – Marketing Section*

The marketing webpage in the licensee area of the program website was targeted to licensed food-service distributors and retailers. The webpage was associated with the strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef with the introduction paragraph that said, “Marketing and advertising are the best ways to attract customers and drive your success with the Certified Angus Beef® brand. As a licensed business, you have exclusive access to these marketing and advertising tools.”

The marketing tactics listed for the target audiences of licensed food-service distributors and retailers on the webpage were logo and taglines, product photos, advertising tools, and marketing solutions. The added tactic of menu design was available for food-service distributors.

An example of the marketing tactics was advertising tools to help the licensees with advertising for television and radio, web promotions, and in-store public-address announcements. The advertising tools also included a sheet of taglines, body copy, and tactics for customized advertising.
One of the advertising tactics on the webpage was the taste the difference campaign. The webpage (Figure 7) for the campaign began with the introduction,

New marketing research shows consumers want information on the difference in Angus brands and need assistance in choosing the best quality – and taste. Leverage the Certified Angus Beef® brand and the following campaign as your commitment to providing the best Angus beef and unparalleled tasted. Advertising pieces below are available in both ready-to-print and customizable formats. Use our style guide when building your own ad from provided copy, taglines and logos.

The campaign tools available to licensees were the research behind the campaign, print advertisements, billboards, truck wraps, radio spots, and copy points. This tactic was associated with the message of the ten specifications of the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products.
Another tactic in the marketing section was tip sheets for the licensees to use when communicating with traditional media about the Certified Angus Beef brand. Another tip sheet focused on communicating through social media outlets with specific advice about Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. One of the tip sheets gave licensees specific ideas for Facebook posts and tweets for the strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef in social media campaigns. These tactics were associated with the message of the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand to exceed all other standards for beef products.

Another example of the marketing tactics was the logos and taglines webpage. The introduction on the webpage said, “Usage Guidelines: all trademarks are legally
protected to maintain product integrity. Use the marks exactly as shown. Unlicensed accounts cannot use the mark.” The accompanying pdf file entitled “Logo Guidelines” contained the proper legal usage of the logo, proper usage of the brand’s name and references to the organization. The logos featured on the Logo Guidelines pdf file are shown as Figure 8.

Figure 8: The Certified Angus Beef program logo

*Message: Generations of family farmers and ranchers committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand.*

The message of generations of family farmers and ranchers committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand was associated with the cattlemen advertising campaign on the marketing section of the licensee area on the program website. This tactic was also associated with the strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand. The tactic is
targeted for both food-service distributors and retailers. The webpage for the campaign (Figure 9) began with the introduction,

For generations, farmers and ranchers have been committed to raising the best Angus beef – *Certified Angus Beef®* brand. Share their rich ranching heritage by using this fully customizable campaign to help connect your customers to the cattlemen and women behind the brand. Contact your marketing manager and select from dozens of rancher profiles gathered across the United States and in Canada.

The campaign tools in this marketing tactic included copy for advertisements, cattle photography, and a database to connect the licensees with cattle producers in their area associated with the Certified Angus Beef program.

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**Cattlemen Campaign**

For generations, farmers and ranchers have been committed to raising the best Angus beef – the *Certified Angus Beef®* brand. Share their rich ranching heritage by using this fully customizable campaign to help connect your customers to the cattlemen and women behind the brand. Contact your marketing manager and select from dozens of rancher profiles gathered across the United States and in Canada.

**Ranch Profiles by State**

Each profile may be showcased as an example of one of the ranchers throughout the country who target the *Certified Angus Beef®* brand. Materials cannot imply the brand is raised exclusively by the rancher or that an individual company purchases directly from the farm or ranch.

**Marketing Examples**

Need some marketing ideas to get started? We have examples of in-store signage, advertisements, restaurant materials, banners, and a [newsletter article](#). Scroll over each image for a larger view.

**Copy Points**

These statements help you link customers with the cattlemen and women who raise the brand. Use them to share the brand's story and heritage.

**Cattle Photography**

Print-quality images

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Figure 9: Cattlemen advertising campaign
Tactic: Restaurant Licensing

Licensing restaurants was a tactic associated with the strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand. Food-service distributors were the target audience for this tactic. Food-service distributors are required to be licensed to sell the Certified Angus Beef product, but their restaurant customers were not required to be licensed unless they wanted to promote and advertise to their customers that they were serving the Certified Angus Beef brand.

The vice-president of business development described the licensing requirements for restaurants to market the Certified Angus Beef brand:

We have two different levels of licensing that we call gold and silver. If you want to feature one or more items, as long as you box them out and separate them from the other items [on your menu] you can identify one. You can’t do any kind of advertising outside of that menu unless it is item specific. If you wanted to run a newspaper ad…and you’re only featuring one or two items, you would have to say, ‘Come to…Steakhouse for their Certified Angus Beef New York strip,’ specific to that item that they [the restaurant] are buying.

The restaurant licensing tactic was discussed in the sales tools section of the Certified Angus Beef program website. The webpage began with an introduction that said, “Any account may purchase Certified Angus Beef® product, however, to promote the brand, it must be licensed. Use these tips to identify the best accounts, license them and lead them to success with the brand.” An example of the restaurant licensing tactic was shown on the webpage with sample menu layouts (Figure 10).
Gold License / 100%

- All steak and roast items on the menu must be Certified Angus Beef® product to be eligible for 100% licensing and full marketing privileges.

When the steak and roast items are exclusively Certified Angus Beef® product, other ground beef and value-added beef items (i.e. deli roast beef, pastrami, frankfurters, etc.) may be served, but proper segregation of all Certified Angus Beef® items is required to avoid consumer confusion. See our Menu Identification Guidelines.

- Certified Angus Beef® ground beef and value-added items may be served and identified but are not required as a 100% licensing condition, unless of course, the restaurant only serves those items.

Figure 10: Gold restaurant licensing

The webpage for the restaurant licensing also contained a question and answer exercise:

What is licensing?
- Licensing is the authorization to use federally protected trademarks for Certified Angus Beef® products on the menu.
- There are no fees, no term limit, and no volume commitments.

How should I introduce customers to licensing? Licensing is a process:
- Explain the brand’s benefits.
- Share a chef testimonial.
- Schedule a product sampling.
- Encourage the account to purchase the product for 90 days.
- Then discuss licensing.

Who should be licensed?
- An account that is an example to other customers,
- Wishes to display the Certified Angus Beef® logo on the menu,
- And would be committed to upholding the brand’s integrity.
**Tactic: Retail advertisements in newspaper flyers**

A tactic identified with the strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef program brand was the Certified Angus Beef brand being featured in advertisements by licensed retailers, according to the vice-president of business development. He said a tactic used by national companies such as Proctor and Gamble, Nabisco, Oscar Meyer, and others was to pay retailers to feature their brand in their weekly newspaper advertisements. The vice-president said the retailers expected the Certified Angus Beef program to pay for advertising, but as a non-profit the program could not afford to pay. He said the licensed retail businesses wanted to communicate to consumers in their marketplace that they were licensed to carry the Certified Angus Beef brand and the competitors were not, so they still featured the brand in the advertising and the vice-president of business development said, “It’s been a huge way to be able to communicate the brand to millions of people every week. So for us on the retail side it’s probably created more free advertising for us than any venture.”

**Tactic: Identification of the Certified Angus Beef brand in the retail meat case.**

The tactic of identifying the Certified Angus Beef brand in retail meat cases was associated with the strategy of marketing the brand. The message of the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceeds all other standards was also associated with this tactic. The target audience was licensed retailers.

The vice-president of business development with the Certified Angus Beef program discussed the differences in marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand in a retail
setting compared to the food-service setting. He said food service distributors had salespeople trained to communicate the messages about the Certified Angus Beef brand to the chefs and restaurants. He said:

The problem at retail is you can’t have a salesperson standing in front of the meat case to go through all of this [brand messages]. So it’s really difficult to get that message to people. We will use in-store signage at retail. We will use brochures that are handed out in-store. They will have educational messages as part of those newspaper ads. So at retail it becomes a multi-faceted approach.

The licensee area of the program website had the POS (point-of-sale) webpage which had an ordering system for licensed retailers. An example of some of the materials on the webpage (Figure 11) were case dividers, window decals, banners, retail fresh-meat case picks, dial-a-price for retail meat cases, and two-sided signs. The tactic also contained clothing items for the meat and deli department staffs such as hats and aprons.

Figure 11: Point-of-sale items
**Tactic: Education and Culinary Center**

The vice-president for business development discussed the education and culinary center located in Wooster, Ohio, by the Certified Angus Beef administrative offices. He discussed the tactic of using the center in association with the strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand:

We’re truly an educational/marketing organization but really a heavy emphasis on education. The new Education and Culinary Center does just that. It helps us in marketing the brand to our partners. We’re very excited about being able to invest in that. It’s a one-time investment and after that it’s the gift that keeps on giving for us.

The tactic of the education and culinary center was described on the seminar webpage announcing a seminar to be held at the center that said, “You’ll enjoy a first-hand look at the facility designed with your business – and your customers – in mind. We’re excited to share our vision, and the value of innovative, hands-on brand education with you!”

**Tactic: Finding Prospective Licensees for the Certified Angus Beef Program**

The tactic of finding prospective licensees from the food buyers in the food system was associated with the strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand. The tactic was identified on the business inquiry webpage which was on the corporate section on the main area of the program website. The other tactics on the webpage were
brand integrity and a searchable database to help potential buyers find a licensed wholesale distributor. The introduction on the business inquiry webpage (Figure 12) said:

Our goal is to maintain mutually beneficial relationships with each customer. Need ideas to help grow your business and increase efficiency? We can help. Need assistance with marketing endeavors? We have the resources. We want consumers to know the Certified Angus Beef® brand is the best Angus beef available—and that they can buy it from you.

The message associated with this tactic was the Certified Angus Beef program is non-profit so everything we do is for your success.

Figure 12: Finding prospective licensees
Strategy 3: Identifying the recipient for the program’s message and determining what message to send.

A communication strategy used by the Certified Angus Beef program was identifying the recipient for the program’s message and determining what message to send. The occurrences of this strategy was associated with three messages: the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products, generations of family farmers and ranchers are committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand, and the mission of the Certified Angus Beef program is to create premiums for Angus producers who produce high-quality beef. The tactic that is associated with this strategy are ways to get messages to recipient. Table 3 shows the messages and tactics associated with this strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 3: Identifying the recipient for the program’s messages and determining what message to send</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Tactics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ways to get messages to recipients</td>
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</table>
Tactic: Ways to get messages to recipients

The vice-president of business development discussed the strategy of determining the tactics to reach recipients with the message of the ten specifications of the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products:

There’s real substance to being able to prove that our product is better than the competition; than commodity choice, or even commodity prime, or commodity select product. It’s important if the people that eventually are marketing and selling the product don’t understand it they’ll never be able to properly communicate it then they won’t be any better than the competition their selling against. So how do we go about that?

It’s very difficult to be able to identify which source is best; it’s trial and error. And yet we are very careful not to overdo the number of messages that are proliferated out to that distributor. Otherwise they turn you off. More is not necessarily always better and we really struggle with that. The other thing that has really complicated that, in a good way, is there are so many ways to deliver messages now.

Getting messages to licensees

The vice-president for business development for the Certified Angus Beef program discussed delivering messages received by a president of a large, food-service distributor:

We talked about less may be better than more. That’s one of the things that we’ve concluded. And then the other part of it is who is on the receiving end of the message. Who do we need to send what message to? The typical broadline distributor will have a president that oversees 300-500 employees and a sales force of 150 to 160. They’ve got vice-presidents of sales, vice-presidents of procurement and purchasing, and vice-presidents of operations. So if you send the president a message, there’s a good chance it’s going to fall on deaf ears because they’re getting communications from corporate, they’re getting internal communications, and the last thing they need to see is another email. So we’ll
decide on what messages go to what people...And that’s where we’ve learned: don’t bombard them. Give them the information they want to see and the information that will help us help them be successful.

*Message: The mission of the Certified Angus Beef program is to create premiums for Angus producers who produce high-quality beef*

The occurrence of the message of the mission of the Certified Angus Beef program is to create premiums for Angus producers who produce high-quality beef was associated with the strategy of determining what message to send. This strategy was also associated with the message of generations of family farmers and ranchers committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand. The vice-president for business development said:

It’s back to that local message and we’re working hard to further develop that local message. They see Certified Angus Beef as this big, corporate giant and are by far dominant in branding beef. No one is even close to us. But the reality is we’re doing it for different reasons. We are not some big, corporate giant because there are no stock options here, there’s nothing in it for us other than our pure message of helping the Angus producers.

If you’re operating a restaurant three miles from your house and you’re buying Certified Angus Beef; there’s probably an Angus producer three miles down the road that’s raising Angus beef that’s benefitting from the efforts of the Certified Angus Beef brand if he’s raising high-quality Angus. Those are the messages that we continue to trial and error. It’s a matter of reaching the right person, with the right message, with the right number of touches; not too many, not too little.

*Strategy 4: Having constant dialogue with the licensees to keep them engaged with the Certified Angus Beef program*

A communication strategy used by the program was having a constant dialogue with the licensees to keep them engaged with the Certified Angus Beef program. This
strategy was associated with two messages: the first message was the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products and the second messages was only one in four Angus qualify for the Certified Angus Beef brand. The tactics associated with this strategy were monthly market reports and the annual conference for licensees and partners. Table 4 shows the messages and tactics associated with this strategy.

Table 4: Strategy 4 messages and tactics for the Certified Angus Beef program

| Strategy 4: Having constant dialogue with the licensees to keep them engaged with the Certified Angus Beef program |
| ------------------------------------------------- |-------------------------------------------------- |
| **Message**                                      | **Tactics**                                     |
| The ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products | Monthly market reports about the beef market conditions and price forecasts. |
| Only one in four Angus qualify for the Certified Angus Beef brand. | Certified Angus Beef program annual conference for licensees and partners. |

The Certified Angus Beef program vice-president for business development talked about the strategy of having constant dialogue to keep the Certified Angus Beef program licensees engaged:

Because we never own the product – never buy it, never sell it, -- we need to continue to get their buy-in. If there is one issue that we had early on in the program is that we were so strapped for lack of staff, for lack of any dollars coming in that there wasn’t a whole lot we could do and we had to be pretty rigid
to be able to form the nucleus of the brand. There have been a lot of changes as we’ve grown. Probably the best thing that this organization does is that we’re very flexible in terms of not getting locked into a policy and never changing it. If we have rules in place and they don’t make any sense or all they do is add red tape; it’s gone.

The message that the ten specifications of the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards was associated with this strategy of constant dialogue with licensees. The vice-president of business development discussed issues between food-service distributors and retailers about the price of the Certified Angus Beef product. He said constant dialogue with licensees was needed to explain the differences between the two audiences:

We’ve done some cross-promoting. The typical response from the salespeople at food service is, ‘we’re supposed to be selling restaurant quality and you’re allowing your brand to be sold in supermarkets? Is it the same product? They’re featuring it at much cheaper prices.’

The response is to remember when you go into [those supermarkets], Certified Angus Beef is being sold as the premium brand. They’re still selling choice or select at a much lower price. It is the premium brand and you’re going to pay more for it.

The other thing is, yes, the specifications are exactly the same. However, the product is handled much differently at retail than it is at food service…They [retailers] don’t vacuum seal it, they don’t age it and so all of the sudden there’s two or three or four dollars a pound difference and yet the food service people say, ‘What’s going on here? They are featuring strips at 7.99 and I’m selling them at 11.99’ But, that’s where the education comes in to help them understand.

The vice-president for business development for the Certified Angus Beef program also identified differences among the licensed businesses. He described the
food-service distributors as including independent distributors and broadline, corporate
distributors and the necessity of the strategy of constant dialogue with the licensees:

In food service we have some corporate partners like Sysco, U.S. Foods, and Food Services of America and then independents. We will meet with the independent group usually on an annual basis at annual conference and get their feedback on what types of things we can help with and what can we do. And then we’ll meet with those corporate entities...we were just down in Houston, Texas, the headquarters for Sysco. They have a total of 57 companies that are licensed.

We updated their officer team in terms of how is the sales growth with Certified Angus Beef and Sysco Corporation for those licensed accounts. Then we talked to them about ideas that they have about the brand and listened to their feedback. We give them ideas that we ask them to contemplate and then weigh in on. So there’s constant dialogue going back and forth with each of those groups.

Tactic: Monthly Market Reports

The tactic of monthly market reports about the beef market conditions and price forecasts was associated with the strategy of constant dialogue. The monthly market reports were on the by the numbers webpage in the licensee area of the program website.

The introduction on the webpage said, “One key to growing your business with the Certified Angus Beef® brand is data. Use these tools to manage your buying and sales strategies.” The webpage linked to outside market-forecasting businesses as well as monthly, program-wide statistics on Certified Angus Beef brand sales. An additional page contains an incentive program for meeting brand assurance goals. For proprietary reasons, these webpages were not displayed in this paper.
Message: Only one in four Angus qualify for the Certified Angus Beef brand

A message used by the Certified Angus Beef program was that only one in four Angus qualify for the Certified Angus Beef brand which is associated with the message that the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products.

These messages were associated with the strategy of constant dialogue by the vice-president for business development discussing communications with the licensees about the supply of Certified Angus Beef product:

How do we communicate the message that we are the highest quality and we don’t comprise the brand. We are in a very tight supply situation with cattle right now. So we get to this time and people say, ‘Why don’t you have a second tier of the Certified Angus Beef program? Pick up maybe two out four now and double your supply.’ It would absolutely destroy the program. We have these internal sessions where we talk about it. What can we do to help our mission statement? Well, that would destroy our mission statement is the conclusion that we’ve reached. So we have to effectively get that message out that we’re very selective and three out of four Angus cattle miss the boat and one of those ten specs and it gets kicked out.

Tactic: Annual Conference

The tactic of the annual conference was identified with the strategy of constant dialogue with the licensees. The annual conference webpage (Figure 13) said the conference was, “where we’ll gather to strengthen relationships, share cutting-edge information, and celebrate successes in marketing, sales and integrity. Join leaders and experts in the beef community who will motivate and invigorate you with pioneering insight and fresh ideas that are sure to inspire.”
Figure 13: Certified Angus Beef program annual conference

**Strategy 5: Helping licensees sell Certified Angus Beef product against competitors selling other brands or commodity beef products.**

The final communication strategy in this case study used by the Certified Angus Beef program is helping licensees sell Certified Angus Beef product against competitors selling other brands or commodity beef products. There were three messages associated with this strategy: the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products, only one in four Angus qualify for the Certified Angus Beef brand, and generations of family farmers and ranchers are committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand.
### Strategy 5: Helping licensees sell against competitors selling other brands or commodity beef products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all</td>
<td>the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other standards for beef products</td>
<td>beef products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only one in four Angus qualify for the Certified Angus Beef brand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generations of family farmers and ranchers are committed to the</td>
<td>Generations of family farmers and ranchers are committed to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Angus Beef brand</td>
<td>Certified Angus Beef brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactic</td>
<td>Brochure for food-service distributor salespeople to use in sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochure for food-service distributor salespeople to use in sales calls</td>
<td>calls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tactic: Sales Brochure for Food-Service Distributor Salespeople*

The vice-president of business development for the Certified Angus Beef program referred to a sales brochure that was available for Certified Angus Beef licensee salespeople to use. The brochure was associated with the message that the ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products. In reference to the sales brochure, the vice-president said:

> And on the food service side, how do we communicate the message? That gets more difficult. The primary sales tool is this: it’s called our sales map. Every sales representative, 10,000 plus; it will be closer to 12,000, has one of these. Not to leave with every account that they ever call on, but to use as a sales tool.

> In here they talk about the message: the only brand owned by the American Angus Association and rancher members and some of those key points; trying to bring the local message to people. And then on the back would be our ten specifications. One of the things that we talk about it is if you as a salesperson
don’t know what these are you’ll never be able to differentiate yourself against the competition.

The back page of the brochure (Figure 14) had a chart that showed a comparison of the Certified Angus Beef brand ten specifications with the standards of commodity USDA prime, choice, and select.
The vice-president of business development discussed how a salesperson would use the marbling comparison chart on the inside of the brochure (Figure 15):

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**Figure 14: Ten specifications comparison chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certified Angus Beef® brand 10 science-based specifications</th>
<th>USDA Prime, Choice and Select 2 specifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marbling – the key to flavor</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Modest or higher marbling</td>
<td>Various marbling specifications for each grade. USDA Select and the majority of USDA Choice do not contain enough marbling to qualify for the Certified Angus Beef® brand (See pyramid).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Medium or fine marbling texture</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maturity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “A” maturity for each, lean and skeletal characteristics—cattle harvested younger than approximately 30 months of age</td>
<td>Can include both “A” and “B” maturity cattle. “B” maturity are cattle harvested at approximately 30-32 months of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consistent sizing ensures thicker steaks and consistent plate presentation for each customer</strong></td>
<td>Variation in product size and plate presentation. Accepts all ranges of ribeye and carcass weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 10- to 16-square-inch ribeye area</td>
<td>No specification, accepts industry extremes of 7- to 20-square-inch ribeye area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Less than 1,000-pound hot carcass weight</td>
<td>No specification, may include large carcasses and industry extremes of 1,250-pound hot carcass weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Less than 1-inch fat thickness</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Appearance and Tenderness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Superior muscling restricts influence of dairy cattle</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Practically free of capillary rupture ensures quality appearance</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. No dark cutters ensures consistent appearance and flavor</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. No neck hump exceeding 2 inches safeguards against Brahman-influenced cattle which have more variation in tenderness</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*Licensing is easy!*

*Ask for complete details on how you can capitalize on the Certified Angus Beef® brand items you are serving*

*The Certified Angus Beef® brand name, trade name and design are service marks or trademarks of Certified Angus Beef LLC. © 2013 All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. 10-0162-09, 1918*
If you’re a chef, this is what you’re going to see. You’re going to see the biggest reason that you want to buy the brand is because of the increased marbling versus commodity choice. Then we explain what is marbling. We explain the other specs: maturity and marbling texture. We talk about the consistency specifications and we talk about the appearance: dark cutters and that sort of thing. And then we relate this to where Certified Angus Beef fits into the whole supply of cattle. And this would represent about ten percent of this whole pyramid.

![Figure 15: Marbling comparison and pyramid chart](image)

The inside of the brochure showed a study done by Oklahoma State University that the vice-president associated with the message that the ten specifications exceed all other standards:

This is a survey that was done by Oklahoma State University and they sampled 400 people about the quality levels of steak and asked them to rate the dining experience. One out of every 50 times Certified Angus Beef was an undesirable
eating experience. One out of every 13 times – choice, one out of every six – select.

Basically what you’re saying that if you’re a restaurant operator [serving select], every 13th customer that comes in is going to walk out upset because they didn’t like the quality of what they ate. Can you survive based upon that?

The message of generations of family farmers and ranchers committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand was associated with the tactic of the sales brochure along with the message that only one in four Angus qualify for the Certified Angus Beef brand. These messages were inside the sales brochure (Figure 16) and said:

Not all Angus are equal. The Certified Angus Beef® brand is brought to you by generations of cattle producers. These men, women, and families are committed to raising superior quality beef. They are members of the American Angus Association® and they own the brand. They proudly deliver you the best, bite after bite.

Figure 16: Not all Angus are Equal
Ohio Proud Program

The second organization studied in this multi-case study, was the Ohio Proud program. The individual strategic communication principles of strategy, message, and tactic were identified with the same definitions used for the Certified Angus Beef Program.

The Ohio Proud program is an awareness program that certifies food products that are grown or processed in Ohio. The Ohio Proud program is organized and operated by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The program consists of partners who produce, grow, or process food, and other agricultural products in Ohio.

The case study included an interview with the Ohio Proud program manager, harvest calendar document, and the main portion (publicly-accessible) and the partner portion (password-protected) of the Ohio Proud program website.

A database was used to compile the strategies referenced from the interview, documents, and websites. The strategies were also identified if they were incorporated with a message and used in association with a tactic. The target audience for the strategies, messages, and tactics were also identified. The communication principles identified as being used by the Ohio Proud program were:

Strategies:

1. Getting companies together to create relationships
2. Growing and maintaining Ohio Proud membership
3. Product identification with the Ohio Proud logo
4. Increasing awareness of Ohio Proud product
Messages:

1. Connect with potential buyers
2. Benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud partners
3. Made in Ohio, Grown in Ohio
4. Consumers are demanding local products
5. Buy local and support Ohio’s economy

Tactics:

1. Ohio Food Summit
2. Promoting Ohio Proud at various food shows
3. Working with associations who represent potential buyers
4. Tip sheet entitled “Seven Ways You Can Maximize Your Ohio Proud Affiliation”
5. Searchable database for finding Ohio Proud partners
6. Partner Benefits promotional card
7. Newsletter for Ohio Proud partners
8. Ohio Proud logo
9. Marketing opportunities for Ohio Proud partners
10. Assistance to new food-product businesses
11. Promotional items featuring the Ohio Proud logo
12. Choose Ohio Proud promotion card
13. Produce campaigns during Ohio’s growing season
14. Ohio produce harvest calendar
Messages and tactics were involved in the organization’s communication strategies to help achieve their expected impact. This created an interdependent relationship between these three communication principles. To reflect this relationship, the first three objectives for the Ohio Proud program were presented based on the identified strategies. The messages and tactics identified as used by the organization were presented in context of the strategy.

Before starting the discussion on strategies used by the Ohio Proud program, the partners need to be defined. Partners become licensed through paying a membership fee to the program. Partners must produce a food or agricultural product that is at least 50 percent grown, raised or processed in Ohio, to become an Ohio Proud partner according to the front page of the Ohio Proud program website. Affiliate members also pay a membership fee and were defined on the affiliate member page of the Ohio Proud program website:

An affiliate member is any distributor, retailer, restaurant, or association that does not produce a product but promotes and supports Ohio Proud products throughout the year. For example: Restaurants can put window decals on entrances and feature the logo on their menus. Retailers can use the Ohio Proud logo in weekly circulars and schedule special events with Ohio Proud. Associations can use the logo in newsletters and other publications.

**Strategy 1 – Getting Companies Together to Create Relationships**

The most often used strategy by the Ohio Proud program was to get companies together to create relationships. The messages associated with this strategy were helping partners attract potential buyers and the benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud partners. The tactics identified associated with this strategy were the Ohio Food
Summit, organized by the Ohio Proud program, promoting Ohio Proud at various food shows, a tip sheet entitled, “Seven Ways You Can Maximize Your Ohio Proud Affiliation,” and a searchable database for finding Ohio Proud products.

Table 6: Strategy 1 messages and tactics for the Ohio Proud program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Connect with potential buyers</th>
<th>Benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tactics</td>
<td>Promoting Ohio Proud at various food shows</td>
<td>Ohio Food Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working with associations who represent potential buyers</td>
<td>Tip sheet entitled “Seven Ways You Can Maximize Your Ohio Proud Affiliation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Searchable database for finding Ohio Proud partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Message: Connect with potential buyers

The message of partners connecting with potential buyers was associated with many occurrences of the strategy and tactics of getting companies together to create relationships. The Ohio Proud program manager described encouraging Ohio Proud...
partners go to shows such as the Fabulous Food Show and farmers’ markets to find potential buyers:

I always tell my companies don’t forget that everyone is a consumer. You might be at a farmer’s market on a Saturday afternoon and the gentleman or woman coming up and purchasing your product could be a buyer for a restaurant. You just never know who you are going to meet at these events.

This message was associated with the tactic discussed next.

*Tactic: Promoting Ohio Proud at Various Food Shows*

The Ohio Proud program manager discussed the strategy of Ohio Proud partners getting together with companies by exhibiting or attending a trade show, farmers’ market, fair, or other place where potential buyers may be present. The Ohio Proud program manager described her response to show promoters contacting the program to exhibit at an event:

Many times the show promoters will call me and ask can I go and have a booth. And I’ll say why don’t we get the companies to go because I don’t have anything to sell. I think it’s more important to get the companies to go to the events and sample and sell. We’ll work out an area and try to bargain with them to get a reduced rate if we can get so many companies into the show.

The tactic of encouraging Ohio Proud partners to attend food shows was described by the Ohio Proud program manager in regard to the Fabulous Food Show in Cleveland:

We go to some food shows like the Fabulous Food Show in Cleveland. They have that twice a year now. It’s usually a three-day event. The first day is on a Friday which they usually hold for a business day and there are a lot of distributors there. We work with the show promoters and they set aside so many booth spaces at a specially-priced rate for Ohio Proud partners. So they’re getting a reduced rate and then there’s also 15 Ohio companies together in one area with a nice showing
of the Ohio Proud logo and all of the companies that are there using the logo and promoting themselves. We have had a lot of successes with companies that have gone to that show that have met a distributor or a retailer.

The Ohio Proud program manager also identified other food events she encouraged partners to attend such as the Celebrate Local store at the Ohio State Fair and local farmers’ markets. She said the Ohio Proud program participated in Ohio Proud days at the North Market in Columbus and with a fall event at the Easton Towne Center in Columbus.

*Tactic: Ohio Food Summit*

A tactic identified with the strategy of getting companies together was the Ohio Food Summit, organized by the Ohio Proud program. Potential buyers were invited to visit with specified Ohio Proud partners. The target audience for the summit was representatives of food service, retail, and distributor businesses. The Ohio Proud program manager worked with the Ohio Grocers Association and the Ohio Restaurant Association to have their membership attend the Ohio Food Summit and meet the Ohio Proud partners. The Ohio Proud program manager described the summit format:

There were about 50 Ohio Proud companies that had tabletop displays and they were sampling their products. We invited buyers and distributors from both sectors to the day-long event. They visited with companies and then we had prescheduled 15 minute one-on-one meetings with these companies. We offered the buyers to choose who they wanted to meet with [according to] whatever types of products that they were in search of.
Tactic: Working with associations who represent potential buyers

“We have a really great working relationship with the Ohio Grocers Association and the Ohio Restaurant Association,” said the Ohio Proud program manager. She said she worked with the two groups when planning the Ohio Food Summit to identify distributors. She said if a retailer saw a product at the summit they are interested in selling, the distributor would find the product to sell to the retailer. This tactic of working with the associations was also associated with the Ohio Proud program contributing information to the Ohio Grocers Association weekly checkout. The Ohio Proud program manager described the tactic:

The Ohio Grocers Association does a weekly checkout to their partners and I will say that their partners are not only retailers, they’re distributors as well. Their weekly checkout is an email blurb with reminders. We will send them information that they send out [to their members].

Tactic: Seven ways you can maximize your Ohio Proud affiliation

On the partner portion of the Ohio Proud program website on the “Downloads and Resources” a tip sheet was available to partners in a pdf format and was titled “Seven Ways You Can Maximize Your Ohio Proud Affiliation.” The final two tactics on the tip sheet for partners were associated with the strategy of getting companies together to create relationships. The tactics (numbered as appeared in the document) were:

6. Network with Ohio Proud Companies to Develop New Business Opportunities: Ohio Proud partners like to do business with other Ohio Proud partners. For that reason, one very effective business development tactic is to
take advantage of every opportunity for networking with other licensed Ohio Proud partners. Don’t forget to display signage identifying your company as an Ohio Proud partner while exhibiting at trade shows and other events. You’ll make it easier for potential business partners to identify your company as Ohio Proud.

7. Participate in the Exhibits, Trade Shows and Other Value-Added Marketing Ventures Offered: Ohio Proud partners are frequently offered special marketing opportunities to generate new business leads and sales by participating in trade shows, exhibits, seminars, and other special promotions, often at discounted rates. Domestic marketing events and opportunities offered to Ohio Proud partners are found at www.ohioproud.org.

The first five tactics on the tip sheet promoted awareness of being an Ohio Proud partner such as including Ohio Proud in public relations efforts, informing employees about the Ohio Proud affiliation, using the Ohio Proud logo on packaging and retail promotions, including Ohio Proud in advertising and marketing, and using the Ohio Proud van for events.

Tactic: Searchable database for finding Ohio Proud products

Another tactic for the strategy of getting companies together was a searchable database on the publically-accessible portion of the Ohio Proud program website. The target audience for the database was potential buyers in food service and retail businesses as well as general consumers. Figure 17 shows the searchable database welcome screen. The search categories of the database were name of the company, product categories, county, or city. There was also an option to look for organic products or bulk buying options.
The message of the benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud partners will be described in association with the next strategy.

**Strategy 2: Growing and maintaining Ohio Proud membership**

A communication strategy identified with the Ohio Proud program was growing and maintaining Ohio Proud membership. The message associated with this strategy was the benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud program partners with the target audience being either current or potential program partners. The tactics associated with the strategy and message were the Partner Benefits promotional card, the Ohio Proud logo, newsletter for Ohio Proud partners, marketing opportunities for Ohio Proud
partners and assisting new food-product businesses. Table 7 shows the messages and tactics associated with this strategy.

Table 7: Strategy 2 messages and tactics for the Ohio Proud program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud partners</td>
<td>Ohio Proud logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partner Benefits promotional card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newsletter for Ohio Proud partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing opportunities for Ohio Proud partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assistance to new food-product businesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Message: Benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud program partners

The message of the benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud program partners is associated with the strategy of growing and maintaining membership. The message of the benefits for Ohio Proud partners was discussed by the Ohio Proud program manager in the context of membership value:

The membership fee is only $25 per year. Companies get a listing on our website and a link to their website. For $25 I think all of that right there is a pretty good value and in addition to that they get to use the Ohio Proud logo. We provide that camera-ready artwork for them. We have stickers, banners, and things like that they can use to incorporate the logo into their marketing efforts.
**Tactic: Ohio Proud logo**

According to the Ohio Proud program manager, the benefit of membership for both the partners and affiliate members is to use the Ohio Proud logo (Figure 18). The Ohio Proud program manager identified affiliate members as partners although they do not produce a product:

We do have a group called our affiliate members who are distributors, gift basket companies, any kind of group; a company or association that does not produce a product but they promote products. So that would be restaurants and we have commodity groups and [others] that are part of that affiliate member.

![Ohio Proud logo](image)

Figure 18: Ohio Proud program logo

**Tactic: Partner Benefit promotional card**

The Partner Benefit promotional card was a tactic associated with the strategy of growing the Ohio Proud program membership. The card was distributed at trade shows and other events to recruit new partners and affiliate members. The title of the
promotional card “Partner Benefits” (Figure 19) and was associated with the message of the benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud members. These benefits were listed on the card as: brand your products as local, satisfy consumer demand, build customer awareness and loyalty, point-of-purchase materials, greater access to Ohio retailers, and networking and educational opportunities.
Figure 19: Ohio Proud partner benefits card

*Tactic: Ohio Proud Program Newsletter*

The Ohio Proud program newsletter was a tactic associated with the strategy of maintaining Ohio Proud membership. The Ohio Proud program manager said the
The newsletter was started in Spring, 2012, as a quarterly publication sent to partners and affiliate members. The Ohio Proud program manager described the content of the Summer, 2012, newsletter:

We included the listing of a bunch of educational type of programs that are coming up for the fall and there were marketing tools, applications, and testing…Then all the new partners who have joined during that quarter we have recognized. We encourage any of the companies to send us any success stories that they’ve had from any previous events that they have gone to and photos and things like that.

It’s [the newsletter] really geared toward our partners, letting them know about upcoming events or if Ohio Proud was in the media for any special events or anything like that.

Tactic: Marketing opportunities available to Ohio Proud partners

“I spend a majority of the time communicating with our partners. I’m trying to make them aware of opportunities whether it’s educational or marketing. I work a lot too with the stakeholders and the industry, partnering with OSU, OGA, and the restaurant association to partner with them to help our companies increase their sales,” said the Ohio Proud program manager.

Opportunities available to Ohio Proud partners were identified on the “Domestic Opportunities” page on the partner portion of the Ohio Proud program website. The introduction on the page said, “Ohio Proud Partners have the opportunity to be a part of exciting and creative domestic marketing. The following events are open to companies who Join Ohio Proud.”

The webpage then listed different marketing opportunities and events (Figure 20). An example of a tactic identified on the webpage was in-store demonstrations. The
webpage said, “Take advantage of in-store promotions organized by the Department of Agriculture's marketing staff. From the largest tossed salad to an 8 foot giant sundae and sweet corn eating contests, these events help increase consumer awareness of Ohio made and grown products.”

Another marketing tactic identified on the webpage was restaurant promotions which said, “Highlight Ohio products in local restaurants to increase sales. Use the Ohio Proud logo on menus and feature your company products on table tents.” The other marketing opportunities listed on the website were in-store demonstrations, point of purchase materials, networking opportunities, heartland cuisine at the Ohio State Fair, seminars and workshops, and online farmers’ market directory.
Figure 20: Domestic marketing opportunities

During the interview, the Ohio Proud program manager identified new businesses as a source of potential new partners:

I think with the economy a lot of people who maybe lost their jobs, but have always been making this salsa or this sauce and have been giving to their families for the holidays…people are saying you should make that and sell it.
Most of the new companies that are joining the program…are brand-new, start-up, very small businesses and they’re using a family recipe and they’re using the incubator kitchens to go and make their product and things like that.

The incubator kitchens referenced in the interview were on a resource list on the “Downloads and Resources” webpage of the partner portion of the Ohio Proud program website. The resource provided a list of available incubator kitchens for the partners to contact and make arrangements to produce their product.

**Tactic: Assistance to new food-product businesses**

The tactic of assisting new food-product businesses was associated with the Ohio Food Summit. The Ohio Proud program manager described some sessions during the Ohio Food Summit that were organized with the Market Ready program from The Ohio State University. The sessions provided assistance for new food-product businesses and growers:

Market Ready program had different sectors educating the companies on pricing, distribution, the labeling, and making sure they had all their ducks in a row before we actually set them up to meet with the distributors. Many of the companies are selling to maybe one or two small specialty food stores or maybe to a neighborhood restaurant and they think they are ready to move on and take that next step. Then they realize everything that is involved, or how much product they actually need, and can they really get that product made. Many of our companies are very small, family-owned businesses.

**Strategy 3 – Product identification with the Ohio Proud Logo**

The next strategy used by the Ohio Proud program was product identification with the Ohio Proud logo. The messages associated with this strategy were “Made in Ohio,
Grown in Ohio,” consumers are demanding local products and buy local and support Ohio’s economy. The tactics associated with the strategy of the Ohio Proud logo were the Choose Ohio Proud promotional card, promotional items featuring the Ohio Proud logo, the Ohio Proud logo, and the tip sheet entitled, “Seven ways you can maximize your Ohio Proud affiliation.”

Table 8: Strategy 3 Messages and tactics for the Ohio Proud program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 3: Product identification with the Ohio Proud logo</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers are demanding local products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy local and support Ohio’s economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Proud logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose Ohio Proud promotional card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotional items featuring the Ohio Proud logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tip sheet entitled, “Seven ways you can maximize your Ohio Proud affiliation.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Tactic: Ohio Proud logo*

The strategy of identifying products with the Ohio Proud logo was identified on the “About Ohio Proud” webpage on the partner portion of the Ohio Proud program website. The webpage said, “When you see the Ohio Proud logo, you know you are getting Ohio-made and grown products. From fresh meats, fruits and vegetables, to dairy
products and snack foods, you can find Ohio Proud products in your favorite grocery store and at your local Farm Market. Ohio Proud is a quick and reliable way for you to identify Ohio-made and grown goods.”

Usage of the Ohio Proud logo was identified as protected by Ohio Administrative Code 901:4-6 which identified the logo as an Ohio Department of Agriculture registered trademark. During the interview, the program manager described encountering companies who are not licensed partners:

That’s probably all I would be doing if I would police it [logo usage]. But a lot of times when the people will call they’ll say they are already using [Ohio products] and they’ll start rattling off a bunch of companies. Many times if they are using the logo and if it’s a couple of companies that are Ohio Proud and few that aren’t, I’m not going to get bent out of shape about it. As long as they are an Ohio company, even if they are not part of the program, it’s just another way to promote Ohio agriculture.

The tactic of using the Ohio Proud logo is associated with the message discussed next.

Message: Consumers are demanding local products

The message that consumers are demanding local products was associated with the strategy of identifying products with the Ohio Proud logo. A flyer located on “Downloads and Resources” webpage of the partner area of the Ohio Proud program website summarized the benefits for partners and affiliate members to use the Ohio Proud logo:

Meet Consumer Preference

Whether it’s on a retail shelf or a restaurant menu, the Ohio Proud logo gives consumers an easy way to identify those products that are made and grown in Ohio.
• 98% of Ohio consumers surveyed say they prefer to buy Ohio products over a national brand.
• 90% of those surveyed are willing to pay up to $.50 more for an Ohio product.

Point-of-Purchase Materials Move Product
The Ohio Department of Agriculture will provide signage, decals, and banners to Ohio Proud partners and Affiliate Members.

Build Consumer Awareness & Customer Loyalty
Advertising promotes the Ohio Proud logo and increases consumer awareness of the program. Those surveyed purchase Ohio products because they believe the products are fresher, healthier, and provide jobs and economic support to Ohio’s farmers and small businesses.

The Ohio Proud program manager identified the message of consumers demanding local products associated with an increase in membership of the Ohio Proud program:

We have the most Ohio Proud partners that we have ever had since the inception of the program. I have not focused on recruiting at all because I just don’t have the time to do so. Everybody asks me what contributes to that increase and I really think it’s the consumers wanting local products and the Ohio Proud logo is an easy way for a company to show that their product is made or grown here in the state.

During the interview, the program manager mentioned an Ohio Proud partner who raised tomatoes and was asked by the retail buyer to add the Ohio Proud logo to their tomatoes:

[A farm] called because they are selling tomatoes to a major retailer in Ohio and the retailer said we want you to use the Ohio Proud logo on the packaging. So they ordered...thousands of stickers from us and we had to ship the stickers to the storeroom where once the tomatoes made it [there] they were going to apply the stickers to the product boxes.

A lot of times, when the companies call or when the partners call me for the logo or stickers it’s because the retailer or the restaurant wants their consumers to know that this is an Ohio product.
The message to buy local and support Ohio’s economy was associated with the strategy of identifying product with the Ohio Proud logo. The Ohio Proud program manager described the message:

We always encourage and promote that purchasing local products naturally they are getting a better, fresher quality type of product because it’s not sitting in a truck and being shipped halfway across the United States. And they’re supporting the local economy and agriculture which is Ohio’s number one industry. And I really think with the way the economy has been the last few years, not only consumers, but I believe the business to business aspect has changed to where buyers are looking for that local product and wanting to support [other businesses].

Plus, they know what the demand from the consumer is. Consumers now more than ever are interested in where their food is coming from which is going to drive the distributors and the retailers to have more local product, so it’s kind of hand-in-hand.

The message to buy local and support Ohio’s economy was identified on the webpage “About Ohio Proud” on the main area of the Ohio Proud program website:

Agriculture is Ohio’s number one industry, contributing more than $93 billion to the state’s economy. Ohio is home to more than 1,000 food processing companies and produces more than 200 commercial crops. Of these, the Buckeye State is the leading producer in more than 35 product sectors.

In the partner portion of the Ohio Proud program website on the “Downloads and Resources” webpage was the Ohio Proud van request form that identified the message of supporting Ohio’s economy:

Ohio Proud is a logo identification program developed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture to help consumers easily recognize food and agriculture products that are made and grown in Ohio. The program is designed to support Ohio agriculture. The purpose of Ohio Proud is:
• to encourage consumption of raw and processed products through consumer awareness
• to strengthen Ohio’s agriculture economy
• to provide jobs through increased economic activity

Tactic: Choose Ohio promotional card

A promotional card entitled “Choose Ohio Proud” was a tactic associated with the message of buying local to support Ohio’s economy. The listings on the card (Figure 21), said, Support your local farmer, increase sales of Ohio companies, provide jobs to Ohioans, and reinvest in Ohio’s economy.” The target audience for the card was potential buyers in the food system as well as consumers.
Figure 21: Choose Ohio Proud promotional card

Tactic: Promotional items featuring the Ohio Proud logo

A tactic associated with the strategy of product identification with the Ohio Proud logo was point-of-purchase materials available through the Ohio Proud program website.
in the partner portion. One example of the materials was price cards (Figure 22) with the Ohio Proud logo and the tagline, “Buy Fresh. Buy Ohio.” The Ohio Proud program website address was also on the price cards.

Figure 22: Price cards for Ohio Proud product

The “Downloads and Resources” page of the partner portion of the website contained a listing of promotional materials: stickers, window decals, price cards, banners, napkins, buttons, lapel pins, t-shirts, polo shirts, and bags.
Tactic: Seven ways you can maximize your Ohio Proud affiliation

Another occurrence of the strategy to identify product with the Ohio Proud logo was in the “Seven ways you can maximize your Ohio Proud affiliation” tip sheet in the partner portion of the Ohio Proud program website. Tactic number three in the tip sheet is to “Use the Ohio Proud Logo on Your packaging and in Your Retail Promotions” and said:

Research indicates that Ohio consumers want to purchase products made in Ohio—and using the Ohio Proud logo on your packaging will make it easy for them to locate and buy your products. A 2007 consumer awareness survey showed that 98% of those consumers surveyed said they prefer to purchase Ohio products over the national brand. 56% also stated they look at labels when making their purchasing decisions.

That’s why using the Ohio Proud logo on your product boxes, bags, and order fulfillment packaging is a smart business decision! Eye-catching Ohio Proud point-of-sale materials will soon be available on the new and improved interactive website coming live May 2008. Visit www.ohioproud.org for a complete listing of marketing materials. There’s no better way to capitalize on Ohioans’ preference for Ohio products.

Tactic number four in the tip sheet was titled “Include Ohio Proud in Your Advertising and Marketing” and said:

Are you looking for a competitive edge for your product—a way to help distinguish your product from the competition? Incorporating Ohio Proud into your advertising and marketing efforts may be just what you need. Whenever possible, use the Ohio Proud name and logo in the following advertising and marketing tools:

- direct mail pieces
- website link
- product brochures
- television commercials
- print ads
- banners and signs
• seasonal promotions
• catalogs
• point-of purchase displays

**Strategy 4 – Increasing awareness of Ohio Proud products**

The last strategy used by the Ohio Proud program was increasing awareness of Ohio Proud product. The messages associated with this strategy were “Made in Ohio, Grown in Ohio,” and consumers are demanding local products. The tactics associated with the strategy of increasing awareness of Ohio Proud products include produce campaigns during Ohio’s growing season, Ohio produce harvest calendar, and the Ohio Proud logo. Table 9 has the messages and tactics associated with this strategy.

Table 9: Strategy 4 messages and tactics for the Ohio Proud program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy 4: Increasing awareness of Ohio Proud product</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made in Ohio, Grown in Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumers are demanding local products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tactics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Proud logo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce campaigns during Ohio’s growing season</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio produce harvest calendar</td>
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</table>
The Ohio Proud program manager discussed the differences in communicating with retail and restaurants and the strategy of increasing awareness of Ohio Proud program.

The restaurants are not as difficult to sell to because when you’re dealing with a retailer, especially a large chain, they have to go through their corporate headquarters which may be in a totally different state. So it’s more difficult to get them interested in the Ohio product. But with the restaurants they might have two or three stores in the area or in the state. Those folks might be interested and more familiar with what’s available to them.

She also categorized the Ohio Proud program as an awareness program:

Ohio Proud is not a quality program. I mean it’s just basically an awareness program. So we really can’t say that it’s certified or that the quality is better, but I think it’s just you’re getting a fresher product, whether it’s a processed item or a fresh item.

Message: Made in Ohio, Grown in Ohio

The message of Made in Ohio, Grown in Ohio was associated with the strategy of increasing awareness of Ohio Proud product. The message was a tagline developed in 2007 when the Ohio Proud logo was updated. The Ohio Proud program manager described the development of the updated logo and tagline:

The Ohio Proud logo changed back in 2007. The program was created in 1993 and in 2007 we put it through a whole new marketing program and ran the old logo through some consumer testing at the retail level and came up with the new logo mainly for the fact that the old logo – people really weren’t sure what Ohio Proud was. People confused the little symbol with an ear of corn or rolling hills; they really weren’t sure what they were.

So we felt like we should have something that was representative of Ohio and agriculture and also have some sort of tagline which is how we came up with the Made in Ohio, Grown in Ohio. And all that was tested at the consumer level before we decided to change it.
The strategy of the Ohio Proud logo (Figure 18) was associated with this message and with the following tactics.

**Tactic: Ohio produce campaigns during the Ohio growing season**

Ohio produce campaigns during the Ohio growing season were a tactic associated with the strategy of increasing awareness of Ohio Proud products. The Ohio Proud program manager described the campaigns:

I think probably the produce campaigns have been the most successful just because it’s so specialized and there’s only a certain time of the year that we can really promote it. All the stores and restaurants like to promote that they have local produce.

Usually they are pretty good at knowing when a product is available, but we’ve created these harvest calendars and it shows all the products that are grown in Ohio and the different times they are available.

**Tactic: Ohio produce harvest calendar**

The Ohio produce harvest calendar (Figure 23) was used by the Ohio Proud program. The calendar had 71 produce products listed. There were 35 products illustrated on the calendar with the harvest period beginning in March and extending to November. There were an additional six products listed as raised in greenhouses or hydroponic and available year-round. The Ohio Proud program manager described the outcome of the campaign:

We mailed these large posters [harvest calendars] out to the OGA and restaurant memberships. And then we make the Ohio Proud logo available to all of them. These organizations are creating their own signage because they all want their
own marketing campaign. I’m okay with that, so if they want to throw that Ohio Proud logo on there that makes that all the better.

That’s really been successful for us. We don’t have a very large marketing budget so it’s not like I could go in and pay for advertising. We have to work hand-in-hand and take the freebies they give us.

All of the grocers in the state have really been great partners. We encourage our growers, companies and Ohio Proud partners to use the logo in their advertising and when they’re working with buyers too.

Figure 23: Ohio Proud Harvest Calendar
Comparison Between the Two Certification Programs

The final objective of this study was to compare and contrast the strategies, messages, and tactics between the two programs. The comparison and contrast was based on the strategies, in keeping with the results shown prior in this chapter that were arranged first by program and then by strategy. The messages and tactics were compared and contrasted within the discussion of each strategy.

There were five communication strategies identified for the Certified Angus Beef program and four communication strategies identified for the Ohio Proud program. Similar strategies between the two programs were identified in Table 10.

Table 10: Similar strategies of the two programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certified Angus Beef Program</th>
<th>Ohio Proud Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 1: Getting companies together</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy 2: Growing and maintaining membership</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 3: Product identification with logo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy 4: Awareness of Ohio Proud products</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy 2: Marketing the brand</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 3: Identifying recipients and determining message</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy 4: Constant dialogue with licensees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 5: Helping sell against competitors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Similar Strategies for the Two Programs

The first strategy for the Certified Angus Beef program was helping Certified Angus Beef licensees improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand. This was identified as similar to the first strategy of the Ohio Proud program which was getting companies together to create relationships with Ohio Proud partners. Both strategies had similar target audiences. The Certified Angus Beef strategy had the target audience of their licensees and the Ohio Proud program had the target audience of their partners and potential buyers in the food system. The target audiences were similar where the Certified Angus Beef licensees were food-service distributors and retailers which was the same as the potential buyers in the food system for the Ohio Proud program target. The audiences were different as the Ohio Proud partners were growers or product processors.

There were similarities between the Certified Angus Beef program message of doing things for the success of their licensees and the Ohio Proud program message of benefits for their partners.

The remaining messages associated with these first strategies were not similar as the Certified Angus Beef program message about the ten specifications exceeding expectations was product-based and the Ohio Proud program message about connecting with potential buyers was an activity for partners.

The strategies of helping licensees and partners that were similar between the two programs also had similar tactics. The tactic of the annual conference for the Certified Angus Beef program was similar to the tactic of the Ohio Food Summit for the Ohio
Proud program. Both tactics brought companies together to network and were targeted at the same audiences for both programs. The fact sheets and webpages for the Certified Angus Beef program were similar to the Ohio Proud tip sheet in giving communication tactics to licensees and partners. There were no similarities between the fact sheets for the Certified Angus Beef program and promoting Ohio Proud at various food shows and the searchable dataset for the Ohio Proud program.

The first strategy of the Certified Angus Beef program of helping Certified Angus Beef licensees improve their business to be successful with the Certified Angus Beef brand was also identified as similar to the second strategy of the Ohio Proud program of growing and maintaining Ohio Proud membership.

Both of these strategies had similar target audiences. The Certified Angus Beef strategy had the target audience of their licensees and the Ohio Proud program had the target audience of their partners and affiliate members. The target audiences were similar where the Certified Angus Beef licensees were food-service distributors and retailers which was the same as the affiliate members for the Ohio Proud program. The audiences were different as the Ohio Proud partners are growers or product processors.

There were similarities between the Certified Angus Beef program message of doing things for the success of their licensees and the Ohio Proud program message of benefits for their partners and affiliate members as the recipients (licensees and partners).

The remaining Certified Angus Beef program message about the ten specifications exceeding expectations was product-based that was associated with this strategy did not match the only Ohio Proud message of growing and maintaining their membership.
The similar tactics were tools available to licensees for the Certified Angus Beef program on the webpages and marketing opportunities available for the Ohio Proud partners. These tactics were focused on helping the businesses to be more successful. Both programs had a protected logo available for their licensees and partners respectively to exclusively use. The assistance to new-product businesses by the Ohio Proud program was similar to the strategy for the Certified Angus Beef program of helping businesses be successful. There was no tactic for a newsletter for the Certified Angus Beef program similar to the Ohio Proud program’s newsletter for partners and affiliate members.

The second strategy of the Certified Angus Beef program of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand was identified as similar to the third strategy of the Ohio Proud program of product identification with the Ohio Proud logo.

The definition of strategies used in the chapter was the organization’s expected impact of the communication strategy to achieve their identified strategy. Both of these strategies were identifying product to increase awareness of the brand (in the case of the Certified Angus Beef) and the logo (in the case of the Ohio Proud program). The target audiences were also the same. The Certified Angus Beef program identified the licensees to help market the brand and the Ohio Proud program identified the partners and affiliate members to utilize the logo and identify the product.

There were similarities between the Certified Angus Beef program message of the ten specifications for the brand exceed all other standards and the Ohio Proud program message of the Made in Ohio, Grown in Ohio as these messages reflected the benefits of the product associated with each respective program.
There were also similarities between the Certified Angus Beef program message of generations of family farmers and ranchers are committed to the Certified Angus Beef brand and the Ohio Proud program message of buy local and support Ohio’s economy. Both of these messages were to benefit the recipients of each program’s success – the Angus producers for the Certified Angus Beef program and Ohio’s agricultural industry for the Ohio Proud program.

There were similar tactics associated with the strategies of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand and product identification with the Ohio Proud logo. The identification of the Certified Angus Beef brand in the retail case for the Certified Angus Beef program was similar to the tactic of promotional items featuring the Ohio Proud logo for the Ohio Proud program. Both tactics featured buttons, banners, stickers, and other items with the respective logos. The other similar tactics were the marketing section of the program website for the Certified Angus Beef program and the tip sheet for the Ohio Proud program, as both gave communication tactics to licensees and partners. The information in this case study did not identify similarities with the Ohio Proud program or the Certified Angus Beef program tactics of restaurant licensing, retail advertising featuring the brand in newspaper flyers, the education and culinary center, and finding prospective licensees for the Certified Angus Beef program.

The second strategy of the Certified Angus Beef program was marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand which was identified as similar to the fourth strategy of the Ohio Proud program of increasing awareness of Ohio Proud products. These strategies were also similar to the strategies described in the previous paragraphs. Both of these
strategies were focused on increasing awareness of the products through marketing strategies. The target audiences were also the same which included potential buyers in the food system as well as general consumers.

There were similarities described in the last paragraph between the Certified Angus Beef program message of the ten specifications for the brand exceeds all other standards and the Ohio Proud program message of the Made in Ohio, Grown in Ohio were the same. The similar tactics were the marketing section on the licensee area on the program website for the Certified Angus Beef program and the produce campaign during Ohio’s growing season for the Ohio Proud program. The marketing section of the Certified Angus Beef program contained marketing tactics such as campaigns that were similar to the product campaign created by the Ohio Proud program. Also, the logo usage for the Certified Angus Beef program with licensees would be the same as the logo usage for the Ohio Proud partners and affiliate members.

The information in this case study did not identify similarities with the Ohio Proud program for the Certified Angus Beef program tactics of restaurant licensing, retail advertising featuring the brand in newspaper flyers, the education and culinary center, and finding prospective licensees for the Certified Angus Beef program.

**Strategies Not Similar for the Two Programs**

The information in this case study did not identify similar strategies with the Ohio Proud program for the following strategies of the Certified Angus Beef program:

- **Strategy 3**: Identifying the recipient for the program’s message and determining what message to send,
- **Strategy 4**: Having constant dialogue with the licensees to keep them
engaged with the Certified Angus Beef program, and Strategy 5: Helping licensees sell Certified Angus Beef product against competitors selling other brands or commodity beef products.
Chapter 5: Discussion

This multi-case study looked at the strategic communications used by two communication programs to increase awareness of certified products to potential buyers in the food system. The objectives were to look at the strategies, messages, and tactics used individually by the Certified Angus Beef program and the Ohio Proud program and then compare and contrast those communication strategies. This chapter summarizes each program’s communication strategies individually and then in comparison.

The communication strategies of the certification programs were also evaluated by applying the Andersen model (2001) of relationship-building for buyers and sellers. The model was applied with the extended theories of information, information processing, and contingency. After assessing the strategic communications of the two certification programs, the Ohio Proud program was in the first, or pre-relationship, phase of the Andersen (2001) model with strategic communications associated with information theory. The Certified Angus Beef program was in the third, or relationship-development, phase of the model with contingency theory associated with the strategic communications. The partners in the Ohio Proud program would benefit from the
program facilitating communications with potential buyers in the food system to move into the next phase of the relationship-building communication model (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Relationship-Building Communication Model (Andersen, 2001).

**Summary of Certified Angus Beef Program Strategic Communications**

The primary audiences for the Certified Angus Beef program communication strategies were their licensees who are primarily food-service distributors and retailers. The strategies reflected the relationship the program had developed with their licensees to help them grow and develop their business which in return would drive demand for Certified Angus Beef product and benefit the program.
There were five communication strategies identified in this case study. The strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand was the main strategy as the messages and tactics involved with the strategy were interwoven into other communication strategies. The strategy of helping Certified Angus Beef licensees improve their business to be successful with the brand and the strategy of helping licensees sell Certified Angus Beef product against competitors selling other brand or commodity beef products certainly were built on the strategy of the marketing Certified Angus Beef brand.

The main message of ten specifications for the Certified Angus Beef brand exceed all other standards for beef products was central to not only these three strategies, but to the majority of the tactics used for all five strategies.

This message of the ten specifications exceeding all other standards was used in most of the tactics available through the licensee area on the program website. The message was used in the advertising campaigns, training programs for licensees’ staff, take-along sales brochures, point-of-sale materials, promotional items and other tactics. The Certified Angus Beef program created the tactics for the strategy of marketing the brand, but the tactics were designed for the licensees to use in their marketing campaigns. The strategy of helping the licensees be successful with their business was evident in the tactics which were designed to not be used by the program itself; but to be used by the licensees to personalize the brand to their business’ communications. This communicated an association of licensees’ business and the Certified Angus Beef brand. The strategy was for the consumer, or the licensees’ customer, to associate the brand directly with the
local business. So, the retail consumer would associate the Certified Angus Beef brand with the retail store where it was available. Likewise, the chefs and restaurants would associate the Certified Angus Beef brand with the food-service distributor who was licensed to sell the brand.

This relationship of the Certified Angus Beef brand relying on the licensees for marketing the brand and the licensees benefitting from their association with the brand created the final two strategies of the Certified Angus Beef program. The strategies for the program were having a constant dialogue with the licensees to keep them engaged with the program and the Certified Angus Beef program identifying the recipient for the program’s message and determining what message to send.

Mohr and Nevin (1990) discussed the need to apply communication strategies to marketing channels to develop the relationship between manufacturers and resellers. The Certified Angus Beef brand represented the Angus producers (the manufacturers) and the licensees represented the resellers. The Certified Angus Beef program communication strategies also provided the messages and tactics for their licensees to use in selling their product in the marketing channels.

On the surface, it could be interpreted that the Certified Angus Beef program operated as a marketing agency that is providing tactics and materials to their clients to market a brand. However, the message of the mission of the Certified Angus Beef program showed the investment the program had in the success of the communication strategies. The mission of the program was identified as creating premiums for Angus producers who produce high-quality beef. The success of the marketing of the brand was
linked to the ability of Angus producers to realize premiums. Demand for the Certified Angus Beef product needed to be created to drive the incentive for cattle to be produced that could be identified for the brand.

The message of the Certified Angus Beef program is non-profit so everything we do is for your success was identified by the vice-president of business development as beneficial to the program’s licensees. He said that if the Certified Angus Beef program is driving premiums for Angus producers, the licensees will have more supply of the product to sell in their marketplace.

The vice-president of business development for the Certified Angus Beef program discussed the communications strategy of identifying the recipients for the program’s message and determining what message to send. He talked about the difficulty of identifying which source of communicating is best; dependent on the recipient.

“We are very careful not to overdo the number of messages that proliferated out to that distributor – otherwise they turn you off,” he said. “More is not necessarily always better and we really struggle with that.”

The communication strategy of helping licensees sell Certified Angus Beef product against competitors selling other brands or commodity beef products indicated the proliferation of competitors for the program in the marketplace. The strategy focused on providing messages and tactics for the Certified Angus Beef program licensees to use. The messages identified the competitors’ product and provided tactics and messages for the licensees to use in the strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand.
Certification programs promote a product that is not owned by the program. The vice-president of business development confirmed that the program never owns any of the Certified Angus Beef product.

“We never own the product; never buy it, never sell it,” he said. The licensees are invested in purchasing the product and he referred to the strategy of needing constant dialogue with the licensees keep them involved with the program.

Since the Certified Angus Beef program never owned the product, the brand name and logo became the identifier for the product. The Certified Angus Beef name, as well as the logo, is a registered trademark. The message became essential that any product that bears the Certified Angus Beef name or logo has passed the ten specifications to be identified for the Certified Angus Beef brand.

Reinforcing the brand was used by the Certified Angus Beef program for the communication strategies to help the licensees sell the product to other buyers in the food system and compete with other brands. The communication strategy of designing tactics and messages for the licensees to take and incorporate in their business, within the strategy of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand, indicated a reciprocal relationship between the licensees and the program. This relationship built a value chain as defined by Stevenson & Pirog (2008) which said close cooperation between strategic partners in the chain is required.

This value chain is beneficial for the licensees who are buyers in the food system. But how did this relate back to the premise of the problem statement identified in this study? The problem was defined as growers who were seeking ways to differentiate their
product from the mainstream commodities, realize premiums, and create a reliable market for their products. The Certified Angus Beef program has shown how a certification program can help growers achieve these goals.

Angus producers have realized premiums because demand has been created for their product. The Angus producers who wished to participate in this value chain focused on producing animals that met the ten specifications to be identified with the Certified Angus Beef brand. The Certified Angus Beef program developed the value chain within the food system so once the producer had a product that met the ten specifications, they were able to enter the chain with their product.

The communication strategies of marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand were handled by the certification program rather than the individual Angus producers. As Inwood et al., 2003, indicated, building relationships for mutually beneficial results can be time consuming. The Certified Angus Beef program invested the time into building the relationships, which allowed the Angus producers to spend time on production-related tasks.

Summary of the Ohio Proud Program Strategic Communications

The primary audiences for the Ohio Proud program communications program were their partners who produce, grow, or process agricultural products in Ohio. The other audience was affiliate members, who are distributors, retailers, restaurants, or associations that do not produce a product but promote and support Ohio Proud products.

The strategies reflected the focus on their partners and encouraging them to utilize the Ohio Proud logo in their marketing programs.
There were four communication strategies identified in this case study for the Ohio Proud program. The strategy of growing and maintaining Ohio Proud membership was the basis for other strategies identified with the program. The strategy was supported by the message of the benefits and opportunities available to Ohio Proud partners. The tactics such as the promotional cards, marketing opportunities listed on the program website, and tip sheets delivered the message of the membership benefits to help the partners market the Ohio Proud logo and name for their company.

The Ohio Proud logo was the main benefit communicated to the Ohio Proud membership. Usage of the logo was identified in Ohio Administrative Code, which regulated the logo to only be used by members. Ohio Proud was defined as a logo identification company on the program website. The program was developed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture to help consumers easily recognize food and agriculture products made and grown in Ohio.

The strategy of identifying product with the Ohio Proud logo was described by the Ohio Proud program manager in the interview when she related the incident of an Ohio Proud partner was requested by their retail buyer to add the Ohio Proud logo to their product.

“Consumers want local products and the Ohio Proud logo is a really easy way for a company to show that their product is made or grown here in the state,” she said. “It’s easy for the consumers to recognize that logo.”

The tactics on the program website supported the strategy of identifying product with the Ohio Proud logo. Promotional items such as price cards, signs, and camera-ready
logo artwork were available to partners free of charge to use in their marketing campaigns. The marketing page of the website also suggested utilizing tactics such as the Ohio Proud van or promotional events to associate the Ohio Proud logo with individual businesses.

The tip sheet provided tactics developed by the Ohio Proud program for companies to use to identify their product and company with the logo. In addition to marking the product with the Ohio Proud logo, the program encouraged them to submit news releases, story ideas, and letters to local media announcing their affiliation with the Ohio Proud program. The tactic of using the Ohio Proud logo in all marketing and advertising done by the company was also suggested in the tip sheet.

Getting companies together to create relationships was also a strategy identified with the Ohio Proud program. Networking with other partners was communicated as a tactic in the tip sheet and partners were reminded to display their Ohio Proud membership with the logo to alert other companies to their membership. A searchable database was available on the Ohio Proud program website to not only be used by general consumers, but also by other partners who wanted to do business with other Ohio Proud partners.

The program manager related the tactic of the Ohio Food Summit as helping partners be more successful in their businesses by finding potential buyers in the food system. She also talked about working with new businesses as partners to find distributors or retailers to carry their product.

The strategies of the Ohio Proud program were focused on providing the identification for the partners with the Ohio Proud logo. The program would develop
opportunities such as the Ohio Food Summit or booths at other food shows to provide the setting for the partners to find buyers in the food system.

**Similarities and Differences of the Two Programs**

As certification programs, neither the Certified Angus Beef program nor the Ohio Proud program own or sell any product. They were both non-profit organizations with governing boards. The Certified Angus Beef program was governed by the farm and ranch members of the American Angus Association and the Ohio Proud program was governed by the director and administration of the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The programs both owned their name and logo and had protections in place for only licensed partners to be able to use the names or logos.

On the surface, the two certification programs seemed different since the Certified Angus Beef program was focused on a branded beef product and the Ohio Proud program represented a variety of commodity-based agriculture products as well as processed food and agricultural products.

However, the mission of the two programs was strikingly similar. The mission of the Certified Angus Beef was to increase premiums Angus producers received for cattle that met the specifications for the brand. The communication strategies for the program had focused on developing the relationship with buyers in the food system to create demand for high quality beef products with Angus heritage. The demand for these products had resulted in providing premiums back to the Angus producers.

The Ohio Proud program communicated the message of buying local to support Ohio’s economy. Documents on the program’s website identified the purpose of the Ohio
Proud program was to strengthen Ohio’s agriculture economy and to provide jobs through increased economic activity. This message was also communicated with the tactic of the promotional card that listed the reasons to choose Ohio Proud products as supporting local farmers, increasing sales of Ohio companies, providing jobs to Ohioans, and reinvesting in Ohio’s economy.

The mission of both certification programs didn’t stop at identifying product, but included a financial return for the producers of the product. The Certified Angus Beef program did not directly pay Angus producers for their cattle, but created a demand for cattle with Angus-heritage that met the ten specifications to drive producer premiums. Likewise, the Ohio Proud program would be viewed as successful if demand for agriculture products from Ohio increased from the program’s strategies.

Both certification programs were focused on their licensees and partners for communication strategies, messages, and tactics. The strategies were focused on helping the licensees and partners become more successful in their marketing with the support of the program’s name and logo.

However, these strategies were also where the programs were different. The licensees identified in this study by the Certified Angus Beef program were buyers in the food system as food-service distributors and retailers. The communication strategies focused on marketing the Certified Angus Beef brand, but by benefiting the individual licensees and their businesses. The Certified Angus Beef program developed the value chain for the producers by creating the demand and infrastructure within the food buyer system.
The Ohio Proud program was also active in the food system through the affiliate members of distributors, retailers, and restaurants; however, the Ohio Proud program was not actively developing the distributor network in advance of the partner’s entry into the food system. The program had been creating the setting for partners to enter through the food shows, searchable database, and logo usage; but the individual growers or producers needed to develop the relationship for their individual product.

Another difference between the two certification programs was their age. The Certified Angus Beef program was developed in 1978 whereas the Ohio Proud program was started 15 years later in 1993. This span could account for the difference in the development of the relationships as the Andersen (2001) model for building relationships between buyers and sellers contained a time element. The next section of this chapter explored the difference of the two certification program in the context of Andersen’s (2001) model and corresponding communication theories.

**Applying the Relationship-Building Model**

The relationship of buyers and sellers was discussed in Chapter 2 of this paper in regard to the relational exchange where the seller and buyer invest time and communications to develop the relationship (Dwyer et al., 1987). This idea was developed into a model (Figure 24) by Andersen (2001) to incorporate the evolution of communication strategies between the seller and buyer in the relationship-building process.

The model showed three phases of the relationship-building process: pre-relationship, negotiation, and relationship development. The corresponding
communication tasks, according to Andersen (2001), were awareness, persuasion, and commitment.

In Chapter 2, this study explored the possibility that the pre-relationship phase was the application of information theory (Shannon & Weaver, 1949) which focused on a single transmission of a message. Andersen’s model (2001) showed the communication direction as unidirectional, from the seller to the buyer which is in keeping with information theory. One of the applications of the theory was determining the message that needs to be sent. The message would more likely to be received if an intimate link existed between the source and destination through a shared set of messages before the message was chosen and sent (Finn & Roberts, 1984).

The communications strategies, messages, and tactics of the Ohio Proud program would align with the pre-relationship phase as depicted by Andersen (2001). He referred to the communication strategies as awareness, and applying the information theory single transmission to the relationship, the Ohio Proud program’s strategies were awareness-driven.

The Ohio Proud program communication strategy of having partners use the logo and Ohio Proud name to identify their product and company is unidirectional from the seller to the buyer. This communication would create awareness for the seller, but does not establish a long-term relationship with the buyer.

However, the information theory denotes the need for a relationship to exist before the message so there is familiarity between the sender and receiver. This ensured a message would be transmitted and not overcome with noise. The Ohio Proud program
strategy of using the Ohio Proud logo provided this familiarity since the logo was recognized and identified with the tagline of Made in Ohio, Grown in Ohio. When a partner began the first step in the relationship with a buyer there is already an awareness developed with the Ohio Proud logo. This helped the message to be received by the buyer.

With the strategies, messages, and tactics developed by the Ohio Proud program, the partners were able to begin the relationship process because the program had created the awareness with potential buyers in the food system that recognized the logo and the message of locally grown or produced products. This put the Ohio Proud program’s communication strategies in the pre-relationship phase.

The next step in the relationship-building model developed by Andersen (2001) is the negotiation phase, with persuasion as the communication strategy. In Chapter 2 of this study, the information-processing theory was presented as applicable to the negotiation phase of the relationship-building process. The communication became bidirectional, so there was dialogue between the seller and buyer at this point. The communication strategies focused on creating consensus and fostering a more productive and beneficial relationship (Smith, 2009).

For the Ohio Proud program to continue helping their partners develop seller and buyer relationships, the program would need to become involved in the distribution and buying relationships for the products. The program has begun this with food shows and other setting to create the awareness for the partners to start this relationship. However, the negotiation phase of the relationship-building process, if undertaken by the
certification program, would need bidirectional communication strategies. The program would need to be more actively involved in working with the distribution and buyer side, helping partners enter the food system with a more developed infrastructure and relationship with the potential buyers.

The third phase of the relationship-building process for buyers and sellers is the relationship phase with the communication strategy of commitment. This is where the Certified Angus Beef program strategic communications were focused. The licensees were the buyers in the food system and the program had created a relationship where the program is helping the buyers to improve their business by purchasing the product. In Chapter 2, contingency theory was proposed as applicable in this phase of the relationship because the communication is interdependent. The theory was applied to the organization being able to communicate in its environment. The environment for the organization could be its publics, its customers, or its internal organization.

The Certified Angus Beef program’s strategies were focused on the environment their licensees were operating within. The strategy of developing messages and tactics for the licensees to use to sell against competitors was contingency theory where the organization strives to communicate and operate in its reality – which includes competition.

Comparing and contrasting the Ohio Proud program and the Certified Angus Beef program communication strategies couldn’t be done unilaterally because the certification program were at two separate ends of the relationship-building process for buyers and sellers. The Ohio Proud program was at the pre-relationship phase with awareness
communication strategies and the Certified Angus Beef program was at the relationship-development phase where there was commitment from both the buyer and seller. The communication strategies used by the Ohio Proud program were unidirectional and more closely aligned with the information theory of communication. The messages developed by the Ohio Proud program were sent to the receiver, but the focus was on the message and delivery without prompting for feedback.

The communication strategies used by the Certified Angus Beef Program were more flexible and bidirectional which are reflected more in contingency theory. The messages and delivery were adjusted to meet the changing environment for not only the certification program, but in response of the changing environment for their licensees.

In Andersen’s model (2001), there was a time element where time was needed to move through the three phases. The Ohio Proud program had not been in the marketplace as long as the Certified Angus Beef program and there was no indication on the amount of time needed to move through the phases in Andersen’s (2001) model. This could be an area of further research by looking at other programs and seeing if there is a relationship between the amount of time for a certification to have existed and the progression through the relationship-building communication model.

**Conclusion**

The relationship-building communication model developed by Andersen (2001) with the extension of applied communication theories could be used for accessing communication strategies of certification programs. The model could be used for programs to not only access the focus of their current communication strategies, but the
model could provide framework for planning strategic communications to reach potential buyers in the food system.

The Ohio Proud program had communication strategies that were in the awareness, or pre-relationship, phase of the relationship-building process. The Ohio Proud program had started the process of creating an entry point for growers in the relationship-building communication model. However, advancing to the next step of the model was left to the individual farmer, grower, or processor.

The Ohio Proud program could continue the relationship-building with the potential buyers with communication strategies that would help pull the program partners to the next phase of the model.

The Certified Angus Beef program has developed the relationships and a value chain with potential buyers to pull the farmer’s product through the food system. The farmer’s entry into the value chain is to create a product that meets the program’s ten standards. The strategic communication that is needed to create these relationships in the value chain has already been undertaken by the Certified Angus Beef program for the farmer. The Ohio Proud program could benefit their partners by facilitating the communication with the potential buyers to help them move to the next phase of the relationship.

_Agricultural Communication Professionals_

The Andersen (2001) model with the extended theories can be beneficial to practicing agricultural communicators who are working with certification programs or other organizations in the food system. The buyer and seller relationship involves
strategic communications and by assessing the current phase of the program or organizations, the communication professional can create strategies to develop the relationship further.

By implementing the communication theories, the communication professional can develop entry points for farmers and growers into the food system. The resulting strategic communications can help the certification program, or organization to develop a value chain for an increasing number of commodities to benefit small and medium-size farmers.

For agricultural communication professionals, the challenge is to evaluate the communications within the buyer and seller relationship. The certification programs can provide the communication strategies that will help the farmer enter into the relationship. However, the communication professional needs to realize he or she may be required to have an active role in the relationship communication for the farmer to be successful. If the certification program simply gives the farmer the tools for communicating, but does not help with the execution of the communication strategy, the relationship building process many not happen easily, quickly, or progress to the next step. The model indicates the relationship-building process contains multiple steps, and each step requires a different communication approach. The agricultural communications professional is needed by the agriculture industry, especially certification programs, to facilitate the relationship-building process through the different phases.
Future Research

The application of research from the non-agricultural manufacturer supply relationships could be explored for more agricultural products. As agriculture marketing begins to look at value chains and other ways to differentiate products from the commodity market, researching the communications for these buyer and seller relationships would be beneficial for the growers.

This study only looked at two certification program. There are several other certification programs that have been developed, including other programs that are state-specific like Ohio Proud program or product-specific like the Certified Angus Beef program. While research has looked at some of these programs based on the certification criteria or the monetary return to the grower or producer, there is little research on the communications process to build the relationships in the food system for participants in the certification program. More research in the area of communications within the food system would be beneficial for agriculture, especially as consumers are looking for differentiation amongst food products.
References


Clark, J. K., Inwood, S. & Sharp, J.S., (2011) *Scaling-up Connections between Regional Ohio Specialty Crop Producers and Local Markets: Distribution as the Missing Link*. Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Developmental Economics, Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University


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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What distributors involved with retail or food service do you try to reach with messages about your certified product?
2. How would you describe this audience?
3. How do you find out information about this audience?
4. What are the communication strategies that you use to reach these distributors?
   a. Are there differences in the strategies among different distributors, such as food service or retail?
      i. If so, how do you address these differences?
   b. Are there some strategies that have been more successful than others?
      i. What are those strategies?
5. What are some specific communication messages that you currently use for these distributors?
   a. How does the message meet needs of these distributors?
   b. Have the messages changed over time?
   c. What messages have been used in the past?
6. What tactics or methods do you use to get communication messages to your audiences?
   a. Are there different tactics used for the different distributors?
   b. What tactics have been the most successful with distributors?
   c. Are there tactics that are used differently with the different specific products from the certification program?
7. Do you think the distributors use your communication messages to sell the certified product to their customers?
   a. What tactics do they use to get the communication message to their prospective customers?
   b. What makes these messages beneficial to reach their audience?
   c. Do you encourage them to use your messages?
i. If so, what tactics do you encourage them to use with your communication messages?

d. What methods or tactics do you provide for them to communicate with their audience?

e. Do you see their customers as one of your audiences?
   i. If so, why are they an audience for you?
   ii. What percentage of your communication work is concentrated on this audience?

8. What other audiences are integral to your communication strategies for the certified product?
   a. Why are they part of the strategy for the product
   b. In what ways are the messages to that audience different than the food service and retail distributors?

9. What are the benefits for the producer selling the certified product from the communication strategies?
Appendix B: The Certified Angus Beef Program Food Service Brochure

Front of brochure
Not all Angus are Equal

The Certified Angus Beef® brand is brought to you by generations of cattle producers. These men, women and families are committed to raising superior quality beef. They are members of the American Angus Association® and they own the brand. They proudly deliver you the best, bite after bite.

www.certifiedangusbeef.com

Angus beef at its best

Inside brochure - first panel
Marbling is the key to flavor

- Blood flows to muscle through the fat
- Marbling is the key to flavor
- USDA Choice offers 37% Small Marbling
- USDA Select offers 40% Small Marbling
- USDA Prime offers 5% Modest Marbling
- USDA Prime, Choice and Select Beef Standards

- Beef must pass U.S. standards to qualify
- Within the Choice grade, there's a range of marbling, from Modest to Large, with 15% having Small marbling
- The majority of USDA Choice knocks out streak, for exceptional juiciness and flavor.
Maturity
★ Beef harvested at the right time will have superior:
✓ Color
✓ Tenderness
✓ Texture
✓ Firmness

★ Certified Angus Beef® brand selects only “A” maturity — the most desired beef classification, which is derived from cattle harvested younger than approximately 30 months of age.*

★ USDA Prime and Choice can include “B” maturity cattle harvested at 30–42 months of age.*

* United States Standards for Grades of Slaughter Cattle, effective Jan. 1, 1997.

Consistent Sizing
★ Limiting variation in ribeye size and eliminating extremely heavy subprimals and excessive fat is important to improving product consistency. The Certified Angus Beef® brand requires:
✓ 10- to 16-square-inch ribeye area
✓ Less than 1,000-pound hot carcass weight
✓ Less than 1-inch fat thickness

★ Steaks will be thicker and more uniform in size.
★ Plate presentations will be more consistent for every customer.

Quality Appearance and Assured Tenderness
★ Superior muscling delivers uniform plate presentations.
★ Not allowing capillary ruptures or dark cutters ensures consistent flavor and appearance.
★ Safeguarding against significant Brahman cattle-influence also ensures tenderness.

Science-based Specifications
Angus-influenced, predominantly (51%) solid black hair coat or AngusSource® enrolled cattle must pass 10 product specifications to qualify for the Certified Angus Beef® brand. To ensure completely unbiased approval, cattle are evaluated by the USDA, not in-house graders or plant employees. In Canada, brand standards are evaluated by the Canadian Beef Grading Agency.
You don’t get a second chance to impress your guests

Superb service and fabulous flavor will appeal to new customers and keep regulars coming back for more.

Grades do count!
Reduce your risk of offering a slightly tough or tougher steak.

Certified Angus Beef® Brand 1 in 50

USDA Choice 1 in 13

USDA Select 1 in 6

Source: Oklahoma State University, 2004 Journal of Animal Science

The Certified Angus Beef® brand reduces the odds of a tough steak by nearly 300% over USDA Choice.
The Certified Angus Beef® brand...your product solution

- The highest quality beef with the greatest availability
- Takes the confusion out of buying beef
- Gives you an advantage over the competition
- Ensures product integrity and consistency in every box with the industry's most extensive tracking system
- The category leader in quality, availability, market share, customer recognition and marketing support

Exceeding standards for USDA Prime, Choice and Select graded beef.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certified Angus Beef® brand 10 science-based specifications</th>
<th>USDA Prime, Choice and Select 2 specifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marbling – the key to flavor</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Modest or higher marbling</td>
<td>Various marbling specifications for each grade. USDA Select and the majority of USDA Choice do not contain enough marbling to qualify for the Certified Angus Beef® brand (See pyramid).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Medium or fine marbling texture</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maturity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &quot;A&quot; maturity for each, lean and skeletal characteristics—cattle harvested younger than approximately 30 months of age</td>
<td>Can include both &quot;A&quot; and &quot;B&quot; maturity cattle. &quot;B&quot; maturity are cattle harvested at approximately 30-42 months of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consistent sizing ensures thicker steaks and consistent plate presentation for each customer</strong></td>
<td>Variation in product size and plate presentation. Accepts all ranges of ribeye and carcase weight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 10- to 16-square-inch ribeye area</td>
<td>No specification, accepts industry extremes of 7- to 20-square-inch ribeye area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Less than 1,000-pound hot carcase weight</td>
<td>No specification, may include large carcasses and industry extremes of 1,250-pound hot carcase weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Less than 1-inch fat thickness</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Appearance and Tenderness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Superior muscling restricts influence of dairy cattle</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Practically free of capillary rupture ensures quality appearance</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 No dark cutters ensures consistent appearance and flavor</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 No neck hump exceeding 2 inches safeguards against Brahman-influenced cattle which have more variation in tenderness</td>
<td>No specification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Licensing is easy!

★ Ask for complete details on how you can capitalize on the Certified Angus Beef® brand items you are serving

The Certified Angus Beef® brand name, logo, and design are service marks of Certified Angus Beef® LLC. © 2011 All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A. 11-106-27/1. 5118

Back of brochure

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Appendix C: The Certified Angus Beef Program Website

Front page of licensee web area

Marketing web page

Annual conference web page
Advertising tools: video library webpage

Advertising tools: radio grilling tips webpage

Advertising tools - taste the difference campaign: top half of webpage

Advertising tools - taste the difference campaign: bottom half of webpage
Training and education: waitstaff training

Fact sheets: top half of webpage

Fact sheets: bottom half of webpage

Point of sale materials: top of webpage

Fact sheets: top half of webpage
Point of sale materials: middle of webpage

Main web area: wholesale distributor database webpage

Point of sale materials: bottom of webpage

Main area - prospective licensees webpage

Main area - online purchase webpage
Appendix D: The Ohio Proud Program Documents

Produce Harvest Calendar
Produce harvest calendar inside
Partner Benefits

- Brand Your Products as Local
- Satisfy Consumer Demand
- Build Customer Awareness & Loyalty
- Point-of-Purchase Materials
- Greater Access to Ohio Retailers
- Networking & Educational Opportunities

OhioProud.org

Choose Ohio Proud

- Buy Local Products
- Support Your Local Farmers
- Increase Sales of Ohio Companies
- Provide Jobs to Ohioans
- Reinvest in Ohio’s Economy

OhioProud.org

Partner benefits promotion cards
Choose Ohio Proud promotional card
Appendix E: The Ohio Proud Program Webpages

Ohio Proud home: top half of webpage

Ohio Proud home: bottom half of webpage

Partner database webpage

Main area - affiliate member: top half of webpage
Main area – affiliate member: bottom half of webpage

Partner area - welcome webpage

Main area - domestic marketing: top half of webpage

Partner area - compliance webpage

Main area - domestic marketing: bottom half of webpage

Partner area - downloads and resources webpage
OHIO PROUD
Made in Ohio • Grown in Ohio

What is Ohio Proud?
Ohio Proud is the marketing program of the Ohio Department of Agriculture that promotes food and agricultural products which are made and grown in Ohio.

Mission:
To create and return pride by marketing Ohio’s food and agricultural industries.

Objective:
To increase in-state sales of Ohio food and agricultural products.

Goals:
- Consumer Promotion
- Marketing Services
- New Market Access & Development

New Program Features:
- A new logo and tagline
- A brand new interactive website coming May 2008
- A reduced membership fee
- Affiliate members — a new member category
- Point-of-Purchase materials
- Mobile Chef Wagon

Why Buy OHIO PROUD?
Every dollar spent on Ohio Proud products remains in the state’s economy. Support local farmers, food processors, and your community by purchasing Ohio Proud products.

Benefits

Most Consumer Preference
Whether it’s on a retail shelf or a restaurant menu, the Ohio Proud logo gives consumers an easy way to identify those products that are made and grown in Ohio.

- 95% of Ohio consumers surveyed say they prefer to buy Ohio products over a national brand.

- 90% of those surveyed are willing to pay up to $0.50 more for an Ohio product.

Point-of-Purchase Material Feature
The Ohio Department of Agriculture will provide signage, decals and banners to Ohio Proud partners and Affiliate Members.

Build Consumer Awareness & Customer Loyalty
Advertising promotes the Ohio Proud logo and increases consumer awareness of the program. Those surveyed purchase Ohio products because they believe the products are fresher, healthier and provide jobs and economic support to Ohio’s farmers and small businesses.

How to Apply
- Call (800) 467-7683 or visit www ohio proud org to download your application and agreement.
- Submit your $25 annual membership fee to the Ohio Proud program, 6995 E. Main Street, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068.
Ohio Proud Van Request Form

Ohio Proud is a logo identification program developed by the Ohio Department of Agriculture to help consumers easily recognize food and agriculture products that are made and grown in Ohio. The program is designed to support Ohio agriculture. The purpose of Ohio Proud is:

• to encourage consumption of raw and processed products through consumer awareness
• to strengthen Ohio's agriculture economy
• to provide jobs through increased economic activity

The Ohio Proud van travels throughout the state attending agricultural related events. An Ohio Proud product display and giveaways are available with any van appearance. Giveaways are also available through request if the Ohio Proud van is unable to attend your event. Van appearances are free and scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information contact Lori Panda at 1-800-IM PROUD (800-467-7683), or at panda@agri.ohio.gov

Event Name: ___________________________ Event Dates: ___________________________

Please indicate the best day to attend:
First Choice: ________________________
Second Choice ________________________
Third Choice _________________________

Best hours for attendance: ________________________
Contact Name: _________________________
Address: ________________________________

City: ___________ Zip: ___________
Phone: ___________ Fax: ___________

*Please include directions to the event from Columbus, OH
**If the event is an agricultural fair, please include entrance gate

Has the Ohio Proud van been displayed at your event in the past?
(Circle One)
Yes No

Can the Ohio Proud Van participate in your parade?
(Circle One)
Yes No

Date of parade: ______________________

Please return to: Lori Panda • Ohio Department of Agriculture • 5995 East Main Street • Reynoldsburg, OH 43068
Seven Ways You Can Maximize Your Ohio Proud Affiliation

1. Include Ohio Proud in Your Public Relations Efforts
   Increased awareness of the Ohio Proud name and logo will ultimately lead to increased demand for your Ohio Proud products. Every time you mention your company’s Ohio Proud affiliation, you help to raise consumer awareness of Ohio Proud, thereby enhancing the value of the program for all licensed Ohio Proud partners.

   So, don’t forget to include Ohio Proud in your company’s public relations efforts. Any time you are interviewed by your local media, profiled in professional and/or trade journals, or featured in publications or public forums—be sure to identify your company as an Ohio Proud partner.

   The resources and ideas in this action pack can help you get the Ohio Proud message out! These materials can be used immediately to generate public visibility, include the following:
   - News release to be sent to local media outlets (newspaper, radio and television)
   - Letter to the editor of your local newspaper
   - Suggestions for angles to use in “pitching” story ideas to local media outlets

   Use this material to tell your local media, community and employees that your company/products are Ohio Proud.

2. Spread the Word About Ohio Proud to Your Employees
   Let your employees know that your company is Ohio Proud! The more they know about Ohio Proud, the more likely they are to become ambassadors for the value of “Buying Ohio Proud.”

   Try these ideas:
   - Include an article about Ohio Proud in your employee newsletter (a sample is attached)
   - Use paycheck stuffers that explain Ohio Proud benefits to consumers (pre-written text and artwork for paycheck stuffers can be obtained by calling 1-800-1M-PROUD)
   - Schedule a presentation about Ohio Proud at employee meetings
   - Incorporate the Ohio Proud logo in your company’s letterhead, business cards, etc.
   - Display an Ohio Proud sign at your company (Stickers are available by calling 1-800-1M-PROUD)

3. Use the Ohio Proud Logo on Your Packaging and in Your Retail Promotions
   Research indicates that Ohio consumers want to purchase products made in Ohio—and using the Ohio Proud logo on your packaging will make it easy for them to locate and buy your products. A 2007 consumer awareness survey showed that 96 percent of those consumers surveyed said they prefer to purchase Ohio products over the national brand. 56% also stated they look at labels when making their purchasing decisions.

   That’s why using the Ohio Proud logo on your product boxes, bags and order fulfillment packaging is a smart business decision! Eye-catching Ohio Proud point-of-sale materials will soon be available on the new and improved Interactive website coming live May 2008. Visit www.ohioproud.org for a complete listing of marketing materials. There’s no better way to capitalize on Ohioans’ preference for Ohio products.

4. Include Ohio Proud in Your Advertising and Marketing
   Are you looking for a competitive edge for your product—a way to help distinguish your product from the competition? Incorporating Ohio Proud into your advertising and marketing efforts may be just what you need. Whenever possible, use the Ohio Proud name and logo in the following advertising and marketing tools:

   - Direct mail pieces
   - Website link
   - Product brochures
   - Television commercials
   - Print ads

   SUCCESS STORY: A number of Ohio Proud partners, including Dutch Creek Foods (Sugar Creek), Mill Creek Gardens (Canton), and Fruit Growers Marketing Association (Newcomerstown), feature the Ohio Proud name and logo in their advertising.
5. Use the Ohio Proud Van to Promote Your Ohio Proud Membership

Schedule the Ohio Proud van at your next company function. The van travels around Ohio to educate consumers about Ohio Proud products at county fairs, festivals, trade shows, and retail events. To determine availability or to request a van appearance at one of your company functions, call 1-800-IM-PROUD. Functions might include:

- Grand openings
- Local parades
- Retail promotions
- School visits
- Trade show exhibits
- Company picnics or outings
- Community fairs and festivals
- Special events hosted by your company

SUCCESS STORY: Shiearer's Foods of Brewster, which produces potato chips and other snack items, has reported a 12 percent sales increase since becoming a licensed Ohio Proud partner. By using the Ohio Proud van for promotional purposes, Shiearer's obtained a contract with a major retail chain that previously was not selling the company's products.

6. Network with Ohio Proud Companies to Develop New Business Opportunities

Ohio Proud partners like to do business with other Ohio Proud partners. For that reason, one very effective business development tactic is to take advantage of every opportunity for networking with other licensed Ohio Proud partners. Don't forget to display signage identifying your company as an Ohio Proud partner while exhibiting at trade shows and other events. You'll make it easier for potential new business partners to identify your company as Ohio Proud.

You can also put Ohio Proud to work for you by selling the value of an Ohio Proud affiliation to your retailers, wholesalers, and distributors. Many Ohio retailers would rather sell Ohio-made products than out-of-state products, so enlist the help of your wholesalers and distributors in letting retailers know you are a licensed Ohio Proud partner.

SUCCESS STORY: Networking resulted in Ohio Proud partners Bob Evans and Cooper Farms striking up a business deal in which Cooper Farms sells turkey to Bob Evans to serve in their restaurants.

7. Participate in the Exhibits, Trade Shows and Other Value-Added Marketing Ventures Offered

Ohio Proud partners are frequently offered special marketing opportunities to generate new business leads and sales by participating in trade shows, exhibits, seminars, and other special promotions, often at discounted rates. Domestic marketing events and opportunities offered to Ohio Proud partners are found at www.ohioproud.org.

To get the most out of your Ohio Proud membership, participate in as many of these marketing ventures as possible. Call 1-800-IM-PROUD for details on all the great marketing tools available in coming months.

SUCCESS STORY: While exhibiting in the Ohio Proud pavilion at the Fabulous Food Show (Cleveland), partner Cucina Pitrelli (Cincinnati) sampled Orlando Baking Company's (Cleveland) dinner rolls and began purchasing them for his restaurant. These two partners would have never met if they didn't exhibit at this show.
Sample Letter-to-the-Editor

To the Editor:

I am proud to announce that [company name] has recently become a licensed partner in the Ohio Department of Agriculture's "Ohio Proud program".

Ohio Proud is a marketing program that works to increase awareness of agricultural and food products that are raised, grown or processed right here in Ohio. Ohio Proud companies employ more than 50,000 Ohioans. By promoting Ohio companies and locally produced goods, Ohio Proud helps to protect jobs and to strengthen state and local economies.

Ohio Proud also provides a valuable consumer service. Retailers throughout Ohio are displaying the distinctive Ohio Proud logo to make it easier for shoppers to identify licensed Ohio Proud products. Why is this important? In a statewide survey of Ohio consumers, 98 percent stated that if cost and quality are the same, they prefer to purchase Ohio products over the national brand.

We at [company name] are excited about our new Ohio Proud membership, and we encourage other local food and agriculture companies to join the Ohio Proud team.

Consumers, who want more information about Ohio Proud products, or companies interested in joining Ohio Proud, should call 1-800-IM-PROUD. Or call us here at [Company name], and we will be happy to tell you more about the benefits of being Ohio Proud.

Sincerely,

[Name, Company, Address, Phone Number, Website]
SAMPLE COMPANY INTERNAL NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

(Company) is proud to announce that it has become an Ohio Proud partner. Ohio Proud is the Ohio Department of Agriculture’s marketing program that promotes food and agricultural products which are made and grown in Ohio.

Ohio Proud currently has over 200 companies in most Ohio counties who are licensed Ohio Proud partners. These companies employ more than 50,000 Ohioans.

Why did (company) join Ohio Proud? It’s simple; we believe it will help improve the company’s bottom line. In a recent statewide poll, 98 percent of Ohio consumers stated that if cost and quality are the same, they prefer to purchase Ohio products rather than products from the out-of-state competitors. Being an officially licensed Ohio Proud company will help us reach and appeal to those consumers.

As an Ohio Proud partner, we will enjoy numerous benefits. We can use the Ohio Proud logo on our packaging, in our advertising, and in our point-of-purchase displays. We will be able to network with other Ohio Proud partners — valuable contacts that can lead to new customers for our products.

Many Ohio Proud companies have experienced increased sales as a result of their Ohio Proud membership. We believe Ohio Proud has the potential to produce similar results for our company. So, tell your friends that you work for an Ohio Proud company and remind them that buying Ohio-made products keeps revenues right here in (name of city), strengthening the job security of our family members, our friends, and our neighbors.
# Promotional Materials Order Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity/Size</th>
<th>Unit Price</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Produce Stickers (BW)</td>
<td>5&quot; round – 2500/roll</td>
<td>$1.00/unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Package Stickers (Color)</td>
<td>1&quot; round – 1000/roll</td>
<td>$0.50/unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Package Stickers (Color)</td>
<td>1 1/2&quot; round – 500/roll</td>
<td>$0.50/unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window Decals (Color)</td>
<td>8&quot; round</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price Cards (Color)</td>
<td>3x5&quot; – 200/package</td>
<td>$16/package</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4x6&quot; – 100/package</td>
<td>$9/package</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11x17&quot; – 50/package</td>
<td>$5/package</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Proud Banner (Color)</td>
<td>2'x4'</td>
<td>$20/banner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Proud Napkins 5x5&quot; (Color)</td>
<td>240/sleeve</td>
<td>$0.00/sleeve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Proud Button</td>
<td>2 1/2&quot; round</td>
<td>$1.00/each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Proud Lapel Pin</td>
<td>1&quot; round</td>
<td>$1.50/each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Proud T-shirt (Iron transfer - Yellow)</td>
<td></td>
<td>$12 each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$13 for 2XL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men's Ohio Proud Polo Embroidered</td>
<td>White: ___ S ___ M ___ L ___ XL ___ 2XL</td>
<td>$30 each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$32 for 2XL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Light Khaki: ___ S ___ M ___ L ___ XL ___ 2XL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Ohio Proud Polo Embroidered</td>
<td>White: ___ S ___ M ___ L ___ XL ___ 2XL</td>
<td>$30 each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$32 for 2XL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Light Khaki: ___ S ___ M ___ L ___ XL ___ 2XL</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycled brown paper Ohio Proud Bags</td>
<td>400 per bundle</td>
<td>$55/bundle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ohio Proud** items are usually shipped within 2-3 weeks. You will be notified of any back-ordered items. Please allow 4-6 weeks for major orders. If orders are needed for special occasions, please allow ample time.

Company Name: ___________________________________________  Contact Name: ___________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________

City: __________________________ State: ___________ ZIP: ___________

**Order total**

Tax 8.75%

Shipping

**Partner area - Promotional materials order form pdf**
Connections

A Quarterly Newsletter Published by the Ohio Department of Agriculture

The Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio Farm Bureau, Ohio State Fair, and the Buckeye State's agricultural commodity groups are again sponsoring the "Agriculture is Cool!" program at the Ohio State Fair. Complete with exciting interactive stations like the "Field to Fork" exhibit, "Agriculture is Cool!" is a great way to learn about Ohio agriculture.

Ag is Cool for Teachers

Win a $2,500 grant to use in your classroom! Fourth grade teachers can print a unique free admission coupon and visit the Ag is Cool stations at the Ohio State Fair (July 26 - Aug. 5).

Upcoming Events

Ohio State Fair, Columbus
July 25 - August 5
The Celebrate Local store will be coordinating Ohio Proud products at the 2012 Ohio State Fair. Contact Celebrate Local at 614-245-0241 to reserve your space!

Easton Fall Harvest, Columbus, September 8
This fall event at the Easton Town Square is open only to Ohio Proud partners. Vendors have the opportunity to sample and sell at Easton. Reserve your space today by contacting Lori Panda at panda@agri.ohio.gov. Cost to participate is $25.

Ohio Proud in the News

Lori Panda recently talked "Ohio Proud!" with Brownfield Ag News. Visit the attached link to hear what she had to say: http://brownfieldagnews.com/category/featured/

Free Public Tour Series Offered

The Ohio Ecological Food & Farm Association (OEFFA) has announced their 2012 farm tours and workshop series. Some featured tours are listed below. For additional information and a complete list of all farm tours, visit www.oeffa.org/oeffa/pdfs/farmtour2012.pdf

- Produce Auctions & Local Food Web Tour, (September 14) – Carriage House Farm, North Bend, www.carriagehousefarmcilc.com (This is an Ohio Proud partner)
Fabulous Food Show

This show was held in Cleveland on April 28 & 29 and focused on spring and summer patios, furniture, food and cooking demos featuring Food Network Chets. Show Management coordinated a section of Ohio Proud companies who said the Saturday attendance was heavier than Sunday. One Ohio Proud Partner who exhibited at the show was very pleased as she gained two new retailers who visited her booth on Sunday! Mom’s Gourmet (Cleveland) products will be found on the store shelves of Gibb’s Butcher Block (Columbia Station) and Surf N Turf (Tiffin). Mom’s Gourmet has a line of unique spice rub blends and a very good condiment, Mom’s Whiskey BBQ Sauce. Congratulations, Mom’s Gourmet!

New Ohio Proud Partners

We would like to welcome the following companies that have recently joined the program. Ohio Proud currently has 425 partners.

- Chocolates by Erin (Massillon)
- Dusty Acres (Portland)
- Fresh Harvest Farm (Richwood)
- Hen Run Farm (Mansville)
- HyR BRIX Fertilizer (Delaware)
- IL Caso Foods, LLC (Youngstown)
- Joe’s Passion Bakes (Cincinnati)
- Spicy Rooster BBQ Company (Huber Heights)
- Summer Thyme Farm (Marysville)
- Amigís Salsa (Rawson)
- Marywood Farm (St. Louisville)
- Mike-sell’s Snack Food Company (Dayton)
- Ready Fill, Foods, LLP (Columbus)
- Sweets & Savory Creations (Canton)
- The Good Frank (Columbus)

Welcome, Ohio Proud Interns

Join us in welcoming our summer interns who will be working with Ohio Proud and the Ag is Cool program!

Kristin Kugler is a junior at The Ohio State University where she is studying Agricultural Communications with a minor in Animal Science. Victoria Flott is a senior at The Ohio State University where she is studying Agricultural Business and Applied Economics with a minor in Agricultural Communications.