

Opportunities for Fruit Producers to Connect with Consumers



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Presentation Overview

<https://pollev.com/catherinecam222>

- Behavior theory and current research project
- Local food purchasing:
 - Beliefs and motivations
 - Difficulties with local food
- Direct to consumer sales, health & wellness
 - Pilot project overview
 - Consumer program preferences



Who are you?

Farmer

Extension agent

Extension specialist

Home grower/Hobby farmer

Industry Organization Representative

Other

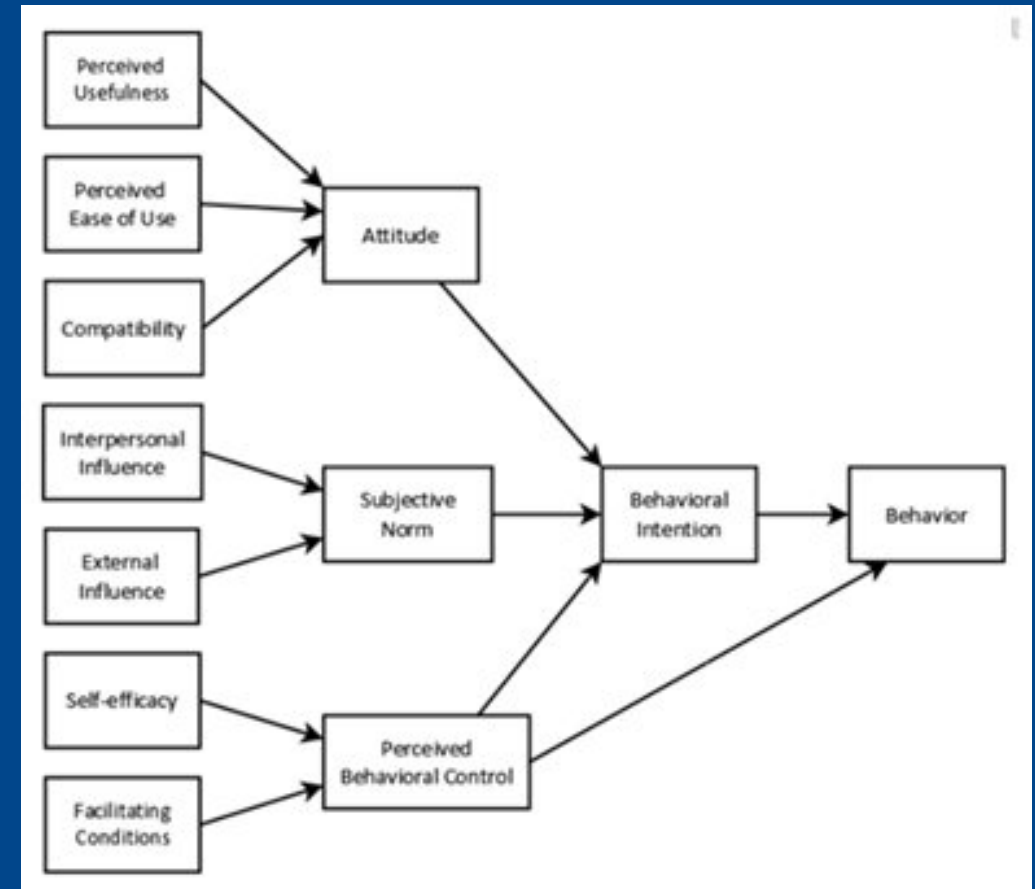
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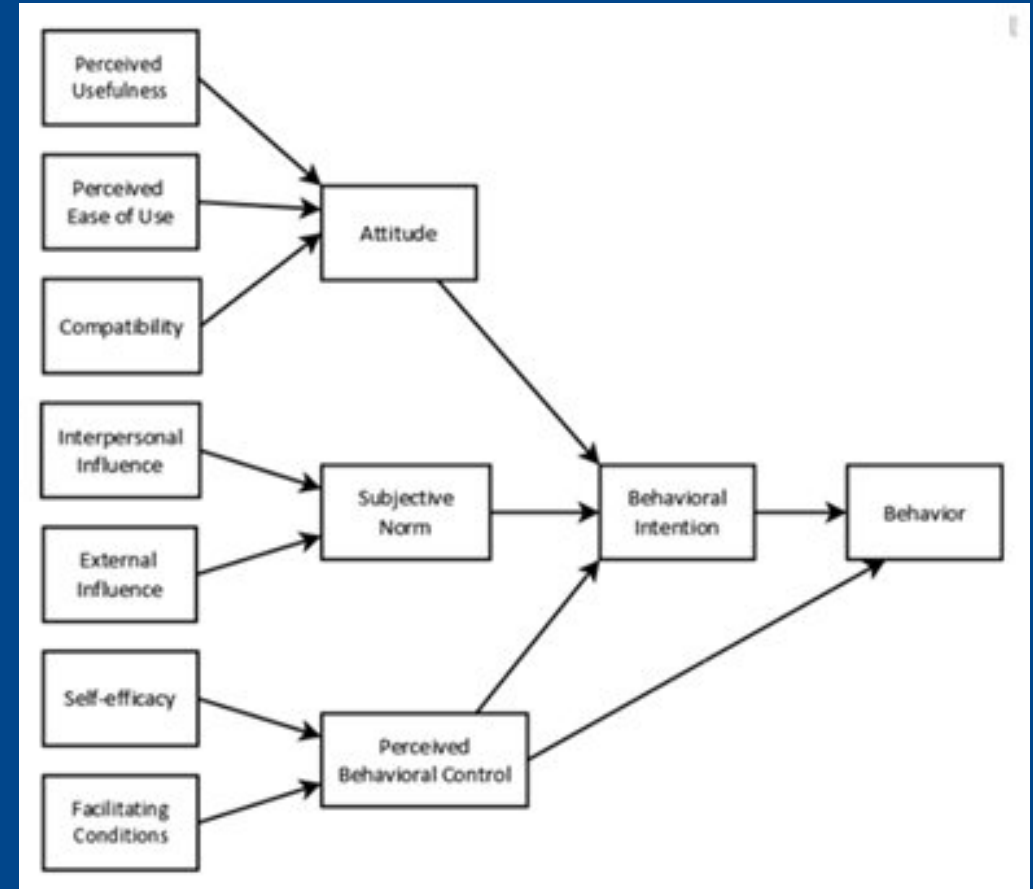
Community Food Systems Research & Extension

- Empirically tested behavioral models helps us motivation and behavior change
- Behavior theory can be used to understand, predict, and influence behavior
- It is useful for:
 - Understanding consumer behavior
 - Developing marketing and communications strategies
 - Guiding program development and implementation



Current Research Projects

- Mixed methods (interviews and surveys) research project on consumers' perspectives on CSAs.
- Developing a local food health & wellness consumer education program and materials
 - Local food/culinary nutrition workshops
 - Conducted surveys of prospective participants on their needs and preferences for the program.



Why do people purchase local food? (One word or hyphenated answers)

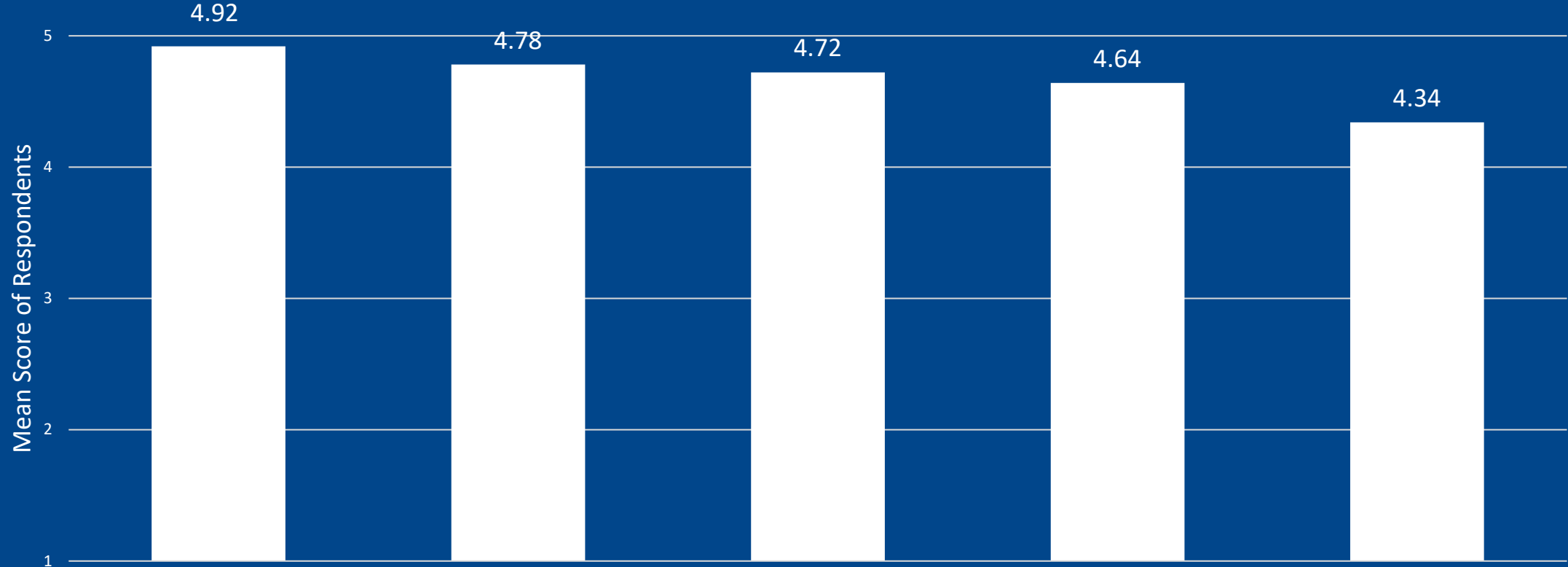
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Local Food Purchasing Attitudes (N=54)

Index Score: $M = 4.68$



Good for farmers

Good

Desirable

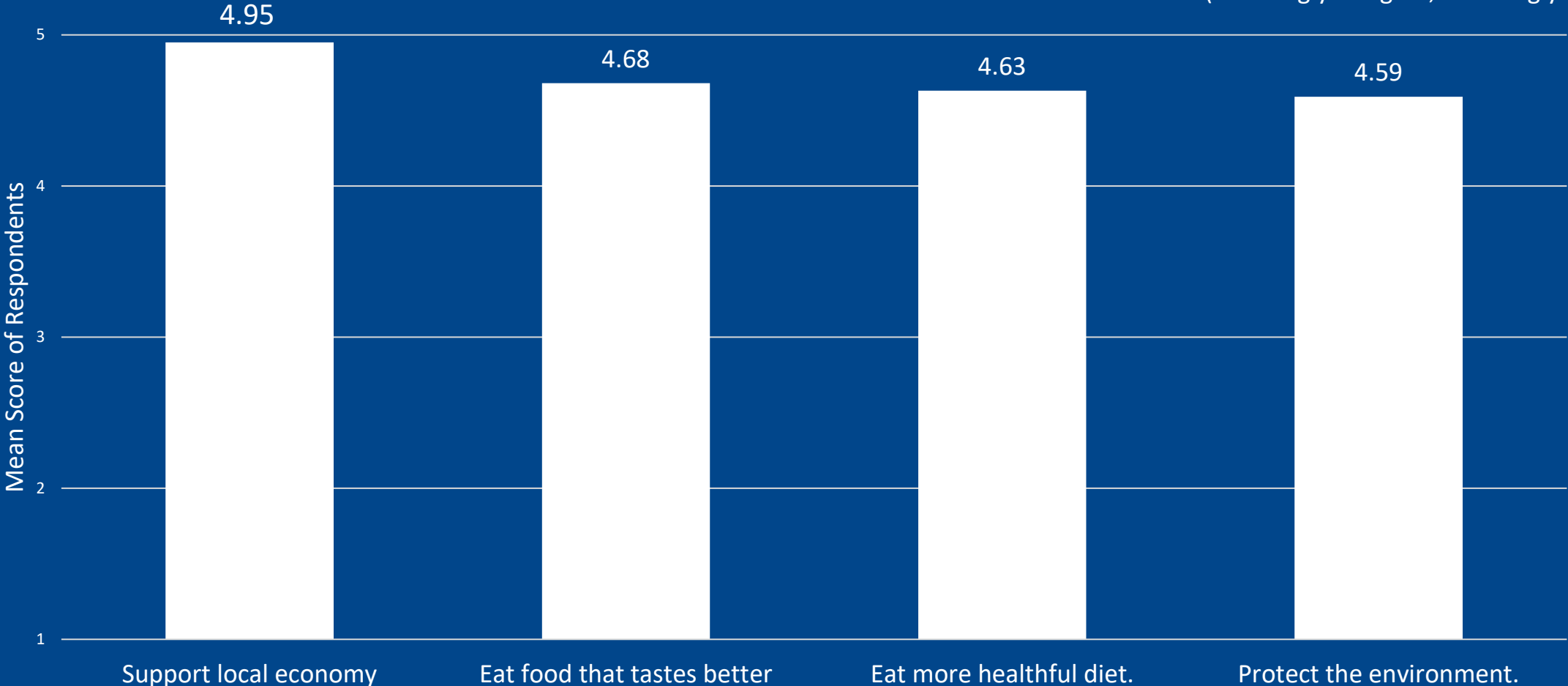
Important

A high priority



Local Food Purchasing Beliefs (N=54)

Responses collected using 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)



Why do Consumers Purchase Local Food?

- It was just learning that there's more nutrition in this box of vegetables, ... if this box of produce has a higher nutritional value it can make up for the price difference.
- So, it's really about local economy, wanting to support eco agriculture. ... Getting food that's been picked sooner, that's been picked closer. It's just healthier.... Things that have to be shipped... take a lot of greenhouse gases.



Why do Consumers Purchase Local Food?

- Supporting local farmers is important. Reducing my carbon footprint so, yeah, the environmental factor and you know the social factor in terms of supporting local businesses, and actually I found that the food was a lot fresher and tasted better.
- I'm doing something better for the environment by eating seasonally and more locally.... Supporting local farmers keeps money the in the community, and the added nutrition that you get from local foods.



Common Consumer Issues with Local Food

- Lack of consumer knowledge about local products
- Lack of customer skill at cooking seasonally
- Lack of time, e.g., to learn about products and find recipes
- Food waste



Direct-to-Consumer Sales Health & Wellness



Direct-to-Consumer Sales, Health & Wellness

- Global “wellness market” of goods and services to support health and wellness is \$1.5 Trillion, with annual growth of 5-10 percent
- Consumers frequently cite healthfulness as a motivation for local food purchasing.
- Florida is one of the top states for farms in urban counties and for farms engaged in direct sales and community-supported agriculture (CSA) models
- Demand for local food is concentrated in urban areas.
- Focusing on urban demand for local food can enhance the markets available to local farms, potentially increasing their financial viability.



CSAs, Health & Wellness

- CSAs promote numerous positive health and nutrition behaviors, including increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, and increased knowledge and self-efficacy in cooking skills
- The CSA model has capitalized on this fact by targeting the unique market opportunity of health and wellness programs.
- Some CSAs partner with insurers or healthcare providers to provide cost-offsets for people to enroll in their CSA programs.
- Classes & member engagement are positively correlated with CSA member satisfaction and retention.



CSAs, Health & Wellness (cont.)

- Including fruit in a CSA share increases the likelihood of members renewing shares.
- People with children at home have a stronger preference for fruit in shares.
- In our interviews of current and former CSA members here in Florida, 94% mentioned that they would like to receive more fruit in their shares.
- While health is a key motivator for consumers, convenience and ease of use is often the primary factor in joining or maintaining a CSA membership.



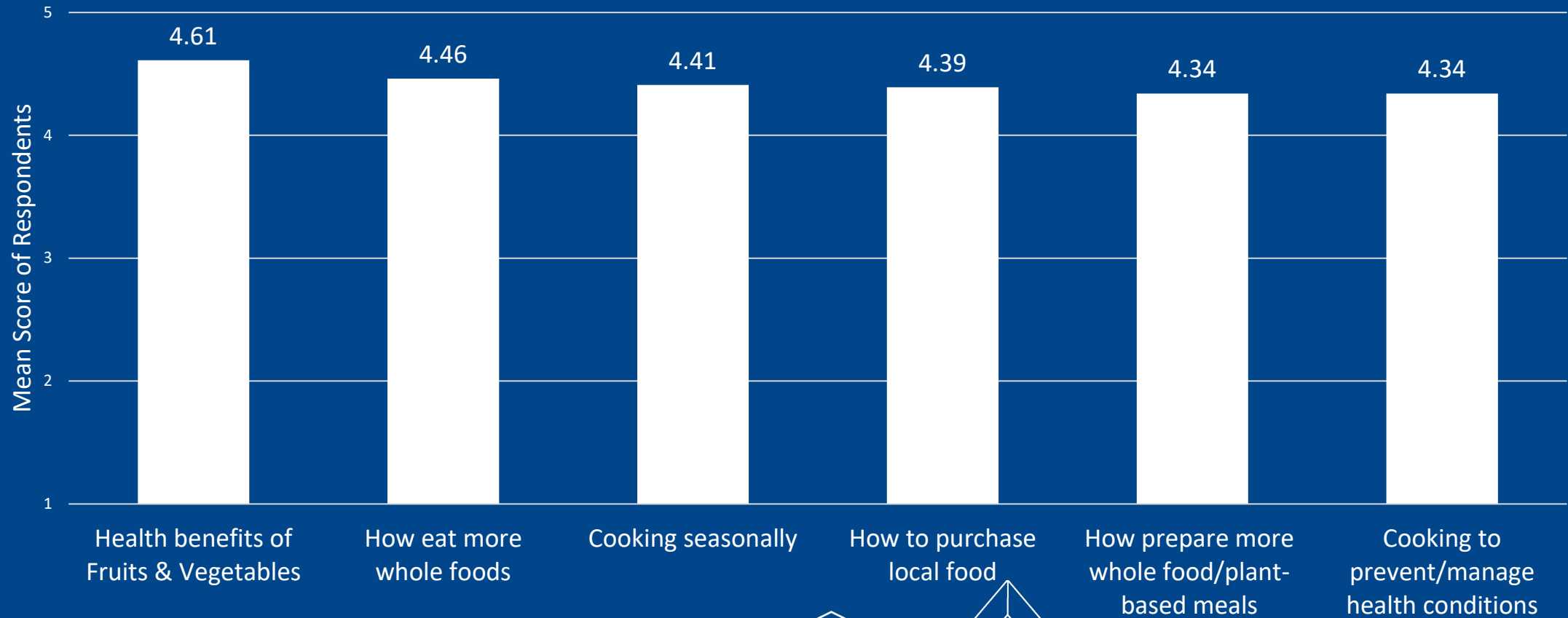
Direct-to-Consumer Health & Wellness Pilot Program

Project purpose:

- Identify consumer preferences and barriers to local food purchasing and CSA membership.
- Develop and pilot test a local food health and wellness program that will be implemented via Extension.
- Develop tools and resources for the program
- Distributing the survey to consumers soon



What do Consumers want to learn? (N=54)



Consumers' Information Preferences

- Would like to know more about the farm - what is happening, what is in season/coming soon, basic details about the farm operation
- Would like to know about unique/local products: What makes them different from what they get at Publix or anywhere else in the US?
- Recipes to support seasonal/healthy cooking
- For CSAs: What is going to be in the box?



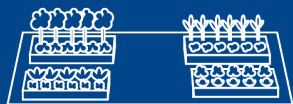
Consumers' Desired Program Format

Program format (n=53)

- In person 39.6%
- Hybrid 37.7%
- No Preference 11.3%
- Online (only) 11.3%

Frequency (n=54)

- Every two weeks 55.6%
- Every week 22.2%
- Once a month 22.2%



In-person Program Time Preference (n=52)

In-person time preference

- Weekday evenings 38.4%
- Weekday lunchtimes 23.1%
- Weekday mornings 19.2%
- Weekend mornings 13.4%
- Weekend afternoons 5.8%



Consumers' Online Program Preferences (N=54)

Online Format

- Live, real-time interactive sessions that are recorded, so you can watch later 44.4%
- Recorded videos that you can watch at any time 33.3%
- Live, real-time interactive sessions 22.0%

Online time

- Weekday evenings 35.2%
- Weekday lunchtimes 33.3%
- Weekday mornings 16.7%
- Weekend afternoons 7.4%
- Weekend mornings 7.4%

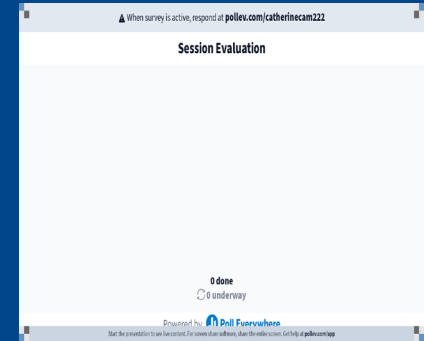


Take-away Points

- You can leverage consumers' beliefs and attitudes to create targeted marketing, communications, and educational programs.
- Health & wellness motivates consumers to purchase local food.
- People will be more likely to try something new if they understand the benefits and feel like it will be easy to do.
 - Providing information and resources can help!
- Connect with me if you are interested in my research or the tools I'm developing!



Thank you!



Questions or feedback:

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