

A Taste for Quality

Angus Foundation-funded research uncovers positive palatability ratings for branded beef.

by **Carrie Horsley**

With high beef prices come high expectations for a quality eating experience. In today's market, it's increasingly important for consumers to relate the Angus breed and *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand with a superior tasting product.

A recent study at Kansas State University (K-State), funded by the Angus Foundation, aimed to better understand beef palatability and how branded programs may affect consumer ratings of beef products. Travis O'Quinn, K-State assistant professor and meat extension specialist, authored the research titled, "Determination of the effect of branding on consumer palatability ratings of strip loin steaks and ground beef."

The results point to positive trends for cattlemen who target high-quality Angus genetics in their herds.

"For both steaks and ground beef, products that were branded as either 'Angus' or 'Certified Angus Beef' were rated higher and more acceptable overall by consumers than similar, unbranded and generic branded products," said O'Quinn.

"This research project was the first to demonstrate the palatability-related value of beef branding," he said.

The research objective was twofold. First, determine the palatability differences of beef strip loin steaks and ground beef across the various quality levels, and second, evaluate how consumer palatability ratings are affected when products are identified with a brand (CAB), USDA quality grade, lean point or subprimal prior to evaluation.

O'Quinn reports that CAB steaks were rated 10% higher and Angus steaks 12% higher for consumer overall liking when the products were identified with a brand. No such increase was observed with USDA Choice or Select steaks.

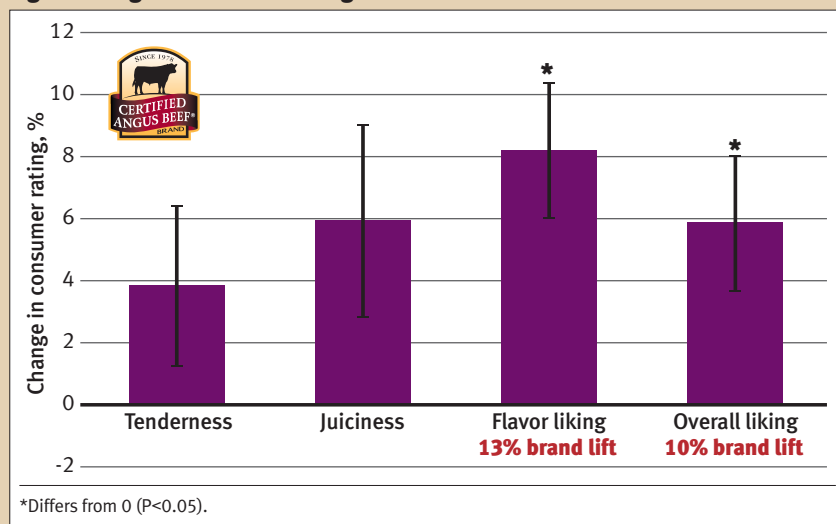
Additionally, the research showed CAB 90% lean ground sirloin increased 22% for consumer overall liking when the product was identified with the brand prior to testing. Primal-specific and lean point branded products received no increase due to branding.

Effect of branding on consumer perceptions

Strip loin steak results

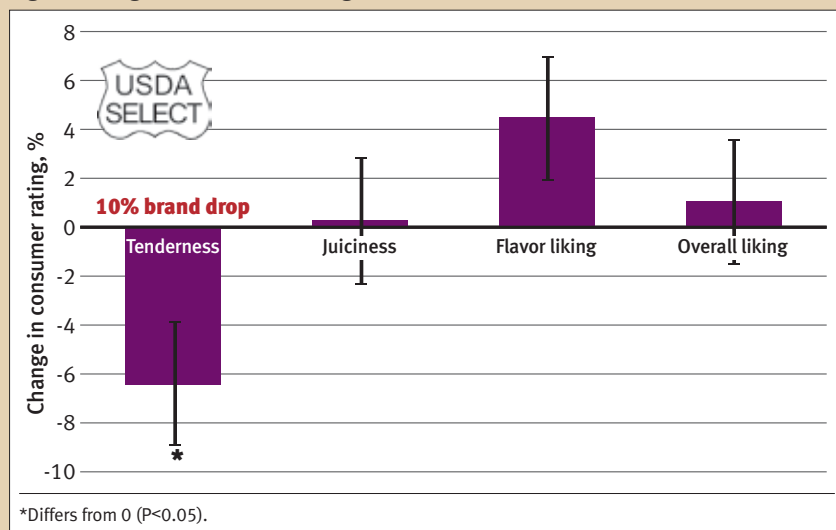
- ▶ Brand disclosure had a large influence on consumer palatability ratings.
- ▶ Palatability advantage of USDA Prime and *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand samples were magnified when brand/grade was disclosed.
- ▶ Branding (identifying grade) had no positive effect on consumer perceptions of Choice and Select samples.
- ▶ In blind evaluation, consumers rated CAB similar to Prime, and better than Select and Angus Select.
- ▶ In non-blind evaluation, consumers rated CAB over Choice, Select and Angus Select.
- ▶ Knowledge of the CAB brand increased consumer rating in flavor by 13% and overall liking by 10%.

Fig. 1: Change in consumer rating due to brand disclosure – CAB®



- ▶ In contrast, with knowledge of the product being USDA Select, consumers rated tenderness 10% lower.

Fig. 2: Change in consumer rating due to brand disclosure – Select



- ▶ In overall acceptability, consumers rated CAB equal to Prime and better than Choice, Select & Select Angus.

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— Travis O’Quinn

“These results give a clear indication that consumers associate the Angus breed with a high-quality product, and this value perception is carried all the way through the eating experience,” O’Quinn said.

Further analysis shows that consumers associate the Angus breed with a high-quality product, and this quality perception results in a “brand lift” for the eating quality of Angus products, O’Quinn said. Results from this study also indicate a value-creation opportunity through Angus branding in ground beef products.

The American Angus Association’s research priorities committee approved funds for the K-State research through the Angus Foundation earlier this year, and the findings were released in June 2015. The full research report and project summary are available on the Angus Foundation’s website at www.angusfoundation.org/fdn/Research/FdnPastResearch.html.

“The Angus Foundation strives to encourage and fund research projects where the benefits support the Angus breed and beef cattle industry,” said Milford Jenkins, Angus Foundation president. “Providing consumers the highest-quality beef product possible is the goal of every Angus breeder, and this research project gives us more insight into consumer preferences.”

For information on additional project investments through the Angus Foundation, go online to www.angusfoundation.org.

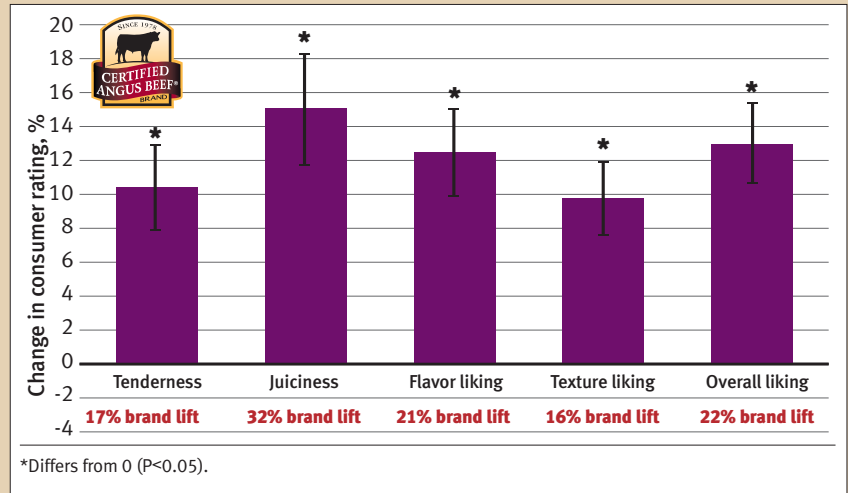


Editor’s Note: Carrie Horsley is the former director of marketing and public relations for the Angus Foundation.

Ground beef results

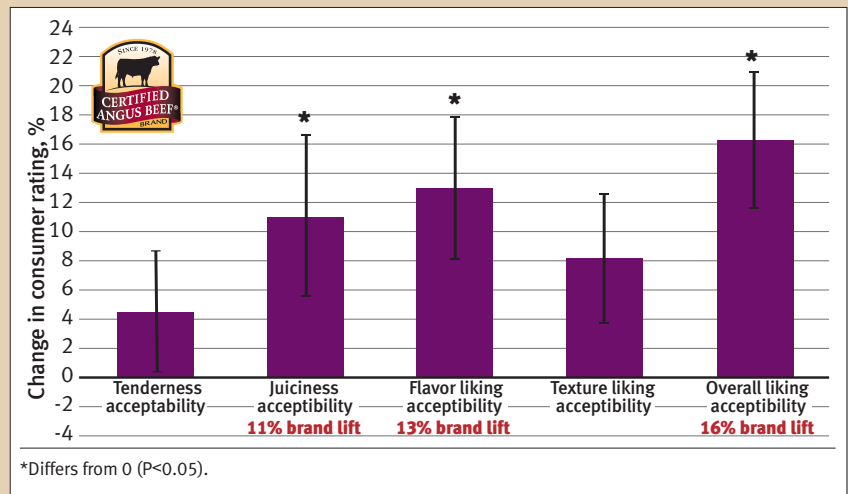
- ▶ Identifying ground beef as “90/10 CAB ground sirloin” improved overall liking by 22% and the percentage of samples rated “acceptable” by 14%.

Fig. 3: Change in consumer rating due to brand disclosure — 90/10 CAB® ground sirloin



- ▶ Identifying ground beef as “80/20 CAB ground chuck” improved overall liking by 10% and the percentage of samples rated “acceptable” by 16%.

Fig. 4: Change in consumer rating due to brand disclosure — 80/20 CAB® ground chuck



- ▶ Identifying ground beef as “80/20 ground chuck” had no effect on overall liking.

Fig. 5: Change in consumer rating due to brand disclosure — 80/20 commodity ground chuck

