Berry Basket Marketing: Positive Impacts across the Board

The project 'MT23500 FY24 Berry Basket Marketing Campaign' is funded by industry levies through Hort Innovation and contributions from the Australian Blueberry Growers Association voluntary levy.

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- Delivered through Hort Innovation and led by Berries Australia, this project collaboration sees blueberries, raspberries, blackberries and strawberries all promoted under a 'berry basket' banner
- Two bursts of activity have now been completed with the final burst just about to start across December and January
- All consumer indicators are showing strong positive movement in the right direction

At its most basic level, the point of consumer marketing is to connect products with potential buyers by creating awareness, interest, and desire. Marketing activities aim to inform consumers about what is available, why they need it, and how it can improve their lives, ultimately encouraging them to make a purchase. Effective marketing strives to ensure that the right message reaches the right audience at the right time, helping brands and products to build relationships, trust, and loyalty with their customers while driving sales and growth.

In the long run, we're on a mission to boost berry sales by inspiring occasional berry buyers to reach for them more often during their grocery trips. How? By igniting a deeper love for the irresistible taste of berries and creating a powerful emotional connection to these little bursts of joy. At the same time, we're sharing the unique health benefits that only berries can offer, turning them into a must-have choice. It's about making berries more than just a treat—transforming them into an everyday essential that shoppers can't resist.

We have laid out the tactics being deployed in the Berry Basket campaign in previous editions of this journal (Winter 2024 PAGE 33, Autumn 2024 PAGE 15, Summer 2023 PAGE 72). The campaign has sought to make consumers aware of fresh Australian berries at the peak of each crops availability across the year using a variety of media channels and to turn that awareness into interest and then the desire to purchase whilst in stores.

The purpose of a long-term marketing campaign in any fresh produce category is to make that category a 'must-buy' purchase on every shopper's list, ensuring that the in-store category display is visited on each shopping trip. Once the shopper is standing in front of the berry fridge, other factors like price, quality perception, brand choice and pack size come into play.

How can we decide if the investment is worth it?

When you have a branded item, produced by a single organisation and sold with a single unique product identifier like a barcode, you are able to isolate the sales results for that item and make some assessments about the direct impact that a marketing investment has had. In this case, we have a category wide approach with hundreds of individual product lines under a multitude of brands sold through a variety of channels, many of which do not report sales data to a third party. So, our only methodology for assessing the impact of this campaign is to look at a small number of indicator metrics which give us an insight into changes in consumers purchasing behaviour in the berry category.

Thanks to Hort Innovation, there is a Consumer Insights Strategy underpinned by a number of multi-industry investments that work together to provide the data and insights needed to help plan and evaluate marketing activities. Through the NielsenIQ Homescan panel – delivered through the Harvest to Home portal – we are able to examine consumer purchasing behaviour and how this is changing over time.

The results in the latest data release (52 weeks ending 08/09/2024) are summarised on PAGE 36.

What has changed for the berry category in the last 12 months?

September 2023	September 2024	
		
88.8%	**88.0%**	Slightly fewer households purchased the total berry category in the last 12 months than the year before. This overall fall was driven by a slight drop in the number of households buying blackberries (33% down to 31%), but both blueberries (61.8% up to 64.6%) and raspberries (43% up to 46%) showed significant increases. Strawberries increased slightly from an already high figure of 83% up to 84%.
September 2023	**September 2024**	
		
$128.90 spent on 7.8kg of berries on average per household	**$141.20** spent on 8.4kg of berries on average per household	Major swings in the supply of berries can have a dramatic affect on the price charged at the point of retail sale, and this substantial increase in the average amount spent by a household on berries is partly a reflection of differing supply conditions from last year to this year. The important fact is that the total volume purchased has also increased which clearly demonstrates higher levels of purchasing within the category. In fact, at a total level the berry category saw a value sales increase of 9.0% (vs total fruit of just 5.5%) and a volume sales increase of 6.9% (vs just 1.7% for total fruit). All berry crops saw an increase in both the amount spent and the volume purchased from last year to the current year.
September 2023	**September 2024**	
		
21 Purchase Occasions per year 0.4kg per Occasion	**22.2** Purchase Occasions per year 0.4kg per Occasion	Two other key indicators that can show the impact of any marketing activity are the number of times that a household buys a category and how much on average they purchase each time they buy. Over the 12 months to September this year, the total berry category has been purchased on a more frequent basis than in the previous year. The same weight has been purchased on each occasion on average, showing that shoppers are buying the equivalent of 400g of berries each time they buy from the category. There has also been no increase in the amount of any one berry crop purchased on average from last year to this year. The result is a significant increase in the total amount of berries purchased from last year to this year.

What does this mean?

The core objective of the Berry Basket Marketing campaign has been to ***'persuade existing buyers who buy berries relatively infrequently to buy berries more often when they are shopping for groceries'*** and the data indicates that this is exactly what has been achieved so far.

After the final burst of activity has been completed, the Marketing Sub-Committee will be meeting to conduct an evaluation of the overall campaign and make recommendations back to the Berries Australia board and wider industry for the way forward.

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