

The Beef Baccalaureate

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Introduction

An international center for food industry issues, the American Meat Institute, the National Cattlemen's Board Association and a College of Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources within a division one university together assembled a two-day workshop, called the Beef Baccalaureate. This workshop was designed to allow media professionals to learn about the beef industry from the farm to the table. The goal of the Beef Baccalaureate was for attendees to increase positive attitudes towards the beef industry, and display these attitude changes in their published articles. The purpose of this study is to determine how effective the workshop was, based on changes found in the attendees articles.

Methodology

The first Beef Baccalaureate occurred in the fall of 2004, with thirteen attendees. During the workshop attendees listened to lectures presented by university professors and industry experts the first day. Day two took place within a meat packing plant and on a large feedlot.

Articles were collected from the attendees in order to conduct this research project. This included articles one year prior to the workshop and articles that had been published a year following the event. Out of the thirteen attendees, seven were professionals within the broadcast field, which led to their materials not being used for this study.

A content analysis research design was used to conduct this study, based upon the Hayakawa-Lowry method. S.I Hayakawa developed a system to analyze sentences in print media, which included the categories report, inference and judgment (1940). D.T. Lowry later developed nine categories upon Hayakawa's idea, because he thought that it was important to consider reporter bias and attribution of the information (1971). From this, nine categories were designed, and were used to conduct this study.

When conducting this research, each and every sentence within an article pertaining to beef was coded into a category by a panel of three experts from the Department of Agriculture Communications. The experts then reviewed each sentence together and reached a general consensus as to where each sentence should be categorized.

Results

The researchers determined that the Beef Baccalaureate did have a positive effect upon the journalists' articles pertaining to beef. The results in table one are combined totals from the attendees. The before heading includes articles that attendees wrote one year prior to the workshop. The after section involves all of the articles written a year following the event. The overall total section represents the percent change within each category from the before and after results.

Table 1: Percent change from year one to year two

Category	Before	After	Overall
Report/Attributed	29%	20%	-9%
Report/Unattributed	12%	16%	+4%
Inference/Labled	9%	10%	+1%
Inference/Unlabeled	3%	3%	0%
Judgment/Attributed/Favorable to Beef	9%	16%	+7%
Judgment/Attributed/Unfavorable to Beef	9%	9%	0%
Judgment/Unattributed/Favorable to Beef	0%	3%	-3%
Judgment/Unattributed/Unfavorable to Beef	1%	0%	-1%
All Other Sentences	27%	22%	-3%

The greatest positive overall change was found in the judgment/attribution/favorable to beef category, with a seven percent increase. This includes sentences that are attributed (credited) to a source and are positive towards the beef industry. Sentences that were still favorable to beef, but were not noted as to where they were obtained from, judgment/unattributed/favorable to beef category, also increased by three percent.

Report type sentences are anything that considered factual information. After attending the Beef Baccalaureate, journalists increased report/unattributed sentences by four percent. However, sentences that were in the report/attribution category decreased by nine percent after attending the workshop. All other sentences, any sentences that did not pertain to the other eight categories, decreased by three percent as well. The rest of the above categories have little or no change at all.

Implications and Future Plans

Results indicate that attendees did gain a positive outlook on beef at the two-day event, based off the analysis of these articles. Organizers of this event are optimistic that results will lead to an increase support for the beef industry. Plans are to hold this event every other year. The second Beef Baccalaureate will be held in the fall of 2006. One thing that is likely to be implemented at the second event will be asking the attendees to bring articles with them to the workshop. This will help the instructors of the workshop determine what level each attendee is at whenever it comes to beef, and specific areas that need to be concentrated on more.

References

Hayakawa, S.I. (1940). *Language in thought and action*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co.

Lowry, D.T. (1971). Ag news and the network TV news: A before/after content analysis.
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