

Bearing fruit with groundbreaking marketing

INNOVATION IS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND AVOCADOS FROM MEXICO BRAND'S MARKET PENETRATION AND IMPRESSIVE GROWTH

Why have U.S. imports of Mexican avocados almost doubled in just seven years? Just look to Avocados From Mexico, an innovative nonprofit marketing organization that has reinvented the way produce is marketed in the U.S.

In recent years, avocados have gained traction among health-conscious consumers (and as millennials' favorite toast topper). In 2013, AFM set out to address the fact that many consumers were unaware of the origin story of the fruit and expand the demand throughout the U.S. By creating a highly visible brand—in a brandless category—the AFM team has played a key role in helping the country's avocado growers gobble up 80% of the market share in the United States.

AFM's continued commitment to reinventing the way produce is marketed in the U.S. landed the organization a spot on *Fast Company's* annual list of the World's Most Innovative Companies—including No. 1 in the branding category.

CULTIVATING A CREATIVE CULTURE

AFM has only 34 employees, but they come from a broad array of industries and backgrounds. Sixty percent are women and more than 10 nationalities are represented. As AFM President and CEO Alvaro Luque, who joined the organization in 2014, puts it, these unique backgrounds create a diversity of thought that drives innovation. "It starts from the bottom up," he says. "We're a performance-driven organization, and that's what's allowed us to

sustain constant innovation."

The numbers don't lie—AFM is the No. 1 brand in the U.S. for avocados, increasing brand preference to more than 55% from 20% in only seven years. By pulling a page from the consumer packaged-goods playbook, the group worked to meet avocado lovers where they eat, shop, and search. AFM launched the only Avocado University; opened AvoEatery, the world's first avocado-centric restaurant; and cultivated fan fervor with Avocado Nation, the first AI- and algorithms-driven platform in the fresh produce industry with a brand-loyalty program.

GOING BIG

The avocado became a superstar thanks in part to its decision in 2015 to become the first fresh produce to advertise in pro football's biggest game of the year. Alongside the TV commercial, AFM launched a robust digital campaign that included an interactive website experience. According to the Merkle Report, which tracks media trends, AFM earned the number-one or -two spot for Big Game-related digital campaigns for five consecutive years, generating 41.6 billion brand impressions.

AFM isn't afraid to dip into nontraditional marketing avenues, either: A year or so before non-fungible tokens, or NFTs, became all the rage, AFM was the first brand to place advertising assets in blockchain for the Big Game.

AFM sat out this year's Big Game in order to create something totally different when it returns in 2022. And Luque promises to make a splash. "This is going to be the most sales effective campaign we've ever created," he says. "It's going to be something that no one else has ever done. Another step towards becoming the most innovative produce company in the world." ■



▼ **AFM HAS PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN** helping Mexico's avocado growers attain 80% of the market share in the U.S.

