

ADAPTIVE COMMUNICATION

– the impact of different value arguments

Forest owners as well as their values and objectives for forests have become more diverse. Thus, they cannot be considered as a homogenous group in the communication activities either. Traditionally used economic rhetoric to encourage forest owners to activate in forest management may not be effective anymore to the new kinds of forest owners. The forest-based companies must find ways for better segment their customers and tailor the communication accordingly to be able to reach different forest owner groups.

In Finland, already 40 % of the forest owners are women. The previous research shows that they often hold ecological values higher than men. This raises the question whether the current marketing messages actually fit the values of women forest owners or should they be modified. Typically, gender is information that can be easily found in the customer databases of forest-based companies and thus, could be a simple segmentation criterion.

Purpose

The aim was to test the effectiveness of different kinds of marketing messages in promoting first thinning to women forest owners. For this, three different marketing messages were created. One explaining the importance of first thinning to provide maximal economic income from the forests, one explaining the importance of first thinning in relation to biodiversity protection and climate change mitigation and one control message, having no value arguments at all. These messages were sent out to 300 women forest owners, most of them not living in the same region where their forests are located.

After receiving the messages, the forest owners were shortly interviewed by phone.

Conclusion

First, the pilot shows that the marketing messages sent out as text messages did not work well for this forest owner group. Thus, some other means should be used instead.

Second, somewhat controversially with the presumption, the marketing message with the economic arguments was found clearly more interesting than the one with ecological/climate change values. Thus, it can be concluded that for this women forest owner segment, the marketing message with economic arguments was more effective one. However, the results also show that younger women forest owners clearly value the ecological/climate change more than the older ones. The average age of the respondents was 60 years.

Third, the results show that the control message was found the least interesting. This indicates that some kind of value arguments improve the impact of the marketing message. Based on the results, women forest owners value the most in their forest owning the heritage/link to the family the forests represent. Could this be use as a safe and neutral enough value argument to appeal women forest owners?

Finally, it is important to notice that women as a forest owner group are not a homogenous group either and the wrong kind of a marketing message can irritate them more than encourage to forest management activities.

PILOT SUMMARY



EUROPEAN UNION

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European Regional Development Fund



Prosperous forest
Diversification through Inclusion and Specialisation