

## Introduction & Literature Review

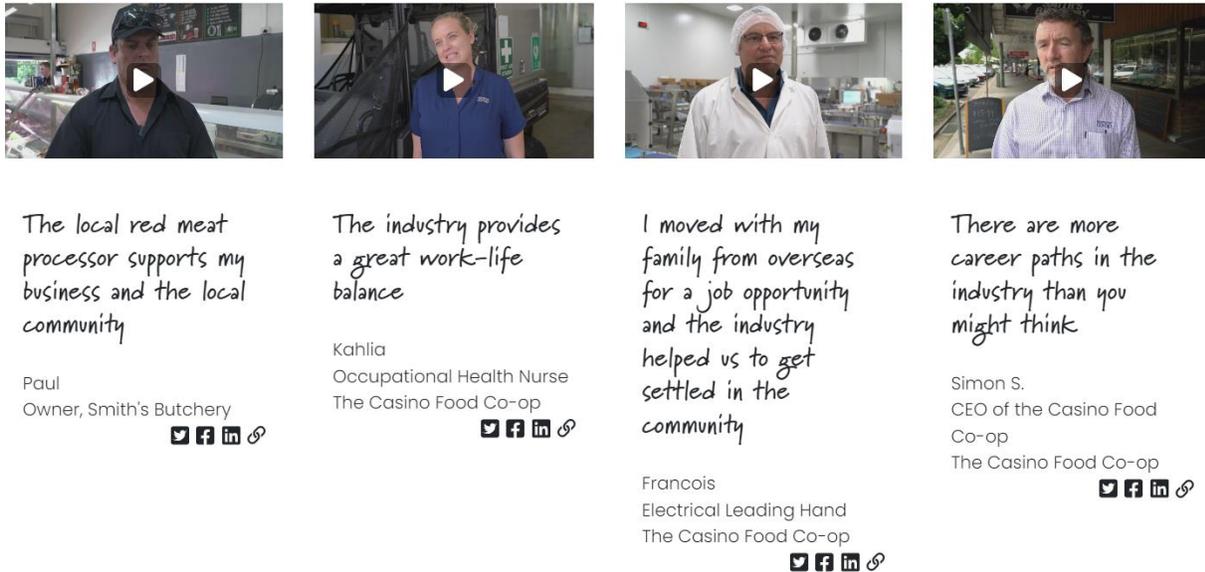
The Australian red meat industry is comprised of beef cattle, sheep, and goat sectors (Meat & Livestock Australia, n.d.) as well as the post-farmgate sector of processors, retailers, and smallgoods (Australian Meat Industry Council, 2020). This industry feeds around 75 million people globally (National Farmers' Federation, 2020) in addition to contributing to 39% of the gross value of Australian agricultural production of AUD\$82.4 billion (Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences [ABARES], 2025). In 2021, employment within agriculture accounted for only 2.5% of the Australian population, which has declined over the previous five years (ABARES, 2022). Red meat processing is an integral part of the agricultural supply chain in Australia, contributing AUD\$21 billion to the Australian economy. The processing sector is supported by the Australian Meat Processing Corporation (AMPC) for research and development and the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) for advocacy and policy.

Red meat processors not only play a vital role in rural and regional employment, but also provide social, environmental, and economic sustainability (Whitewood, 2023). Despite these factors, few people have a direct connection to the industry, which is highlighted through the declining agricultural workforce and increased urbanization of the population (Cosby et al., 2022). This has resulted in a low level of agricultural literacy (i.e., having more than a basic understanding or awareness of the industry) leading knowledge seekers to increasingly use sources such as social media to learn about agriculture (Gorham et al., 2016; Meischen & Trexler, 2003; Packwood Freeman, 2009). A reliance on social media to find information about agriculture has been shown to have a predominantly negative sway on consumer perceptions of agriculture (Howard, 2015). Media coverage on animal welfare can have a detrimental impact on consumer perceptions and trust in animal agriculture (Rice et al., 2020). One way to address these negative perceptions and increase awareness and agricultural literacy is through the development and implementation of strategic communications campaigns (Gorham et al., 2016). This is often accomplished with more emphasis on transparent information and provenance stories (Bray et al., 2017; Rumble & Irani, 2016; Weinreich, 2010), which is not only where food comes from, but its entire journey from start to finish (Barling et al., 2011).

The "More to Meat" campaign was launched in August 2022 by the Australian Meat Processing Corporation (AMPC) (Sheep Central, 2022). The campaign was guided by four objectives: 1) growing support for the red meat industry, 2) advancing the industry's performance, 3) reducing opposition against the industry, and 4) supporting employee recruitment. The campaign highlighted "community voices" to promote the benefits of working in red meat processors (More to Meat, 2023), demonstrate the diversity of people and roles within the industry (see Figure 1), and generate a positive perception of the industry. The "More to Meat" campaign was an integrated campaign with content shared across print, paid, and social media. AMPC invested in consumer research to inform the strategic development of the campaign and its content based on current perceptions of the red meat industry, which occurred before and during the campaign by collecting survey data.

## Figure 1

Selection of Profiles Developed for the “More to Meat” Campaign (More to Meat, 2023)



Due to its focus on the red meat processors, this campaign was the first of its kind in Australia, highlighting the need to study its development and determine its effectiveness within the context of the country. By assessing the campaign, agricultural communicators can learn about campaign development from an international context and potentially apply it to the United States' red meat industry. Rather than targeting urban consumers, this campaign was designed to reach the target audience of rural communities where red meat processing facilities are located. The insights from this study have the potential for broader application because consumer scrutiny of red meat production and processing is not limited to Australia. This type of targeted campaign could inform consumer education and agricultural literacy efforts in other areas and about other topics.

### Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework for the study was based on stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility. Stakeholder theory stresses the relationships between an organization and its stakeholders in terms of creating value for each group. Stakeholders can be defined as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984, p. 25). Trust underpins the relationships between organizations and stakeholders, with stakeholders placing trust in an organization to act in their best interest (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2010). When trust or trustworthiness is absent, exploitation can occur, which results in a breakdown in the relationship between stakeholders and the organization.

Serra’s (2023) stakeholder management model has two variables: interest and influence. Interest refers to how concerned a stakeholder is in the outcome of an organization or project, while influence refers to the power each stakeholder has on the organization or project materials or outcomes (Mendelow, 1981). For the “More to Meat” campaign, five stakeholder groups were identified within the stakeholder management model: 1) the Australian Meat Processing Corporation, 2) the campaign development company, 3) red meat processors, 4) the Australian

Meat Industry Council (AMIC), and 5) people who live in regional towns where a red meat processor is present. These groups were categorized as either: 1) influential and uninterested, 2) influential and interested, 3) not influential and uninterested, and 4) not influential and interested. Figure 2 provides the stakeholder theory (Serra, 2023) category descriptions and designates the various stakeholder groups for the “More to Meat” campaign.

**Figure 2**

*The Stakeholder Management Model (Serra, 2023) Applied to the “More to Meat” Campaign*

<b>Influential &amp; Uninterested</b>	<b>Influential &amp; Interested</b>
<p><i>Fulfill requests when asked</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government bodies including AMIC</li> </ul>	<p><i>Want to be regularly updated and included in key decisions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red meat processors in Australia</li> <li>• AMPC and its Board</li> </ul>
<b>Not Influential &amp; Uninterested</b>	<b>Not Interested &amp; Influential</b>
<p><i>Want to be informed of any major updates</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People living in regional and rural Australian communities where a red meat processor is present</li> </ul>	<p><i>Consider and update regularly</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processor employees</li> <li>• Campaign development company</li> </ul>

Stakeholder theory has been linked to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Both theories emphasize the importance of acting in the best interest of stakeholders or society as a key business responsibility (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017). CSR is a concept where organizations and businesses attempt to manage their obligations to society beyond their stakeholders (Béji et al., 2020). An organization’s CSR involvement can be based on its beliefs and values or pressure from external expectations. CSR is often related to an organization’s moral obligation to fulfill not only its stakeholders’ needs but also the needs of society (Wood, 1991). CSR can help shape how society and key stakeholders view a business and its reputation (Chen et al., 2020). This applies to the “More to Meat” campaign as it is aimed at increasing awareness of the red meat industry within the “not influential and uninterested” stakeholder group, while also fulfilling its societal obligations of highlighting the benefits of working in the red meat sector and the benefits of red meat processors to rural and regional communities; therefore, building trust and reputation in the industry.

In addition to the theoretical framework, the R.A.C.E. formula provided a conceptual framework through which to explore the “More to Meat” campaign development. The R.A.C.E. formula describes a sequence of elements to assist in creating public relations. Standing for Research, Action, Communication, and Evaluation, this formula provides a linear framework that professional communicators can use to inform communication campaigns (Bégin & Charbonneau, 2012). However, Guth and Marsh (2003) suggested the model should be dynamic and evaluation should occur at each phase. Not only is the R.A.C.E. formula applicable to the “More to Meat” campaign and its development process, but it also allows campaign creators and stakeholders to appraise how the campaign was refined and understand how it was being evaluated and changed throughout the process. A summary of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and how they pertain to this study are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1***Relevance and Application of Current Study's Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks*

Relevance and application to study	
Theoretical frameworks	
Stakeholder theory and management model	Creates value in the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders. Stakeholder groups were identified for the campaign and were grouped based on their interest and influence in relation to the campaign.
Corporate social responsibility	Organizations or business should act in the best interest of their stakeholders. Corporate social responsibility can help build trust and reputation, which is its application to this study.
Conceptual framework	
R.A.C.E formula	Provides a linear timeline for developing an evaluating communication campaigns. The research, action, communication and evaluation were applied to the campaign and allowed it to be refined throughout its development.

**Purpose & Research Questions**

The purpose of the study was to understand stakeholder perceptions and overall evaluation of the “More to Meat” campaign in Australia. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What were the stakeholders’ perceived rationale for the creation of the “More to Meat” campaign?
2. How did stakeholders perceive the campaign’s representation of their interests?
3. Was the campaign effective in achieving its goals?

**Methods**

To answer the research questions, a case study was conducted to intensely investigate a singular phenomenon in order to understand specific variables within (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The epistemological approach applied to this study was interpretivism; therefore, understanding how each stakeholder group applied their own interpretations of the campaign based on their beliefs and experiences (William, 2024). To collect data to answer the research questions, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. Purposive sampling (Campbell et al., 2020) was used to select individuals from the identified stakeholder groups except the “Not Influential and Uninterested” group (i.e., people living in rural areas with meat processing facilities). The selected individuals had to fit the following characteristics: (1) an individual who was involved in, personally or through their company, and was knowledgeable about the “More to Meat” campaign, and (2) an individual who can, and was willing to, discuss the development process of the campaign and the perceived outcomes. Participants from AMPC provided a list of contacts that fit the characteristics listed above. An initial email was sent outlining the study, with a follow-up email sent two weeks later due to non-response. Snowball sampling was also used to

increase the sample size and ensure all appropriate participants were interviewed (Noy, 2008). These potential participants were also contacted via email with a follow-up email if there was no response after two weeks.

Four interview guides were developed, one for each participant group: AMPC, red meat processors, the campaign development company, and AMIC. Significant effort was placed on creating open-ended questions that were written in a specific order that linked theoretical concepts to the research questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014; Pedersen et al., 2015). As Mason et al. (2020) suggested, each interview guide was reviewed by an expert panel before participants were interviewed. For AMPC, the interview guide asked about the campaign development, including the intended audience, key messages, and metrics. Red meat processor questions centered on their familiarity with the campaign, why participants were chosen to participate in the campaign, and how they would like to see the campaign progress. The campaign developers were asked about the creative process behind the campaign, how channels were selected, and how messages were developed for content. Lastly, the AMIC interview guide asked about how the campaign could be leveraged politically, the campaign’s influence on policy, and if the campaign had increased political support for the red meat industry in Australia.

From April to August 2023, the interviews were conducted and recorded, with the participant’s consent, over Zoom due to the researcher residing in the United States and the participants residing in Australia. Interviews ranged from 26 to 62 minutes. Once each interview was completed, the audio file was uploaded into Otter.Ai to convert it into a transcript, which ranged from 5 to 11 single-spaced pages). Each transcript was reviewed to address any errors such as removing duplicate words and correcting any mistranslations. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant (Table 2) to provide anonymity within the study.

**Table 2**

*Description of Participants (N = 7)*

Pseudonym	Stakeholder group	Company position	Category in the Stakeholder Management Model (Serra, 2023)	Interview guide
REBECCA	AMPC	Program Manager – People and Culture	Influential and Interested	1
FIONA	AMPC	Industry and Government Relations	Influential and Interested	1
SIMON	AMPC	Chief Executive Officer	Influential and Interested	1
PERRI	Red meat processor	Chief Executive Officer	Influential and Interested	2
MATT	Red meat processor	Director – Corporate Communications	Influential and Interested	2
HEATH	Campaign creator	Campaign Manager	Not Interested and Influential	3
ANNA	AMIC	Chief Executive Officer	Influential and Uninterested	4

To analyze the data, we used in vivo coding and thematic analysis. No software was used during the coding process. The coding process for this study involved hand-coding each printed transcript for key codes and insights, then grouping the codes as they related to the research questions. In vivo coding involves drawing the participant's own words from the interview transcripts that are often catchy and colloquial (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2011). These codes encapsulate the participants' own words and allow the reader to see how significant the participant's own words are to the creation of themes (Saldaña, 2011). Thematic analysis was the next step in analyzing qualitative data. Thematic analysis brings codes together that are similar and deduces an overarching theme that explains the group of codes (Scharp & Sanders, 2018). Themes can be deduced from words already present in the codes or can be created separately (Saldaña, 2011). Themes should help answer the research questions, provide insight into participants' answers, and should be interpretations of the data collected (Saldaña, 2011).

Research rigor for this study was established using four primary criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Choosing appropriate research methodology as well as including multiple information sources and stakeholder groups helped establish credibility of the data (Cope, 2014). Providing description of the methodology for collecting data as well as sampling method improves transferability (Maxwell, 2021). One-on-one interviews can provide dependability as the data can only be credited to one source. Finally, the researcher documented any personal biases that may affect the study and remained impartial and reflective throughout the process, which helps establish confirmability (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). To address researcher subjectivity, the lead researcher is from Australia and has experience working in the Australia red meat industry. The researcher understands the importance of the "More to Meat" campaign to the Australian industry in securing its social license to operate in a proactive manner. Prior knowledge of the campaign was limited as the researcher was residing in the United States. Although this study is specific to the "More to Meat" campaign, the methodology and findings could be transferable to other campaigns focused on creating awareness and changing perceptions within a specific agricultural industry or commodity.

## Findings

### **RQ1: What were the stakeholders' perceived rationale for the creation of the "More to Meat" campaign?**

Four themes emerged that addressed this research question: 1) Changing our story, 2) There's more to processors than meets the eye, 3) Arming the industry for the future, and 4) Empowered by insights. Table 3 provides an overview of the themes for this RQ along with a representative quote for each.

**Table 3***Summary of Themes to Answer Research Question 1 and Representative Quotes*

Theme	Quote
<i>Changing our story</i>	“It was the negative media attention, the constant barrage that we were getting, that made us want to do something about it.” REBECCA
<i>There’s more to processors than meets the eye</i>	“It’s not just about the role, but it’s also then how they’ve [the employees] integrated and become active members of the community.” ANNA
<i>Arming the industry for the future</i>	“The industry needs to position itself to fill up its goodwill bucket so when something happens, the stakeholders and decision-makers aren’t going to, you know, pull a shotgun out and shoot from the hip.” SIMON
<i>Empowered by insights</i>	“If you’re trying to change public opinion or raise awareness of something, it is essential to have an understanding of that context and adapt to that context...if you went into it and started prosecuting a campaign message without identifying what actually matters to people, you’re just not going to get anywhere or you’re going to really struggle” HEATH

***Changing our story***

When asked about the rationale behind the creation of the campaign, each participant discussed the need for the narrative around the industry to be changed to become more proactive rather than reactive. Participants said this motivation stemmed from negative media attention (e.g., animal activists and negative animal welfare outcomes) that had caused reputational loss. REBECCA said she strongly felt “it was the negative media attention, the constant barrage that we were getting, that made us want to do something about it.” PERRI echoed this sentiment, stating “there was a whole group of factors that said ‘Hey, we’ve got to be a bit more proactive on presenting our industry in a better light.’” SIMON offered a different perspective, stating they were “passionate about finding ways to improve the way that the industry is perceived.”

Participants highlighted that the reputational issues the red meat sector was facing were due to a lack of education and awareness by communities, whether urban or rural. HEATH said the initial motivation for the creation of the campaign was “primarily around building awareness and understanding of the essential role that processors play and why they are essential to the prosperity of regional towns and cities, and their contribution to the economy.”

ANNA shared a similar sentiment by saying perceptions need to be changed “within key stakeholder groups,” and it is not only the perceptions of consumers that need to change. This acknowledged that while consumers have traditionally been an important target audience, other segments exist and deserve attention. Additionally, REBECCA described the need for “champions and supporters” to help bridge the gap in knowledge and awareness between the red meat industry and target audience members, encouraging the need for a campaign to change the red meat industry’s story.

### ***There's more to processors than meets the eye***

The second theme emerging from the results was the need to show those in the target audience that there is more to the red meat industry than the processing of animals. Participants individually discussed how the “More to Meat” campaign provided the red meat industry with the opportunity to showcase what it has to offer rural and regional communities. FIONA said there are many “benefits of having a meat processor” such as employment opportunities and economic impact within rural and regional communities. HEATH echoed this by saying the industry needs to “reaffirm to people that... processors play a really important role in jobs, in supporting the local economy, [and] supporting the supply chain.”

The participants identified two main benefits of the campaign for the red meat processing industry: career opportunities and community engagement. PERRI mentioned the campaign was “an opportunity to start putting in front of them [the public] more about our business. That there's more to it than just the meat works on the hill. It's actually career opportunities.” ANNA supported the previous statement and said, “It's not just about the role, but it's also then how they've [the employees] integrated and become active members of the community.” These needs all contribute to the rationale behind the creation of the “More to Meat” campaign.

### ***Arming the industry for the future***

Participants emphasized the need to enhance the strength and longevity of the red meat industry, leading to the third theme for RQ1. Participants said adopting a proactive approach can help the red meat industry thrive and withstand any negative media attention it may receive. Given the reactionary nature of the red meat industry to negative press and media, participants agreed support is necessary from a variety of audiences. REBECCA stated, “If we're going to be supported by anyone, we first need to be supported by the people that work in our processing plants, that live near our processing plants, because without their support we may cease to exist at some point.”

Gathering local support enables red meat processors and their communities to work together and thrive, ideally having locals in those communities spreading positive stories, experiences, and support. MATT shared his opinion about how the “More to Meat” campaign was able to “provide a strong and strategic voice” for the industry. He said the campaign was “a great addition to our arsenal of programs to encourage people into our industry... we're putting our money where our mouth is.”

By showcasing red meat processors' support for rural and regional communities, the campaign provides a platform for political leverage. REBECCA mentioned the campaign would “put the industry in a better position to get what they need” in terms of funding and practical support. SIMON said being proactive with communication efforts would help the industry in the long-run. “The industry needs to position itself to fill up its goodwill bucket so when something happens, the stakeholders and decision-makers aren't going to, you know, pull a shotgun out and shoot from the hip,” he said.

### ***Empowered by insights***

According to participants, the “More to Meat” campaign was developed based on years of consumer research, which collected consumer perceptions of the red meat industry and tested messages. PERRI mentioned “there was quite a substantial level of soft support... people that are undecided, they could be supportive, and they could be persuaded to be supportive.” In each interview, participants said there was a large amount of effort dedicated to ensuring the success

of the campaign before it began. SIMON clarified that “undertaking some reputational research in the first instance, to then inform the development of the campaign” was imperative to the campaign’s success and was a “critical part in the formation of the campaign strategy.” HEATH elaborated on the importance of research to understand the people whose perceptions the campaign was attempting to change:

If you’re trying to change public opinion or raise awareness of something, it is essential to have an understanding of that context and adapt to that context...if you went into it and started prosecuting a campaign message without identifying what actually matters to people, you’re just not going to get anywhere or you’re going to really struggle.

Before launching the campaign, messages were tested with the target audience to determine if they were “salient or actually cutting through,” as HEATH stated. Additionally, HEATH called attention to the need for messages and information presented in the campaign to be trustworthy stating that “they absolutely have to be credible.” Participants’ comments suggested that incorporating audience research would strengthen a campaign’s rationale and objectives, enabling more precise targeting.

**RQ2: How did stakeholders perceive the campaign’s representation of their interests?**

Three themes emerged to address Research Question 2: 1) Nothing but positivity for the campaign, 2) Putting the industry’s best foot forward, and 3) Room for improvement. Table 4 provides a summary of the themes identified for this research question along with a representative quote for each.

**Table 4**

*Summary of Themes to Answer Research Question 2 and Representative Quotes*

Theme	Representative Quote
<i>Nothing but positivity for the campaign</i>	“It was so important that we actually have a campaign to do positive stories and get the message out there.” PERRI
<i>Putting the industry’s best foot forward</i>	“We are actually interested in what is good for the entire meat industry. Because if it’s good for the meat industry, it’s going to be good for us as well.” ANNA
<i>Room for improvement</i>	“The only thing we could’ve done better or different is really articulating how individual processing plants can benefit from the campaign.” SIMON

***Nothing but positivity for the campaign***

From all stakeholder groups interviewed, there was overwhelming positivity and support for the campaign. When reflecting upon the campaign, PERRI said, “It’s certainly worth celebrating.” HEATH said they “are so glad that the industry is patting itself on the back.”

Given the range of issues the red meat industry faces, many participants articulated their pride in the industry for being proactive. MATT complimented the proactiveness of the

campaign to get ahead of negative perceptions: “Someone’s been brave enough to dip their toe in, and I’m really glad as someone who’s worked in the red meat industry, that it was the red meat industry that jumped in the deep end with this.” PERRI offered a similar view from the creative perspective of the campaign: “It was so important that we actually have a campaign to do positive stories and get the message out there.”

### ***Putting the industry’s best foot forward***

The “More to Meat” campaign highlighted the stories of several red meat employees across the country to demonstrate the diversity in roles and demographic characteristics within the industry. The campaign featured stories of employees who were passionate about the red meat industry and had progressed in their careers. This showcased the people and jobs available within the industry to help red meat processors and their employees feel “personal pride [in] the workforce,” as PERRI said.

REBECCA discussed the process of identifying several employees to appear in the television advertisements and social media saying they were “looking for a mum who’s basically gone through the system, or... looking for a dad who basically started work there after high school and who’s actually progressed through the processing plant.” SIMON said, “Choosing people that have got really good stories” was important to the campaign. HEATH reinforced this by highlighting the stories filmed were “not to say red meat processing supports local towns, but its red meat processing supports Julie who has worked in the red meat sector for 20 years and met her husband there.” PERRI’s processing plant had multiple women involved in the campaign: “Our focal point was on a couple of employees, a couple of ladies in particular, that are really champions in what they’re doing... they were a shining example of where we are heading.”

The participants agreed it was ideal for the red meat industry to present a united front. ANNA articulated this about the “More to Meat” campaign: “We are actually interested in what is good for the entire meat industry. Because if it’s good for the meat industry, it’s going to be good for us as well.” PERRI said “our industry has to be an influencer” and providing real stories will help achieve this. Providing these authentic examples benefits the red meat processors whose stories are being told and AMPC can highlight these stories to showcase the positive impacts the industry has on rural and regional communities.

### ***Room for improvement***

When participants were asked if they saw any areas in the campaign that could be improved, they provided open and honest answers to how the campaign could continue to grow and thrive. PERRI said there was space to increase transparency within the campaign saying, “I think more openness, more transparency is certainly what consumers and the public are demanding and we’ve got to give it.” Transparency between the stakeholder groups was also noted as a key area to the success and longevity of a campaign. If the campaign were to be extended, ANNA said she wanted the company the featured individuals worked for “to be acknowledged as one of those key players in [those] regions” rather than keeping the campaign neutral because processor logos and paraphernalia were excluded from video content. On the other hand, SIMON saw the campaign as “a platform that can be built on for other purposes” because it was not limited to a specific company.

Although the campaign was in its second year, the participants acknowledged that keeping the campaign regionally focused was in the stakeholders’ best interest. If the campaign

was to grow too quickly, the positive messaging could get lost and the goals of the campaign fail to be met. When asked if the campaign would move to urban areas, SIMON said, “Let’s just focus on regional areas to start with and see how that goes.”

The campaign only mentioned the red meat processors in the communication materials briefly, either in social media posts or in job titles, and participants highlighted they wanted greater recognition for participating in the campaign to be able to leverage the campaign themselves within their communities. SIMON recognized that “the only thing we could’ve done better or different is really articulating how individual processing plants can benefit from the campaign.” Allowing individual processing plants to build on the “More to Meat” campaign was something ANNA noted when she said, “I can leverage from their campaign... that’s where we would get sort of that little bit of a bang for our buck.”

PERRI highlighted the need for “keeping the information and the materials up to date and relevant,” specifically if the campaign is to continue for years to come. Participants also discussed future areas of interest for the campaign such as sustainability, rather than focusing primarily on people. FIONA acknowledged the campaign “seemed to be very heavily focused on the people,” and she recommended including other aspects of the red meat industry such as “a sustainability pillar, showcase the automation that’s coming to industry, and the market access.” If AMPC and the campaign development company address this feedback, they could broaden the goals and scope of the campaign while continuing to act in the best interest of the stakeholders.

**RQ3: Was the campaign effective in achieving its goals?**

Three themes emerged relating to Research Question 3: 1) Perceptions are shifting in the right way, 2) Let’s not drop the ball now, and 3) Representing regional communities. Table 5 displays a summary of the themes identified for this research question with a representative quote for each.

**Table 5**

*Summary of Themes to Answer Research Question 3 and Representative Quotes*

Theme	Representative Quote
<i>Perceptions are shifting in the right way</i>	“It’s obviously got people talking about red meat processing, and possibly understanding a little bit more about the numbers of people that are employed and the contribution back to the economic area.” FIONA
<i>Let’s not drop the ball now</i>	There’s a real need that we don’t make this a one-off... think about how we keep on consolidating this good work into the future.” PERRI
<i>Representing regional communities</i>	If we’re going to be supported by anyone, we first need to be supported by the people that work in our processing plants, that live near our processing plants, because without their support we may cease to exist at some point.” REBECCA

### ***Perceptions are shifting in the right way***

The “More to Meat” campaign was guided by specific goals and objectives. One of the goals was to change the perceptions of the red meat industry within the target audience, and the responses from the participants of this study emphasize this has been achieved. Red meat processors could see a positive shift in perceptions about their industry within their own communities. SIMON was especially vocal regarding this, affirming “there’s been a positive shift... I couldn’t be much happier with the result.” FIONA associated the success of the campaign with the increase in awareness, revealing “it’s obviously got people talking about red meat processing, and possibly understanding a little bit more about the numbers of people that are employed and the contribution back to the economic area.”

Participants said the “More to Meat” campaign also made red meat processors understand how they can play an even bigger role in their communities. PERRI noticed this when engaging with the campaign stating, “It gave us the resources to then engage our local community and engage them either through local media or advertising.” ANNA added to this by mentioning, “We’re actually keeping people in those communities.” Not only does the “More to Meat” campaign provide opportunities to red meat processors and their communities, but also to other industries within the Australian agriculture such as grains or wool to learn from and create their own campaigns.

### ***Let’s not drop the ball now***

With the extension of the campaign through the 2023 calendar year, participants voiced the need for the campaign to continue for years to come. Participants explained why they thought it was important to keep the momentum of the campaign going. PERRI said, “There’s a real need that we don’t make this a one-off... think about how we keep on consolidating this good work into the future.” HEATH offered a similar statement to “keep it relevant or keep it new; keep it fresh so that it doesn’t result in fatigue.”

While many of the participants shared this outlook, SIMON highlighted some potential constraints stakeholders may not realize, including “resource availability... budgets to make sure that it can be something that’s sustained into the future.” These comments emphasized the need to continue to evaluate the campaign and how well it is achieving its goals within the dedicated budget.

### ***Representing regional communities***

Participants continuously referenced the ability of rural and regional towns to flourish due to the red meat processors that support them. REBECCA stated, “If we’re going to be supported by anyone, we first need to be supported by the people that work in our processing plants, that live near our processing plants, because without their support we may cease to exist at some point.” According to participants, the families and friends of those employees featured had discussed the campaign as a source of pride for those involved. ANNA said, “They’re really proud to be involved in the campaign and their mates and their friends saw it.”

SIMON identified three areas that red meat processors underpin in these communities: “economic contribution regionally and globally, employment in the regions, and also the piece around Australia’s standing globally.” HEATH echoed this when he said the industry needs to “reaffirm to people that... processors play a really important role in jobs, in supporting the local economy, [and] supporting the supply chain.” Participants understood that red meat processors were “actually keeping people in [those] communities” through employment opportunities, as

ANNA stated. The participants said by providing social and economic support to regional communities and their residents, red meat processors can help these towns become resilient.

### **Conclusions & Implications**

The “More to Meat” campaign provided the Australian red meat industry with the opportunity to showcase its people and opportunities in an educational and relatable manner for the target audience. Focused on regional and rural towns, the campaign aimed to increase awareness of the role red meat processors play in the longevity and resilience of these communities (More to Meat, 2023).

Research Question 1 was to identify the stakeholders’ perceived rationale for the creation of the More to Meat campaign. All participants acknowledged that perceptions surrounding the red meat industry needed to change. This campaign considered previous research to understand consumers and their opinions and values, as well as what the industry needed to continue to thrive. This research also showed the industry’s appetite for the campaign to help rural communities become resilient while informing the target audience that the red meat industry provides employment opportunities and supports communities socially and economically (Gosnell et al., 2021). According to stakeholder theory, understanding influence and interest for each stakeholder group can help the organization comprehend motivations in the context of the group (Serra, 2023). The campaign’s transparency efforts can provide stakeholders with additional information to support more informed decision-making about the red meat industry, suggesting an increasing recognition of corporate social responsibility. However, other aspects of CSR need to be addressed such as environmental and ethical considerations, which participants acknowledged as areas to include in future communication materials. Participants applauded the campaign’s proactive approach to taking on negative consumer perceptions with transparent information and relatable stories (Barling et al., 2011; Rumble & Irani, 2016). Participants saw this as an opportunity to show a united front as an industry to gain support from the government and other target audience members in order to fill up their “goodwill bucket.”

Research Question 2 was to describe how stakeholders perceived the campaign’s representation of their interests. By ensuring that each stakeholder group was involved in the development of the campaign, the consultation process, or as the intended audience, value was created for each segment through engagement and consultation. This supports the application of stakeholder theory because Holtz and Havens (2009) said transparency is necessary to help stakeholders make informed decisions. The “More to Meat” campaign’s efforts demonstrated commitment to being transparent with the target audience about the benefits of having a red meat processor in the community by sharing relatable stories of those working in the industry. Adding a human aspect to the industry not only provides a “shining example of where we are heading [as an industry],” as mentioned by PERRI, but demonstrates the red meat industry is helping regional communities thrive. Showcasing these stories can help consumers relate to workers in the red meat industry if they see someone like them (e.g., a parent or an international worker), which has been found in agricultural awareness campaigns in the United States for companies such as McDonalds (Gorham et al., 2016).

While each participant suggested areas to improve the campaign, these were minor and aimed at ensuring its continuity. Potential improvements included increasing transparency to other areas of the supply chain, ensuring campaign materials are kept relevant and up to date, and recognizing the processors involved in the campaign for their contributions. AMPC and the campaign development company should take these into consideration as the campaign progresses

to ensure processors feel included in the decision-making process and remain an interested and influential stakeholder (Serra, 2023). Companies can then begin to apply benefits to society at large and uphold their CSR (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017). AMPC and the campaign development company should also continue to support the campaign with regular consumer research, which literature has highlighted is imperative to understanding the target audience and tailoring key messages to inform campaign development (Berger et al., 2010; Lee & Kotler, 2016). When creating campaigns to increase awareness and trust, other agricultural industries should follow the R.A.C.E. formula of research, action, communication, and evaluation (Bégin & Charbonneau, 2012).

Research Question 3 was to describe the campaign's effectiveness in achieving its goals. The literature highlighted the importance of identifying and engaging stakeholders who have a vested interest in an organization and its objectives (Freeman, 1984). The overall success of the campaign was highlighted through the interviews with the participants. They noted perceptions about the red meat industry were shifting in the right direction with more support for the role this industry provides to rural and regional areas (Whitewood, 2023).

The participants noted the need to engage with various stakeholder groups. For their perspective, the campaign had been well received by red meat processor employees and community members (specifically family). As Chen et al. (2020) noted, how these stakeholders view an organization is part of its corporate social responsibility. Given the extension of the "More to Meat" campaign into 2024, it is imperative the momentum of the campaign endures and consumer perceptions continue to change in a positive manner, which was captured in the "Let's not drop the ball now" emergent theme. This highlights the need for continued communication and education efforts within additional stakeholder groups (Weinreich, 2010), particularly for consumers who do not live in a rural or regional setting. Although the participants anticipated the continuation of the campaign beyond 2024, they recognized constraints such as budget and available resources. Alternatively, educating processors on how they can leverage the "More to Meat" campaign within their communities with the resources already available would be a cost-effective measure.

### **Recommendations**

This study provides an opportunity to suggest several recommendations for research and practice. A limitation of the study is that no one in the "Not influential & Uninterested" category within stakeholder theory (Serra, 2003) was interviewed. Additional research with individuals in this category should be conducted to gather a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions and impacts of the campaign.

Additional research regarding this campaign could analyze the campaign materials, specifically regarding how they were framed. Framing can help understand how individuals perceive messages (Goffman, 1974). It would be beneficial to determine how the "More to Meat" campaign content was framed to then provide recommendations to others in the red meat industry and broader agricultural areas to inform strategic campaign development.

Another area of exploration would be consumer research and message testing to determine campaign awareness and perceptions of the developed content. This research could also examine what influence the campaign has had on trust in the red meat industry or behavioral intentions such as applying for a job in this industry. As those in the agricultural industry consider developing similar campaign efforts, they should follow the R.A.C.E. formula of

research, action, communication, and evaluation (Bégin & Charbonneau, 2012), which emphasizes the need for data-driven decision making.

An additional avenue of research to explore would be the role social media influencers play in the red meat industry. Influencers can help change public opinion on contentious issues (Buddle & Bray, 2019). Some work has been done through Meat & Livestock Australia to educate a variety of influencers about on-farm production and husbandry practices. Avenues for advocacy could include using employees already showcased within the “More to Meat” campaign or finding existing influencers within, or outside, the red meat industry to help share content.

Finally, a comparative study between Australian and U.S. agricultural campaigns should be done. This could also be extended to include any country that has a red meat industry and is interested in enhancing their reputation among stakeholders. This will help determine similarities and differences in the execution and success between countries to help develop better campaigns in the future.

This study provides several recommendations for practice. While red meat processors were involved throughout the campaign’s development process, engagement with groups such as local, state, and federal politicians could be increased. Gaining the support of politicians could help AMPC gain the funding required to continue the “More to Meat” campaign, as well as inform politicians of the issues facing the red meat industry such as recruitment and retention of workers. Engaging politicians allows the red meat industry to leverage this relationship within the bounds of corporate social responsibility.

Other Australian agricultural industries should refer to the “More to Meat” campaign as an example of what can be done to improve consumer perceptions. This campaign can be used as a case study to discuss the R.A.C.E. formula as it applies to communication campaigns (Bégin & Charbonneau, 2012), which may encourage other commodities to address concerns regarding consumer trust and transparency. While the “More to Meat” campaign is about one segment of the Australian agriculture industry, other aspects of this primary industry can learn from these insights to provide proactive information to address misinformation and build stakeholder support.

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