The Institute for Retail Studies

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

The Retail Planning Knowledge Base
Briefing Paper

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Farmers' Markets

Key Findings and Research Progress

- Key Agendas: Local food, local identity, consumer identity, town vitality
- Customer loyalty is critical to the success or failure of farmers' markets. Better promotion must assist.
- Farmers' markets are particularly popular with older consumers.
- The regulation of farmers' markets is a local rather than policy prescribed activity.
- The local food agenda is important to farmers' markets but increasingly major multiples are managing the supply of local foods better.
- The contribution which a farmers' market can make and its success depends on the size of town and the location of the market with markets in central locations in smaller towns fulfilling the key roles of farmers' market more successfully than those in cities or peripheral locations. This is important for those trying to improve town promotion.
- Research Base: This is limited with no large scale surveys but rather evidence based on a series of case studies with the contribution of the North West Advanced Food Centre being the most comprehensive.
- Non-academic interest: Countryside Agency who are pioneering food audits and the Council for the Protection of Rural England who are interested in maintaining pressure to protect local institutions and identity.

Web Sites
www.scottishfarmersmarkets.co.uk
www.farmersmarkets.net
www.lfm.org.uk/index.asp
www.hampshire**farmersmarkets**.co.uk
www.orton**farmers**.co.uk

Key Reports and Articles

Archer, G.P., Garcia Sanchez, J., Vignali, G. and Chaillot, A.
Latent attitudes to farmers' markets in North West England,
British Food Journal, 105(8), 2003, 487-497.

In the authors' survey the ways in which farmers markets are perceived and used is considered. The customers who said that they visited markets, liked them and would return. Some marketing issues were highlighted such as the need to market the measures to promote hygiene which are taken at the market. In towns where the market had a focal location and was dominant, a higher proportion of potential customers were aware that the market was going on. In bigger towns or cities farmers' markets were much more peripheral. This differential is significant in terms of town promotion and the likely impact on town viability which a market can contribute.

Farmers' markets

Campaign to Protect Rural England
Market towns: losing their character?
London: CPRE, 2004, 4p. Available on-line at www.cpre.org.uk

The campaign for the Protection of Rural England have been involved in carrying out a survey of market towns. This is a brief resume of their findings. These include the fact that local retail outlets are struggling and the availability of local foods is declining. Farmers markets were seen very positively. In the conclusions it is noted that large national retailers pose a threat to local business by threatening the identity of the towns.

Market towns

Countryside Agency
Faringdon foodcheck audit report,
Cheltenham: Countryside Agency, 2004, 65p.

The Countryside Agency is pioneering a new foodcheck process which aims to provide a mechanism for supporting and enhancing a town's sustainable local food economy. As a beacon town for its healthcheck process Farringdon was selected as the pilot for the foodcheck process. This is a very detailed study involving much primary research. It included details about forming a food group, gaining community

involvement, completing a local food audit, preparing a local food plan and putting that plan into action. The study involved finding out what consumers regarded as and thought about local food. Purchases of local foods were studied as well as where such products were purchased. Farmers markets were particularly important places of purchase although consumers stated that they would liker to buy these products in supermarkets. Barriers to increased local food purchasing are outlined.

Local food, Farringdon, Farmer's markets

Dunbar, J.
Voices and visions: a celebration of Norwich market,
Norwich: Mousehold Press, 2005, 107p. ISBN 1874739358

This book has been included because of the insights which it gives to the ways that traders think and respond to their changing environment in a market. It also gives useful insights into the way that consumers see the market.

Norwich

Festing, H.
Farmers' markets – bringing the countryside to the town,
Town and Country Planning, 65(1), 1996, 269-270.

The US experience of farmers' markets is examined with reference to the potential for such markets in the UK. Three planned sites in Merseyside, Wiltshire and Kent are noted. Aspects of food safety, planning, sector structure and the attitudes of farmers are all discussed briefly.

Markets

Jones, P., Comfort, D. and Hillier, D.
Back to the future – reviving market halls and covered markets,
Town and Country Planning, 74(11), 2005, 344-347.

With the current emphasis on town centre retailing it might be anticipated that market halls and covered markets would be faring well. The study shows that in practice the focus on town centres as the locus of development has meant increased pressure on town centre sites often with pressure on market sites. In addition the poor state of many markets and the need for extensive renovation and modernisation to meet health and safety standards has also put pressure on the economic viability of market halls and covered markets. Markets in town centres are also less popular with consumers who often find they do not offer the price advantages they hoped for and equally they are difficult to access by car. The example of market redevelopment in Chester is cited. Here the market will be relocated to be better integrated into the town centre and improved facilities will bring the market up to current standards.

Markets, Town centre

Jones, P., Comfort, D. and Hillier, D.
A case study of local food and its routes to market in the UK,
British Food Journal, 106 (4), 2004, 328-335.

This paper examines the concept of local food. It differentiates between products associated with a geographical area but marketed nationally and internationally and those food produced and consumed within a local area. It outlines the benefits and problems associated with local foods noting issues of sustainability and food miles. Local economic benefits are also claimed to accrue form local food initiatives. The article discusses the way that local foods reach consumers via pick your own, farm shops and farmer's markets. The final section looks at the way in which major food retailers respond to local foods. It asks whether the concept of local food really compatible with large scale retailing in the way that consumers perceive the concept of local food. Despite increased interest and supermarket initiatives the prospects for the sector remain limited.

Jones, P., Hillier, D. and Comfort, D.
Alive, alive, O! Street trading in town centres,
Town and Country Planning, 73(4), 2004, 134-135.

A review of the contributions and conflicts associated with street trading and markets. Regulation is primarily a local authority responsibility and rules vary from authority to authority. The aims of policies are generally similar with authorities anxious to ensure fair competition and protect fixed retailers but the policies operated and the means of regulation differ. Some local authorities have schemes of licensed streets and prohibited streets. Other policies focus on the environmental issues and the problems of access and street safety.

Street trading, Farmer's markets

Morris, C.and Buller, H.
The local food sector,
British Food Journal, 105(8), 2003, 559-566.

This study is based in Gloucestershire and uses data collected during interviews with retailers and farmers. Local food chains are investigated. Problems arise in the different constructions of 'local' which appear to exist. Direct farm sales are contrasted with sales of local produce in multiple and independent retail outlets. Although local retailers might be thought to benefit from demand for local produce, the farmers markets have been successful in gaining the major share of this. Equally the major multiples have also taken some of the market.

Rural retailing

Szmigin, I., Maddock, S. and Carrigan, M.
Conceptualising community consumption; farmers' markets and the older consumer,
British Food Journal, 105(8), 2003, 542-550.

This paper shows that farmers' markets exhibit the type of exchanges which characterise the concept of community. These are of significance to certain types of shoppers and appeal particularly to older shoppers. Aspects of farmers' markets which consumers like include the fact that they can talk about the products and their sources with those selling the goods. There are different meanings for those shopping at

farmers' markets reflecting ethical positions. The article is primarily concerned with why consumers choose farmers' market, the kind of identity it offers them and thus the appropriate venue for these markets and the scale of community of consumers they create.

Consumer groups, Farmers' markets

Taylor, J., Madrick, M. and Collin, S.
Trading places: the local economic impact of street produce and farmers' markets,
London: New Economics Foundation, 2005, 84p.
(www.neweconomics.org/gen/uploads/w2rrxbb4htuk3t55fbvmhh5514122005114341.pdf)

This volume uses data collected at two street markets and two farmers' markets in London to assess the role of markets in respect of local economies, food access and the retail mix. Specific problems facing such markets are identified and suggestions made relating to enhancing their contribution.

Farmers' markets, London

Youngs, J.
Consumer direct initiatives in North West England farmers' markets,
British Food Journal, 105(8), 2003, 498-530.

A useful introduction to studies on farmers markets and their viability introduces the article. This is a study of 34 farmers' markets in North West England, many in Cumbria. Half the markets were developing or thriving but others were described as surviving. Customer loyalty was a key factor. A lack of funding for promotion and a lack of produce diversity appeared to be major problems. The article includes a substantive range of responses and information on consumers and traders with socio-economic characteristics and perceptions of trading opportunities at the markets.

Farmers' markets

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