



# Who shops at local farmers' markets? Committed loyals, experiencers and produce-orientated consumers



Lisa McNeill \*, Olivia Hale

University of Otago

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 19 November 2015

Accepted 18 January 2016

Available online 19 February 2016

### Keywords:

Farmers' markets

Lifestyle segmentation

Food

Consumption motivation

Consumer behaviour

## ABSTRACT

Lifestyle segmentation, used to explore consumer attitudes, interests, opinions and values, is applied to a local farmers' market (the Otago farmers' market, in New Zealand) in order to build a profile of consumer motivations and behavioural drivers beyond simple demographic data. Prior research indicates a growing need for studies that seek to understand the intangible aspects of food selection and consumption. Farmers' market consumers are often treated as a homogenous group, with purchase and consumption decision making assumed to rest with tangible aspects of produce on offer, such as its organic nature or lower cost. The overall experience of the consumer within the food purchase environment is often overlooked. The current study finds that three distinctly different consumer segments exist within the farmers' market context, with those concerned with the tangible aspects of produce being the smallest group of consumers. Two consumer segments driven by differing experience-related motivations give the greatest insight into consumer behaviour in a farmers' market context, with committed, loyal consumers being concerned with relationships with sellers and producers, and experience orientated consumers motivated by the opportunity to interact with other farmers' market attendees.

© 2016 Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## CHINESE ABSTRACT

生活方式细分是用来探究消费者态度、兴趣、想法和价值观的方法，它被应用到了一个本地农贸市场（新西兰Otago农贸市场），目的是在简单的人口统计数据之上建立一个消费者积极性和行为推动因素的数据资料。之前的研究表明，我们需要更多地通过研究来设法了解影响食品选购和消费的无形因素。农贸市场的消费者往往被当作一个单一的群体来进行分析，认为他们的购买和消费决策停留在被出售的农产品的有形属性，例如它是否有机或是否价格更低。消费者在食品购买环境中的整体体验往往被忽视了。目前的研究发现，在农贸市场环境中存在三个截然不同的消费群体，而那些关注农产品有形属性的消费者只是人数最少的那个群体。另两个群体是根据不同的体验相关积极性而划分的，一种是坚定的忠实消费者，他们的积极性建立在与卖家和生产者的关系上；另一种是注重体验的消费者，他们的积极性源自与农贸市场中其它参与人员的交流机会。这两个群体能让我们最深入地了解一下农贸市场环境中的消费者行为。

© 2016 Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Farmers' markets continue to rise in popularity, particularly in urban settings, where the concept of buying food directly from the producer has many perceived consumer benefits (La Trobe, 2001). This short supply chain model, with its implied positive implications for the environment and local economies, appears to have achieved considerable consumer trust and acceptance in the food industry (Migliore et al., 2014). Indeed, where current concerns in the food industry are raised (such as genetic modification of food

products), supermarkets rather than producers/growers tend to be the focus for negative consumer reactions (Pearce and Hansson, 2000). In New Zealand, farmers' markets are significant sources of rural economic development (Guthrie et al., 2006). In addition, the farmers' market offers the opportunity for a region to showcase itself and local products (Çela et al., 2007; Plummer et al., 2005) and provides significant regional identity (Boyne et al., 2003; Thomas, 2004).

## 2. The consumer benefits of farmers' markets

Most food-related research focuses on retail stores such as supermarkets, or restaurant settings, particularly with regard to urban environments (McKinnon et al., 2009). Studies of farmers' markets tend to assess the offerings in relation to tangible aspects of the goods

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +6434795758; fax: +6434798172.  
E-mail address: [lisa.mcneill@otago.ac.nz](mailto:lisa.mcneill@otago.ac.nz) (L. McNeill).

on offer, such as price and product availability or variability and nutritional status of offerings (e.g. McGuirt et al., 2011; Lucan et al., 2015). Fewer studies assess the beliefs consumers hold towards farmers' markets and their reasons for both attending, and for purchasing food products within them. Where studies of consumer perceptions do exist, consumers have tended to be aggregated together to provide an overview of reasons for attending these markets, and consumers directed towards assessing the aforementioned tangible aspects of the good on offer (e.g. La Trobe, 2001; Migliore et al., 2014). Overall, food based literature devoted to discussing the farmers' market context regards it as a mechanism for providing increased access to fresh produce in areas where these products are not normally as freely available (i.e. non-rural areas) (Lucan et al., 2015; McKinnon et al., 2009). Tourism literature, however, provides an alternative perspective through examination of culinary tourist motivations, suggesting that food, as a major element of any tourist product, can provide opportunities for relaxation, learning, communication and entertainment within the food procurement experience (Çela et al., 2007; Plummer et al., 2005). Where attendance at a farmers' market can be treated as an 'experience', the wider implications of culinary tourism attributes are likely to be relevant in the overall consumer perceptions and evaluation of a farmers' market, irrespective of the local nature of most farmers' market visitors.

### 3. The farmers' market lifestyle

Where the economic benefits of farmers' markets to regions are well documented, these markets also offer unique social benefits to communities, as well as to individual consumers (Hofmann et al., 2008). Prior research has addressed the role of farmers' markets in satisfying moral issues that many consumers now associate with food production and supply (Aslet, 2002; La Trobe, 2001), increased demand for observable 'quality' indicators in food (such as the ability to meet the producer) (Guthrie et al., 2006; Youngs and Holden, 2002) and the degree of social cachet associated with simply being seen to purchase in a farmers market setting (Fernandez-Armesto, 2001; Guthrie et al., 2006). These factors, combined, relate to the use of farmers' markets by consumers in the construction of a personal lifestyle and identity associated with that (Schaefer and Crane, 2001).

### 4. Farmers' markets and lifestyle segmentation

Lifestyle segmentation, when compared to traditional demographic segmentation (such as age or gender categories) offers the opportunity to understand groups of consumers in terms of their attitudes, interests, opinions, values and consumption preferences (Vyncke, 2002). In this way, lifestyle segmentation allows the attitudes and motivations (and thus behavioural drivers) of specific groups of consumers to be uncovered, rather than profiling the 'average' consumer (Nie and Zepeda, 2011). In the context of farmers' markets, factors such as the relationship between the seller (often the producer) and the consumer, as well as relevant situational factors are suggested as likely to have a greater effect on consumer behaviour than socio-demographic factors such as age, gender and education (Migliore et al., 2015). Recent studies suggest a need for greater understanding of intangible factors in farmers' market purchasing, such as familiarity of the consumer with the shopping experience, cultural values and personal food shopping desires (Lucan et al., 2015). Where farmers' market food experiences can be said to be inseparable from local culture and thus authentic and unique to the host community (Plummer et al., 2005), it is clear that consumer behaviour in a farmers' market context should also be examined in a region-specific fashion.

When groups of consumers are clustered into segments, differentiations between the segments are generated through the total

configuration of benefits sought, rather than individual benefits (Haley, 1968). The clusters that emerge will thus be groups of consumers who place corresponding degrees of importance on the various benefits under study. Farmers' market consumers are often treated as a fairly homogenous market; simply all those who purchase at farmers' markets – and it is often assumed that these consumers all seek the same benefits (such as organic produce, healthy food choices or low prices). Indeed, it is noted that classifying consumers into groups based on psychographic, attitudinal or behavioural characteristics often over simplifies the issue under study (Watkins et al., 2015). Lifestyle segmentation however, which allows segmentation of consumers within a specific regional farmers' market, into distinct groups based on the benefits that they seek from that farmer's market, allows different tactics to be incorporated into farmers' market strategy, to cater towards consumers who seek particular benefits – such as a range of activities, events or facilities that enhance their market experience.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Pilot survey

A pilot survey was administered to twenty consumers at a regional farmers' market in a major New Zealand city. Ten general questions, focussing on why consumers shopped at the market and what kind of products they hoped to purchase, were included. The pilot survey allowed the final set of survey variables to be confirmed, by examining the relevance of scale items drawn from existing literature on farmer's market attendance.

### 5.2. Survey construction

Three main constructs were utilised in the survey for the purposes of the current study: the first two constructs were related to benefits that consumers seek, and the third related to satisfaction. The first benefit segmentation construct was labelled "Reasons for attending the Farmers' Market", and, in order to construct the scale, attributes were identified from existing literature on farmers' markets (Guthrie et al., 2006; Hossain et al., 2002; Lawson et al., 2008; Wolf, 1997). Prior research identifies the general reasons consumers attend farmers' markets; thus the current study sought to determine whether differing segments of consumers would show a propensity towards different sets of these attributes. The factor analysis performed on the scale provided an alpha of 0.725 for reliability (using Cronbach's alpha).

The second construct, labelled "Evaluation of the produce available at the farmers' market" was adapted from Bruner et al. (2001), using the scale "Product Evaluation (Food)". This scale, developed by Perracchio and Tybout (1996), measures the degree to which a consumer positively evaluates, has interest in buying, and would recommend items to a friend. The reliability of the scale was alpha of 0.95. The third construct, "Degree of satisfaction with the shopping experience at the Farmers' Markets", used the scale "Satisfaction (Generalized)" by Westbrook and Oliver (1981). The scale consisted of 12 seven-point Likert items designed to measure a consumer's degree of satisfaction with a product that has recently been purchased. The scale has a reliability alpha of 0.95, and was factor analysed to ensure unidimensionality.

### 5.3. Sample

The sampling design used for the population was a single-stage procedure, visitors to the Otago Farmers' Markets on two Saturday mornings. The selection process for individuals involved a convenience sample, as respondents were intercepted at the farmers' market based on their attendance on that day. The sam-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1026855>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1026855>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)