



Evaluating local food programs: The case of Select Nova Scotia

Andrew J. Knight*

Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, 1741 Brunswick Street, PO Box 2223, Halifax, NS, Canada B3J 3C4

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 30 June 2011
 Received in revised form 20 February 2012
 Accepted 20 May 2012
 Available online 28 May 2012

Keywords:

Program evaluation
 Local food
 Consumer studies
 Buy local

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the buy local food program Select Nova Scotia; a government program with the goal to increase awareness and consumption of Nova Scotia produced and processed agri-food products by Nova Scotians and visitors. The evaluation methodology was based on prior evaluation resources and local food consumer research. Data were gathered through a web panel survey; 877 respondents completed the survey in June 2010. The results suggest that the program is reaching a wider audience than just those predisposed to local food initiatives. In addition, awareness of Select Nova Scotia was related to perceptions of local benefits and barriers, as well as purchase motivation and behavior. Respondents who were aware of Select Nova Scotia rated societal benefits as more important and viewed location and price as less of a barrier; they were also more likely to be highly motivated to purchase local foods. This study also informs results found in previous consumer research studies and identifies marketing opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of local food programs. The results suggest that societal benefits might be used as a way to differentiate products with similar attributes.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The evidence suggests that the demand for local foods is increasing; this demand has been highlighted by the suggestion that localness is one of the “hottest” trends in the world of food (Lerman, Schlack, & Austin, 2010; Gooch et al., 2009; Hartman Group, 2008). In addition to consumer interest for local food, there are a number of local food initiatives in Canada. A review of local food initiatives across Canada by the Canadian Co-Operative Association (2009) identified a total 2314 initiatives. Initiatives were organized into ten types aimed at various actors in the marketplace including consumers, foodservice, food security and policy groups, and regional value chains.

The local food movement has not gone unnoticed by government. Many municipalities and state or provincial governments have enacted local food policies, initiatives and programs across North America and Western Europe. In Canada, at least four provincial governments have implemented local food programs. In Nova Scotia, the provincial government local food program is Select Nova Scotia, which was launched in 2007. The initiation of the program was the result of research indicating that local products in the marketplace could be enhanced with a significant brand strategy.

The goal of Select Nova Scotia is “to increase awareness and consumption of Nova Scotia produced and processed agri-food

products by Nova Scotians and visitors.” In doing so, the program is geared towards forming networks among food producers, the food industry, and consumers. The program accomplishes this goal by promoting local foods, producers, processors and restaurants through awareness campaigns, events, and a logo. More specifically, Select Nova Scotia campaigns are designed to:

- increase awareness and knowledge surrounding local produced food
- help industry with new opportunities
- promote the benefits of buying Nova Scotia products
- increase opportunities for agriculture’s growth and development.

Select Nova Scotia sponsors public relations and marketing campaigns, retail promotion and partnership events, direct marketing events and promotions, foodservice promotions and events, trade events, industry participation, business development support, and maintains a database of local producers and a website. The website contains consumer information such as recipes, where to purchase local foods, benefits of purchasing local foods, the availability and types of local foods, and a list of events and attractions.

This paper focuses on the evaluation of Select Nova Scotia in meeting its consumer goals. More specifically, the evaluation was to determine awareness levels of the Select Nova Scotia program and the impact that this program has on consumer preferences and consumption. This research was to serve as benchmark data as it was the first systematic in-depth attempt at evaluating Select Nova

* Tel.: +1 902 722 1306; fax: +1 902 424 4671.
 E-mail address: knightaj@gov.ns.ca.

Scotia's consumer goals since the inception of the program. Previous evaluations relied primarily on anecdotal evidence and a few survey questions (generally no more than nine) pertaining to Select Nova and local foods that were purchased and asked on a quarterly public opinion survey conducted by a private marketing research firm. The questions, however, were not purchased for each quarterly survey.

Because an evaluation methodology did not exist internally, the first step was to search for existing evaluations of similar programs. Unfortunately, the author was unable to locate any previous published evaluations of programs that encompassed all of Select Nova Scotia's consumer goals. Thus, an evaluative approach needed to be created because the literature review revealed that (a) few local food programs have undergone an evaluation process, and (b) few prior evaluation resources were relevant to conducting such an evaluation. The evaluation approach developed in this instance was based on taking relevant aspects from prior evaluation resources and from local food consumer studies.

The process was further complicated by the lack of data. For instance, it would be ideal to capture consumption directly from retailers, wholesalers, and from direct marketing sales. However, this information is either proprietary or does not exist. Regardless, it was not available to government. To address this issue, proxy information had to be gathered. In this instance, the consumer behavior literature was reviewed so that purchase intention measures could be substituted for consumption data.

This article presents the results pertaining to awareness and the impacts of the Select Nova Scotia program on consumer purchase intentions. It is organized as follows. The first section briefly reviews how local food is defined. The next section provides an overview of local food evaluation resources followed by a literature review of local food consumer studies. The methodology used in the evaluation is described next followed by the evaluation's findings. The findings section contains several sub-sections. The first sub-section discusses the descriptive results. The other sub-sections present the results of multivariate analyses including how the Select Nova Scotia program impacts consumer perceptions on the benefits and barriers of purchasing local foods, as well as their motivations and behaviors to purchase local foods. Conclusions and lessons learned are discussed in the last two sections.

2. Conceptualization of local food

While straight forward conceptualizations of local have been proposed, there is a realization that the term "local" is complex and rather personal in nature (Blake, Mellor, & Crane, 2010; Khan & Prior, 2010; Pearson et al., 2011; Roininen, Arvola, & Lahteenmaki, 2006; Selfa & Qazi, 2005; Smithers, Lamarche, & Joseph, 2008) with consumers generally holding one or more the following conceptualizations of local food. First, local food is defined in geographical terms with multiple geographical distances proposed such as one mile to 100 miles (Blake et al., 2010; Pearson et al., 2011; Smith & Mackinnon, 2007), or a self contained trading area (Khan & Prior, 2010).

Second, it has been defined as a political boundary such as a community, region, state or province, or country (Khan & Prior, 2010; Selfa & Qazi, 2005). A third definition considers local in conjunction with certain benefits and/or attributes such as convenience, health, status, sustainability or preservation of open space (Blake et al., 2010; Selfa & Qazi, 2005). Fourth, local has been conceptualized in opposition to industrial or corporate agriculture as an alternative social movement (Adams & Salois, 2010; Selfa & Qazi, 2005; Weiss, 2011; Zepeda & Deal, 2009). Last, local can be defined in terms of social relationships generally between the consumer and producer (Smithers et al., 2008; Weiss, 2011).

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency states that a food product can only be labeled as local if it originated within 50 km of the place where it is sold, or it must be manufactured in a local government unit and sold in that same local government unit or adjacent government units only. For this reason, Select Nova Scotia cannot market provincial foods as local. A political definition of local is used as Select Nova is a provincial program; thus, the political definition was used in this study and local was defined as foods grown or made in Nova Scotia.

3. Prior local food program evaluations

There are a multitude of local food initiatives with different goals and audiences. Evaluation tools can be adapted for some specific local food initiatives from marketing and economic assessments. For example, tools for calculating economic impacts of farmer markets are fairly well established (Connell, Taggart, Hillman, & Humphrey, 2006; Dungannon Consulting Services, 2008; Fullerton & McNeil, 2004; Miedema, 2008; Otto & Varner, 2005; Sanderson, Gertler, Mertz, & Mahabir, 2005). However, there are few evaluation tools for local food programs aimed at a more general audience, particularly government programs targeted at consumers. Unfortunately, the tools employed in these specific initiatives were not designed to measure the effectiveness of general initiatives.

Two previous evaluation studies were found when conducting the literature search. Govindasamy, Italia, and Thatch (1999) evaluated the Jersey Fresh program by measuring awareness of the program and its impacts on consumer attitudes through a mail survey. The authors found that awareness levels were high and consumers rated food products with the Jersey Fresh logo higher on quality and freshness than other similar products. Patterson, Olofsson, Richards, and Sass (1999) evaluated the Arizona Grown program by measuring awareness, attitudes, and sales of particular fruits and vegetables. Awareness and attitudinal data were gathered through surveys with grocery store shoppers, and sales data were gathered from weekly quantity and price reports provided by grocery stores in Phoenix and Tucson. Their conclusions were that point of purchase materials provided by the Arizona Grown in-store promotions had modest impacts on consumer awareness and preferences for local products, and minimal impacts on product sales. Two other studies measured awareness of state sponsored local food logos, and found that 26 percent were aware of the Delaware Agricultural Products Logo (Gallons, Toensmeyer, Bacon, & German, 1997) and 36 percent were aware of the AgriMissouri label (Brown, 2003).

Previous research on state sponsored local food programs and logos are rather dated and limited. Three of the studies used descriptive statistics, and two studies were not primarily focused on state sponsored local food programs. While Patterson et al.'s (1999) study included multivariate analyses, their research was limited to evaluating point of purchase materials and their sample was limited to grocery store retail shoppers.

In addition to these studies, Meter (2005) offered the following five considerations for how to conduct an evaluation for buy local food campaigns: (1) measure assets, (2) develop a theory of change, (3) develop clear measures of progress, (4) pay attention to progress that is hard to measure, and (5) keep track of evaluation data over time. This research serves as a benchmark to evaluate Select Nova Scotia, which will aid in the development of a theory of change and provide clear measures of progress that can be tracked over time. It was coordinated at a time of review so that other considerations could also be explored.

These previous economic assessments and evaluation studies formed the basis of how to conduct an evaluation of Select Nova Scotia. However, certain limitations, such as the lack of retail and

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/319435>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/319435>

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