

Farmers Markets: Peat, Repeat, and Say It Again - Marketing Your Shoppers Won't Miss

Thursday morning 9:00 am

Where: Grand Gallery (main level) Room C

For many busy farmers, marketing slips down the long list of other demands. And yet, more than ever, there is real competition for "local foods," shoppers' attention and sales. Taking the shopper perspective, this workshop provides tools to maximize the impact of marketing that you're already doing. We will also discuss how to select strategic marketing priorities for the coming season.

Moderator: Amanda Shreve, Manager of Programs and Partnerships, Michigan Farmers Market Association, East Lansing, MI

- 9:00 am Peat, Repeat, and Say It Again: Marketing Your Shoppers Won't Miss
- Colleen Donovan
- 11:00 am Session Ends

Peat, Repeat, and Say It Again: Marketing Your Shoppers Won't Miss

Colleen Donovan, F2M Research x Education, colleendonovan509@gmail.com

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“LOCAL FOODS” SHOPPERS¹ HAVE MORE OPTIONS THAN EVER, MEANING MORE COMPETITION FOR YOU.

In today’s marketplace, most farmers market shoppers today have more options than ever to buy local and organic foods. Produce, dairy, and meat from familiar farms are available at many major grocery store chains and a growing variety of delivery services in addition to food co-ops, independent grocers, CSAs, and buying clubs. For others, the rapid growth of farmers markets may be “reducing the ways in which consumers perceive farmers markets as different from other food-purchasing venues” (Gao, Swisher and Zhao 2012, 1106). As a result, farmers markets and their vendors face unprecedented competition for the “local foods” or “farmers market shopper.”

Many shoppers don’t know the difference between “true” farm products and those that evoke the imagery, language, and feel of farmers market products. The “mavens” may dig deep into the authenticity of a product or source, but most customers are easily swayed and too busy to investigate each product². However, if a “look-alike” product or brand breaks customers’ trust, then it affects everyone, even the genuine producers. What can we do?

KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS’ NEEDS AND WANTS

One of the premises of marketing is to think about what you’re selling from the perspective of your prospective *customer needs or wants*. What “problem” are you solving for your customer? In general, we can look at Maslow’s “Hierarch of Needs” as a starting point.



¹ In this presentation I refer to the “local foods shopper” as shorthand for an eclectic grouping of people seeking out “sustainable” products that evoke a set of values and aspirations without regard to a particular geography.

² The term “maven” as used by Malcolm Gladwell in “The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference” will be explored in the context of “word of mouth” strategies.

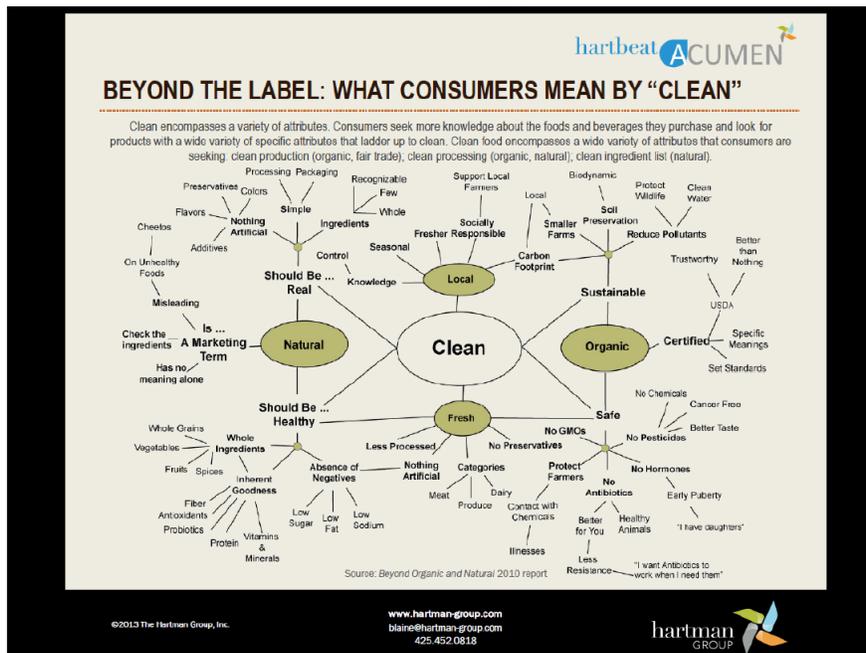
To be more strategic and help you make marketing decisions, we need to know more about YOUR customers. First, let's look at the big picture.

LARGER TRENDS IN “FOOD CULTURE”

Shopper preferences happen amid broad-based food trends and food cultures that change over time. Paying attention to popular food, cooking, health, and “sustainable lifestyle” magazines, websites, TV shows, as well as field trips to your popular retail outlets can provide clues as to the big messages customers are hearing.

Traditional food culture has given way to a dynamic modern food culture

<p>Traditional Food Culture</p> <p>clear societal roles hierarchy class-based identity focus on basic needs production-driven economy uniformity</p>  <p>Traditional Eating Culture</p> <p>product = predictable cooking = chore brand interaction = transactional engagement = low</p>		<p>Modern Food Culture</p> <p>roles in flux values in flux malleable identity creation co-design customization demand-driven economy self expression</p>  <p>Modern Eating Culture</p> <p>product = distinct cooking = discovery brand interaction = playful engagement = CONSUMER CHOICE</p>
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Source: The Hartman Group: <http://www.hartman-group.com/>

For some people, making food choices have become a source of **stress**, including:

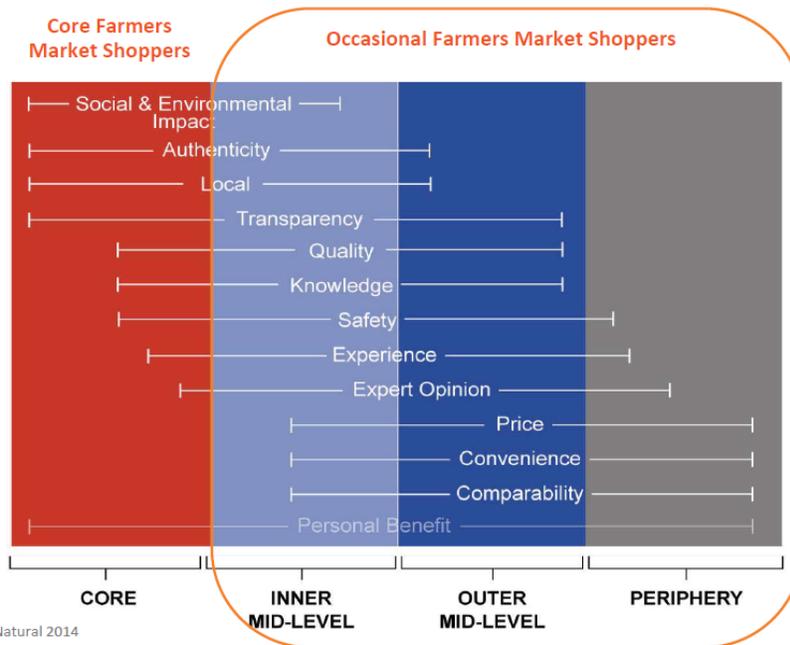
- Pressure to buy the “right” product amid abundance of choice; feeling judged
- Conflation with identity and pressure to perform to social ideals
- Health pressures to feed family/household “right” way in terms of ingredients and meals
- Not enough time or money to “shop responsibly”

DIGGING DEEPER: MARKET SEGMENTS

Different groups of shoppers share particular demographics, values, lifestyles, and behaviors. They also tend to respond to the same sets of product attributes and shopping experiences. Knowing these traits for your CORE SHOPPERS can help you make successful and strategic marketing decisions.

While all segments are driven by personal benefit, differing values inform their purchase criteria

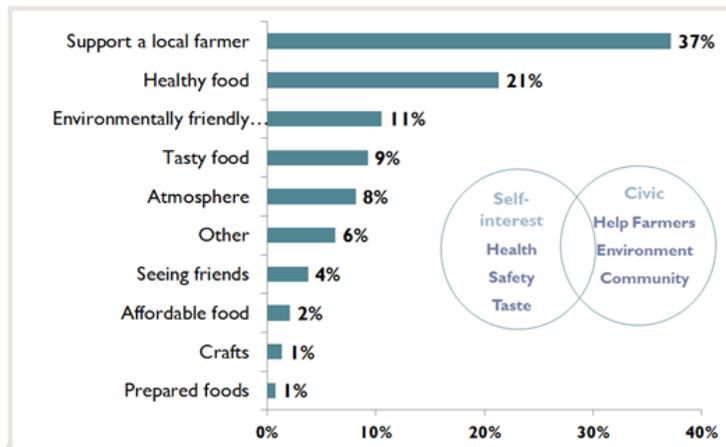
Occasional farmers market shoppers are not thinking about supporting the local food system or sustainable agriculture. They are looking for personal benefits. A great experience of fresh and local foods, abundant samples, cool activities, cooking advice, and good deals. They are looking for a fun adventure in fresh.



Source: Organic & Natural 2014

Source: The Hartman Group

Primary Reason for Shopping at Farmers Market (N = 4,720)



MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUR CUSTOMERS

Knowing what you know about our hierarchy of needs, larger food trends, *and* your core customers, what are your customers' needs and wants? What are you offering (goods, services, experiences) to meet these needs and wants? How can you be more competitive in today's marketplace?

	Core Customer	Needs?	Market Strategy?
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gender</i>: Mostly female • <i>Age</i>: ranges from Gen Y, Gen X, Baby Boomers • <i>Household size</i>: 2.66 • <i>Children under 18</i>: 34% • <i>Income</i>: Non-poor, not necessarily high middle income • <i>Education</i>: Higher levels of formal education 		
Lifestyle/Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy cooking, mealtime • Exercise more • Religious observance • Gardening • Interest in health/foods • Social and ecological impacts • Authenticity • Local • Transparency • Trust relationships 		
Product Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh, healthy, taste <input type="checkbox"/> Unique, heirloom, heritage <input type="checkbox"/> Quality, value <input type="checkbox"/> Safe, trustworthy 		

MARKETING STRATEGIES

- Increase focus within current market channel(s)
- Add new market channels
- Change product(s) to increase number of units sold
- Add products (and services!) to sell more to same customers; “load the wagon” (Allan Nation)
- Change product features (e.g., price, quality, size, quantity, timing, packaging, etc.)
- Improve/change customer service(s)
- Improve display and presentation of individual products
- Improve display and presentation at point of sale
- Targeted outreach (e.g., advertising, social media), merchandising, promotions
- (Re)brand farm and/or product through market position and visual cues (logos, labels, etc.)
- Co-brand by partnering with like-minded entrepreneurs, outlets
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