Location and Other Market Attributes Affecting Farmer's Market Patronage: The Case of Tennessee

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Farmer's markets range from open areas where growers sell their production beside tailgates to multimillion dollar facilities. Surveys of residents living around a variety of farmer's markets and shoppers at the sites are used to draw comparisons of residents versus shoppers at the farmer's markets on the basis of demographics, distances to grocery stores versus farmer's markets, and reasons for and against shopping at the outlets.

Many growers, especially smaller-volume producers, rely on direct outlets as sources of income. During the past few years, there has been a nationwide resurgence of interest in and expansion of farmer's markets. For example, the number of farmer's markets increased 20 percent between 1994 and 1996 (Burns and Johnson, 1996). Facilities range from seasonal sites, which are open areas where growers sell their production from tailgates, to fairly elaborate multimillion dollar facilities, which are open year-round. Tennessee is typical of states that have this broad spectrum of market types. The *1996 National Farmer's Market Directory* identifies 50 farmer's markets in Tennessee (Johnston, Lewis, and Bragg, 1996). Most of these markets were developed with the combined financial support of one or more governmental entities.

Alternative retail outlets for fresh produce create a need to identify similarities and differences among people regarding perceptions of markets in order to develop marketing strategies that cater to market segments. Sensitivity to the distance traveled can also enhance patronage. Facility characteristics that deter patronage, as well as those that foster shopping, comprise a structure for developing effective shopping environments and promotions.

The Farmer's Market Survey

A 1997 survey of consumers in Tennessee was designed to address market segmentation. Six farmer's markets were selected for the study summarized here. They reflect a diversity of settings. Three of them are relatively new. The Agricenter, located in an eastern suburb of Memphis was developed with state funding. The Knox County Regional Farmer's Market, located in the county northeast of Knoxville, was funded by the county. The newest market in the state was developed in Nashville's central business district with city and state funds. An older, privately owned market is located close to the downtown area of Chattanooga. Other municipalities around Tennessee have farmer's markets with more modest physical structures. The West Tennessee Farmer's Market, located in downtown Jackson, is an open-air facility with a concrete floor and a separate building in which crafts are sold. The farmer's market in Murfreesboro is an open-air structure with a gravel floor. Both the Jackson and Murfreesboro markets are seasonal whereas the other four are open year-round.

Based on previous surveys of patrons of farmer's markets, a questionnaire was developed.[1] The motivation was to gather information about food shoppers' perceptions of and patronage of several types of direct outlets. At the beginning of the survey instrument, definitions of each type of retail outlet included in the questionnaire (grocery, on-farm, specific farmer's market near the respondent, and other farmer-to-consumer outlets) were provided. The cover letter or person distributing the questionnaire asked the primary food shopper to complete the form. The following were among the questions asked: (1) What distance does the respondent normally travel to grocery

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[1]Surveys included previous Tennessee surveys as reported in Eastwood, Brooker, and Orr (1987); Eastwood, Brooker, and Gray (1995, 1998); and surveys conducted in Delaware and New Jersey.

stores, to the selected farmer's market, on-farm stands, and to other direct outlets? (2) Has the respondent seen or heard about the Pick-Tennessee-Products logo on products, packages, or in advertising? (3) If the respondent did not go at least occasionally to on-farm or to other direct outlets during the summer, why not (asked to check any of the 14 reasons that applied)? A table format was used so responses were gathered by outlet type. The other questions described here asked respondents to check those criteria from a list of 16 reasons for shopping at the respective outlet. A table format was used for these questions as well.

Questionnaires were distributed in two different ways for each of the six farmer's markets. One method was to distribute them to samples of 1,000 shoppers at the sites. These questionnaires were handed to shoppers regardless of whether a purchase was made. The other method was to mail questionnaires to random samples of 1,000 residents living within a 15-mile radius of each farmer's market. These people were identified with the aid of a computerized database that permitted sorting of residences on the basis of location. Two weeks after the initial distribution, a follow-up instrument was mailed. An explanatory letter was included in both mailings. The questionnaires were mailed to residents and handed out to shoppers in July and August of 1997.

The nature of the survey permitted comparisons between samples of residents in proximity to each market with people who were actually shopping at the respective outlet. It was also possible to create subgroups of resident respondents on the basis of whether they had visited the respective market within the past 12 months. All shoppers had been to their respective farmer's market at least once in order to have received the questionnaire, but they could be separated into subgroups on the basis of whether they had been to on-farm or other direct-to-consumer locations. Visitors and shoppers are similar in the sense that both groups had been to their respective farmer's markets.

Results

Response Rates

For residents, the response rates varied between 13.3 percent and 19.2 percent for the six locations. For shoppers, the response rates ranged from 6.3 percent to 12.9 percent. There was no consistent pattern of response rates between residents and shoppers by farmer's market. Low response rates for mail surveys sent to random samples of people are not uncommon. The printed questionnaire's length could have contributed to the low response rates. It took five sides of 8½-by-11-inch paper, which was folded into a six-page pamphlet. The time required to complete the instrument was five to 10 minutes because most responses simply involved checking the appropriate box or providing a number that did not require any additional information or calculation. A partial explanation of the low shopper response rates is that the questionnaires could have been easily lost on the way home or discarded while unpacking the purchased items; however, the response rates were high enough for the descriptive analyses provided below (Dillman, 1992).

Resident respondents could have visited or not visited each of the markets during the preceding 12 months. Shoppers were patrons at a farmer's market, so all of them were "visitors" of this outlet. However, shopper respondents may or may not have visited on-farm and other direct outlets. Typically, the number of visitors for each of the six locations was smaller for on-farm versus farmer's markets. No consistent pattern for farmer's markets or other direct outlets was observed.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Characteristics of the samples and corresponding information for the 1990 Census, for the respective counties in which the markets are located, were compared (DOC). For all six locations, both resident and shopper respondents were considered to be more interested in fresh produce than the respective populations were. Among residents who received the questionnaire, those who had greater involvement with the consumption of fresh produce would be more likely to have completed the form. Shopper respondents, by their presence at the sites, were not only interested but willing to make the trip to a farmer's market at least once. Consequently, many characteristics of the resident respondents were more like those of shoppers, as opposed to the respective county's population.

Compared to the 1990 Census, respondents were disproportionately female, which is not surprising because most food shoppers are women. At least two-thirds of the non-visitors were female. The percentages of visitors and shoppers who were female were very similar within each location. Murfreesboro had the lowest female patronage percentage (68 percent) and the highest percentage for shoppers (81 percent). Most respondents who had been to the respective outlet were white, and in the cases of Knox County, Memphis, Murfreesboro, and Nashville, the percentages in this racial group were higher than they were for the respective counties in the 1990 Census. Only Jackson had a visitor percentage (white) that was below that for its respective county population. Chattanooga had the highest number of responses from other racial groups.

With respect to age, the proportions of respondents from the youngest age group (18–29) were always less than the corresponding census percentages. Similarly, respondents—and especially visitors and shoppers—tended to be from older age classifications.

Residents and shoppers were more likely to have at least been to college vis-à-vis the county census populations. Consistent with the higher educational attainment, the respondents were disproportionately in the highest income group. To some extent, this factor was the result of rising incomes over the seven-year period although the increases were fairly moderate.

These observations about the socioeconomic compositions of the respondent subgroups suggest the samples are somewhat different from the county populations in which the six markets are located. This was expected, and the results reflect the characteristics of typical fresh produce shoppers who are more likely to be white, female, more highly educated, over 25 years old, and have higher incomes (for example, U.S. Department of Labor).

Awareness of the Pick-Tennessee-Products Logo

Respondents' awareness of the Pick-Tennessee-Products logo and its potential influence on decision-making is reported in Table 1. The first six rows show the breakdown of the percentages of non-visitors, visitors, and shoppers who had seen or heard of the logo. Awareness for all resident respondents was lowest in Chattanooga. Nashville visitors had the largest overall percentage that was aware of the logo. Non-visitors were the least likely to have seen or heard about it. Aside from Murfreesboro and Nashville, shoppers' percentages were greater than visitors'.

Inspection of the four columns of the bottom half of the table suggest that most food shoppers had an inclination to buy Tennessee-labeled products. Memphis non-visitors had the lowest percentage, suggesting slightly less than one-half (46 percent) would give preference, followed by Chattanooga shoppers. Aside from Memphis, at least three-quarters of the visitors indicated that they would show a preference. Shoppers' percentages were not consistently above or below those

Table 1. Awareness of the Pick-Tennessee-Products Logo by Farmer's Market.

Location of Farmer's Market	Residents			
	All	Non-visitors[a]	Visitors[a]	Shoppers
	percent			
Those who have seen or heard of logo:				
Chattanooga	16.9	18.6	15.6	22.2
Jackson	23.3	12.3	31.6	34.8
Knoxville	30.3	22.5	39.7	48.4
Memphis	19.1	16.0	25.5	32.6
Murfreesboro	30.3	26.9	37.5	31.8
Nashville	40.9	35.0	45.8	34.7
Those who would show a preference:				
Chattanooga	72.4	67.6	76.1	57.6
Jackson	70.2	69.0	80.0	85.1
Knoxville	76.6	73.5	80.2	68.0
Memphis	55.4	46.2	58.7	71.3
Murfreesboro	69.3	66.3	75.5	75.9
Nashville	81.8	85.0	79.2	73.6

[a]Non-visitors are those who indicated that they had not been to the respective farmer's market during the past 12 months.

of visitors or non-visitors, which may reflect current or recent experiences at the respective farmer's markets where locally grown produce was of variable quality, perhaps as the result of being there early or late with respect to harvest time. Visitors, as described below, are less regular patrons and may just frequent the outlet when they know specific locally grown commodities are available. The absence of a consistent pattern, with respect to rows and columns in the table, implies that no one group or location is more (or less) disposed to state products.

Distance to Outlets

Distances to retail outlets where respondents shop, along with the average expenditures on the last trip, are displayed in Table 2. Grocery stores, as expected, had the advantage of convenience. People drove several miles farther to reach any of the direct outlet types. Other direct outlets tended to be closer than on-farm and farmer's markets but not as near as grocery stores.

Table 2. Distance to Outlets and Average Purchase by Outlet.[a]

Location	Grocery	Selected Site		On-Farm		Other	
	Mileage	Mileage	Spent	Mileage	Spent[b]	Mileage	Spent
Chattanooga:							
All residents	2.8	10.3		13.9		6.0	
Non-visitors	2.9	11.0		11.4		12.5	
Visitors	2.7	10.1	18.41	14.7	12.09	5.3	11.22
Shoppers	3.5	11.9	21.32	17.1	11.10	4.5	8.44
Jackson:							
All residents	4.0	6.4		10.1		7.9	
Non-visitors	4.1	6.0		6.0		1.3	
Visitors	3.8	6.6	12.56	10.7	14.93	8.8	11.54
Shoppers	3.7	8.3	14.50	10.9	11.67	8.5	8.11
Knox County:							
All residents	2.9	11.6		11.6		4.6	
Non-visitors	2.8	14.6		9.4		5.5	
Visitors	3.6	10.0	15.21	12.6	10.62	4.5	14.76
Shoppers	4.3	9.1	14.70	10.2	13.21	17.9	15.65
Memphis:							
All residents	2.2	8.6		11.2			
Non-visitors	2.3	10.4		8.4		3.2	
Visitors	2.1	7.1	13.83	12.2	13.55	5.8	14.88
Shoppers	2.1	5.8	21.58	17.7	12.00	6.5	13.71
Murfreesboro:							
All residents	4.7	7.4		10.4		7.6	
Non-visitors	5.1	9.5		7.0		9.7	
Visitors	3.8	6.0	12.40	11.6	10.91	7.0	10.50
Shoppers	4.0	5.8	11.91	5.9	12.88	9.9	9.50
Nashville:							
All residents	2.6	11.2		17.5		5.4	
Non-visitors	2.8	16.4		8.0		8.7	
Visitors	2.5	9.6	15.33	20.7	12.11	4.9	13.27
Shoppers	3.4	13.5	19.36	19.0	12.00	4.0	8.76

[a] Visitors are residents who reported making at least one trip to the respective direct outlet. Shoppers received the questionnaire while at the respective farmer's market and also visited the respective direct outlet. Non-visitors are residents who did not go to the respective outlet during the previous 12 months.

[b] Average amount spent on most recent trip.

There appears to be a difference between Jackson and Murfreesboro versus the larger metropolitan areas in that the average distances to the grocery store were slightly longer for the two smaller cities, but the averages for the number of miles to the on-farm and farmer's market sites tended to be somewhat shorter than those for the larger metropolitan areas. This situation is consistent with higher density populations in the metropolitan areas, which are also bigger geographically, so there are more grocery stores spread throughout the suburbs. The results suggest that the limited number of facilities (on-farm or single area-wide farmer's market) have the double distance hurdles of the convenience of grocery stores and other direct outlets. On-farm outlets have the greatest distance problem, as reflected in the longer average distances to travel in this column of the table.

Except for Knox County and Murfreesboro, shoppers on average spent a little more than resident visitors on their last visits to their respective farmer's markets. Residents who visited other direct outlets typically spent more than shopper respondents who also visited other direct outlets, except for Knox County.

The Number of Trips

Further insights into trip frequencies are found in Table 3, where the percentages of respondents visiting each facility at least once during the past year and 10 or more times are presented. With respect to all resident respondents, there was little difference among the percentages going to grocery stores at least one time. However, the four larger metropolitan areas had higher percentages of shopper respondents visiting grocery stores, which may reflect this type of outlet being spread out more in and around larger cities. The very high percentages going 10 or more times indicate both types of respondents were very regular patrons of grocery stores. Memphis and Murfreesboro resident respondents were the least likely to have been to their respective public farmer's market, followed by Knox County. Chattanooga, Jackson, and Nashville had the highest percentages visiting at least once.

Table 3. Percent Visiting Outlets and Making 10 or More Trips, by Outlet and Residents Versus Shoppers.

Location	Grocery		Selected Site		On-Farm		Other	
	At least once	10 or more	At least once	10 or more	At least once	10 or more	At least once	10 or more
Chattanooga:								
All residents	95.7	86.3	55.3	17.7	25.2	8.0	58.3	38.5
Shoppers	98.1	82.3	100.0	60.0	39.0	8.7	45.8	34.2
Jackson:								
All residents	95.2	98.8	55.5	35.8	32.8	11.9	31.4	15.6
Shoppers	98.2	77.1	100.0	60.7	38.2	7.3	34.5	18.7
Knox County:								
All residents	98.3	88.9	44.7	19.6	24.5	2.3	53.1	41.2
Shoppers	97.5	93.0	100.0	77.3	31.3	5.6	53.1	40.0
Memphis:								
All residents	98.4	88.2	32.4	12.2	20.0	4.7	41.4	29.0
Shoppers	98.3	89.3	100.0	62.9	20.4	4.9	36.1	26.7
Murfreesboro:								
All residents	97.9	91.8	31.2	3.6	21.1	7.4	38.1	19.2
Shoppers	98.5	75.9	100.0	44.1	27.9	0.0	39.7	16.2
Nashville:								
All residents	98.4	91.7	54.1	17.3	23.3	3.6	50.4	86.8
Shoppers	98.5	91.6	100.0	48.6	28.6	2.4	44.3	26.7

Shopper respondents always had higher proportions, indicating that they had been to the respective farmer's market at least 10 times. The very low percentages of Murfreesboro residents may be due to this facility offering the least protection from the weather and being open a limited time during the week. Among shoppers, Knox County had the highest proportion of respondents visiting the outlet at least 10 times. Jackson, Memphis, and Murfreesboro resident respondents were somewhat clustered with respect to other direct outlets in terms of having been to these locations at least once or at least 10 times. On-farm markets were visited the least.

Reasons for Not Shopping

If respondents did not go at least occasionally to an on-farm or other direct outlet, they were asked to check all the reasons that applied from a list of 14 criteria. Grocery stores were not included because the focus of the survey was to gather information about food shoppers' attitudes and behaviors relative to direct outlets, and supermarkets were a competing alternative. Therefore, "prefer supermarkets" was included in the list of reasons for not patronizing direct outlets. The criteria are presented in Table 4. Included in the criteria were some payment options offered by grocery stores that were not always available at direct outlets (don't accept checks, food stamps, and/or credit/debit cards). Limited variety was part of the list to reflect the broader range of commodities available in grocery stores as opposed to direct outlets.

Table 4. Reasons for Not Shopping at an Outlet.

Reason	Reason
High Prices	Don't Accept Food Stamps
Poor Quality	Don't Accept Credit/Debit Cards
Limited Variety	Prefer Supermarkets
Inconvenient Location	Too Far
Don't Know of Any	Limited Hours
Not Clean	Grow My Own
Don't Accept Checks	Don't Feel Safe

Inconvenient location and too far were the major reasons for not shopping at farmer's markets. The two are related but were included separately to distinguish between miles traveled and the amount of time that a shopper may have spent to get to a location. For example, in a large metropolitan area, travel time could be greater although the distance traveled could be smaller. Both travel cost measures were major deterrents. Non-visitor percentages for these two deterrents were much greater than were those for visitors, which were almost always greater than those for shoppers. The percentages for the other reasons were all very low and approximately equal among the subgroups. Shoppers were much less likely to have checked inconvenient location and too far, which is consistent with the fact that they typically make more trips. Location problems seem to be greater for the four largest areas for all three respondent groups. Limited hours for Murfreesboro reflected this market being open only two days per week during the harvest season.

For on-farm outlets, the don't know relative frequencies were approximately the same as the location-related ones as far as the non-visitors were concerned. By definition, on-farm visitors and shoppers who also had been to an on-farm site had to know of at least one. But the low percentages of patrons at these outlets suggest many of them also "don't know of any."

Food shoppers seem to be more aware of other direct outlets than they are of on-farm sites but not as familiar with them as they are with their respective targeted farmer's markets. In addition, both location-related reasons for not shopping applied to these other types of sites.

Respondents who had been to the Knox County farmer's market were the most likely to have checked high prices as a reason for not shopping there. Just over one-quarter of the shoppers indicated that this was a reason. Otherwise, the low response rates across all markets and subgroups suggest visitors and shoppers were fairly well pleased with the attributes that can be controlled. That is, little can be done to move consumers closer to the various markets. With respect to quality, variety, limited payment options, and supermarkets, the direct outlets have favorable perceptions on the part of most respondents.

Reasons for Shopping

Reasons for shopping at outlets are listed in Table 5. Respondents were asked to check all those that applied at the respective type of market. Grocery stores were included as an outlet to allow

Table 5. Reasons for Shopping at Outlet.

Reason	Reason
Convenience	Canning/Freezing
Value	Atmosphere
Quality	Special Event
Selection	Homemade Foods
Help Local Farmers	Crafts
Nutrition	Flowers
Freshness	Precut
Locally Grown	Shrubs

for comparisons of criteria that were common to the four types of retail food outlets through which fresh produce is typically sold to consumers.

The most frequently checked criterion for grocery stores is convenience, followed by selection, quality, and value. For these four criteria, the residents had higher percentages than shoppers, which is consistent with the shoppers being more frequent patrons of farmer's markets. Percentages for the remaining criteria were fairly low and suggest that they were not primary determinants of either type of respondent going to grocery stores.

Convenience was a reason for patronizing farmer's markets for less than one-half of the visitors and shoppers, and for non-visitors, less than 15 percent felt that it was a reason. The major criteria were help local farmers, freshness, locally grown, value, quality, and nutrition. Canning/freezing was also a motivation for many shoppers. Special events were a draw for just under one-third of Knox County shoppers, but the percentages were much lower in the five other farmer's markets. Both visitors and shoppers rated selection better for farmer's markets over grocery stores in Chattanooga, Jackson, and Knox County, and the proportions of shoppers in Memphis, Murfreesboro, and Nashville rated selection higher vis-à-vis grocery stores. Flowers was a positive reason for approximately one-third of the visitors and shoppers in Knox County and Nashville, and for just under one-quarter in Memphis.

With respect to on-farm outlets, convenience was less of a reason to patronize, except for the Jackson area where it was fairly comparable to the farmer's market. Selection percentages were also lower for the on-farm sites. Somewhat surprising were the lower proportions for help local farmers, nutrition, freshness, and location (with the exception of Murfreesboro and Nashville visitors).

Percentages for the other direct outlets generally fell between farmer's markets and on-farm. Convenience was more of a factor—which was to be expected because there are more other direct outlets in metropolitan areas but only one targeted public farmer's market in each. These other outlets were also more likely to have fresh produce from other areas. Furthermore, freshness and nutrition may be perceived by some respondents as lower because of increased time in post-harvest handling.

Systematic Patterns in Responses

Tests of statistical independence were conducted among respondents. These tests pertained to all resident respondents and the three subgroups: non-visitors, visitors, and shoppers at farmer's markets. On-farm and other direct outlets were not included because there were too few observations to draw inferences. This problem was also present within some response categories, even for farmer's markets. For example, the low percentages for many criteria for not shopping at a farmer's market resulted in too few observations to apply statistical tests. Nevertheless, it was possible to conduct some tests and to draw inferences with marketing implications. These tests and inferences are summarized below.[2]

One set of tests evaluated whether the socioeconomic characteristics of the resident respondents were related to their being non-visitors or visitors of the respective farmer's market. The inferences drawn were that visiting a farmer's market was independent of age, education, and income. An implication is that, given the typical characteristics of fresh produce consumers, there is no need for further distinction on the basis of whether a particular socioeconomic characteristic is associated with the likelihood of visiting a farmer's market.

Another group of tests examined awareness of the Tennessee logo versus the socioeconomic measures. Familiarity with the state logo was not associated with age, education, or income. This finding suggests that, among typical fresh produce shoppers, no demographic subgroup was more or less aware of the logo. In addition, no socioeco-

[2]Readers who would like statistical tables associated with the tests can contact the authors.

nomic measure was related to giving preference to Tennessee-labeled products. Another point is that the respondents' preference for Tennessee products was not associated with having made a trip to a farmer's market.

Responses to the reasons for not shopping were compared to the number of trips made to farmer's markets.[3] Inconvenient location and too far were associated with fewer trips in each market. Prefer supermarkets was found to be independent of the number of trips, which is an indication that respondents did not have a bias against a respective farmer's market. There were too few responses to the other reasons for not shopping to conduct these tests.

The following results were obtained from tests of association between the number of trips and the reasons for shopping at a farmer's market. Convenience was related to making more trips for all resident respondents. With respect to non-visitors versus visitors, the latter were associated with checking all the reasons except special event, homemade foods, crafts, flowers, precut/packaged produce. An implication is that most of the criteria included in the list of reasons for shopping should be included in various promotions during harvest season.

Tests of association between shoppers versus residents and reasons for not shopping were conducted. Shoppers were less likely to have checked high prices, inconvenient location, and too far as reasons for not patronizing the respective farmer's market. There were too few observations or no significant differences in the response patterns for limited variety, don't know of any, not clean, payment options, prefer supermarkets, limited hours, raise my own, and don't feel safe. An implication is that media promotions could suggest to stop by while on trips near the location.

Shoppers versus residents and reasons for shopping were also analyzed. Systematic patterns were found for most of the criteria. Shoppers were more likely to have checked value, quality, selection, help local farmers, nutrition, freshness, locally grown, and atmosphere as reasons for shopping. Precut/prepackaged foods were never significant, or residents and shoppers checked this criterion in an unrelated manner. Shoppers were more likely to have indicated that convenience was a reason, except in Memphis and Nashville, where there were no systematic patterns. Canning/freezing was significant aside from Jackson. Special events and homemade foods were reasons for shopping in Jackson and Knox County. Flowers were a significant reason for shoppers to go to farmer's markets, except in Chattanooga and Jackson.

Marketing Implications

Several marketing implications follow directly from the results of the surveys. These are organized in terms of socioeconomic characteristics, messages to include in promotions, and things to provide at outlet sites. Outlet-specific comments are given where appropriate.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

The typical fresh produce shopper is a white female who is over 45 years old, has at least been to college, and is in an above average income group. Choice of media to use should include newspaper sections that are read by this type of person, such as a food and/or living sections. In the larger metropolitan areas, regional sections of the paper, especially those in close proximity to the direct outlets, would be good places for ads. Local, area-specific papers that have circulations in ZIP codes near sites should be part of the marketing plan.

Media

Newspapers were the most frequently recalled source of information for all three types of direct outlets and across all six geographic areas, so it should be part of marketing programs. Roadside signs are also important for three reasons. First, they serve the purpose of "announcing" the respective outlet to people passing by. Second, they convey a shopper-friendly message to people who are first-time customers. Third, they address the problem of many potential customers not knowing the location.

A good time for radio messages would be during the rush hours. Not only are the audiences larger, but potential customers are already on the road. The promotion could encourage people to turn off well-traveled commuter roads for a quick side-trip for locally grown produce.

[3] Trips were grouped in none, one to six, and more than six.

Messages

Direct outlets must address the greater cost and travel time that their patrons incur in order to frequent their facilities. Directions to outlets should be provided in as many promotions as possible. In print media, an easy-to-read map would help potential customers to realize where the site is and would show them how to reach it. Travel time from frequently visited locations, such as a mall or major highway, can help to attract patrons.

Remind people that fresh produce items are great snacks. They are healthy and easy to prepare. In this regard, tie-in information about the national 5-a-Day program would be good to include.

Recipes, perhaps with a map to the location on the back, are also popular promotional items that could be available at direct outlet cash registers, within easy reach of shoppers, or handed to customers along with any change from their purchases. Canning and freezing instructions could be distributed in the same way.

Key reminders are reasons for shopping at direct outlets: support local farmers, freshness, locally grown, value, quality, and nutrition. These are reasons for people to go to the extra effort to patronize a direct outlet. All of them do not need to be included in every promotion. Rather, they could be rotated, thereby presenting a different message during the harvest season.

Since patronage incurs additional travel and time costs to shop at direct outlets, as opposed to grocery stores, competitive pricing is essential. Consequently, some price information in ads would help to attract shoppers by suggesting that it is worth the trip. This is particularly important since so many food shoppers are unsure of prices at direct outlets.

Year-to-year variations in weather, coupled with many consumers growing up and living in urban areas, lead to people being unaware of the varieties of fresh produce raised locally. Promotions could include information about what produce is available, when commodities are expected to be ready for sale, and the length of time that these items will be available.

On-Site

Once people have reached direct outlets, it would be good to reinforce their reasons for coming. This can be accomplished with the use of signs that clearly identify each locally grown commodity. Use of logo-oriented signs serve as positive reinforcements of consumer attitudes, and they would even be useful at on-farm outlets. At farmer's markets, uniform signs—which include the Pick-Tennessee-Products logo—could serve this purpose. Outlets that are close to state boundaries could have similar signs for out-of-state, but nearby, growers. A closely related point is that, if boxes are used in displays or for customers to take products home, boxes for a competing product should not be used. For example, a Washington State apple grower box should not be used for locally grown apples.

Quality is important to shoppers, so displays must be neat; it is best if only the highest-quality products are available. Consequently, vendors need to inspect their displays and remove damaged and spoiled produce.

Since consumers may be unaware of expected harvest dates, it would be useful to have signs indicating when various commodities are, or should be, available. One location for this would be close to registers, where people could read them while waiting to check out. Roadside signs could also have interchangeable tags to indicate that popular produce items are available.

Heat quickly damages fresh produce; however, most food shoppers are unaware of how little time is required, especially in automobiles, for quality to decline. To avoid customer dissatisfaction, it would be good to have signs near the registers or entrances giving transport and storage tips for fresh produce. They could emphasize the need to avoid getting items too hot in the car. Inexpensive coolers and ice could be available for sale as well. Such information has the added benefit of suggesting that the outlet is concerned with providing quality produce and trying to help customers maintain the quality.

Some direct outlets may also want to promote the availability of baskets and boxes of produce. They make excellent presents for businesses and are good gifts when going to friends' homes for cookouts or when visiting someone who is sick.

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