

North Iowa Farmers Market

Vendor and Consumer Preference Study



PROJECT STATEMENT

Mason City's community farmers market was recently displaced from a highly visible location, and the temporary 2016 site location lacked visibility, although it was located along a high traffic corridor. Consequently, sales decreased at the market. Some producers have left the market and established their own pop-up sites along heavily traveled streets.

A healthy and profitable metropolitan farmers market, which will support broad efforts to enhance the quality of life in the community, promote sustainability, and encourage agricultural entrepreneurialism and small business.

In a report to the City of Mason City and North Iowa Farmers' Market Board of Directors, students in the Entrepreneurial Management Institute: Business Consulting class made recommendations for future decisions based on best practices, as well as consumer and vendor preferences. The group conducted market research among current and former vendors and producers, and consumers, on their expectations, preferences and perceptions of the farmers' market.

The student consulting team made recommendations on best practices of metropolitan farmers' markets, including facilities recommendations to support a vibrant year round farmers' market in Mason City.

Name of Market	Day(s) of Week	Time of Day	Product(s)	Event/Entertainment
Mason City Farmers Market pop. 27,704	Tuesday & Fridays	3 - 6 pm	Produce, Baked Goods, Candles, Crafts, Jams & Preserves	No
Marion Farmers Market pop. 34,768	Saturdays	8 - 11:30 am	Produce, Fresh baked goods, flowers and homemade crafts	No - It coincides with the Market of Marion's Special Events (another program.)
Muscataine Area Farmers Market - pop. 23,034	Tuesdays &	Tue (2:30-5:30 pm) Sat (7:30 - 11:30 am)	Tuesday - just produce. Sat - produce, meat, baked goods, arts/crafts, etc.	Tuesday - No; Saturday -Yes, live groups from around the area
Fort Dodge Market On Central pop. 24,639	Every 2nd & 4th Saturday of Month	9am - 1 pm	Produce, Arts/Crafts, meat, fresh baked goods, food vendors on site, local business involvement, etc	Yes - Live music or groups from city
Coralville Farmers Market pop. 20,092	Mondays & Thursdays	5 - 7 pm	Produce, Baked Goods, Eggs, Flowers, Jams & Preserves, Local Honey, Wine, Handmade art & jewelry	Yes - live music & kids/family theme days. (specifically acoustic music)



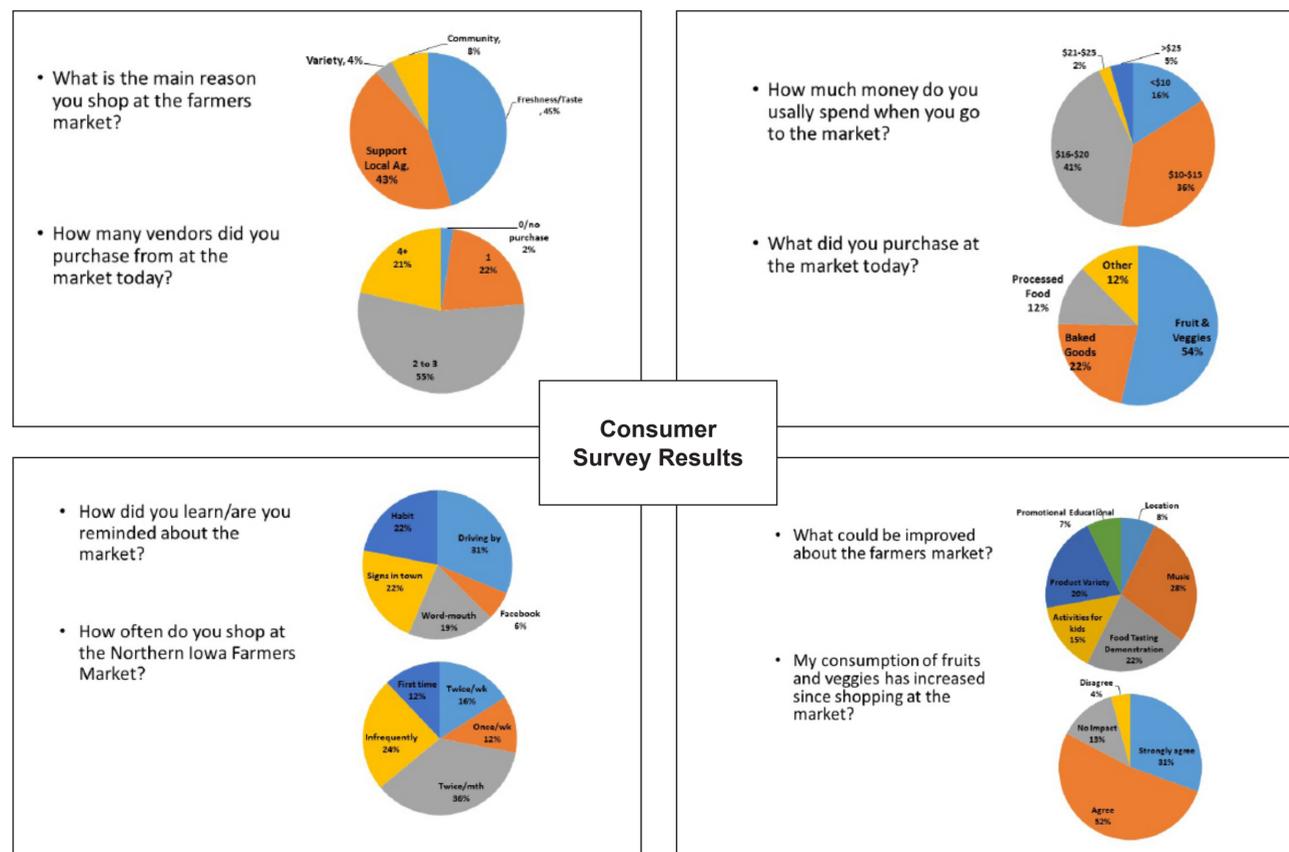
Environment Analysis

Industry Overview
According to the USDA

- 8,144 markets in the US, 229 in Iowa.
- Approximately 150,000 farmers, ranchers and agricultural entrepreneurs are selling products in US.
- Over \$1.5 billion in sales in 2015.
- \$16 million in sales through SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

Vendor Interview Results

- Products offered - produce, fruit, jams/jellies, fresh baked goods, knitted craft items, quilts, candles and organic aromatherapy items.
- All vendors participate in other markets, Clear Lake, Cedar Rapids and Des Moines.
- Prefer Friday over Tuesday Mason City markets (15 out of 20 said they wouldn't participate in any other days offered).
- All vendors rely on word-of-mouth advertising, few have any other forms of advertising besides what the market does currently with Facebook.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Feature events, such as musical performances, once or twice month to attract a larger crowd to its location.
- Include small local businesses to set up vendor booths or host/sponsor events.
- Expand variety of products, such as meat producers.
- Continue to use brainstorming events to allow vendors to partake in discussion about the future of the market.
- For market board members and managers, attend the annual Iowa Farmers Market Association Conference to connect and brainstorm with other managers.
- Increase advertising and promotion of markets by providing a free class to vendors on how to utilize social media so that consumers are more aware of the market.
- Changing the days of the market is not recommended due to vendors participation in other markets.