Proceedings from
The 16th Annual National Value-Added Agriculture and The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development
What Works III Conference
May 2014
EXPANDING DIRECT MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH FARM SHOPS IN WESTERN TOURISM DESTINATIONS: EXTENSION PROGRAM DESIGN

Deepayan, Debnath, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute, University of Missouri – Columbia, 573-882-5105, debnathd@missouri.edu

Kynda, Curtis, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Economics, Utah State University, 435-797-0444, Kynda.curtis@usu.edu

Susan, Slocum, Assistant Professor, Tourism and Events Management, George Mason University, 703-993-4260, slocum@gmu.edu
EXPANDING DIRECT MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH FARM SHOPS IN WESTERN TOURISM DESTINATIONS: EXTENSION PROGRAM DESIGN

Abstract

Direct marketing outlets have expanded dramatically due to increasing consumer demand for local fresh and valued-added food products, especially in the western US. Direct marketing has been crucial in creating jobs, expanding market opportunities for agricultural producers, and spurring regional economic development—especially in prime tourism destinations, where visitors spend almost half of their travel budget on food and beverages. On-farm shops/stores, where producers can sell their fresh produce, value-added food items, and other arts and crafts are popular direct marketing avenues in the UK and some eastern US states. There are very few on-farm shops in the West, however, likely due to high initial investment costs, lack of experience and information on farm shop management and marketing. The I-15 corridor in the Intermountain West provides access to over 20 national and state parks, and thus, is a prime area for tourism development, including on-farm shops for producers looking to access this market.

To assess producer interest in on-farms shops, producer preferences for shop location, as well as the primary hurdles and educational topics they view as important, an online survey of small-scale producers in the Intermountain West states of Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Wyoming was conducted in November 2013. Survey results show interest in farm shops is high among respondents as 36% have considered selling their products through farm shops, 79% would
attend Extension workshops on farm shop establishment and operation, and 73% would consider joining a food hub or state-wide farm shops system.

This project will enhance the economic viability of small farms in the region by introducing opportunities to diversify markets, market outlets and product lines through farm shops. A curriculum on best practices and assessing economic feasibility for farm shop development focused on the tourism market will be delivered through workshops across the Intermountain West.

Introduction

Food tourism is gaining momentum, as agricultural producers look to diversify their operations in order to achieve economic sustainability (Everett and Slocum, 2013) and ourism providers struggle to find the regional distinctiveness necessary to differentiate themselves against other tourism destinations (Lane, 2009). In the Intermountain West, agritourism has received extensive industry and policy focus (Thilmany et al., 2007). However, it can be argued that traditional agritourism is only a sub sample of a broader agricultural related tourism industry, which also includes food tourism. Many policy directives and funding in the Intermountain West region have neglected to address the larger picture of uniting the growing tourism industry with the local foods movement.

Food tourism is a concept that has gained significant attention in recent tourism literature. It is recognized as a vehicle that can enhance a destination’s tourism offering and create backward
linkages that generates additional economic opportunities for local residents in tourism destinations (Telfer and Wall, 1996). Especially in areas where farming and food production constitutes a large economic sector, food tourism provides an avenue to promote and distribute local agricultural production while simultaneously providing the tourist with a means by which cultural experimentation can occur (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). Government agencies have also realized the potential of food tourism’s ability to enhance the sustainability of tourism development (du Rand and Heath, 2006) and have created a culturally-aware and critically-orientated policy research agenda that supports agriculture and tourism partnerships (DEFRA, 2002). The result is that food is increasingly becoming part of the sustainability agenda for many communities, especially in Europe, and emphasis has been placed on food tourism to supplement the agricultural sector and broaden the scope of regional development schemes in rural areas (Sharples, 2003).

Food tourism is important in strengthening a region’s identity, sustaining cultural heritage, easing fears of global food homogenization, and supporting a region’s economic and socio-cultural foundation (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). Therefore, community identity and cultural distinctiveness can be expressed through food tourism while providing an avenue for economic development (Rusher, 2003). The ultimate policy agenda for uniting food production and tourism are two-fold: to fulfill utility goals that involve the contribution of the farming sector in the overall health of the economy; and enhance equity goals that focus on the provision of satisfactory incomes for rural populations (Pretty, 2002).
Research has shown that tourists spend approximately 40% of their travel budget on food and beverages when traveling (Boyne et al., 2002). Additionally, tourists may travel exclusively for food related experiences, such as brewery and winery tours, cooking schools, etc. Food can enhance tourists’ experiences and can be used to represent the image and distinctiveness of the destination (Quan and Wang, 2004). Therefore, identifying and positioning food for the tourism market is highly desirable in developing a potential regional image for tourists. Corigliano (2002) argues that regions that take advantage of their food and beverage offerings and position them as part of their premier tourism basket will benefit highly through the increased value of their destination.

The I-15 corridor in the Intermountain West (See Figure 1) provides access to over 20 national and state parks and other outdoor tourism activities (skiing, hiking, fishing, boating, rafting, etc.), and thus, is a prime area for agriculture and food tourism development. In 2012, Utah had 23.5 million visitors and it is estimated that visitors spent over $4 billion. According to the Utah Department of Workforce Services, tourism is a key job creator in rural Utah counties, employing 41.9% percent of the workforce in Garfield County, 35.6% in Grand County and 32.8% in Kane County for example (Park Record, 2013).

This project seeks to enhance economic development in rural areas of the Intermountain West by opening up new markets and diversifying outlets and product lines of small-scale agricultural and food producers in Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, and Montana, through ag/food tourism development and expansion, as well as coordinated marketing efforts through current tourism
publications. The project will focus on small-scale producers, which make up 90% of all farms in the Intermountain West (defined by the USDA as those who have less than $250,000 in annual sales (USDA –AgCensus, 2007)). Thus, their long-term success is important for the economic survival of these communities.

![Map of the US Intermountain West](image)

**Figure 1. US Intermountain West.**

**Background**

Traditional industries, such as farming, face new challenges with increasingly globalized supply chains and price-competitive marketing strategies employed by food service providers. However, consumer food safety concerns in combination with the potential environmental repercussions of global food systems, consolidation among food industry players, and a perceived loss of distinguishable food identities, has resulted in widespread discouragement with current food distribution systems (Goodman and Du Puis, 2002). Thus, consumers are turning to regionally-identified foods, relying on local direct markets and distribution networks (Lockie and Collie, 1999).
The local foods movement in the US has fueled the expansion of direct market outlets for fresh local foods. For example, the number of farmers’ markets increased by 184% percent from 2000 to 2013 (2,863 to 8,144) (USDA-AMS 2014). Other typical direct outlets such as farm stands and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs have also grown dramatically in number due to consumer concerns regarding foods safety, diet/health, the environmental impacts of conventional food production and transportation, as well as the desire to support local agriculture and preserve local agricultural lands (Curtis and Cowee, 2011; Darby et al., 2008; George et al., 2011). Research suggests that those consumers who support local producers and purchase local foods through direct marketing outlets at home also seek to experience local and traditional food/drink when traveling (Curtis et al., 2009). The direct marketing of local foods has been crucial in creating jobs, expanding market opportunities for agricultural producers, and spurring regional economic development (Curry and Oland, 1998). Direct marketing venues such as farm shops/stores (both on and off-farm), where producers can sell their fresh produce, value-added food items, and other products are popular in the UK and some areas of the US, but there are very few farm shops in the Intermountain West (less than 25 in Utah, Nevada, and Idaho combined), likely due to high initial investment costs, as well as lack of experience selling to tourists/visitors and knowledge regarding visitor preferences.

Food tourism is defined as “the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region” (Hall and Sharples, 2008, p.10) and covers a vast number of gastronomic
opportunities for tourists (Okumus et al., 2007), as well as economic development schemes. Food tourism has been hailed as a vehicle for regional development that can strengthen local production through backward linkages in tourism supply-chain partnerships (Telfer and Wall, 1996; Renko et al., 2010) and is regarded as an important vehicle in delivering sustainable tourism (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). In rural areas where food production constitutes a large percentage of the economic output, food tourism offers new opportunities to promote and distribute local produce while providing an enhanced visitor experience through the expression of community identity and cultural distinctiveness (Rusher, 2003).

In the Intermountain West, academic studies and Cooperative Extension publications document the rise of direct market distribution networks, such as farmers’ markets, consumer supported agriculture programs (CSAs), and farm stands/shops. However, there are only a few studies that have acknowledged the rise of agritourism in this region (Gascoigne et al., 2008). A study of agritourism visitors in Arizona found that visitors were seeking a farm experience, especially when they had children unfamiliar with farm life (Anderson and Hall, 2000). In a study involving 11 western states, many of them Intermountain states, Wilson et al. (2006) measured the impact of Conservation Reserve and Wetland Reserve programs on the productivity of agritourism operations. They found that public investment through these national programs did enhance the recreation (and tourism) revenue streams of the study areas by increasing native animal populations and supporting a growing hunting and fishing industry.
Healy (2009) documented the advantages of a locally formed ranch cooperative in Montana and found that the network helped match vacationers with specific ranches that offered a customized holiday experience and helped ranchers create an ‘authentic’ touristic experience. This limited list of agritourism and food tourism studies show the need for a much larger scale investigation into economically feasible models of ag/food tourism activities. An investigation is needed to assess the willingness of agriculture and food producers to diversify into food tourism, consumer (tourist) perceptions of food in the Intermountain West and the food related images currently promoted, as well as strategies for integrating food tourism into current tourism activities.

**Program Design**

This project is designed based upon the standard Logic model (Millar et al., 2001), which describes logical linkages among audience needs and program resources, activities, outputs, and short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes (Table 2). The situation and target audience of the program is founded and described based upon the *Needs Assessment*. The assessment also provides the foundation for fashioning the economic and social impacts, both private and public, that the program aims to achieve. Required inputs, outputs, and evaluation tools can then be chosen or created to best achieve the program results/impacts desired. The following paragraphs describe the needs assessment conducted and an overview of the results, the current program outputs and activities planned, and finally the program impacts and evaluation methods.
Figure 2. Extension Program Design Schematic.

**Needs Assessment**

To assess producer interest and educational needs related to programming in agritourism and farm shops specifically, a web-based survey of small-scale producers in the Intermountain West (Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Wyoming) was conducted in November 2013. Producers were recruited through programming list serves of Extension programs in the target area. A total of 96 producers responded to the survey.

The survey respondents primarily marketed their products through direct marketing outlets such as farmers’ markets (72.8%), as well as by internet (38%) and to restaurants (36%). Just over 45% of the respondents had five years or less experience farming and 49% had annual gross revenues under $5,000. About 63% indicated they were located near a tourism destination or on a direct travel route between destinations, 36% (Figure 3) had already considered selling their products through on/off-farm shops, and 24% were already involved in
agritourism activities (farm stays, hay rides, school visits, etc.). Additionally, 49.3% felt that the new activity should be located on or near their farm/operation and 32% would locate it in a nearby town. Over two-thirds (73%) were interested in joining a marketing cooperative, such as food hub or state-wide farm shop system (Figure 4) and 79% would attend Extension workshops on best practices for ag/food tourism expansion and operation.

The primary benefits noted by respondents in rank order (Figure 5) were, 1) additional market for current products, 2) a venue for year-round sales, 3) an outlet for value-added/processed product sales, and 4) additional income opportunity for family members. Infrastructure (capital) investment was the primary hurdle noted by respondents, followed by governmental regulations, insurance costs, marketing, and labor availability, respectively (Figure 6). Respondents ranked marketing, pricing, financing options, and processing/labeling value-added products highest among the education topics they would like to see offered through programming (Figure 7).

Figure 3. Interest in Farm Shops as a Marketing Outlet
Figure 4. Ownership Interest

Figure 5. Benefits of Sales through a Farm Shop
Figure 6: Primary Hurdles to Opening/Operating a Farm Shop

If you were to attend a workshop/training on farm shop sales, what topics would you like to see covered? (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring and managing employees</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/promotion</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering and inventory management</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product placement and arrangement</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing/labeling value-added products</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pricing products</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracting with store owners</td>
<td>52.3%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Educational Topic Rankings

**Program Outputs**

A curriculum on best practices and assessing economic feasibility for farm shop development focused on the tourism market will be delivered through workshops across the Intermountain West. Engaging, interactive Extension programming, where participants are given the tools needed to successfully evaluate new opportunities and the ability to use those tools by the end of the program, demonstrate a high likelihood of success in terms of participant achievement of
program goals/results and ultimately the economic and social impacts desired. This project follows this hands-on engagement model. The project will deliver face-to-face workshops, where instructors will lead producer participants through a step-by-step process of evaluating the financial, regulatory, and marketing aspects of introducing farm shop sales and value-added products into their operation. Workshop materials will include a notebook including topic-based fact sheets and worksheets participants will complete during the workshops, as well as check lists, action plans, and excel assessment tools for their use in completing all remaining project results. The project will also track participant progress, in terms of achieving project results and resulting impacts. All materials will be available online and distributed to Extension professionals.

**Program Impacts and Evaluation Methods**

All project activities will be evaluated for participant knowledge gain/attitude change, practice change, and economic and social impacts resulting from the educational programming.

Proposed project impacts or results are provided in Table 1. Evaluation instrumentation will be quantitative in design primarily, utilizing Likert-type scales that provide participants with flexibility to answer question items as honestly as possible while allowing analysis using basic descriptive statistics. The Likert-type scales featured in questionnaires will pose user-friendly questions and provide both positive and negative options, with each containing equal numbers of choices. Evaluation design with these type of ordinal response options will be meaningful, balanced, easy to understand and complete, and easy to distinguish from the question and response directions. An accurate, user-friendly evaluation instrument will include numbered,
simply worded questions, simply worded responses, clear instructions, logical question order, attractive and easy to read design and format.

Evaluation instrumentation will be designed to measure project benefits/impacts. Evaluation questions will assess baseline knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation, confidence, behavior, practice and decision-making. The baseline data (pre-workshop) will be used to compare with post-workshop evaluation data to gage immediate changes as a result of educational intervention in an intense learning setting. Retrospective evaluations will be designed to measure knowledge retention over time in addition to subsequent desired attitude and behavioral changes. Similarly, these evaluation instruments will be quantitative in design, utilizing Likert-type scales and will be user-friendly and simple to answer. Retrospective questionnaires will be as brief as possible so as not to require lengthy time involved with completion, and thus ensure a higher response rate.

All evaluation instrumentation will be designed early on in the project planning phase so as to match impact measures with identified benefits/impacts and teaching/learning activities designed to achieve the identified benefits/impacts. Evaluation instruments will be reviewed by a panel of experts in survey design, and revisions made accordingly. Evaluations will measure the quality and effectiveness of teaching/facilitation, strengths, and areas that may need improvement. Evaluations will also identify the needs, interests, and assets to build on in future programs and projects. Evaluations will measure the type, number and quality of teaching and learning activities, their strengths and weaknesses, the resources that were mobilized, and the
process in general for educational delivery, including participant recruitment and retention throughout the project.

Table 1: Proposed Project Results/Impacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Result</th>
<th>Participant Action</th>
<th>When Measured</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understand the components and process of evaluating the economic feasibility of a direct marketing outlet, such as a farm shop</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Post-workshop evaluation</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Understand the various components of farm shop establishment and operation</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Post-workshop evaluation</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Understand the market in terms of tourist preferences and expectations when visiting the I-15 corridor</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Post-workshop evaluation</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Understand the advantages and disadvantages of business entity types, ownership structures, and contracts</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Post-workshop evaluation</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Understand any governmental code, regulations, and permit and licensing procedures for farm shop establishment</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Post-workshop evaluations</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Understand processing and labeling requirements for cottage food production (value-added) and sales</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Post-workshop evaluation</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Understand product pricing, labeling, visual merchandizing, and inventory management best practices</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Post-workshop evaluation</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Develop action plan for completing all post-workshop activities</td>
<td>Develop</td>
<td>Post-workshop evaluation</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. List and investigate farm shop ownership options and costs/benefits of each option</td>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Follow-up evaluation - six months</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Investigate farm shop location options and corresponding code and regulatory implications for each option</td>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Follow-up evaluation - six months</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Create a listing with a description including type, size, and price of all current and future farm/ranch products which could be sold through the farm shop</td>
<td>Develop</td>
<td>Follow-up evaluation - six months</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Create a basic business plan with common elements, as well as projected investment pay back period and annual operating budget</td>
<td>Develop</td>
<td>Follow-up evaluation - six months</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Investigate USDA grant/loan programs for farm shop financing</td>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>Follow-up evaluation - 1 year</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Implement farm shop sales through off-site shop in conjunction with others</td>
<td>Implement</td>
<td>Follow-up evaluation - 1 year</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Establish and begin operating an on-farm shop</td>
<td>Implement</td>
<td>Follow-up evaluation - 1 year</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

This project seeks to the enhance the economic viability of small farms and surrounding communities in the Intermountain West by introducing opportunities to diversify markets, market outlets and product lines through farm shops. A curriculum on best practices and assessing economic feasibility for farm shop development focused on the growing tourism market will be delivered through workshops across the region. The curriculum will be based on
the educational needs and issues identified by the target audience in the needs assessment conducted in 2013. Project activities will be evaluated to assess their contribution toward the achievement of the identified program’s economic and social impacts.

References


Food Safety Education for New Jersey's Direct Market Produce Growers

Author 1 - Meredith Melendez, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County
609-989-6830 melendez@aesop.rutgers.edu

Author 2 - Wesley Kline, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Cumberland County
856-451-2800 wkline@aesop.rutgers.edu
Abstract:
The pending implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) has the potential to impact the operations of New Jersey’s direct market produce growers. Regulations focusing on water use, animal manures, packing facilities, and worker requirements will cause direct market producers to change their standard farm practices. Prior to 2012 food safety education in New Jersey focused on wholesale producers required to comply with third party audits with limited focus on direct producer growers. To prepare New Jersey growers for regulatory changes due to the FSMA which is critical for maintaining the strength of the New Jersey vegetable industry, a series of educational workshops were developed, conducted and evaluated to assess learning outcomes.

The Food Safety course content included the FSMA and potential points of product contamination in varying types of produce operations. Participants were guided through the process of creating their food safety plan including writing risk assessments, writing standard operating procedures, developing farm policies, and determining which activities require written documentation.

Nearly all participants indicated the workshops met or exceeded their expectations and that the information was useful to them. More than 85% of participants indicated the FSMA will impact the operation of their farms. Participants indicated that they were most likely to modify sanitation practices, implement traceability procedures and improve management of domestic and wild animals on their farms as a result of the workshops. The Rutgers direct market food safety workshops can be used as a model for food safety education programs for vegetable producers.

Introduction
The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) proposed produce rule will potentially impact a large number of New Jersey farms. According to the 2007 USDA NASS Agricultural Census 46% of NJ vegetable farms and 43% of NJ fruit farms exceeded FSMA compliance food sales dollar values. Increased government regulations without educational training and technical support will have a negative impact on the New Jersey agricultural industry, agricultural acreage and farm families. Educating growers on the realities of FSMA compliance and Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) in advance of the regulation is critical to keep agriculture thriving in New Jersey. The Rutgers Farm Food Safety Team recognized the importance of educating the many types of farming operations within New Jersey and is strengthened by its partnerships with local county boards of agriculture, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture, the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey, the New Jersey Direct Farm Market Association and others.

**Program Background**
Farm food safety education for New Jersey produce growers began in 1999 as a result of grower’s requests due to third party food safety inspections mandated by wholesale buyers. Since 1999 the number of farms required to comply with third party audits has increased due to buyer requirements. In 2012 the Rutgers Farm Food Safety team added educational programs for direct market producers to its outreach objectives. The increase in third party audit requirements, the impending Food Safety Modernization Act and recent high profile produce related human illness outbreaks have increased the number of farms interested in food safety education. To address these needs farm food safety workshops were developed and offered to vegetable producers.

**Educational Approach**

**Program Design**
Three direct market food safety workshops were held regionally in northern, central and southern New Jersey at Rutgers Cooperative Extension office and farm locations. Sessions were team taught by Dr. Wesley Kline and Meredith Melendez, both Rutgers Cooperative Extension county based educators. Workshops were divided into morning and afternoon sessions. PowerPoint presentations were used during the morning session focusing on GAPs. New Jersey on-farm sampling results and farm pictures were used in PowerPoint presentations to illustrate correct and incorrect farm food safety practices relating to food safety issues. During the morning session participants were given handouts related to FSMA, an information sheet on risk assessments and how they should be written, and the course binder which details GAPs for both field operations and post-harvest operations. Session topics included:

1. Overview of current and pending food safety regulations (30 min)
2. Developing a risk assessment of farm activities and history (30 minutes)
3. Good agricultural practices for field operations (1 hour)
4. Good agricultural practices for post-harvest operations (1 hour)

The afternoon session focused on writing the farm food safety plan.
Participants were given an information sheet on SOPs and how they should be written, a listing of what should be included on the farm maps, and an outline of how to write their food safety plan. PowerPoint presentations were used to educate growers about the proper components of a food safety plan. Topics included:

1. Writing standard operating procedures (SOP) (15 minutes)
2. Creating farm maps (10 minutes)
3. Writing your food safety plan (15 minutes)

The course binder was used as a guide for writing the details of their food safety plan. Laptops were provided for participants who need them. All participants receive a USB drive loaded with the course presentations, handout materials, additional GAPs information and the Cornell sample food safety plan template modified for direct market producers. Each of the resources was designed to aid the grower in writing a complete food safety plan specific to their farm. The presenters explained each of the resources and describe how each can be used. The group then began using the Cornell Food Safety Plan template to write their farm food safety plan. The presenters worked with the participants to write their food safety plans and answer questions that the participants had. Participants paid $45.00 for the one day program which included all materials, breakfast, lunch and a certificate of completion. Additional funding for the workshops and food safety outreach was sourced through USDA Specialty Crop Block grants.

Program Materials
Participants in the direct market food safety workshops were provided with the following materials to use during the workshop and to take home with them.

Three ring binders titled “Food Safety for Retail Marketers” with the following chapters:
- Worker Hygiene and Training
- Toilet and Hand Washing Facilities
- Harvest and Field Sanitation
- Direct Marketing
- Postharvest Handling
- U-Pick Operations
- Petting Zoos and Farm Animals
- Equipment and Supplies
- Resource Information

Handouts – Produced by the Rutgers Food Safety Team:
- Food Safety Modernization Act – Proposed Produce Rule
- Risk Assessment Cheat Sheet
- How to Write A Risk Assessment
- SOP Cheat Sheet
- How to Write A SOP
How to Write Your Food Safety Plan

Handouts- Produced by the Cornell GAPs Program:
- Food Safety Begins on the Farm
- Le Seguridad de los Alimentos Empieza en el Campo
- In the Field there is a Need for Hygiene Too!
- En el Campo Tambien se Necesita Higiene!
- Good Hygiene Protects Everyone
- La Buena Higiene Protégé a Todos!
- Your Kitchen Could Be a Source of Illness
- Hand washing signage
- Proper toilet use sign
- Proper toilet paper disposal sign

USB Flash Drive Containing:
- GAPs Direct Market Food Safety Plan, adapted from the Cornell GAPs Program
- Water documents specific to irrigation and post-harvest water quality
- Risk assessment development tools
- Sample logs
- Sample policies
- Sample standard operating procedures
- Workshop PowerPoint presentations

Evaluation Methods
Participants were surveyed at the beginning of the workshop to assess current food safety knowledge and needs, and surveyed at the end of the workshop to assess knowledge gain and additional food safety assistance needs. The post workshop survey consisted of a series of yes/no, fill-in, and numerical grading questions regarding the content of the workshop.

Program Results
Responses below are from food safety workshops held in 2014 that focused only on direct market producers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were the objectives of this workshop clearly explained?</td>
<td>Yes- 100% No- 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree did the workshop meet your expectations? (1= did not meet; 5= exceeded)</td>
<td>1- 0% 2-0% 3-0% 4-30% 5-65% No response-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the information shared useful to you?</td>
<td>Yes-100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please list three workshop topics or activities that you liked best.

| Ranked #1 - Writing the food safety plan |
| Ranked #2 - Overview of GAPs |
| Ranked #3 - Sanitation specifics |

Do you think FSMA will affect your farm?

| Yes- 85% |
| No-5% |
| No response-10% |

Participant demographics

| Fruit grower-50% |
| Vegetable grower-90% |
| Food retailer-15% |
| Farm owner-80% |
| Farm Manager- 20% |

Program Impacts

The responses below were from the workshops held in 2014 that focused only on direct market producers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What specific practices will you modify as a result of your participation in this program?</td>
<td>Ranked #1-Improve sanitation practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ranked #2- Implement a traceability procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ranked #3-Domestic and wild animal management (including manure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Comments</td>
<td>“A very worthwhile day for me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I thought this was well done and the thumb drive was a great asset to receive.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There is a lot of information that is going to take time to digest.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you recommend the workshop to other people?</td>
<td>Yes-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion/Conclusions

The majority of participants thought the workshops were useful, met or exceeded their expectations and had direct implications for their farms. All participants indicated the workshop objectives were clearly explained. Participants indicated they were most likely to improve sanitation practices, implemented traceability procedures and implement better animal management practices. Participants from both wholesale and direct market categories indicated a need for information on rodent control programs, composting to reduce human pathogens and sanitation measures. Participants also showed interest in iPad/tablet based resources for food safety documentation. Subsequent workshops will follow the same format as previous workshops. Two direct
market focused regional workshops and two direct market/wholesale market workshops will be held during the winter months. Presentations will include more information on rodent control, composting and sanitation measures. The training program as developed can be used as a template for conducting Food safety Education in other states in order to ensure compliance with the FSMA.
Health Care Sector Support for Healthy Food Initiatives

Author 1 – Jeffrey K. O’Hara, Union of Concerned Scientists, 202 331 6944, johara@ucsusa.org

Author 2 – Anne Palmer, Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF), 410 502 7577, apalmer6@jhu.edu
Abstract

Unhealthy diets in the United States contribute to chronic diseases and their treatment costs. Health sector organizations are beginning to support initiatives that promote healthy eating in their community as a result of incentives for prevention in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA). The ACA’s emphasis on prevention coincides with new farm policy programs intended to improve health and nutrition. Despite these synergistic opportunities for collaboration between health care and food organizations, few reviews have been undertaken to assess the extent to which they are occurring, the types of partnerships that have been formed, and impediments to collaboration that exist. We solicited examples from food policy councils of their experiences with health sector organizations. We also reviewed community benefit reports from non-profit hospitals in Maryland and discussed opportunities with health sector personnel. We found that while hospitals, health insurers, and health centers have begun to support efforts to increase the affordability and accessibility of healthy food, these partnerships are in nascent stages, and the health sector’s familiarity with food policy councils, farm policy, and opportunities to collaborate with food-based organizations is not widespread.
“Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food” -- Hippocrates

Introduction

The United States (U.S.) health care system accounts for 18% of U.S. gross domestic product, making it the most expensive in the world (World Bank 2014). Chronic diseases in particular are a significant contributor to U.S. health care expenditures. According to the Center for Disease Control, about half of all adults have one or more chronic health conditions, which account for the majority of U.S. health care costs (Ward, Schiller, Goodman 2014; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 2010). The high incidence of these chronic diseases can be prevented through diet and lifestyle choices. In particular, food intake in the U. S. is, on average, not aligned with dietary guidelines. Fruits and vegetables are under consumed, while the consumption of red meat and ingredients like solid fats and added sugars is in excess of what is recommended (USDA HHS 2010).

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides incentives for health sector organizations to initiate activities that prevent diseases in an attempt to reduce treatment costs. Food system innovations intended to promote healthier diets and reduce inequalities related to accessibility and affordability could provide opportunities for health organization support. Partnerships between the health care sector and implementing agencies could be an effective strategy since lower-income populations confront greater constraints in maintaining a healthy diet than others, and the health care industry interacts directly with the most disadvantaged populations. Some hospitals have made on-site improvements in procurement for staff and patients, including instituting farm-to-hospital programs to source
healthier food and establishing on-site farmers markets (Smith II, Kaiser, and Gomez 2013; Cromp et al. 2012). Nonetheless, the involvement of hospitals and health insurers with improving food environments in the community is not widespread.

Despite these emerging opportunities for collaboration between health care and food organizations, few reviews have been undertaken to assess the extent to which it is occurring, the types of partnerships that have been formed, and impediments to opportunities that exist. To examine this topic in greater depth, we solicited examples from members of a food policy council (FPC) listserv for examples of their experiences with health sector organizations. We also reviewed community benefit reports from non-profit hospitals in Maryland and discussed opportunities with health sector personnel.

We found that health sector organizations, including hospitals, health insurers, and health centers, have begun to support these efforts in various capacities. However, the health sector’s familiarity with food policy councils, food and farm policy, and knowledge of opportunities to collaborate with food-based organizations was not widespread. In this document, we review our findings, provide specific examples of partnerships, and summarize ways by which further support for healthy food initiatives from the health care industry could occur.

Background

Although the ACA is more popularly known for increasing access to health insurance, constraining health care costs is also a major priority (Koh and Sebelius 2010). Incentives to constrain treatment costs include financial assistance, such as community grants that can be
used to invest in prevention initiatives, as well as penalties, such as restrictions on reimbursement to hospitals if Medicare patients are readmitted within 30 days for some types of diseases, including heart attacks or heart failure.

In addition, the ACA provides new guidance with regard to “community benefit” expenditures from non-profit hospitals, which comprise 51% of total hospitals in the U.S. (AHA 2014). Non-profit hospitals received tax exemptions that were equal to $12.6 billion nationally in 2002 (CBO 2006). In turn, they are required to report initiatives they undertake that support “community benefits” under the rationale that these services would otherwise have to be addressed using public funds. Historically hospitals have had considerable discretion in quantifying and defining the types of services that constitute community benefits (U.S. GAO 2008). There is no threshold community benefit expenditure requirement at the federal level, and states and localities have the discretion to develop their own standards (Folkemer et al. 2011). Nationally, 8% of expenses for nonprofit hospitals are for community benefits (Young et al. 2013b). Of those expenditures, 85% were for subsidized patient care (e.g., charity care, unreimbursed Medicaid costs, subsidized health services), with just 5% directed toward prevention efforts such as screening, education, or immunization (Young et al. 2013b). The remaining 10% of community benefit expenditures were for health-professions education, cash or in-kind contributions to community groups, and research.

As the percentage of uninsured patients is anticipated to decline due to the expansion of coverage in the ACA, hospitals are expected to identify more opportunities to undertake community benefit initiatives that promote prevention. Specifically, the ACA requires tax-exempt hospitals to develop a public “community health needs assessment” (CHNA) every
three years that incorporates community input, particularly from the public health sector. The ACA also requires these hospitals to adopt an implementation strategy by which the health improvements identified in the CHNA will be achieved. Additionally, they must specify in their audited community benefit financial report a description of how the hospital is addressing the needs identified in the CHNA and a rationale for identified needs that are not being addressed.

Because 97% of recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits could qualify for Medicaid under expansion (Dorn et al. 2013), health insurers may also have incentives to promote healthier food consumption as a means to reduce treatment costs, particularly in states where Medicaid has expanded. Improving diet-quality among lower-income populations is of particular importance because diet quality often declines with income. For example, the consumption of fruits and vegetables is lower among people in lower-income households relative to those in higher-income households (Lin and Rogers 2013).

The ACA’s emphasis on prevention coincides with new programs developed in farm policy intended to improve health and nutrition. The Farm Bill passed in February 2014 contains the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program, which offers grants to organizations that are implementing or continuing incentive subsidy programs for the redemption of SNAP benefits for fruits and vegetables. FINI is modeled after incentive subsidy programs that provide recipients of food assistance benefits, such as SNAP or the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), additional vouchers that they can spend when redeeming their benefits. As of 2012, at least 500 farmers markets nationally were offering incentive programs for SNAP, and these incentive programs are starting to be piloted in grocery stores (Community Science 2013). Research has found that
they increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables (Freedman et al. 2013; Lindsay et al. 2013; Young et al. 2013a). In order to apply for FINI funds, however, applicants must demonstrate that they have secured matching funds from other sources. Support from hospitals, in the form of a community benefit initiative, and/or health insurers would be a way to leverage resources so that FINI program funds are successfully distributed and used for healthy food purchases.

Methods

We undertook several approaches to assess the ways that community food organizations are working with the health care industry. First, we compiled examples of partnerships that we identified anceotally through discussions or in the literature. Second, we reached out to FPCs, which consist of food system stakeholders that are working in the community to identify and promote healthy food policy initiatives, to solicit their experience with health sector organizations. We used a FPC listserv to ask subscribers if they had members on their FPC from the health care sector; if so, what kinds of healthy eating policies or programs did they support; and if the FPC had discussed the ACA.

Third, we conducted a systematic review of hospital initiatives in Maryland by reviewing community benefit reports and having discussions with health sector personnel. Maryland was a good location for a case study for a variety of reasons. Maryland has a prominent hospital sector that is required to demonstrate $330 million in Medicare cost savings over the next five years. The Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission also makes individual community benefit reports publically available for each Maryland non-profit hospital on an annual basis,
which provides a greater level of transparency with regard to community benefit expenditures than exists elsewhere. Through the Maryland Food System Mapping project, the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF) has played a significant role in identifying areas where food access challenges exist, and has experience collaborating with organizations and personnel working on those challenges throughout Maryland. CLF has also participated in and evaluated initiatives to increase the affordability and accessibility of healthy food throughout the state, particularly in Baltimore (Santo, Yong, and Palmer 2014).

As part of our efforts, we had direct communications, either in-person or on the telephone, with health sector personnel that represented associations (Maryland Hospital Association), hospitals (Johns Hopkins Hospital, Adventist HealthCare, MedStar Harbor Hospital, University of Maryland Medical Center, Mercy Health Services, Holy Cross Health), federally qualified health centers (Health Care for the Homeless), and health care providers (Kaiser Permanente). We also had discussions with food organizations that interact with the health care industry (Crossroads Community Food Network, Maryland Hospitals for a Healthy Environment, Maryland Farmers Market Association).

Findings

Examples of Health Care Sector Efforts at Promoting Healthy Diets

We identified numerous ways by which health sector organizations are addressing food-related challenges in their community. Some examples include:
*Subsidizing healthy food purchases.* There are several ways that health organizations are subsidizing healthy food purchases, particularly of fruits and vegetables. Some hospitals and health insurers are providing funding support to farmers markets that offer nutrition incentive programs for food assistance benefits that we described earlier. In other instances, vouchers for healthful foods are provided without requiring that the recipient also utilize their own cash or benefits. These programs are sometimes referred to as “prescription” programs in instances when a medical doctor issues the food vouchers to patients with diet-related chronic diseases. For example, a federally qualified health clinic in South Carolina offered financial incentives for fruits and vegetables to diabetics, and subsequently found that fruit and vegetable consumption increased (Freedman et al. 2013). In another example, Boston Medical Center primary care providers write food “prescriptions” to patients that they can redeem on-site at BMC’s “Preventive Food Pantry” (BMC 2014). Health care organizations have also partnered with local farmers markets in implementing such programs. Such an example occurred in New York City, where the Lincoln Medical Center and Harlem Hospital Center have partnered with Wholesome Wave to issue “prescription” coupons to families with poor nutrition that they can redeem for fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets (Wholesome Wave 2013).

Financial incentives were also applied to insurance premiums. For example, the FairShare CSA Coalition in Wisconsin works with health insurers to offer health insurance rebates to customers that purchase a share in a community supported agriculture arrangement (FairShare CSA 2014).
Increasing access through the supply chain investments. We did not identify examples of investments in upstream supply chain facilities, such as a “food hub” that could facilitate the sale of food from local farmers to retail institutions that purchase food in larger quantities, from the health care industry in our review. Nonetheless, it is possible that such investments could occur, as the Internal Revenue Service allows “community building” activities to count as a community benefit for non-profit hospitals provided that a rationale exists on how the building improves community health (Rosenbaum, Rieke, and Byrnes 2014). However, other ways of improving access have been implemented. For example, Indiana University Health subsidizes a “Garden on the Go” program, which is a mobile food truck that stops at low-income and elder care facilities to sell fresh fruits and vegetables from local farms (IUH 2013).

Collaborating with food organizations on outreach and education. Farmers markets can provide an outreach location for health care organizations so that market shoppers can obtain health screenings, culinary education, and other information. Maintaining a consistent presence at a weekly farmers market could offer a greater level of continuity and duration for conducting such outreach as opposed to a health fair scheduled irregularly or infrequently (George et al. 2013). Health organizations could also collaborate with practitioners in evaluating the health impacts of healthy food interventions.

Experience of Food Policy Councils with Health Sector Organizations

Table 1 contains summary information on responses provided by FPCs of the types of activities they are undertaking. Ten FPCs responded to the survey. The table shows that all of the respondents had health care sector representation on their FPCs, although the FCP’s that
responded to the survey are not necessarily representative of all FPC’s, as the FPCs that responded could be the FPCs most likely engaged with the health care industry. Half of the respondents identified that health sector organizations are supporting healthy food access programs in some capacity. The respondents also indicated that the following activities were occurring with at least one of the FPC’s: ACA enrollment was occurring at food pantries, hospitals were funding the FPC, the FPC was actively discussing how the ACA could support food system reform in their community, or hospital counselors were enrolling people in SNAP.

We elaborate further on a select number of responses below:

• The Ozarks Regional Food Policy Council was initiated and funded by its local hospital, CoxHealth, to address pediatric obesity in southwest Missouri.

• The Community Food Council for Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands in California has received funding from its hospital to facilitate a SNAP matching rebate program at its local farmers market.

• The San Francisco Food Security Task Force has discussed opportunities the ACA presents for funding nutrition-related programs to reduce hospital readmissions and support long-term care.

• Through the food insecurity working group, the New London County Food Policy Council in Connecticut coordinated ACA enrollment at food pantries.

• Denver Health has contributed personnel time to the Denver Sustainable Food Policy Council and the development of Denver’s Healthy Food Access Plan. It has also advanced grocery store implementation and the evaluation of food policy with the city of Denver through a CDC Community Transformation Grant.
• UMass Memorial Medical Center works with the Worcester Food & Active Living Policy Council, and provided community benefit funding to operate a mobile farmers market for low-income areas, an urban farming summer program for low-income youth, and Share Our Strength’s Cooking Matters classes. It has also trained its financial counselors to enroll people for food assistance benefits.

**Review of Maryland Hospital Community Benefit Initiatives**

The nonprofit hospitals in Maryland, along with their location, community benefit service area (CBSA), and operating expenses, are listed in Table 2. Only the CBSA regions within Maryland are listed. Hospitals do not define their CBSA in a standard way. For example, the CBSA definitions for some urban hospitals are at the zip code level, while the CBSA definitions for rural hospitals might encompass multiple counties.

The location and size of hospitals in Maryland reflects the variation in population density within the state. Nine of the eleven largest hospitals are clustered in Baltimore City. In particular, Johns Hopkins Hospital and the University of Maryland Medical Center are the two largest and each have annual operating expenses in excess of one billion dollars. In rural regions, however, there may only be one hospital that services the entire county and some of these have annual operating expenses of less than $50 million. Figure 1 shows community benefit expenditures within Baltimore City. These were reported by plotting the total community benefit expenditures of each hospital over their entire self-reported community benefit service area (CBSA), as we cannot allocate exactly within a CBSA where the expenditures occurred. The parts of Baltimore City with high levels of community benefit
expenditures coincide with areas with the highest percentage of people using SNAP benefits, the highest degree of heart disease mortality, and the greatest food access challenges.

At least 7 hospitals in Maryland have an on-site farmers market that administer nutrition assistance programs and a number of hospitals have improved sourcing of healthier food options by participating in “farm-to-hospital” programs with assistance from Maryland Hospitals for a Healthy Environment. While these initiatives were typically not identified in community benefit reports since these efforts are primarily implemented for staff and patients, they can be a first step for a hospital to become engaged with promoting healthier eating options.

As part of their community benefit initiatives, 80% of hospitals in Maryland have implemented screening and/or education programs that are relevant for general nutrition or a diet-related chronic disease, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, or obesity. However, some of these initiatives are modestly funded, and except in a few instances, community benefit efforts by hospitals are generally not promoting healthy food programs beyond this stage. In contrast, one health care provider, Kaiser Permanente, has supported some of the more progressive projects in the state. These include funding a nutrition incentive program for SNAP and WIC benefits at the Crossroads Farmers Market in Takoma Park, which was one of the first farmers market nutrition incentive programs (Winch 2008). Kaiser Permanente also provided a grant to the United Fresh Produce Association to install salad bars in neighboring Washington, DC elementary schools (UFPA 2014).

Conclusions and Recommendations
We identified various ways by which health sector organizations are improving diets and nutrition. We also found there is a growing awareness among food organizations of the importance of the health sector support for healthy food initiatives to either complement or substitute for funding from governments or philanthropic foundations. Nonetheless, there numerous challenges that must be resolved in order for these efforts to expand. These include:

• Evidence has found that health care cost expenditures decline with improved nutrition (Gurvey et al. 2013). However, health sector organizations confront multiple risk factors in their community. Besides poor nutrition, other risk factors can include smoking, mental illness, substance abuse, inactivity, poor prenatal and infant care, domestic violence, and a lack of implementing simple cancer screenings. This implies that focusing prevention efforts to address any one risk factor can have high opportunity costs.

• Healthy diets are just one component of lifestyle choices needed to mitigate the incidence of chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease and obesity, and interventions to rectify diet-related chronic diseases may require a long time to be successful. These can present impediments to the effectiveness of healthy food interventions, increase the challenges with evaluating them, and imply that any resulting health benefits and medical care cost savings may require a long timescale to occur.

• The population that could be targeted by a healthy food intervention may not overlap with CBSA boundaries for hospitals. This can be a particularly vexing challenge in large municipalities. For example, the largest farmers market in Baltimore is the Downtown/JFX market, and it attracts shoppers from all across the city. Thus,
supporting a financial incentive program at Downtown/JFX would result in improved diets for populations in CBSA’s for several hospitals. This implies that an individual hospital may not have as great of an incentive to support the project if some of the benefits accrue to citizens of neighborhoods that patronize other hospitals.

- Hospitals and health insurers are large bureaucracies, and engaging with these institutions can impose high transaction costs on community food organizations with limited resources.

Even though the health sector’s support for healthy food initiatives is just beginning, a framework exists to help the future success of these partnerships. Greater coordination among non-profit hospitals when developing CHNA’s and ensuring that CHNA’s include a food systems analysis can ensure that hospitals have a greater understanding of opportunities that are available for healthy food interventions. Outreach facilitated by FPCs and food organizations can be a way to increase the health sector’s understanding of mutual opportunities for healthy food interventions. This would also enable food organizations to obtain a better understanding of how health care organizations implement prevention initiatives; priorities confronting health sector organizations; and logistical issues that would require cooperation for successful partnerships, such as ones relating to administration, budgeting, and evaluation.
Table 1. Examples of Food Policy Council Engagement with Health Sector Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food policy council (FPC)</th>
<th>Health care representation on FPC</th>
<th>Support healthy food access programs</th>
<th>ACA enrollment at food pantries</th>
<th>Hospital funding for FPC</th>
<th>Actively discussing ACA opportunities</th>
<th>SNAP enrollment by hospital counselors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kansas City (MO) FPC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozarks Regional (MO) FPC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Louis FPC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Food Council for Del Norte and Adjacent Tribal Lands (CA)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco Food Security Task Force</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino (CA) FPC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New London County (CT) FPC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver Sustainable FPC</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcester (MA) Food and Active Living Policy Council</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2 –Community Benefit Service Area and Operating Expenses of Maryland Acute Care Hospitals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospital Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Community Benefit Service Area</th>
<th>FY 2012 Operating Expenses (Million USD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins Hospital</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Baltimore City</td>
<td>$1,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Maryland Medical Center</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Baltimore City</td>
<td>$1,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinai Hospital of Baltimore</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>NW Baltimore City, Baltimore County</td>
<td>$691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>SE &amp; NE Baltimore City &amp; County</td>
<td>$543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Arundel Medical Center</td>
<td>Annapolis</td>
<td>Anne Arundel County</td>
<td>$501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin Square Hospital Center</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>SE Baltimore County</td>
<td>$437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercy Medical Center</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Baltimore City</td>
<td>$400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Memorial Hospital</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>North Baltimore City, Baltimore County</td>
<td>$397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Baltimore Medical Center</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Baltimore City &amp; County, Harford County</td>
<td>$394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Cross Health</td>
<td>Silver Spring</td>
<td>Montgomery &amp; PG County</td>
<td>$387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Agnes Hospital</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Baltimore City &amp; County, Anne Arundel, Carroll &amp; Howard County</td>
<td>$380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peninsula Regional Medical Center</td>
<td>Salisbury</td>
<td>Wicomoco, Worcester &amp; Somerset County</td>
<td>$374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederick Memorial Healthcare System</td>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>Frederick County</td>
<td>$349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore-Washington Medical Center</td>
<td>Glen Burnie</td>
<td>Anne Arundel County</td>
<td>$325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Joseph Medical Center</td>
<td>Towson</td>
<td>Baltimore County</td>
<td>$318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Maryland Health System</td>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>Allegany County</td>
<td>$305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Samaritan Hospital of Maryland</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>NE Baltimore City</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shady Grove Adventist Hospital</td>
<td>Rockville</td>
<td>Montgomery County</td>
<td>$293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meritus Medical Center</td>
<td>Hagerstown</td>
<td>Washington County</td>
<td>$284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban Hospital</td>
<td>Bethesda</td>
<td>Montgomery County</td>
<td>$239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Maryland Hospital Center</td>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>Southern PG County</td>
<td>$238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard County General Hospital</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>Howard County</td>
<td>$230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Adventist Hospital</td>
<td>Takoma Park</td>
<td>Montgomery &amp; PG County</td>
<td>$225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Hospital Center</td>
<td>Randallstown</td>
<td>Baltimore County</td>
<td>$216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Chesapeake Medical Center</td>
<td>Bel Air</td>
<td>Harford County</td>
<td>$213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll Hospital Center</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>Carroll County</td>
<td>$211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince George's Hospital Center</td>
<td>Cheverly</td>
<td>PG County</td>
<td>$204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harbor Hospital Center</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Southern Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County</td>
<td>$202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctors Community Hospital</td>
<td>Lanham</td>
<td>PG County</td>
<td>$191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland General Hospital</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>West Baltimore City</td>
<td>$180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial of Easton</td>
<td>Easton</td>
<td>Caroline, Dorchester, Queen Anne's County</td>
<td>$159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Hospital (Cecil County)</td>
<td>Elkton</td>
<td>Cecil County</td>
<td>$144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery General Hospital</td>
<td>Olney</td>
<td>Montgomery County</td>
<td>$138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Mary's Hospital</td>
<td>Leonardtown</td>
<td>St. Mary's County</td>
<td>$122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Name</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>County/County</td>
<td>Charge ($)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bon Secours Hospital</td>
<td>Baltimore SW</td>
<td>Baltimore County</td>
<td>$121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvert Memorial Hospital</td>
<td>Prince Frederick</td>
<td>Calvert County</td>
<td>$118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civista Medical Center</td>
<td>La Plata</td>
<td>Charles County</td>
<td>$104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Lawrence Kernan Hospital</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Baltimore City &amp; County, Anne Arundel &amp; Howard County</td>
<td>$103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurel Regional Hospital</td>
<td>Laurel</td>
<td>PG, Anne Arundel, Howard, &amp; Montgomery County</td>
<td>$97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic General Hospital</td>
<td>Berlin</td>
<td>Worcester County</td>
<td>$91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harford Memorial Hospital</td>
<td>Havre de Grace</td>
<td>Harford County</td>
<td>$90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester River Health System</td>
<td>Chestertown</td>
<td>Kent County</td>
<td>$55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorchester General</td>
<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>Caroline, Dorchester, Queen Anne’s County</td>
<td>$43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Washington Medical Center</td>
<td>Fort Washington</td>
<td>Fort Washington, Oxon Hill, Temple Hills</td>
<td>$42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrett County Memorial Hospital</td>
<td>Oakland</td>
<td>Garrett County</td>
<td>$38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCreary Memorial Hospital</td>
<td>Crisfield</td>
<td>Somerset County</td>
<td>$22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MHSCRC 2012.

Notes: James Lawrence Kernan Hospital is a rehabilitation orthopedic hospital. Dorchester General and Memorial of Easton file the same Community Benefit narrative report under Shore Health Systems. Southern Maryland Hospital Center was a for-profit hospital until 2012.
Figure 1 – Variation in Community Benefit Expenditures within Baltimore City

Source: MHSCRC 2012.
References


Lindsay, S., Lambert, J., Penn, T., Hedges, S., Ortwine, K., Mei, A., Delaney, T., & Wooten, W.J. (2013). Monetary matched incentives to encourage the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets in underserved communities. *Preventing Chronic Disease, 10*,130124.


Opportunities for Agri-entrepreneurs: 
Build Brand Community around Consumers' Love of Collecting

Pauline Sullivan, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Graduate Program Coordinator, Merchandising and Consumer Sciences, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX 78666, 512.245.2448, ps48@txstate.edu

Jacqueline Gutierrez, Graduate Student, Merchandising and Consumer Sciences, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX 78666, j_g167@txstate.edu

1Contact Person
Abstract

This case study focuses on a business driven by desire to return rural Texas. It answers the research question how a rural entrepreneur can use their environment to build a sustainable business, with a competitive advantage, and engaged brand community. Additionally, this paper explores consumers’ use of up-cycled/repurposed clothing at the retail event, Junk Gypsy’s “Promo-o-Rama”, 1) as an expression of individual and group identity, 2) to document group and individualistic repurposed attire, and 3) demonstrate collecting’s role in reinforcing brand community.

Junk Gypsy uses post-consumer goods to create second market products appealing to their target market. Also, they stage the semi-annual extravaganza, “Promo-o-Rama”, to satisfy post-modern consumers’ desire for entertainment and a break from the ordinary. Junk Gypsy actively interacts with their customers in real-time and in social media with messages that encourage the brand community to collect goods to use in upcycled/repurposed garments for “Promo-o-Rama”.

This exploratory, qualitative research used photoelicitation, which is a type of ethnography, to study consumers’ use of collected goods at Junk Gypsy’s “Promo-o-Rama”. The Grounded Theory Method guided data analysis.

Analysis of photographs supports Tian et al.’s (2019) three collection categories. Informants’ comments reflect how these collections of repurposed garments contribute to building and reinforcing participation in a brand community. Brand community members receive symbolic value from upcycling garments as their creations. The upcycling process adds
authenticity consistent with the Junk Gypsy brand message (Ritzer, 2010), personalizes the consumption experience at “Promo-o-Rama” and connects with the brand culture. Other rural and agri-businesses start-ups can learn from this business model; be different, start small, grow wisely, engage your brand community in real-time and through social media, satisfied customers spread word-of-mouth information about your company and return for brand extravaganzas that have consumption experience exchange value. Alternatives to brick and mortar locations exist.

**Key Words:** Retail event, Brand Community, Post-modern consumer behavior, Sustainability
Opportunities for Agri-entrepreneurs: Build Brand Community around Consumers’ Love of Collecting

Introduction

The retail sector provides employment in rural areas, but the number of jobs, as well as wage values, have declined since 1970 (Council of Economic Advisors, 2014). In addition, the number of people, particularly those between the ages of 25 to 65, living in rural areas has dropped. Resource limited, rural communities, challenged to stave off social and economic decay, benefit from entrepreneurship.

Small retailers may not be able to compete with the large retailers’ price, but they can create competitive advantage through customer experience and company expertise (Cheek, Ferguson, & Tanner, 2013). Smaller retailers have a greater flexibility, than large ones, in responding to customers, their changing individual styles, and creating personalized emails. Thus, entrepreneurial small retailers that take advantage of creative imitation (Drucker, 1985) are in a position to provide bespoke, genuine experiences (Cheek et al., 2013). This creativity is essential to their success (Rantisi, 2011).

One solution to the challenges facing rural communities is a consumption center that uses nostalgia to remind visitors of times past (Mitchell, 1998). This allows post-modern consumers to experience and receive a sense of authenticity in the products purchased (Beverland, Farrelly & Quester, 2010; Mitchell, 1998). An example of this is the Amana Colonies in rural Iowa.

The focus of this case study is a business driven by the owners’ desire to return to their rural Texas roots and love of “junking” or finding treasure in others’ trash motivated their
business. It answers the research question of how can a rural entrepreneur use their environment to build a sustainable business, with a competitive advantage, and engaged brand community. Additionally this paper explores consumers’ use of up-cycled/repurposed clothing at the semi-annual retail event, Junk Gypsy’s “Promo-o-Rama”, 1) as an expression of individual and group identity, 2) to document the group and individualistic styles, and 3) demonstrate collecting’s role in reinforcing brand community.

This qualitative study uses photoelicitation ethnography, a type of research uses pictures for analysis to record informants’ opinions as they take pictures of attendees at “Promo-o-Rama”. Then grounded theory guides data analysis. This case study and data analysis provide insights other small rural businesses may find useful in as they start-up and build brand community,

A. Literature Review

Brands and Brand Communities

Brands communicate social status through recognizable images, individual’s endorsements appealing to market segment, opinion leaders, and other people who influence customers (Tain, 2005). Branded products have symbolic value as they portray people as associated as tasteful, with a desirable lifestyle, and as members of social groups related to the product’s brand character or meaning. Similar identities and lifestyles among participants in a specific brand community contribute to a shared culture that bonds the group together (Belk, 1988). Collective culture includes common meaning, rituals and traditions, associated with brand or consumption situation.
Brand communities establish both group boundaries and cross-group coalitions (Hirschman 2010). Thus a consumer can belong to one brand community or complementary groups. Post-modern, brand-related consumption communities offer sense of authenticity (Beverland, Farrelly & Queste, 2010). Consumption communities surrounding brands originally were conceptualized as geographically bound (Boorstin, 1974), but have progressed to exist in any space or time (Wenjing, 2005). A common bond resulting from brand use and affiliation creates unity among group members.

**Evolution of Consumer Behavior**

Figure 1 shows the progression of consumer motivations as they change from modern through post-modern periods. Circumstances during each time period influence consumer desires and behavior. The modern time period is associated with the industrial revolution that allowed mass production of goods which represented growth in material culture (De Vries, 1994). During this time, wages earned in factories provide consumers money to purchase products. The emphasis is on maximizing household utility.
The time period of modernity exists beyond the infancy of the stage industrial age (Friedman, 2001). Economic expansion in the West, globalization, emphasis on urban culture, and increasing power of the middle class define this period. Standardization of learning and production yield a rational, linear model of social order (Friedman, 2001). Products symbolizing middle class success enchant consumers (Ritzer, 2010). However, emphasis on urban culture and sophisticated production and distribution methods distance consumers’ purchases of products from the origin of these material goods. Consumer disenchantment begins to appear as meaning associated with the natural world vanishes (Ritzer, 2010).

Disillusionment with the modern period and modernity provides agri-entrepreneurs unique opportunities for success. Post-modern consumption is defined by consumers’ feelings, religiosity, perceptions of reality, personal experiences, myths, and reflections, for example (Ritzer, 2010). This is in contrast to modernism and modernity’s emphasis on production and rational value focused on product utility or function The post-modern economy is intertwined with culture, as the life span of goods becomes brief and then disposable. Consumption is evaluated by its symbolic exchange value. Rural and agri-entrepreneurs can re-enchant consumers through creative brand experiences, such as extravaganzas and simulations. This allows commodities to create their own realities, by turning the ordinary into extraordinary. Extravaganzas gather consumers for entertainment and allow a break from the mundane (Ritzer, 2010). One example of this is the annual Luling, Texas watermelon festival. It celebrates local agriculture and Texas culture.

In contrast, a themed educational tourist destination, the pizza farm, is a simulation that links the reality of meeting market needs and consumption fantasies through a sense of
authenticity in the consumer experience (Ritzer, 2010). This is exemplified in pizza farms, which are circular land plots, divided into slices, where they produce ingredients used in pizzas. After touring the farm, visitors can order a pizza made from the ingredients grown there. The situation and time bound non-substitutable consumption experience offers symbolic value to the consumer.

**Examining Creative Sustainable Entrepreneurship**

Junk Gypsy was started by two sisters with a passion for recycling and repurposing old goods. They started their business by making second market products to sell in a pop-up tent at antique fairs around Texas (Junk Gypsy, 2013). Then Junk Gypsy developed an online store front, added more products (such as jewelry), used social media to engage their brand community, and created a bi-annual event, “Promo-o-Rama”. Junk Gypsy’s promotions encouraged their brand community to talk about the company. The buzz garnered the company exposure on HGTV, as well as a television series. Fall 2013, Junk Gypsy opened their first brick and mortar store. They expanded their product lines to sell new products and regional foods, like buttermilk biscuits.

The eclectic assortment sold by Junk Gypsy provides consumers with opportunities to cross-shop product lines and build collections of Junk Gypsy’s lifestyle related items. Junk Gypsy’s brand community collects objects and product that represent meaning to the individual (McIntosh & Schmeichel, 2004) and meeting symbolic requirements for brand community participation (McCracken, 1990). Consumers’ product collections range from Junk Gypsy furniture and clothing to old prom dresses. Junk Gypsy’s brand community’s identity is free-spirited and consumes products that mirror their personality, to a considerable extent. It
fosters a sense of kinship, belonging, and a support for others. Members of Junk Gypsy’s brand community collects old prom dresses to up-cycle or repurpose for the retail event, “Promo-o-Rama”. The consumption experience becomes personalized and cannot be substituted as it is define by a specific time, in a certain place, and with a particular group of people.

Junk Gypsy’s “Promo-o-Rama” engages their brand community through simulation and extravaganza. They use social media to increase their customer touch points and encourage consumers to broaden their collection of Junk Gypsy products and experiences (Junk Gypsy, 2013). For example, they use social media to instruct the brand community how to upcycle or make clothes, such as a prom dress, from used materials to wear to “Promo-o-Rama”. The retail extravaganza encourages the brand community to gather in real-time and virtual reality, as event attendees post pictures of their costumers on Instagram and Pinterest. Lastly, Junk Gypsy’s second market products and education on how to repurpose and recycle products contributes to sustainability by keeping post-consumer goods out of landfills.

**Collecting Theory**

Collecting theory frames this study. Collecting products is a hobby, with its own classification. Collecting motivates the gathering of tangible items to create worlds of accumulated objects meaningful to the individual (Tanselle, 1999). Consumers building product collections display similar behavioral patterns. Product collection motivations include curiosity about times past, fascination with certain types of products, and desire for indulgent consumption. Collections are visible examples of personal identity, as well as social self-expression (Prentice, 1987), and allow opportunities to socially engage individuals in communities based on procession of similar items (Tanselle, 1999).
Building collections of material goods is explained by a series of steps (McIntosh and Schmeichel, 2004). In the first step, the consumer identifies the product category for their collection. In the second step, the consumer seeks information about items in the product category. The knowledge gained in the second step helps the consumer begin to plan how to collect. In the fourth step, the consumer acquires the products essential to their collection. Lastly, the consumer’s collection classification of items is created. Collecting is a continuous and recreational pursuit in which consumers add to his or her collection by investing both time and money to purchase additional products. Through the different steps in creating product collections, a bond is formed between the consumer and object.

Once a collection is created, the products can be categorized. For example, Tian, Bearden, and Hunter (2001) identify three categories of collecting. They are “Creative Choice Counterconformity,” “Unpopular Choice Counterconformity,” and “Avoidance of Similarity.” Table 1 provides a description of the different collection categories.

**Table 1. Collection Category Descriptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1 Creative Choice Counterconformity</strong></td>
<td>Creative Choice Counterconformity (Tian et al., 2001) refers to the outward self-expression of uniqueness. Material goods show one’s individuality or unique style. Individuals either use one-of-a-kind items or unique pieces to produce a new or original style with the items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.2 Unpopular Choice Counterconformity</strong></td>
<td>Unpopular Choice Counterconformity (Tian et al., 2001) when consumers purposefully select brands or products to separate them from the group’s social norms. In this category, consumers face disapproval from the rest of the group. They decide to show their distinctiveness or individuality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3 Avoidance of Similarity</strong></td>
<td>Avoidance of Similarity (Tian et al, 2001) shows consumers’ wish to totally avoid similarity with others. They avoid styles favored by the majority in order to establish their uniqueness. Choices would include highly common brands or products, considered unfavorable. These consumers have a profound desire to be different. They watch other consumers’ behavior to escape acting in the same way. However, their uniqueness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
lasts a short time, as innovative people attract a following, as other group that imitate them or what they like related to innovators’ lifestyles or taste.

C. Research Design, Data collection, and Methods

This exploratory study used qualitative research methods to study consumers’ involvement with collected goods displayed at Junk Gypsy’s “Promo-o-Rama”. This method allowed investigation of individualism and socially constructed relationships in brand communities created around material culture (Oestigaard, 2004). The ethnographic method allows informants to engage in the activity they are observing, as well as observe subjects (Lee & Broderick, 2007).

Photoelicitation, a type of ethnography, records images and description of the observers’ thoughts as the picture is taken. This provides two types of data (Harper, 2002). Advantages of this data collection method are 1) visual material is processed by the brain processes at a deeper level of perception than verbal messages and 2) it yields a different type of data, created through combining the visual and verbal information. The data allows analysis of multi-sensory indicators of consumer behavior and culture (Valtonen, Makuksela, & Moisander, 2010; Schembri, 2008). The unit of analysis is each picture.

Data Collection

Data were collected by nine trained informants between the ages of 21 to 27. Each informant was asked to take 10 pictures in public places at Junk Gypsy’s “Promo-o-Rama” (Heisley & Levy 1991). Also informants were requested to document their thoughts as they took each picture in a comment log. They were to record their thinking, feelings, and what they were doing as they took each picture.
All informants explained the purpose of the study to potential participants, prior to taking their picture. They established each potential participant was over 18 years and asked permission to take their picture. All participants were told their identity information would not be collected. Each participant could withdraw their photo from the research at any time up until December 1, 2013 (Allen, 2009). All participants were given a card with study details and contact information. The process yielded 110 usable photographs for data analysis.

D. Data Analysis

This study uses the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) to systematically examine data, as well as the continuous interactions associated with interpretation during analysis and constant comparisons (Gasson, 2003; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Trained coders used the GTM which includes three stages of analysis:

**Open coding** - data with similar characteristics provide a basis for a label representing the idea (Medley-Rath, 2010; Gasson, 2003)

**Axial coding** - establishes data linkages through connections between categories established through open coding (Gasson, 2003)

**Selective coding** - integrates the data to further establish categories core to the foundation of theory development.

If coders had different opinions about classifying a picture, consensus building provided a basis for reaching agreement. The process of analyzing data continued until no new information was obtained (Gasson, 2003). This meant that additional analysis failed to identify anything new, but confirmed previous data categories.

E. Findings
The first stage of analysis using the GTM was open coding. Data was categorized as to whether or not the repurposed garment expressed the event attendee’s individuality or unique style or group identity. One picture provides insights as to how a sense of individuality is created through these repurposed garments. An informant writes:

“From head to toe, this outfit is an excellent representation of an outfit that symbolizes the emotional benefits of displaying intimate pieces of ‘junk’. The girl in this photo creatively embellished her blazer with vintage pins, which stays true to the theme of ‘junking.’

This informant speaks to event attendees’ group identity:

“Mother/Daughter: The Junk Gypsy “Promo-o-Rama” was a nice social event for family and friends. It was an opportunity for everyone to dress-up and enjoy each other’s company. It was nice to see a mother and her daughter both dresses in prom style outfits having a good time.”

Secondly, axial coding was used to develop product categories for the upcycled garments. Participants collected post-consumer goods to create their upcycled garments.

Product categories for upcycled garments were prom dresses, accessories, old time looks, Native American fashions, costumes, Texan, and transgendered.

One example described by an informant is:

“Texas Pride: This gentleman instantly caught my eye with his large Texas flag cape. The choice to display your patriotism for Texas at such an event seemed highly appropriate. From this cowboy hat to his cowboy boots, his choice of costume for the prom was Texas themed head-to-toe.”
Lastly selective coding allowed grouping of garments as “Creative Choice Counterconformity,” “Unpopular Choice Counterconformity,” and “Avoidance of Similarity” (Tian, et al., 2001). An example of “Creative Choice Counterconformity” in an upcycled outfit including a blue prom-like dress with a poufy sleeve decorated with a detached babydoll’s corsage and a headband adorned with deer antlers and Christmas lights. “Unpopular Choice Counterconformity” is described by an informant as follows:

“A man dressed in a dress reminiscent of the showgirls of the Old West, with chandelier earrings harkening to higher levels of class. The gruff appearance of the man is juxtaposed by the feminine details of the outfit. An example of how cultural norms are specific to time and place.”

Another informant writes of “Creative Choice Counterconformity”:

“These women, dressed as a vintage bowling team, symbolize the benefit of a public event. It allowed this group of friends to express a collective admiration for a hobby and activity. Attending the “Promo-o-Rama” dressed in a uniformed costume is a popular custom. Overall, the feeling of being part of a community is symbolic to the “Promo-o-Rama”.”

Qualitative analysis of the 100 pictures confirms Tian et al.’s (2001) three collection categories.

F. Discussion

The purpose of this case study was to explain how a rural entrepreneur could use their environment to build a sustainable business, with a competitive advantage and engaged brand community. The rural company studied has a unique story and developed a brand community around junking. Junk Gypsy use post-consumer goods to create new products that appeal to
their target market. They actively interact with their customers in real-time and in cyberspace. The company stages an extravaganza, their “Promo-o-Rama”, to satisfy post-modern consumers’ desire for entertainment and a break from the ordinary. Furthermore, Junk Gypsy uses social media to encourage the brand community to collect goods and actively engage in upcycling and repurposing garments for “Promo-o-Rama.” Junk Gypsy’s products are differentiated; appealing to target consumer with a particular lifestyle. The company produces non-substitutable consumption experiences that are differentiated because they are specific to time, place, and group of people.

Junk Gypsy’s position as a sustainable business also is due to their use of post-consumer goods to make second market products, and product repurposing education for their brand community using social media. Junk Gypsy “Promo-o-Rama” demonstrates how the brand’s up-cycling identity is fused with personal appearance at a situation bound event.

The photoelicitation ethnographic study confirms consumers’ use of up-cycled/repurposed clothing at the retail event, Junk Gypsy’s “Promo-o-Rama.” Pictures show objects and garments meaningful to the individual (McIntosh & Schmeichel, 2004), group identity, and brand community (McCracken, 1990; Belk, 1988). Photographs and informants’ comments describe attire consistent with what Tanselle (1999) suggests as meaningful to individuals and in group participation.

Analysis of photographs supports Tian et al.’s (2001) three collection categories. Informants’ comments reflect how these collections of repurposed garments reinforce building brand community. Brand community members receive symbolic value from upcycling garments, as their creations are authentic and consistent with the Junk Gypsy’s brand message.
(Ritzer, 2010). This provides a personalized, non-substitutable experience at “Promo-o-Rama.” This strengthens the bond between the company, Junk Gypsy, and the brand community’s culture. Additionally event attendees’ participation in the online community, real-time interactions, and participation in “Promo-o-Rama” contribute to brand equity.

G. Implications

Staged extravaganzas appeal to post-modern consumers because they are entertaining and a diversion from the ordinariness of every day (Ritzer, 2010). Events, such as “Promo-o-Rama,” differentiate and personalize the consumption experience to provide symbolic value for post-modern consumers. Rural and agri-entrepreneurs have increasing opportunities to engage customers in their brand community. Many rural communities are recognized for producing a product or having a beautiful environment. These communities can host events related to their product. For example, there is the annual Gilroy Garlic Festival with a cooking contest. The Gilroy Garlic Festival has an organization website (http://gilroygarlicfestival.com) and Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/garlicfestival?sk=wall) that garlic and festival enthusiasts can join. Thus Facebook help connect the place branded Gilroy Garlic Festival community and tweets updates to its members. This also allows the brand community to learn about Gilroy Garlic Festival related products that they can purchase.

Harley Farms is an example of how on agri-business sells an assortment of cheese made from goat milk. It also offers customers an assortment of products made from goats’ milk, such as soaps, face cream, lotion and house paint, so they can collect goat related products. In addition, Harley Farms has tours, a restaurant, and Christmas fair that provide additional customer experiences. They communicate with their brand community using an assortment of
social media platforms, such as their webpage, electronic newsletter, Facebook, twitter, and vimeo videos (http://vimeo.com/62189321).

Social media is an integral component in building brand community and maintaining buzz, especially for small businesses in rural locations. These strategies increase the consumption experience exchange value for customers. Junk Gypsy’s brand message and reason for “Promo-o-Rama” allows participants in the repurposing of collected items to express self-identity. The event communicates benefits of up-cycling which the brand explains how to do online and actively engage their customers in recycling, and reinforces their core “junker” values. “Promo-o-Rama” gathers the community for multi-sensory activities that strengthen brand awareness.

H. Conclusions

This is a case study about one company which limits its generalizability. Also, other methods of data analysis, for example the software program NVivo, could provide additional information relevant to agri-business’ marketing and promotions.

Nevertheless, the business model developed by Junk Gypsy provides insights for other rural or agri-entrepreneurs considering start-up opportunities. Lessons learned from the Junk Gypsy are to be different, start small, grow wisely, and engage your brand community in real-time and through social media. Staged events that are non-substitutable add symbolic value to the consumption experience for your consumer. This increases the exchange value for the brand. Satisfied customers willing to spread word-of-mouth information about your company in a variety of social mediums add to the return on investment for brand extravaganzas.
References


