

Practical Research Methods for Farmers' Markets

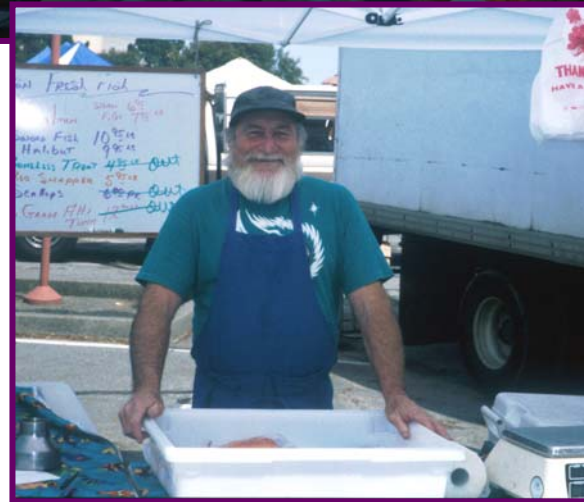
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Oregon State University

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Farmers' Markets: Solid Growth *But Little Understood*

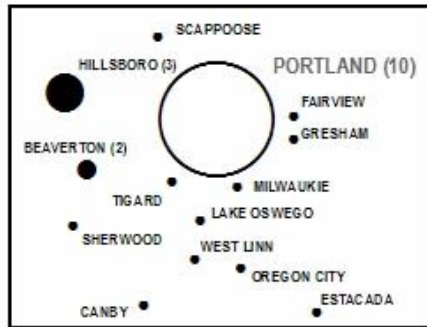




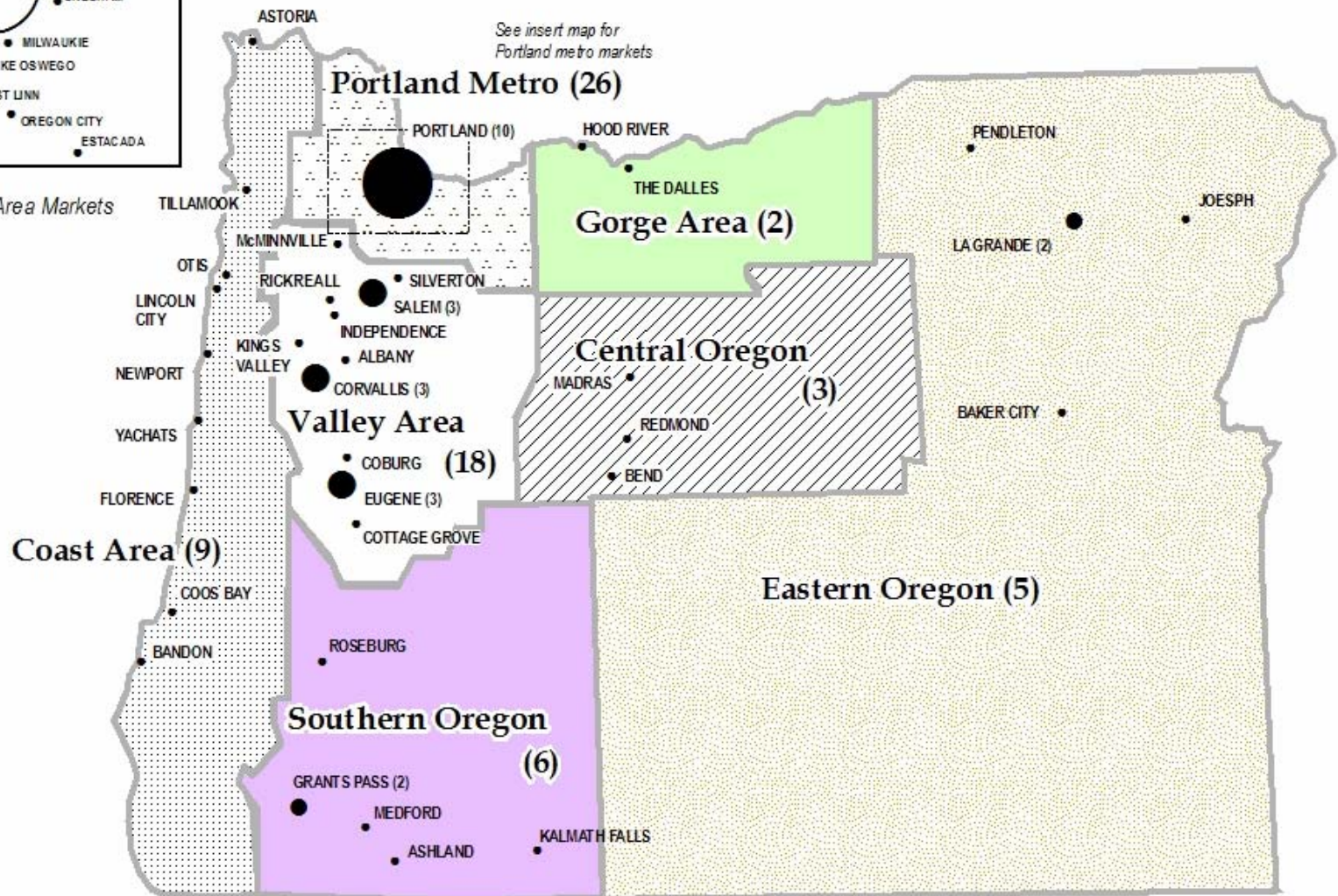
Session Objectives

- Better understanding of how research can help markets
- Overview of methods developed
- Examples of results

OREGON FARMERS' MARKETS



Portland Metro Area Markets



Why Do Farmers' Markets Need Economic & Social Data?

- To fine tune what they offer
 - sell more to existing customers
 - attract new customers
- To attract new vendors
- To build support
 - Government
 - Business
 - Public

Which Data Are Most Useful?

- Total value of sales
- Number of shoppers
- Value of “spillovers”
 - Sales by neighboring businesses
 - Additional farm sales generated
- Social value of markets
- How to attract more customers/vendors

Who Can or Will Collect This Data?

- Outsiders:
 - Extension
 - Universities
 - Interns
 - Consultants
- Markets themselves
 - Volunteers
 - Paid staff

This remains a huge challenge for most markets.

Traditional Survey Approaches Are Valuable but Flawed

- All require resources and expertise.
- Mail/phone surveys are inadequately targeted to FM customers.
- Face to face interviews typically have small sample size and concerns with the sample.
- Mail back surveys have variable response rates and concerns with the sample.

Twenty years ago, Robert Chambers asserted that:

- Social scientists collect too much data that are never analyzed . . .
- If analyzed, the data are never written up .
- If written up, they are never understood or remembered . . .
- If understood and remembered, data are never actually used . . .

This Approach Has Been Different

Research and Training
Methods **That Recognize
Constraints & Meet Needs**

- Target managers & board members
- Generate market specific results
- Develop simple, inexpensive approaches
- Use a participatory action research model

Three Components

- Attendance Counts - a sampling approach
- Dot Surveys
- Constructive Comments & Observations

All three parts conducted simultaneously
as a *participatory action research process*
are known as a Rapid Market Assessment
(RMA)

Attendance Counts Allow

- The market to attract vendors
- Vendors to predict sales
- The market to estimate potential spillover sales for neighboring businesses
- The market to document its role as a social center for community leaders



Dot Posters Complement Other Approaches

- Large sample size and very high acceptance rate (91%!) leads to better data.
- Inexpensive, easy to do and analyze
- Very popular with FM customers
- Interactive rather than extractive

you'll be back today in
work.

Do you plan on being a
shopping or eating in Washington
today?
If yes, how much do you anticipate
spending?

and have you stopped at
the 1st Avenue Market

Would you
this market?
No change made
No parking





WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

Indicate the general direction - don't be too exact



How much have you / will you spend at the FARMERS' MARKET today?



Was the farmer's market your primary reason
for coming downtown this morning?

Corvallis

Albany

YES

78%

88%

NO

12%

8%

Partially

10%

5%

Will you be doing additional shopping in the Hollywood District on this trip? If “yes,” how much do you anticipate spending?"

Market	% Doing Additional Shopping	Average Amount Spent
Albany (1998 average)	38%	\$4.32
Corvallis (1998 average)	63%	\$10.13
<i>Hollywood District (2000)</i>	<i>47%</i>	<i>\$8.98</i>

One of the most intriguing things we discovered in our research with OSU is that economic activity increases around farmers' markets.

Markets draw lots of people into downtown areas and then our customers fan out into downtown and spend money. Statistics like these can help us play a key role in revitalization efforts. This has proven true for us in the development of the Corvallis' Riverfront."

Rebecca Landis Corvallis/Albany Farmers' Markets

Do you come to the farmers' market for the products, the atmosphere, or some combination?

	Corvallis Saturday	Albany Saturday	Corvallis Wednesday
Products only	19%	20%	29%
Primarily Products	35%	20%	25%
Equally P & A	43%	53%	45%
Primarily Atmos.	3%	5%	1%
Atmosphere only	0%	2%	1%

What stopped you from buying more at the market today?

	Corvallis Saturday	Corvallis Wednesday	Hollywood District
Nothing else wanted	67%	60%	55%
Couldn't carry more	13%	11%	17%
Out of money	10%	14%	14%
Prices too high	6%	8%	5%
Ran out of time	4%	7%	8%

What does this kind of research cost?

- Clickers are cheap (\$10 each)
- Something to hang the posters on (\$0-\$200)
- Dots (\$3.69/800)
- Personnel - volunteer?

Rapid Market Assessment (RMA)

- Form a team of managers to study a specific market – **unique opportunity**
- Collect quantitative data - in the field training
- Collect qualitative data - observations and interviews



Constructive Comments and Observations (CCO) Worksheet

- Team members consider major themes:
 - Site physical characteristics
 - Vendors and products
 - Atmosphere and customers
- Use one side for your notes
- Use other side for:
 - 3-5 key suggestions & comments to provide to the market
 - 3-5 good ideas you will take home
- The goal is to collect diverse opinions and views
- Collate the significant worksheet observations for a final report provided to the market.





RMA Process

- Recognizes and uses manager expertise and makes the research **sustainable**
- Improves market being studied **AND** the markets of the team members
- Strengthens state/national networks
- **Provides an exhilarating and empowering experience**

My experience with the assessment project was wonderful both as a team participant in Ashland and having a team visit our Wednesday market. The information and insights were great. What a good way to meet my peers. Sometimes I feel isolated (even though I am surrounded by vendors, customers and board members!). No one really understands like another market manager.

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See especially Technical Report #6