

Rapid Market Assessment

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Markets

Three Basic Elements

- Customer Counts
- Dot surveys
- Comments / Observations

General Thought

- Attendance counts and dot surveys can be used independently by individual markets.
- Comments/Observations : Work best as a collaborative learning process in which a team (market managers and others) visits and studies a “host” market.
- Combining the three provides the most robust analysis of a market.
- All three are designed to make efficient use of 2 resources that most markets don't have enough of: Time and Money

Customer counts

Preferred methodology

- Determine lines of sight in the market between and among all entrances
- Count should take place every hour at the same time. For example for markets that open on the hour; from 00:25 to 00:35.
- Only adults are counted
- Count only shoppers *entering* the market during the counting period . Re-entering shoppers not counted again.

Customer counts

- Market attendance equals the sum of the hourly 10 minute counts times six.
- *A special case:* “pre-shoppers”:
Counted just before the opening of the market, **not multiplied by six**, and added into the daily total.

Dot Surveys

Background

- The accuracy of face-to-face interviews and other sampling techniques at farmers markets are constrained by small sample sizes and give a bias toward those willing to be interviewed
- Because of the nature of Dot Surveys:
 - Respondents may be influenced by what they observe on the posters.
 - + The “event like” nature entices more respondents.

Dot Surveys

“Dot Influence”

- Not an issue for many questions.
IE: Where do you live?
- Potential bias can be reduced by:
 - ~ “Seeding” posters with randomly placed dots that are later removed.
 - ~ Replacing the poster sheets with fresh sheets at intervals throughout the market day.

Six Steps to Successful use of Dot Posters

1. Carefully craft up to four closed-ended questions.
 - In general consumers are quite willing to answer four questions
 - more questions may reduce the response rate.
 - Each additional question increases the space needed in the market to conduct the research.

Six Steps to Successful use of Dot Posters

1. Cont.

- ~ Each question; clear and succinct
- ~ The number of answers as few as possible
- ~ Careful wording may combine questions

- Respondent's comprehension of the question(s) and answers are crucial.

Six Steps to Successful use of Dot Posters

2. Create Poster(s)

- One or more questions per page?
 - ~ clarity and sample size
- Completely block answers
- Preferable to divide the space evenly so that the space allocated doesn't influence respondents
- Order of answers straight forward for quantitative answers, not crucial for others but; maintain consistency

Six Steps to Successful use of Dot Posters

3. Prepare color coding labels or dots
 - ¾-inch self-stick dots are most easily handled but might require multiple posters. (½-inch size dots take up much less space on the posters) Additional poster preparation has the advantages of reducing prior response bias and allows the data to be analyzed by time period.
 - Cut the dots into strips, provide only one dot per question.
 - ~ Use of a single dot color reduces participant confusion. Individuals receiving one color and observing that others have used a different color may draw conclusions regarding the demographic significance of the colors.
 - Changing dot colors during the market day is another way to get a time analysis of responses

Six Steps to Successful use of Dot Posters

4. Position the dot posters in the market.
 - Select a site passed by most or all of the shoppers but, obviously, does not interfere with sales of surrounding vendors.
 - Set up the flip charts in a row. (don't box customers in)
 - Use signage to identify yourself to the public.
 - Be prepared for the effect of wind and rain.
 - ~ Large binder clips will eliminate paper blowing
 - ~ Weights may be necessary to keep easels from blowing over.
 - ~ Tents for rain

Six Steps to Successful use of Dot Posters

5. Actively recruit participants.
 - *Most people will not participate without a direct, personal invitation to do so.*
 - Be brief. Examples of invitations: “Can you help out the market?” or, “Have you had a chance to do the dots?”
 - *Avoid using the word survey!* People tend to associate it with something much more time-consuming.
 - Limit to one set of dots per “shopping group.” A group of adults shopping together and managing their money in common defines a shopping group.

Six Steps to Successful use of Dot Posters

5. Cont

- Instruct participants to place dots “where it most makes sense,”
- Place only one dot per question.
- Pay attention to the posters. Intervene when there is “abuse”.
- Encourage answers specific to the day.
- The survey is best used a snapshot of a specific market day rather than an indicator of average shopping practices.

Six Steps to Successful use of Dot Posters

6. Data analysis

- Ensure accuracy of the count by leaving a small mark on each dot as it is counted.
- Remember the sampling unit in this technique is the “shopping group,” not the individual.
- The average size of a shopping group will vary by market (best determined using the dot poster) Past data indicates the average size of a shopping group to be in the range of 1.5 to 1.8 people.
- So, an estimated market total based on the simple market population count would result in a significant overestimate

Six Steps to Successful use of Dot Posters

6. Cont.

- Compute responses as percentages of total responses.
- Quantitative data can be further analyzed.
 - ~ total spending per time segment may be of interest
 - ~ or total dollars spent in the community

Comments / Observations constructive please!

- Requires the greatest amount of preparation and coordination
- The host market profits from the insights provided by “fresh” eyes of outsiders.
- All gain from establishing relationships with and learning from their peers. (Round Robin best)
- We begin to see beyond the hectic routines of market day and can begin to view our own markets with greater perception.

Comments / Observations

RMA participants consider three major themes for each market. Recorded on separate work sheets.

- 1. Market atmosphere:** includes the “feel” of the market, type of shoppers, conversations, and educational activities.
- 2. Physical characteristics of the market site:** include access, flow of people, liability issues, and organization.
- 3. Vendor and products:** address product mix, product quality, signage, display, and customer service.

Comments / Observations

- On each worksheet the team members provide constructive comments that reflect both what is going well in the market as well as what could be changed or improved.
- Whenever possible they are encouraged to write down things that they observe that they will apply back to their own market.

Comments / Observations

- On market day, the team members are responsible for three things:
 - ~ Attendance counts
 - ~ Dot surveys
 - ~ Filling the out the three C/O sheets based on their own observations of the market.
- Some times a 4th element: interviews with key people in the community

Comments / Observations

- The team leader sets a schedule ensuring that each team member has a chance to participate in all three activities
- Before they finish with the worksheets team members are encouraged to go through each and select out
 - ~ Their most important message to the host's manager,
 - ~ The most important lesson/observation they will take back to their own markets, and
 - ~ Any observations that should be excluded from the public report.

Comments / Observations

- At the end of the market the team gets together briefly to debrief the experience.
- Hands over his/her sheets to the person who will prepare the report.

Results

- The RMA process should not be regarded as a comprehensive assessment or evaluation of the market.
- The collated report pulls together all of the comments made by individual team members.
- There is a not an attempt to provide a single view of the market.
 - ~ Individual comments may conflict.
 - ~ No separate report for each participant. The guarantee of anonymity for each participant greatly eases any potential for tension.
 - ~ Best used as snapshot of a specific market day rather than an indicator of an average.

Results

- Multiple days of records will lead to an accurate overall assessment of a market.
- The more samples the more accurate.
- Trends can be calculated

Other

- Use the “event” as a promotion: Invite a local reporter to observe the RMA
- Take advantage to generate “good will” in the community.
- The use of others brings an air of mystique and “experts” from afar.