

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Alternative food networks and value creation: The case of farmers markets in New Zealand

A 152.800 thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Business Studies at Massey University

Cassandra Ellen Tozer

12058195

2013

Word Count

45,161

Alternative food networks and value creation: The case of farmers markets in New Zealand

Abstract

As the global population transitions into a high-energy consumption lifestyle, natural resources are diminishing and pressures on food production systems are intensifying. A growing population and changes in consumption behaviour have seen the emergence of a food economy characterised by large-scale industrial production systems often considered to be environmentally unsustainable, socially unjust, and even exploitative. In addition, these conventional food systems are largely dependent on access to cheap and abundant sources of energy. However, it has become widely accepted that such sources of energy cannot be guaranteed long-term. Therefore, it has been of particular interest among scholars and wider society to explore alternative systems of food provisioning.

As part of an *alternative food network*, farmers markets have been characterised as an outlet for small-scale food producers to re-capture some of the value that is often lost through conventional food systems. Their growing popularity on a global scale shows that significant value opportunities exist as a result of participation. However, while there has been some research on farmers markets within New Zealand, very little has considered value processes within the social phenomena. Described as a shift towards sustainable development, farmers markets provide a useful site for research into understanding sustainable food system opportunities. This research explores an agricultural sector for which little research exists in New Zealand by seeking to investigate value creation within a sample of farmers markets.

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher utilised a qualitative research approach whereby a combination of semi-structured interviews and ethnography was employed. Data was analysed under a social constructivist lens and the findings of the research are presented in narrative form in order to communicate the true perspectives and opinions of those being studied. The research revealed various forms of value evident within farmers market settings in New Zealand and various factors present in its creation. This thesis presents the research and its findings, aiming to further conceptualise farmers markets within New Zealand. In doing so, the research offers small-scale food producers/entrepreneurs and the academic community insight into value processes within farmers markets and thus their true efficacy and merit as part of an alternative food network. The findings of this research can help us to further understand the role alternative food networks play in the food and agricultural sectors and thus help to define more sustainable food system opportunities within New Zealand.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Doctor Janet Sayers and my co-supervisor, Associate Professor Craig Prichard (School of Management, Massey University) for their time and efforts they committed to assisting me with this thesis. Their insights into my chosen topic have proven instrumental in terms of framing my research and their continual support throughout the project has been invaluable.

I would also like to thank Farmers Markets New Zealand for hosting me at their Annual Forum 2013 in Lyttelton. Having access to the two-day forum as a research student early on in the project provided me with invaluable insight into the operation of farmers markets within New Zealand.

In addition, I would like to thank each of the participants who committed their valuable time to be a part of this study. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Associate Professor Lex Chalmers at Waikato University for showing a genuine interest in my research topic and for introducing me to various potential research participants in the Waikato region.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher and supervisors named above were responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii

Chapter One

1. Introduction	8
1.1 The Problem Field	8
1.2 The Research	11
1.3 The Thesis	12

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review	14
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 Alternative Food Networks	15
<i>2.2.1 Defining Alternative Food Networks</i>	15
<i>2.2.2 Theoretical Perspectives</i>	16
<i>2.2.3 Geographical Perspectives</i>	17
<i>2.2.4 Uncertainties and Tensions</i>	18
2.3 Farmers Markets	19
<i>2.3.1 The Global Phenomenon</i>	19
<i>2.3.2 Farmers Markets in the New Zealand Context</i>	22
2.4 Value – A Contested Domain	24
<i>2.4.1 Defining Value</i>	24
<i>2.4.2 Value Creation and Realisation</i>	25
<i>2.4.3 Economic Value</i>	27
<i>2.4.4 Relational Value</i>	29
<i>2.4.5 Symbolic Value</i>	31
2.5 Value Within Farmers Markets	33
2.6 Conclusion	35

Chapter Three

3. Study Design and Methodological Considerations	37
3.1 Introduction	37
3.2 Study Purpose	37
3.3 A Qualitative and Investigative Approach	38

3.4 Participants	39
3.5 Data Collection	41
3.5.1 <i>Preliminary Data Collection</i>	41
3.5.2 <i>Interviews</i>	42
3.5.3 <i>Ethnography</i>	43
3.6 Data Analysis	45
3.7 Ethical Considerations	48
3.8 Conclusion	48

Chapter Four

4. Findings and Discussion	50
4.1 Introduction	50
4.2 ‘Beginnings’ – <i>Self Identity and Symbolic Value</i>	51
4.2.1 <i>The Eco-Conscious Pioneer</i>	51
4.2.2 <i>The Accidental Beekeeper</i>	52
4.2.3 <i>The Business Man</i>	52
4.2.4 <i>Discussion</i>	53
4.3 ‘Preparation’ – <i>Adding Value</i>	56
4.3.1 <i>Making Muesli</i>	56
4.3.2 <i>A \$250 Chicken</i>	57
4.3.3 <i>Eye-wateringly Hard Work</i>	57
4.3.4 <i>Discussion</i>	58
4.4 ‘The Point of Sale’ – <i>Relational Value Beyond the Transaction</i>	62
4.4.1 <i>The Discerning Pie Eater</i>	62
4.4.2 <i>Interesting Muesli</i>	62
4.4.3 <i>A Fear of Sales</i>	63
4.4.4 <i>Complaints</i>	63
4.4.5 <i>Discussion</i>	63
4.5 ‘Stallholder Interaction’ – <i>Beneficial, Redistributive, of Destructive?</i>	67
4.5.1 <i>The Business Mentor</i>	67
4.5.2 <i>Independence</i>	67
4.5.3 <i>An Ulterior Motive</i>	67
4.5.4 <i>Nit-picking</i>	68
4.5.5 <i>Discussion</i>	68
4.6 ‘Farmers Markets in the Community’ – <i>Help or Hindrance?</i>	72
4.6.1 <i>Shop Owners and Land Owners</i>	72
4.6.2 <i>Educating the Kids</i>	72

4.6.3 <i>Coming Together</i>	73
4.6.4 <i>Exploitation?</i>	73
4.6.5 <i>Discussion</i>	73
4.7 ‘The Wind-down’ – Closing Time	76
4.7.1 <i>Exhaustion</i>	76
4.7.2 <i>In Need of Help</i>	77
4.7.3 <i>Shelf Life</i>	77
4.7.4 <i>Discussion</i>	78
4.8 ‘After Market Day’ – Personal and Business Values	81
4.8.1 <i>Better than McDonald’s</i>	81
4.8.2 <i>Family Time</i>	81
4.8.3 <i>Standing Strong</i>	81
4.8.4 <i>Breaking Big Business</i>	82
4.8.5 <i>Keeping it ‘Local’</i>	82
4.8.6 <i>Discussion</i>	83
4.9 Conclusion	87
 Chapter Five	
5. Conclusion	89
5.1 Introduction	89
5.2 Value Within Farmers Markets	90
5.3 Value Processes Within Farmers Markets	91
5.4 Understanding Sustainable Food System Opportunities in New Zealand	92
5.5 Practical Implications	96
5.6 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research	96
5.7 Reflections	98
5.8 Concluding Remarks	99
6. References	100
7. Bibliography	108
8. Appendices	110
8.1 Appendix One – A Typical Farmers Market Setting	110
8.2 Appendix Two – Categories of Alternative Food Networks	111
8.3 Appendix Three – Participant Information Sheet	112
8.4 Appendix Four – Participant Consent Form	114
8.5 Appendix Five – Original Guide Sheets for Semi-structured Interviews	115
8.6 Appendix Six – Revised Guide Sheets for Semi-structured Interviews	117