



food environment evaluation device
measuring the human impact of a public market

Individual Human Capital Impact Study

Prepared by Market Umbrella
for
The Crescent City Farmers Market
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This human impact study was created using the Food Environment Evaluation Device (FEED),
a methodology developed by



Market Umbrella is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit devoted to cultivating the field of public markets for public good. For more information about Market Umbrella, please visit www.marketumbrella.org.

What Is Individual Human Capital?

Individual human capital is the stock of skills and physical and mental health of people in a particular region. It includes spending and investments in health maintenance and improvement. Spending and investments in human individual capital that lead to improved health also lead to increased energy and productivity.

During a time when the prevalence of chronic diseases is on the rise, it is important to reflect on the nutritional quality of the food around us and how it affects health and well-being and therefore individual human capital. Current statistics from the CDC and the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) report that that fewer than 20% of adults in the U.S. eat at least 2 fruits and 3 vegetables per day and 73% of adults in the country are either overweight or obese. According to the World health Organization,

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, including the health system. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities—the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries.

Farmers' markets have the potential to create positive nutritional change in communities whose other options are often stores that stock primarily processed food high in fat, sugar, and salt content and that offer limited and unvaried fresh fruits and vegetables. By changing the everyday social determinants of health in a community, farmers markets have the opportunity to effect positive improvements in that community's human capital.

What Is FEED?

The Food Environment Evaluation Device (FEED) tool, developed by Market Umbrella, is a tool for measuring individual human capital at public markets.

Market Umbrella began work on FEED with the understanding that farmers markets increase a community's access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Market experts theorize that positive shifts in food values and improvements in nutritional decisions occur partly as a result of this improved access and as a result of the opportunities consumers have to connect and engage with farmers directly and to encounter, talk about, and exchange knowledge of fresh, nutritious, locally produced food.

Market Umbrella sought to test the hypothesis that farmers markets impact individual consumers' knowledge of food and, consequently, influence food choices and interactions within consumer food environments. To that end, it created the FEED tool.

FEED Methodology

The Food Environment Evaluation Device (FEED) tool uses surveys and visual cues to measure shoppers' food knowledge, shopping behaviors, and familiarity with fresh produce. Trained research teams survey a representative sample of shoppers on a representative shopping day, using a preprinted survey form and images of produce to assess shoppers' food knowledge.

Measuring Individual Human Capital at the Crescent City Farmers Market

Market Umbrella's FEED tool measures individual human capital at the Crescent City Farmers Market in terms of shoppers' food knowledge. Measuring market-goers' food knowledge provides strong indicators of the market's role as a place for actively engaging with food and improving shoppers' relationship to the food they eat and the way they interact with their food environments.

Summary: FEED Study of the Crescent City Farmers Market

Data Set: In March 2012, the FEED research team, including pollsters from the Policy and Research Group in New Orleans, interviewed adult shoppers at the Crescent City Farmers Market’s three locations:

- 97 adult shoppers at the Tuesday, Uptown market on Broadway Avenue
- 98 adult shoppers at the Thursday, Mid-City market on Orleans Avenue
- 118 adult shoppers at the Saturday, Downtown market on Magazine Street

TOTAL: 313 surveyed shoppers

Survey Findings

Survey respondents were asked the following questions. Aggregated responses for all markets are shown below.

1. How long have you been coming to the market (in months)?

Response	Number	Percent
Over a year	207	66.1%
6-12 months	23	7.4%
3-6 months	12	3.8%
0-3 months	28	9.0%
first time today	43	13.7%
	313	100%

2. Do you shop at the market regularly?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	230	85.2%
No	40	14.8%
	270¹	100%

3. Have you been introduced to new food at the market?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	212	78.5%
No	58	21.5%
	270	100%

¹ Tabulations for questions 2-4 include only respondents who responded “0-3 months,” “3-6 months,” or “over a year” for question 1.

4. Has shopping at the market influenced the way you shop elsewhere?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	220	81.5%
No	50	18.5%
	270	100%

5. [Showing photo of beets:] Have you seen this product before?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	286	91.4%
No	27	8.6%
	313	100%

6. [Showing photo of beets:] Do you like the taste of this product?

Response	Number	Percent
A lot	207	72.4%
A little	31	10.8%
Don't like	33	11.5%
Don't know	15	5.2%
	286²	100%

7. [Showing photo of blood orange:] Have you seen this product before?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	218	69.7%
No	95	30.4%
	313	100%

8. [Showing photo of blood orange:] Do you like the taste of this product?

Response	Number	Percent
A lot	170	78%
A little	23	10.6%
Don't like	7	3.2%
Don't know	18	8.3%
	218³	100%

² Tabulations for question 6 include only respondents who responded "yes" to question 5.

³ Tabulations for question 8 include only respondents who responded "yes" to question 7.

9. What is your gender?

Response	Number	Percent
Female	197	62.9%
Male	116	37.1%
	218⁴	100%

Interpreting the Survey Findings

These survey results tell us a great deal about the market and its ability to increase/improve individual human capital.

Responses to the first two questions clearly indicate that a preponderance of market shoppers have been shopping regularly at the market for weeks, months, and even years. Responses to questions 3 and 4 show that a large majority of shoppers, 78.5%, report that they have been introduced to a new food at the market, and a similar number, 81.5%, report that their market experiences have influenced the way they shop elsewhere.

Responses to questions 5–8 shed light on whether the Crescent City Farmers Market has indeed acquainted shoppers with vegetables and fruits that are wholesome and locally available but not everyday table items among the general population and not often sold in convenience stores, big box stores, or small urban groceries. Shoppers who were shown signature seasonal market produce (in this case, beets and blood oranges) overwhelmingly reported having seen the produce (91.4% reported having seen beets, and 69.7% reported having seen blood oranges). Further, a majority who reported familiarity with the foods indicated that they enjoy these foods (83.2 say they like beets “a lot” or “a little”; 88.6% say they like blood oranges “a lot” or “a little”).

The 9th question indicates that most market shoppers are female (62.9%). Because women are more often the household members who acquire and prepare foods, this figure shows that the market is likely very often reaching individuals and family members who are responsible for household food decisions.

⁴ Tabulations for question 8 include only respondents who responded “yes” to question 7.

Conclusions

The FEED studies conducted in March 2012 demonstrate that the Crescent City Farmers Market increases individual human capital, primarily by increasing food knowledge among market patrons via

- direct contact with knowledgeable market producers
- wider experience of seasonal local produce
- multiple transactions that provide opportunities to discuss food and food-preparation with producers and other shoppers

FEED thus underscores the value of the farmers market as a platform for food education.

Farmers markets are places where consumers come to learn about food. As they broaden their food environment and discover the pleasures of consuming fresh produce, they become more confident, discerning consumers.

The data indicate that the market is an effective vehicle for introducing shoppers to new foods, influencing the ways patrons shop for food elsewhere, and improving their ability to recognize and enjoy fresh produce. The Crescent City Farmers Market thus influences the social determinants of health and positively impacts human capital in its community.