

There is so much information regarding the type of shoppers you should be attracting to your farmers' market. Since the majority of farmers' markets attract local residents and tourist shoppers, it is interesting to explore who they are and what they are doing to make their decision to visit your market.

Here is some insight

A recent article in the EDCO Exchange (Economic Developers Council of Ontario) exhibited the importance of the 'domestic' market (those that visit in their own country or province). 94% of domestic visits in Ontario were made by residents of Ontario, 4% were from Quebec, with the balance spread out across the rest of the provinces. Same day visits reached 49 million in 2006, while overnight visits numbered 34 million. Visits for pleasure, vacation, holiday and visiting friends and family represented 89% of all domestic visits. Together, these leisure visits (for pleasure, vacation, holiday and visiting friends and family) decreased marginally in 2006 (-0.1%) compared to 2005.

Source: *Travel Survey of the Residents of Canada (TSRC), Statistics Canada*

Recent research conducted by the Ministry of Tourism continues to show that our US neighbours are still not visiting Ontario and this trend will continue for the next while. Ontario has never regained the US market following SARS and 9/11. Thus, the key market remains the domestic market. But what does that domestic market want? They want new experiences, they don't want the "... been there, done that" type of visit. As farmers' market manager or vendor you need to ask yourself, 'why would they visit my market or stand, what do I have that is unique, what new products or activities can I develop to attract new visitors/shoppers and maintain repeat visitors/shoppers?'

At a recent 'Agriculture and Tourism' day in Norfolk County, the topic of understanding and attracting visitors was discussed.

Key points included:

Travel is the top reason people visit the internet (it is their starting point)
Key consumer segments for the domestic market: a) families, b) upscale

adventurers; c) Young go go's; and d) Retired roamers.

As an FMO member, the two segments that best fit the farmers' market experience are families and retired roamers – in other words – young parents and grand parents. Disney is now targeting grandparents as a key market. With many families having both parents working and little time for leisure pursuits – grandparents are the next logical market to target.



The aging baby boomer market is also supported by well known demographer David Foot – author of the well known book "Boom, Bust Echo". As the keynote speaker at the recent Organic Conference in Guelph, Dr. Foot explained that those in the 55 – 65 range (early baby boomers) are retired with disposable income and time on their hands. These folks are healthy and 'raring to go' and the opportunity to share that time, money and energy is a huge potential for FMO members. How do you target them? Unlike their own children (the parents of their grandchildren) who use the internet

regularly to make travel and leisure decision, this group still refer to newspapers, magazines and television – however they still use the internet.

Dr. Foot also went on to share how baby boomers (those born between 1945-64 & largest sector of the population in Canada) have two major concerns: 1) health and safety and; 2) the environment. As a farmers' market vendor or manager these concerns can be opportunities for your market. Is what you grow, sell and offer aligning with

these concerns? Growing and selling food that promotes health, offering activities that involve exercise in an outdoor setting and operating using sound environmental practices should be used in your marketing to attract this key segment of the population. Dr. Foot concluded by saying that we have moved through three major sectors as a Country since 1900, those being a) the agricultural sector; b) the manufacturing sector; and c) the service sector which is where we are now. This proves that farmers' markets are positioned well as they offer products and service to predominately urban and aging markets.

Save The Date...



Don't miss the Farmers' Markets Ontario (FMO) sessions at the Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Convention Feb. 20th and 21st at Brock University.

Details www.ofvc.ca <<http://www.ofvc.ca/>>

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