

The Community Grocer: An Impact Evaluation

Romy Sacks, Lori Braun, Georgia Feben and Sofia Gill

Introduction

The Community Grocer is a not-for-profit social enterprise that was founded in 2014. It aims to improve food security and community for people living in disadvantaged areas of Victoria, by increasing access to affordable fruits and vegetables. Its' approach aims to empower customers by giving them the capacity to purchase fresh produce on a weekly basis that is accessible; economically and physically.

An impact evaluation was carried out over a 7-week period to determine the impact of the Carlton and Fawkner market's on food security, social inclusion and job skill development.

Methods

Surveys

A cross-sectional survey was created which comprised of 14 questions, relating to demographics, opinions and shopping habits of customers. Participants who were willing and understood English participated in the survey. The survey produced

Interviews and focus groups

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted over a 2-week period with market partners, staff, volunteers and customers (n=27). A template was utilised, which consisted of multiple open-ended questions. Responses were audio recorded, transcribed and coded into common themes.

Observational studies

Participants were randomly selected and observed over a 3 hour period. Shopping habits, number of interactions and behaviours

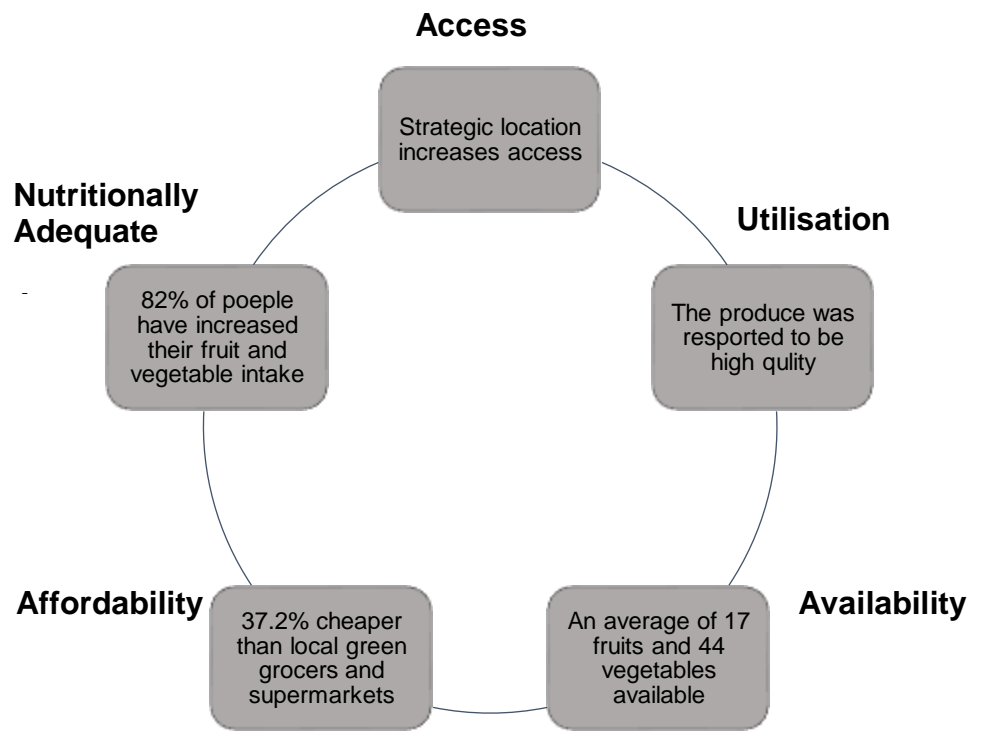
Price comparison

The market prices of the fruit and vegetables items in the Victorian Healthy Food Basket (n=10) were recorded and compared to retailers (n=6) within a 1km radius of the respective Community Grocers. A mean difference between market prices and surrounding retailers was calculated.

Finding 1: Demographics



Finding 2: Food Insecurity



Finding 3: Social Inclusion

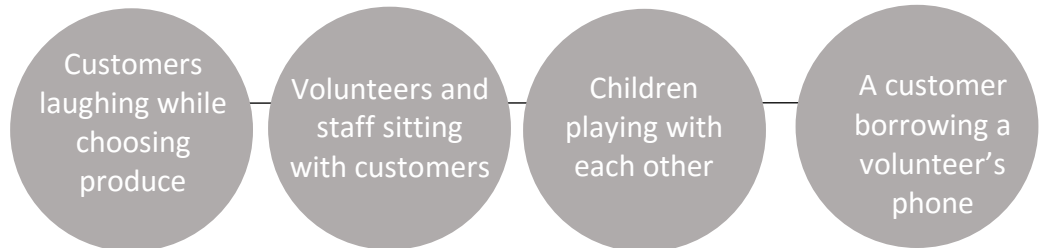
The market's facilitate:

- Frequent engagement
- Cultural diversity
- A sense of belonging

91% feel a sense of community

- "Good for community"
- "It's really important"
- "Buzzing"

An average of 4 interactions were observed per customer, including:



Finding 4: Volunteer skill development



Key themes:

- Social engagement
- Community and contribution
- Improved English
- Increased food knowledge

Conclusion

The key findings of this evaluation infer that The Community Grocer supports food security, social inclusion and support job skill development within these communities. Its' unique approach should be considered as an exemplar within the public health arena to address food insecurity nationwide.