FARMER’S MARKET RESEARCH TECHNIQUE – THE DOT SURVEY
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**Situation and Purpose:** The number of farmers markets has grown from 1,755 in the United States in 1994 to approximately 6,200 in 2010. The United States Department of Agriculture estimates that these markets generate an estimated $1.3 billion in consumer spending each year. Dot surveys can be used to determine how much consumers are spending, in addition to answering other questions such as how often they visit the market, how far they travel, what marketing methods have they noticed and much more. The objective of a recent survey was to determine how much consumers are spending on a given day, what changes they would make in the market and what marketing methods are working. **Educational Methods:** The Wildwood Growers’ Market is governed by a Market Board and daily operation is conducted by the City of Wildwood through the market manager. The questions for the dot survey were developed with the market manager, and one in particular was asked to help the Market Board with a dilemma of physically expanding the market. The questions used recently at market were 1). How much do you plan to spend at the market today? 2). What one thing would you do to improve the market? 3). How did you find out about the market? **Results:** Response to the dot survey was very favorable, with 165 consumers stopping to answer the questions using dot-shaped labels. The responses indicated an amount of money being spent which will help the manager recruit vendors, what marketing methods work best and also answered the question about expanding the market physically. **Conclusion:** With a small amount of preparation, a dot survey can be a useful tool in determining consumer habits and preferences at a farmers market.


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