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FARMERS' MARKETS: POSITIVE FEELINGS OF INSTAGRAM POSTS

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Abstract

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With increasing consumer requirements, farmers and vendors see the importance of social media as a marketing tool to engage with consumers. In particular, on a more personal level for reasons of brand management. Instagram is becoming increasingly popular as a marketing communication tool. The aim of this paper is to identify areas that users evaluate in terms of positive feelings in connection with farmers' markets. The results are based on the analysis of the worldwide, and Czech, instagram social network. Instagram posts were identified on the basis of keywords, such as #farmarsketrhy and #farmersmarkets. The results of the study are based on 100,000 contributions on Instagram made by 55,632 users. The analysis contains 1,357,812 'unique' words. The results identified six major areas (1) Healthy (2) Good (3) Great (4) Happy (5) Nice (6) Perfect. An appropriately posted hashtag indicated the positive feelings that were evoked and then assigned to a matching category. The research results are used to identify group characteristics that exert these positive feelings while visiting farmers' markets. These results can be used to build communications campaigns for farmers' markets. They can also be used as a basis for further research in defining the behaviour of farmers' markets visitors, based on cultural differences arising from geographic location.

Keywords: farmers' market, social media, instagram, positive feelings, healthy, local, organic

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural production can be defined as a production of food ensuring the physical existence of mankind (Vošta, 2014). In Europe, and more specifically in the European Union, the food market and food consumption issues are widely discussed (Šrédl and Soukup, 2011). The future development of food markets depends on consumer trust mainly in terms of quality. According to Renting *et al.* (2003), previously, food used to be bought close to where it was produced, or even directly from the producer. Customers mostly used to assess quality based on their own observation or by word of mouth. A previous study established that food quality not only depends on objective characteristics of the product, but it is a combination of aspects related to personal needs, such as food safety, environmental impact, support of local and rural communities and other ethical aspects (Migliore *et al.*, 2015). Retail chains are used as a mediator between producers and end consumers (Vošta, 2014). Fresh produce, such as fruit, vegetables, flowers and seafood, are all time-sensitive, perishable foodstuffs. Consequently, the time period from harvesting to being consumed has to be as short as possible (Su *et al.*, 2014). One of the possible solutions is the farmers' market.

Farmers' market

A farmers' market can be defined as a place where farmers sell their products directly to consumers. Key products sold at the farmers market include fruit, vegetables, flowers, bakery products, eggs and other dairy products. By buying fresh, organic and local products at the farmers market, the consumers satisfy their current concerns about nutrition, health, well-being and the support of local farmers (Cassia *et al.*, 2012). Recently, farmers' markets have been spreading rapidly thanks to being able to satisfy these consumers' requirements, which can be described as ethical, responsible or green values

(Onianwa *et al.*, 2005). Also, farmers have been responding to customer needs, such as organic farming. This area is currently expected to continue growing (Yu, Yoo and Yao, 2014).

Farmers' markets and locally grown foods in general, contribute to the sustainability of the food system by raising the viability of small and medium-sized farms. They are therefore popular due to the consumer's need for fresh plants whilst satisfying the personal intention to support local farmers (Pokorná *et al.*, 2015; Migliore *et al.*, 2015). Previous research has shown that customer values when purchasing goods at farmers' markets also involve social issues, such as supporting local farmers, strengthening local food systems or other ethical, responsible or green values (Onianwa *et al.*, 2005; Cassia *et al.*, 2012; Conner *et al.*, 2010). Customers prefer farmers' markets because they can interact directly with the farmers and also support their local performance (Pokorná *et al.*, 2015). They focus more on personal benefits and buying high quality goods as a priority, since they demand food with a high added value (Pokorná *et al.*, 2015; Turčínková and Stávková; 2009). However, they perceive farmers' markets as having higher prices and so they express reservations about shopping there (Pokorná *et al.*, 2015; Lucan *et al.*, 2015).

Social Media

Social media has boosted marketing practices, such as advertising and promotion, by their unmatched features and enormous popularity (Hanna, Rohn and Crittenden, 2011). Nowadays, social media is changing organizations as they're frequently used to transform communications between companies and their audiences, so influencing other users and their behaviour (Cui, 2014). As stated by scholars, in the area of organic products for example, we can consider the Facebook network as an important tool when it comes to promotion (Pechrová, Lohr and Havlíček, 2015). Research in the field of social networks has become appealing and there is great potential for further findings that would help practitioners who use social networks. As it is stated by Staab *et al.* (2005), this occurs due to the quantity of available data.

The social network system can be defined as a system of individuals acting as vertices and edges, with relationships between vertices (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). These individuals change the roles of subjects within marketing communication processes. Consumers are active creators of the communication content and not just passive receivers of messages (Malthouse *et al.*, 2013). This creates a pressure on the value of the communication content. The content has to be as valuable as possible to attract customers into two-way communications. The value can be seen as the ability of the content to encourage engagement, discussion, and conversation (Walsh *et al.*, 2013). As it is presented by previous researchers, in agribusiness, farmers and enterprises have been using social networks not only for information searches, but also for communication and promotion aimed at their public (Kánská *et al.*, 2012).

For the entire usage of social networks and its possibilities, it is important to know the structure of such networks. Social network analysis is a process of examining social structures through the use of network and graph theories (Otte and Rousseau, 2002). Interest in the area of research, such as opinion mining, has grown as the possibility of spreading opinions, evaluations, recommendations, and other forms of self-expression online have risen (Wright, 2009). Companies perceive this as an effective tool for reputation management and marketing, but they need to understand the conversation, identify relevant content and user activities (Wright, 2009).

Instagram

In this research we have analysed the Instagram social network. Instagram is a mobile photo-sharing and video-sharing application. It is a social network service that enables its users to take and share photos and videos (Frommer, 2010). Currently, it is the fastest-growing social network (Wagner, 2015). One of the important characteristics of Instagram users is their narcissism. Buffardi and Campbell (2008) claim that narcissists use social networks as they enjoy being in their highly controlled environment with superficial relationships, where they can extensively manage the style of their self-presentation. In the last 10 years, several studies have been carried out analysing social networks in terms of gratification. These studies have analysed Facebook (Krause, North, and Heritage, 2014), (Sheldon, 2008); (Smock, Ellison, Lampe, and Wohn, 2011), Twitter (Chen, 2011), YouTube (Hanson and Haridakis, 2008), Pinterest (Mull and Lee, 2014) as indicated (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016). In 2015 internet users spent more time on Instagram than on other sites (Pew Research Center, 2015). This is a crucial finding and for a stakeholder, such as a company, is important to understand why consumers use Instagram and what gratifications they receive from it (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016). Previous studies have shown that it is popular to use hashtags and post attractive photos at the Instagram network, especially with the connection to food photos and that it seems to be a popular trend for future Instagram posts (Zhang *et al.*, 2015). Keller (2009:143) defines six brand building blocks, where one of the major areas is feelings (brand salience, performance, imagery, judgements, feelings, and resonance). He claims that it is necessary to create a connection between a brand and a consumer, in both a rational and emotional way. Based on these studies, the aim of the research was formulated: What feeling is connected to farmers' markets?

The aim of this research is to identify keywords used by instagram social network users that are associated with expressions of feelings. The following aim is to identify keywords that are

further matched by users to the major keywords expressing feelings. Based on the results of previous findings, (Pilař *et al.*, 2016) the partial aim is to evaluate whether positive feelings are posted rather than negative. In this paper there is also a comparison of the global and Czech data. This is used to identify any main cultural differences within these two environments that can help to understand customers' behaviour. These results are the first comparison of the long-term research aimed at identifying the country specifics of customer perceptions at a farmers' market.

METHODS

Primary data was collected using Netlytic (Gruzd, 2016). Netlytic is a programme analysing contributions on the Instagram social network. The analysis included Instagram photos selected based on the keyword #farmersmarket. The study is based on data including the most recent 100,000 (limitation of Netlytic Dataset) contributions dated 12th June 2016, on Instagram made by 55,632 users. The analysis contains 1,357,812 'unique' words. To identify major areas within "feelings", a Netlytic filter was used according to Gruzd (2016)'s methodology that identifies the given areas in a contribution based on pre-defined keywords. Subsequently, a worldwide analysis of the individual photos was carried out in six major areas (1) Healthy (2) Good (3) Great (4) Happy (5) Nice (6) Perfect, where individual keywords were assigned to these areas. The main areas included categories exceeding 5 % level of relative frequency. For example: Sweet date treat #date #farmersmarket #africa #african #days #prague #festival #health #healthy #healthy #fruit #exotic – the user thinks the dates he has bought at the farmers market are healthy. He/she considered this product worth taking apicture of and publishing on Instagram. Keywords matched to the six major areas were analysed. The method of ordering was based on positive feelings via the frequency within contributions belonging to each category. For the comparison to the Czech Republic, the dataset with keywords #farmarsketrhy (Czech for #farmersmarket) between 10th April 2015 and 5th August 2016 was used. In that period, 8,914 contributions by 3,238 users were published with this hashtag. The analysis contains 67,627 unique words.

RESULTS

The results show most the common areas of 'good' feelings posted by Czech and global Instagram users, written in English, that were identified. Based on the data categorisation in accordance with (Netlytic, 2016), six major areas were identified for both environments: World i.e. (1) Healthy (2) Good (3) Great (4) Happy (5) Nice (6) Perfect; Czech i.e. (1) Healthy (2) Happy (3) Nice (4) Good (5) Great (6) Lovely. Particular shares of specific areas can be seen in the table with positive feelings (Tab. I).

The analysis of world Instagram posts identified the following matches of certain keywords (Tab. II). "Healthy" is mostly used in photos together with the keywords "organic", "vegan", "cleaneating", "fresh", "local", "foodporn", "eatclean", "glutenfree", "delicious". In the world context, we can't find particular keywords as they have no equivalent in Czech. However, synonyms for the "healthy" keyword were used. The keyword "Good" is mainly used with basic food characteristics such as "fresh", "organic", "healthy", "vegan", "local","goodfood", but also with other user activities such as "foodporn", "cleaneating", "instagood" etc. "Great" has broadened previous keywords with following keywords, such as: "greatdane", "greatfood", "foodie" or "yummy" which can be considered as feelings matched to the consumption of farmers' market products. Within the "Happy" category, excluding previously named keywords in other categories, the following keywords were identified: "weekend", "beautiful", "thehappynow" or "thatsdarling". The category "Nice" is interesting and be linked to exact geographical locations, such as "losangeles" or "california". Within the "Prefect category, (again excluding previously mentioned keywords from other categories), contains the keywords: "delicious", "natureperfection", "flowergasm" or "foodgasm".

Generally speaking, the most common keyword, worldwide, is cleaneating (eat cleans). Even in the Czech Republic, this expression is known and is becoming popular (Google trends, 2016). However, there is no usage of such a keyword by Czech Instagram users. Within the last three

I: *Comparison of Positive Feelings*

Global		Czech Republic	
Positive Feelings Areas	**Relative Frequency**	**Positive Feelings Areas**	**Relative Frequency**
Healthy	23.88	**Healthy**	24.75
Good	13.92	**Happy**	23.15
Great	13.65	**Nice**	17.68
Happy	13.06	**Good**	9.64
Nice	8.4	**Great**	9.32
Perfect	5.97	**Lovely**	6.75

*Areas over 5 %
Source: Own calculation (2016)

II: *Keywords with connections to areas of Positive Feelings*

Positive Feelings Category	Keywords
Healthy	organic, vegan, cleaneating, fresh, local, foodporn, eatclean, glutenfree, delicious, vegetarian
Good	instagood, fresh, foodporn, organic, instafood, healthy,vegan,local,goodfood,cleaneating
Great	vegan, greatdane, foodporn, instafood, organic, greatfood, healthy, foodie, goodfood, yummy
Happy	thehappynow, organic, thatsdarling, healthy, vegan, flowers, local, foodie, weekend, beautiful, vegetarian
Nice	losangeles, healthy, vegan, organic, california, flowers, fitness, vegetarian, glutenfree, local
Perfect	Foodporn, foodie, delicious, organic, natureperfection, yummy, healthy, flowersgram, fruit, foodgasm

Source: Own calculation (2016)

categories – 'Happy', 'Nice' and 'Perfect', there is an obvious match to specific products, such as flowers or pears. In all six categories (with the exception of 'Perfect'), the positive feeling is matched with the 'organic' and 'vegan' keywords. In all the categories, there is also match to the 'Healthy' keyword. In four of the categories, the 'Local' keyword can be found. Positive feelings seem to be connected not just with the healthy lifestyle, but also with social values, such as local production and the support of local farmers.

Based on the methodology used in this research (Netlytic, 2016), Instagram posts concerning farmers' markets indicate 95.3 % of users expressing positive feelings, whilst 4.7 % expressed negative feelings.

DISCUSSION

The absence of the "Negative Feelings" category can either be caused by the fact that people are very satisfied with the farmers' markets' products, or by the fact that one of the motives of posting photos on Instagram is to be cool (Sheldon and Bryant, 2016), and the users do not want to show to others that they have bought a product they are not satisfied with. Taking into account the study (Pokorná *et al.*, 2015) identifying the reservations of farmers' market visitors, we can conclude that Instagram is only used for sharing positive feelings. Following the methodology used in the research (Netlytic, 2016), the comparison between positive and negative feelings expressed in Instagram posts about farmers' markets reveals that 95.3 % are positive and only 4.7 % are negative. For this reason, it would be useful to carry out an analysis of other social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Flicker, etc. This would help identify and categorise social networks that are used in sharing negative experiences about farmers' markets. It might also be useful in helping increase customer satisfaction by not only stating the positive feedback. A research question for future study (1): What social networks can be used for collecting negative feedback on farmers' markets?

The results of keywords analysis in this research can be compared with the analysis of Czech Instagram posts identified following the matching of certain keywords (Pilař *et al.*, 2016). Farmers' markets in the Czech Republic offer a great many products that give the users a feeling of health (Cassia *et al.*, 2012), which is demonstrated by examples of home-made pastries, such as cakes and cheesecakes that are sugar-free or made with stevia.The analysis of Instagram confirms the findings that people not only go to the farmers' market to get basic products (Onianwa *et al.*, 2005), but also to get additional, mre luxurious products like cake and cheesecake. Within the global Instagram posts, the top five keywords related to positive feelings included rather general food adjectives such as – organic, fresh, healthy, yummy or delicious. The only specific keywords used were flowers and fruits.

In both analyzes, the 'Healthy' area is the most frequented. From the results of both analyzes it can be concluded that customers express their dietary choices (e.g vegetarian, vegan, clean eating) in the context of the positive feeling. In the global environment dietary choices are represented in the first five categories, while in the Czech culture, users associated dietary choices only with the Healthy' category.

Users of the global environment posted more keywords associated with local support. In previous studies, scholars stated that in general, customers support local farmers and production through their visits and purchases at farmers' markets (Onianwa *et al.*, 2005; Cassia *et al.*, 2012; Conner *et al.*, 2010). However, previous research of the Czech farmers' markets suggested that Czech customer values are not focused on local support when entering the farmers' market (Pilař *et al.*, 2016; Pokorná *et al.*, 2015), which also confirms the absence of keyword 'local' in the Czech Republic (Pilař *et al.* , 2016).

On the basis of evaluated differences between the Czech and global analysis of Instagram posts, it is possible to assume that there are differences between countries in the perception of positive feelings and, ultimately, in the added value of farmers' markets for customers. For a proper understanding of these positive feelings, it is

necessary to analyze individual types of posts on Instagram within different countries. This leads to the aim of better understanding and targeting consumers not only with promotion but also by attracting attention and raising awareness of healthy lifestyles. Research question for future study (2): What are the value propositions of farmers' markets in different countries and cultures?

CONCLUSION

Farmers and vendors recognise the importance of using such marketing tools as social media, as they are engage consumers on a more personal level for the purposes of brand management. The findings of this paper can be used in marketing communication and to connect the products with emotions according to Keller (2009).

The research results have answered the aim of the paper as to what feelings can be identified in the visitors to farmers' markets who post photos on Instagram. In analysing Instagram posts in the global enviroment (hashtag #farmersmarket), the 'Negative Feelings' category did not rise above 5 %. This indicates that in sharing feelings about the farmers' market, people tend to use rather positive expressions. Therefore, Instagram cannot be considered as a tool for negative feedback, but only as a tool for monitoring products and activities that arouse positive feelings in people visiting the farmers' market.

Based on a global analysis it can be assumed that there will be differences within countries and regions, e.g the absence of posts expressing the support of local farmers and production in the Czech Republic. Another important finding is that Instagram users at the farmers' market associate positive feelings with expressing their dietary choices, which has been evaluated to be among the top five areas.

Based on these findings, it is possible to better target marketing communications connecting a brand to a consumer, in both a rational and emotional way (Keller, 2009), where besides the products, it is advisable to promote the activities that can be undertaken at a farmers' market. The research has brought up two questions for potential future research: (1) What social networks can be used for collecting negative feedback? (2) What are the value propositions of farmers' markets in different countries and cultures?

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