

## Farmers' markets and tourism: Identifying tensions that arise from balancing dual roles as community events and tourist attractions



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### ABSTRACT

An increasing interest in food tourism, and the need to provide diverse tourism experiences, has provided an opportunity for some farmers' markets to evolve from community events into tourist attractions. While this presents opportunities to develop a larger customer base, it also creates challenges. The aim of this paper is to identify the tensions that may arise when farmers' markets attempt to service their local communities as well as attract tourists. An inductive, explorative approach was adopted and thematic content analysis used to extract qualitative data from 14 semi-structured interviews. The results identified tensions between market stakeholders and consumers, including: stall holders' understanding of tourism; the market experience; mix of stall holders and products available; and the different purchasing habits of local and tourist consumers. Highlighting the significance of target marketing and the range of produce offered, a conceptual model was developed that shows how farmers' markets may transition from community events into tourist attractions. This research contributes to our understanding of how a farmers' market may transition into a tourist attraction and identifies indicators that managers should consider when combining tourism with farmers' markets.

### 1. Introduction

Farmers' markets are community events that bring consumers and producers together to learn, share and enjoy local and regional produce as well as value-added food products. As short chain distribution channels, farmers' markets provide economic benefits to participating producers (Frost et al., 2016), as well as opportunities to develop value-added products and educate consumers about farming and local, seasonal and sustainable foods. Farmers' markets are a global phenomenon that have increased in popularity since the 1970s and become a part of community life in rural areas and some urban centres (Frost et al., 2016; La Trobe, 2001; Stanley & Stanley, 2014). There are several reasons for this growth, including a focus on improving health and well-being, a desire to preserve local food varieties and an increased understanding of the importance of maintaining small, sustainable farms (Frost et al., 2016; Guthrie et al., 2006; Stanley & Stanley, 2014). The increasing support for farmers' markets may also reflect a wider recognition of the value of agricultural production considering pressures that include sustainable agriculture and climate change (Frost et al., 2016).

The pursuit of good quality, locally grown food may also extend beyond consumers in local communities to tourists who are seeking food experiences. As a result, the role of farmers' markets may extend

beyond fulfilling a community-based role within farming communities to providing niche food tourism experiences. Examples of the types of food experiences at farmers' markets include guided tours, shopping for local produce that forms part of a cooking school experience, and the filming of cooking segments with celebrity chefs using local produce (Getz et al., 2014).

When visiting food destinations, it is not uncommon to see farmers' markets promoted as food tourism experiences. While tourism enables farmers' markets to expand their customer base and enhance their economic sustainability, challenges also exist around a market's ability to successfully service both local and tourist consumers. For locals, farmers' markets contribute to community well-being and the local economy as places to network and regularly shop for groceries (La Trobe, 2001; Silkes, 2012). While this primary function forms part of the appeal of a farmers' market (Zittlau & Gorman, 2012), tourists are rarely able to regularly support farmers' markets in this capacity. Tourists at farmers' markets also exhibit different purchasing behaviour compared to locals (Dodds & Holmes, 2017). This situation presents a challenge for farmers' markets trying to capture and service the competing needs of their local and tourist markets.

While there is growing interest in the tourism potential of farmers' markets in the events and tourism literature, the question of balancing an additional role as a tourist attraction with a traditional role as a

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community event has yet to be addressed. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to identify the tensions that may arise when farmers' markets attempt to service their local communities as well as attract tourists. The research described was undertaken at the Barossa Farmers' Market, in the Barossa region of South Australia. The contribution of this paper is that it draws attention to the underlying tensions faced by market managers and stall holders when attempting to service two consumer markets, each of which may have very different product and experience needs. Exploring these tensions draws attention to factors that have yet to be addressed in the literature. The theoretical contribution of this research is a model that conceptualises the pathway of farmers' markets that transition from community events to tourist attractions, indicated by changes in the type and number of consumers, product mix and authenticity of the market experience. The model also has practical implications as a tool to assist market managers identify potential tipping points and develop a balance between the aforementioned indicators to assist the economic viability of farmers' markets performing dual roles as community events and tourist attractions.

## 2. Literature review

This review begins by defining farmers' markets, followed by a discussion of the primary role markets have as a community event with an emerging secondary role as a tourist attraction. The review concludes by highlighting a gap in the literature that relates to the lack of understanding of the tensions that may arise when farmers' markets attempt to service two different consumer groups.

### 2.1. Defining and understanding farmers' markets

As farmers' markets have grown in popularity, so too has the use of the term 'farmers' to describe these markets. This trend has led to concerns that some so called 'farmers' markets do not necessarily represent the core values intended by the term farmers' market (NAFDMA, 2018). The potential for confusion among consumers about the term's meaning has prompted peak industry associations across North America, the United Kingdom and Australia to more clearly define what is meant by farmers' market. As Hall and Gössling (2016) highlighted, problems around defining what constitutes farmers' markets can add to the term's misuse. This misuse has further implications for the certification of farmers' market and the expectations of customers – whether locals or tourists.

Unlike community markets that incorporate a range of food, plants, entertainment and knick-knacks, the core function of a farmers' market is to act as a local distribution outlet for farmers to sell their produce to the community (Guthrie et al., 2006). Definitions of farmers' markets vary from country to country but maintain similarities – namely that markets are recurring events, held at a specific location, in which the stall holders are producers who sell their own produce (Hall & Gössling, 2016). These qualities are also encompassed within the Australian Farmers' Market Association (2018) definition, in which a farmers' market is described as “a predominantly fresh food market that operates regularly within a community, at a focal public location that provides a suitable environment for farmers and specialty food producers to sell farm-origin and associated value-added specialty foods for human consumption, and plant products directly to customers”.

Farmers' markets also have similar roles and benefits for their stakeholders, which are best identified from an Association's perspective. In an Australian context, farmers' markets are required to adhere to a set of rules and guidelines that distinguish farmers' markets from other community markets by maintaining the market's focus on the sale of locally sourced produce and value-added products. The Australian Farmers' Market Association (2018) developed a rationale outlining the four primary aims of its markets, which are to:

1. Preserve farmland and sustainable agriculture

2. Support and stimulate the profitable trading, viability and business growth of independent primary producers, hobby farmers, community and home gardeners, and associated produce value-adders
3. Provide customers with regular supplies of fresh food and access to improved nutrition
4. Contribute to the economic, social and health capital of the host community.

The evolution of farmers' markets from community events to tourist attractions can add to the confusion surrounding the term, making it more difficult to determine what constitutes a farmers' market and its role within a community. This dynamism in definition and functions of farmers' markets highlights the need to determine how to balance the tensions that may arise from performing dual roles.

### 2.2. Farmers' markets as community events

In rural and agricultural regions, farmers' markets contribute to the fabric of a region's economic activity by benefitting those involved (Guthrie et al., 2006), primarily producers and local consumers, and in some instances tourists. For example, a New Zealand study has found that farmers' markets provide additional outlets for small-scale farmers, an alternative purchasing avenue for consumers, and opportunities at the community level (Guthrie et al., 2006). As a consequence, farmers' markets can make a substantial contribution to the rural economy, especially for farmers seeking to maximise their returns (Hall et al., 2003). Farmers' markets also provide an avenue for local consumers to source local produce and value-added products directly from the farmer and/or producer (Smith & Xiao, 2008). This linkage can result in personal connections between producers and consumers who are able to share and exchange information, ranging from food production to consumption. By selling directly to consumers, farmers' markets enable producers to showcase local and regional foods, test new products, and build customer loyalty that contributes to increased farm sales (Coster & Kennon, 2005; Guthrie et al., 2006; La Trobe, 2001). Other studies examining the benefits of farmers' markets (Frost et al., 2016; Guthrie et al., 2006) have identified a range of economic, social, cultural and health benefits from the perspectives of producers, consumers and the wider community. However, these benefits may extend beyond producers and local consumers to tourists.

### 2.3. Farmers' markets as tourist attractions

The demand for local and regional food, particularly from tourists, presents an opportunity for agricultural regions to cater to a new target market. Farmers' markets fall within the special interest areas of food tourism (Getz et al., 2014; Smith & Xiao, 2008) and agri-tourism (Stanciu, 2015). Studies on the roles of farmers' markets have largely focused on: connecting farmers and consumers (Joliffe, 2008); as a distribution outlet or part of supply chains (Smith & Xiao, 2008); and their potential to enhance tourism development (Joliffe, 2008) by promoting cultural heritage (Avieli, 2013; Timothy & Ron, 2013) and regional identity (Fox, 2007; Sims, 2009). While there are opportunities to link farmers' markets with tourism (Joliffe, 2008), the tourism potential of farmers' markets is not always recognised by farmers' market managers (Smith & Xiao, 2008) or within the tourism literature (Getz et al., 2014). The following discussion explores farmers' markets as tourist attractions.

As tourist attractions, farmers' markets enable tourists to learn more about the agricultural heritage of a region through its fresh produce and value-added food products (Frost et al., 2016). Recent research has recognised the role of farmers' markets as tourism experiences offering an authentic food experience and the opportunity to meet local people (Zittlau & Gorman, 2012). The farmers' market experience can be enhanced with guided interpretation, which engages tourists with a hands-on tour that may include learning, tasting, shopping and perhaps

cooking with the market produce (Getz et al., 2014). Other research has demonstrated how quality food and the shopping experience influence visitor satisfaction with farmers' markets and are therefore important in the economic success of farmers' markets (Silkes, 2012). Farmers' markets provide places that create an atmosphere and space for tourists to experience local foods, and aspects of the local community, through the creation of lifestyle consumptionscapes (Hall & Gössling, 2016). As Thompson et al. (2016) highlighted, the creation of local food tourism experiences allows tourists to 'consume' an agricultural landscape by engaging with it, rather than simply gazing upon it. However, the experience of a farmers' market differs between tourists and locals. Dodds and Holmes' (2017) found that tourists visiting farmers' markets exhibit different purchasing behaviour compared to locals, with a tendency to buy pre-packaged and ready-to-eat foods rather than fresh produce. While food tourism experiences enhance the appeal of farmers' markets for tourists, little is known about the impact of this additional role on farmers' markets that are attempting to service the needs of local consumers simultaneously.

As tourism experiences, farmers' markets may also be incorporated into tourism marketing and development strategies of rural and regional areas (Avieli, 2013; Friedberg, 2003). Promotion of regional food experiences may vary from region to region, but can include events, festivals, cooking schools, farm tours and more recently, farmers' markets (Dodds & Holmes, 2017). Research by Hashimoto and Telfer (2011) found that incorporating farmers' markets into a broader tourism strategy in rural Oita, Japan, resulted in an additional distribution channel for farmers as well as a stopping point for tourists. Although some farmers' markets are well suited to becoming incorporated into the tourism industry, this opportunity is not always realised. In some cases, market managers and stall holders may not see or desire this secondary role (Smith & Xiao, 2008). For those markets seeking to appeal to tourists in addition to their local customer base, little is known about the potential tensions that may arise from servicing the needs of this additional market in conjunction with the existing local market.

While there is a growing body of literature on farmers' markets, including their role in tourism, a gap remains in understanding how farmers' markets balance their primary role of servicing local consumers with a secondary role that uses tourism to further boost local farm income. There is a lack of information as to how farmers' markets achieve these dual roles, and the potential for tensions that may arise as a result of servicing the needs of two complementary, yet competing, consumer groups. This is a significant gap given the consequences that may be generated. For example, some farmers' markets have become increasingly drawn into tourism, developing products and experiences specifically tailored to the tourist market. However, it is not clear from the literature whether a farmers' market loses local support because it has focused too heavily on the tourism sector, or if a loss of income may occur if the potential tourism market is ignored. Hence, the basis of this research focuses on the potential tensions that may arise from trying to perform these dual roles.

### 3. Methods

This research adopted an inductive approach within an interpretivist paradigm, using exploratory and qualitative data, to gain an in-depth understanding of the tensions that may arise from the dual roles of farmers' markets. Obtaining knowledge to provide greater understanding than currently exists aligns with the interpretivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). As tensions that may arise from the dual roles of farmers' markets are not well understood, an inductive rather than deductive approach was required. Inductive reasoning draws on detailed observations of the real world to develop more general principles or theories (Veal, 1997). A similar approach to understanding the role of farmers' markets was used by Guthrie et al. (2006) and Zittlau and Gorman (2012).

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with 14 key market stakeholders were collected to gain an in-depth understanding of the potential for tensions to arise from farmers' markets trying to cater to locals and visitors. Semi-structured interviews also allow for key topics to be discussed among all interviewees and probing for new information using the conversational nature of the interview and the interviewee's background knowledge or expertise (Yin, 2009). This technique enabled two key issues to be addressed: the role of farmers' markets as tourist attractions; and the identification of potential tensions that may arise for markets satisfying dual roles. Interview questions were developed from a review of the literature and preliminary observations made at the Barossa Farmers' Market concerning its roles as a community-based event and as a tourist attraction. The semi-structured interview style allowed for key questions to be asked, while also exploring further lines of enquiry during each interview. The questions were tested based on an initial interview with the Market co-ordinator and were refined in subsequent interviews. The base questions used were:

- Describe your business and involvement with the Barossa Farmers' Market.
- What is the role of the Market in the region? Does this include tourism?
- What changes have you seen over time in the Market?
- Who are the main customers at the Market?
- What are the similarities/difference in purchasing behaviour of consumers?
- Would you consider the Market a community event or tourist attraction?

Participants were initially identified at the Farmers' Market and by their role in the Barossa's food and tourism industries, with additional participants recruited using a snowballing technique. Representatives associated with the Barossa Farmers' Market included stall holders, the Market co-ordinator, regional chefs, local food businesses and tourism managers in the Barossa region. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the author in September 2017, followed by additional interviews in the following year to confirm themes identified and provide an update on the Market's operations. Interviews were conducted in the region, either at the Market or on business premises, and generally lasted for 1 h. Interviewing was continued until saturation was reached with little or no new information elicited from participants.

Interviews were transcribed and analysed with NVivo software, using thematic content analysis with open coding to identify key, recurring themes. Based on semi-structured questions, five key themes were identified: the culture of the Market; benefits for local producers; benefits for consumers; benefits for tourists; and balancing the Market's roles in the region. Understanding the role and benefits of the Market to the Barossa region (known issues) was important to provide context for any tensions that may arise between the main stakeholders (unknown issues). The results section is structured around these five key themes, along with several sub-themes that provide a more in-depth understanding of the tensions identified at the Market. Interviewee quotes have also been used to highlight each theme and sub-theme, encapsulating the perspectives of participants and further demonstrating how the key themes were identified. Participants were de-identified and coded for reporting purposes into three groups: Farmers' Market stakeholders, including stall holders (FM1 – FM5); food industry representatives (FI1 – FI4); and tourism industry representatives (TI1 – TI2). These groups were chosen to provide further insights into the findings while maintaining participant anonymity and confidentiality.

As with all research, there are limitations that need to be acknowledged. The data presented in this paper reflect the views and perspectives of those interviewed and are not necessarily representative of the views of others in the region who did not participate. The research focused on the supply-side perspectives of those involved in the

Farmers' Market and does not contain the views of consumers (demand side). Due to limited participant availability, a smaller number of follow-up interviews were conducted with stall holders in 2018 to confirm themes identified in 2017. Furthermore, the results are limited to participants' opinions and interpretations, which are reflective of their memories of and involvement with the Farmers' Market. These perspectives may differ based on their historical recollections and positions within the region.

### 3.1. The Barossa region

The Barossa is located 1 h's drive from Adelaide, the state capital of South Australia. It is one of Australia's oldest wine regions, with a Mediterranean climate (BGWA, 2018) and distinctive geography ideally suited for farming. At the time of data collection, the Barossa Council area had an estimated population of 24,808 and a median annual income of \$45,449 (ABS, 2018). Approximately one-fifth (20%) of employment was in manufacturing (related to the wine industry), whereas agriculture and accommodation and food service accounted for 6.8% and 6.7% respectively (ABS, 2018). Tourism is a relatively new development and has been leveraged to complement the agricultural and viticultural industries.

Many of the region's tourism experiences have been developed to showcase regional cuisine or have grown out of community events based on food and wine. The regional food culture has evolved from the food traditions handed down from the region's first European settlers and remains integral to the region's lifestyle (Barker et al., 2003; Heuzenroeder, 2002, 2006; Hopkins, 2001; Ioannou, 2000). Combined with an attractive rural landscape, food traditions form an important part of the region's tourism pull factors. Food and wine experiences dominate the most popular activities among domestic visitors, with 73% eating out at restaurants and 51% visiting wineries (SATC, 2018). The region's close proximity to Adelaide contributed to an estimated 828,000 average annual day trips (SATC, 2018). Statistics for the region estimate the value of tourism expenditure at AUD \$161 m, with 209,000 average annual overnight visitors (SATC, 2018). The overwhelming majority of visitors was domestic (94%), with the holiday market accounting for 54% of total visitors (SATC, 2018).

### 3.2. The Barossa Farmers' market

The Barossa Farmers' Market is South Australia's second oldest market and was established in 2002 by a group of residents concerned about changes in the region's landscape. In the preceding decades agricultural land had been converted to residential development and vines had replaced orchards that were no longer financially viable. The Market was largely volunteer run, with two local wineries providing the site and funding a Market co-ordinator's wage for the first 12 months to assist in establishing the Market. The Barossa Farmers' Market began in one shed with approximately 12 stall holders and has expanded to two sheds with an average of 45 stall holders (weekly) and 1500 visitors per week. This number can grow up to 60 for special occasions and when counting casual stall holders who attend fortnightly or monthly. The stall holders range from large vegetable growers to small artisan producers, selling a mix of fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables, preserved fruits, jams and chutneys, cheese, breads and bakery items, fresh cut and preserved meats, and chocolates. Over time, the composition of the Market has evolved, from featuring local artisan producers to now representing a mix of local artisan producers of fresh fruit and vegetables, a small number of external stall holders, and a growing number of value-added products. The composition continues to change, dependent on stall holder availability and seasonality. To increase its attractiveness as a shopping alternative, the Market also allows a small quantity of produce to be sourced from outside the region. When sourced externally, produce and/or value-added products are chosen based on a philosophy that aligns with the Market's principles of authenticity and

integrity as well as adhering to the rules for stall holders' admission to the Market.

From the beginning there has been a focus on how to make the Barossa Farmers' Market economically viable through the establishment of legal and membership structures. The Market is an incorporated association with a 12-person board that has total management of the Market, and delegates authority to an employed manager. Due to its incorporated structure, the stall holders are incorporated market members who pay an annual membership fee. All stall holders must be members of the Barossa Farmers' Market, except for a small number of community stalls that may attend up to six markets annually. An additional 'friends of the market' membership is available to locals who receive discounts at the Market owned and operated breakfast bar. This provides locals who frequent the Barossa Farmers' Market with a discount while tourists at the Market pay full price. In addition to growing the Market's membership base, the profit from the breakfast bar is directed back into the Market and contributes to its economic viability.

## 4. Results

The content analysis identified five main themes, and several sub-themes, that have been used to organise and present the following section.

### 4.1. The culture of the Barossa Farmers' Market

The Barossa Farmers' Market has a distinctiveness from other farmers' markets, because a layer of regional identification has been built into the Market's culture. As one interviewee said:

"We are a Barossan Farmers' Market" (FM1).

This can also be considered one of the strengths of the Market, where the guidelines restrict the stall holders and products available for sale to those that have a genuine connection to the region. In addition to being accredited with the Australian Farmers' Market Association and operating in accordance with their guidelines, the Barossa Farmers' Market has strict rules around sourcing produce from, and being located in, the Barossa region. While the promotion of local produce is a characteristic of all farmers' markets, in the case of the Barossa it is overlaid with the traditions, values and heritage of the regional food culture. One interviewee attributed this authenticity to the Market's success, stating:

"I think the reason that the Barossa Farmers' Market has been very successful is that we have a genuine food culture here that is displayed at the Farmers' Market ... What that means is that our traditional artisan producers have room to breathe. And there is an authenticity and an integrity to our Market" (FM1).

However, the Barossa Farmers' Market does allow some stall holders from outside the region as a strategy to enhance its economic viability through product diversity. Although situated outside of the region, these stall holders are required to embody the cultural values of the Barossa, such as small scale, family-owned farms. As an interviewee explained:

"... for the Farmers' Market to be a viable alternative to the supermarket so that people can do their shopping, they need to be able to buy everything from an avocado to a lime, to bread to olive oil to meat to cheese to milk. There has to be that breadth of produce at the Markets" (FM1).

### 4.2. Benefits for local producers

#### 4.2.1. Distribution network

Analysis of the data sources identified the role of the Market as an important distribution channel, with supporting comments from

interviewees such as:

“I’d say it would be the primary source of distribution for most of them [the producers]” (TI1).

“That’s where the majority of people who are producers are going to sell ...” (FI3).

The Market has created opportunities for producers to connect with each other as well as with customers, and in doing so, is a vital avenue to build customer relationships and test new products. The benefits relating to distribution and promotion are demonstrated in the following quotes:

“It’s really pleasant to be engaged with the people that are actually eating and buying your product as opposed to it just goes out, it could be anybody’s and there is no relationship” (FM2).

“It’s my time to talk to my customer. It’s a PR thing. I get ideas, I give ideas ... And I get ideas from that feedback” (FM3).

“They might have the highest quality of something and if they didn’t have that Farmers’ Market they would be very limited in how much they could promote themselves or be recognised as a quality producer in the region. I think it’s a key aspect of showing off the produce in the region” (TI1).

These quotes demonstrate how the Barossa Farmers’ Market acts as a distribution channel that enhances marketing of regional foods and allows producers to connect with consumers.

#### 4.2.2. Linkage agent

Some producers have used the Barossa Farmers’ Market as a catalyst from which to build their business. One interviewee describing an example of chefs using the Market:

“I think the Farmers’ Markets are fantastic out there because not only do people do their shopping ... But restaurateurs and other food people will trawl the Farmers’ Markets to see who is producing stuff and of a quality that they can use ...” (FI4).

Another interviewee described how a new food business started its own shopfront from the Market, stating:

“I mean these guys were amazing when they came in. When they first started, they had a stall at the Market – just selling nougat I think just so he could get to know the producers, people get to know him ...” (FI1).

The Barossa Farmers’ Market is an important link for producers, providing valuable direct links to consumers as well as other businesses and the local community.

#### 4.3. Benefits for local consumers

As a distribution channel, the Barossa Farmers’ Market directly links producers with local consumers, enabling locals to connect and build a relationship with producers. One interviewee described how this connection starts, stating:

“The idea, as with all the authentic farmers’ markets is to get people to do their fresh shopping. Whether they do it weekly, fortnightly or monthly is neither here nor there” (FM4).

Other interviewees emphasised the importance of this connection, demonstrated in the following quotes:

“Again, that is one of the greatest things about a farmers’ market is you can talk to that person – where did it [the produce] come from, how’s it made, what’s in it” (FM1).

“It [the food] attracts people – even if they don’t want their own garden, they want to come to the Farmers’ Market and talk to the farmer” (FI1).

For the community, the Barossa Farmers’ Market also provides links to cultural heritage by celebrating the regional food culture. In relation to the community and food, one interviewee stated:

“I think it’s engrained in the life of the community that people use food as an expression of family, community and generosity and self-sufficiency. To me that’s the most interesting part” (FI1).

Interviewees also highlighted the role of the Farmers’ Market, as a connector of the local community. The social aspect of the Market for locals is reflected in the following remarks:

“And it also becomes a meeting place and there is a sense of vitality and a sense of community (FI4).

“And that social networking is the stall holders as well as their friends. So it’s that relationship building stuff” (FM4).

#### 4.4. Benefits for tourists

The Barossa Farmers’ Market has continued to evolve, growing its customer base to include both tourists and locals. Interviewees described the role of the Market as a tourism experience, and gave an insight into the local community, as demonstrated in the following observations:

“I think the Farmers’ Market is a perfect way to give them [tourists] that experience because they get to talk to people who are growers, they get to sample food as part of the Farmers’ Market experience” (FI1).

“Certainly a strength for the Barossa is a very vibrant Farmers’ Market. Lots of places have markets. Lots of places have farmers’ markets. This one exists very much for the locals to buy their week’s food supplies. It’s not at all staged as a tourism experience. It allows guests to step in and have a wonderful experience, but it essentially is the connected network between the growers and the locals. And it’s earned its big gold star for authenticity” (TI2).

Other interviewees supported these views, highlighting the popularity of the Farmers’ Market and how it supports tourism experience in the Barossa, by stating:

“... [Tourists] can get immersed in the local food culture at the Farmers’ Market ... But it is something that you have to come to the Barossa to experience” (FI2).

“It’s a tourism attraction for sure ... They come in buses, they come for the weekend, they are travelling through, they’ve seen it on the travel programs, it’s in the paper ... Everyone is actually sending people to the Market” (FM3).

These comments encapsulate how the Market has become a tourism experience due to its role within the community as a direct distribution channel for local food. Although the Market never envisaged becoming a tourist attraction, it has acknowledged it has a role in servicing both local and tourist consumers. The duality of the Market’s roles was summarised by one interviewee who reflected:

“We never set out to be tourist destination. We don’t market ourselves as a tourist destination. But we acknowledge that we are because it’s an extraordinary experience, locals are there and it’s amazing” (FM1).

The Barossa Farmers’ Market has become more involved with the tourism industry and has the potential to be included more broadly in regional tourism marketing and development. Understanding the Market’s role in this evolutionary process can be summarised in the following interviewee statement:

“So yes it’s absolutely critical. I think it’s a real model for any region which has got food potential and tourism potential to advance fairly



quickly those assets of that region. And without it, it would be much more difficult” (FM5).

#### 4.5. Balancing the Market's dual roles

Given that the Barossa Farmers' Market has dual roles as community event and tourist attraction, it is important to understand how and why this has been achieved, as well as how it can be maintained. Interviewees identified locals as those individuals within the community who regularly shopped at the Market, whereas tourists were people who visited the Barossa region and included a visit to the Market as part of their weekend activities. While not strictly defined, the differences between the two groups were distinct in terms of their purchase behaviour. While locals purchased fresh produce as part of their regular shopping, tourists were more likely to buy small quantities of value-added products as part of their Market experience. Some interviewees argued that the Market has always had a tourism element, as one stated:

“It was a very new concept [the farmers' market] and because the Barossa did it very well, there was an enormous amount of publicity, so I think there has been a tourist element from the beginning” (FM1).

A similar recollection demonstrated how the Market brought together agriculture, food and tourism. This interviewee recalled:

“That's really when there became an opportunity to package the food for tourism. Before that, it was producers spread across the region, without any kind of cohesive place to market from or for people to experience what they do. They might be selling their products to some really high-class restaurants or providing this fantastic product. But there really wasn't a place in the region where you could go and see what the whole region was producing from the food side of things. That was the first stage where food really started to come on the tourist game card” (TI1).

From a tourism perspective, the Market's community role provides an important means of accessing and engaging with the Barossa's cultural and regional food heritage. As one interviewee explained:

“We've got Farmers' Markets now. There is a lot of ways to be able to access local food” (FI2).

In addition to the accessibility of the regional food and cultural heritage, interviewees discussed the authenticity of the Market as a contributing factor to its touristic appeal. The following quotes illustrate the importance of authenticity:

“I think that's one of the great strengths of the Farmers' Market is the authenticity” (FM1).

“It [The Market] allows guests to step in and have a wonderful experience, but it essentially is the connected network between the growers and the locals. And it's earned its big gold star for authenticity” (TI2).

As indicated by these interviewees, the primary role of the Market within the community is central to its touristic appeal. From this perspective, an important part of maintaining the Market's success is to ensure it remains relevant to locals as a distribution channel and social event, while also helping to retain an authenticity that appeals to tourists. One interviewee described the synergies between the Market's role and authenticity, saying:

“I think we need to encourage people to be more involved with the Farmers' Market and I think we should be careful about letting other people or other regions selling things at our Market. I know it's hard to gauge a bit but it's something we need to be on guard of” (FI3).

These findings highlight the different perspectives of the Market's purpose, and how an understanding of the Market's dual roles is integral

to balancing these roles from a management perspective. For some stall holders, the Market is regarded as a community event that has a tourism role, but could exist without the presence of tourists. However, its success as a tourist attraction relies on its primary role as community event, as it is the authenticity of the Market experience that provides an opportunity to engage with the Barossan food culture and local community.

##### 4.5.1. Challenges to balancing the Market's dual roles

The economic viability of the Barossa Farmers' Market relies on its ability to service both its local and tourist markets. Ensuring an appropriate mix of products will enhance the Market's ability to perform its primary role as a direct outlet for producers, with a secondary role that creates a food tourism experience for tourists. Interestingly, the results allude to the tensions in servicing two quite distinct markets, in which stall holders with fresh produce (producers of fruit and vegetables) do not consider themselves a part of the tourism industry and therefore, not reliant on tourists. Rather, these stall holders are reliant on loyal and repeat custom that comes from the local community. This sentiment was not necessarily shared by all stall holders, as those with value-added products would be attractive to both locals and tourists. This perspective was explained by one interviewee:

“In terms of the actual producers I don't think they see themselves in that respect. I don't think it's something that they see ... a lot of the producers would prefer that there was less tourists and more locals shopping there.” (FM1).

However, as the Market has acknowledged it is a tourist attraction, with a consumer base that includes tourists, it has to ensure that desirable products are available to satisfy tourists' needs. Tourists tended to exhibit different purchasing behaviour and product preferences, which was highlighted in an interviewee's account:

“They [stall holders] are all in tourism because they need these tourists to come to the place. Having said that, you may well have bought a packet of noodles or some fudge - but you wouldn't buy a leg of lamb. You probably wouldn't buy a loaf of bread, but you might buy some of the cakes ... You might buy some apples, but that's only your snack stuff not your full vegetable load” (FM3).

Maintaining the right product mix to service both consumer markets was identified as a challenge for the Market, with one interviewee commenting:

“... And quite often you need to look at your mix of offerings very carefully because somebody who is flying out, won't necessarily be wanting to take a bunch of spinach and a couple of bunches of beetroot and some wonderful duck ...” (FI4).

These perspectives highlight the differences between locals and tourists at the Barossa Farmers' Market, and the balance needed to ensure that both consumer groups are satisfied with their market experience.

Those involved with managing the Market are aware of the tensions that dual roles have on offering the right product mix. Although the Market acknowledges it is a tourist attraction, it is focused on maintaining local patronage and support. One interviewee highlighted this by stating:

“That's something that I'm working on and want to improve. I want there to be far more locals there than tourists” (FM1).

The results demonstrated how a farmers' market can evolve from being primarily a community event to one that also has a strong tourism element. More importantly, the results indicated that tensions may arise when a farmers' market seeks to fulfil the dual roles of community service and a tourism experience. Tensions identified in the Barossa Farmers' Market included: the perspectives of stall holders as tourism providers; creating an appealing market experience for both consumer

groups; different purchasing behaviours of locals and tourists; and providing a diverse mix of stall holders and food offerings that enhance the economic and social sustainability of the Market.

## 5. Discussion

The aim of this paper was to identify the tensions that may arise when farmers' markets attempt to service their local communities and attract tourists. The Barossa Farmers' Market is an example of how one farmers' market has balanced its primary role as a community event with its secondary role as a tourist attraction. The results show general agreement among interviewees that the Barossa Farmers' Market has dual roles (see Balancing the Market's Dual Roles theme). This result supports previous research (Joliffe, 2008) that identified the role of farmers' markets in linking tourists with food and agriculture. Having recognised this tourism potential, the results (see Benefits for Tourists theme) also support studies that have identified a role for farmers' markets as food events (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2011; Joliffe, 2008) and in food marketing (Timothy & Ron, 2013; Zittlau & Gorman, 2012). Although some interviewees expressed concern that the Market's success as a tourist attraction may disenfranchise local residents, they also recognised that attracting tourists brought benefits to the wider community. Benefits include additional tourist revenue that flows onto other market stall holders and community businesses. The role of the Market in the community was also recognised by interviewees (see Benefits for Local Consumers theme). This finding confirms previous studies that have emphasised the importance of farmers' markets in distribution (Frost et al., 2016; Guthrie et al., 2006), providing a direct link between producers and consumers (Smith & Ziao, 2008), and building customer loyalty and additional revenue (Coster & Kennon, 2005; Hall et al., 2003; La Trobe, 2001).

Farmers' markets have a primary role of providing the community with fresh produce and a place of social networking and cohesion (Guthrie et al., 2006; Frost et al., 2016; La Trobe, 2001). The results of this research (see Benefits for Tourists theme) highlight how this primary role is also attractive for tourists and is an important part of the appeal of a farmers' market. As tourism experiences, farmers' markets provide opportunities to learn more about regional food, lifestyle and livelihoods, community, culture and heritage (Frost et al., 2016; Hall & Gössling, 2016; Zittlau & Gorman, 2012). The results (see Balancing the Market's Dual Roles theme) also support previous research that identified how farmers' markets may be used to showcase a region's food culture (Coster & Kennon, 2005; Guthrie et al., 2006; La Trobe, 2001), and are associated with regional identity (Fox, 2007; Sims, 2009) or being Barossan. Having acknowledged this tourism potential, it is important for market managers to consider the tipping point at which a market is perceived as a tourist attraction rather than as an authentic farmers' market.

Maintaining a successful market requires continued loyalty and support from the local community. The results highlight the significance of local support to a market's economic viability (see Balancing the Market's Dual Roles theme) as well as the emergence of artisans of value-added products. Maintaining customer loyalty should be an important consideration for farmers' market managers. Customer loyalty is reliant on having an appropriate mix of stall holders and products that enhance consumer appeal, which in turn contributes to its economic and community sustainability (Frost et al., 2016; Guthrie et al., 2006; Hall et al., 2003; Silkes, 2012). These results also support previous research (Dodds & Holmes, 2017) that shows the tendency of tourists to be more interested in purchasing local, value-added products that they can take home and share. The addition of value-added products has potential to create further tensions by altering the market's product mix to the point that it may no longer be considered a farmers' market as defined by the relevant farmers' market association (AFMA, 2018) and as a consequence, damage the market's authenticity.

Attempting to service both locals and tourists may result in tensions

that can negatively impact the ability of a farmers' market to sustain either, or both, consumer groups. In addition, farmers' market managers need to ensure that stall holders also benefit from the market and the consumers frequenting it. The results also show (see Benefits for Local Producers theme) that producers were reliant on this outlet and the income generated. This supports previous studies into the financial returns that farmers' markets provide producers/stall holders (Hall et al., 2003). While it may not be the case for all farmers' markets, the tensions highlighted from the results (outlined in the Balancing the Market's Dual Roles theme) demonstrate the need for managers to exercise caution when expanding the scope of the market to include tourism. This result supports previous research that identified the need for products and experiences to reflect core values and authenticity (Getz et al., 2014; Silkes, 2012).

The tensions identified in this research highlight several barriers that may inhibit the sustainability of farmers' markets economically and socially. Managers need to achieve a balance to ensure that a market can still fulfil its primary role while simultaneously undertaking a role in tourism. Achieving this balance requires an understanding that the essence of a farmers' market is central to its ability to successfully function in its dual roles servicing market customers, whether community members or tourists. The domino effect of this secondary role overtaking a market's primary role may be detrimental to all stakeholders involved. It is therefore essential that market managers recognise the interests of all stakeholders and seek to ensure that all stakeholders' needs are addressed.

The tensions also highlight the significance of the target market and the range of product sold in understanding how farmers' markets transition from community events to tourist attractions. Fig. 1 is a conceptual model that demonstrates how farmers' markets can be positioned according to these two characteristics, and the tipping points at which changes may occur based on these two characteristics. Using this model, the Barossa Farmers' Market is positioned in the upper right quadrant, with a large tourist market and volume of value-added and processed goods available to purchase. While the Market has had some tourism role since its inception in 2002, the model indicates how this has grown over time in conjunction with the range of products available. From a theoretical perspective, Fig. 1 provides a conceptual framework that illustrates the pathways that farmers' markets may follow based on their roles as community events and tourist attractions, and the tensions that may arise from attempting to balance these dual roles. For example, changes in a market's customer base and product offering, resulting from a growing number of tourists and the addition of a greater proportion of value-added products, indicates a shift towards a tourism role. Conceptualising this transition is important as it has the potential to change the traditional market experience which may then impact a market's authenticity, whether perceived or real, and therefore a tourist's experience of the market.

In addition, Fig. 1 can also be used as a practical tool to assist managers identify the position of a farmers' market in terms of its current functions, and help determine its future role, or roles, based on target markets and products sourced and sold. The model achieves this by demonstrating the need for farmers' markets to identify the market that is being served and the products to sell to that market. This model also highlights the importance of the authenticity of the market experience, and can alert market managers to changes that may impact the patronage from both locals and tourists. Experiencing the traditional role of the market as a community event is an expectation that is commonly held by both locals and tourists. However, the ability to experience a regional/traditional farmers' market is an essential pull factor that enhances its touristic appeal and enables farmers' markets to fulfil this additional role. As a practical tool, the model may also help managers conceptualise those tipping points at which tensions are likely to occur based on changes in a market's customer base and product offering, and the potential impact on the authenticity of the market experience. This conceptual understanding may be used in

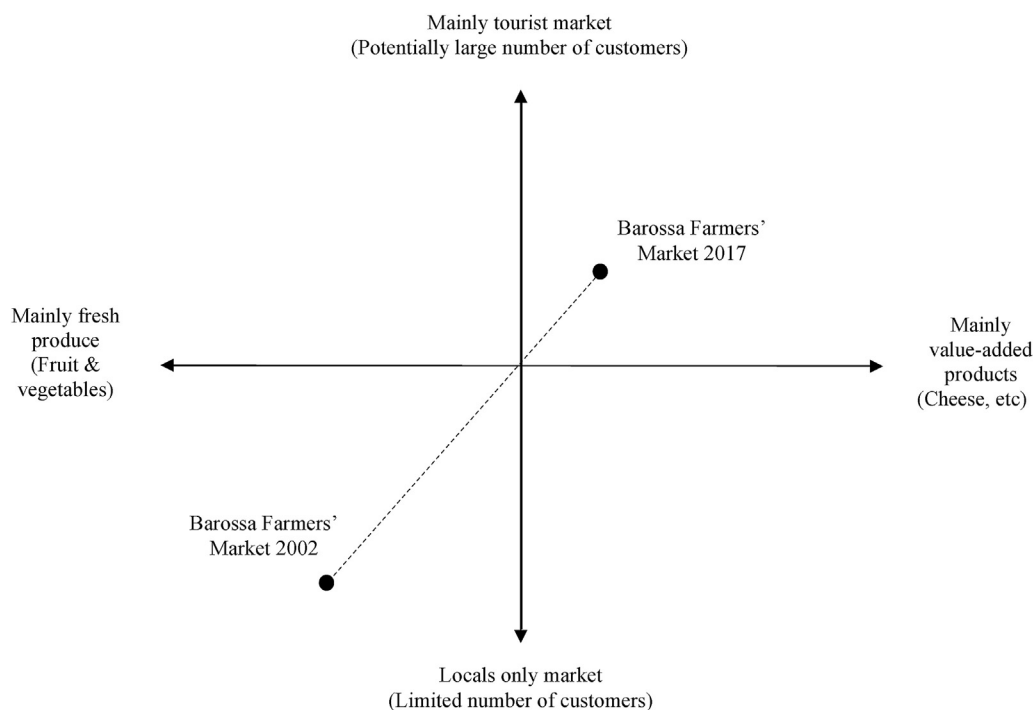


Fig. 1. Indicative positioning of farmers' markets by target market and products sold.

decision-making that determines the market's future direction and its role, or roles, accordingly.

## 6. Conclusion

The tourism potential of farmers' markets has gained increasing recognition, with several studies (Frost et al., 2016; Joliffe, 2008; Silkes, 2012; Zittlau & Gorman, 2012) identifying the reasons for and benefits of farmers' markets as tourist attractions. Reasons include: economic gains from servicing an additional consumer market; authentic regional experiences for tourists; and regional promotions and branding. However, there is little understanding as to the tensions farmers' markets face when balancing their primary role servicing locals with a secondary role attracting tourists. This research has identified tensions between producers and consumers when farmers' markets attempt to attract tourists. The tensions identified in this paper include: tourism understanding of stall holders; the market experience; mix of stall holders and products available; and the different purchasing habits of local and tourist consumers.

This paper contributes to the literature on farmers' markets and tourism by identifying the tensions that may arise as farmers' markets attempt to realise their tourism potential. The paper has also developed a conceptual model (see Fig. 1) that highlights how farmers' markets need to achieve a balance between the dual roles servicing local and tourist consumers. The tensions identified in this paper may also be used as preliminary indicators, or stressors, by farmers' market managers when combining a secondary role in tourism with their primary role within the community. Recommendations for future research include testing the tensions identified in a deductive study that investigates the perspectives of local and tourist consumers of farmers' markets. Deductive analyses may also refine the model (see Fig. 1) proposed in this paper, by identifying additional variables, such as gross turnover by product type and diversity of product offerings across fresh and value-added, which may inform the positioning of farmers' markets along the axes presented.

## Declaration of competing interest

None.

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