

Title: Evaluation outcomes of a targeted marketing and education intervention for a mobile food market

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Abstract

Objective: Using neighborhood samples from the serving areas of a mobile produce market in Allegheny County, PA, we assessed how a marketing and educational intervention changed community members' perceptions of their food environment and access therein; and increased purchases from the Green Grocer (GG).

Methods: The marketing and educational intervention consisted of paper advertisements (e.g., door hangers, flyers, posters) and food tastings with recipe cards at three intervention sites. We administered surveys to customers at all six GG sites pre-intervention, as well as approximately three months after the intervention was implemented. These surveys collected demographic information, self-reported food consumption, and customer perceptions about the food environment and GG program. We conducted difference-in-difference analyses to compare degrees of change in behavior or perception between control and intervention sites.

Results: We conducted the pre-survey with 105 customers and successfully followed up with 64 of them for the post-survey. Overall, survey responses show that GG's clientele is mostly female (72.4%), Black (48.6%), not coupled (75.2%), and has at least a high school education (96.2%). Respondents at the control and intervention sites did not differ significantly, except by race ($p=0.037$). At baseline and follow-up periods, customers largely reported being satisfied with the GG program. Difference-in-difference analyses showed some change in GG engagement, eating behaviors, and perceptions between control and intervention sites, but our findings were largely non-significant.

Discussion:

Customers at control and intervention sites reported high satisfaction with the Green Grocer. The main significant finding was that customers at intervention sites were less likely to report many opportunities to purchase fast food in their neighborhood (OR: 0.32), which may indicate how marketing and education efforts change community perceptions. Study limitations included small sample sizes and reduced response to the follow-up survey.