

The Modern Farmers’ Market: The Role of the “Anchor Vendor” in Technology Usage and Adoption

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Technology is an increasingly important force in the world today, pervading everyday life in a myriad of ways. This is no less true in the field of retail than elsewhere. However, farmers’ markets—which have become increasingly prevalent in recent years, from 1,755 in 1994 to 8,669 in 2016 (USDA, 2016)—may represent an unusual case because of their cultural associations. Moreover, the nature of technology adoption in general often follows patterns similar to those in the fashion industry: After an initial surge in popularity, a new concept is abandoned with similar relative speed (Sun, 2013). This process may be driven by opinion leaders or, especially, prominent and influential “anchor vendors,” who occupy a special position in the establishment of shared market spaces (Gatzlaff, Sirmans, and Diskin, 1994). To understand the role of technology in the context of the modern farmers’ markets and what drives this role, this study seeks to quantitatively analyze a broad cross section of farmers’ market vendors, not only to determine their technology usage but also to understand the drivers of this technology usage. Taking a cross-sectional approach, we categorize farmers’ markets by vendor types and seek to understand both the characteristics of technology use and the sources of influence of this usage by vendor type. The results have implications for the theoretical understanding of the farmers’ market context and how it compares with other retail contexts as well as for technology companies seeking to expand their services to include vendors at these increasingly prominent markets.

Keywords: farmers’ market, technology adoption, entrepreneurship, vendor

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