
What motivates Locavores?

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Abstract

The lack of scholarly research about “locavores”, defined as those who are passionate about eating local food, means that there is little understanding of what motivates such consumers. This study focuses on understanding the motivations of such locavores. The phenomenon of “locavores” has its origins in the eco-consciousness or sustainability movement, the trend toward natural and organic food and the rising support for local businesses. It is quite popular in the San Francisco Bay area and gaining popularity in the rest of the U.S. and in Europe.

The research was based on 22 interviews conducted with consumers who identified themselves as passionate about eating local food where available and practicable. The interviews were mainly conducted at farmers’ markets. The depth interviews with consumers were content-analyzed to identify trends.

Based on the content analysis, the main motivations for locavores were that local food was 1) tastier, 2) healthier, and 3) left a smaller environmental footprint compared to food in supermarkets. Only a few respondents mentioned that an incidental reason for their interest in local food was to support local businesses.

Most consumers expressed a combination of different motives and this might pose a marketing challenge for local farmers, typically with limited budgets, in that it makes marketing local food much more complex.
