



Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust

A Central Regions Farmers Trust Award

The Marketing of Food and the Education of Consumers

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1. INTRODUCTION

Having seen some troubled times at home on the farm nearly ten years ago - but still achieving our high quality beef production - it was clearly not the finished product but the income and profit margin which needed addressing.

My two brothers and I could not be afforded full time employment on the family farm and had been working elsewhere for several years until the decision was made to market our own products (and not send the beef we were producing to be slaughtered under contract to Tesco's).

We were looking to shorten the links in the chain, retain more of the margins ourselves and add value everywhere possible.

So, Tortworth Estate Shop in South Gloucestershire (www.tortworthestateshop.co.uk) was established where I became Manager. We have been trading since 2003 and we have succeeded in reducing those links in the chain, adding more value and retaining a larger profit margin.

However, it has not been just as easy as selling our beef to customers. We have had to find those customers, find and position ourselves in the market and work continuously hard to keep that market.

Everything in retail seemed far removed from farming and, without ever having studied for a business degree or marketing before, we as a family were all in for a very steep learning curve.

I have taken all the opportunities given to me and to great benefit. This particular opportunity (my Nuffield Scholarship) to study a subject of my choice has been a one off. I've gained much needed confidence and a wave of new information. It's my personal journey and the interesting people I have met that have changed me for good.

So where should I begin?



2. MOTIVE

My own reasons for undertaking a Nuffield Scholarship were to go out and see what other people were doing and bring back some ideas to my business to keep it moving forward.

I have wanted to keep my farm shop business developing from the day we opened and regularly take trips around the country and subscribe to food sector and agricultural magazines to keep up to date with what's new.

The opportunity to travel abroad to study excited me. The fact that I'd do it alone did not deter me either. With the fantastic support from my family and knowing the business was in good hands, I was on that plane and for the first time ever, heading to the other side of the world.

I believe that the continuing knowledge I gain will help to guide me more accurately in my future decisions.

3. AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

My aims were to find new innovative ideas on how to display and market produce. I wanted to research the different routes that other countries use to get their food to the consumer.

In **France** I wanted to understand the close connection people have with food.

I think that there are still so many people in the **UK** who have no understanding of food. What I mean is... no understanding of seasons, no understanding of getting good value for money, eating sustainably and even being environmentally aware.

In **New Zealand** I wanted to find out how education was being incorporated into agriculture and food production.

I had been told that Tasmania is the boutique food producer of **Australia**. I wanted to find out what was so special? How do Tasmanians get their produce to market?

In all the businesses I visited on my travels I wanted to see how people incorporated educational messages into their marketing.

How are consumers able to make informed decisions without enough information and could I find any innovative ideas for relaying my own information?

4. MY STUDY PLAN

In the first 6 months I planned to travel the **UK**. I wanted to visit a range of routes to market which included:

- farm shops
- community supported agriculture projects
- farmers markets and box schemes

I looked at the current processes in marketing food and any new innovative trends.

I wanted to go to **France** to look at the specialist foods produced there such as foie gras and understand the marketing in relation to provenance. I knew the French were passionate people and that food was in their hearts. How do they retain that close connection with food and what do they actually do daily to keep this connection going?

I feel that it is important for this study to look at countries with similar economies to get a perspective that would be easy to relate to. I wanted to find ideas that I had not seen before and gather information to transfer to the UK.

In a larger study block of five weeks I planned to go to **New Zealand**, and **Australia** incorporating **Tasmania**. I researched some good examples of businesses similar to those I had visited in the UK and arranged to visit some earlier Nuffield Scholars. Starting in South Island NZ I mapped a route to the top of North Island, down to and around Tasmania, across to Brisbane Australia before heading down to Sydney then back home. I was warmly welcomed into New Zealand by fellow Nuffield Scholar Steve Sternes.

I was really interested in looking at the red meat sector of the food industry, particularly for the smaller producer, and the approach which the Australians and New Zealanders had to eating habits.

When I returned I wanted to be able to implement some of my new ideas in my own business and assess the impact and the benefits.

5. MY STUDY TOUR.

5.1 UK

Taking to the road and heading up the length of the country on a journey to visit as many farm shops as I could, I was excited at the opportunity of doing some real research. Straight away I realised that this was an important exercise which I had never really utilised properly before.

I first analysed my competitors in depth to take the opportunity to gain a better understanding of them. I felt it would reflect the needs of the consumer within my local region.

I made physical, emotional and financial comparisons when on my visits. I started these comparisons from the very first recognition of the businesses. My first impressions as a customer set me in a frame of mind. These first impressions came from signage and advertisements. I felt that this would hint as to whether businesses were getting across clear messages, messages they wanted to convey?

I looked at all areas closely, the shop front, ambience, displays, the welcome and service, the products, standards, information available, the after service and also my response.

I was looking at business trading today, regardless of age. I was very aware of whether businesses had modernised and kept up to date with current times, fashions and styles.

The UK is a small country and across the board businesses were very similar. Personality of the proprietors and regionalism of foods were the main difference.

The current economic climate has aided the reduced customer spend and footfall in the last couple of years, particularly on more specialised luxury foods. There is still however a growing awareness of food production, a thirst for knowledge and a willingness to support British agriculture.

I feel awareness has stemmed from the various food scares Britain has suffered in the last 15 years and I personally cannot foresee the trend reversing. Consumers have the right to know where food comes from and how it is produced. They are continually finding new ways of sourcing information. No stones are being left unturned.

Along with consumers demanding ever more value for money, convenience and information, the market place has become very competitive.

"I am unsure whether farm shops have longevity. Are they just a trend before the next big innovation in food retailing such as food halls set within the large multiples, stocking regional produce?" (Simon Ball 2010)

Betty's of Harrogate

One business which has stood the test of time is Betty's tea rooms in Harrogate. This beautiful little tea room oozes charm and Victorian character and is an inspiration to any like minded business.



Betty's is set out like a big sweet shop with large storage jars filled with teas and coffees from around the world all of which you can open and smell the delights. Professional, expertly trained tea blenders are there to answer any questions, with an exemplary level of knowledge and service.

This business made real connections with people's hearts and minds by evoking memories of the past whilst offering the highest quality of products and service. Betty's has a motto of "delicate and dainty" and this is applied to all aspects of the business. This consistency over its 90 year history is what makes Betty's of Harrogate shine.

Betty's has not stood still though and now offers a cookery school which works very well as a food connection and educational facility. Online shopping is now available at www.betty's.co.uk

5.2. FRANCE

Supermarkets to one side please!

Market stalls, farmers markets and small farm shops are why I visited the South of France. My hire car was stopping every time I saw produce for sale at the farm gate.

Non-uniform shaped fruit and vegetables bursting with provincial sun, stacked high at the farm gate or picked straight from the field. Product consistency was not important. Flavour and taste however, was uppermost!

From the abundance of produce available I could feel that the French loved their food. Nothing was overly processed. Beautiful simple recipes made up of a few fresh ingredients, recipes handed from mother to child and leisurely long lunches made for very enjoyable food. Seasonal food was simply preserved to extend its shelf life not brought in from abroad out of season.

I believe that, unlike the Brits, most of the French are no more than two generations away from the land. Families grow more of their own fruit and vegetables and parents teach their children from a young age how to cook with pride and get enjoyment from cooking.

I visited a large pick-your-own business which belonged to a chain, there is nothing like it in the UK. There were children running all over the place. A play area, toilets and refreshments all available. However, the children were not using these facilities very much as they were enjoying running around harvesting fruit and vegetables for their supper. This was wonderful to see and made me quite jealous that more children back in the UK were not as enthusiastic about food.



I could see that seasonality was being engrained into the French children. Local food was not going to waste. The benefits this would have financially for the local economy and the reduction of transportation would also result in less environmental impacts.



Seasonal batch cooking events in the UK would be a great idea whenever there was an abundance of produce. I am going to try putting some ideas into practice back at my farm shop. It's fun, educational, offers good seasonal awareness, great flavours, value for money and could be a social event. It would also utilise fruit and vegetables which often go to waste in the UK when supply is abundant. This is one of my potential future plans.



One "Pick your own" business I visited specialised in courgettes, tomatoes, onions

and aubergines. These are the basic traditional ingredients for the local ratatouille dish. They grew together, were harvested together and were eaten together. This is how they were marketed. This also meant that the crop field was seasonal and a real "cash crop" to the producer.

Next to an old table and chair at the side of the four acre field, 5 litre drums of oil were being sold – the final ingredient to this local dish. Simplicity and great merchandising!

There are many misconceptions about the process that produces foie gras. Even more effort has to be put into conveying true information so the consumer can make an informed choice.

I visited a small family farm which produced ducks to a very high standard, with high levels of care and attention to detail. The family was pro-



active in showing the public all the steps in the process. This was portrayed in a short video film of the farming year being played in their shop. We discussed a producer in Northern Spain that relied on the ducks naturally fattening in autumn on acorns. The preference was for the French method of fattening and it did not seem that was going to change in the near future!

The family's small farm shop also sold peanuts and asparagus, produced on the farm.



There were many farming implements in their shop which children were able to touch so they could understand how they worked; these were not seen as decoration or museum pieces but as educational aids.

As consumers have to be proactive in finding the relevant information we need to make informed choices. We need to talk to our producers.

A simple yet very effective way of getting information across is to produce a short video film of the farming year or of one production process. Play it to as many folk as possible – it's a great educational aid.

We need to make sure that communication in the supply chain runs smoothly and effectively. A chain runs both ways and it is not only the producer who benefits when it is fully connected. For a chain to work for the benefit of everybody there needs to be an effective, well linked dialogue.

5.3 NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand's clean and green image is its pride and joy. Its economy is mainly based around agriculture, export, forestry and tourism. The pristine image and the rugged landscape are what attracts the many tourists to the islands and why many farmers have diversified into the tourism industry to accommodate the needs of the tourists (holiday lets/jet boat rides/nature trails etc..)

New Zealanders enjoy the outdoors. They are also described as backyard geniuses because of the number of inventions they have given the world.

To be a modern "Kiwi" you have to embrace everything new in technology. New Zealanders are one of the leaders in agricultural technology and one of the most productive and efficient producers in the world today.

Steve Sternes

Steve Sternes, NSch, and family have for the past 11 years run an efficient pork production system on South Island producing some 77,000 finished pigs per year. This equates to 10% of New Zealand's domestic pork market. The free range pork system is based on concentrate feeds bought in, a good management program of inputs and some very good uses of technology. The latter are what make this business so ultra efficient.

In over a dozen large hangers, holding 500 porkers apiece the unit made good use of computerised weighing scales and drafting gates. Automatically the pigs were sorted and moved onwards towards the finishing pens until they were of the weight required for killing and ready for transportation. At its busiest Steve, his family and his minimal staff can have an output of 2500 pigs per week.

I visited Silver Fern Farms an animal processing plant which processed beef animals. 97% was for export and the remaining 3% for domestic consumption. Apart from the contents of the intestines every part of the animal's carcass has a market, whether it was meat cuts into Europe, eyes & offal to Asia or teeth to Saudi Arabia, everything has its use.

The plant handles 100,000 large animals in a nine month period and a further 200,000 bobby calves in a further two month period. I had a tour around the meat killing and cutting lines and to my amazement witnessed a robot cutting meat. Silver Fern Farms had designed and patented a robotic butcher suited to their processing plants, much like you could see in a car factory. Each robot eliminated the work of approximately fifteen staff, which in turn eliminated many health and safety issues.

Carcasses were x-rayed at the beginning of the cutting line to measure individual structure, confirmation, external and internal fat and then were allocated a barcode. When passing through the robotic butchers the bar code was read as unique to the carcass and the carcass cut accordingly – genius!

In New Zealand plenty of fresh vegetables are available from the farm gate or the greengrocer. The very best grades may be sold through the export market. Vegetables in the home market can tend towards second grade.

Farmers' markets are abundant across the islands and are well established with local producers preferring to support only their own local market.

Some wine producers grow fruit and vegetables alongside the grape vines. This is mainly to stop the landscape becoming a monoculture and encourage more diversity and wildlife. The soil and climate are ideal for this.

It has to be said that the quality of the packaging of products in general at farmers' markets is far more commercial than ours in the UK and I believe this is mainly due to New Zealand's large export market and the familiarity with packing a product suitable for stocking European shelves. Producers will often share facilities and advertising to help save

on costs of production and marketing, which works well for them. This was a good idea to take home.

Road side sales are big in New Zealand, much the same as France. There is a large variety of produce on offer which is very competitively priced. Very few people stock other producer's goods.

Wine producers are leading the way with on-site shops, tastings and visitor experiences. The high quality wines, food and visitor tours which are on offer from the cellar doors are a great way to spend an afternoon with the producers, learning about all the processes in the wine industry. The tourism market is strong and offers great experiences.

Regionally there are wine trails which encompass many vineyards and attractions. These can be enjoyed by hiring a bicycle and taking a long day off, maybe stopping for a night. These are particularly popular with tourists.

Food trails in the UK are only a recent introduction and can certainly be made more of. With the rise in "stay-cations" there is a great opportunity to offer a real experience.

5.4 TASMANIA

Rich Volcanic soils and an optimum growing climate lend themselves to high quality, high yielding and quick returning crops.

Known as the boutique food producer of Australia, Tasmania did not disappoint. There is a far greater density of population and of food retail outlets where you can find high quality meats and speciality foods than on the mainland.

There is a resurgence in breeding traditional breeds of cattle for flavour and I regularly saw herds of native breeds such as Belted Galloways & Murray Greys.

Many of Tasmania's residents have moved there from elsewhere in the world and have brought with them a variety of food based skills and individual tastes. This has helped achieve high quality end products such as smoked salmon, cured meats, cheeses and fruits.

Familiar UK television programmes UK about food are also aired in Australia. Celebrity chefs have regular appearances on the screen. Maybe this is one of the many reasons Australians have very similar diets and food cultures to ourselves. People can gain inspiration to take more roles in food production and agriculture.

Many successful food businesses are family based. They concentrate on one core product and exploit everything, drawing upon all the skills brought of each member of the family.

As with all businesses those that succeed are those that have somebody at the helm who is passionate and knowledgeable about what he/she does. Many businesses in Tasmania however are a lifestyle choice and not commercially driven.

The Cherry Shed

Established in 2003, Paul and Tina Badcock planted

8000 grafted cherry trees which have rapidly increased to 20,000 trees over 15 acres. Paul started by selling cherries from a roadside stall which over the course of the first five years had grown into a large shop called The Cherry Shed. Paul has added value to his cherries by creating a large range of approximately 150 products from his cherries which include items such as cherry brandy, preserves, ice-cream and even cherry stone art.

In 2008 Paul expanded the shop, added a cafe, a restaurant with over 80 covers and a function suite. From this Paul further increased his cherry product range to include main meals, salads, desserts and ready to eat foods.

The Cherry Shed is now open seven days a week and employs over a dozen people in the shop and seasonally around 40 additional cherry pickers.

Paul has also created a room with lots of information, picture boards and machinery to help to explain to customers the story of cherry production and harvesting.

The whole concept was originally totally new to Paul and his family but through his own experimenting, by trial and error and with customer comments Paul now has a successful thriving business.



Nichols Poultry

Rob Nichols of Nichols Poultry was a great example of how to diversify and develop a farm business to gain maximum return. Rob who originally came from Shrewsbury, England moved to Tasmania 25 years ago and started a poultry rearing business. Rob has grown his business to supply over 150 different chicken and turkey products to Australian super-markets under the Nichols Poultry brand, a brand that he has updated several times to improve the packaging and to meet the market needs. This ensures he is giving customers what they want.

There is a clear structure of management in the business, with Rob at the head. Over 50 employees work on the farm covering all aspects of farm work. There are three on-site engineers covering all aspects of his business and helping to reduce costs. There is a whole factory full of processing staff and associated delivery drivers for local rounds. Most of the industrial cleaning and cultivation of the land is contracted out allowing Rob the time to develop his other interests. Contracting out some of the work assists accurate budgeting and minimises his investment risk.

Rob has formed partnerships and contracts with neighbouring farmers so he can invest into particular crops, share the cost and share the profits. He has also invested in a milling plant to process all his own feeds.

Rob classes himself as a Manager, Entrepreneur and technician and has a great interest in technology. Rob has installed the first of two wind turbines designed to provide power for the entire business. Rob has also started buying and selling wind turbines around the globe. This is a man who moves fast and grasps all the opportunities he sees that he'll get satisfaction from.

Festivale

Festivale is North Tasmania's food and drink festival with lots of entertainment! This two day event I attended gave me so much inspiration. Held very much like "Party in the Park" in the UK or any good music festival, Festivale was all about having fun.

Set within the confinements of the town's walled park, customers were able to amble freely, attend one of the three main music stages, admire local artists' work, sip a glass of wine under an old tree or enjoy plenty of street entertainment. That was enough to ensure a great time, but the festival was about food and drink and



hundreds of people were showcasing some of Tasmania's best foods by offering goods for sale or by giving away tasters.

This set people in a great frame of mind to be receptive to producers telling their stories, to enjoy slow tastings of products, to give vital feedback and of course to spend more.

I really think we could do so much more if we made better connections with people. Providing entertainment is one way that really adds value.

5.5 AUSTRALIA

If you have ever thought that the wrong location could fail a business then you need to look at The Master Butcher in Queensland. This business is set in the back end of an industrial trading estate. It feels as if you are entering the premises from a fire exit door and you would hardly know what the business does or, even, that it was there at all.

The Master Butcher is a retail outlet for the public. It does not deal with accounts, caterers and contracts. What you see is on sale to the public only.

Set up in a large warehouse the whole premises are refrigerated. As you walk in the door and into the large fridge you are taken aback by the sheer quantity of packaged meat for sale. In a matter of moments you are greeted by a member of floor staff who will guide you through the meat, offer you advice and tell you today's special offers. The meat ranges in quality from standard to exclusive items such as Wagyu or Kobe beef. Lines of pallets brimming with a different cut of meat on each, such as whole fillet or rib eye joints fill the floor space, whilst the perimeter of the building is filled with shelving stocked high with value added and processed products such as sausages.

Onsite butchers will cater for all detailed requirements in a flash and they'll also box up whole lambs or pigs cut to your liking. Also on site, in a room viewable by the public, up to five tonnes of sausage are produced every week and on a good weekend up to one tonne of minced beef is processed.

The business offers high quality meat and great bulk discounts. For those large family events or for value shopping, this is where the people of Queensland, Australia come for their meat – and yet it's an unassuming warehouse at the back of a trading estate.



A great product and an excellent reputation goes a long way and when you get it right, it does not matter where your location is!

Food projects that educate school children are common and the support that the individual states give for development is good.

Food marketing is of high quality often with the Aussie humour running through its veins.

Several established brands and businesses I have seen are similar to some in the UK. Australian produced products are reaching our shelves very easily and particularly into the speciality food sector here in the UK. As with New Zealand there is a good export system in place and Australian food is sought after across the globe.

5.6 Farmshops and Food Halls

Farm shops vary widely across the countries I visited. At one end of the scale there are small ones which sell just the one or two main products which are home produced. At the other end of the scale, there are larger businesses supporting many other suppliers and a wealth of staff. Some even aim to be competing with the multiples.

Most farm shops are initiated by farming families and some are attached to agricultural societies, deeply engraining them in rural society.

Due to consumer demand in the UK revolving largely around convenience shopping, many farm shops lose track of their origin and begin to broaden their product ranges to fill space and start offering these convenience products. This leads to a dilution in the individual personality of the business with the same lines stocked in many different premises. The problem now is that regional suppliers are producing in such large quantities that the supermarkets are cashing in on the act and are offering the established regional brands. Farm shops must keep their personality and try to stock items not found in the supermarkets.

Where farm shops can compete against the multiples is the amount of product and producer knowledge they can give to the consumer and those that do it well are those that succeed.

Farm shops that are connected directly to the farm/producer are those that have greater flexibility in what they produce. They are the businesses that can cater best to the needs of their consumers and it's this flexibility that keeps the businesses moving forward.

I believe the day will come when that all supermarkets have a local food hall and then what will become of the farm shop?

5.7 Farmers' Markets

I'm lucky to live near Stroud farmers market. Stroud Farmers market has been voted best in the UK for the last three years. A strong management system which controls stall holders and the diversity of local quality products is what has made Stroud the winner. However UK farmers markets can learn from elsewhere in the world. We need to be providing entertainment on market days. In New Zealand every farmers market I visited was vibrant and had great ambience because there was some form of live music and street acts to name just a couple of forms of entertainment. This very importantly put customers in a happy frame of mind, made customers stay longer, purchase more food for instant consumption and overall resulted in higher spends per head. It gave people time to relax, stop and talk longer with their producers making real connections.

5.8 Box schemes

As butchers we contract-cut many animals for localised meat box schemes and wonder how many of our potential shop customers are being supplied with a week's worth of vegetables or two months' worth of meat? One thing for sure is that a lot of time goes into box schemes and the producers work very hard to sell the produce. Having a guaranteed customer base is a great asset to producers and the rewards can be good if the time is put in.

Fresh Direct

A large scale box scheme called Fresh Direct in California offers a vast selection of seasonal vegetables. The three brothers that run the business which was handed down from their parents have two sites in different areas of the state - in different climate zones. This enables them to offer extended seasons on their produce. Thousands of boxes are sent out via an efficient transportation system every week. Customers can be locked into receiving regular boxes for a chosen period of month. To claim a reduced rate per box, customers must pay in advance. This guarantees sales for Fresh Direct and so they can budget accordingly and afford to offer the discount.

Schemes of this scale are truly able to offer added incentives, much more than just recipe cards. Fruit and vegetable cartoon characters from Fresh Direct visit children in schools and teach them seasonality and how to eat healthily. Interactive online games, sponsorship for "grow your own" gardens and day trips all add to a great educational experience.

In the UK some local farmers visit their local schools to speak to children and offer field days. Such offers are increasing across the country; and not only with box scheme businesses but with many other farming and producer-based businesses.

Open Farm Sunday is a prime example of farmers opening up the farm gates.

Local food initiatives are great for getting the public involved to. We, as producers just need to keep on doing more of this style of connection opportunity.

There is lots of room out there for new box schemes. Find your local customer base and produce only what is required. Learning how to become more efficient in production and distribution can offer good returns. However on a small scale, be prepared to do it alone. Teaming up with a complementary producer can offer great savings in overheads but agreements need to be secure to know who is responsible for each job and return that ever important profit margin.

Organic box schemes, although having seen a drop in growth in 2009 of 9.8% (soil association figures), have been looking promising for 2010 with a predicted growth of between 2-5% across the organic sector. Organic box schemes are still something to seriously consider even though they have seen hard times in the last couple of years.

5.9 Commerce

In the last 5 years on-line grocery sales have grown dramatically. The ease of shopping from the comfort of an arm chair and having your goods delivered to your door step has had great appeal to busy people.

At the click of a button the ever more sophisticated web sites, designed for easy navigation, to me seem to be the way forward.

A report in The Times Newspaper from a leading industry analyst stated that: “the on-line grocery market will double in five years, however it currently accounts for less than 5 per cent of retail sales”.

So... the biggest lesson I can take from this is not only to keep up to date with modern trends but to seriously consider on-line groceries sales. One thing that is definitely proving to be true is that people are looking for easier ways to buy their food and are actively searching the internet to find such methods.

A spin off from this is that if you have a good web site you will get more interest. You might not sell groceries on-line or might not want to, but you would be silly not to make the most of your on-line advertising and get those hits. The biggest drawback to on-line customers is the delivery charges incurred. Removing these would be a key factor in encouraging them to buy more on-line.

For smaller more localised businesses an idea from France may be the answer; Instead of removing those delivery charges, how about removing the delivery.

A select group of French supermarkets are focusing on a “drive through” grocery system in which customers order on-line and pick up from the store, saving them time and the task of walking around.

5.10 Community Supported Agriculture

Community supported agriculture (CSA), the idea for which has come from America and China, is that of a captive group of people become members and pay to support the local production of fruit, vegetables, meat and other produce, as I witnessed in Stroud, Gloucestershire. The work is generally carried out through an employed farmer or grower or by working on a rota to produce the goods themselves. In all cases members are able to become involved in the production of food and the food produced is shared between the members of the particular CSA. Losses and costs are also shared.

Importantly though, Community Supported Agriculture is a great means of teaching people about food and food production. It encompasses everything that is good and bad about the seasons and builds awareness in crop production and animal husbandry. Members gain great added value from working as a team and learning about food and production and, as a reward, get to share in the harvests.

CSAs are supported by the Soil Association and there is lots of information available. CSAs are localised and build great community spirit. They are open to all ages. This is something that parents can access to help develop their children outside the school environment as well as learning themselves.

5.11 Marketing

I have seen many marketing ideas across my travels. Those that stand out are from the businesses that have passion, great products and want to tell the world about what they do.

Large capital is not necessary to start a good business in food. Consumers like the personal touch and to see things they can relate to.

Simple ideas like sharing the cost of advertising between a select group of producers, letting a product display and speak for itself and the creation of food trails, simply publicised through tourism leaflets, are all ideas we can implement in our businesses here at home. Embracing modern technology does not have to be expensive. Viral stunts are up to date and affordable. However putting a bit of thought in is more important before you commit to U-tube!

Large advertising campaigns are very costly and because of the need to reinvent and modernise ourselves regularly and to keep things fresh, I personally think that we spend far too much on marketing. If you have a great idea, a great product or service, then a little clever, targeted marketing is all you will need. Money will be far better spent on ensuring that you have consistency and efficiency in what you do to help return better margins.

5.12 Education

Everybody can incorporate education in food labelling, advertising and point of sale information. This includes supermarkets.

The independent food sector however is able to go further with their educational messages through in house advertising and the detail in the story they give.

Generally speaking, smaller independents are less concerned with available display space than the large supermarkets. Greater depth of product knowledge should be displayed. Add story lines and arrange producer meetings with consumers. This is what can make the smaller independents stand out from their larger competition.

Going further and offering detailed websites, open fun day events, meet the producer days are all ways to get people connected with how their food is produced and again an area where smaller producers can better the supermarkets.

Some great initiatives I have seen on my travels include open farms for school trips, farms run by disabled people, farmers visiting schools, local organisations and local councils, and arranging food trail and taste events hosted by a variety of producers. Food, drink and music festivals are also an excellent idea.

Many television programmes and news events are making people aware of where their food comes from. We have got to use this to our advantage and let our consumers know more about what we do. People need more information and more education if we expect them to buy from us.

There is lots of support out there. Bodies such as the Meat and Livestock Commission, the British Pig Executive and the Soil Association offer lots of free advice and promotional material which give guidance on such activities.

6. SUMMARY

We need to keep things fresh and act upon our ideas if we want our businesses to succeed. Consumers now have a thirst for knowledge and we need to give them honestly all the information they require. We also need to act fast as ideas are soon copied and become stale.

There is so much to learn from other people and we must continually look at our competition and trends in our industry.

7. CONCLUSIONS

1. My experiences showed me that it doesn't really matter where your location is. If you have a quality product, a passion for food and want to share your passion with the rest of the world, people will come and, in some circumstances, they'll flock by the coach load.
2. I observed very few large advertising campaigns during my travels. Passionate people create a buzz which spreads out across their communities like blood pumping through veins. Expensive marketing strategies were not always necessary as word of mouth speaks volumes and in turn increases reputation and customer loyalty.
3. The main area in which I feel I have gained from my study is confidence; reassuring myself that I am on the right tracks and that I am progressing all the time, keeping the ball rolling for the entire industry. Smaller producers need an efficient means of communication to be better represented together amongst the larger players in the industry. I wanted to arm myself with more knowledge; for example current trends in retailing and modern communication techniques. I feel have achieved that.
4. I didn't go expecting to be able to change the way my customers think and shop or to be able to change the industry overnight but to be able to understand customers' needs and meet them, even exceed them.
5. I am now able to share my findings with my customers and suppliers and with the wider industry. I now bring a bigger perspective to the table working within my region with other producers and retailers to share knowledge and experiences hoping to improve retail and production practices.
6. My journey is far from over. In fact my journey is just beginning.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Embrace and keep up to date with modern communications in technology. More and more people are sourcing product information on-line. Blogs and viral stunts are relatively cheap ways to be in control, focus your advertising and receive some feedback. Being able to learn about agriculture on-line in the comfort of your own home, learning about how food is made and offering these resources will have an uptake and impact.
2. Source other complementary businesses and market your products together. This can really help save money on marketing. Four businesses advertising together will quarter your marketing budget.
3. Celebrate food and shout about it. Add some entertainment to the mix at a farmers market and your customers will be in a happy frame of mind, feel sociable and are receptive to lots of product knowledge. Once you've told your story it will be a sure thing that you'll make increased sales and customer loyalty.
4. Competition – Time is valuable in any business and spending time on areas such as research does not necessarily see an immediate return. It is however important. Visit your competition and stay ahead of the game. Go further afield and share your knowledge with others in your industry. And don't forget to get some information and ideas back too, as this will help to keep your business moving forward. It pays dividends in the long run so is worth it.
5. Use your initiative! Just because it hasn't been done before doesn't mean it can't be. We all have to take the odd risk or chance or opportunity and that's what makes us entrepreneurs, what makes our industries move forward.

9. FINAL THOUGHTS

This has been an opportunity I would recommend anyone to grasp.

Not having attended University, I personally looked upon this as a chance to further my learning.

I would again like to thank my family for which this would not have been possible.

At home in my business I have started to introduce some of the emotions, business techniques, copied and inspired ideas. I'm testing to see which get the best reaction from my customers and which fit into my own aspirations.

This experience alone has been good for bringing awareness to my business.

I am far more aware of how important it is to take time out of the daily duties to allow me to research my industry, its trends and its future.

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10. APPENDIX

My Hosts in Overseas Countries

Nicolas Germain - France

Steve Sternes - NZ

Graham Pilkington – Silver Fern Farms, TeAroha, NZ

Hazel & Collin Granger-Allen - Thornbury Farms, Rotorua, NZ

Alec Jack NSch –Pakaraka, Kaihohe, NZ

Inacio (cheese maker) - Hohepa Trust - NZ

Janice & Bruce – Whangarei, NZ

Philip and Dina Spratt, Tas

Jane Bennet - Ashgrove cheese -Tasmania

Rob Nichols – Nichols Poultry, Tasmania

Paul Badcock – The Cherry Shed, Bass Highway, Tasmania

Mike Badcock – Chair of New Zealand's producer's network.

Mark & Ruth Postle – Brisbane, Aus

Master Butchers – Queensland, Aus