TAKING THE ‘C’ SERIOUSLY – BUILDING COMMUNITIES IN COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA) PROGRAMS

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CSA ARE ....

• A model for organizing last-mile supply chain
• A set of relationship building practices
• A philosophy/mindset for working with customers
SOCIAL MEDIA IS...

• A specific set of technologies for communicating and coordinating

• A model for engaging with customers

• The new way of doing business
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• How do the aspects of CSA models relate to CSA outcomes?
  • Approach
  • Relational practices
  • Logistical arrangements

• How do the aspects of social media relate to CSA outcomes?
  • Technology
  • Relational capabilities
  • Transactional capabilities

• How do the aspects of CSAs and social media interact?
METHODS, SAMPLE, AND DATA

- Survey of CSA operators
- Survey and measure development
  - Draw from prior literature
  - Interviews and pretests
  - Pilot test (Sample: 100, Responses: 21)
- CSA operators with an active listing in the LocalHarvest database (N = 4384)
- 874 Responses (20%)
- After data cleaning, N=812
CSA RELATIONAL APPROACH

- Multi-item measure, 7 item Likert scale, Cronbach alpha = 0.864
- Items
  - In our CSA, the focus is on building long-term relationships with specific customers
  - Our CSA marketing communications involve personally interacting with individual customers
  - Our contact with our CSA customers is personal
  - When a customer signs up for our CSA, we believe they expect one-on-one personal contact with us.
  - When we meet our CSA customers, our interaction is informal and social.
  - Our CSA activities are intended to develop cooperative relationships with our customers.
  - Our CSA planning focuses on issues related to specific customers we deal with.
  - Our CSA resources (e.g. people, time, money) are invested in establishing and building personal relationships with individual customers.

(Adapted Modified from: Homburg, Mèuller, & Klarmann, 2011)
CSA RELATIONAL APPROACH

The degree to which the CSA operator has adopted a relational approach

Mean = 5.8681
Std. Dev. = .94468
N = 737
CSA RELATIONAL PRACTICES

- Require CSA members to help on the farm?
- Have a dedicated CSA coordinator?
- Encourage CSA members to meet each other?
- Have special events?
- Allow CSA members to help on the farm?
- Send news about the farm employees or farm family to CSA?
- Have a pickup location on your farm?
- Actively solicit suggestions, information and ideas from CSA?
- Have a person at the pickup locations to talk to and meet CSA?
- Send news about the farm employees or farm family to CSA?
- Allow CSA members to visit the farm?
- Provide information about the products you sell, such as recipes?
- Actively solicit suggestions, information and ideas from CSA?
- Allow CSA members to provide suggestions/information/ideas to…
- Provide information about the products you sell, such as recipes?
- Actively solicit suggestions, information and ideas from CSA?
- Allow CSA members to visit the farm?
- Have special events?
- Encourage CSA members to meet each other?
- Have a dedicated CSA coordinator?
- Require CSA members to help on the farm?
SOCIAL MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE

- Has Twitter account?
- Has Facebook page?
- Has third party webpage?
- Has website?
SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

- How often is your website updated?
  - Mean Response: Between a few times a year and monthly
- How often is your third party webpage updated?
  - Mean Response: Less than a few times a year
- How often is your Facebook page updated?
  - Mean Response: Monthly – weekly
- How often is your Twitter account updated?
  - Mean Response: A few times - weekly
ONLINE PRESENCE – HOW LONG

When did you first create an online presence for your farm?

- 2000 or earlier: 8.47%
- 2001 to 2005: 20.42%
- 2006 to 2008: 21.05%
- 2009 to 2010: 31.26%
- 2011: 12.20%
- 2012: 6.60%
TRANSACTIONAL CAPABILITIES ONLINE

- Sign up for the CSA
- Receive a notification about a pickup (e.g., email, text)
- Change their contact information
- Find out pickup locations/times
- Find out what will be in their basket for the next pickup
- Change pickup location/time
- Pay for the CSA
- Select from available items for their next basket

% Respondents
RELATIONAL CAPABILITIES
ONLINE

- Create a public profile of themselves
- Participate in online events (For example: Webinars or discussion sessions)
- Exchange messages with other CSA participants
- Read reviews from other CSA participants
- Provide reviews of the farm, CSA, and products
- Find out how they can help on the farm
- Find out about local food related social events and activities
- Contact our CSA coordinator
- Arrange visits to the farm
- Exchange messages with particular members of our farm and/or family
- Find out how to use food provided in the CSA basket
- Find out news about the farm and farm employees
- Make suggestions regarding the CSA
- Exchange messages with other CSA participants
- Participate in online events (For example: Webinars or discussion sessions)
- Create a public profile of themselves

% of Respondents
CSA OUTCOMES

• Financial outcomes
• Participant growth/acquisition [single item]
• Participant retention (i.e. turnover) [single item]
• Participant Satisfaction
• Product and Process efficiency
• Revenue, demand, and price uncertainty
• Farmer satisfaction with the CSA

(Multi-item measures, 7 item Likert scale, unless otherwise noted)
PARTICIPANT RETENTION

What percentage of your 2011 CSA customers came back for 2012?

- More than 90%: 14.74%
- 76-90%: 26.18%
- 51-75%: 31.04%
- 26-50%: 18.03%
- 11-25%: 7.30%
- Less than 10%: 2.72%
PARTICIPANT GROWTH/DECLINE

How did your membership in your CSA change from 2011 to 2012? Did it:
- decrease by 50% or more
- decrease by 26 – 49%
- decrease by 5 – 25%
- stay about the same
- increase by 5 – 25%
- increase by 26 – 49%
- increase by 50% or more

- 33.10%
- 24.68%
- 12.27%
- 8.56%
- 1.14%
- 3.00%
## OUTCOMES AND CSA RELATIONAL APPROACH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>CSA Relational Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant Retention</td>
<td>0.138**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Growth</td>
<td>0.141**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profitability of the CSA</td>
<td>0.142**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Quality Impacts</td>
<td>0.192**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process Efficiency Impacts</td>
<td>0.185**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Commitment (Affective)</td>
<td>0.542**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenue Stability</td>
<td>0.407**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmer Satisfaction with the CSA</td>
<td>0.201**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partial correlation controlling for number of CSA participants.

**: p\leq0.001
ONLINE PRESENCE AND CSA OUTCOMES

Has a website?

- Profitability (Higher) & Retention (Lower)

Has a Facebook page?

- None significant

Has a twitter account?

- None significant

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How often ___ is updated

- Website & Participation Satisfaction (positively associated)
- Twitter & Participant Satisfaction (negatively associated)

Results based on MANOVA analysis, N = 812
TRANSACTIONAL CAPABILITIES AND CSA OUTCOMES

Sign up on line
  • Lower retention

Pay online
  • Lower retention, higher growth

Finding out pickup and location times
  • Lower retention, higher growth

Find out what’s in the upcoming box
  • Higher process efficiency, Lower retention

Change Contact info
  • None significant

Notification of a pickup
  • Higher product quality, Higher farmer satisfaction, Higher retention

Select what is in the upcoming box
  • Higher affective commitment, Higher retention

Results based on MANOVA analysis, N = 812
TRANSACTIONAL CAPABILITIES AND CSA OUTCOMES

• Providing support for “passive consumer” activities online is associated with higher participant growth...and lower participant retention

• Active engagement and support for “active consumer” behavior is associated with higher participant retention
RELATIONAL CAPABILITIES ONLINE AND CSA OUTCOMES

- **Contact the CSA coordinator**
  - Lower retention

- **Exchange messages with particular members of the farm/CSA**
  - Higher participant satisfaction and affective commitment

- **Find out about local food events, make suggestions about the CSA, arrange visits to the farm**
  - Not significant

- **Participant in online events**
  - Lower product, process outcomes
  - Lower revenue and demand stability
  - Higher affective commitment

- **Find out how they can help on the farm**
  - Higher product, process outcomes
  - Higher revenue and demand
  - Lower retention
CSA RELATIONAL FOCUS AND INTERNET/SOCIAL MEDIA CAPABILITIES

Comparing the likelihood of different transactional ICT capabilities across low, moderate, and high levels of relational focus:

- Sign up for the CSA
- Pay for the CSA
- Change their contact information
- Receive a notification about a pickup (e.g., email, text)
- Find out what will be in their basket for the next pickup
- Select from available items for their next basket
- Find out pickup locations/times
- Change pickup location/time

Only 25% (2/8) were significantly different.
CSA RELATIONAL FOCUS AND INTERNET/SOCIAL MEDIA CAPABILITIES

Comparing the likelihood of different relational ICT capabilities across low, moderate, and high levels of relational focus:

- Contact our CSA coordinator
- Exchange messages with particular members of our farm and/or family
- Find out about local food related social events and activities
- Make suggestions regarding the CSA
- Arrange visits to the farm
- Participate in online events (e.g. Webinars or discussion sessions)
- Find out how they can help on the farm
- Create a public profile of themselves
- Find out how to use food provided in the CSA basket
- Read reviews from other CSA participants
- Provide reviews of the farm, CSA, and products
- Exchange messages with other CSA participants
- Find out news about the farm and farm employees

In this case, 53% (7/13) were significantly different.
CONCLUSIONS

• It's not just a matter of having social media infrastructure – it’s how you use it.

• Transactional capabilities
  • Providing “set-up” activities online is associated with higher participant growth...and lower participant retention
  • Providing information and options for individuals boxes is associated with higher participant retention

• Relational capabilities
  • Non-trivial interactions with the logistical arrangements, relational practices, and CSA overall approach