

The purpose of this study was to identify effective marketing practices for food resource related organizations in the rural Midwest

Research Questions

- What marketing strategies are food banks using to ensure small or rural communities provide services to those who are food insecure?
- What marketing practices have proven successful for food banks in Iowa?

Findings/Results/Analysis

- Food banks that responded to the survey need an average of 30 volunteers on a daily and consistent basis (Org. A = 50 volunteers daily; Org. B = 20; Org. C = 10; Org. D = 50)
- All respondents cited the effectiveness of having a presence with local groups in a targeted community, which can aid in efforts to spread awareness and host events in selected areas.
- Half of surveyed food banks said that they make reaching smaller, rural communities (population >10,000) a priority, while the remaining respondents also claim responsibility for reaching out to smaller communities, along with closer and larger communities.
- The following strategies have been reported as ineffective by one or more food banks when reaching rural communities: Direct mail (without a local address), social media, and working with exclusively one medium.

Implications for Research and Practice

In order for food banks to see their services most effectively reach and serve small and/or rural communities in need of food resources, they should establish presence in communities through:

- Forming interest groups and hosting events in the area.
- Using outcome evaluations to show tangible value of food donations.
- Diversifying marketing mediums to reach and appeal to a variety of potential volunteers crucial to food banks reaching their mission of feeding hungry people.

Research Method

Four food banks from various locations across the Midwest were surveyed to gather their knowledge and past experiences in regards to using different marketing strategies to reach communities in need of food insecurity resources. Responses were then analyzed to determine which strategies and advertising mediums have proven to be the most effective for different food banks in the past as far as helping along the mission to reach those who are in need of food.



Literature Review

- When deciding how to best market to potential food bank volunteers, studies have shown that the most dedicated food bank volunteers are motivated by social factors and altruism (Agostinho, 2012)
- Food banks can utilize outcome evaluations to show donors and volunteers the potential impact of the program along with the practical use of their time and donations (Cotunga, 1994)
- Food donations to food banks are inconsistent and can vary greatly in quantity and frequency, highlighting the importance of effective marketing strategies to ensure efforts are being made to reach out to surrounding food donors and secure an adequate amount of food donations (Davis, 2016)
- Cause-related marketing can partner for-profit and non-profit organizations to effectively address a social issue by reaching a broader audience, pool resources, and benefit both companies (Varadarajan, 1988)
- When deciding what issues to address in marketing efforts, there's a need for nutrition educators to work with food banks regarding the education of staff and general population on appropriate food donations (Verpy, 2003)