

Eat Cambridge (2014)

Economic/Social Impact and Innovation Report



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1.0 Abstract

Incorporating the views across 29 food and drink traders, this study attempts to look at the local economic and social impacts of the Eat Cambridge 2014 festival, and explore the ways local traders marketed and innovated in light of, and during, the festival. The study: disseminated via an online survey asked 15 questions, hosts a mix of open (qualitative) and closed (quantitative) questions, and are thus split in to two key areas of this report:

- Responses to closed questions (3.0)
- Responses to open questions (4.0)

Findings from the closed questions identified that there was strong agreement that the festival provided opportunities to (1) expand the customer bases; (2) built business to business (B2B) relationships; (3) provided a platform to market their business; (4) helped consider new marketing techniques, and (5) consider, in future, hosting fringe events to stimulate footfall. Although throughout the closed questions a high number of traders reported an economic boost to their businesses, the open question responses revealed, that for most traders, being part of the festival meant much more than a short-term economic boost.

The report highlighted the added complexities, and positive outcomes of being part of such a large networked communicative festival. Indeed being part helped to ‘stimulate new business’; ‘enhance business profile’; reach ‘wider audiences’ and ‘expand’ customer base both locally and regionally to capture new and existing foody audiences. However, the study reported stories of e.g. (1) specific B2B collaborations and formation of networks; (2) festival as a platform to test and launch new products; (3) identifying new ways to engage with customers; (4) promoted a shift in customer buying behavior from ‘chain’ to ‘local trader’ and promote more generally the local food and drink scene in and around Cambridge. Interestingly, there is a strong dominant role for Twitter and social networks within this report and the festival as a whole, and the role in which ‘@EatCambridge’ as festival organisers could-should play in helping to promote local traders in light of and during festival time on Twitter.

All themes identified in 4.0 are supported with direct quotes from businesses for evidential purposes. Direct raw data responses are provided in section 5.0 with respect to ‘suggestions for improvements’.

2.0 Introduction to study

2.1 Objectives

- I. Identify the economic and social impact of Eat Cambridge 2014 on participating traders.
- II. Analyse ways in which participating traders used the event to innovate and maximise potential opportunities associated with hosting the festival.

2.1.1 Value of study

There are a number of reasons why exploring the above objectives is important and of value:

- I. Allows organisers to gather ideas, thoughts and experiences from the participating local traders and consider ways to continually improve the planning and delivery of the festival.
- II. Prove / disprove the economic and social value of Eat Cambridge for local traders.
- III. By analysing economic/social impact, thus allows traders to make informed decisions based on *real* research data as to to participate, or not, in Eat Cambridge 2015.
- IV. Explore how traders make the festival work for them, and to inspire new ideas for future trading participants of Eat Cambridge 2015 for maximising potential opportunities associated with being part.
- V. For the council to consider how far such locally focussed events can help promote local business and attractions, a key objective for Cambridge’s tourism policies over the next year(s).
- VI. To identify how Eat Cambridge may foster a sense of community of food and drink stakeholders in and around Cambridge, and the potential benefits this may bring.

2.2 The research team

Independently developed, administrated and evaluated by Michael Duignan (Lecturer/Researcher) and Marlene Rack (Student / Research Intern) of the Lord Ashcroft International Business School, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge.

2.2.1 Short bio of authors

Michael researches in to the local economic and social effects of major events, including the London 2012 Olympics; and has commented on ITV News various times on the economics of the Cambridge leg of the Tour de France.

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Marlene is studying for a double degree in International Tourism Studies (B.A). After two years at Harz University in Germany she joined Anglia Ruskin University for her final year



2.3 Sample – demographic of respondents

From retailers, to cafés, confectioners, bakers, and soft drinks providers, to wine and spirit distributors, the report includes an eclectic variety of food and drink providers in and around Cambridge. According to the festival website section “who’s on board” a total of 89 traders participated in the festival, 29 of which participated in this research study, accounting for a response rate of 33.7% of the target population.

The average number of employees across the 29 respondents was ‘4’, incorporating owner/manager type businesses and pop-up shops, right through to larger micro and small enterprises that have up to 10 employees. Respondents were involved in the event through a variety of ways, mainly either stallholders at the main events and hosts of some of the Eat Cambridge’s fringe events. However, we also had responses from those who sponsored the event, traders who gave informational talks and those involved in the launch.

The most important element was to involve businesses over a range of demographics to feel confident the study covers a broad spectrum of business in terms of type, size, different geographical locations in relation to the centre of Cambridge, and the different ways they engaged with Eat Cambridge 2014.

3.0 Responses to closed questions

Featured at the beginning of the survey, we asked a number of quantitative closed questions to capture statistical evidence over a number of different areas of impact and innovation. Below we cover some top level statistics:

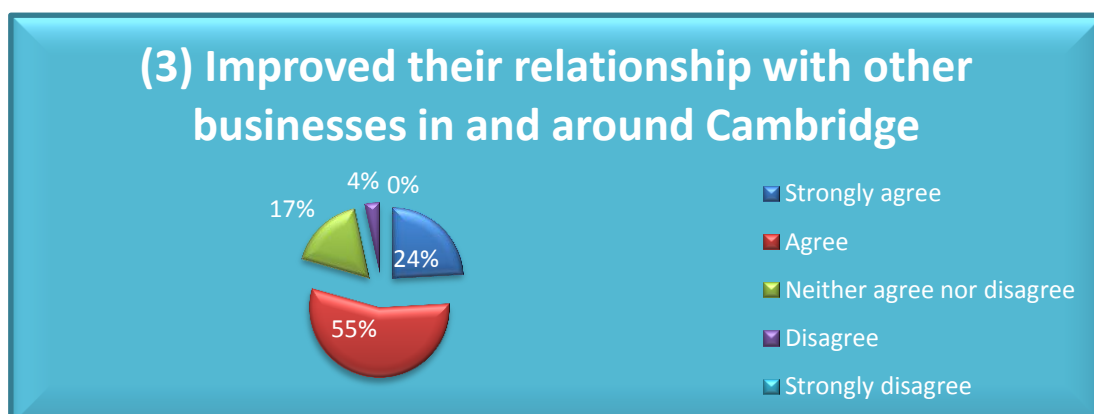
- 1) 86% of respondents either agreed (44.8%) or strongly agreed (41.3%) believed that Eat Cambridge 2014 'provided an opportunity to expand their customer base' (25 out of 29 respondents)



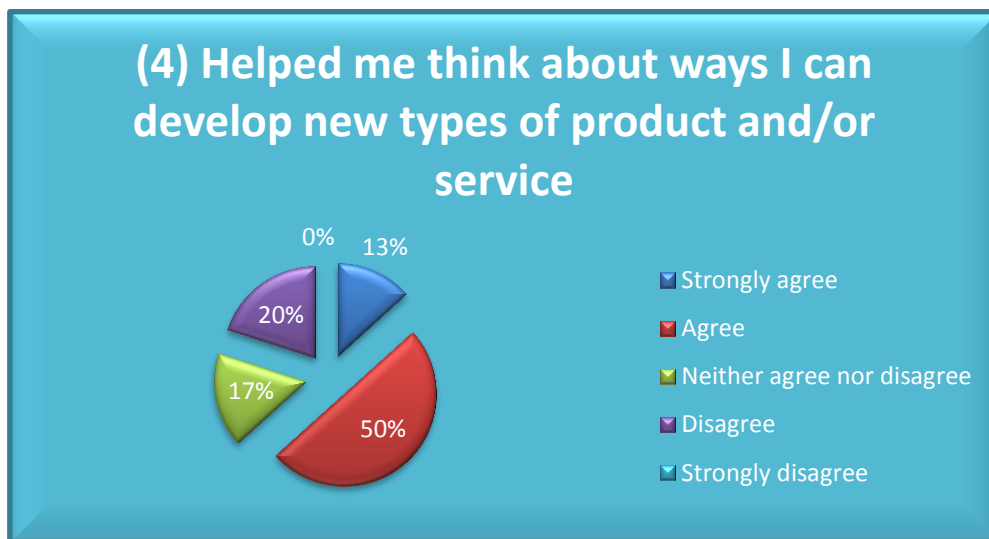
- 2) Exactly 50% of respondents either agreed (32.1%) or strongly agreed (17.8%) that the festival 'encouraged them to think about new marketing techniques' (14 out of 28 respondents)



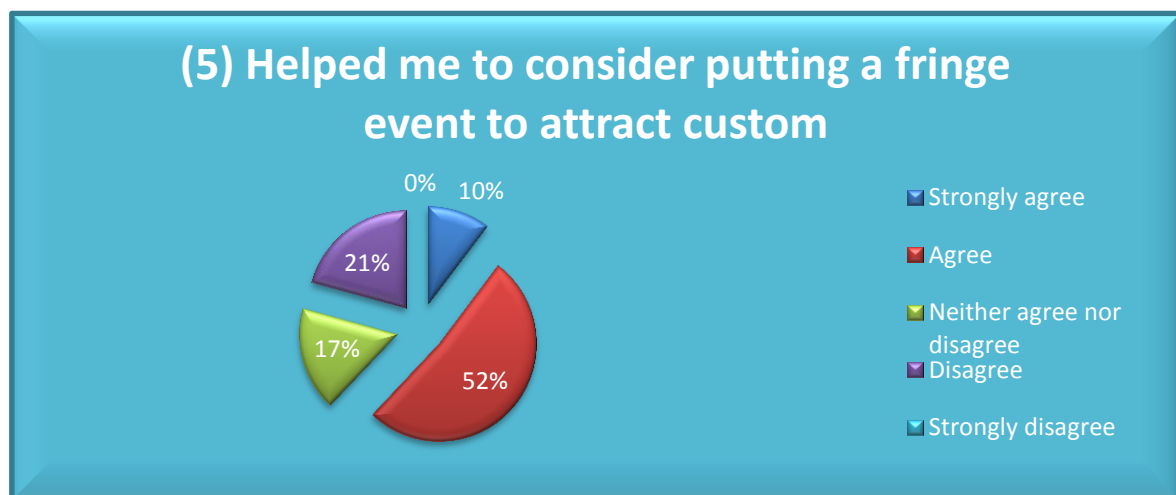
- 3) Just under 80% (79.3%) of respondents either agreed (55.1%) or strongly agreed (24.1%) that the festival 'improved their relationships with other businesses in and around Cambridge' (23 out of 29 respondents)



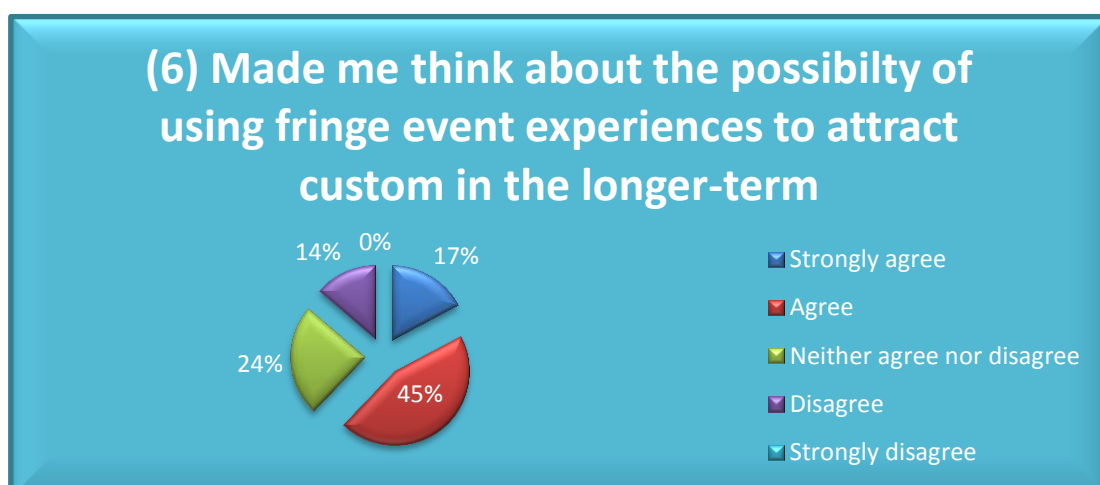
- 4) 65% of respondents either agreed (50.7%) or strongly agreed (13.8%) that the festival ‘helped them think about ways they can develop new types of products and/or services’ (19 out of 29 respondents)



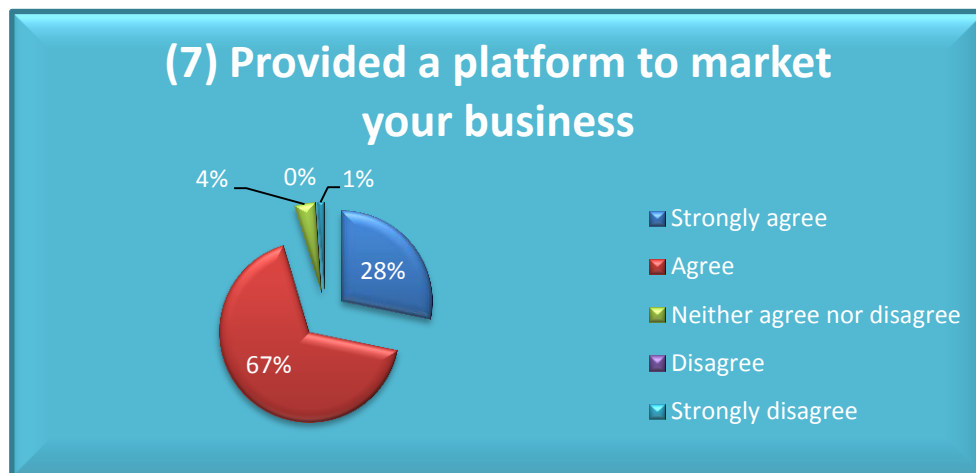
- 5) 62% of respondents either agreed (52.7%) or strongly agreed (10.3%) that the festival ‘helped them consider putting on a themed fringe event to attract custom’ (18 out of 29 respondents)



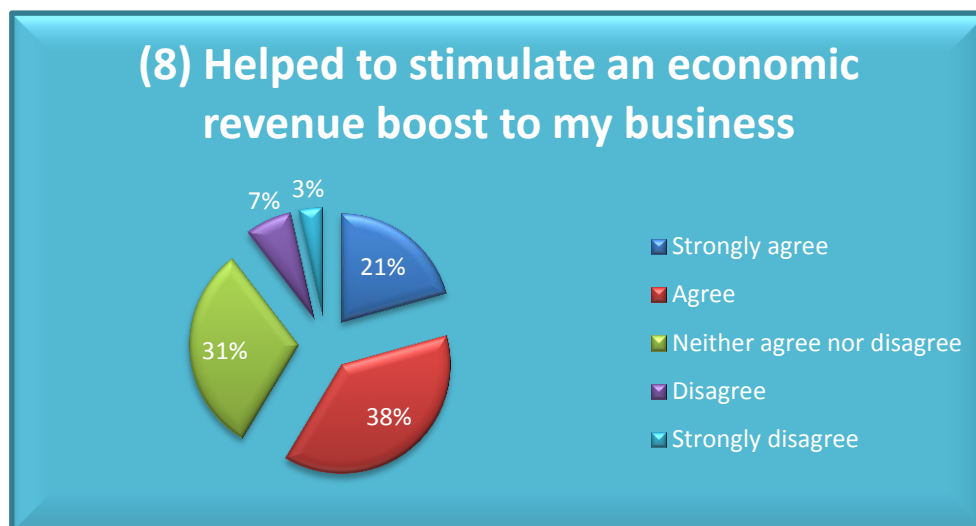
- 6) 62% of respondents either agreed (44.8%) or strongly agreed (17.2%) that the festival ‘made them think about the possibility of using fringe events in the future to attract custom in the longer-term’ (18 out of 29 respondents)



- 7) 93% of respondents either agreed (66.5%) or strongly agreed (27.6%) that the festival ‘provided a platform to market their business’ (27 out of 29 respondents)



- 8) 60% of respondents either agreed (38.9%) or strongly agreed (20.7%) that the festival ‘helped to stimulate an economic boost to their business’ (17 out of 29)



4.0 Responses to open questions - thematic evaluation and conclusions

The authors of this report, after analysing responses to all questions, have thematised responses for evaluation. All themes are evidenced by direct quotes from the survey to bring examples to life.

4.1 Enhancing business profile, customer base, and relationships between businesses and the foody community

The festival clearly allowed business to reach “wider audiences”; helping to “expand” their customer base, “raise profile”, and broadly improve their “business reputation” in the local area. This includes businesses geographically placed just outside of the centre (e.g. Mill Road) of whom customers may not have been aware of their existence. Businesses commented on the positive feedback given by customers, and highlighted how the

event provided a great opportunity to get them seen by a new cross-section of distinct ‘foody’ audience. This was a dominant response theme for the study.

"Gaining exposure to the Cambridge foodie crowd- breaking into a new cross section of local people that we haven't come into contact with much before" (...) "Great opportunity to get ourselves seen by a wide Cambridge (foody) audience." (Respondent, 2014)

Specifically, the festival helped to promote local business in a variety of ways. From enhancing Twitter followings, to creation of email databases that local businesses set-up in light of the event – participants identified a number of ways to extending their customer networks. Social media and electronic communities (e-communications) was a dominant theme of the research:

"Promoted my business, I had lots of emails for outside catering the two weeks following the street food market (...) I had lots more followers on Twitter" (Respondent, 2014); "I got some more twitter followers that might pay off in the long run" (Respondent, 2014);

"Helped me gain more respondents to my email marketing" (Respondent, 2014); "We signed up 55 new members and raised our profile significantly" (Respondent, 2014); "Overall it is very beneficial in promoting our business, increasing awareness of our brand" (Respondent, 2014);

"Our aim at the events we attended was to educate the public about our business and products, which in turn we hope will broaden our customer base, which should help grow and sustain our long term revenue and future" (Respondent, 2014)

In response to the question: “did you conduct in any specific marketing as a result of being part of the festival?” the evaluation finds that the role of Twitter (and secondarily Facebook) played a key role in local trading marketing/promotional strategies for their business. With support from ‘@EatCambridge’, the official Twitter account for the festival – given their wide networks the impact of the festival team retweeting local trader tweets helped to extend local trader networks and promote them.

"Twitter is our main tool. When @Eat mentioned us or replied etc. we saw an increase in followers' interaction etc..." (Respondent, 2014)

Additionally, given the importance of these networks for the festival, some local traders used this opportunity to open up new Twitter accounts. This could be an interesting legacy for the event, as the development of such networks may be useful for local traders going forward – this is still a question mark until further impact is measured.

With respect to product innovations stimulated because of the event, there were also a number of local traders who used the festival occurrence to develop ideas for ‘themed events’. Ideas for wine/beer pairing events, and the pay as you please supper club at the Three Horseshoes, right through to a collaborative effort between two participating traders in the successful creation of a new coffee flavoured beer:

"With one other local producers we developed, a coffee flavored beer which has go on to become one of our best selling products over the last year and has as added greatly to the marketing of both companies" (Respondent, 2014)

There were also signs of traders using the festival as a spring and sounding board for testing new product developments, and seeking feedback before launch:

"We asked attendees three questions about their food shopping habits: Where they shopped for food what issues mattered most to them when food shopping (cost, quality, convenience, source, health etc.) How much meat they ate Nearly 250 people responded and it was (a) useful for us to get their answers and (b) it provided an easy way to engage with people We are continuing to ask the same questions in different venues (in Arbury, for example, the answers were rather different, with more focus on supermarkets and cost)" (Respondent, 2014)

"Having just undertaken a complete re-brand of our product range we verbally engaged in questioning the public about overall look and feel of our new branding. The event was the first time we had shown our new branding to the general public in Cambridge and was a fantastic opportunity to have first-hand feedback from prospective customers. The feedback we received overall was very positive, little details about our designs were brought to our attention and we have in some cases undertaken or are working on further improving our image" (Respondent, 2014)

A few other respondents found their way on to 105FM radio interviews and found publicity by being featured on local blogs, including the MovingFoodie.wordpress.com. Another respondent highlighted how they created *"new menus and leaflets for the show and am sure that from the positive feedback they went down well"*.

4.2 So how far did the festival help local business innovate; and consider new ways of engaging with future customers?

There were a number of responses to this question, which covers similar points above. One trader mentioned how attending the event helped them:

"Learn new ways to engage with customers and following feedback from them (...) thus come away from this year's event with many new ideas for themed events" (Respondent, 2014)

Another said they are considering *"possibly a supper club and using the Botanic Garden in some way"* whilst others re-iterated the importance of developing Twitter networks for free advertising. As previously highlighted above, the enhanced business to business relationships are seen as a distinct way local traders may continue to innovate their products and services, e.g to stimulate:

"Collaborative work with local breweries, wine retailers, cheese merchants and bakers to form new supply chains and collaborative pairing events with coffee" (Respondent, 2014). *"We are now working with another trader at some private events"* (Respondent, 2014).

"Last year I met Afternoon Tease and Platelickers who we had successful collaborations with - bartering farm fruit and veg used in one of their supper clubs for some yummy cakes provided for our farm harvest party. I really think one of the strong points of the festival" (Respondent, 2014).

"Having collaborated with other local producers since the first event was held in 2013 we were keen to find more local producers to work with. This year, following the event we have already made plans to engage in four new collaborations. Two of our past collaborations that we have undertaken have been very successful for both parties" (Respondent, 2014)

Interestingly, the report found that 6 out of the 29 respondents had no intention to innovate for the festival at all.

4.3 Building 'Business to Business' (B2B) relationships

"I really think one of the strong points of the festival is networking with businesses/initiatives in Cam"
(Respondent, 2014)

But the event did not just help build B2C (Business to Consumer) relationships, it also helped to enhance B2B (Business to Business) relationships *"who all seem happy to support and promote one another and it builds good relationships with like-minded people"*, and to help build *"collaborative opportunities"*. The camaraderie amongst both consumers and businesses was referred to as giving a local 'buzz', facilitating a *"sense of community amongst traders"*. Alongside improving general contacts with other business, respondents highlighted how the festival helped them meet *"local suppliers"*, *"new stockists"*, and *"new connections which will hopefully lead to new wholesale accounts"*. The festival also helped foster new relationships which may open up opportunities for trading at future festival and events in and around Cambridge. These new contacts may therefore be understood as providing a gateway in to a wider network of opportunities, similarly to Eat Cambridge.

4.4 Direct economic effects: short term revenue and profits

With respect to direct economic impacts, namely short-term revenue/profits there were a mixed response. Whilst some said the event helped to increase revenue, and provide *"direct sale opportunities"* and a *"good return on investment"*, some businesses highlighted how they faced issues of unsold stock and the need to hire extra personnel that restricted them from financially benefitting from being part of the festival. Although mixed response, approx. 80% of traders reported signs of increased revenue/profits, 5% reported a loss, and 15% reported no change/break even.

4.5 Local trader learning points for future events

The key points here were the importance of giving free tasters to inspire purchasing; the importance of limiting product offering *"to prioritise fewer varieties but key baked goods for the stall"*. Another respondent claimed the importance of using the festival as a way of introducing/testing new products to gauge customer reaction, with another claiming the learning they received from attending a variety of themed events, which may in turn inspire them to do more the following year.

"Each time we attend an event of this type we learn new ways to engage with customers and following feedback from them, we have come away from this year's event with many new ideas for themed events"
(Respondent, 2014)

4.6 From ‘chain’ to ‘local trader’, and enhancing Cambridge’s ‘local’ - ‘slow food’ scene

The notion that this locally focused festival, and its promotion of locally produced/sources goods/services featured, particularly to break potential routines of choosing chain/online shopping behavior, to experience the ‘local’.

"A chance for people to discover new independents and break their routine of habitual chain or online shopping" (Respondent, 2014)

This is of key concern/interest for Cambridge’s tourism strategy- the objective of showcasing more local business, talent and options, away from the mainstream centralised city zones. The ‘Slow Movement’ which has seen its emergence from Italy (‘CittaSlow’), particularly ‘slow food’ is apt here – the idea that both local (domestic and national) consumers may be drawn to the city to enjoy good local food, may be an important note for enhancing Cambridge’s reputation for ‘slow food’. Respondents repeatedly highlighted how the festival showcased “good Cambridge traders” with “positive engagement with local foodies” and helped improve “awareness of the street food scene in Cambridge”. With respect to the wider city image, one respondent claims the festival raise the *“food profile of the whole city, giving more legitimacy to the idea of Cambridge having a great food-scene”*.

"I believe Eat Cambridge has enabled local traders to (...) show the people of the city what a wonderful and diverse collection of local talent and craft made products are available on their own doorstep. Which in turn should lead to all who have participated in the events to further the aims of their businesses" (Respondent, 2014).

“Good to know that there is a growing foodie culture in Cambridge and if it fits in with our farm work we will be discussing how to bring more of these folks to the farm and get involved with growing food locally” (Respondent, 2014)

4.7 Post-festival impacts

The survey was disseminated 2-3 weeks post-festival, and for one of the final questions we asked respondents how far the festival has left a positive/negative legacy on their business so far. With respect to ‘expansion of customer base’ and ‘improving business profile’ those who responded claimed customers who visited their business on *“launch night are still coming back to their business”*, another found their business has seen customers as a direct result from having a stall at the main event”, whilst another trader explains how the festival stimulated some *“very positive reviews on Trip Advisor”*. Similarly to range of points above, the issue of better business relationships continues to be a strong theme.

5.0 Suggestions for improvements for the delivery of Eat Cambridge 2015

The below responses are split in to five different feedback themes

- Time and date
- Venue
- Programme

- Promotion
- Logistics

5.1 Time and Date

- *"We may well not participate next year unless we can see the event covering its costs for us by moving back to an earlier date in the year (...)."*
- *"It would be helpful if the main Eat weekend didn't coincide with a large MA graduation ceremony involving most of the colleges as this prevented us from accessing college dining facilities which is a major draw for our tours. This weekend is usually mid-May each year."*
- *"I think last years were earlier in the year when it was not competing with many other events."*
- *"Date was far more inconvenient this year and we much preferred a March event. I was told it was to include seasonal produce like asparagus, though I never saw a single asparagus spear at the event. May is a far busier time for events and we had to make a choice to come to yours and not our other regular events, and not sure I would do the same next year. Either way, it would be one of quite a few options we have on the day rather than being a stronger choice (by being the only event we had on the day) if it was in March again, or maybe April."*

5.2 Venue

- *"Even bigger venue."*
- *"The Street Food Market was very crowded - a bigger venue would be great."*
- *"A larger site! Other than that I felt it was well organised and very well attended."*
- *"I felt last year's venue, The Guildhall, was better, the turnout was higher and people came to purchase last year whereas this year there was less people, and a lot of people came to simply try. The layout of the hall means that a lot of people looped round then left which was a shame."*

5.3 Programme

- *"Possibly encourage more free events to make it inclusive to a wider audience."*
- *"More of the pop up events!"*
- *"Encourage more events that are cheaper/free of charge in the fringe? Have a section on food that grows locally as well as local food prep/sale businesses - after all growing food is an essential part of eating it. I enjoyed the networking event in the Cam Brew house last year- did that happen this year or did I miss it? If not, bring that back as was very useful for networking- more so that the main event- as there was more time to chat and meet your fellow stall holders/foodies."*
- *"More local producers that showcase products that are actually produced LOCALLY at the main event. Please NO products that can be bought in any of the major supermarkets. EAT CAMBRIDGE!"*
- *"Less fringe events. More info on how to apply to street food festival. (no information was available on website)."*

5.4 Promotion

- *"The magazine layout needs to be improved! Looking at the stall holders all the images looked like they were associated with the wrong company - very disappointing, especially if you've spent money on the photos! It also would be great with a calendar so it's easier to see what's going on each day! I had*

plenty of people asking me when things were happening and they weren't even sure when everything started or ended."

- *"Increased Twitter promotion would be good. We felt that Twitter was not used to its best potential in the run-up to the festival to promote the stallholders' businesses."*
- *"I did find there were a lot of students, reaching more audience who like to spend will be good."*
- *"Have the programmes arrive far earlier for fringe event marketing? I think it needs a good few months to be honest."*

5.5 Logistics

- *"Timed packing-up slots would avoid the rather chaotic situation at the end of the day. I would suggest priority given to those businesses that have travelled the furthest to Cambridge. Let us be the first to pack up and go."*
- *"Marshalled parking for delivery/collection, provision of long term offsite parking and shuttle bus?"*
- *"Please provide more bins in the Corn Exchange."*

Want to speak about the report further?

For further information please contact Michael Duignan via email Michael.Duignan@anglia.ac.uk, or on his mobile on +44 (0)7846061595.

- Michael Duignan, and Marlene Rack