

Trolley Talk

A fieldwork activity to investigate local supermarkets and sustainable shopping

Background

In the new 2008 KS3 Programme of Study, one of the 'Key Concepts' relates to the study and understanding of sustainability, and it is also a core element of GCSE specifications. Students should develop an understanding of what sustainable development means, how the human and physical dimensions of the environment are interrelated, and how human actions, including their own, can influence environmental change. The role which supermarkets and shopping practices might play is a relevant, though-provoking and interesting 'angle' for students to study through fieldwork.

In this module, students will compare at least two contrasting stores / supermarkets in their local area. They will investigate the stores / supermarkets themselves, and also examine consumer awareness of sustainable shopping by conducting questionnaires.

The study has been written so that it can be used at both KS3 and KS4. The resources are very flexible to allow individual schools to adapt them to suit the needs of their students and their local environment / available study sites. There are strong cross-curricular links with Citizenship and PSHE, and the investigation involves the use of numeracy skills.

The data collection resources have been designed with the intention of comparing 3 different supermarkets. If possible, try to visit 3 local supermarkets of the bigger 'chains'. The Cooperative is a good one to compare to two others due to its 'ethical' stance. **(NB consent from the store manager at each location should be obtained)**

Aims

1. To investigate and compare the sustainability of local supermarkets
2. To conduct questionnaires to investigate consumer awareness
3. To use the data collected to evaluate the demand for, and choose the most suitable location for an 'eco-store'.

Objectives

- Students work in small groups to collect data in each store / supermarket on;
 1. Packaging of fruit and vegetables
 2. Range of UK-grown fruit and vegetables sold
 3. Range of recycled products sold
 4. Range of eco-friendly products (e.g. Ecover) sold
 5. Range of fair trade products sold
 6. Checkout bags
 7. Recycling facilities at the store
- They also conduct questionnaires at each store / supermarket to investigate consumer awareness of sustainable shopping.

Format

Starter

Start to show students the PowerPoint presentation and ensure that they understand the term 'sustainable'. You may wish to ask them if they can give examples of what the word might mean in relation to shopping or supermarkets.

Ask them to describe what they can see in the picture on the 3rd slide – try to guide them towards noticing the packaging. Read them the 'starter resource story' and show them the BBC news clip by clicking on the link on slide 4. Gain feedback of their reactions and ask them to try and list the items which they buy regularly which have excess packaging. Ask for some examples.

Continue with the presentation, and lead students from thinking about excess packaging to other ways in which supermarkets have a role to play in sustainability. Use the pictures on slide 6 to help them to think of ideas; the bags they use, air miles, fair trade products, energy use, recycling facilities and products, eco-friendly products.

Main

Go through the aims and information on the presentation. Give out the fieldwork booklets and go through the instructions on filling in the data tables. Students must fill in all 7 data tables for each store or supermarket they go to. There are different ways of organising the class to collect the data – see the section below on 'differentiation / extension'.

Students must also carry our questionnaires at each store or supermarket. Again, different resources have been provided to allow for differentiation or use by groups of different ages / abilities – see the section below on 'differentiation / extension'.

Follow-up

Show students the 'follow-up' slides of the presentation. A 'follow-up' resource has been provided to guide students through comparing and analysing the data they collected in each of the 7 tables.

The 'Eco-store' resource guides students through examining and analysing the results from their questionnaires, and then using this data to decide whether there is a need or demand for a new 'Eco-store', and where this should be best located.

Suggestions for differentiation of follow-up activities are outlined below.

Differentiation / Extension

During the fieldwork – the number of sites surveyed can be adapted to suit the ability of the pupils. Also, if there are time constraints, the class could be divided into three, and each different group could collect data at only one location. Data can then be shared back in the classroom.

The students can be organised so that not everyone needs to fill in all 7 data tables at each supermarket – the data collection could be 'split' so that different groups take responsibility for different data tables, and the data is then shared back in school.

With regard to the questionnaires – a 'questionnaire resource' has been provided with a 'ready made' questionnaire, which could be used with less able pupils. More able pupils could use the 'designing a questionnaire resource' to design their own questionnaires. They could be shown the ready-made version as an example.

During the follow-up – The follow-up resource gives guidance on drawing graphs, describing the findings, analysis and conclusion. The amount of support students need will depend on their ability. Less able students may need to be provided with graph or writing frames. More able students could write the study up as a formal investigation (an 'investigation write-up' resource was provided with the 'Lichens and pollution' study on this website).

The 'eco-store resource' is flexible, and students can progress at their own pace through the tasks.

Debating extension activity – The last few slides of the presentation introduce a debating activity, which can be used for higher ability or older groups. The idea is to get them thinking about some of the less obvious 'issues and questions' behind sustainable shopping, and to make them realise that it's not always straight forward. Some examples of these have been given, e.g. 'is it better to buy Fairtrade sugar from abroad or sugar from the UK?' – 'Yes' arguments might be that it supports farmers from less developed countries, and that they get a better deal through Fairtrade. 'No' arguments might be that we should be supporting our own producers, and that the air miles involved in importing the sugar from abroad are contributing to climate change.

There are different ways of running the debate. One method is broadly outlined on the final slide; students are organised into groups (3-4 per group) and given a topic (e.g. Sugar from home or away?) and a viewpoint (e.g. 'Support the UK producers' or 'Fairtrade sugar from LEDC farmers'). They should be given time to research their view and write a speech to outline their main points. A class debate can then be held, whereby each topic can be addressed by the two opposing and supporting groups through their speeches. They can be questioned by the 'other side', and a class vote could then be cast.

Embedding this fieldwork activity

This fieldwork activity could be run as part of a unit on sustainable development. Prior knowledge of how human activities can affect environmental conditions would be advantageous. Students will learn and practice important geographical skills; (designing and) carrying out questionnaires, collecting and recording specific data, and drawing comparisons and conclusions between different sets of data.

Adapting this activity for alternative sites

Due to the nature of the activity, suitable locations should be available reasonably close to most schools, although transport between sites is likely to be required. Any realistic and appropriate number of sites can be used, depending on the time available, the ability of the students and availability of staff.

Resources

- PowerPoint presentation
- Field work activity booklets
- Questionnaire resources
- Other resource sheets for starter and follow-up activities
- Clip boards