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Supermarket access and consumer well-being

The case of Pathmark in Harlem

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Abstract

Purpose – To extend the research stream that, in the UK and USA has linked supermarket access to consumer diet by focusing on Pathmark, a supermarket chain that operates in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper examines the square footage allocated to fresh produce, fish, meats, snack foods, soft drinks and similar items in Pathmark's Harlem store, and the pricing and promotion of those various foods. It also reviews news accounts of the controversy leading to the selection of Pathmark as the operator of a second store in Harlem.

Findings – The allocation of space to nutritious foods and to those with minimal nutritional value as well as the pricing and promotion of those goods at the Pathmark Harlem store is similar to that of suburban supermarkets. The debate over the second supermarket in Harlem further shows that community leaders, food activists, and neighborhood residents recognize that large chain supermarkets may be uniquely positioned to improve access to healthy foods in lower-income urban areas.

Research limitations/implications – The study examines only one chain in one US city.

Originality/value – The paper uses retail space allocation rather than self-report data to consider the likely impact of the availability of nutritious foods on shoppers' diets. It also supports growing beliefs that large chains as well as small entrepreneurs may play important roles in urban regeneration.

Keywords Supermarkets, Consumer behaviour, Food products, Social groups, United States of America

Paper type Case study

Introduction

During the latter decades of the twentieth century, retailers in the USA followed the population shift from cities to the suburbs. Supermarket abandonment of major urban areas for suburban locations was particularly notable. From 1970 to 1988, Los Angeles, Chicago, and the New York City boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn lost half of their large grocery stores, while in 1991, the Conference of Mayors reported that such major cities as Boston, Miami, San Antonio, and Minneapolis witnessed a decline in the number of supermarkets in poor neighborhoods. For the populations left behind, the loss of supermarkets appears to have been critical. Studies conducted by government and social service agencies found that residents of neighborhoods without supermarkets pay more for groceries than those with supermarket presence. They also showed that the absence of supermarkets limits food choice and increases grocery-shopping inconvenience (Alwitt and Donley, 1996).

The situation in the USA to some extent paralleled that in the UK where, during the 1980s and 1990s, many small high street food retailers closed because they could not compete against the edge-of-town superstores that had been constructed by the major supermarket chains. That shift in food retail structure stripped at least some residents of British cities of easy access to food, or reduced the selection and quality of those



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foodstuffs that remained available in some low-income neighborhoods (Guy, 1996; Wrigley, 1998). Reacting to those circumstances, the Low Income Project Team of the Nutrition Task Force of the Department of Health in 1995 coined the term “food desert” to describe “those areas of cities where cheap, nutritious food is virtually unobtainable,” and from 1998, the Labor government made food access a central issue of its social exclusion debate (Wrigley, 2002).

The controversy related to whether or not “food deserts” exist or how they may be identified is ongoing (Cummins and Macintyre, 1999; Donkin *et al.*, 1999; Furey *et al.*, 2001; Clarke *et al.*, 2002), but it is not the focus of the current paper. Rather, this study attempts to extend the research stream that, on both sides of the Atlantic, has linked supermarket access to consumer well-being. To this end, it will first review the findings of research conducted on the topic in the UK and the USA. It will then focus on Pathmark, a US supermarket chain that has developed a niche strategy devoted to serving residents of “inner cities” that may, in fact, qualify as “food deserts.” In particular, the paper will examine the square footage allocated to fresh produce, fish and meats as well as to snack foods, frozen pizzas, soft drinks and similar items in the chain’s store on 125th Street in New York City. This store, which opened in 1999, was the first full-service supermarket in the heavily-populated Harlem neighborhood. In addition, it will consider the controversy leading to the selection of Pathmark as the operator of a proposed second full-service store in another area of Harlem.

Literature review

In 1990, a Nielson survey found that low-income households consumed a disproportionately high share of the frozen pizza, pork rinds, beef patties and corn dogs eaten in the USA. At about the same time, the US Department of Labor reported that poor households were less likely than others to spend their food dollars on “gratification foods” such as snacks or crackers and “healthy foods” including fresh fruit, but more likely buy “filling foods” such as rice and bread, and “unhealthy foods” including hot dogs and oils (Alwitt and Donley, 1996.) More recently, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene released the results of a survey of city residents. It reported that 26 percent of Black residents and 23 percent of Hispanic residents were obese as compared with 14 percent of Whites and 5 percent of Asians. It also found that 21 percent of Hispanics reported not eating any fruits or vegetables the previous day, while only slightly fewer Blacks noted the same unhealthy eating pattern. By contrast, whites and Asians were far more likely to have consumed fruits or vegetables (Perez-Pena, 2003).

The foregoing results are open to several interpretations. They may be used to support the argument that poorer people consciously choose to eat foods that provide low levels of nutrition, and that, in fact, may be injurious to their health. Alternatively, they may provide support for the contention that the limited availability of nutritious foods in low-income neighborhoods, that are often home to African Americans and Hispanics, compromises the diets and the health of the inhabitants of those areas.

Of course, not all low-income consumers should be expected to spend their food dollars in a similar fashion. Piacentini *et al.* (2001) found that although most low-income consumers in their study could be classified as “economic shoppers,” who were heavily dependent on local convenience stores, other factors including social support networks, illness, age, family situation, and mobility played important roles in the ways that they coped with deprivation. Similarly, research that focused on the impacts of low income and limited access to food retailers before the opening of a large

Tesco store in the Seacroft district of Leeds revealed that interest in health, family responsibility, and smoking status influenced the grocery shopping practices of study participants (Whelan *et al.*, 2002).

Although the impact of the above-noted factors must be recognized, considerable evidence also suggests the likelihood that supermarkets do play an important role in assisting the well-being of low-income consumers. A survey of 325 food retail outlets in Glasgow, Scotland showed that “shop type” was the best predictor of the price and availability of an assortment of foods “comprising a modest but adequate diet.” That research, more specifically, found that discount stores, such as Aldi, Lidl, and Netto, offered the lowest prices, and that multiples like Tesco, Sainsbury and Asda were price competitive, but that delicatessens and small independent grocers were the most expensive. It also reported that multiples and discounters offered the highest level of availability of the healthy range of food items being considered (Cummins and Macintyre, 2002b).

Research conducted in the USA has more explicitly examined the relationship between the local food environment and residents’ reports of recommended daily dietary intake related to servings of fruit and vegetables, percent of calories from fat, consumption of saturated fat, and dietary cholesterol. Beginning with data on food consumption gathered by the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study from more than 10,000 adults (2,393 Blacks and 8,231 Whites) in the states of North Carolina, Mississippi, Minnesota, and Maryland, epidemiologists collected additional information regarding the number and types of food stores and food service places available in those same areas. This effort revealed that Whites were five times more likely to live in a census tract with a supermarket than were Blacks. It also showed a relationship between supermarket presence and the likelihood that neighborhood residents eat a healthy diet. Specifically, the study found that, controlling for education and income, Black Americans living in census tracts with at least one supermarket were more likely to meet dietary guidelines for fruits and vegetables and to limit fat intake than were Blacks living in areas with no supermarkets. The research also found that produce consumption rose by 32 percent for every additional supermarket in a Black neighborhood. The results for Whites were not as dramatic, although supermarket presence for Whites did relate to an 11 percent increase in meeting dietary guidelines for fruits and vegetables and a 10 percent increase in restricting saturated fat intake (Morland *et al.*, 2002). Those findings led Dr Kimberly Morland, the epidemiologist who headed the research effort, to conclude: “There is an assumption that we all have access to healthy foods, and that when people aren’t eating healthy, it’s because they choose not to. But this demonstrates that the availability of food varies between neighborhoods, and it’s related to the affluence and race of the neighborhood” (Duenwald, 2002).

Perhaps the most ambitious effort to assess the impact of supermarket presence on diet was the before/after study of food consumption patterns in the deprived area of Seacroft, Leeds in the UK. Ranking in the top five percent of the most deprived wards in the UK and with 70 percent of its population of 15,000 households living more than 500 meters from a food retailer, Seacroft was the site of the construction of a 97,000 square-foot Tesco superstore in the autumn of 2000. To determine the impact of the new store, a team of researchers associated with the “Food Deserts in British Cities” project collected food consumption diaries from local residents the summer of 2000 (before the Tesco opening) and in the summer of 2001 (after the Tesco opening). Analysis of that data showed that a significant increase in fruit and vegetable

consumption occurred among those residents who had earlier reported the poorest diets. The research effort also revealed that those residents, who switched to Tesco as their main food source, increased fruit and vegetable consumption more than those who did not, and that those who switched to the new store from "limited-range/budget" stores rather than from more distant Tesco outlets were more likely to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. The data further demonstrated that positive dietary change was linked to proximity to the store, and that the new store led to reduced use of taxis for grocery shopping. Given those results, the researchers concluded that "a large-scale corporate intervention can significantly change shopping access and travel mode for large numbers of residents" as well as positively affect the diets of the most "at risk" groups in a "food desert." The research did not address the relative merits of a large-scale corporate-owned supermarkets as opposed to a small-scale, community-based stores that are widely advocated by many UK planners, but the impact of Tesco did offer support for growing pro-development opinion that considers reliance on small stores to bring about regeneration of distressed urban areas to be naïve and "a little bit precious" (Wrigley *et al.*, 2002).

Method

The foregoing discussion suggests some linkages between supermarket presence and the diets of consumers in the store's trading area. The present study seeks to extend that research stream. Unlike previous work, this research does not focus on shoppers' reports of consumption behaviors. Instead, it assumes that retailers allocate space in their stores in such a manner as to maximize their profits. Based on this assumption, it examines the relative square footage allocated to fresh produce, fish, and meats and to snack foods, frozen pizzas, and soft drinks in a large inner city supermarket. This analysis should suggest whether or not low-income residents take advantage of the healthy foods made available by the supermarket (in such a case, square footage devoted to such goods should approximate that of suburban stores) or use the store to gain increased access to a wider assortment of "junk foods" (under that circumstance, square footage devoted to that merchandise should be larger than in a suburban counterpart.)

The store of interest is the 50,000 square foot Pathmark store, which was the first full-service supermarket in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. Opened in 1999, the supermarket has been credited with beginning the revitalization of East Harlem (Pristin, 1999c), and it is one of the most profitable stores in the Pathmark chain (*New York Times*, 2001). In the summer of 2003, the researcher made several visits to the store. On those occasions, she measured the square footage allocated to a variety of products, noted the locations of those goods, and photographed in-store displays. She also obtained copies of the store's promotional flyers, analyzed their contents, and recorded shoppers' use of those materials.

The paper also considers the controversy surrounding the establishment of a second full-scale supermarket in Harlem. *The New York Times* reported extensively on the conflict that emerged as large chain food retailers, including Pathmark, and the operators of two 10,000 square-foot stores put forth proposals for the new supermarket. Those published materials provide a basis for understanding the relative abilities of large chain retailers and of mid-size stores to serve the food needs of inner-city areas. In addition, the reactions of local inhabitants and community leaders to food retail alternatives, recorded

in the news reports, document an awareness of the fact that supermarkets can play major roles in the health of the inhabitants the neighborhoods they serve.

Findings

As noted above, the 125th Street Pathmark supermarket was the first full-service supermarket in New York City's heavily populated, low-income Harlem neighborhood. Before opening the Harlem store, however, Pathmark had gained substantial experience operating in inner-city locations. As early as 1979, the regional chain established a large store in Bedford-Stuyvesant, an economically depressed area with a predominately African American population in the New York City borough of Brooklyn, and in 1990, it built a 43,000 square-foot store in the Central Ward of Newark, New Jersey. The latter store was the first new supermarket constructed in the Central Ward since the riots that had followed the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King in 1967. Reporting on the Newark store, a *New York Times* article in 1995 included praise from one shopper who noted: "I can usually find everything I need right here . . . The fish is really good." A Pathmark spokesperson stated that with 50,000 shoppers per week, the store revenue was twice the national average. The chain, however, also recognized the special problems of operating in an inner city location and the particular needs of the inhabitants of the area. To assure the safety of its shoppers, Pathmark created a security force composed of local residents to police its parking lot, and to assist low-income mothers in their purchase decisions, it established displays of products that were approved for participants in WIC, the federal food assistance program (Revkin, 1995).

By late 1999, 20 percent of Pathmark's supermarkets were located in urban areas, and a number of the chain's newer stores were located in economically depressed areas. To recognize the particular impact of the 125th Street store, Partners for Livable Communities, a non-profit organization that was founded in 1977 to advance the livability of communities by advancing "quality of life, economic development, and social equity," awarded Pathmark its "Bridge Builder" Award. This acknowledgement of the 125th Street Pathmark noted "This private business and local community partnership demonstrates that investment in inner-city neighborhoods is good for both the community and business" (*PR Newswire*, 1999).

Allocation of space

Given Pathmark's considerable experience with inner-city grocery retailing and the recognition its efforts have received, it appears likely that the chain has allocated space in its 125th Street store to maximize both its sales and its customer satisfaction. As shown in Table I, the store devotes a considerable amount of sales space to healthy products as well a large amount of footage to snack and beverage items commonly found in most supermarkets. Display tables that hold fresh fruits and vegetables occupy approximately 1,200 square feet, the refrigerated case containing fresh fish takes up more than 50 square feet, and the cases of fresh meats account for more than 400 square feet. By contrast, snack foods are present along aisles that stretch about 71 feet, frozen pizzas are available in freezers approximately 32 feet long and six feet high, and soft drinks, beer, and alcoholic coolers are available on multi-tiered shelves that extend 36 feet. The proportion of healthy products to foodstuffs with little or no nutritional value approximates that found in a typical suburban supermarket.

Pathmark not only makes available fresh fruits and vegetables, the store also gives them prominence and presents them attractively. As commonly found in many

Table I.

Allocation of space in the
125th Street Pathmark^a

	Space allocation
<i>Nutritious foods</i>	
Fresh fruits and vegetables	1,200 square feet
Fresh fish	50 square feet
Fresh meats	400 square feet
<i>"Junk" foods</i>	
Snack foods	71ft. multi-level shelving
Frozen pizza	Freezers, 32ft long and 6ft tall
Soft drinks, beer, and alcoholic coolers	36ft multi-level shelving
Note: ^a Includes only areas where products are stocked for sale. Preparation areas, aisles, and storage areas are not included in the above numbers	

suburban supermarkets, fresh produce is the first merchandise category that 125th Street shoppers encounter as they enter the store. The assortments of both fruits and vegetables are broad; in fact, they include seasonal produce that would be expected in most other supermarkets as well as a section featuring plantains, yucca, sour oranges and other items of special interest to the Hispanic residents of East Harlem. Most fruits and vegetables are not pre-packaged. Instead, the majority of items are displayed on fixtures placed at an angle that permits a cascading, plentiful appearance that has been associated with European open-air markets. Customers are free to serve themselves. They can select products according to desired quantity, ripeness and size. The prices of fruits and vegetables at the Harlem Pathmark are similar to those found in other supermarkets and at many small greengrocers that are common in higher-income areas of Manhattan, but not in Harlem.

The full-service fresh fish counter is also positioned near the entry of the Pathmark. Two employees are on duty in this area during daytime hours of business. The fish in the case is attractively arranged on shaved ice, and the sales associates fill each customer's order on demand. A wide variety of fish and shellfish is available, but the assortment appears to be in keeping with the low incomes of most local shoppers. Most of the fish offered for sale is priced under \$6 a pound, but fish such as Chilean Sea Bass and Swordfish, which generally command \$10 or \$12 a pound or more, is not available.

The meat cases occupy almost the entire rear wall of the store. Meat is pre-packaged in plastic wrap, but custom-cut meat service also available. The meat and poultry selections are extensive. Most of the assortment is similar to that available in suburban supermarkets, but the Pathmark does carry some organ meats as well as a wide selection of smoked turkey products.

The 125th Street store is a full service supermarket that, like its suburban counterparts, includes an in-store pharmacy and bank and carries a full line of canned and frozen foods, health and beauty aids, greeting cards, household cleaning products, paper goods, and seasonal merchandise. Included in this assortment are the extensive selections of frozen pizza, snack foods, soft drinks, beer, and alcoholic coolers noted in Table I. To be certain, the latter group of products cannot be considered "healthful." But the amount of selling space devoted to these "junk foods" appears proportional to that found in supermarkets located in more affluent areas.

Products featured in store flyer

Pathmark distributes the same flyer in all of its stores – regardless of suburban or inner-city location. That circumstance means that promotional items are uniform across all of the chain's stores, and that its customers in disadvantaged areas have the same access to nutritious foods at reduced prices as those who reside in more affluent neighborhoods. A minimum total purchase is not a prerequisite for promotional prices, but, in some cases, a customer loyalty card – which is easily obtainable in the store – is required.

The flyer distributed for the period July 18-24, 2003 was 16 pages in length. According to the front page of the piece, 3 pounds of bananas were on sale for 99 cents, a pint of blueberries was offered at 99 cents, two half-gallon containers of orange juice were specially priced at \$4, and a pound of chicken breasts cost \$1.99. An entire interior page of the flyer featured produce, and included among those offerings were two pounds of seedless grapes for \$3, two pounds of collard greens for \$1, and extra large honeydew melons for \$2.99. Fresh meats were presented on a page and a half of the flyer, and fresh and frozen fish, including salmon filet at \$3.99 a pound and a five-pound bag of whiting filets at \$7.99, occupied another half page.

The flyer for the week of July 25-31, 2003 was 20 pages and included a four-page section devoted to “back-to-school” items. Its front page advertised seedless grapes for 99 cents a pound, a half-gallon of orange juice for \$1.69, and split chicken breasts or pork spareribs for \$1.79. As had been the case during the previous week, a page featured fruits and vegetables and offered a “double your money back produce guarantee.” Also a page and a half detailed the weekly meat specials, and half a page did the same with fish; again, salmon was featured at \$3.99 a pound and a two-pound bag of whiting filets at \$2.99. The “back-to-school” pages promoted such commonly used products as notebooks, which were priced six for 96 cents, backpacks, which ranged in price from \$5.99 to \$19.99 and crayons, which cost \$1.49 for the 24 count package.

Each of the two flyers devoted a page to health and beauty aid specials, and each also offered a page of “frozen savings.” In addition, both carried pages that urged customers to “Get a Little More,” by purchasing multiple packages of such products as Weight Watchers frozen dinners or Edy’s Whole Fruit Bars. Items featured each week also included paper items, detergents, and cleaning supplies. Snack foods, beer, hot dogs, and soft drinks were also heavily promoted in the weekly flyers. One week, for example, a two liter bottle of Pepsi was priced at 79 cents, while the next, three twelve-pack cans of Pepsi were available for \$7.99. In short, the mix of nutritious and “junk” foods present in the flyer mirrored the mix in the store. Pathmark made both readily available to its 125th Street customers, and those consumers – like those in the chain’s suburban stores – were free to spend their grocery dollars as they wished.

Of course, consumers must use promotional flyers, if they wish to minimize their food costs. During the researcher’s visits to the 125th Street Pathmark, the flyers were very evident. The promotional materials were available at the Customer Service Desk, and many shoppers were seen consulting them as they made their purchase decisions.

Controversy over Harlem’s Second Supermarket

The 125th Street Pathmark serves the East Harlem neighborhood; 20 blocks north and further west, the area of Central Harlem known as Bradhurst continues to lack adequate grocery shopping opportunities. As early as 1986, Rev. Preston R. Washington, president of the Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, stated that his organization began “dreaming” of a supermarket. Later, in 1995, after a group of Harlem pastors

inspected food stores in the area, Washington reported: "It was very distressing to realize that the quality of goods was absolutely inferior and far more expensive than what other people were paying." Efforts, however, to bring a supermarket to Central Harlem did not begin until several years later. (Pristin, 1999b).

In 1999, New York City officials gave control of city-owned land at 145th Street and Bradhurst Avenue to a team led by a major Manhattan real estate developer, Related Companies. The team, which also included the Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, was charged with building on the Bradhurst site over 100 middle-income condominiums, a supermarket, and several smaller stores (Pristin 1999b). To avoid the years-long political controversy that earlier had ensued before Pathmark had been allowed to build on 125th Street (Lavin, 2000), city officials bypassed proposals by Pathmark and by three other grocery operators. Instead, it gave the development team control over the choice of supermarket operator (Pristin, 1999b).

Several criteria guided the selection of a supermarket operator for Bradhurst. As the process began, one of the business leaders of the development team declared that "We're very open . . . We need a tenant that's going to be bankable, with a track record that shows that they are responsive to the community" (Pristin, 1999b). In short, prospective candidates needed to be financially viable, and, at the same time, capable of serving the food needs of area residents. Identifying such a store operator proved very controversial.

Pathmark had long been interested in the 145th Street location, and in 1999, the chain submitted a proposal for the new store to New York City. When the city's officials passed responsibility for selecting the supermarket operator to the development team, Pathmark's vice president, Harvey Gutman announced: "We are disappointed and frankly a bit puzzled by the decision." At the same time, a spokesperson for Matthew and Mauricio Fernandez, Pathmark's chief competitors, noted that the city's tactic "throws the process wide open." The Fernandez brothers were young Hispanics, who had inherited a chain of mid-size grocery stores in Harlem from their father. Their willingness to fight Pathmark for control of the Bradhurst site pitted a large chain with "inner city" grocery experience against two Hispanic entrepreneurs with strong ties to the local community (Pristin, 1999b). It also brought into focus the relative advantages that large supermarket chains possess in providing food for "inner city" residents.

Paul Travis, one of the consultants advising the site development team argued: "Pathmark can provide services that don't exist there." David Grotenstein, an advisor to the retail food industry was more explicit. He contended that the Fernandez brothers should not be chosen over Pathmark unless they could exactly describe how they could make the leap from operating mid-size stores to running a full-scale supermarket. He further stated: "The idea of going with a local merchant is very appealing, but the goal should be to serve the neighborhood. As the decision is made that should be the major consideration." Pamela Fairclough, director of the supermarket project for the Community Resource Center, agreed. She conceded that the Fernandez Brothers' stores were better run than most other mid-size operations, but she also noted: "All of these stores suffer from the way that they handle perishable stuff" – a specific reference to the inadequate provision of fresh fruits, vegetables, fish and meats in the area (Pristin, 1999a).

Although its proven experience in "inner city" locations well-positioned Pathmark to win the competition for the Bradhurst site, the chain experienced financial difficulties in 2000 that were unrelated to its urban efforts. In 1987, the company had gone private, and its resulting large debt forced it to use available cash throughout the

1990s to service interest expenses rather than to expand quickly as did many competing chains. Given the constraints imposed by its large debt, Pathmark entered into an agreement whereby it agreed to be acquired by Royal Ahold, the large Dutch food retailer, which had publicly stated its intention to continue Pathmark's "inner-city" efforts. Statements of concern from the Federal Trade Commission, regarding possible anti-trust issues, however, led Ahold to abandon its planned acquisition of Pathmark, and by January 2000, the chain faced the possibility of acquisition by another chain, "drastic refinancing and reorganization," or bankruptcy. Those circumstances jeopardized Pathmark's plans for Bradhurst, and Pamela Fairclough of the Community Food Resource Center expressed the concerns of many when she stated "it is a loss for New York City if Pathmark stays in a holding pattern or has to retrench" (Blair, 2000a).

In early June 2000, Pathmark filed for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy, and announced plans for normal operations during its financial restructuring (Blair, 2000b). Several weeks later, however, Pathmark also removed itself from the Bradhurst competition. Spokesperson, Harvey Gutman, denied that the company's financial difficulties were responsible for the decision. Instead, he argued that "Given the location and the nature of the community needs, the site is much more appropriate for a smaller supermarket" (Blair, 2000c).

Little progress in identifying an appropriate supermarket operator for Bradhurst occurred in the months following Pathmark's abandonment of the project. In fact, during that time political issues appear to have superceded neighborhood needs. Deputy New York Mayor Rudy Washington, a backer of the Fernandez brothers, blocked Empowerment Zone financing of the Bradhurst redevelopment effort stating "I would like, where it's possible, to see people in that community being able to take advantage of the empowerment zone." Gregory Watson, of Harlem Congregations for Community Development, however, indicated that the Hispanic brothers had only wanted to pay rent of \$12 a square foot and he argued that they wanted control of the Bradhurst property only to protect their 12,000 square-foot store several blocks away. The Chairman of Community Board 10, which represents the Bradhurst area similarly argued that neighborhood residents gave the Fernandez stores only "mixed reviews," and he noted: "Ideally, I would like to see a viable chain there" (Pristin, 2001).

In the spring of 2001, Pathmark again indicated interest in the Bradhurst site. This time, however, the chain indicated that the store be 42,000 square feet – considerably larger than originally planned. It also demanded that rents be reduced from \$30 per square foot to \$20 – the rent it pays on 125th Street (Pristin, 2001). Pathmark's renewed involvement moved planning forward. By the summer of 2002, New York officials announced that construction on the Bradhurst project would begin in the fall of that year. The \$52 million undertaking would include a 45,000 square-foot Pathmark, 126 middle-income cooperative apartments, 6,000 square feet of retail space, and underground parking for 118 cars (Pristin, 2002).

Groundbreaking for the Bradhurst project occurred on November 19, 2003. As late as the summer of 2003, however, no construction had occurred on the site. The development team has been seeking public loans and private financing because of higher costs related to design alterations and the replacement of the general contractor. Despite the continuing delays, a Pathmark spokesperson continues to insist that site will ultimately provide "a modern supermarket, new housing and jobs for people living in the neighborhood (Rayman, 2003).

Conclusion

The present analysis of the product selection available at Pathmark's 125th Street store suggests that the presence of a large supermarket provides residents of a low-income area with important access to the foods necessary for a healthy diet. It also indicates that the supermarket chain makes available fresh fruits, vegetables, fish and meat at highly competitive prices, and tailors its assortment to include items in keeping with the special tastes of its many African American and Hispanic customers. Moreover, the present research occurred four years after the store's opening, and, during that time, the square footage devoted to fresh produce, fish and meats had not been adjusted. From that circumstance, it may be concluded that Pathmark is maximizing its profit from its allocation of store space, because customers are, in fact, buying, and presumably, consuming the healthy foods for sale in the store.

The merchandise assortment available at the 125th Street Pathmark also indicates that the supermarket offers a wide array of snack foods and beverages such as soft drinks and beer that do not contribute to a healthy diet. As noted in earlier studies, low-income consumers do not have homogeneous attitudes toward food, and healthy diet is not a high priority for all. The space allocation at the Harlem store also reflects that reality – Pathmark stocks those items because they sell and also contribute to overall profitability.

Finally, the debate over whether a large supermarket chain like Pathmark or a community-based operator would control the second full-service supermarket to be built in Harlem reveals an acknowledgement by some community leaders, food activists, and neighborhood residents of the important role that a large chain supermarket can play in a food-deprived area. This recognition runs parallel to that currently emerging in the UK Planners, on both sides of the Atlantic, have been long disposed to view small entrepreneurs as to central neighborhood regeneration. More recently, however, they have also come to realize that large chains may also make highly significant contributions to such efforts. In particular, supermarket chains possess the expertise to handle highly perishable products, the experience required to manage a large store, and the capital necessary to operate on the scale necessary to satisfy the needs of a large, underserved population. The opening of the 125th Street Pathmark has been associated with beginning the revitalization of a previously derelict section of Harlem, and the establishment of supermarkets – which provide food access like that found in more affluent locations – in similarly distressed neighborhoods may likewise underpin the renewal of those areas.

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