



Mooroopna Township Marketing Plan

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First Impressions

General

This information has been gathered from personal observation of Mooroopna by consultant Linda Hailey, an orientation tour of the area by car, a site visit to the Coles shopping centre and a retail audit of the central business district. Additional information was gathered from interviews with local business owners.

As Mooroopna is so close to Shepparton it was also decided to undertake a brief retail review of the Shepparton CBD to see if there were any obvious gaps in the retail mix that Mooroopna businesses could fill. The review also aimed to identify any competitive advantages Mooroopna may be able to capitalise upon to position the town in relation to Shepparton.

The review also looked at the "back road" shortcut from Kialla to Mooroopna which may be a source of business for local operators.

Objectives

The aim of this first phase of the consultancy is to identify the key issues that will have an impact on the future marketing of Mooroopna.

The review encompassed:

- ▶ Signage
- ▶ Visibility
- ▶ Identity and branding
- ▶ Product stock levels
- ▶ Product ranges in stores
- ▶ Traditional versus innovative products
- ▶ Merchandising
- ▶ Street scaping
- ▶ Access and egress to the main street
- ▶ Architecture
- ▶ Heritage values
- ▶ Customer service

Town Audit

Approach – Causeway Entrance

- ▶ The approach to Mooroopna from Melbourne/Shepparton is easy to find and is well signposted with three directional signs to Mooroopna and Bendigo
- ▶ Unlike many satellite towns close to regional centres which tend to "drift" into each other there is a distinct difference between Shepparton and Mooroopna
 - There is a sense of leaving Shepparton at the Monash Park intersection with bright flags and signage
- ▶ Mooroopna is also distanced from Shepparton as it is approached via a long causeway
 - Once on the causeway there is no advertising signage or visual clutter
- ▶ Signs along the causeway include
 - A tourist sign promoting the local attraction SPC Ardmona KidsTown

- A directional sign “Mooroopna 4 kms”
- A small town entry sign promoting Mooroopna as “Fruit Salad City population 6580”
- ▶ Unlike other towns in the Greater Shepparton area there is no highly visible gateway entry sign for Mooroopna
- ▶ At the entrance to town there is a park which has a number of signs including:
 - A green “events” sign welcoming visitors to Mooroopna and promoting upcoming events
- ▶ There is a sense of “arrival” in the town as the road curves and heritage buildings, the water tower and main street businesses can be seen

Echuca/Tatura Entrances

- ▶ Mooroopna can also be entered from the Midland Highway from Tatura and Echuca Road from Echuca. Both of these entrances include:
 - A standard Mooroopna entry sign
 - A green “events” sign welcoming visitors to Mooroopna and promoting upcoming events
- ▶ The Echuca Road town entrance takes visitors past the small Coles shopping centre
- ▶ From the Midland Highway approach the road runs past new housing developments and an attractive park
- ▶ Both these entrances are attractive and lead into the main street

Main Street

- ▶ The main street is typical of many regional Victorian towns with a wide main street divided by a strip of park which runs the length of the main street.
 - This green belt in the centre of town contains two parking areas, a clearly visible toilet block, seating, a clock, flagpoles, a civic guide noticeboard and map, the water tower and a sculpture in recognition of a famous local motor cycle rider.
 - At the causeway entrance to town there is one of the MoovingArt cows
 - This park would be attractive to travellers as it provides toilet facilities, easy parking and access to local shops for food and necessities.
 - On the days of the town visit there were a number of travellers using the park
- ▶ The strip of park effectively creates a barrier between the two sides of the main street
 - There are no designated pedestrian crossings (other than at traffic lights) in the main street which make it more difficult to travel to both sides of the street
 - Presumably most locals drive their cars from one side of the street to the other rather than walk the length of the shopping area
- ▶ There is a lot of visual clutter in the main street with light poles, traffic lights and building signage all competing for attention
- ▶ At first glance the main street has a suburban feel and would appear to be a service town for the local community
 - The main street is busy with a constant stream of locals
- ▶ There is a steady stream of traffic through the main street including heavy vehicles although the noise and interruption is not excessive

- ▶ There is plenty of parking available in the main street. There is also parking available in the streets behind the retail centre and next to the Mooroopna Hub
- ▶ At first glance it is hard to tell whether the town has “browsing” appeal - there is evidence of cafés and outdoor eating but not a lot of typical browsing shops
- ▶ The retail mix in Mooroopna doesn’t give the impression of targeting tourists and feels more like a service town
- ▶ There are three retail vacancies in the CBD and one business is about to close
- ▶ The retail strip feels buoyant and appears to be trading well

Architecture

- ▶ There are a number of “stand out” heritage buildings in Mooroopna which are highly visible as you enter the main street. These buildings include the Mooroopna Hall, Royal Mail Hotel, Teller Restaurant and the Commercial Hotel which is currently undergoing refurbishment
 - The water tower is also a dominant feature of the streetscape
- ▶ At first glance from street level, it appears the majority of retail buildings are modern 1960s, 70s and 80s buildings with few period or stand out features.
 - There is also a 70s style arcade development
- ▶ A look above street level reveals a number of older buildings dating back to the 1930s and 40s
- ▶ A key feature of the streetscape is the purpose built SPC Ardmona Factory Sales outlet which dominates the Northgate Street end of the main street
- ▶ The old service station in the centre of the main street is an eyesore and gives a rundown look to the Mill Street end of the shopping centre

Ambience

- ▶ The retail area is not particularly pretty or attractive and looks like a traditional suburban strip shopping centre
- ▶ The retail CBD feels comfortable and friendly
- ▶ The main street has wide pavements and most shops are undercover of awnings
 - In some places the pavement looks bleak
- ▶ There are tables and chairs outside a number of cafes and food outlets
- ▶ A few individual operators have made an attempt to beautify their retail space with pot plants outside their shops
- ▶ The streetscape includes
 - Tree plantings which will soften the area in spring, summer and autumn
 - Seats in a number of finishes
 - Metal bike racks
 - Square metal rubbish bins
 - Decorative light poles
- ▶ There are a lot of A-frame boards in the main street
 - Most are well placed and used well
- ▶ There are a number of magazine racks, display racks, or posters outside stores
 - Some of these add to the visual clutter in the main street
- ▶ There are also a number of outlets with stock outside their store

- It was sale time during the visit so much of this stock was discount
- ▶ Some outlets like Mooroopna discounts have a permanent display of stock outside their shop

Retail Mix

- ▶ The retail mix covers the day-to-day needs of the local community well. An overview of the retail mix identified approximately 70 businesses in the CBD area
 - 21 servicing daily needs of locals (30%)
 - 10 cafes, takeaways, restaurants (14%)
 - 4 hotels, motels (6%)
 - 3 women's fashion/accessories (5%)
 - 6 trade business (9%)
 - 12 professional services/banks (17%)
 - 7 browsing shops (10%)
 - 5 hair and beauty outlets (8%)
- ▶ In addition to the main street there is a Coles shopping centre on Echuca Road which includes a supermarket, liquor store, service station and café/pizza takeaway
- ▶ Unlike some regional communities Mooroopna has kept its service businesses and banks but some now run at reduced hours
- ▶ Locals have a choice of businesses in a number of retail categories with two supermarkets, two pharmacies, two service stations and five hair and beauty salons
- ▶ Mooroopna is also fortunate to have a number of "destination" businesses that attract people to the town. These include:
 - SPC Ardmona Factory Sales outlet
 - It is planned that this outlet may be relocating to Shepparton in the near future and possibly replaced with a Coles supermarket
 - Teller Restaurant
 - Pampens and Tigerlily clothing which both stock brands that are not available elsewhere in Greater Shepparton
 - There is potential for the newly opened "Just Me" outlet to also attract destination shoppers
 - This retailer has been running a successful party plan business and is well known to clients in the area
 - Country Thyme Patchwork
 - Although not visible from the main street traditionally needlework and patchwork retailers attract customers from a wide catchment area
- ▶ In addition to retail outlets, Mooroopna has two attractions that pull people into the area
 - SPC Ardmona KidsTown
 - This is a great attraction but it is located off the causeway approach to town and there is a strong likelihood that visitors from Shepparton would not detour into Mooroopna but simply head back into Shepparton
 - WestSide Performing Arts Centre
 - This attraction is toward the edge of town so may not have an impact on main street business. It is also likely that a high percentage of visitation would be in the evening or outside main street trading hours

- ▶ There are not a lot of retail outlets actively targeting the visitor market

Product Mix

- ▶ The majority of retail outlets carry conservative stock and there appears to be an assumption that most customers are price shoppers
- ▶ There are two supermarkets in town - Coles located in Echuca Road and Fishers IGA in McLennan Street
 - Both seem to have a clear idea of their target markets and are different in their overall product offering
 - Coles seem to target the larger family market with most products coming in larger economy sizes
 - Fishers has a very strong community focus with Christmas Club, Kids Club and community notices
- ▶ Pharmacies seem to carry mid range skin care and cosmetics. It would appear that many women would buy their cosmetics and skin care products out of town
- ▶ There is good percentage of shelf space allocated to products for children in both supermarkets and pharmacies
- ▶ The fashion retailers in town appear to be targeting mid market and carry brands that are not seen in Shepparton
- ▶ Stock in many of the shops sends "mixed messages" as if the retailer is not sure of their target market

Signage

- ▶ Although there is directional signage to Mooroopna, there is no gateway signage or any promotion of Mooroopna as a destination
- ▶ Quality of awning signage on individual outlets is generally good with a large number of retailers featuring strong graphic images and easy to read signs
 - Some shops have gone to great lengths to brighten up their outlets e.g. the video shop which features wall murals, baker "chef" character on the pavement
- ▶ There are only one or two faded shop awnings or retailers without signs
- ▶ Under awning signage is not quite as strong with some retailers not carrying their awning image through to street level
- ▶ There is extensive use of A-frame boards in the shopping precinct
 - These are generally well used and placed so they do not create a hazard for pedestrians
- ▶ There are two directional signs in the main street
 - On the wall of the closed service station
 - Some of the information on this sign is out of date
 - One on a noticeboard in the park area

Identity and Branding

- ▶ There is no obvious Mooroopna branding in the form of a town logo or positioning statement, apart from the Fruit Salad City sign on the entrance from Shepparton
- ▶ The positioning statement may no longer be as relevant if the SPC Ardmona Factory Sales relocates to Shepparton
- ▶ Compared to other towns in the region Mooroopna seems to lack a strong identity

Retail Skills

- ▶ This is an area where Mooroopna out performs many regional towns. It was an unexpected delight to note the overall quality of retail merchandising in a wide range of outlets. Some of the stand out areas included
- ▶ Stock display and layout
 - Mooroopna has the neatest stock displays of any group of retail outlets I have ever seen. Both supermarkets had full shelves, well merchandised stock and clean tidy surrounds.
- ▶ Signage and visual merchandising
 - A large number of outlets had very strong retail displays and had used signage exceptionally well
 - Most outlets made excellent use of their shop windows with signage, stock and marketing messages well displayed
- ▶ Some outlets did not present as well as others. Some of the areas of poor performance included:
 - Windows cluttered with posters affecting the view into the outlet
 - Lack of signage or branding
 - Out of date or faded window displays
 - Stock not presented logically
 - Lack of directional signage
- ▶ Customer service:
 - It is difficult to judge customer service on a brief visit however most outlets were friendly and greetings were offered on a number of occasions

Food Retailing

Cafes/Restaurants

- ▶ At first glance the food offering is typical of a regional town, however Mooroopna does have a wide range of food choices
- ▶ The town is home to Teller a well known restaurant and café which is featured in food guides across Australia and attracts destination visitors
- ▶ There are two bakeries in town located at either end of the main street
 - One bakery promotes its award winning apple pies
- ▶ Peter's Takeaway and Takeabreak Café also offer table service and light meals
- ▶ There are also several takeaway outlets operating in the evening including Roasting Roosters, Uncle Tom's Pizza, Che Che's Café and Pizza and Subway located in the BP service station
- ▶ Luen Sing is open for dinner and food evening meals are also available at the local hotels
- ▶ All outlets have a distinctive feel in terms of décor and presentation. However, a number of them appear to serve similar products.

Fresh Food outlets

- ▶ Apart from the two supermarkets there are few fresh food retailers. There is no butcher or greengrocer which is unusual for a town the size of Mooroopna
 - Limited ranges of deli items, chicken and fresh fish are available at the supermarkets
- ▶ There are two bakers which also cater for the visitor market

Tourism

- ▶ Mooroopna businesses do not appear to be actively targeting the tourism or traveller market, however there is limited accommodation in the town and it is unlikely to be a tourism destination
- ▶ The SPC Ardmona Factory Sales outlet attracts half a million visitors per annum and anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of these include local businesses such as Pampens and Tigerlily in their shopping trip to the area. The newly opening Just Me is also reporting strong visitation from people shopping at the SPC Ardmona Factory Sales

Local workers

There are a few larger businesses and organisations in the town which would employ staff from outside the Mooroopna area. These businesses include

- ▶ SPC Ardmona production
- ▶ ED Parsons
- ▶ Mooroopna Secondary College
- ▶ Mooroopna Golf Club

Marketing

- ▶ A web search brings up several pages of "hits" but very little information about the Mooroopna business community or retail precinct
 - The highest ranking site is the Greater Shepparton City Council website which has a page on Mooroopna, however there is little information on this site apart from a paragraph about the town
- ▶ Mooroopna has no tourism information or local business directory

Mooroopna Focus Group

A meeting of local business owners was held on Monday July 30, 2007 from 6pm – 7.30 pm. Participants were selected business owners from the area including retailers and service businesses.

This was an opportunity for local business operators to have their say about the marketing of the area. They also provided valuable insights into the profile of locals and visitors to the area. This session helped identify the issues that need to be addressed before marketing can begin.

Attendees included:

- ▶ Greg Freer – Freer’s Panel Works
- ▶ Rebecca Hutchinson – Billy’s Bakehouse
- ▶ Russell Hall – GV Printing
- ▶ Allen Hunter – Mooroopna Home Hardware
- ▶ Andrew Jones – Mooroopna Newsagency
- ▶ John Kiss – John Kiss Real Estate
- ▶ Paul Wickham – Mooroopna Chemist

The group was asked a series of questions in relation to Mooroopna. Responses to questions and issues are detailed below. **Please note that these are the opinions of the participants and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the consultant.**

How would you describe your local residential market?

- ▶ A mixed community with both lower income and higher income families
 - Both lower socio economic and higher socio economic demographics are well represented
- ▶ Mooroopna is a multicultural community with Aboriginal, Filipino, Turkish, and Albanian residents
 - This is typical of the Goulburn Valley
- ▶ There are a high number of older residents – many living in retirement villages
- ▶ There is a history of older, long term residents in the town
 - Historically it is a town of big families
 - Mooroopna is a generational community
 - Younger couples and families stay near their relatives
 - Don’t find it necessary to leave the area to go to the city, to be happy or to get work
 - People stay in town and raise their families
 - Young people have more employment opportunities here
- ▶ Mooroopna is a very community orientated town
 - People live here for family ties/familiarity
 - There is a strong sense of pride in the town
 - The strong sense of community started with the football club and the town still has that pride
 - Mooroopna is like a country town and can have a parochial attitude

What do you think attracts residents to Mooroopna?

- ▶ People move here for affordability
 - Lower cost of land compared to surrounding areas
- ▶ It has a small town feel with close proximity to other services
 - Everything is central within the town – facilities such as the golf club, schools, sporting facilities
- ▶ The town is central
- ▶ The area is enjoying the benefits of closer proximity to regional centres and Melbourne

What are the spending habits of the local market?

- ▶ Older residents tend to be the main supporters of the local businesses
 - Convenience driving force for older residents - prefer to shop locally
 - Older customers have strong shopping habits, show loyalty, appreciate the sense of community and shop locally
 - The newsagent has a number loyal older customers
- ▶ A number of locals are also driven by convenience mixed with a desire to support the town and local businesses
- ▶ People enjoy the interaction that comes with shopping locally
- ▶ Most families need to go to Shepparton at least once a day – for sport, or with kids activities and some find it easier to shop in Shepparton
- ▶ The hardware store gets good support from locals
- ▶ There is a feeling that for younger residents it is just convenience – they will get it in Shepparton if it's easier

What are the gaps in the retail mix from a local perspective?

- ▶ Menswear
- ▶ Shoe shop
- ▶ Sporting goods
- ▶ Toy shops
- ▶ Juice bar
- ▶ Butcher shop
- ▶ Fruit shop
- ▶ Electrical store
- ▶ Electrical equipment hire
- ▶ Mobile phone shop
- ▶ Health services - radiology

Are there businesses in town that attract people to Mooroopna?

- ▶ SPC Ardmona Factory Sales
- ▶ Tigerlily Clothing
- ▶ Pampens Clothing
- ▶ Teller Restaurant
- ▶ SPC Ardmona KidsTown
- ▶ Sporting venues on the weekend
- ▶ WestSide Performing Arts Centre

Who else supports the business community in Mooroopna?

- ▶ Employees working for local companies
 - SPC Ardmona
 - Workers turn off before they reach the shopping area and have canteen where they eat lunch
 - ED Parsons
 - Mooroopna Secondary College
 - Mooroopna Golf Club
- ▶ People travelling through to or from Shepparton

What do you think are the opportunities for Mooroopna?

- ▶ Easy parking
- ▶ Banking – easy parking and access
- ▶ It's quicker and easier for residents in Kialla to get to Mooroopna than central Shepparton
 - There is a back road around the river
- ▶ Attract more people travelling from Echuca
 - Bakery currently get people stopping from Echuca

What are the challenges is the business community facing?

- ▶ Spread out nature of the street, distance between businesses
- ▶ No pedestrian crossing in the main street
- ▶ Locals don't always shop locally
 - Residents travel to Shepparton daily
- ▶ The town has grown residentially but not commercially
- ▶ Very tough to succeed in business
 - A number of main street businesses have come and gone
- ▶ Parking at the post office
- ▶ Other smaller towns are far enough away from the larger towns/cities to have a diverse range of shops
- ▶ Flood overlay
- ▶ The town is unfairly treated/labelled as a lower socio economic group
 - Can be regarded as the poor cousin of Shepparton
- ▶ No real town brand or image
- ▶ Most businesses are only open 5 ½ days a week
 - Supermarkets 7 days
 - Bakeries open 7 days
 - Newsagent open 7 days (limited hours)

What do you think is the image or "brand" of Mooroopna?

- ▶ Mooroopna can be seen as the "poor cousin" of Shepparton
- ▶ It's seen as a cannery town
- ▶ Mooroopna is thought to have a transient population
- ▶ There is a strong physical divide between Shepparton and Mooroopna
 - The river and bush divide the two towns and that will never change
 - River very important to the town to keeping them separate
- ▶ People in Shepparton are not interested in Mooroopna
- ▶ Mardi Gras

Key Issues

Image and Branding

Although the town of Mooroopna is a major contributor to the local market and has strong community values; the town itself has no clear image or brand.

It has no highly visible gateway sign and the positioning statement of "Fruit Salad City" is only used on one small sign and says little about the benefits or attributes of Mooroopna as a town. For a potential new resident or visitor to town it could be a small town on the outskirts of anywhere.

Even though it is the second largest town in the municipality it almost seems to have taken a default position as poor cousin to Shepparton. However, from a commercial perspective there are real benefits to shopping in Mooroopna ranging from a relaxed atmosphere to easy parking and no hassles. Mooroopna also has a few "surprises" hidden in its retail mix with the high profile Teller Restaurant, award winning baker, well known fashion retailers and browsing shops. The overall high level of retail skills also means that Mooroopna can offer a high level of professionalism in the retail sector.

Changing Population Profile

Mooroopna is a community that is facing a positive future. It has the basic infrastructure and enthusiasm to capitalise on population increases and a growing traveller market.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the population of Mooroopna and surrounding areas is undergoing a change. There has been a growing interest in residential real estate and a few retail businesses have opened or changed hands recently.

It is likely these population changes are driven by several factors:

- ▶ Affordable local real estate when prices are compared to other areas
- ▶ Availability of work in the area
- ▶ Desire for a sense of community and family values
- ▶ A growing number of baby boomer retirees looking for quality of life

There is also evidence that suggests a developing traveller market. Local business owners are reporting a growing number of visitors from surrounding areas. It is likely this interest is being fuelled by:

- ▶ The availability of key services
- ▶ The mix of interesting independent retail shops as opposed to "chain" retailers
- ▶ A number of destination retail outlets and businesses
- ▶ The ease of shopping main street compared to larger centres

It is vital that the Mooroopna business community focuses on maximising revenue from the existing local market.

Local businesses are also reporting a growing number of travellers in the main street and some retailers are already actively targeting this segment. Mooroopna already has the potential customers driving through the town, yet many may have driven through time and time again without stopping. The challenge for the future will be to encourage more travellers to stop and spend time in the town.

Growth in tourism is likely to be driven by:

- ▶ Growing interest in "Drive" tourism

- ▶ Attractiveness of the main street
 - Ease of parking
- ▶ Number of browsing shops
- ▶ Food and coffee offering
- ▶ Increased interest in historic and nostalgia tourism products
- ▶ Retail opening hours

It is clear that Mooroopna is also a community facing change. The business community in particular needs to decide whether it wants to capitalise on these opportunities.

New residents will continue to move into the area and the mix of new versus established populations will change significantly. Although many of these new residents may be 50 plus they will have very different attitudes and attributes, needs and wants to the existing senior citizen market. Younger families will also have specific needs and wants.

To meet the needs and wants of new residents, businesses will need to review their product ranges and introduce new products or upgrade existing product ranges. For instance, stock wholegrain bread in addition to white bread, carry more products for young children, stock "up market" skin care or cosmetic brands. Businesses may also have to adapt their trading hours.

It is likely that Mooroopna businesses will see revenue growth from three main areas:

- ▶ Increased average spend from the local community
- ▶ Increased visits by residents from surrounding areas
- ▶ Increased number of destination visitors and travellers spending longer in the town

Strategies for Success

This Township Marketing Plan is an opportunity for the Mooroopna business community to work in partnership with the Council to achieve realistic goals designed to increase the profile and business activity in Mooroopna. The Council and the Mooroopna business community must work together to prioritise projects and commit to resourcing the initiatives together.

Image and Branding

There is an opportunity for the Mooroopna business community to drive the development of a stronger image and market positioning for the town with a new logo and positioning statement. This logo could represent the positive aspects of the community and promote the business precinct of Mooroopna.

It is important that both the local businesses and community in general have ownership of the new image so it should be generated locally.

Mooroopna also needs a positioning statement that quickly identifies where it sits in the local marketplace and how it differentiates itself from surrounding towns.

- ▶ The positioning statement will need to take into account the current positioning of the town and not over promise or set the town up for ridicule. For instance, it would be inappropriate to position Mooroopna as “The Coffee Capital of the World”.
- ▶ The branding also needs to be motivational for the local community and reflect the pride they have in their town.
- ▶ The new logo and positioning statement should be included on:
 - Gateway signs
 - Directional signs
 - Street banners
 - Individual retail outlets – e.g. window strips

Visibility and Signage

Mooroopna needs to increase its visibility and awareness amongst locals, workers, visitors and people passing through. More vibrant signage will encourage people to stop and explore the town and increase local pride in the business district.

- ▶ Mooroopna would benefit from new gateway signs similar to those used in other communities such as Tatura and Murchison. Ideally these would reflect the new logo and positioning of the town.
- ▶ Flags are already used very effectively in Shepparton and would be a relatively easy way of introducing more colour to the main street and strengthening the overall image and branding of Mooroopna. These “standards” could be attached to existing poles on the causeway and in the main streets. A series of flags could be used to promote all aspects of the town. Themes could include:
 - Primary produce and the fruit salad connection
 - Heritage architecture
 - Community involvement
 - Hassle free shopping
 - Mooroopna logo and positioning statement

- ▶ These flags could be supplemented or replaced with flags promoting key festivals or promotions such as the Shop Local campaign during the year
- ▶ Mini versions of the flags could be made available for local businesses who want to show their support for the area. (These look something like the Lotto flags outside newsagencies)
- ▶ Window strips that tie in to the new branding would also create strong visibility at shop level. Window strips run at the top and bottom of shop windows and create a “frame” for merchandise. These could be developed as a part of a retail promotion or provided at cost to interested retailers. (Cadbury use these strips to promote their range of ice creams)
- ▶ A-frame boards are another way of adding branding and character to the main street. Local retailers already use A-frame boards extensively in the main street and there may be potential to add the town logo to existing boards using stickers
 - To avoid creating too much visual pollution it may be necessary to set strong guidelines into the use of A boards and promotional stands outside retail outlets
- ▶ A-frame boards can also be used to promote special events like the shop local campaign and decorated with balloons during retail promotions
- ▶ Retailers like the baker are already adding character to the main street with their use of a baker character positioned on the footpath. Other retailers may like to investigate the potential to add their own characters to the streetscape
 - Uralla, a heritage town in NSW has made historic figures/dummies a feature of their pavement display with old fashioned characters that are appropriate to individual shops in the retail mix. Mooroopna may like to focus on quirky characters rather than historic figures to fit in with their brighter retail facades

Marketing Material

Mooroopna needs marketing collateral to carry its new image and brand and reach target markets. As there is no formal chamber of commerce or representative body for Mooroopna businesses there is no source of funding expensive marketing brochures or websites. However there may be potential to fund initiatives on a user pays basis. There also may be potential to seek sponsorship or part funding from the major employers in the area.

- ▶ A business directory would be an excellent tool for existing and new residents. Ideally this should be developed in an “electronic” format and become a key element of the website, as well as being a printed document. An on-line directory has significant benefits because
 - It can be downloaded and printed by users if required
 - It can be kept up to date easily and changed monthly
 - It is easy to access by anyone at anytime
 - It can link directly to individual business websites which provide even more information
 - The Business Directory should be updated every six months and could be distributed through:
 - Local employers
 - Local businesses
 - Accommodation outlets
 - Local real estate agents (for new residents)
- ▶ The town needs to increase its web presence and it would be logical to increase the amount of content on the Council website as it is already

Search Engine Optimised and comes up first on any search for Mooroopna. Information on the site could include

- Business Directory
 - Retail promotional campaigns
 - Copies of marketing material
- ▶ A simple flyer promoting Mooroopna businesses could be used to cross promote Mooroopna businesses to customers of destination businesses in the town

Retail Mix

Local Market

Mooroopna is generally well serviced for day-to-day needs but there are gaps in the areas of fresh food, men's fashion, shoes and electrical appliances.

Most towns of Mooroopna's size would have a stronger retail mix in these areas but the towns' proximity to Shepparton may mean that retailers prefer to trade in the busier Shepparton retail precinct. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that there is significant escape spending from Mooroopna as many locals travel to Shepparton on a daily basis and tend to shop in the larger centre.

From a local perspective there are several outlets and products that would be on the "wish list".

- ▶ Fruit and vegetable shop
- ▶ Butcher
- ▶ Menswear retailer
- ▶ Shoe shop
- ▶ Sporting goods
- ▶ Toy shop
- ▶ Electrical appliance
- ▶ Mobile phone shop

It should be noted that some of these gaps exist because the market is not large enough to sustain a dedicated retail outlet in this category. For instance a dedicated mobile phone outlet may not be viable for a town of Mooroopna's size. Both supermarkets carry meat and fresh fruit and vegetables so an independent butcher or greengrocer may struggle to develop a strong market share.

There are also a limited number of retail vacancies in Mooroopna which will mean that changing the retail mix will tend to be a slow and steady process.

In the short term, gaps such as sporting goods, electrical appliances and toys may primarily be opportunities for existing retailers who would like to expand their product range rather than new retailers.

There may be an opportunity for existing retailers to introduce a "two in one" shop concept to fill specific gaps. For this concept to work there must be:

- ▶ Enough retail space to make the concept viable
- ▶ A visible difference between the two concepts from the shopper's perspective
- ▶ A demonstrated demand for the product lines

Examples of this concept working in other communities include:

- ▶ Hairdressing and craft/gifts
- ▶ Sweetshop and coffee shop
- ▶ Hardware and appliance retail
- ▶ Homewares and cooking utensils plus coffee shop

- ▶ Beauty salon and chocolates/sweets
- ▶ Health food and delicatessen
- ▶ Fabric shop and shoe store
- ▶ Coffee shop and bookstore
- ▶ Newsagency and gifts
- ▶ Newsagency and toys
- ▶ Plant nursery/gifts/café
- ▶ Trophy store/ key cutting/engraving/gifts
- ▶ Trophy store/sporting goods

Visitor Market

There may also be potential to change the retail mix to appeal to visitors and destination shoppers. A review of the Shepparton retail mix identified a gap in the mix of boutique fashion retailers. Operators in the Shepparton fashion sector are predominantly chain stores or discount outlets and there are only two independently owned boutiques in the CBD. Mooroopna already has two well known destination retailers in the mid range fashion category and the recent addition of Just Me handbags and accessories has strengthened the mix. This combined with browsing outlets such as Everything Country, Nostalgia Forever and Country Thyme Patchwork means there is potential for Mooroopna to appeal to the recreational shopping market.

Research is showing that people shop differently depending on whether they are shopping for necessities or browsing for wants.

- ▶ Weekly shopping: most people head for a mall or major centre that is convenient to home or work with easy parking. Their destination is influenced by their preferred supermarket chain and the range of specialty fresh food outlets. They usually have a set period of time to purchase everything on their list. Here they become creatures of habit; parking in the same area, following the same route through the supermarket and visiting fresh food and specialty outlets in a certain order. If shoppers stop to have a coffee or a snack they often visit the same couple of café's on a regular basis. Day to day shopping is all about familiarity and routine.
- ▶ Recreational shopping: Whilst day to day shopping is all about familiarity and routine, recreational shopping is all about "new and different". Women tend to drive the recreational shopping sector with fashion, beauty, gift and homewares purchases. Initially it was assumed that major shopping centres would be the preferred destination for recreational shoppers, however although they have appeal to the mass market it has been identified that there is a backlash against the "everything is the same" promise of major malls and a move towards retail strips where there are more independent boutiques. These choosy recreational shoppers are willing to pay for products that are innovative, interesting or unique. Although shoppers visit these areas less often, they have usually budgeted to indulge themselves and spend on wants rather than needs. They are looking for independent retailers, a range of choice in their chosen category e.g. gifts, fashion, sports supplies or homewares, interesting stock and most importantly a range of eating options because lunch or coffee is an important part of the experience. A large number of recreational shoppers travel in pairs or groups e.g. young mums catching up for coffee or mother and daughter outings, baby boomer couples shopping for their new lifestyle.

There is potential for Mooroopna to build its retail mix towards recreational shoppers adding more browsing, homewares and fashion outlets to the mix rather than just focus on day to day needs.

A group discussion amongst local business owners to investigate gaps and develop a “hit list” of opportunities could be facilitated by the Council’s Economic Development Department

There may also be an opportunity for the Economic Development Department and interested members of the business community to actively source new businesses and nominate suggested usage for any vacancies. This would involve

- ▶ Working with local real estate agents to promote vacant properties with nominated usage
- ▶ Approaching retailers in other regional communities who may wish to open a second store in Mooroopna
- ▶ Actively marketing to business owners in specific areas of regional and metropolitan Melbourne through advertising or publicity in local papers.
 - A town on the Central Coast of NSW advertised in the fast growing suburbs of western Sydney for deli operators and gift shop retailers who were looking for a “sea change”.

Product and Service Mix

Mooroopna generally has a good mix of products when it comes to servicing the local population, however the range of products and services offered does not always appear to match the profile of the resident community. Judging by the products stocked in many outlets, there appears to be a general assumption that the local market is older, conservative, not affluent and somewhat price focused.

Whilst there are no doubt residents who match that profile there is also anecdotal evidence of a younger, less price focused market. There are several retail outlets that are visibly targeting this higher spending market.

Anecdotal evidence suggests there are pockets of higher spending residents that are not currently being targeted. More networking and discussion amongst retailers will give better insights into the changing profile of Mooroopna and some retailers may choose to test this market with ranges of different or higher priced product. This is not as risky a venture as it sounds as much of this product will also appeal to the visitor market.

Research

The business community will find it easier to target specific market segments if they have a clearer idea of the needs and wants of specific groups of potential or existing shoppers. It would help to have an idea the spending power of as many groups as possible. A market research program into visitation would clarify the best target markets for the town. The research program could include:

Census Data

The 2006 census information was released on June 27, 2007 and more detailed information is scheduled for release in the coming months. This will provide detailed information on the current population profile including home ownership and household spending. This data should be discussed with local real estate agents who will be able to flesh out the statistics based on their observation of population trends.

Postcode Research

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of residents from surrounding areas and visitors shop in Mooroopna. It would be useful to quantify the sources of these visitors with simple postcode research (see appendix). It is recommended that postcode research be initially run for a four week period and postcode and \$\$ spend recorded in as many outlets as possible. The research will also

generate data about locals and visitors and will enable the business community to identify which geographic areas have the highest average spend

Cafes

Cafes can participate in postcode research but may also be able to play a key role collecting information on the reasons people shop in Mooroopna. During the four week research period Cafes could also place small survey sheets on tables and collect results. (See appendix for sample questionnaire)

- ▶ Adding a question about other outlets visited may give information on spend resulting from SPC Ardmona visitors

Business Initiatives

To maintain local spending, retailers should not attempt to compete solely on price but promote quality, product knowledge and customer service. Local businesses can build loyalty with the local market by:

- ▶ Tailoring their opening hours to meet the needs of the local community
 - For instance a butcher in a regional town opening later so commuters can pick up their meat order on the way home from work
- ▶ Researching products that customers would prefer to buy locally and tailor their product ranges to suit e.g.
 - Have a suggestion board where shoppers can fill out special requests and the retailer then responds to their request
- ▶ Improving customer service so there is a loyalty which holds the shopper to the local area e.g.
 - Packing groceries
 - Home delivery
 - Ordering stock in specially

There are a number of strategies the Mooroopna business community can use to promote the range of products and services

- ▶ Retail and food outlets can increase number of visits and average spend from the local market with events or promotions targeted specifically at locals. Initiatives could include:
 - A monthly pasta night at a local pizza takeaway to encourage extra visits
 - “Value add” bonus for locals who bring friends and relatives e.g. free shampoo gift pack for anyone introducing a new client to a hair salon
 - Local business owners and their staff also respond well to informal bonuses like delivery of coffee during quiet times or being able to bring in their own mug for a fill up.
 - Some cafes build local loyalty by targeting specific groups in the community; some examples include: Coffee club for young mums (or retirees) offering a coffee and cake special between 9.30am and 11am, Frequent Flyer bonuses for regulars e.g. buy five cups of coffee get one free or seniors specials and coffee club.
 - Some cafés also promote take home meals such as lasagne or quiche and salad towards the end of the day for the local retail and business community or busy mums.

Escape Spending

Mooroopna needs to keep locals spending as much as possible in town. To be realistic, locals will continue to purchase in Shepparton and larger centres, but a “Shop Local First” campaign can be an effective way of maximising revenue

from locals. Typically shop local campaigns should run two or three times a year during peak or shoulder retail times. To keep these promotions fresh you can look at different styles of promotion; these include:

Shop Local First

This simple concept runs three times a year. For every \$5 customers spend they receive a ticket for a prize draw. The prize can be tailored to suit the needs of the community but can range from a donated holiday to cash prizes, which would typically be first prize \$500 - \$1,000 and second prize \$200 - \$500. At peak times like Christmas a large number of smaller cash prizes can be offered. Although effective, this promotion has a major disadvantage in that there is no guarantee the winnings will be spent in town.

Shopper Dollars Concept

Over a period of 3 - 4 months every purchase in Mooroopna earns Shopper Dollars. These dollars can be called Mooroopna Money or Mooroopna Moolah to give the promotion a local flavour. Typically you would earn 10% or \$1 for every \$10 you spend. These dollars can either be redeemed at participating Mooroopna businesses.

- ▶ This promotion should be an ongoing campaign run twice a year
- ▶ Timing should be tied in with optimum trading times such as Christmas
- ▶ Promotion of the event can include:
 - Advertising in local press and radio
 - Window banners in each retail outlet
 - Street banners
 - Window display competition
 - To maximise the impact of the promotion you can consider a community service angle where a percentage of the dollars raised go towards funding a program that will help a local group

Quarterly Events

As the Mooroopna business community have run very few joint promotions a simple way of building awareness is through quarterly events where all retail outlets theme their stores and run "in store" promotions. These promotions should not all be discount or bargain focused. Examples of promotions include:

- ▶ Sports Saturday where retailers all deck out their shops in the local team colours and invite local football stars to sign autographs or run sports clinics in the main street
- ▶ Christmas sales or promotions. This could tie in with a Christmas tree, Christmas lights or a Carols by Candlelight campaign
- ▶ Crazy Day with sales tables outside retail outlets, spruikers and
- ▶ School Holiday Kids Day with kids meals, competitions for children, buskers etc. This promotion could also have a charity component where retailers collect cash or goods for a local children's charity.
 - Ideally this could be run in conjunction with Kids Town and a portion or donations going to Kids Town

Destination Shoppers

Local Employees

Increased signage, colour and activity in the main street will all encourage local employees to "take another look" at Mooroopna. Although SPC Ardmona production workers have a canteen on site it may be possible to pull them into

the main street with other services. The Economic Development Department may be able to liaise with HR management in major companies and organisation to identify key products and services that will be useful for local employees. These can then be promoted in a simple flyer/email which can be displayed in staff rooms, distributed to all staff with company information or emailed to all new employees. Information in the flyer should be specific and include opening hours and contact details for relevant businesses. Businesses that could be promoted in the flyer include:

- ▶ Pharmacy and medical services
- ▶ Laundry and dry cleaning
- ▶ Post office
- ▶ Health and fitness classes
- ▶ Watch batteries and jewellery repair

If cafes and bakeries are willing to participate, the flyer could also include services like delivery of lunches or fax/email ahead lunch orders. (These services may not be relevant to all companies)

To launch the local worker flyer Mooroopna could produce "Good neighbour" or "Honorary Local" cards which encourage repeat visits and entitle local employees to different bonuses e.g. Buy 5 coffees and the 6th is free

Customers of Destination Retail Outlets

There is potential to cross promote Mooroopna businesses to customers already visiting destination outlets and venues such as Teller, SPC Ardmona Factory Sales, Pampens, Tigerlily and Country Thyme Patchwork. If the business owners are willing to participate they could distribute a simple one colour flyer or email promoting the fashion, browsing and food outlets in Mooroopna. As some businesses will not be keen to promote competitors a number of flyers could be tailored for each retail category e.g. the fashion flyer would promote food, Country Thyme and SPC Ardmona whilst restaurants or cafes would promote fashion, SPC Ardmona and Country Thyme. These flyers could be emailed to individual databases, displayed on counters or used as an in bag flyer. The flyer should include retail and non retail experiences in Mooroopna and be themed around "Next time you visit" or "While you are here". Suggestions could include

- ▶ Memorials and sculptures in the main street parks
- ▶ Suggestions for morning tea
- ▶ Browsing for particular fashion labels
- ▶ Booking for dinner

Kialla Residents

It has been suggested that there is potential for Mooroopna businesses to promote directly to residents and businesses in Kialla who can get to Mooroopna quicker than Shepparton if they take the "back road" to Mooroopna. There is an opportunity to increase marketing to these surrounding areas and encourage visitors to stay longer. The most cost effective way to do this is through a letter box drop to residents and businesses in the area. These flyers could be headed

No parking meters, no hassles - Easy shopping just 10 minutes away and detail the services available in Mooroopna. The flyer could also provide a link to the business directory on the website so readers can source more information on the businesses in Mooroopna

Visitor Market

Mooroopna is located on a major highway and therefore a natural stopping off point for many travellers. However, Mooroopna is competing with other towns

on the route and needs to create a distinctive difference to encourage travellers to stop. It is also important to recognise that the main street has a role to play in a visitor's decision to stop. Key attractions for visitors include:

- ▶ Easy parking
- ▶ Attractive streetscape
- ▶ Appealing cafes and food outlets
- ▶ Browsing shops that are visible from the vehicle
- ▶ Toilet facilities

There are several factors which will impact on the successful marketing of the area to visitors. These include:

- ▶ Lack of Saturday afternoon and Sunday trading
- ▶ Number of browsing shops
- ▶ Range and quality of food offerings for the visitor market
- ▶ The ability of food outlets to cope with growing numbers and offer consistent service levels in food outlets
- ▶ The need for retailers to stock products specifically for the tourism market

Opening Hours

One of the key issues for the traveller will be the lack of weekend trading.

To successfully compete in the wider market it will eventually be necessary for many of Mooroopna's retail businesses to open weekends. Understandably there will be resistance to this idea and it is not something that can be legislated. Ideally five or six key businesses that are keen to trade on a weekend can be identified and promoted in a campaign that will market the new opening hours.

- ▶ The businesses most likely to benefit from weekend trading will be the food outlets, fashion and browsing retailers and browsing shops
- ▶ This concept is best trialed during spring/summer months. It is important that all participating businesses agree on a starting date and give the trial at least three months before declaring it a success or failure. An ideal trial period would be October through January. It may not be possible to get agreement on seven day trading immediately and you may need to extend hours gradually. Starting with Saturday afternoon trading or Sunday morning trading

Food Outlets

Cafés

It is highly likely that there will be demand for more innovative food offerings and longer opening hours from the changing traveller and local markets in the short to medium term. This is evidenced by the changing profile of travellers and the age of the town population.

Some of the products/services likely to increase in demand include:

- ▶ Well-made espresso coffee (most coffee suppliers will provide free or low cost barista workshops which train operators and their staff to produce consistently high standards of coffee)
- ▶ Gourmet sandwiches featuring gourmet breads. This is an opportunity for a local baker to provide "café only" breads to the local cafés so they can create interesting dishes
- ▶ Healthy takeaway such as salads, wraps, yoghurts, fruit smoothies
- ▶ Picnic packs or pre prepared takeaways for the travellers that may want to have a picnic in a local park or out of town. These packs will increase revenue for takeaway outlets and allow for fast service

- ▶ Local retailers can also develop products specifically for the traveller market e.g.
 - Barbeque packs which include salad and breads
 - Picnic packs including cold meats, salads, drinks
 - Easy meals for the caravan market
 - Kids meals
- ▶ There is an opportunity to increase promotion of local produce in the food outlets. Local cafés could feature dishes with local produce such as sausages from the local butcher and also retail gourmet product from local suppliers. Local bakers could also supply specialty pies for the café market e.g. local lamb and beef. Local restaurants could feature a selection of local wines
- ▶ Some of the local food and beverage operators would benefit from a visit

Amenities

- ▶ Although not covered as a part of this consultancy, it is important that the local council review public amenities such as toilets and street seating to make sure they are adequate for the needs of the tourism and local market
- ▶ The main street would also benefit from a pedestrian crossing

Business Development

As there are a number of motivated business operators in Mooroopna there is an opportunity to bring the business community together on a regular basis to network, socialise and share information. This will be especially valuable for business operators who are new to town and keen to learn more about the area.

At this stage I would recommend an informal social group rather than a Chamber of Commerce or formal structure. An ideal format is "Business after Five" or "Business before Seven" where a different business hosts an informal after work or breakfast meeting at their premises every month. This has the added benefit of giving business owners a chance to find out more about some of the products and services offered in the town.

Suggested Training

Skills development seminars are the most effective way of maintaining and improving customer service and retail skills such as merchandising and display. Although retail skills are generally high

- ▶ Some retail businesses in Mooroopna would benefit from customer service training
- ▶ Food and beverage outlets would benefit from Barista and food presentation training
- ▶ Some businesses would benefit from business advice to help them analyse and improve their financial performance
- ▶ There also may be opportunities to tap into State Government funding to bring consultants to town that can present a workshop on a specific issue such as customer service or visual merchandising and also conduct one on one sessions with interested retailers.

Business Awards

The Shepparton Chamber of Commerce and Industry has annual business awards that are open to all small towns surrounding Shepparton. It is recommended that Mooroopna businesses participate strongly in these awards to raise their profile and highlight their exceptional customer service and shop appearances.

Implementation

It is obvious that many members of the Mooroopna business community are ready to embrace change and adopt initiatives suggested in the plan. However, as most already have extensive business, family and community commitments they are unlikely to be able to find the time to manage the implementation phase.

In my experience communities that rely on volunteers for implementation do not generally achieve results as quickly as communities that have a dedicated coordinator or implementation committee.

The Greater Shepparton City Council is committed to assisting small business and business development in general. However, it is imperative that not only is there ownership but a commitment from the Mooroopna business community towards these initiatives.

It would also be advisable to develop an informal committee of interested business owners who can have input into prioritising initiatives and act as a point of contact for the coordinator.

Appendix "A" – Resources

Shopping Basket Research

This simple research compares a “shopping list” of grocery and food items between retailers in different areas. This is a great way of identifying whether price or variety are factors in “escape spending” (where locals shop in other areas). Ideally, this list should be compiled by a representative group of locals as it is important that it represents the type of products locals might buy.

The butchers, bakeries, liquor store, supermarkets and fruit and veg supplier can be approached to put together a list of items they would like included on the list. The list should include:

- ▶ Daily staples such as bread and milk
- ▶ Brand name items e.g. Kellogg’s Cornflakes
- ▶ Generic or no name items
- ▶ Specialty and gourmet items
- ▶ Products likely to be purchased by families
- ▶ Products likely to be purchased by single people/retirees

It is recommended that no more than 30 items be included on the list.

Select up to three locations for comparative shopping

This researcher will not need any specific skills but must be accurate in recording the data. In some communities retirees have been happy to carry out this research.

Postcode Survey

The aim of this research is to identify where your customers or visitors are coming from and what is the average spend for each of the locations. This information will help you decide whether the business community should advertise or promote in specific areas. It is also very useful for individual businesses as it will help you decide who are your most "desirable" target customers. Until you have gathered the data you won't know exactly where your customers will come from but at this stage we could perhaps assume that they may include:

- ▶ Locals
- ▶ People from surrounding areas
- ▶ Local tourists from VIC
- ▶ Interstate tourists

Suggested Methodology

The information can be collected over a month and should not be run "day in, day out" as it can be tiresome for you, your staff and your customers.

It is suggested you do the research two hours a day rotating **through all trading hours including busy periods**. This is important as you may have different types of customers visiting you at different times of the day.

At the end of the month you should have enough data to start drawing conclusions about the information.

You can continue the research longer for your own personal use; ideally for two half days a week for another month. Further down the track you might run another survey to see if the spending patterns have changed. You may end up running this kind of research twice a year.

On the next page is a sheet for recording the information. You will need to head it up with the date every day. It is generally easier to start a clean sheet for each day.

On the days you are doing research you will need to ask every customer for their postcode. (You needn't ask people you know are local residents but you must record their post code). This information along with the amount of the sale is recorded on the form provided. (You can also record their age bracket if you are interested in identifying demographics. This should be guessed. Do not ask customers their age!!)

All you need to say is. *"Could I have your postcode please?"*

If you feel more comfortable you can add an explanation e.g.

"We're doing some research into where our customers/visitors come from, could I have your postcode please?"

It is unlikely you will meet any customer resistance to this request but if you do, let it go, leaving the customer feeling happy is more important than getting their postcode!

Once you have collected the information simply add up all the dollar amounts for each postcode. This will give you the amount of revenue per postcode. If you divide the total sales by the number of entries (or transactions) per postcode this will give you the average spend per postcode.

Café Questionnaire

Customers in cafes are often looking for things to read or take their attention while they are waiting for their tea or coffee. This means they are prime candidates for questionnaires. These can be used to flesh out postcode research, identify specific attributes of visitors or back up gut feel.

They can be printed on a DL envelope size piece of paper with the business group or café logo or name on the top. The questionnaire can also include a brief explanation of what it is about e.g.

The business community in Mooroopna is working hard to improve our main street shopping area, and we need your help. Please take 2 minutes to fill out this questionnaire.

No more than 5 questions should be asked and they can be tailored for each community. Sample questions include

- ▶ How often have you visited Mooroopna in the last 4 weeks?
- ▶ Did you come here to visit one particular retail shop or service provider?
 - Ask for details or offer a choice of boxes to tick
- ▶ How long do you usually spend shopping in Mooroopna?
- ▶ How many shops do you visit when you come to Mooroopna?
- ▶ What is your favourite thing about shopping in Mooroopna?
- ▶ What do you like least about shopping in Mooroopna?

Thank you for your feedback

These forms can be collected and collated and information shared with the local business community