

Castle Markets Project - Oral History

Interview Transcript

Interviewee Details

Name: Paul Smith

ID Number: CM_058_Smith

Place of Birth: Sheffield

Year / Date of Birth: 23/07/61

Interview Details

Interviewer: John Buston

Date / Time: 28/06/2013 11:41

Place: Castle Markets

Audio File Nos: CM_058_Smith

Summary

Time	Description
0.26	What is sold on the stall
0.41	The Family's marketing history
1.03	Originally had 8 units selling different goods
1.36	Closed the units
2.17	Mainly older customers
2.40	Enjoys interaction with customers and traders
3.24	A boring, slow job
3.53	Customers numbers down 30%
4.15	Mixed views on the new market
4.29	Will not survive move without more customers
5.17	Doesn't hold much hope
5.49	Believes car parking is too expensive for customers

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Transcript:

John: My name is John Buston and I'm conducting an oral history interview on behalf of the Trading Histories project. I'm speaking to a stallholder, and your name is?

Paul: Paul Smith

John: May I have your date of birth please?

Paul: 23/ 07/ 61

John: And your place of birth?

Paul: Sheffield

John: Now the first question, would you please describe what your stall is and what you sell?

Paul: On the stall we sell, handbags, travel goods, purses, umbrellas, associated lines on two units in castle market

John: So how did you and your family start working here?

Paul: The family originally started in the first, were original tenants in the Norfolk Market which opened in 1851, so it's been passed down through the generations on my father's side, since then.

John: So has the number of stalls that you previously owned changed and the siting in the market, in the castle markets, has that changed?

Paul: Yes, originally when we came in here we had 4 units downstairs and 4 units up here, my parents actually gave up 4 of the units downstairs because it was too much work for them at the time, kept the 4 upstairs. I came into the business we then expanded on those four which was then selling handbags that we do now, toys and what, we also bought the electrical which was opposite us, because trade was deteriorating, that helped to keep, you know, making a living.

John: So you have adapted to the circumstance?

Paul: Yes basically yes, but then it got to the stage where it was impossible to be able to employ staff to keep going, so we closed the electrical, and then we closed the toys, I actually no longer work in here now apart from maybe one day a week, my wife runs it, we just kept the handbags on for the time being.

John: Interesting development. Quite a strong demand for handbags at present is there in relation to the market?

Paul: It's the same as what it's, you know, it is one of the better trades that we've found, one of the stronger ones that we've been in, and its one we know the best, we've been at it for a lot more years.

John: A lot of variety there.

Paul: Yes

John: Do you get various age groups shopping here?

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Paul: Yes, but mainly its older people, that's what we cater for, basically, with the style of what we have, a lot of it is aimed at the older generation.

John: I see

Paul: Not the younger generation, don't get the younger generation in here

John: Right, so what do you like regarding your experience of working in the market generally?

Paul: The interaction with the customers, made a lot of friends that I've kept over the years, you know, fellow traders for years and years, you see new traders coming in, some go, seen many, many changes over the years, basically its just the banter of being you know, in an environment of working with people

John: Right, so a lot of socially interaction with the other stall holders and that keeps you buoyed up I suppose?

Paul: Yeah, yep, yeah.

John: That's interesting.

Paul: especially now, I mean in the old days when it was really busy, you didn't have time, but nowadays, you seem to have more and more time to stand about and chat

John: Yes, yes, well what aspects do you dislike, I imagine, as you said, you've got quite a lot of time on your hands at present

Paul: Yeah, its quite boring, the days go very slowly at the moment, so that's not very good, the opening hours, you get to the afternoon and there's nobody in at all, its very difficult to keep enthusiasm up, but every year the takings drop so it's, it's quite hard.

John: It can be a bit demoralising at times

Paul: Oh aye yes, exactly, yeah

John: So, that would've led to the changes you've noticed over the years, its gone from er, you...

Paul: Yeah, Yeah, you only now serve about 30% of customers to what we used to have.

John: Only 30%?

Paul: Yeah, maybe even less

[Interruption with customer]

John: So what are your views regarding the new market?

Paul: Mixed really, personally speaking I think its going to having a 99% chance of failing, in regards of our circumstances, I can't see that the new market is going to be that much more busy, but its got to be a hell of a lot more busy than what this is, I just can't see the number of people, having been down that end of the Moor, that'd go in and use the markets.

John: Most of the customers for this market are from a different area of Sheffield aren't they, so it's going to be a long way for them to move isn't it?

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Paul: Yes although not a nice thing to say, but we wouldn't be able to survive on our present customers, we need new customers that have got more disposable income, it's got to be an upmarket market to have any chance whatsoever of surviving.

John: I believe that is the aim of the market, it's meant to appeal to various socioeconomic groups, based on a continental model apparently so it may be able to draw other customers that you haven't experienced before?

Paul: but you know we've been here that long, we're gonna give it a try and see?

John: That's good news.

Paul: But I don't hold, not many of the other traders, speaking to the other traders, a lot of them don't hold much hope out for erm, you know, having the number of customer coming in, especially if things are bad anyway, the economic climate is bad as well, so that's...

John: If the Moor is developed generally, then it may attract new customers to the area.

Paul: It's been done, some of it, but it does need, it needs all the units to be taken really down there, make it more - the old adages, the one big bugbear about it down there is that is no free parking, no free parking or no cheap parking, people will not want to come to town to spend £4 on parking, when you can go to Meadowhall, shop for free.

John: Yes, maybe that is something to address, yes.

Paul: Yes but the Council just don't seem willing, don't seem to grasp that fact, they keeping putting charges up, car parking charges up, rather than biting the bullet, getting the town centre running again and encouraging people to come, not everybody will come on a bus, when they've got a car, they'll want to come in a car.

John: Especially when they are carrying shopping bags yes. Well thank you for your assistance on this interview.

Paul: No problem.

John: Thank you.