

Connecting street vendors to global consumers

Connect.Reflect.Act Talk by Christine Souffrant, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Vendedy

Abstract

Vendedy is the only digital network connecting travellers to authentic 'street experiences'. It provides a unique street market experience from street art tours to tasty street food – Vendedy curates global articles, videos, and resources in one place. Souffrant emphasised that it is significant to purchase from street vendors and explained this through her own personal connection to street vending. While most of us all travel and buy souvenirs where we end up is always the generic souvenir shops. Instead, we need to emerge ourselves in the culture and buy from street vendors and this is where Vendedy plays a role. While many economists boast about statistics on e-commerce, they fail to acknowledge there is a rapid rise of street markets as well: 'In 2014, about 8024 farmer's markets popped up on the streets'. Street vendors provide an important link to find information about a city and its heritage. Further, street vending brings back nostalgia and connects individuals with society. The next time you travel and explore, be sure to engage with Vendedy and share your story.

E-commerce vs. street vendors

Vendedy connects travellers to street vendors. She has a personal connections with street vendors as she used to sell items alongside her parents on the street in Haiti. She comes from three generations of street vendors. Basically, "I am obsessed with the art of street vending". Purchasing while traveling is normalised; when you travel, the most normal thing you do is shop.

Street vendors is where you want to be to be immersed in the culture. However, the problem is that most of the best local items are in the busy places. Currently, there are over 160 global players who try to give attention to street vendors and get their products online. However, e-commerce is not the answer for street vendors and for transforming their

lives. There is 1.3 trillion dollars circling online and 10 trillion dollars circling offline.

While a lot of economists boast statistics on e-commerce there is a rapid rise of street markets as well. She spoke of the often discounted importance of street vendors to the world economy and society.

For instance, in 2014 about 8024 farmer's markets popped up. Further, when Vendedy asked travellers to send us their stories engaging with street vendors. One of the most common criticism is this is happening online in emerging markets, yet some of the largest emerging street markets are actually in Europe. In London, Camden market receives 100,000 visitors every day and there are over 1500 flea markets in the US. This is happening more and more and we don't believe it is happening. This is because there is a global trend of purchasing items from street vendors. If you buy from street vendors, the majority of activity are actually offline. Imagine when we are able to centralise activity street vending activity. Right now, 2 billion people around the world sell products and services on the street. They sustain families. It reduces crime.

Since civilisation

On a purely more fundamental level, street vendors have existed since the dawn of civilisation; they are part of the human experience. They foster engagement and inclusion: they enable the re-establishment of the social connections that we are perhaps losing in our digitalised age. Despite online growth, they are here to stay, she said. So please, the next time you shop engage with Vendedy and share your story with them.