

Millennials at the Market

Investigating Millennials' Experiences at the Hamilton Farmers' Market to Foster Sustainable Change



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Abstract - Millennials at the Market

Since it was established in 1837, the Hamilton Farmers' Market has been a main attraction in Hamilton for both locals and tourists. In recent years, the Market has looked for ways to continue to succeed logistically and economically while experiencing a change in customer demographics. They commissioned a third-party survey that was published in July 2019, which looked to address barriers to expanding the Market's customer base. Through thematic analysis, this study strives to enhance the previous research by gaining qualitative insight from the Market's current target demographic - millennials. To obtain this data, 21 millennial participants were recruited to shop in the Market for a three-week period where online survey feedback was gathered following each visit. Afterward, 19 of the 21 were interviewed to gain a better understanding of their firsthand experiences at the Market. This report discusses two main areas of interest - barriers and enhancements - that will help the Market in attracting a more regular millennial clientele. The key themes identified for each respective category were 1) Dependability & Accessibility and 2) Experience & Community. This report breaks down these themes into recommendations for sustainable change in each area.

Keywords:

Farmers' Market, Hamilton, Millennials, Market Vendors, Small Business, Local, Community Space, Thematic Analysis

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Hamilton Farmers' Market is one of Hamilton's hidden gems. Since it was established in 1837, it has been a bustling community hub to both locals and tourists. Recently, the Market has been trying to tackle some logistical and economical hurdles (Craggs, 2013). In order to address some of these concerns, the Market Board commissioned a third-party consulting company to conduct a survey that was published in July of 2019 which looked to address barriers to customer satisfaction at the Market. This quantitative study was inclusive of all age groups and captured perspectives of both regular customers and non-marketgoers from a variety of demographics.

It has been identified that millennials are currently the largest demographic in Hamilton (Buist, 2016). For this study, it was considered that millennials are those born between 1981-1996 (Dimock, 2019) or those between the ages of 23-38 by the end of 2019. Despite millennials having a reputation for being exceptionally busy individuals (Hayes, 2017), they tend to participate in extracurricular experiences and take great enjoyment in having a sense of belonging to their communities (Alton, 2019). Many farmers' markets share these traits as they strive to be places where the community gathers and where relationships can develop between vendors and customers (Snyder, 2009).

In recent years, the number of people in each demographic has changed and so have shopping and food preferences (Mealey, 2018). This change has likely played a role in the overall success of the Market and its vendors. As such, it was decided that there should be more focus put into investigating the millennial demographic and ways in which the Market can foster sustainable change to better meet their needs. Therefore, this research strives to enhance the feedback from the previous study with the addition of qualitative research done through surveys and in-person interviews with both engaged millennial aged Hamiltonians and current Market vendors. The valuable insights gained from this study were presented to the Hamilton Farmers' Market Board in April of 2020 and may be used to ultimately make decisions about beneficial changes and adjustments that can be made to the Market in future plans.

The objectives of this research were to:

- 1) Better understand millennials' attitudes and perceptions towards the Hamilton Farmers' Market
- 2) Identify key themes in the data to serve as the foundations for suggestions
- 3) Share findings, results and recommendations with decision makers

Through these objectives, this research strives to provide the Hamilton Farmers' Market with well-informed recommendations and feedback from the millennial demographic. This vision compliments the two goals of this study which were to: 1) to give voice to the data through interviewing new or current market-going millennials and 2) to provide opportunities for data-driven decision-making to enhance the Market and by extension, the Hamilton community.

1.2 Background

This research study was initiated through McMaster University's Academic Sustainability Programs Office. This program connects students at the University to experiential learning opportunities within the McMaster and Hamilton communities. This project opportunity was part of a fourth year, eight-month long course. Four student researchers were championed by Hamilton Farmers' Market Manager, Bill Slowka, and Hamilton Farmers' Market Board Member, Elly Bowen, to tackle

the project. The team was also supported by Andrea Pohlmann, 2019 Chair of the Hamilton HIVE for the millennial participant recruitment for this study.

The Hamilton Farmers' Market has been an integral part of the community for 183 years. Its role in society is more than just a space to pick up food or to shop; it is a place to bring family, friends, and the community together to enjoy an experience. As such, it proves to align with the City's priorities such as community engagement and participation (Hamilton, 2019). Beyond engagement, the Market contributes to the growth of the local economy through the promotion of local businesses and job opportunities. Additionally, it strives to promote healthy, sustainable and local purchasing and consumption habits (Nugent, 2020).

The Market developed a Strategic Plan in 2016 to serve as the foundation for a five-year vision from 2016-2020 (HFM Board of Directors, 2016). This plan identifies what the Market is striving to change and the steps that it is going to take to get there. In this plan, it was acknowledged that "the Market needs to change" in order to reach out to different types of customers. It states:

"The demographics of our city are changing and there are many younger professionals who are living near the market. Their needs are different. As one Board Member noted, there was a time when you would see parents, with 4-6 kids in tow, carrying bags as they shopped at the market. Now many people are shopping for 1 or 2 people and what they want to purchase is different than the customers of the past. The market needs to change to ensure it is attracting these new residences of the core." (HFM Board of Directors, 2016)

This research aligns with the Market's vision as it looks to address the increase of millennials in the area and to discover ways to attract this demographic. Additionally, the Plan mentions the need to distinguish the Market from nearby competitors and ways to make the Market a more lively and vibrant destination during the week and weekends (HFM Board of Directors, 2016). This research acknowledges where these visions have been met in the eyes of millennials and where there are opportunities for future planning.

2.0 Methods

The methodology for this study was chosen to meet the specifications necessary to allow for robust qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) as well as to align with the standards of the McMaster Research Ethics Board, from which this study gained approval before moving forward. The main stages of the research methodology were taken from the outline provided in Braun and Clarke (2006). These components include recruitment, data collection, data processing, and analysis. The methodology is further broken down in the sections below.

2.1 Recruitment

This study involved the recruitment of 21 Hamilton millennial participants and nine Market vendors. The number of participants allowed for a variety of responses but still enough opportunity to gain deep and insightful feedback from each.

Student researchers created an infographic (Appendix 9.2), recruitment email, and an Eventbrite page that was shared with the Hamilton HIVE young professionals' network through project collaborator Andrea Pohlmann. The first 21 participants to sign up were sent a follow-up email from the student researchers that included information about the study, screening questions, and a Letter of Information (Appendix 9.1.1). Once participants responded to screening questions and gave consent, they began their participation in the study. All participants were entered into a draw to win a Hamilton Farmers' Market gift basket (approximately \$100 in value). Additionally, each interviewed participant received \$25 worth of gift cards for the Hamilton Farmers' Market at the beginning of their interview.

Market vendors were recruited verbally and in-person by the Hamilton Farmers' Market Manager and collaborator, Bill Slowka. A verbal recruitment script made by the student researchers was provided to Bill, and vendors who chose to participate in the study followed up directly with Bill. Vendor participants were provided with a physical copy of the Letter of Information (Appendix 9.1.2).

2.2 Data Collection

It was important that the millennials who participated in this study offered perspectives from their lived experiences after being customers at the Hamilton Farmers' Market. As such, each participant was asked to shop at the Market at least once per week for a three-week shopping period in November and/or December 2019. On their visits, they were asked to fill out a quick online survey to keep track of their Market experiences (Appendix 9.4). The online survey was provided through SurveyMonkey and consisted of a mixture of multiple-choice and short answer questions. Survey results in Appendix 9.5 show visit spending's and categories of purchases.

Following the shopping period, 19 of the 21 participants engaged in recorded one-on-one in-person or phone interviews with student researchers (Appendix 9.3.1). Interviews took place within the months of December 2019 and January 2020 and were approximately 30-45 minutes long. This process allowed the student researchers to generate findings and suggestions for Market initiatives.

Following the millennial interview process, in January 2020, select Farmers' Market vendors also engaged in brief in-person interviews at the Hamilton Farmers' Market (see Appendix 9.3.2). Interviews were approximately 10 minutes long and were conducted by student researchers who took hand-written notes. These brief vendor interviews provided Market vendors an opportunity to share their perspectives and opinions towards enhancing the Market for millennial shoppers.

All data collected was stored on secure platforms and later deleted after use. Any personal and/or identifiable information was removed from quotes that were used and participants were given the opportunity to review quotes before submission. Data security and confidentiality procedures outlined in the Ethics application were followed.

2.3 Data Processing and Analysis

All data collected was stored on Mac Drive, a secure data-storage drive allowing for data sharing. The millennial interviews were then transcribed using Temi, an artificial intelligence software. These files were then uploaded to NVIVO to support thematic analysis. NVIVO is a qualitative analysis software that provides access to word frequencies and key words in context to aid in identifying underlying themes and patterns to support data-driven decision-making (NVIVO, n.d.).

The first stage in thematic analysis was manual coding which was used to determine the recurring topics discussed by participants. The six main topics that were deduced to be used as nodes were:

- 1) Hours and Dependability
- 2) Layout and Accessibility
- 3) Payment and Pricing
- 4) Experience and Community
- 5) Marketing and Promotion
- 6) Variety

Once the nodes were determined, the student researchers digitally coded the data into these six nodes using NVIVO software and divided them into sub-nodes, if necessary. The purpose of this was to ensure that the chosen themes were specific and representative of millennial opinions and perspectives. Following the digital coding process, the nodes were streamlined into key themes based on number of occurrences and quality of references.

The thematic analysis employed in this study began with a rich description of the dataset, rather than a detailed account of one aspect (Braun and Clarke, 2008). Themes that were chosen were broad as they were representative of the entire dataset which helped to determine the greatest barriers and enhancements. This method was beneficial as the participants' views were unknown to the student researchers prior to the commencement of the study. Student researchers took an inductive approach to thematic analysis, looking at themes emerging from the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2008). The themes identified were classified as semantic since the coding process involved grouping the data based on the surface meanings of the excerpts. Furthermore, the epistemology of the thematic analysis employed in this study was considered to be an essentialist/realist approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis was essentialist because the student researchers reported the experiences of participants through their interviews and surveys (raw data).

3.0 Results

Through thematic analysis, it was identified that there were two main categories of interest discussed in millennial interviews. Interviews tended to focus either on barriers that discouraged participants during their shopping experiences or proposed opportunities for enhancements of the Market, to make it a more attractive destination. This led to the determination of the key themes of this research. Regarding barriers, the key theme recognized in the data was “Dependability & Accessibility”. More specifically, this theme focuses on the Market’s hours of operation and payment methods. In a similar way, in the area of enhancements, the key theme that was recognized was “Experience & Community”. This theme looks at building the Market at a community hub and improving social media presence. Figure 1 depicts the outline for how both themes were broken down into the mentioned research topics and how recommendations were developed for each.

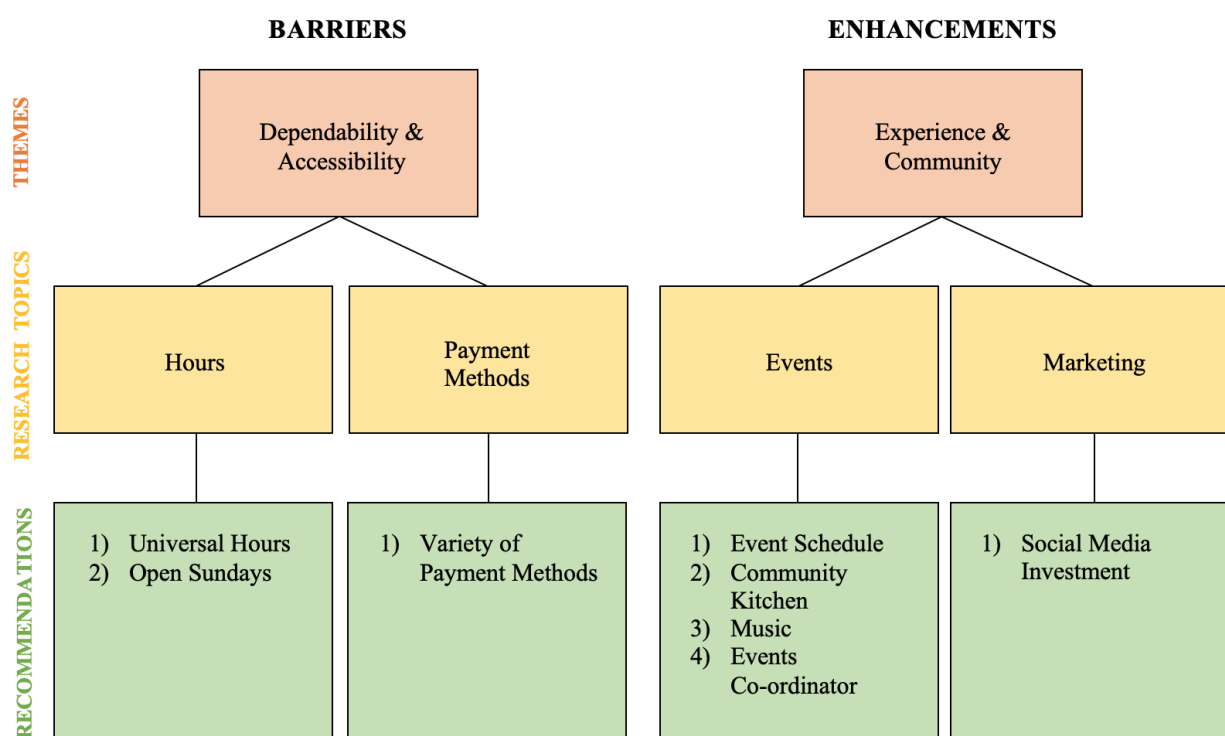


Figure 1: Flow chart breaking down the two key themes into their associated research topics and recommendations.

3.1 Dependability & Accessibility

The barriers were considered in the theme of “Dependability & Accessibility”. This theme takes a focus on hours as well as payment methods.

Currently the Market is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. These are just the general Market hours and not necessarily the hours that all vendors comply with. There is currently flexibility given regarding vendor hours. This frequently results in stalls not remaining open for the entirety of operating hours.

The second research topic in this theme is payment methods. Currently the only payment method accepted by all vendors is cash, with select vendors accepting cards. There are also ATMs that

are located throughout the Market, where you can take cash out for a fee.

3.1.1 Hours of Operation

95% of interviewed millennial participants discussed the barrier of hours of operation. The topic encompasses not only the actual operating hours of the Hamilton Farmers' Market but the dependability of those hours. The Market currently allows vendors to be flexible with hours, which for many means having fewer hours than the general Market operating hours. One participant discussed their lack of trust of vendor hours, stating:

"I no longer go before [work] if I have to do midweek groceries. And I'm up at like 5:30 and I live downtown - like it's easier for me to go to the Market. And it's usually fresh vegetables that I run out of. But now I'll go to Fortinos before the Market. It's like I've along the way maybe lost trust that things would be open or available."

Approximately 65% of the interviewed participants discussed vendors not being there during the Market hours. This was commonly expressed in relation to their frustrations with inconsistent operating hours. In relation to that, nearly 70% of interviewed participants mentioned either the Market or its vendors not being open late enough. This was typically mentioned in participants comments about not being able to go after their workday. In addition to those workweek hours, over 40% of the interviewed participants either communicated their desire for the Farmers' Market to be open on Sunday or recommended it as a way to attract other millennials, which is demonstrated in the following quote:

"Extending the hours, especially during the week would be key. And if that's not feasible, definitely incorporating Sunday. For myself and a lot of people that I know, like that's typically like our errands day or shopping day and it's usually our day to kind of prep for the week ahead. So a lot of our shopping or groceries actually take place on Sundays."

The Market conducted a pilot during the month of December 2019 where they opened the Market for Sundays leading up to Christmas. This overlapped with the study period so many participants attended. Although the specific results and success level of the Sunday pilot are unknown to the student researchers, the participants who were aware of the pilot expressed their enthusiasm about the idea but were disappointed with the execution. This was in part due to the inconsistency of vendor operation. One participant explained:

"I meal prep, I think it's very popular for a lot of food conscious millennials, if you will. And so like I do a lot of cooking on Sunday and I really figure out what I want to make and I need to get some stuff. And so I heard the market is going to be open on Sundays, so I was like, great, that's amazing. So I went and like 50% of stuff was closed. So, I mean, if I had gone trying to hit a specific stall then I would have been really, really frustrated."

Trust and dependability were one aspect of the experience that participants felt strongly about. These are people who want to support the Market but are struggling to do so because of the Markets' operating hours or the hours of individual vendors. One participant stated:

"People's most valuable non-renewable resource is their time and if you disrespect their time, it's definitely a sign of disrespect to them. So if you say you are going to be open and you're not open, it just kind of feels like a bit of a punch to the stomach, you know. Like I'm trying to support you, but I don't feel like it's reciprocal."

These results suggest that the Market could improve customer experience by expanding upon market hours and having universal vendors (See Section 4.1.1).

3.1.2 Payment Methods

Another main barrier for millennial customers was the lack of diverse payment methods, a topic that was discussed by approximately 60% of interviewed participants. Millennials discussed that this barrier affected the frequency of their Market visits and the quantity of their purchases. Overall, participants had detailed feedback regarding payment methods and were generally not enticed by the ATMs in the Market. Participants voiced their preference for cashless alternatives to be explored. One participant expressed their opinion on the cash-only tendency at the Market, stating:

“You always have to have cash with you. And that's something that I don't always have on me. And that can be a barrier. So there were many times when I was working downtown where I had planned to go to the Market on my way home or over my lunch, but I didn't have cash on me and I didn't have time to go all the way across Jackson Square to my bank. I know they have one of those ATMs but it charges you. And so I'm not really keen on using those types of machines that charge the extra fee.”

Similarly, another participant explained that, with advancements in technology, more millennials are not only relying on credit or debit rather than cash, but using payment options available on their smartphones:

“I think a lot of millennials just don't have cash. I know some people who do everything on their phone now.”

Finally, one participant commented that the addition of electronic payment options would easily enable them to do all of their shopping at the market:

“If I can just go to any stall and tap and go and get a receipt, I personally would do all my grocery shopping there. It would be really easy.”

These results suggest that the Market could improve customer experience by offering a variety of payment methods for customers (see Section 4.1.2).

3.2 Experience & Community

The enhancements were considered in the theme of “Experience & Community”. This theme takes a focus on events as well as marketing.

Currently, with regards to events, the Market hosts events and musicians on an irregular basis, runs seasonal events which are predominantly kid-specific or incentives, does not have an updated Events Page on its website, and does not make use of its Community Kitchen. Furthermore, the 2020 Market Budget saw an 100% decrease in event-specific funding as compared to that of the previous year (see Section 4.2.1) (HFM Board of Directors, 2020).

The second research topic in this theme is marketing. Currently, the Market budgets approximately \$50,000 a year to marketing across various platforms. Radio and billboard

advertisements, combined, account for over half of the annual budget spendings (HFM Board of Directors, 2020).

3.2.1 Events

75% of millennial participants discussed the importance of establishing the Market as a community hub and ensuring that the Market incorporates experiential components. Three main points of discussion were brought up by the participants in relation to experience and community. Firstly, participants emphasized that markets are inherently different from regular grocery stores, so the Hamilton Farmers' Market has the opportunity to set itself apart from local competition by becoming more of an experiential destination. One participant noted the following:

“Going to the grocery store seems like a chore; going to the market seems like an experience.”

Some of the large local grocery stores near the Hamilton Farmers' Market include Fortinos, Food Basics, and Nations, which offer the typical grocery experience of aisles of products and no interaction with the producers of the food available for purchase. The Market is unique in that it allows the customer to explore aisles of vendors and engage in discussions about their products while supporting local farmers and businesses. While this customer to vendor interaction is important in attracting millennials and others to the Market, it is often not enough to keep them there long-term for convenience reasons such as hours, payment methods, etc. (see Section 3.1). People need a good reason to spend that extra chunk of their day exploring the Market. Another participant emphasized this, stating:

“You don't want it to be 100% functional. If the Market is striving to get people to go there and make it an experience they need to incorporate in these [experiential] pieces that'll really separate them from the big box stores.”

Another main point of discussion repeatedly brought up by the millennial and vendor participants was the incredible potential of the Market space that is not being put to good use. One of the vendors at the Hamilton Farmers' Market noted that entertainment and experience seems to be very important to the spending habits of millennials (Vendor). They explained that millennial shoppers tend to sample more often and engage in discussions about the products and the history of the farm or business. However, the vendor went on to discuss that the Market is inherently inconvenient, so you have to make it more of an experience throughout the year, not just during Christmas and other holidays. The vendor emphasized that community engagement does not need to be expensive, and that the Market can get people interested by being creative in planning events. Otherwise, they stated, people are not just going to come to the Market for groceries. Overall, this vendor believes that long-term Market shoppers are dying out and that millennials are the key to fixing that if the Market can give them a reason to come down there (Vendor). The community kitchen of the Market is one of the biggest opportunities to attract new marketgoers, as according to this vendor, the space used to be packed every Saturday but is now predominantly unused. One of the millennial participants also discussed the potential of the community kitchen, stating:

“Having that space available and people knowing, I think it would be a big asset. There used to be a kitchen space available and now I don't know if there is. So I think that would be something [useful] because they could welcome different groups having meetings to promote the space.”

Hosting events in the unused and underused spaces in the Market, such as the community kitchen and the lobby at the York Street entrance, has great potential for attracting new, long-term customers. Another participant noted that the Market space itself does not have loyalty attached to it, saying:

“I think establishing it more as like a community hub is what I’d like to see. I think I have a lot of loyalty to some of the shops there, but not necessarily to like the space and what the space can offer. And I think it’s a really cool space and in a really good location. But yeah, I just don’t think it’s being used to its full potential.”

It was also noted that many of the current events are unrelated to the Market vendors and that having more vendor related programming may better translate to a more devoted clientele for vendors. One millennial participant was particularly passionate about this issue, emphasizing the importance of incorporating relevant food-related events into the Market schedule. They discussed:

“It’s not enough to tell people to come to the Market and just shop local. There’s this whole opportunity to create educational components in terms of tying in the produce, the meats and whatnot and making it educational. Like how do you know these kinds of foods can be boosting your immune system or whatnot? I think there’s a missed opportunity to it because the local stuff can only go so far - you have to come at it at different points to create the space. It’s more than just going there to get your produce but a place of community, a place to learn something. A place for all these interactions.”

Music is another example of creating a community experience, which was mentioned by almost 50% of the interviewed millennial participants. One participant reflected fondly on their experience of music at the Market:

“I remember over the holidays they had someone playing an instrument and singing. You could hear it throughout the entire Market, and I was like, “How amazing is this?!”. [...] And you’re supporting Hamilton as ‘the music city’.”

Similarly, another participant noted their feelings of disappointment in the lack of music after the holiday season, stating:

“I think the lack of music or lack of ambience sometimes is a little bit disappointing. I get that maybe it’s not sustainable all the time, but I think it definitely leads to a better experience.”

These results suggest that the Market could improve customer experience by adding an events schedule to the website, making use of the community kitchen, bringing local musicians to the Market, and hiring an Events Coordinator (See Section 4.2.1).

3.2.2 Marketing

75% of interviewed participants identified the need to increase advertisements and promotions, especially on social media. It was identified that approximately 85% of the interviewed participants came to shop at the Market from the downtown core, either coming from work or home. Despite their close proximity to the Market, they felt that they could have been better informed on events and general advertisements.

Millennials at the Market

One common discussion point was that there were many surprises upon actually becoming a regular customer. A popular comment included that the Hamilton Farmers' Market is a unique destination as it showcases such a variety of vendors. The space is filled with categories of vendors who sell anything from produce, deli, and coffee to flowers, wine, and artisan goods (Hamilton Farmers' Market Vendors, n.d.). Ultimately, the Market is not what many participants expected a "farmers' market" to be. For example, a participant mentioned that the prepared food section came as a surprise saying:

"Even all the like takeout food places, I felt like it was not always super characteristic of a farmers' market and that was fine. But I think that was just the one thing that surprised me is I think I had a different idea of what a farmers' market would be like."

Traditionally, farmers' markets are places where local farmers sell their grown food to customers. Overall, participants were surprised to learn that the Market had so much to offer. Additionally, many interviewed participants mentioned the importance of showcasing the Market as a place to support locals. One said:

"I can't speak for all millennials, but that's something I've been trying a lot for in my life, is to use and purchase goods and consumables that are produced more locally and not shipped here from who knows where. [...] I like things that look like they were grown by someone and you could ask them and they would say, yeah, these came from a farm, down by Brantford or like we own a farm out here. So that would be how you could market it."

Furthermore, participants expressed how much they appreciated transparency from vendors. Those who strive to support local want to know that the products which they are purchasing are truly local. Interviewed participants commented that it was a selling factor that some vendors showcased where all of their goods were sourced. This type of transparency instills trust in customers. A participant noted:

"I really like (vendor), they always have signs. And I really like that I know that that food came from somewhere nearby compared to a lot of the vegetables that come to Fortinos from however many kilometers that they've traveled. So I would try primarily to get fresh fruits and vegetables at the Market and the fruits really more depend on the season."

The vision of the Strategic Plan aligns with this perspective as one of the goals was to have the Market filled with farm fresh products and that shoppers are made aware of where these products were grown (HFM Board of Directors, 2016). It is evident not all vendors are transparent with where they source their goods. The Market is more than just a place to buy produce but a place for small businesses and a place for experiences. A participant suggested an increased level of transparency saying:

"I just think the Farmers' Market just needs to figure out what they want to be. If they want to be a literal farmers' market then be a place where people grow their food and then sell it. But like they're not that because they have coffee and the food court and bath bombs...So if you're going to be that, then be that. [...] And just like knowing who actually grows their own food. Like I really appreciate (vendor) because they label everything, what comes from their farm and what doesn't. It'd just be nice if you'd be upfront about where you're sourcing your stuff."

One of the promotions run by the Market in 2019 was the previously mentioned Sunday operating hours in December. Some millennial participants visited the Market during this pilot and commented on their desire for more promotional efforts. Unfortunately, expectations weren't completely met due to the lack of participating vendors. A participant commented on the promotion and execution stating:

"I remember right at the beginning of the study, I think it was in December, they decided to be open Sundays and I remember being a little bit frustrated because I definitely would've went. [...] I only knew because like the sign was like by Sensational Samosa and I felt like I didn't know that they were closed and I went there. So that was like a little bit of a weird thing. I was like, what the heck? Why don't I know anything?"

Furthermore, the Market opened on Christmas Eve and participants who attended had similar experiences to that of Sunday. A participant noted their excitement on the promotions but felt disappointed after the promotion did not translate to a positive shopping experience, saying:

"I'm going to say it was on December 24th on Instagram, they made a post everywhere saying the Market was open even though it wasn't their normal day, I think. And I was like, 'oh sweet'. 'Cause I actually had something I needed to get, so I was really excited. And I get there and about 60% of the vendors were closed and I was like, 'Why did you make a post?' [...] You know, if the first one was a picture of 'Market's open today!' and the second page image had been a list of vendors that were open, then that would have been helpful to me 'cause, you know, I made a trip out there on Christmas Eve specifically to get something only to be like, 'Oh it's closed.' [...] I was happy that, you know, they're trying to be open on a special day, like to kind of bring people in on that kind of last day of shopping, but then to actually not be able to get stuff at a bunch of their locations seemed to defeat the purpose."

Overall, it seemed that millennials were excited and enthusiastic about the idea of these events, yet it is evident that they felt left down after these experiences. Reactions showed that there is potential for interest around the Market and existing promotions and events. However, better informing the public, being transparent and following through with expectations are important to help build customer trust. When asked how the Market should approach these promotions, a participant suggested:

"Maybe just building a bigger presence online and just extending the interaction and user experience online. Like I've looked at the website a few times and it's not that great in my opinion, like I think it could be enhanced and really speak to the key benefits of going to the Market. So I would say that'd be kind of the last piece is just building more of an online presence and driving a lot of users to first start in the online space and encourage them then to come and use tactics from their online space to really drive them to the physical market."

These results suggest that the Market could improve customer experience by investing in social media and being transparent with promotions and product sourcing (See Section 4.2.2).

4.0 Discussion

4.1 Dependability & Accessibility

There are many factors that must be taken into consideration when deciding on business hours, including the main demographic of the target market (OnDeck, n.d.), which, in this case, has been identified as millennials. It has been estimated that, in 2020, millennials make up more than half of the workforce (PwC, 2011). As a result, one could imply that a large portion of millennials are working during the day, with work hours of approximately 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday - Friday. Currently the Market's hours are Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Saturday from 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. With the exception of Saturdays, the majority of the Market hours overlap with the typical workday and leave only about an hour of leeway before and after work, as well as lunch breaks.

Like a mall, these business owners, or vendors, rent out the space owned within the Farmers' Market. The Market sets certain rules and policies for all vendors to follow, but similar to mall retailers, the vendor can decide which payment options they will accept. The Market has opted to place multiple ATMs throughout the space despite this not being an enticing option to millennials. The Market's ATMs include a transaction fee, which is problematic when considering that "millennials are frugal and prefer surcharge-free ATM transactions" (Marcos, 2018). Beyond that, when looking at shopping habits by this target demographic, the usage of card, both credit and debit combined, comes in at over 50% of all purchase transactions, compared to cash at 17% (Visa, n.d.).

4.1.1 Hours of Operation Recommendations

The flexibility of vendor hours was proven to be a large concern for millennial participants. Through an investigation of best practices of various markets within the province, such as but not limited to the St. Jacobs Farmers' Market and Flea Market, the Cambridge Farmers' Market, and the Guelph Farmers' Market, it is evident that it is common practice to have strict guidelines regarding vendor attendance (2018; 2019; 2019). Within all of the aforementioned markets' policies, vendors must agree to comply with the market hours, with some markets even outlining the repercussions if this is not followed. As one market clearly stated, "late arrivals and early departures only hurt the market" (Cambridge Farmers' Market, 2019). This is even more important considering the Hamilton Farmers' Market's location. The Market is on the perimeter of Jackson Square, a mall located in the core of downtown Hamilton. When you go into a mall, there is an expectation that the stores will be open during the mall hours. This concept is often assumed to be followed within the Farmers' Market as well. Although the Market does not operate under the mall hours, there is an underlying assumption for vendors to be open during the Market hours unlike independent street-level shops and storefronts.

The Hamilton Farmers' Market's five year strategic plan outlines that "the Market has hours that are responsive to the needs of shoppers (e.g. people can go "after work" which for some might be 5pm or 6 pm)" (HFM Board of Directors, 2016) Although these posted hours do reflect the "after work" timing, the vendors themselves are not necessarily open until that time. As feedback suggests, inconsistent and unclear vendor hours is a barrier to shopping which leads to decreased trust in the customer and vendor relationship.

Recommendation 1: Universal Vendor Hours

Firstly, it is highly recommended that the Hamilton Farmers' Market enforce their existing operating hours. Although it is strongly recommended to put this in place, it's recognized that this may

take time to achieve. As such, a good first step would be to have all vendors clearly post and advertise their hours to their customers, including any potential lunch breaks. The hours can be advertised through social media and the Market website and should be clearly visible at each vendor’s Market stall. If the hours are known to customers, they can manage their expectations hopefully prior to entering the Market. This first step will help to build that much needed customer confidence and trust, prior to full implementation of universal vendor hours. Once vendor operating hours are enforced, some millennial customers may be more willing to shop after their workdays without fearing closed stalls.

Recommendation 2: Open on Sundays

It is also recommended that the Market goes beyond the 2019 December Sundays pilot and make Sundays part of the regular Market operating hours. When researching local competitors’ ‘popular times’ on Google, Sunday proved to be one of the busiest days (Figure 2). ‘Popular times’ on Google uses data from multiple weeks prior and is calculated through smartphone users who have their Google location history turned on (“Popular Times”, n.d.). Google location history provides multiple benefits for users such as personalization of map, find services near you, etc. (“Manage your Location History”, n.d.). Seeing as millennials are some of the top smartphone users, this data can be assumed to give a fair representation of customer attendance for this demographic (Nielson, 2016).

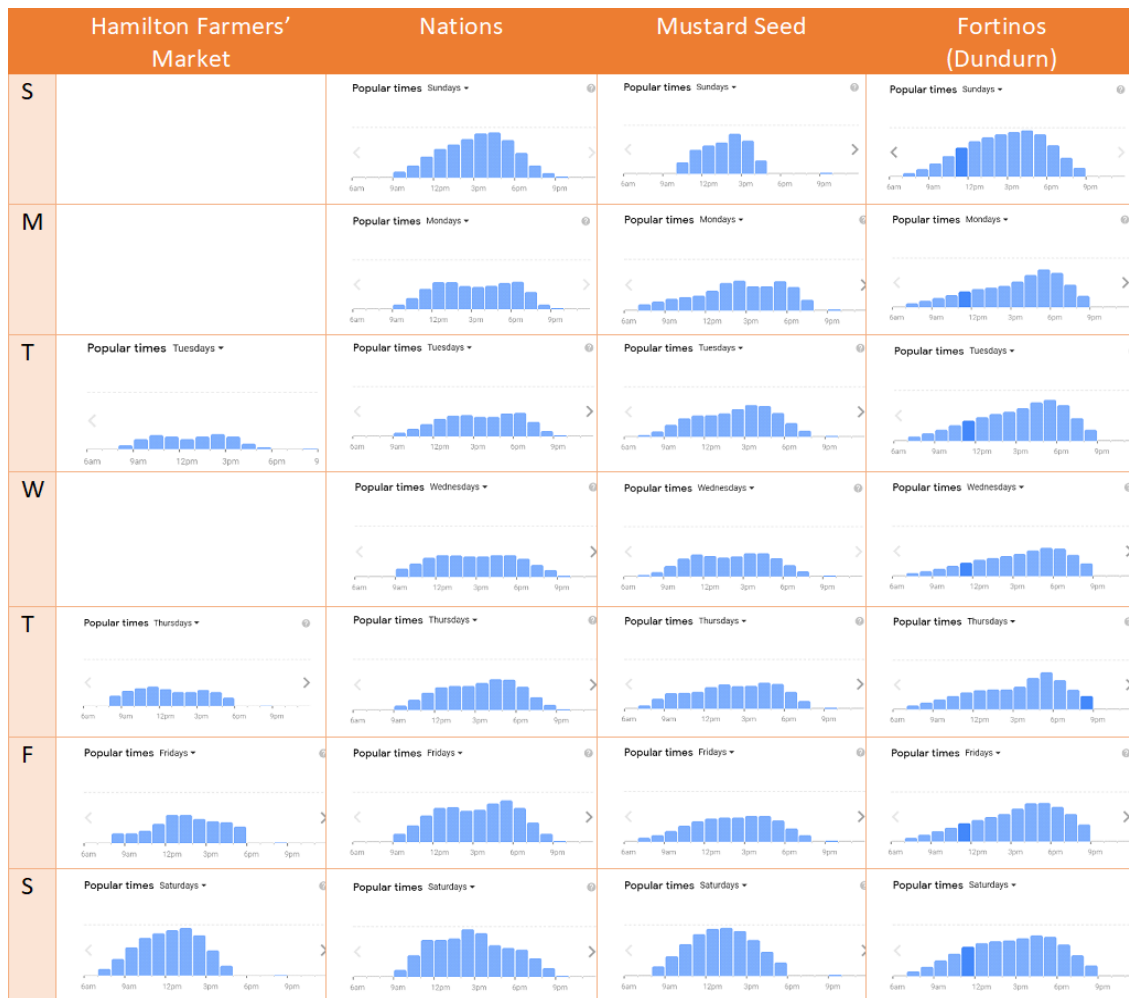


Figure 2: Popular times for the Hamilton Farmers’ Market and various competitors in the area. Retrieved from Google in March 2020.

The popularity of Sunday shopping could be explained in part by the weekly “food prep” trend that has taken off with millennials in recent years. This is typically completed on the day leading up to the workweek i.e., Sunday (Karlis, 2019). It is possible that the addition of Sunday hours could prove to be too many Market hours a week for vendors. Therefore, it is suggested that the Farmers’ Market consider arranging operating hours to better align with hours of popular demand.

The Market also has the opportunity to follow the St. Lawrence Market’s newly advertised pilot involving Sunday operation for all of 2020. St. Lawrence’s post gained a lot of attention online and it will be interesting to see how successful their Sunday hours are and whether their long-term approach to the pilot is effective. Should the Hamilton Farmers’ Market run another pilot to test hours, feedback suggests that mandatory vendor participation be addressed, and pilot duration be considered.

4.1.2 Payment Methods Recommendations

Many interviewed participants mentioned that the Market lacked payment methods and found it to be a significant barrier. They mentioned not being able to purchase their groceries conveniently as debit and credit is not offered at most vendor stalls. In Canada, as of 2019, the use of electronic payment methods such as credit and debit cards have significantly flourished as compared to previous years (Galociova & Li, 2019). This transition to a predominantly cashless society has caused people to carry around smaller amounts of cash than they may have in the past. Roughly 90% of Canadians own a debit or credit card, highlighting the importance of electronic options to the payment habits of Canadians across a range of age groups and other demographics (Galociova & Li, 2019).

Card readers are a popular example of an electronic payment option that can accommodate debit and credit cards and are offered by a wide range of companies. For example, Square is a relatively young company offering several unique card reader devices suitable for different store types and their needs (Square, n.d.). With Square, there are no monthly or hidden fees, which makes this company particularly appealing for many small businesses (Waring, 2017). Many small businesses will forgo the use of credit or debit cards as there is an interchange fee - a charge that is transferred to the acquiring bank whenever a credit or debit card transaction is processed (Pritchard, 2019; Wamala, 2019). This fee is lower with debit than it is with credit cards, which is why small businesses prefer debit payments over credit (Wamala, 2019). Debit card interchange fees range from a flat rate between five and 30 cents, while credit card interchange fees range from two to three percent of the total purchase price (Wamala, 2019).

A study done on the Washington Farmers’ Market pilot program back in 2011 discovered that running out of cash is one of the biggest reasons why consumers limited their market purchases (Gallardo et al., 2015). Additionally, they found that roughly 42% of consumers would buy more after becoming aware of their ability to use electronic payment methods at the farmers’ market (Gallardo et al., 2015). These findings closely parallel the feedback of the millennial participants in this Hamilton Farmers’ Market study. The student researchers discovered that customers would purchase more items and visit the Market more frequently if the convenience of electronic payment methods was available. Three cases to increase payment methods at the Market are explored below.

Recommendation 1: Variety of Payment Methods

Case 1: Accepting Debit and Credit Cards

The first recommendation to navigate the barrier of payment methods is to clearly communicate with vendors the benefits of accepting debit and/or credit, with the intent for all vendors to provide these

payment methods for their customers in the future. Although the student researchers are aware that all vendors may not be enthusiastic about this change due to interchange fees, accepting cards can actually increase one's sales by approximately 30% (Litwiler, 2019). Electronic payment methods such as different types of card readers, "are providing Canadians with easier, faster, and more efficient ways to pay" (Galociova & Li, 2019). Being adaptable and more accommodating to customers will hopefully motivate more millennial customers to frequent these vendors.

Case 2: Only Cash and Debit

The second recommendation is the option of accepting cash and debit card payments, but not credit cards. As previously mentioned, debit cards have a flat fee for each transaction ranging from five cents to 30 cents, which can be much less than a typical credit card interchange fee (2% and 3% of the total purchase price). Some participants noted that they have access to a debit card and would much rather pay using their card as they do not always have cash on hand. Although this is not as ideal as the first case, it still is a great compromise for those vendors who are worried about associated fees.

Case 3: Splitting the Cost

Beyond the interchange fees, there are multiple other fees that may be involved, depending which card reader and company is used. This may be overwhelming for a small business owner who is used to accepting cash exclusively. As such, the third case is for the Market to provide some form of financial assistance for those vendors who perhaps cannot initially afford card reader systems or who are skeptical of the benefits. Although it may not be ideal for the Market to contribute financially, it may be the key in overcoming this accessibility barrier regarding payment methods.

With all the outlined cases above, it is important that education on these payment methods be provided to the vendors by the Market. Outlining the benefits of card reader adoption may entice vendors to be open to the idea. Adoption of this vision does not have to be uniform, but if more vendors provided a card reader option, feedback suggests that millennials would be more likely to be regular customers.

4.2 Experience & Community

The second theme established through thematic analysis was "Experience & Community". This theme looks at enhancements and covers the research areas of both events and marketing. This theme aligns with the priorities outlined in City of Hamilton's Strategic Plan that look to bring people together and make a positive impact on the community (Hamilton, 2019).

Farmers' markets around the world have the potential to be locations where healthy food, education, entertainment, and community engagement intersect (Roth, 2019). They allow community members to support the local economy, have face-to-face interactions with farmers, and understand where their food comes from. It also helps people to become educated on the various personal, social, environmental, and economic benefits of supporting local, sustainable agriculture (Heath, 2011). Building a loyal community at any market in general, is invaluable to its economic success (Farmers' Markets Ontario, n.d.). According to Michelle Wolf of the Ontario Market Manager Certification program, a regular market customer will spend approximately 67% more money than a new customer (Farmers' Markets Ontario, n.d.). Thus, developing a loyal, growing customer base is integral to maintaining the relevancy of the Market in the long-term. Millennials and younger generations are more obsessed with convenience than ever (Fromm, 2019). As such, the Market should show that it can provide meaningful benefits and is more than just a place to shop (Farmers' Markets Ontario, n.d.).

Otherwise, the convenience-focused and experience-driven younger generation will, frankly, shop elsewhere.

According to the Hamilton Farmers’ Market Board Budget (HFM Board of Directors, 2020), approximately \$5,530 was allotted to Community Programming in 2019. In the past, this budget was spent on events such as petting zoos, market incentives, Hamilton Supercrawl, and Santa’s Workshop. The 2020 Budget allots \$0 into Programming, marking a 100% decrease in event-specific funding. In the 2020 Budget, it was noted that any necessary promotional events will be funded through the Advertising and Promotions budget of \$55,000, if applicable.

It is also equally important for the Market to translate interest to customers. Promotion is a type of marketing communication that looks at how to attract an audience to businesses. These include the events, activities, contests, etc. that create awareness of a product/service that entices your ideal customer (Jones, 2017). The Market’s Strategic Plan includes a direction that talks about developing a marketing plan aimed at attracting shoppers that are desired (HFM Board of Directors, 2016). The Hamilton Farmers’ Market’s proposed budget for 2020 allowed for a 10% growth in their marketing budget from the previous year, 2019. \$55,000 was allotted for 2020 in comparison to the \$50,000 allocated in 2019 (HFM Board of Directors, 2020). This budget is further broken down in Section 4.2.2.

4.2.1 Events Recommendations

The Hamilton Farmers’ Market currently makes use of its Event Page on Facebook but does not have a Calendar of Events on its website. There is an Upcoming Events Page on the Market website, but it is currently blank. There are a variety of events at the Market throughout the year, predominantly in alignment with holidays or seasons. The Market event schedule in 2019 was the following:

Table 1: Hamilton Farmers’ Market Event Schedule for 2019, as posted on their Facebook page. Events have been colour-coordinated according to type. Blue events are kid-specific, orange events are food- or cooking-related, purple events are musical performances, red events are Market incentives, and green events are miscellaneous.

Month	Day	Event
January		
February	9 14 16 23	First 40 Customers Receive a \$5 Market Gift Card Find the Valentine’s Monkey Scavenger Hunt Bel Canto Live Performance at the Market Bel Canto Live Performance at the Market
March		
April	6 20 21	Celebrate the 60-Year Anniversary of Sam’s Cheese & Meats Meet the Easter Bunny at the Market Find the Easter Bunny Scavenger Hunt

Millennials at the Market

May	11	Free Kids Petting Zoo
June		Happy Hour at the Market: 4-6pm Tues., Thurs., and Fri. (with Miscellaneous Promotions such as Live Music, Market Gift Card Contests, etc.)
July		
August		
September	14 15	Supercrawl Outdoor Farmers' Market & Petting Zoo Supercrawl Outdoor Farmers' Market & Petting Zoo
October	12 26	Thanksgiving Celebration & Fundraiser at the Hamilton Farmers' Market Spooky Saturday at the Market
November	16	Hamilton Santa Claus Parade
December	1 8 15 21 21 22 23 1-23 24	First 50 Customers Receive a Free Market Bag First 50 Customers Receive a Free Market Mug First 50 Customers Receive a \$5 Market Gift Card Santa and Mrs. Claus at the Market with Free Photos Free Holiday Petting Zoo First 50 Customers Receive a Free Market Bag First 50 Customers Receive a Free Greenbelt Bag Open Sundays in December First 50 Customers Receive a \$5 Market Gift Card

There are a few notable trends within last year's events. First and foremost, there were almost no promoted events with the main theme of food or cooking. The Hamilton Farmers' Market sells local, fresh foods and their events have the potential to promote these foods and how to use them in creative ways. Events that not only bring people to the space but also engage them with Market products while providing education and promoting food literacy should be explored. The Market also ensures the incorporation of kid-specific events throughout the year, which is beneficial for bringing families to the Market and making children, the Market's potential future customers, familiar and comfortable with the space. However, the kid-specific events such as holiday scavenger hunts and petting zoos leave a missed opportunity for complementary food-related children's programming. Atmosphere-boosting musical performances were also lacking in the 2019 programming. While it was assumed that not all were documented as Facebook events, there is a lack of information on how often these performances occur, on what days, and how a musician can book time to perform at the Market. Furthermore, there were no promoted events in January or March and no specific promoted events throughout the Summer, besides *Happy Hour*.

Recommendation 1: Events Schedule

Currently, Facebook is the only main location where community members are informed about Hamilton Farmers' Market events. It is recommended that a Market Events Schedule be created and

added to the Market website in addition to the current Facebook event postings. A Market Events Schedule can be in the form of a list or a calendar and typically contains all important details of the event. The website is often the first place a potential new customer, whether that be a local or a tourist, goes to receive information on what the business has to offer (Leinbach-Reyhle, 2014).

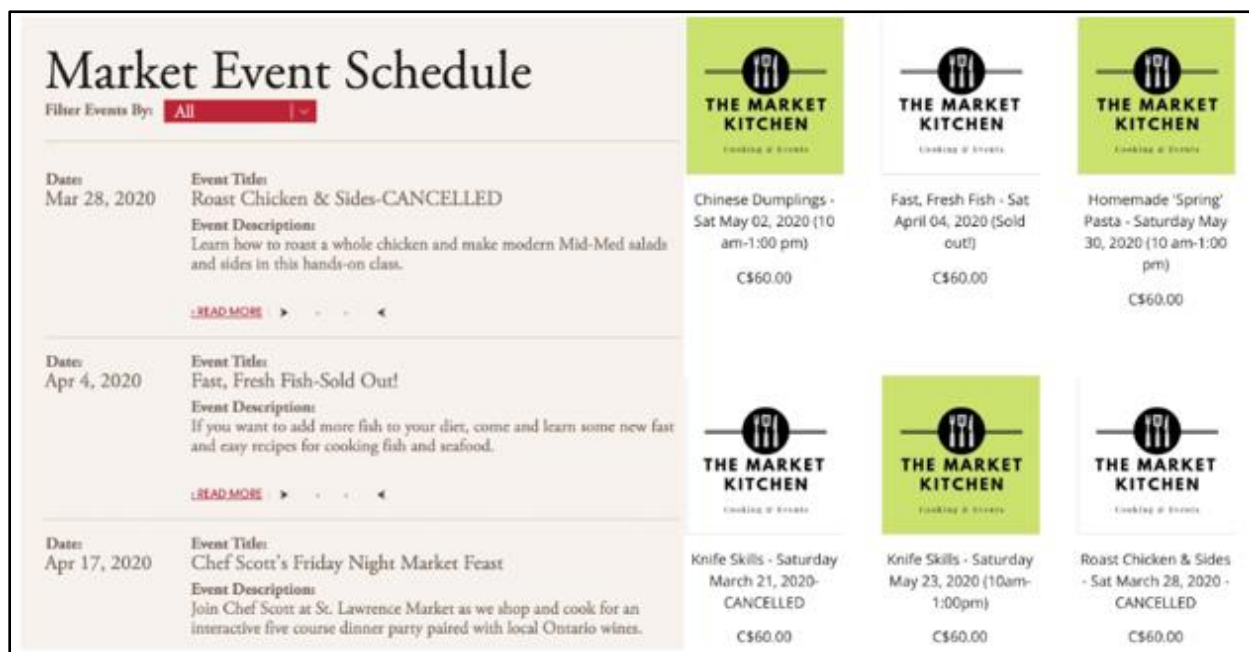


Figure 3: St. Lawrence Market Events Schedule and St. Lawrence Market Kitchen event sign-up page (St. Lawrence Market, 2020).

In addition to these resources, the St. Lawrence Market also has a website specifically dedicated to their community kitchen, known as *The Market Kitchen* (Figure 3) (The Market Kitchen, 2020). The website offers customers the opportunity to purchase tickets to these workshops online, providing a level of convenience for workshop organizers throughout the preparation processes.

For the Hamilton Farmers’ Market, it is recommended that a calendar or list be created on their current website and that it be regularly updated with event details. For convenience, this list should have the ability to be filtered by event type and date. If the Market begins to incorporate paid events, such as workshops in the community kitchen, it would be beneficial to set up the capacity for online enrollment and payment. This would provide an extra level of security for workshop presenters as well as convenience for customers.

Recommendation 2: Educational Classes and Workshops in the Community Kitchen

It is also recommended that the Hamilton Farmers’ Market incorporate regularly scheduled events, particularly classes and workshops related to food and cooking. This category of events has great potential since it engages the community with what the Market has to offer, allows customers to become educated on a variety of food-related topics, and encourages the purchase of Market-sold products. The incorporation of regularly scheduled events in the community kitchen can help to create a sense of community through shared learning and experiences (Figure 4). It is noteworthy that, historically, the Market Board budgets included money set aside for events in the community kitchen,

but this is no longer the case as the kitchen is currently unused. It is recommended that this space is reevaluated as an engagement space and that a plan is developed to ensure economic feasibility.



Figure 4: The Hamilton Farmers' Market community kitchen, a space with incredible potential for improving community engagement at the Market (Arban, 2011).

The Mustard Seed Co-op, a local competitor to the Market, is a cooperative grocery shop in Hamilton that showcases local foods and business. The Mustard Seed has a *Co-op Kitchen* dedicated entirely to food-related events occurring at least once per month. Workshops in 2019 included Sourdough 101, Learn How to Make Cucumber Kimchi, Build Your Own Backyard Clay Bake Oven, The Art of Marmalade (or Preserving Sunshine), and Lacto-Fermentation for Beginners. These workshops are run either by Mustard Seed staff or Hamiltonians who wish to share food-related skills with their community. The Mustard Seed website has a Workshop Guide for Potential Instructors, detailing a step-by-step guide for planning and implementing a successful event. In their model, instructors are paid \$50 per event plus up to \$50 for food purchased at the shop for the workshop, while workshop attendees pay between \$30-\$50 depending on the length and type of event (The Mustard Seed, n.d.).

Similarly, at the St. Lawrence Market in Toronto, the aforementioned *Market Kitchen* hosts the vast majority of their events (The Market Kitchen, 2020). Their cooking workshops include Knife Skills, Homemade Pasta, Chinese Dumplings, and Roast Chicken and are mostly offered at a cost of \$60. No information is publicly available on details of the payment of instructors and whether the St. Lawrence Market hires community members or only recurring professionals for the running of their workshops. However, it is likely that the St. Lawrence Market makes significant revenue off these events, as they are hosted once or twice each week and are often sold out.

Bringing life to the Market community kitchen is beneficial not only for community engagement but also for creating another source of revenue for the Market. The success of similar ventures at other markets shows that community members are willing to pay for high quality events that support food literacy and skill building. This space can also expand to host a variety of events. Locals

looking to share their knowledge on crafting, painting, and mending, amongst other skills, would likely love to take advantage of a well-established space like the Hamilton Farmers' Market. It is recommended that, if feasible, the community kitchen be open to both vendors who wish to showcase their products and community members who wish to share their skills. These events could be scheduled throughout the week during off-hours to increase foot-traffic or during busy times such as Saturdays to create interest.

Recommendation 3: Local Musicians

It is recommended that a regular schedule of musical guests be incorporated into Market programming, as many participants claimed that music helped to create a backdrop for the Market experience. Rather than hosting local musical performers predominantly during holiday seasons, they should be welcomed year-round to create an extra welcoming atmosphere at the Market on a regular basis. The Vancouver Farmers' Market, for instance, has a page on their website dedicated specifically to buskers (Vancouver Farmers' Market, n.d.). This site provides performers easy access to information regarding space booking and associated costs and shows the community that they are open to welcoming local talent into the space. Their website also provides background information on some of the Market's more regular buskers, adding a level of connection with customers.

It is recommended that the Hamilton Farmers' Market follow in the footsteps of the Vancouver Farmers' Market and create a webpage dedicated to musical performer information and bookings. Simply improving the marketing surrounding the potential of the space to be used in this way is the first step for the Hamilton Farmers' Market to attract local talent and, consequently, new customers.

If the Market could bring local musicians into the space every weekend, that would be ideal, but any improvement is a start and will improve the atmosphere of the Market. From the millennial interviews, it is clear that participants value communication, consistency, and accountability. As such, it is recommended that the Hamilton Farmers' Market include music consistently at the same day and time and communicate through social media to highlight the local artist, type of music, and performance hours. In doing so, music at the Market would shift from being a pleasant surprise for customers to being a factor in a customer's decision to visit.

At the Niagara Falls Farmers' Market, musicians are paid \$100 for an hour of performance (Niagara Falls Review, 2016). On the other hand, at the St. Albert Farmers' Market in Alberta, buskers are not paid by the market but rather pay a \$10 application fee and accept monetary donations during their performances in place of being paid (St. Albert Farmers' Market, 2020). This recommendation does not necessarily need to be funding intensive. Evidently, there is a wide range of methods and costs that the Hamilton Farmers' Market could employ to bring more entertainers at the Market, depending on budget.

Recommendation 4: Events Coordinator

It is also recommended that a staff member be dedicated specifically to handling both event programming and social media. Currently, the Market staffs one full-time Manager, one part-time Marketing Coordinator, and one part-time Office Assistant. Over three years ago, the Market had a Community Events Coordinator who created and managed events in the Community Kitchen, but this position was eliminated at the time in order to invest in building a social media presence instead. As evidenced by the large social media following of the Hamilton Farmers' Market (Section 4.2.2),

investment in social media has been effective in building a following but not necessarily in translating these followers into Market shoppers. The student researchers suggest that the current part-time Marketing Coordinator role be expanded into a full-time role in order to manage both marketing and events at the Market, as both are important in attracting a larger clientele. Someone who is organized, passionate, and dedicated to the challenge of improving the Market experience through community engagement could be an asset.

An article that speaks to the benefits of hiring a professional event planner states that it is only an assumption that events cost money since a coordinator's time is not free (Event Group Houston, 2015). The article goes on to mention that these staff members are often the ones who build trust and lasting relationships with stakeholders (Event Group Houston, 2015). A contract worker or student intern could be hired for a period of one year to test out the feasibility of regular programming and the potential of the position as a permanent role. If improved Market experience proves to provide an increase in revenue over a long-term pilot, then the Market may have the ability to hire a new staff member in the future.

While it is understandable that the Market may not have the monetary resources available to hire a full-time employee or student intern to take on this role, it is advised that a return on investment for this position be done to determine financial feasibility. If the community kitchen recommendation is pursued, the space could be taken on and managed as one of the roles for this staff member. Potential long-term revenue brought in from rentals and ticket sales could help to fund this role in part. Ultimately, the key benefit to this recommendation is the increased foot traffic and intrigue at the Market. This staff could be instrumental in improving the success of vendors, which is key to the Market's operation. Having someone in charge of events roles would ultimately contribute to a more expansive programming that is shared through a strong social media presence in the community.

4.2.2 Marketing Recommendations

Growing up at a time when technology started quickly developing, millennials are the first generation to be quite tech savvy (Vogels, 2019). The e-commerce platform Orbelo acknowledges millennials as the generation with the highest use of social media. They say that active social media users include 90.4% of Millennials, 77.5% of Generation X and 48.2% of Baby Boomers, emphasizing the importance of making use of online social media platforms (Mohsin, 2020). The current 4.5% budget allocation towards social media at the Market, does not fully reflect these millennial preferences.

Over half of the 2019 marketing budget was spent on radio advertisements and billboards, and smaller portions of this budget were allocated to geo targeting (6%) and social media (4.5%) (Figure 5). Additionally, in 2019, the Market invested money outside of this budget and put it towards building a brand-new website. The modernized home page now features Updates, a Market News section, and shows viewers all the different categories of vendors as well as individual profiles for each.

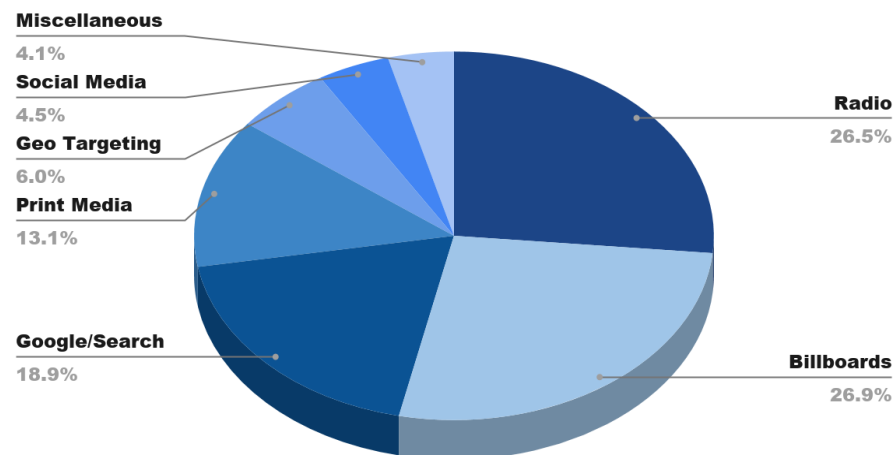


Figure 5: Hamilton Farmers’ Market Marketing Budget 2019 (HFM Board of Directors, 2020).

Furthermore, it was common for participants to mention their surprise on discovering the variety that the Market has to offer. It is not a traditional farmers’ market in the traditional sense where farmers sell their locally grown food to consumers, but rather a market of small local businesses and a place to bring the community together as shown by the variety in Figure 6. Marketing tactics can be used to educate the public on the unique features of the Market such as the food court and the variety of vendors. Having this identity of a downtown Market where local businesses are supported, food can be enjoyed, and events take place are honest brands to what the Hamilton Farmers’ Market is all about.



Figure 6: Hamilton Farmers’ Market Vendor Categories (Hamilton Farmers’ Market Vendors, n.d.).

Recommendation 1: Social Media Investment

It is recommended that the Market look into how the marketing budget is currently being spent and how effective it is in each of its categories. Since millennials are known to be such avid participants on social media, there is opportunity for the Market to look to engage them in different ways and give reasons for customers to keep up with them on their social feeds.

An article titled “7 Ways to Reach Millennials Through Social Media Marketing” claims that Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms. It is estimated that many millennials engage through this platform as it is an easy way to discover information and keep up to date with their worlds (Smart Insights, 2019). It has seen an increase in stories from 150 million daily stories in January 2017 to 500 million in January 2019 (Mohsin, 2020). Instagram stories are a great way to engage with customers as they are quick 24-hour snapshots that allow you to add questions, polls and stickers to make content engaging (Mohsin, 2020).

Currently, the majority of the Market online traction comes from the Instagram page which sees anywhere from 40-200 likes a post and has over 18,000 followers. This provides great opportunity for engagement if used to run online promotions such as giving away gift cards for those who participate in online surveys, having rotating food features once a week, holding contests etc., as ways to involve customers with everyday life at the Market and provide ongoing feedback.

Along with this social media focus, it is suggested that the social media platforms be used to better inform customers on Market events. The variety of the Market's vendors and products should also be made well known to its followers so that customers know how to better gauge expectations. In addition, the Market should be transparent about product sourcing and try to execute promotions to build customer trust. Making use of the features that exist on these platforms can help to establish a stronger relationship between Market and customers, ultimately helping to translate these interactions into a regular clientele.

5.0 Future Planning

The length of time allotted for this study and the broad scope of recommendations produced certain limitations on the data collected. One main limitation was the small sample size. Although it was determined that the chosen sample sizes were sufficient to allow for robust qualitative analysis, expanding the study to involve a greater quantity and a more diversified range of participants would enhance these results. The choice to focus specifically on an engaged group of Hamilton millennials was intentional and provided focused results that are relevant to the Market as these are the existing and potential customers of the space.

Building on this research, adding additional components to include perspectives from those in other demographics may be useful to capture a more inclusive range of market-going individuals in the community. The time constraints placed on the study also only allowed for a three-week shopping period and 30-45 minute interviews with each participant. Extending the time allotment for a similar future study could allow for an increased sample size, a greater duration of the shopping period, and more opportunities to obtain in-depth feedback. This research is not exhaustive but rather just a starting point and foundation for more in depth research and discussion at a Market Board level.

6.0 Conclusion

In the Hamilton Farmers' Market Strategic Plan for 2016-2020, four main strategic directions were identified as priorities to achieve positive change in order to align with the Market Board's vision for the future of the Market (HFM Board of Directors, 2016). In this plan, which was updated in 2018, it is emphasized that "the status quo won't do" for several reasons including the changing demographics of Hamilton, to appeal to a diverse range of customers, to stand out from competitors, to bring more foot traffic and business, and to change alongside the developing city (HFM Board of Directors, 2016). It is evident that the priorities discussed in this study are in alignment with the future goals of the Market and that implementing the outlined recommendations will help the Market to achieve those goals and build on them for post-2020 plans.

With the recommendations provided to the Hamilton Farmers' Market through this study and research, the hope is to foster positive, sustainable benefits for not only the Market but also for the environment and the health and well-being of the community. The implementation of the aforementioned recommendations at the Market will aim to bring more regular customers and will strive to encourage them towards a more mindful, sustainable way of grocery shopping. Furthermore, a

buzzing Market space will create a more connected, inclusive community through shared learning and experiences. This research has the potential to bring long-term benefits to the city of Hamilton, helping the local economy to thrive and the community to flourish with health and connectedness.

7.0 Acknowledgements

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9.0 Appendix

9.1 Letters of Information

9.1.1 Millennial Participant Letter of Information

Purpose of the Study: To enhance the understanding of the needs and preferences of Millennials at the Hamilton Farmers' Market with the goal of improving their customer experience.

As a millennial living and/or working in Hamilton, we are inviting you to participate in this study so that we can learn how the Hamilton Farmers' Market can make improvements to better serve their target market. Participation is completely optional but taking part will support our McMaster University *Leadership in Sustainability* course work and provide insight on how the Hamilton Farmers' Market can create a better market atmosphere and a more positive customer experience.

I, Josephine Agueci, am the Primary Student Investigator, along with my student team members, Melissa Downey, Natalie Ciancone, and Molly Parker. Together we are working under the support and supervision of Elly Bowen, Board Member of the Hamilton Farmers' Market (Citizen Representative), Bill Slowka, Market Manager (Hamilton Farmers' Market), Andrea Pohlmann, Hamilton HIVE (Chair), and our course instructor, Kate Whalen.

Procedures Involved in the Research:

We want you to understand the study components, procedures, and the steps we will take to maintain your confidentiality.

If you agree to take part in the study by signing this consent form, you will participate in a 3-week shopping period where you will be asked to shop at the Hamilton Farmers' Market (located at 35 York Boulevard) at least once per week. You will be able to choose which week you start from a list of four options, provided the 3-week period is completed by December 16th, 2019.

Participants will be required to complete a short (max. 3-minute) online survey during or immediately following each Market visit. Therefore, submitting at least one survey each week for the 3-week shopping period. Each Monday during your chosen 3-week shopping period, an email will be sent to you by a student investigator providing you with a reminder and a link to access the online survey. In those post-visit surveys, we will ask you questions such as "What categories of items did you purchase?" and "Were there any significant positive or negative experiences that you had during today's visit?", but we really just want to understand your experience at the Hamilton Farmers' Market.

You will have no guidelines regarding what or how much you need to purchase at the market; however, you will be asked to purchase from at least one new vendor each visit. Participants may go to the Market during their days and times of preference (Market hours permitting). We ask you to make an effort to attend the Farmers' Market's Sunday hours (a pilot beginning in December), if your 3-week period happens to be during that time.

Transportation is up to your discretion, as there are a variety of options available (including e bike racks near the York Blvd entrance, bus stops and the MacNab bus terminal within a short walking distance, and multiple parking lots nearby). Note: If you choose to drive, there is free one-hour validated parking at the York Boulevard Parkade (located at 28 York Blvd) available to all customers of the Hamilton

Farmers' Market. They may be validated by handing your parking stub to any of the market vendors at the time of purchase.

Following this 3-week trial period, participants will be contacted to schedule an in-person interview with a student investigator. The interview will be conducted at a time of your convenience within the months of November 2019 – January 2020, depending upon when you complete your weekly visits to the Market. A selection of dates and times available for interviews will be provided, allowing you to choose a time that best suits your schedule. Your interview is estimated to take about 30-45 minutes and will likely take place in or near the Hamilton Farmers' Market/Hamilton's downtown core, at a location convenient to you.

As long as you provide consent, we will record the interview (with an audio recorder provided by McMaster University) so that we can more easily type out our discussion later. If you would prefer not to be recorded, just let your interviewer know and they will take notes by hand, and you will be given the chance to read the notes afterwards.

While interview recordings are being transcribed, the researcher won't include your name to help ensure anonymity. Instead, they will give you a unique number so that your name and your interview will never appear in the research documents together. Once the recording is typed out, the audio file will be deleted.

We hope to use some quotes from our interviews and surveys to help tell the story of what we heard through our research, which we plan to share with the Hamilton Farmers' Market Board of Directors. We will contact you to confirm before we decide to use any of your quotes, giving you one week to review and make any revisions or decline our use of your quote. All quotes we choose will be anonymous in that no one who reads it will be able to know that it was from you. As such, if we don't hear from you within the week, we will assume that you are okay with us using your quote(s).

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:

The risks involved in this study are low. However, you may feel uncomfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings, or you may be worried that what you share with me may impact your relationships in the community.

Please know that taking part in the study is completely optional and you can also choose to withdraw at any time, even if you have already started. We can send you the interview and survey questions (which will be the same each week) beforehand so that you can prepare your answers in advance.

During the interview, you can skip any question that you don't want to answer and stop the interview at any time without risk of losing compensation. However, when completing surveys, there will be required questions that will prevent you from submitting if they are not completed. Completion of surveys is required for this study.

Within our surveys/interviews, we plan on capturing the main themes through participant feedback, but we are also interested in capturing some quotations. While we, the student researchers, will know what you said in the surveys and interview, all direct quotes included in our report will be anonymous. To be completely sure that you're comfortable with the quotes we use in our report, a student researcher will contact you and ask for your permission to use the quote. At that time, you can choose not to have your quote used, and you can also clarify your quote before it is used. If we don't hear from you with any

revisions or requests to omit the quotes, we will assume that you are okay with us using them in our report.

If, following the interview, you change your mind and would rather we not use your information for research purposes, you can contact any member of the research team before March 1st, 2020 to let us know to delete your quotes and/or interview records.

With respect to any concerns you may have about sharing your thoughts with us, we want you to know that your feedback, both positive and critical, is very important to us and we value your honest opinions. None of your feedback will negatively impact your reputation within the community because we will keep it in utmost confidence, only sharing what you allow us to. We want to hear from you so that we can provide insight to the Hamilton Farmers' Market on how to better serve you and other millennials in our community.

Potential Benefits:

This research may benefit you by contributing to Millennials at the Market because we will learn and share information about the thoughts and opinions of the largest demographic in Hamilton with the Hamilton Farmers' Market. You may be benefited directly from this research, as it will hopefully contribute to creating a better market atmosphere and a more positive customer experience. While not benefitting you directly, taking part in this study will also contribute to our learning as community-engaged and sustainability-minded students, citizens, and possible future researchers.

Compensation:

Your time and feedback are very valuable to us. As compensation for your participation in the study, a \$25 gift certificate to the Hamilton Farmers' Market will be given to each participant prior to the start of their scheduled interview. Additionally, all participants will have their name entered into a draw for a gift basket generously provided by the Hamilton Farmers' Market. The participant who wins the gift basket will receive it at the same time as their \$25 gift certificate, prior to the start of their scheduled interview.

Confidentiality:

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy.

- Your identity will be known to the student researchers, but we will store your data and use quotes with only a unique ID number attached to it, rather than your real name.
- However, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell, and our community is small enough that others may be able to identify you based on what you say in the interview. We plan to publish the findings of this research along with some direct quotes, but we will check with you before including any of your quotes to make sure you feel comfortable with the information we intend to use and that the information does not identify you in any way. We will give you one week to revise or decline use of any quotes. If we don't hear from you otherwise, we will assume that you are okay with us using the quote(s).
- Audio recording can be personally identifying; however, the researchers will record your interview on university-owned recording devices; store the file on the university's MacDrive platform, which will only be accessible by members of the research team; promptly delete the audio file from the recording device; and will also delete the MacDrive copy of the audio recording as soon as it is transcribed.

- The information you provide will be stored with a unique ID number on an encrypted file, on MacDrive. Hard copies of the data are not intended to be produced. Once the study is complete, all interview transcripts, personal information, and related records will be deleted. Only summary results will be kept by the Market Board, which will not include any identifiable information.
- Any related emails will also be deleted from our records.

Participation and Withdrawal:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw) from making your interviews available for research purposes for whatever reason, even if you had originally agreed and up until March 1st 2020. We will contact you in February 2020 for your permission to use any of your quotes. You can choose not to have your quotes used and you can also withdraw from the study at that time. If we don't hear from you, we will assume that we are okay to use your quote(s). If you would like to withdraw from the study, just let us know and we will delete all associated files, recordings, and emails right away. Withdrawing from any part of the study will not impact your entry into the draw for the gift basket, however, may entail forfeiting your right to receive the gift cards.

Information about the Study Results:

We expect to have this study completed by approximately March 2020. If you are interested, we will send you a copy of our report to your email address or in hard copy.

Questions about the Study:

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact our course instructor, Kate Whalen, by email at whalenk@mcmaster.ca or on her cell phone at 905-541-0645.

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat
Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142
c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

Consent:

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Josephine Agueci, Melissa Downey, Natalie Ciancone, and Molly Parker of McMaster University.

yes no

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.

yes no

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until March 1st, 2020.

yes no

I have been given an electronic copy of this form.

yes

no, I don't want or need an electronic copy

Millennials at the Market

no, but I would like one sent to me at this email address:

I agree to participate in the study.

yes no

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

yes no

I would like to receive a copy of the report of results.

yes, please send them to me at this email address:

no

I have received my \$25 worth of Hamilton Farmers' Market gift certificates as compensation.

yes no

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

9.1.2 Vendor Participant Letter of Information

Purpose of the Study: To enhance the understanding of millennials' needs and preferences in the Hamilton Farmers' Market with the goal of improving their customer experience.

As a vendor at the Hamilton Farmers' Market we are inviting you to participate in a brief interview so that we can learn what you think the needs and desires of millennials are at the Market. Participation is completely optional but taking part will support our McMaster University *Leadership in Sustainability* course work and provide insight on how the Hamilton Farmers' Market can better serve what is currently the largest age demographic (i.e. millennials) in the city.

I, Josephine Agueci, am the Primary Student Investigator, along with my student team members, Melissa Downey, Natalie Ciancone, and Molly Parker. Together we are working under the support and supervision of Elly Bowen, Board Member of the Hamilton Farmers' Market (Citizen Representative), Bill Slowka, Market Manager (Hamilton Farmers' Market), Andrea Pohlmann, Hamilton HIVE (Chair), and our course instructor, Kate Whalen.

Procedures Involved in the Research:

We want you to understand the study components, procedures, and the steps we will take to maintain your confidentiality.

If you agree to take part in the interview through means of oral confirmation and signing the consent form, you will meet with at least one member of the student research team so that they can learn more about what you think about how the Hamilton Farmers' Market can improve customer experience for Hamilton's largest age demographic (i.e. millennials).

We will ask you questions like what you think would entice more customers (specifically millennials) to shop at the Market, but we really just want to have a conversation to hear your thoughts on the topic.

The interviews will take place in-person at the Hamilton Farmers' Market at an arranged time approximately in January 2020.

Millennials at the Market

No recordings will take place during the interview however the student investigator(s) will take notes by hand, and you can see what they wrote down.

The notes will later be typed out, and the researcher won't include your name in this process. Instead, they will give you a unique number so that your name and your interview will never appear in the research documents together. Once the notes have been typed out, the hand-written notes will be shredded.

We hope to use some quotes from our interviews to help tell the story of what we heard through our research, which we hope to share with the Hamilton Farmers' Market Board of Directors. We will contact you to check with you before we decide to use any of your quotes, giving you one week to review and make any revisions or decline our use of your quote. All quotes will choose will be anonymous in that no one who reads it will be able to know that it was from you. As such, if we don't hear from you within the week, we will assume that you are okay with us using your quote(s).

Potential Harms, Risks or Discomforts:

The risks involved with this study are low. However, you may feel uncomfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings, or you may be worried that what you share with me may impact your relationships in the Hamilton Farmers' Market and its community.

Please know that taking part in this brief interview is completely optional and you can also choose to withdraw at any time, even if you have already started. We can send you the interview questions beforehand so that you can prepare your answers in advance.

During the interview, you can skip any question that you don't want to answer and stop the interview at any time.

We plan on capturing the main themes through participant feedback, but we are also interested in capturing some quotations. While we, the student researchers, will know what you said in the interview, all direct quotes included in our report will be anonymous. To be completely sure that you're comfortable with the quotes we use in our report, your interviewer will contact you and ask for your permission to use the quote. At that time, you can choose not to have your quote used, and you can also clarify your quote before it is used. If we don't hear from you on any revisions or request to omit the quotes, we will assume that you are ok with us using them in our report.

If following the interview you change your mind and would rather we not use your information for research purposes, you can contact any member of the research team, or Bill Slowka, before March 1st to let us know to delete your quotes and/or interview records.

With respect to any concerns you may have about sharing your thoughts with us, we want you to know that your feedback, both positive and critical, is very important to us and we value your honest opinions. None of your feedback will negatively impact your reputation in the Market because we will keep it in utmost confidence, only sharing what you allow us to. We want to hear from you so that we can enhance customer experience with the Hamilton Farmers' Market.

Potential Benefits:

This research may benefit you by contributing your ideas to better the Market because we will learn and share information about the thoughts and opinions of vendors with the Hamilton Farmers' Market Board of Directors. Through this research we hope to bring more millennials and customers to the Market. While not benefiting you directly, taking part in this interview will also contribute to our learning as community-engaged and sustainability-minded students, citizens, and possible future researchers.

Confidentiality:

Every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy.

- Your identity will be known to the student researchers, but we will store your data and use quotes with only a unique ID number attached to it, rather than your real name.
- However, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell and our community is small enough that others may be able to identify you based on what you say in the interview. We plan to publish the findings of this research along with some direct quotes, but we will check with you before including any of your quotes to make sure you feel comfortable with the information we intend to use and that the information does not identify you in any way. We will give you one week or revise or decline use of any quotes. If we don't hear from you otherwise, we will assume that you are ok with us using the quote(s).
- The information you provide will be stored with a unique ID number on an encrypted file, on MacDrive. Hard copies of the data are not intended to be produced. Once the study is complete, all interview transcripts, personal information, and related records will be deleted. Only summary results will be kept by the community member, which will not include any identifiable information.
- Any related emails will also be deleted from our records.

Participation and Withdrawal:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is your choice to be part of the study or not. If you decide to be part of the study, you can stop (withdraw) from making your interviews available for research purposes for whatever reason, even if you had originally agreed and up until March 1st. We will contact you in February 2020 for your permission to use any of your quotes. You can choose not to have your quotes used and you can also withdraw from the study at that time. If we don't hear from you, we will assume that we are ok to use your quote(s). If you would like to withdraw from the study, just let us know and we will delete all associated files, recordings, and emails right away.

Information about the Study Results:

We expect to have this study completed by approximately March 2020. If you are interested, we will send you a copy of our report to your email address or in hard copy.

Questions about the Study:

If you have questions or need more information about the study itself, please contact our course instructor, Kate Whalen, by email at whalenk@mcmaster.ca or on her cell phone at 905-541-0645.

Millennials at the Market

This study has been reviewed by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board and received ethics clearance. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, please contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

c/o Research Office for Administrative Development and Support E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

Consent:

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Josephine Ageuci, Melissa Downey, Natalie Ciancone, and Molly Parker of McMaster University.

yes no

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details I requested.

yes no

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I may withdraw from the study at any time or up until March 1st.

yes no

I have been given an electronic copy of this form.

yes

no, I don't want or need an electronic copy

no, but I would like one sent to me at this email address:

I agree to participate in the study.

yes no

I would like to receive a copy of the report of results.

yes, please send them to me at this email address:

no

Name of Participant (Printed) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

9.2 Recruitment Infographic

MILLENNIALS AT THE MARKET

A STUDY CONDUCTED BY MCMASTER UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY STUDENTS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE HAMILTON FARMERS' MARKET

WHAT?

GOAL OF STUDY:
To learn about the attitudes and perceptions of millennials towards the Hamilton Farmers' Market in order to provide recommendations for positive change.

WHO?

WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

- Those born between 1981-1996
- Those who live and/or work in Hamilton
- A range of participants - from frequent market-goers to those who have never shopped at a market before
- Those able to commit to visiting the Hamilton Farmers' Market at least once per week for the 3-week study period in Nov.-Dec. 2019

WHY?

WHY SHOULD YOU PARTICIPATE?

- To contribute to creating a better market atmosphere and a more positive customer experience
- To support student research

INTERESTED?
Please sign up through our Eventbrite page:
<http://bit.ly/2WLE5j1>

McMaster University

COMPENSATION

Everyone who completes our quick eligibility survey will be entered for the chance to win a...

Farmers' Market Gift Basket

Participants of our study will receive a...

\$25 Hamilton Farmers' Market Gift Card

9.3 Interview Questions

9.3.1 Millennial Interview Questions

- 1) Tell me a bit about yourself... Were you born in Hamilton? Live/work here? And what led you to be interested in this study?
- 2) I am curious to know more about your past experiences at the Hamilton Farmers' Market, i.e. before your participation in this study.

What was something that surprised you on your first trip to the Market?

Had you been before? How often did you / have you visited? Did your visiting frequency change, and, if so, for what reason(s)?

- 3) What does your typical grocery routine look like? Do you usually visit farmers' markets as part of your routine?

Millennials at the Market

- 4) During this study, what did you shop for at the Hamilton Farmers' Market? Groceries/ Meals/ Vendors?
- 5) Given your experience during this study, is there anything that stands out as being particularly enjoyable? What were the aspects of the Market that you liked the most?
- 6) Given your experience during this study, is there anything that you found disappointing during your Market experience? How did this experience/feeling impact your overall shopping experience?
- 7) How convenient would you say the Market is to support your lifestyle? Can you think of the three things you would most like to see within the Market that would encourage you and others to shop there more frequently?

9.3.2 Vendor Interview Questions

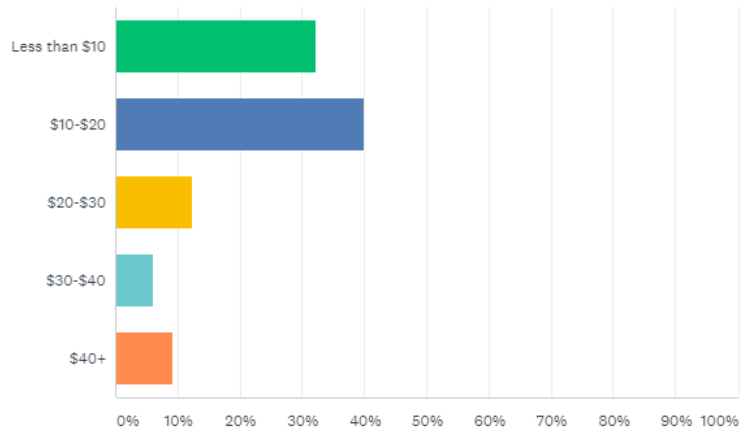
- 1) Could you tell us a bit about yourself and give us an overview of how long you have been at the Market? What do you sell? What age group/demographic do you cater to?
- 2) Our research has been on millennials and their participation at the Hamilton Farmers' Market as they are currently the largest demographic in Hamilton. Do you see yourself catering to this demographic? Why or why not?
- 3) How has the Market changed since your time here? How do you believe these changes relate to millennial shoppers and overall changes in generational habits/preferences?
- 4) Can you list 3 changes/improvements that could be done to attract more millennial customers? These could be suggestions for yourself or for the Market as a whole.

9.4 Survey Questions (Survey Monkey)

- 1) What is your name?
- 2) What day/time did you visit the Market?
- 3) Approximately how much money did you spend at the Market?
- 4) What categories of items did you shop for?
- 5) Are there any positive comments you can make regarding today's visit?
- 6) Are there any negative comments you can make regarding today's visit?
- 7) Is there anything else you would like to share with us about this visit?

9.5 Survey Results (Survey Monkey)

9.5.1 Total Market Amount Per Visit for Millennial Participants



9.5.2 Categories of Items Purchased by Millennial Participants

