

Reducing Single-Use Water Bottle Usage On-Campus: Bring Your Own Bottle, Student Engagement

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Joan Palparan (left) and Jiyeon Park (right) during the BYOB engagement event.
Photo credit: Joan Palparan



Overview

In Ontario, only 14% of all single-use water bottles are recycled, resulting in over 1 billion bottles being dumped into landfills each year.¹ Although this poses a serious problem to the environment, there are several barriers for users that keep them from using reusable water bottles; plastic water bottles can be more convenient, lack of trust in water quality, and access to refill stations. The Bring Your Own Bottle (BYOB) initiative was launched to diminish the use of single-use plastic water bottles within the McMaster community by encouraging the use of refilling stations throughout campus. As part of BYOB McMaster, interactive maps of water refill stations are advertised throughout the university.² However, not everyone is aware of this initiative. Thus, the goal of our project was to engage students to raise awareness of the BYOB initiative and encourage the use of an interactive map.

Objectives

1. Promote and raise awareness about the BYOB engagement event
2. Interact with first-year students through event activities and conversation
3. Encourage first-year students to participate in a survey and pledge

Reporting

To achieve the first objective, we created a BYOB poster and distributed them to Community Advisors on each floor of McMaster residence buildings. We also shared one post on McMaster ResLife Instagram account gaining 100 likes overall. On the day of the event, we created posters to hang around the event space to further gain the attention of the first-year students about the event.

For the second objective, we organized several activities for students to engage in, including decorating reusable water bottles and a photobooth. Through these activities, we interacted with over 50 first-year students, and used the bottle-decorating station to have casual conversations with them. Conversation topics included; what BYOB McMaster's goals were, the interactive map, and what their water-bottle habits have been like since moving to McMaster. These conversations were used to raise awareness of the BYOB initiative.

To achieve our last objective, we designed a survey and created a QR code so it would be accessible to students. Upon entry to the event space, we asked students to scan the QR code. The survey contained a link to the BYOB interactive map and asked students if they would use it in the future. The survey also included a pledge that students could sign by answering 'yes' in response to the question "I pledge to avoid using single-use plastic bottles." Overall, 53 students completed the survey and entered in 'yes' for the pledge.

Collaborators

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See a full list of references [here](#).