

REAL GOOD FOOD: MOTIVATIONS FOR CONSUMER PATRONAGE AT
FARMERS' MARKETS IN NOVA SCOTIA

by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandparents. The completion of this work would not have been possible without their love and support throughout my education.

To Nana Judy and Poppa Jim, thank you for everything – it means the world to me.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the motivations underlying consumers' patronage of farmers' markets in Nova Scotia. This study utilizes qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews with two participant groups, ten farmers' market consumers and ten farmers' market vendors, to identify participants' shared lived experiences regarding farmers' markets, utilizing thematic analysis. The concept of authenticity was found to be an important concept within this study, as it emerged from the interviews with consumers and vendors. It was a key factor underlying patronage of FMs amongst all consumer participants during the process of data analysis. By incorporating both consumer and vendor perspectives, this study advances a relational understanding of authenticity as a concept that is co-constructed between buyer-seller groups. Three major themes were identified within the data and linked to three types of authenticity: moral authenticity, pure/literal authenticity, and approximate/symbolic authenticity. The three major themes included supporting local, product features communicating authenticity, and market experience. Nine subthemes were identified within the three major themes. Price was an additional theme identified outside of the authenticity framework. A key contribution of the study is the emergence of community as a central influence on authenticity perceptions. It is suggested that "community authenticity" may potentially be a distinct authenticity type within consumers' authenticity evaluations. This work contributes to and expands on existing literature on authenticity and intends to shed light on how the definition of authenticity differs among individual consumers.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS USED

FM	Farmers' Market
FMNS	Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As the threat of the global climate crisis continues to worsen, many people are attempting to mitigate their individual impact on the planet. One such method that people are integrating into their daily lives is sustainable consumption, which is becoming an increasingly important trend within consumer groups. These consumer groups are attempting to make more conscious purchase decisions within their daily lives, such as purchasing sustainably made and/or environmentally friendly products, or they are attempting to reduce their individual carbon footprint by shopping with careful consideration of product production and distribution (such as of the origin of products and the process a product goes through to end up on supermarket shelves. (Haller et al., 2022; Simon-Kucher & Partners, 2021; Malan & Duhan, 2018, Sachdeva et al., 2015, Akehurst et al., 2012). One way in which people choose sustainable consumption is through purchasing locally, often with the intention to support the local community, economy, and reduce the carbon footprint created by transporting goods (Conner et al., 2010). The “support local” and “shop local” trends are very popular with many consumers in the current market, and these trends have only increased since the pandemic, as many communities and individual consumers rallied around local businesses to support them through lockdowns and restrictions.

A common method or practice that consumers participate in to source local goods is through patronage of their local farmers’ market (FM), especially when looking for fresh produce and local foods. FMs generally consist of vendors selling locally sourced and/or homegrown goods, including fresh produce, local meats and dairy products, and

other local goods such as art, crafts, home goods, and personal care products. It is important to note that not all FM vendors sell goods they grew/produced themselves, with some acting as “middlemen,” re-selling goods such as produce that have been grown elsewhere and shipped to the FM location; however, this practice is frowned upon in vendor communities and can be considered a form of deception depending on how the produce or other goods are presented to consumers (Syal, 2017). In the context of local food sourcing, FMs are sometimes one of the only available or convenient options for consumers, other than visiting farms directly, which can be a hassle for busy consumers. While many conventional retailers such as supermarkets have introduced locally produced foods to their offerings, this is not yet an industry-wide practice and consumers cannot just rely on traditional grocers when attempting to source local options (Shahbendeh, 2022).

Many North American communities contain some form of FM, whether this is an established affiliated community retail market location or a cooperative of local farmers without affiliation to a wider organization (USDA Farmers Market Directory, 2019). FMs foster many benefits for the conscious consumption minded or sustainability focused consumer, including reduced carbon footprint of goods, support of local vendors/farmers and as such, the local economy, social benefits through creating a community meeting place and providing an experience, and more (Bos & Owen, 2016; Barbara & Dagnes, 2016; Smithers et al., 2008). FMs are often more sustainable places to source food from an environmental perspective when compared to other more traditional established retailers such as supermarkets. This is due to the supply chain seen at FMs, which fit into the category of alternative food systems, specifically short supply

chain systems, where generally the products are grown or produced by the same people that are selling them, in the same geographical area as the market, so there is reduced transportation needed, drastically reducing the emissions created during the process when compared to products sourced from conventional large-scale retailers (Arabska, 2018; Budge et al, 2010).

The intention of the research is to shed further light on the motivations for consumer patronage of FMs through the understanding of individual experiences at the market, as well as examining the nature of the relationship between vendors and consumers, and vendor understanding of their customers' wants and needs.

Most of the literature to date on farmers markets is focused on identifying the consumer groups that attend markets. There is much less research that describes customer motivations and purchasing behaviour (Gumirakiza et al., 2014). While previous research has examined motivations, it is not extensive enough to determine a consensus within the literature for why consumers attend FMs. Additionally, in consideration of the concept of authenticity emerging from the data, the literature on how authenticity as a notion is integrated into the FM experience and how authenticity assessments differ among consumers is also underexplored.

A key question remains largely unanswered: What draws consumers to visit and purchase from FMs, especially on a reoccurring basis? The concept of authenticity has been determined to be integral to the identity of FMs in previous literature and is a mechanism that attracts many customers to FMs with the expectations of high quality, locally produced, "real" food and other products (Wittman et al., 2012). The definition and conceptualization of authenticity is contested in the literature to date, with different

definitions of authenticity proposed but no consensus on a widely accepted definition within academia. This is largely due to how authenticity is perceived among individuals, with perceptions of authenticity influenced by an individual's desired identity (Beverland et al., 2008; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). This creates the potential for authenticity assessments to vary considerably among consumers. A more expansive explanation of this issue is explained in the next section of the paper. Further research of the concept of authenticity in a product and brand context is needed to continue to expand on and measure how the variable is defined, perceived and conceptualized by both FM customers and vendors, to provide data that may assist with developing a consistent definition of authenticity in both academia and industry. The effect of authenticity on variables such as on brand image, brand trust and purchase intention should be explored further to determine how authenticity branding can be utilized to encourage purchase intention and increased sustainable consumption. Additionally, exploring how and why authenticity assessments may vary among consumers is needed to further the understanding of the concept of authenticity.

The results of the research are proposed to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of FMs as participants of local food systems and to discover what assumptions and preferences consumers hold about FMs. In addition, the research helps uncover how different groups at the market perceive the concept of authenticity and how it is integrated into the identity of the FMs, their vendors, and the consumers who purchase their products. The FM can act as a "convenient laboratory in which it is possible to examine how certain contested and contingent notions of local, quality, authenticity and legitimacy find expression in communications and transactions around

food” (Smithers et al, 2008). The results of the research have potential contributions within practice as well and will provide FMs and their vendors with insight into the motivations for consumer patronage of FMs and consumer preferences. This will be useful for vendors to determine if their practices surrounding product offerings, communication and sales align with customer expectations. This will assist FM vendors with improving branding and marketing strategies, which will have the benefit of encouraging consumer purchase behaviour of local goods, thereby contributing to adoption of sustainable local food commerce and consumption.

Purpose of Study

The primary objective of this study is to discover consumer motivations for FM patronage through the use of qualitative methods in the form of semi-structured interviews. This paper examines the nuanced consumer motivations of FM patronage within Nova Scotia, through the process of interviewing FM consumers and vendors to explore the underlying variables that affect FM patronage. During the process of data analysis, a significant theme was discovered, which was the concept of authenticity. Authenticity emerged as a pivotal factor that consistently encouraged patronage of FMs amongst all consumer participants, and as a result authenticity became a central point of focus for this study. With a focus on the examination of authenticity and its influence on FM patronage, this study intends to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of consumer motivations and purchasing behaviour within the context of FMs.

Significance of Study

The results of this study provide implications from both a theoretical and practical perspective. From a theoretical perspective, this study further investigates the

concept of authenticity and its potential validity as a key variable affecting consumers' purchasing behaviour at FMs. A major theoretical implication of this study involves the provision of additional research on the topic of authenticity and how the meaning of authenticity may shift based on an individual's personal and social identity, which will assist with the development of a conclusive definition of the concept, as there are several different definitions of authenticity with no academic consensus on how it is defined, or how that definition may change in different contexts or among different consumers (Beverland et al., 2008; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010).

The use of a qualitative process in the form of semi-structured interviews provides an opportunity to capture the complexity and contradictions that may be present within consumer and vendor perspectives, that would not be possible to capture with the use of quantitative methods. The process of qualitative research offers a nuanced lens and allows for the deeper exploration of concepts in a way that quantitative methods do not provide. Semi-structured interviews were specifically chosen as this method allows for the flexibility to explore emergent themes and guide participants to express themselves more openly than is possible with structured interviews, providing more intricate and personal responses that result in richer data.

Additionally, the research within academia in regards to FM patronage has largely centered around the experience and perceptions of the consumer group, with little research into the experiences and perceptions of FM vendors. Vendors can share valuable insight into the consumer behaviour of their customers. Including a vendor participant group is important for developing a comprehensive understanding of FM patronage, as the valuable perspectives of the vendor group provide an unexplored view

of the FM ecosystem and how vendors perceive and respond to consumer preferences and motivations. The inclusion of vendor participants provides a more balanced understanding of vendor-consumer interactions and relations and offers insight into the strategies used and possible challenges faced by vendors to meet consumer preferences. A major benefit of including a vendor participant group is also having the opportunity to uncover and explore any potential discrepancies between the alignment of vendor and consumer perspectives. Essentially, interviewing both consumer and vendor participant groups provides richer data, and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing FM patronage.

From a practical perspective, this study has beneficial implications for FM vendors as mentioned above, but also for FMs as a whole, and for policy makers and educators. The results of the study will provide valuable information surrounding consumer motivations for FM patronage, which may provide further insight into potential strategies or methods for encouraging the increase of consumption of foods from sustainable sources. FM vendors can use the results of the study to learn more about their customers' preferences and purchasing habits to develop communication and brand strategies to boost sales and further develop consumer-vendor relationships. FMs and food co-ops may find the study results useful for planning purposes (for example, within FM policy and vendor selection), as well as for marketing strategies to encourage increased FM patronage. For policy makers, this research provides information regarding consumer motivations for FM patronage, which can assist these groups with understanding consumer preferences and needs that will help with designing effective policy (on the business/FM side) surrounding sustainable, local food consumption.

Increasing consumer patronage of FMs can improve sustainability within food consumption, as the local nature of most produce, dairy and meat sold at FMs reduces the carbon footprint involved, as FMs generally have much shorter supply chains when compared to large grocery chains (Arabska, 2018; Budge et al, 2010). Finally, since grocery retailing is extremely concentrated in Canada (five large companies account for over two-thirds of grocery sales), understanding alternative grocery outlets is particularly important in Canada (Evans, 2023).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to outline findings from the existing literature on FM's and to establish a foundation for understanding the key factors influencing FM patronage, particularly through the lens of authenticity. Authenticity emerged as a central concept during the early stages of data analysis. Since participants repeatedly referred to ideas related to the concept, the literature on authenticity is also reviewed since it became a key framework for interpreting the data. As such, the literature review situates the insights that arose from the data within broader theoretical concepts, including authenticity.

The literature review first establishes the significance of FMs, with a focus on FMs within Nova Scotia, the province in which the research was conducted. The conceptual framework of authenticity is explored, highlighting the many different perspectives and definitions found in existing research, and how authenticity may influence trust, identity and market participation. This chapter aims to provide context and background knowledge for the study's research questions, with the intent of determining the consumer motivations for FM patronage and how vendor perspectives align with or differ from these motivations.

Farmers' Markets

FMs are considered to be alternative food systems and/or networks, which are characterized by short, transparent and localized supply chains (Arabska, 2018). These systems operate outside of conventional and large-scale agriculture supply chains, and include examples such as cooperatives, organic food markets, farm stands, fair trade and locally grown food. Alternative food systems create a space for food chains with

sustainable development as the foundation for their operation. A 2016 study described alternative food systems as being based on the idea of “linking/relinking as a fundamental set of biological, social and moral processes which provide opportunities for all stakeholders to participate in ethical and transparent systems in which they are more tightly connected to each other and to the environment” (Bos & Owen, 2016). These systems are based on the following three major concepts: accessibility of food products, sustainability (economically, socially, and environmentally), and relationships and links between participants in the system (Barbara & Dagnes, 2016).

Within the umbrella of alternative food systems, FMs are defined as “trading venues for low-volume food producers,” but are not just transactional markets or smaller scale grocery stores. FMs have become important public institutions that provide a space for social interaction and community experience, underneath the selling of local goods (Arabska, 2018). The market vendors rely on face-to-face interaction as a strategy for consumer acquisition and retention. When consumers are purchasing products directly from the producer (vendor) in a FM context, the personal interactions create a relationship that is mediated by authenticity and trust. The vendor-customer relationship fostered at FMs develops a positive psychological experience of the market and is one consumer motivation for patronage of the market (Arabska, 2018).

There has been a significant increase in FMs across North America in recent decades. In the United States, FMs increased from just under 2000 in 1994, to over 8600 markets as of 2019. (USDA Farmers Market Directory, 2019). Canada has seen much of the same growth as reported in the US, as noted by provincial economic impact evaluations completed across the country in recent years. British Columbia saw a 62%

increase in FMs between 2006 and 2012, for a total of 159 markets (Connell, 2012). Manitoba saw a 51% increase in FM vendors from 2003 to 2008, with the annual sales at Manitoba markets almost quadrupling within the same period (DCS, 2008). As of 2021, FM sales in Ontario were estimated to have increased by 10-12% annually over the last 10 years to approximately \$800 million. Ontario currently has over 180 FMs in the province, up from about 154 FMs in 2008, and 60 FMs in the 1980s (Farmers Markets Ontario, 2021). In 2021 alone, in Manitoba there were thirteen new approved markets formed, for a total of 139 approved FMs operating in the province (Government of Alberta, 2021). There has been rapid growth within the Atlantic provinces as well. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of FMs increased by approximately 35% in New Brunswick (ACORN, 2014). Nova Scotia has the highest number of FMs per capita in the country, and the number of FMs in Nova Scotia tripled to over 40 from 2004 to 2023 (FMNS, 2023).

As an alternative to conventional food systems like grocery stores, shifting preferences on the consumer side have seen FMs revitalize as both a place to purchase goods but also as community (Smithers et al., 2008). Consumers in this group tend to prefer products and brands that align with their values, morals, and ethical opinions (Marotta et al., 2017). This may be explained by social identity theory, where a consumer's self-concept consists of the components of personal and social identity. This concept is described as how a person simultaneously interacts with society as an individual and as a member of any social group they feel they belong to (i.e., in-groups), which will be further explored in later sections (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Additionally, these consumers tend to be more aware of the product lifecycle, from production to

consumption, and want to know where, how and with what materials products are created (Marotta et al., 2017). This consumer lifestyle shift has been characterized by an increased demand for sustainable, local and ethically produced goods with transparent supply chains (Stanco et al., 2019). FMs have created a niche space in most North American communities (FMs are ubiquitous within North America) that intend to meet the consumer demand for sustainable, local and ethical goods in a community minded manner (Smithers et al., 2008). Within Canada, FMs provide an important alternative to traditional grocery stores, due to the limited number of chains restricting purchasing options.

A study that examined hashtags used in the captions of posts mentioning FMs on Instagram found that six major hashtags were linked to the #farmersmarket hashtag: #local, #organic, #fresh, #food, #vegan, #healthy, showing some key indications of the characteristics of products at the market that consumers value (Pilar et al., 2017). Most FM vendors are (and are expected to be) the producers and sellers of their own products (short supply chain) and choose their methods of production carefully to meet the expectations of consumers. In the context of consumer desire for locally produced foods, motivations for buying local include both the environmental consideration of overall reduced impact, and local food is perceived to be safer, fresher and better tasting when compared to conventional retail establishments (Archer et al., 2003; Deal & Zepeda, 2009; Teng et al., 2004).

The increased consumer focus on sourcing local food in North America is attributed to people seeking to reconnect with their food and its source, partly as a rejection of large-scale industrialization of food production that disconnects food

consumption from the natural world (Heffernan & Hendrickon, 2002; Albrecht & Smithers, 2018). Consumers at the FM have been found to be motivated by several social, ethical, health and environmental factors. Consumers want to purchase “high quality, fresh, nutritious, and locally produced foods grown or made using sustainable and environmentally friendly farming and food production methods” (Crawford et al., 2017). The focus on quality at FMs has been constructed around consumer desires and concerns surrounding health, food safety, environmental consequences of industrial farming, animal welfare and fair trade (Winter, 2003). Additionally, the social aspect of the formation of relationships with producers and creating community connections were also considered important benefits of the FM (Crawford et al., 2017). There are many established benefits of FMs across stakeholder groups. Consumers access wider food choice in fresh and affordable products, and reap the social benefits of the market, often making friends and fostering positive relationships and a sense of community. Farmers/vendors access increased sales opportunities, an established network of other vendors, new and reoccurring consumer groups, and a consistent location to sell from. Many FMs are established as cooperatives where each farmer owns a portion of the FM, and this provides stability to individual farmers and creates a collaborative environment where the farmers work together to ensure the success of a FM. An established FM cooperative would more readily attract new vendors, and the centralized location provided increases consumer traffic in comparison to what would be available for a farmer vending from an individual farm or stand. In a societal context, FMs create a visible link between production and consumption, assist with both preserving and actively creating community culture and tradition, and provide diversity of food and food security alternatives (Arabska, 2018).

With the increase in patronage seen at FMs in recent years, there is much opportunity to continue to encourage and facilitate the growth of FMs as a viable alternative food source in North American communities as a way to respond to the increased demand for sustainable lifestyles and commerce that allows for reduced impact on the planet by default through means of production and distribution. Understanding the underlying mechanisms and expectations that FMs are built on are critical to developing strategies to encourage continued adoption of FM patronage among consumers.

Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia

FMs exist at the intersection of the local food system and the social economy, and provide a social infrastructure for individual vendors, as well as a purposeful location for civic participation (Lyson et al., 1995). Nova Scotia has a not-for-profit cooperative of FMs, Farmer's Markets of Nova Scotia, founded in 2004. Their vision is "vibrant and diverse communities that are welcoming, economically prosperous, and food secure" (FMNS, 2023). Their mission statement is "our cooperative advances growth and prosperity for our members and their communities through support, programs, advocacy, marketing, and engagement" (FMNS, 2023). The core values of the cooperative include buying local, economic development, support and education, food access, and community (FMNS, 2023).

All member markets of the cooperative are certified FMs. In Nova Scotia, certified FMs hold a public market permit, maintain up-to-date food safety training, have completed market manager training, have participated in board governance training, uphold the values of cooperation and collaboration, and adhere to a "make it, bake it, grow it" policy, according to FMNS. The markets are described as being committed to

selling only fresh, high quality local products, while complying with industry standards in food safety and contributing to economic sustainability and community engagement (FMNS, n.d.). Previous research has found that the introduction of accreditation for producers and food business retailers assists shoppers in making informed decisions when purchasing products at FMs (Conner et al., 2010; Woodburn, 2014). The implementation of accreditation has the benefit of establishing and maintaining the consumer trust in FMs and their authenticity. The “make it, bake it, grow it” policy within the FMNS cooperative is especially helpful for building and maintaining consumer trust, as the policy ensures that vendors are truly selling local goods.

FMs that are not currently a member of the cooperative are encouraged to join, with the requirement that members meet the membership policy of the cooperative. The cooperative states that the membership policy “ensures that we stay true to our mandate of supporting authentic farmers’ markets (FMNS, n.d.). There are currently 44 vendor members of Farmers’ Markets of Nova Scotia from across the province (FMNS, 2023).

In a 2023 Nova Scotia Farmers’ Market Impact Study, it was found that Nova Scotia’s FMs are visited by an average of 39,242 patrons on one market day, with each FM serving an average of 1,090 customers per market day. Annually, Nova Scotia’s FMs are visited by approximately 1,481,985 patrons (FMNS, 2023). 41% of the patrons were local to the specific FM community, 27% were from nearby communities, 13% from the Halifax Regional Municipality, 7% from other NS communities, and 12% from outside the province. These figures show how FMs contribute to the provincial economy, and the role they play in redistributing money from urban areas to rural areas. (FMNS, 2023). An average of \$16.67 was spent by each FM consumer per visit, which resulted in an

overall average daily economic impact of \$31,654 per market. This figure includes spending at the FM as well as other local businesses on market day. With extrapolation of the daily data results across the 44 FMNS member FMs, the annual sector economic impact was \$43,356,359, with 58.6% of that figure representing direct spending at the FMs (FMNS, 2023).

Conceptual Framework: Authenticity

In a 2012 study of FMs in local food systems in Western Canada, vendors and market managers considered the concept of authenticity as central to an alternative local food system such as FMs (Wittman et al., 2012). The concept of authenticity as a key underlying factor within the context of FM patronage was established as a potential research interest for this study when completing a preliminary literature review focused on consumer motivations for attending FMs. It also emerged as a consistent overarching major theme in the initial stage of data analysis. It, therefore, became a natural focal point of the research.

A commonly referred to definition within the literature of authenticity as a concept from a consumer perspective is that it “encapsulates what is genuine, real, and/or true” (Arnould & Price, 2000; Bendix, 1992; Berger, 1973; Bamossy & Costa, 1995; Thompson et al, 2006). The major issue with defining and conceptualizing authenticity as a variable is that authenticity can mean different things to different consumers based on the importance placed on different variables and how they relate to a person’s perception of themselves, their desired self, and their social identity. Authenticity assessments in products/experiences are found to be underpinned by consumer goals; consumers actively seek authenticity to find meaning in their lives in line with personal

goals and prefer brands/experiences that reinforce their desired identity (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Self-relevant assessments of authenticity are found to be underpinned by three goals among consumers: control, connection, and virtue (Arnould & Price, 2000). The defining of what is authentic based on personal identity can, and does, create different perspectives of what product authenticity is among consumers, based on individual motivations. Consumers cocreate product values and overall consumption experiences as a part of self-actualization, where they define a product or experience as authentic through a personal lens that is based on the alignment with their individual goals and desired identity (Beverland et al., 2008). This can be attributed to self-categorization theory and social identity theory. Personal identity and the definition of the self includes one's personal interests and values, and through self-categorization one defines themselves as an individual ("I" – individual identity), and also in relation to their group memberships ("we" – social identity). Social identity is most influential when an individual considers their membership within a group to be central to their self-identity, real or desired. (Turner et al., 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It has been found that consumers find elements of what is genuine, real or true in various consumption experiences or products that others may consider to be fake or not authentic (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). In an FM context, this phenomenon can be related to certain consumers considering an FM product to be authentic only if it is local and/or grown by the farmer selling it, while other consumers may consider an FM product authentic even if it was not originally produced locally.

Additionally, not only is authenticity difficult to define as a concept, but previous literature has also presented several different types of authenticity among consumer

perspectives. A study of FMs in New Zealand determined two types of authenticity; objective authenticity - the who, what, where of products and vendors - and symbolic authenticity - the type of experience that visitors/consumers 'feel' they have consumed (Joseph et al., 2013). A 2008 Beverland study identified three forms of authenticity: pure (literal), approximate, and moral. Pure authenticity was defined in terms of "unbroken commitments to tradition and place of origin," basically that the product remained unchanged from the original version. Approximate authenticity was explained as "focused on symbolic or abstract impressions of traditions," or essentially the feeling that a product or brand has been around for a long time and has history, so their products "must be genuine" (Beverland et al., 2008). This description of authenticity closely matches the symbolic authenticity described in the New Zealand study. Moral authenticity is explained as developed from the sense that "a passionate creator is involved in making products, and not primarily motivated by financial reward but by love of their craft" (Beverland et al., 2008). For all three types of authenticity identified, it was determined that consumers draw on either indexical or iconic clues to form judgements of authenticity among brands and products (Beverland et al., 2008). Among the literature, there is a widespread consensus that authenticity is not constructed using specific properties inherent in a product, but rather that it is a socially constructed interpretation of the "essence" of what is observed (Beverland, 2006; Beverland et al., 2008, Greyson & Martinec, 2004; Rose & Wood, 2005; Thompson et al., 2006). From a marketing perspective, it is critical to manage consumers perceptions of authenticity because authenticity assessments are created through the consumer lens of how things "ought to be" (Greyson & Martinec, 2004).

Authenticity is not viewed differently on an individual level with just consumers, however, but also varies within producer and institutional groups. According to a 2012 study, authenticity and the construction of “good local food” are social constructs based on values that vary among producers, consumers, institutional context, and in different geographic regions (Wittman et al., 2012). Essentially, authenticity is a concept that is context specific, and the definition and expectations of authenticity will be altered depending on the situation and what is valued within that situation, and through the lens of different groups or stakeholders. “The relationship of individual farmers’ markets to local food initiatives needs to be seen in the light of information on how and why specific groups of actors hold various beliefs and exhibit widely different heuristics and strategies” (Smithers et al., 2008). From a marketing perspective, authenticity seeks to attach a product with a set of values that differentiate it from more commercialized brands (Beverland, 2005; Rose & Wood, 2005). Recent studies demonstrate that brands perceived as authentic are more successful, have increased brand trust and emotional customer-brand attachment, and greater word-of-mouth appeal (Oh et al., 2019). When a consumer purchases a product that they consider to be authentic, the brand authenticity influences the consumer’s self-reinforcing assets (enriching and enabling the self – related to a consumers’ identity or desired identity). When a consumer purchases something that reinforces their desired identity, it promotes closeness towards the brand, increasing the behavioral intentions of consumers to continue to buy a product and/or recommend it to other people (Oh et al, 2005). For FMs and their vendors that may be struggling with fostering a brand identity or legitimacy, the concept of authenticity is attractive as a strategy to situate and differentiate themselves in the larger food system (Wittman et al., 2012). The face-to-face interactions that FMs offer is considered an

important element of communicating authenticity for vendors. Face-to-face interaction is a direct marketing method that allows for relationship building and consumer education. The educational value that face-to-face interactions provide for consumers is essential for FM food system maintenance and improvement (Wittman et al., 2012).

As authenticity is a concept that can vary in how it is perceived and evaluated by different individuals, an issue that is creating division surrounding authenticity research within a FM concept is what exactly can be considered an authentic product. One of the most divisive issues is the presence of non-local food products at FMs, as well as resellers that did not grow or create the products that they are selling. Since FMs are largely based on selling local foods to local consumers, how could non-local products be accepted as part of the market offerings? Research that engaged vendors and consumers at the market has found that non-local food products and resellers are not necessarily seen as inauthentic or fake, depending on how consumers considered authenticity to be perceived on an individual level (Smithers, Joseph, 2009). Alternatively, research has conversely found that perceived authenticity of a product can be developed based on how the product is seen as linked to a specific place such as the area of production. For example, a product that is produced and sold in the same area is seen as more authentic to some consumers than the same product manufactured elsewhere and shipped to be sold (Sims, 2009., Newman and Dhar, 2014., Moulard et al., 2015). Part of the perceived authenticity consumers may develop based on closeness to manufacturing can be attributed to natural scarcity. Natural scarcity regarding consumer products can be defined by product limitations due to natural causes (Gierl et al., 2008, Hamilton et al., 2018, Garner and Hollenback, 2023). For example, in the context of locally grown FM

products, crop yields can be negatively affected by regional adverse weather effects such as drought, excessive rainfall, or an early frost, which would naturally reduce the amount of produce available for purchase within a season, creating a supply-side shortage. Low-volume food producers that operate within a localized supply chain also contribute to the perception of natural scarcity, as the volume of product is constrained by the land, labour, and funds that a small producer has access to, especially in comparison to large-volume national and multinational food producers that have the means for mass production (Sims, 2009., Newman and Dhar, 2014). Consumers may view natural scarcity as a positive influencing factor when determining if a product is considered authentic. (Garner and Hollenbeck, 2023). The different results obtained from the research to determine if FM products must be local to be considered authentic is consistent with the issue of authenticity being defined differently based on different consumer identities, values, and expectations. Previous research has also shown that most customers of FMs expect and assume that the available product is fresh, organic and grown locally, so they may not ask vendors about how and where the produce was grown. (Colasanti et al., 2010). These findings provide evidence for ingrained assumptions about the authenticity of farmers' market vendors and their products.

As FMs gain popularity and their consumer base expands, the accepted definition of authenticity among stakeholders has also expanded to include considerations such as ethical production practices, fair trade, and sustainable agriculture. This shift has led to differing opinions on whether non-local products can still be considered authentic if they meet these additional standards (Peters et al., 2009). As FMs continue to grow and adapt to shifting consumer preferences and economic and environmental factors, the debate

surrounding authenticity regarding non-local products and resellers will likely continue. Vendors will be challenged to both uphold the traditions engrained within FMs, while meeting the needs of larger and more diverse consumer groups with different motivations and perspectives on what makes an FM product authentic. This balancing act will be essential to ensure that FMs can remain a relevant and reliable source of sustainable food for their local communities.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that will guide the proposed research are based on the concepts explained in the literature review provided in the previous section. The main theory drawn on is that authenticity assessments in products/experiences are subjective and are found to be underpinned by consumer goals; that consumers actively seek authenticity to find meaning in their lives in line with personal goals and prefer brands/experiences that reinforce their desired identity (Arnould & Price, 2000). Since authenticity has been determined to be central to the identity of FMs and their participating vendors, it is important to examine the concept further and determine how authenticity is viewed by both vendor and consumer groups within farmers' markets, and if there is alignment or differences between both groups, and also in individuals within groups. Since authenticity is a subjective concept, understanding how authenticity is related to the identity of individuals, and how individuals define, perceive, and expect authenticity, will assist with developing a model that determines how authenticity affects consumer purchase intentions, and why.

As proposed by Smithers, "the relationship of individual farmers' markets to local food initiatives needs to be seen in the light of information on how and why

specific groups of actors hold various beliefs and exhibit widely different heuristics and strategies.” (Smithers et al, 2008). Authenticity is integral to FMs but not yet well understood as a variable that affects purchase intention, and discovering the opinions of authenticity held by both vendors and consumers will provide further insight into both the understanding of authenticity as a concept affecting consumer behaviour, and within the literature specific to farmers’ markets and alternative food systems and how certain concepts can be leveraged to encourage increased consumption of sustainable goods. Previous studies on authenticity within FMs has typically focused on the consumer group as research participants, creating a gap within the literature that has not included the perspectives of authenticity among vendors. Additionally, the inclusion of both groups creates an opportunity to determine if and how opinions of authenticity align or differ between consumers and vendors.

Research Questions

To build upon the research within the existing literature, the aim of this study is to explore the complex motivation for FM patronage. The research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the main motivations that attract customers to frequent FMs?

RQ2: How do consumers assess authenticity at FMs, and what are their expectations of authenticity for FM products, vendors, and/or overall experiences?

RQ3: How do FM vendors perceive the concept of authenticity in the context of their products and FMs as a whole, and what characteristics do they consider to be important for consumer patronage of FMs?

The interview protocol (see Appendix D) that provides the questions utilized to guide participants during the interview process focuses on the first research question, as

the concept of authenticity as an underpinning variable affecting FM patronage began to arise as key factor as the interviews took place, upon which the scope of the research was reevaluated and the second and third research questions introduced. The second research question was explored during the interview process as consumer participants shared their perspectives and personal experiences at FMs. Participants were prompted to elaborate further when their responses suggested a relation to authenticity, and the concept of authenticity as a variable that affected the patronage of consumer participants emerged from the data during the analysis process. The third research question, relevant to vendor participants, was intended to be investigated using questions from the interview guide, such as: “Are there any specific characteristics of vendors, products, and/or the market as a whole that you would describe as important to attracting customers?” However, like the second research question much of the relevant data was extracted during participant elaboration and not as direct responses to the initial questions asked during the interviews.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The purpose of this study is to examine motivations behind FM patronage in Nova Scotia, with the intention to discover common themes among consumer motivations which may enable the development of a consistent definition of authenticity in an FM context and how authenticity may affect purchase intention. Chapter 3 outlines the methods chosen for this study, with rationale provided.

Overview of Qualitative Research

A field-based qualitative approach was chosen for this study, due to the exploratory nature of the research to be completed. Qualitative research is interpretive in nature and involves developing research questions, collecting data directly from participants, analysing the data to generate themes, and then interpreting the data to discover the meaning within the data sets. The field-based qualitative approach was chosen due to its suitability for early research stages, especially when the key variables of the subject are not yet known (Creswell, 2009).

Chosen Methodology for Phase 1: Field-Based Qualitative Research

This study uses field-based qualitative research as the chosen strategy of inquiry due to the intention to allow for the theoretical background of the data to arise from the examination of the experiences of consumers at FMs and the motivations behind their patronage, and to discover emerging patterns from that data. These themes can then be analyzed to explore the underlying dynamics and contexts associated with a phenomenon, or central concept. In this case, the central concept being explored is the motivation behind consumer patronage of FMs.

Outline of Study Design

The research presented in this study consists of qualitative research that consists of semi-structured interviews with both FM vendors and consumers in Nova Scotia and facilitates the discovery of important themes surrounding consumer patronage of FMs through guided and open-ended discussion. The interviews completed with consumer participants touch on the primary reasons participants visit FMs, their experiences in the setting, their purchasing behaviour, and any relationships they may have with vendors in the space. The interviews completed with vendors examine how the participants choose to market themselves at the market, how they describe their products and processes to consumers, characteristics they believe are important to encourage consumer patronage of the market, and potential existing vendor use of authenticity as part of their brand or overall marketing strategy. See Appendix D for the list of questions used to facilitate consumer and vendor interviews.

Participant Selection

Initially, the participant selection was intended to be completed in person at various FMs in Nova Scotia, including the Seaport FM, Halifax Brewery Market, Truro FM and Wolfville FM. Unfortunately, this selection method proved quite difficult, as vendors were often extremely busy with customers, and consumers were often socializing and unable to make time to interact. Three consumer participants and one vendor participant were recruited in person. The second method used for consumer participation selection consisted of a two-pronged approach, including on-campus recruitment at Dalhousie University, and the use of snowball sampling from there. Potential participants were provided with a recruitment poster (Appendix A), and as

participants confirmed interest, they were asked if they would be willing to identify other potential participants in their network who may be interested in completing the study as well. The remaining seven consumer participants were selected using these methods; four of the participants were students at Dalhousie University, with three more recruited through the snowball method that were family or friends of the four student participants. For vendor participants, research was completed to identify FM vendors and contact them using email or social media to gauge interest in participating. Nine further vendor participants were recruited this way. Vendor participants were recruited from FMs that were members of FMNS, which was selected in order to ensure that the chosen markets and their vendors were as authentic as possible in terms of accreditation.

Once interested potential participants had been invited to participate in the study, contact continued using email, and interviews were scheduled to be completed either virtually (through Microsoft Teams) or in person at a suitable location for both the participant and researcher. The sample size was 20 confirmed participants in total, with 10 consumer participants and 10 vendor participants. More potential participants were available to invite to participate, but appropriate data saturation was reached with the initial 20 participants. Qualitative research can reach data saturation at different numbers of participants. Appropriate data saturation is determined when concepts and themes are repetitive among participants to the point where there is enough information to complete analysis of the data, and further information is unnecessary to achieve results. (Fusch, Ness, 2015). In qualitative research methods, the sample size needed to reach data saturation can vary. However, the research consensus is that once no new data or themes are being extracted from the research process, data saturation has been reached.

Additionally, it is important to consider the quality of the data. This can be done in terms of “rich” and “thick” data, where thick data can be considered the quantity, while rich data is not quantity based but “many layered, intricate, detailed, and nuanced.” (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore, the number of participants recruited for the study was influenced by the data received by previous participants.

Due to the nature of the research being exploratory, the only necessary participant characteristic was either being a FM vendor registered with FMNS, or an FM consumer. However, participants recruited within the consumer group had the inclusion criteria of visiting a FM at least twice a year, to ensure that this participant group does not include any “one-off” customers or tourists that may skew the data or affect the scope of the research.

Participant Characteristics

Consumer participant characteristics and demographics were recorded to ensure an appropriate sample. All participants visited an FM at least twice in the last year, with a range of 2-40 visits in the last year, with most visiting between 5-15 times in the last year. Some homogeneity could not be avoided; 7 of the 10 consumer participants were female, and five participants were recruited as students from Dalhousie University, with 6 participants within the youngest age group of 20-29 years of age. All participants either had completed post-secondary education or were in the process of doing so. However, the participant characteristics regarding gender and education levels did reflect the previous literature examining characteristics of FM consumers, as previous studies have indicated that FM shoppers are more likely to be female and have completed some level of post-secondary education (Wolf et al., 2005; Landis et al., 2011).

Table 1: Consumer Participant Characteristics

Consumer Pseudonyms (fictional)	Gender	Age	Education	Ethnicity	Visits per Year
Sarah	F	20-29	Bachelor	White	2-5
Jennifer	F	30-40	Masters	White	5-10
Tyler	M	20-29	Bachelor	White	2-5
Hanna	F	20-29	Bachelor	Indigenous	10-15
Mina	F	20-29	Masters	Asian	10-15
Lyn	F	50-60	Bachelor	Asian	5-10
Brittany	F	30-40	Bachelor	White	15-20
Stephen	M	20-29	Masters	Asian	2-5
Kristin	F	20-29	Bachelor	Asian	10-15
John	M	50-60	Bachelor	White	30-40

Table 2: Vendor Participant Pseudonyms

Vendor Pseudonyms (fictional)	Product Focus
Blake	Produce vendor (fruits and vegetables)
Grace	Produce vendor (herbs and greens)
Derek	Family farm vendor (assortment of products)
Emma	Animal products vendor (meat and eggs)
Mark	Produce vendor (vegetables and herbs)
Joseph	Family farm vendor (assortment of products)
Carla	Fruit vendor (orchard fruits)
Wayne	Produce vendor (fruits and vegetables)
Katherine	Family farm vendor (assortment of products)
Kyle	Animal products vendor (meat and eggs)

Participant characteristics and demographics of the vendor participant group are not presented, as they are not relevant to the research being completed. Vendor participants did not require demographics to ensure an appropriate sample, as the vendor interview process was focused on how vendors present their brands, how they attract consumers, and characteristics of their products or brand that they believe are important to consumers. The requirements for vendor participants included being a member of

FMNS and owning the establishment/farm that was selling FM goods grown and/or produced by said farm (i.e. a vendor participant could not be just an employee). However, vendor and consumer pseudonyms were assigned to ensure confidentiality and to allow readers to distinguish between different participants within the quotes presented in the results section.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection method for this research study consisted of semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews consist of a list of predetermined questions to guide discussion between the interviewer and participants, while allowing participants to speak openly without the requirement of strictly following the questions. A key benefit to the format of a semi-structured interview is the ability to obtain the same “core information” from each participant, while also allowing flexibility in the participant responses, which can create reciprocity between the interviewer and participants, encouraging open discussion to the responses provided (Belotto, 2017; Galleta, 2012). Additionally, this interview format provides an opportunity for the interviewer to “follow” instead of lead participants, and ask follow-up questions based on the participant’s responses, resulting in further depth within the responses (Belotto, 2017; Johnson et al., 2016).

The interviews were conducted both virtually and in-person, with the majority conducted virtually over Microsoft Teams. The length of each consumer participant interview was approximately 15-20 minutes, while vendor participant interviews were approximately 25-35 minutes in length. The virtual interviews were transcribed within Microsoft Teams, while the in-person interviews were recorded using the interviewer’s

personal cellphone and transcribed verbatim. During and immediately after each interview, brief field notes were taken to capture contextual, nonverbal cues and the researcher's reflections. Transcripts from Teams were reviewed carefully for accuracy and compared with field notes. In case where the transcription was incomplete or unclear, minor clarifications were made based on the researcher's notes and recollections to best reflect what was actually said by the participants. These clarifications were limited to correcting errors or filling in missing words for accuracy and did not alter the meaning of participants' responses.

Interview Procedure

Prior to the interview, participants were provided with a letter of information (Appendix B) as well as a consent form (Appendix C) to sign. Signed copies of the consent form were provided to the interviewer by each participant before beginning the interview process, and participants were given the opportunity to ask clarifying questions if needed. Each participant was verbally asked for confirmation that they understood the information provided within the consent form and letter of information. The signed consent forms were kept by the researcher/interviewer in a secure location.

Before the interview began, participants were asked for permission to record the interview. Guided question sets for both the consumer participant group and vendor participant group can be found in Appendix D. While prepared questions were used, informants were given freedom to address any other things related to FMs that they wished to discuss. Before ending the interview, compensation was arranged between the interviewer and each participant.

Data Analysis and Coding

The data analysis method chosen for this study was thematic analysis of the interview transcriptions. Thematic analysis is a method that is utilized to identify, analyze, organize, describe, and report themes found within a text (Nowell et al., 2017). This method was chosen as it allows for the discovery of meanings and relationships that emerge from participants' accounts, making it well suited for exploring phenomena that are not yet well understood. Through identification of shared experiences among the participants, thematic analysis will assist with discovering the key motivations for consumer patronage at FMs. (Creswell, 2003; Percy et al, 2015).

Generally, thematic analysis consists of three stages. The first is the initial reading of the data, where the researcher reads the transcription texts in an "open-minded manner" to develop an initial understanding of the data. In this stage, it is recommended that the researcher does not attempt to identify any specific codes or themes within the data, but instead to become familiar with the data and develop a basic and general understanding of what the data is presenting as loose concept (Belotto, 2018). The second stage consists of coding, where excerpts/quotes are identified within transcripts over several readings and assigned codes that represent their meaning. As the researcher progresses through the transcripts, a pattern within the data begins to emerge as participant answers begin to repeat and start to allow for the identification of major themes and sub-themes across the data set (Belotto, 2018; Percy et al, 2015). The third stage of thematic analysis consists of developing a comprehensive understanding of the data. The emergence of a pattern among the transcript data from the second stage begins to develop this understanding, while the third stage further considers the emergent

themes in relation to the research questions as well as the literature, to assist with refining themes and subthemes. The researcher continues to reflect on previous understandings of the data to ensure consistency. When this stage is complete, a comprehensive understanding of the data has been developed, and key variables have been uncovered through themes and subthemes. The goal of this analysis method is to move from surface understanding to an in-depth comprehension of the data (Belotto, 2018).

Beginning data analysis and following the thematic analysis method, the participant interview transcripts were initially read with the intention of developing a basic understanding. The second stage consisted of beginning to take notes and identify excerpts from the transcripts that were then broken down into codes. Initially, the potential codes were tentative, and this stage consisted of several read-throughs of the transcript as patterns emerged from the data and codes were reworked as themes emerged. In the final stage, the literature and research questions were considered in the context of the emerging themes in order to further refine them and develop a comprehensive understanding of the data. Once the themes and subthemes emerged from the data, there were multiple instances of overlap in experiences and motivations shared by the participants, which confirmed the data had reached appropriate saturation.

Presentation of the results that emerged from the data included quotes extracted from the participant interview transcripts. The use of quotes in this manner increases the understanding of the results and imparts validity to the findings; giving a “voice” to the participants that deliver further context and support explanations of the results.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the data analysis are discussed to answer the research questions: 1) What are the main motivations that attract customers to frequent FMs? 2) How do consumers assess authenticity at FMs, and what are their expectations of authenticity for FM products, vendors, and/or overall experiences? 3) How do FM vendors perceive the concept of authenticity in the context of their products and FMs as a whole, and what characteristics do they consider to be important for consumer patronage of FMs?

As mentioned, the chosen methodology approach for this study is field-based qualitative research, where FM patronage is considered to be a social phenomenon which includes common experiences among consumers. These experiences were shared by participants through semi-structured interviews comprised of open-ended and follow-up questions, which allowed participants to freely share their experiences related to the research questions.

Analysis of the consumer interviews revealed that these motivations are multidimensional and interconnected. Through thematic analysis, three overarching themes emerged from the data: supporting local, product features communicating authenticity to consumers, and atmosphere and social interaction within FMs. Within the three major themes, nine subthemes were identified within the data, and associated with three types of authenticity: moral authenticity, pure/literal authenticity, and approximate/symbolic authenticity. There was an additional theme of price listed as another factor affecting FM patronage unrelated to authenticity. Each theme represented a distinct but complementary set of factors that motivate consumers to attend and

purchase from FMs. The following section elaborates on the themes identified, with supporting de-identified quotes from participant interviews. Each theme contains information from both the consumer group and vendor group, with the consumer group excerpts appearing first.

Theme 1: Supporting local

The concept of supporting local has become an increasingly significant factor in consumer decision-making and purchase intention, particularly in the context of FMs. (Archer et al., 2003; Deal & Zepeda, 2009; Teng et al., 2004). For many consumers, supporting local can be tied to an individual's self-identity and personal values, It also as well as contributes to a perception of authenticity in comparison to non-local goods. In the context of supporting local, the concept of moral authenticity could be considered as providing a link between FM patronage and supporting one's self-identity. Moral authenticity as assigned to products is described as developed from the sense that "a passionate creator is involved in making products, and not primarily motivated by financial reward but by love of their craft" (Beverland et al., 2008). Moral authenticity has also been described as related to an individual's self-identity and personal values like honesty and fairness as one may assign moral authenticity to a product or experience if it relates to something that makes up a part of their self-concept (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). FMs connect to the concept of moral authenticity as they are seen by consumers as spaces where vendors are genuinely committed to providing fresh, locally sourced foods. Additionally, consumers who prioritize supporting local businesses do so for not only practical reasons such as quality and freshness of goods, but also as a reflection of their ethical beliefs and desire to contribute to their communities.

Buying Local

Many consumers view buying local as an important motivation for FM patronage, and this was reflected within the data analysis, as 80%_that locality was a separate, although related, preferred characteristic of FM products. Hanna shared:

I used to buy all my food from grocery stores before I started going to farmers' markets in college. I switched to buying tomatoes and basil weekly [from FMs], some sort of greens again, like the staples that kind of you do need weekly. So like eggs, bread, that kind of stuff. I really prefer to buy most of my staples from local sources, to me it seems healthier and eating this way makes me feel more in-tune with how people are supposed to eat naturally, like using in season produce and other foods sourced from the area. You wouldn't normally be able to eat strawberries in the winter, for example.

Hanna's statement highlights a connection between the locality of products and a more natural way of eating, reinforcing the idea that buying local aligns with authenticity, as it ties some consumers' values of healthy living to their food choices, enhancing FM products' perceived authenticity. As what consists of being local has been known to differ among consumers within the previous literature, participants were asked what they considered to be local. Most of these participants described local as being within Nova Scotia, or within close geographic proximity. Jennifer stated:

I would consider local to be in Nova Scotia when I'm shopping at markets here, yeah. Back home, it's local to my area or I guess, the region, because Ontario is so big that something from like 10 hours away I don't consider local because of the shipping involved.

All of the vendor participants discussed the concept of local goods, and all vendors shared the same experience of considering local to be within close geographic proximity. One vendor described local to be within Atlantic Canada, while others considered local to be specifically within Nova Scotia. Many vendors also mentioned how consumers expect FM products to be local, and that since the FMNS policy is to only sell what they produce themselves, that it is important that FM vendors are truly local. Wayne voiced:

You know, local vendors, obviously you gotta take their word that they're actually local, give you see them every week, or they're growing their stuff here. You know, like where else would they be getting it? I've seen that CBC marketplace in Toronto, where they buy it from the terminal. I don't think people are doing that here. It's because of how close knit the vendors tend to be and how the markets are smaller size. I know most people try to avoid anything like that.

As mentioned, most of the consumer participants identified "local" as being within their geographic region or province. Vendors echoed this sentiment, reinforcing that consumers expect that what they are purchasing from FMs is genuinely locally sourced. This expectation enhances the link to moral authenticity, as consumers believe that they are engaging with small-scale producers who are genuinely passionate about their products and are operating with integrity and honesty.

Supporting Local Farmers

Although the importance of products being local was identified earlier under motivations for FM patronage under pure authenticity, the concept of supporting local farmers consisted of different intentions among consumers. The preference of supporting

local farmers was different than preferring local goods, as there was an expression of deeper values such as community solidarity and supporting vendors' livelihoods. Six of the consumer participants discussed supporting local farmers as a motivation for purchasing goods from the market, often describing the meaning behind their choice and how it made them feel. Lyn shared:

I like something with meaning, definitely. I really like supporting people that you know, do everything themselves. I like supporting people's dreams. Also, the environmental factors, it's kind of like, a cherry on the top.

Lyn's comment connects supporting local farmers to moral authenticity based on a desire to support individual vendors who are passionate about their craft. This sentiment is a clear example of how the act of supporting local can be seen as an alignment with personal values, where consumers may feel a sense of moral satisfaction from helping local farmers/vendors.

Several of the participants mentioned how they generally assumed that the vendors at the market were representing themselves as the farmers who grew the products, and as small businesses or small farms, relating to ingrained assumptions about authenticity at FMs. Kristin stated:

I enjoy supporting the vendors and honestly I have, like, I don't really do my research that well. So, I'm not totally sure how much of like a "small business" that actually is and how local things actually are. But I do feel better just like shopping there than at like a huge corporation. I prefer the produce, but then I don't know, just in my mind I feel better paying a little bit more to get it from someone local like that rather than like, Superstore.

Consumer participants seem to feel a sense of moral fulfillment in contributing to small businesses, especially those they perceived as run by individuals like the vendors they interact with. Kristin's statement suggests that even without research into a vendor's operation, consumers may assume that FM vendors are small-scale producers. This assumption contributes to moral authenticity perceptions by making local purchases feel meaningful, as they were in support of what consumers perceived as hardworking, passionate individuals or family businesses that are part of their own community rather than corporations.

All of the vendor participants brought up supporting local as a main reason that they believe their customers buy from them and visit the market in general. Many spoke to how supporting local became a big talking point during the pandemic, especially after many FMs were shut down when the pandemic began. They shared stories about the consumer support upon reopening. Katherine shared:

During COVID, we were closed down when it first started and that was a really difficult time for our farm and lots of others, as we get a lot of our income from the markets. But it was really nice to see the community rallying around us farmers when the markets reopened, we had lots of conversations about it especially with our loyal customers. I think the phrase "support local" really gained traction around that time, there were lots of news articles and social media stuff about it. It really helped us bounce back from that.

Three vendors also expressed the opinion that in Nova Scotia, supporting local businesses has been important to consumers for many years, especially in rural areas. They described how close-knit many rural communities in the province are, and many

also touched on how although Halifax is a more populated area than other parts of the province, there is still a feel of community in spaces like FMs, and people want to support those in their community. Joseph voiced:

Our family is a part of a few different farmers' markets here in Nova Scotia, one in Halifax and two smaller ones outside of the city. We have been farmers here for over 20 years, and one thing we really love about it is the community support. We get into conversations with some of our long-term customers that, you know, we talk about how long we've been selling and they'll bring up how they've been buying our stuff for a long time. I think most people here truly prefer to buy from someone local like us, instead of like a massive company like Loblaws for example. It's just that feeling of support, and you know, belonging, that really keeps us going.

Similarly to the consumer participants, vendors also highlighted the significance of supporting local businesses and community support, particularly during the pandemic when consumer loyalty may have been considered a lifeline for vendors. The collective rallying around vendors emphasized the connection between consumer and vendor groups, reinforcing the concept of FMs as authentic community spaces sustained through trust and shared values, contributing to the perception of FMs as being more authentic to consumers than traditional grocery stores.

Concern for the Environment/Sustainability

For many consumers, environmental consciousness is a part of their self-identity, and shopping at FMs allows consumers to align their purchasing behaviour with their values (Turner et al., 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A desire to shop sustainably due to

concern for the environment was a motivator for FM patronage for five of the consumer participants. These participants all mentioned how the local nature of FMs contributed to their desire to purchase from them, described as due to the reduction in distance of product distribution in comparison to retail grocery stores. Interestingly, guilt was a feeling that was directly mentioned by three participants. Tyler shared:

I like to be able to support local and not like, I guess feel the guilt of transporting all this produce from all over Canada or all over North America that are just contributing to carbon footprint. I like knowing that what I'm buying is from the province and even if it's been driven from like, three hours away, that's nowhere near as bad as having things that have been shipped from, I don't know, Mexico or something.

Tyler's desire to support local due to environmental concerns is another example of how personal values can be linked to moral authenticity. His purchase decisions may be influenced by a desire to reduce his environmental impact, aligning his actions with a self-concept as someone who cares about sustainability. Additionally, Sarah stated,

I think to me, the big thing about the market is that I just think it's more sustainable than like, other options. It's like, for one, you don't have stuff being shipped across the ocean and having all these emissions, it's from here and that I like how that reduces the carbon footprint. I think also, look at the food waste that's being generated by the grocery stores and thrown out every day. The market doesn't have that. Like, sure there's still probably stuff that doesn't sell, but I doubt it's just being thrown in the garbage.

By shopping at an FM, consumers are able to connect their purchases to an environmentally conscious self-identity. They may see themselves as people who are making responsible and sustainable choices through FM patronage. This self-perception may be connected to authenticity as a whole and specifically moral authenticity, as the purchase is not just about the product itself, but also about how the purchase contributes to how a consumer views themselves and what it says about them. In this context, FM patronage linked to an eco-conscious identity can be a deeply personal choice that allows consumers to feel that they are actively contributing to a better world.

Five of the vendor participants brought up being environmentally friendly as a reason they believe consumers visit and purchase from FMs. Two vendor participants mentioned that they thought their younger customers specifically preferred to be environmentally friendly, while three of these participants shared that they believed that most of their customers care about the environmental impact that they have. Kyle said:

When it comes to caring about the environment, I think things have really seen a shift in the last 10 years or so. You know, before that you would still get quite a few people who would bring that up, but it was a small group of regulars and that's why they'd buy from us. Now it seems like everybody cares, which is definitely a good thing. I think we all have to care, especially now, you know, you hear all this news about how the climate is changing and we need to focus on ways to be more environmentally friendly, and I really think farmers' markets could be a huge part of that for people.

Kyle highlighted the cultural shift to preferring to shop sustainably, noting that environmental concern has grown in recent years. This may contribute to consumers'

perceptions that FMs are viewed as a more ethical and responsible way to buy food, reinforcing the idea that FM patronage is not just about personal preference for specific product characteristics provided by FM goods, but potentially considered a morally superior choice that can be linked to consumers viewing FM products in the context of the perception of moral authenticity.

Theme 2: Product Features Communicating Authenticity to Consumers

Product characteristics of produce available at FMs were a distinguishing factor of why many of the consumer participants chose FM products over those sold at traditional grocery stores. Product features that emerged from the data analysis included the characteristics of fresh and organic produce, as well as produce presentation. These consumer preferences can be related to desiring authentic products when defining authenticity as “encapsulating what is genuine, real, and/or true” (Arnould & Price, 2000; Bendix, 1992; Berger, 1973; Bamossy & Costa, 1995; Thompson et al, 2006). Additionally, linkages can also be made to the definition of pure, or literal, authenticity as described by Beverland. Pure authenticity is described in terms of “unbroken commitments to tradition and place of origin,” or essentially that the product remained unchanged from the original version. In the context of FMs, consumer ideas surrounding pure authenticity were explored through their expectations and assumptions for FM products and how participants assigned value to certain characteristics.

Fresh Produce

All participants within the consumer group stated that freshness of FM products, especially produce, was a motivator for their choice to purchase from vendors at an FM

over traditional retail grocery stores. Many participants shared that taste was a primary reason for this preference. Mina shared:

Buying [at FMs], it's more fresh and I think it is better to buy from a farmer.

There are no additives and you know it's going to taste better if you buy things fresh and organic because they grow it on the farm and it would be more healthy, the product looks and taste better and stays fresh longer.

Several participants also stated that they preferred the fresh produce at the market because it lasted longer than produce purchased at grocery stores. Most of these participants attributed the freshness to the locality of the farmers (short supply chain), and the short time between the harvesting of produce and subsequent selling by vendors. As an example, Tyler stated that:

Yeah, I find a lot of times [the produce] is fresher. I have trouble purchasing certain things at grocery stores for produce because it's never good by when I use it. You buy something from, say Walmart, and it's bad in two days I find but with the stuff I get from the market, it lasts much longer and it gives me time to wait to cook it or just eat it over a few days instead of having to use it immediately. I think it's because it's stuff that was grown in the area and brought to the market right after the farmer picked it, and in grocery stores, you know, it takes too much time to ship it and then it sits on the shelf and by the time you buy it it's already been picked for a long time.

Seven of the vendor participants expressed that freshness was a key characteristic of their products for consumers, stating that this was a main reason their customers choose their products. Grace said:

When I talk with customers, one of the things that gets brought up a lot is the freshness of my fruits and vegetables. Especially in the summer with certain fruits in season, like peaches or strawberries, that kind of thing, they just love it. They say the taste is a lot better than the stores, and the fruits would have been picked day of or day before depending on what it is, so it's going right from my farm to them.

Produce freshness was the most recognized characteristic of FM goods in both the consumer and vendor participant group. It was very clear that freshness was a large contributing factor of consumer patronage of FMs, and vendors recognized this and included freshness of their goods as a main selling point during interactions with their customers. The point can be made that freshness contributed to consumers viewing FM products as authentic, because it can signify a short supply chain which may contribute to consumers perceiving FM products as more "real" and "true" to their origins. This aligns with the main definition of authenticity that emphasize genuineness, as well as pure authenticity that refers to unbroken connections to tradition. (Arnould &, Price, 2000; Bendix, 1992; Berger 1973; Bamossy & Costa, 1995; Thompson et al, 2006; Beverland, 2008). Consumer participants like Tyler and Mina recognize this link to authenticity by noting how FM produce tastes better and last longer than grocery store produce, which can be associated as being more pure. Vendors also reinforced this link to authenticity by emphasizing the freshness of their products and making consumers feel as though they were getting produce right from the source, which in this case, they were.

Organic Produce

Three participants shared a desire to purchase organic produce, and these participants stated that they purchased a majority of their organic produce from the market. These three participants all expressed similar opinions regarding organic food, with the participants having a shared sentiment on avoiding chemicals and additives for their health, while two stated that they were also concerned about pesticide use in non-organic food affecting the environment. Kristin stated:

My reason for picking farmers markets [for produce] is because the produce is healthier and there's generally less chemicals because it's grown on a small farm overall. I definitely prefer organic produce in general, like if there's an organic option I will definitely buy that over anything. I just really don't like the idea of putting chemicals in my body when it comes to non-organic food, and at the farmers' market even if it's not organic organic, there's like, way less chemicals involved compared to industrial farms and stuff. It [organic produce] is also so much better for the environment, like for the bee population and stuff like that.

Four participants within the vendor participant group mentioned organic produce as an important characteristic for FM consumers. Two of these vendors were certified organic, while two were not but shared that they grow their produce in an organic manner, without the use of any pesticides or other chemicals. The general consensus among these vendors was that while the majority of their customers did not consider it necessary for produce to be organic, a small subset of their customers greatly preferred their produce to be grown organically. One vendor, Blake (that was not certified organic) shared:

They [customers] ask if we're organic, we hear that a lot and I say no, we are not certified organic, but we do grow organically. And you know, people are fine with that. I do not use pesticides or herbicides and stuff like that, but I will use a little bit of synthetic fertilizer and I will tell them and they're fine with that too. I think that as long as it's communicated and people can weigh their decision, if we're [vendors] honest about how we grow people can choose if it fits their standards, and most of the time it's a yes. We do lose out on some customers without the certification, but it's a very minor amount.

Another vendor, Carla, who was certified organic, shared the following opinion in regards to preference towards organic produce:

For the majority of our customers, being organic is not terribly important. We do have some customers to whom its very important. I would say they are a minority, but they tend to be very good customers in terms of the amount of stuff they buy, we also sell and because we are certified, they will choose us over other vendors at the market. That change came out I don't know, maybe roughly 10 years ago now. And honestly it happened because people were abusing the word organic. People were selling stuff as organic that did not in fact conform to the organic standard. And without a third party, you know, providing some oversight and verification, it's a pretty ambiguous system.

The preference for organic produce can be associated with authenticity in that it is food grown with no pesticides or other chemicals, aligning with Beverland's definition of pure authenticity. Organic farming methods can be seen as a return to traditional and more natural ways of growing food, reinforcing the consumer perception that FM

products are more “real” and “unchanged” than products sold at a grocery store. Consumer preferences for organic food can be linked to self-identity theory, where consumers who consider themselves to be health-conscious or environmentally friendly may consider purchasing organic produce to be authentic and aligned with their real and desired self. Additionally, vendor communication of their organic growing methods, even if they are not certified organic, can strengthen consumer trust and reinforces the perception that they are making an informed decision on the purchase of an authentic product.

Produce Presentation

The presentation of produce at FMs was a topic that many consumer participants brought up when answering the question of “What does the farmers’ market have to offer you over other traditional retail stores?” When discussing product features compared to produce available at a traditional grocery store, some consumers shared a preference for the “more down-to-earth” presentation, as one participant quoted. Specifically, participants mentioned features such as a lack of plastic packaging, no bar codes, imperfect produce, and even dirt still left on produce available for purchase. Stephen shared:

I like going to the market and being able to tell that what I am going to buy is grown by the same person selling it to me. You see piles of these really vibrant vegetables, like tomatoes, and there’s no packaging, no little stickers, just a bunch of really great tomatoes to choose from.

On a similar note, Jennifer mentioned:

The grocery store seems to only put out perfect stuff, like no bumps, bruises, scratches. I get why they do that, some people won't buy those, but I like those. Last time I was at the market I bought carrots that still had some dirt on them. Those carrots seemed more real than the super clean bags of them you get at a grocery store...like I had just pulled it out of my own garden.

Interestingly, vendor participants did not mention the presentation of their produce for sale during the interview process. This may be a gap in what vendors understand to be important to their customers. Vendors did acknowledge the two previous characteristics of fresh and organic produce as an important selling point and also communicated those characteristics to consumers to encourage purchases. Product presentation could be added to their marketing strategy to communicate authenticity of their goods, as the argument can be made that the way produce is displayed at FMs enhances consumer perception of authenticity. Consumer participants like Stephen and Jennifer associated unpackaged and imperfect produce as more "real" or "natural," like Jennifer's statement on how the carrots she purchased could have been freshly picked from her own garden. The lack of packaging and other features like stickers or bar codes distinguished FM produce from those sold at grocery stores, reinforcing the idea that FM goods remain true to their origins. This presentation aligns with pure authenticity as defined by Beverland, as well as the general definition of authenticity as something that is real, genuine, or true.

Theme 3: Market Experience

Analysis of the data shows that FMs offer consumers an engaging experience that provides a unique atmosphere and a space for social interaction and community, both

contributing significantly to consumer patronage of FMs. These characteristics of FMs may be associated with approximate, or symbolic authenticity as defined by Beverland. Symbolic authenticity as described by previous research is explained as focused on symbolic impressions of traditions, as well as being encompassed by the type of experience that visitors feel that they have consumed (Beverland et al., 2008; Joseph et al., 2013). Essentially, it describes a consumer's feeling that a product or experience is authentic based on either their assumptions of the history or story behind it, or how their lived experiences match the "image" of the experience and the assumptions attached to that image. The market experience affected by atmosphere, social interaction, and community were three factors that arose from the data that connected to symbolic authenticity, where consumers may have felt more inclined to view their experience at the FM as authentic based on these factors.

Atmosphere

Many of the consumer participants mentioned that the environment or overall atmosphere of the market was a key motivation for FM patronage. The majority of these participants discussed the atmosphere of the market in comparison to grocery stores, generally describing the FM as more enjoyable in contrast to shopping at a grocery store. The consumer participants viewed FMs as more than just a place to purchase food, but also as an actual experience, reinforcing an idealized image of FMs as more than just a store. For example, Stephen shared:

Yeah, it might sound kind of silly, but I think its for me like, the experience. It's a more enjoyable shopping experience and thing to do in the day, than just going to the grocery store. I think the atmosphere, it's just nicer than the grocery store. I

feel like going to the market is a lot more of an activity. It's something that you can do on a Saturday or Sunday morning and pass some time. And it's like a nice, wholesome activity, I guess.

Stephen's perspective demonstrates how FMs are not just viewed as a place to purchase goods, but as meaningful experiences in themselves. His emphasis on visiting the FM as a "wholesome activity" reinforces the idea of FMs as more than just transactional spaces, but representing an enjoyable way to engage with the community. This aligns with approximate/symbolic authenticity, as the experience of visiting an FM can be a representation of a traditional and personal shopping experience unlike the impersonal nature of traditional grocery stores. Some of the participants discussed the atmosphere of FMs as specifically being attached to fond memories or experiences that they had as children of visiting the market with family members. Brittany expressed:

I think for me, a big thing I like about the farmers' market is the like, small-town vibe when you step inside one, like there's people everywhere, the lightings nice and this is not so much a thing anymore, but you usually pay with cash at the market and that, I guess it just feels nostalgic. Like, you stepped back in time 20 years but in a good way, like there's no fluorescent lighting and ads everywhere kind of thing. It reminds me of going to the farmers' market with my family when I was a little kid, it still has that same vibe.

FMs being considered as an engaging and enjoyable experience due to the atmosphere they provide aligns with symbolic authenticity; the aesthetic elements of FMs such as open-air layouts, vendors over cashiers, and a lack of commercialized branding create an experience that consumers perceive as more authentic than

conventional grocery stores. As mentioned, for some participants the atmosphere of the FM was closely tied to a feeling of nostalgia, which reinforces perceptions of symbolic authenticity through personal memories and cultural associations. For example, Brittany highlighted how elements like lighting and cash transactions contributed to a feeling of nostalgia from when she would visit the markets as a child. This feeling of nostalgia enhances the authenticity of the FM experience, as consumers may feel as though they are stepping back into time when visiting an FM, embodying the definition of approximate/symbolic authenticity.

Social Experience

The social experience of FMs was found to be one of the most important motivations for FM patronage among the consumer participants. In addition to the atmosphere of an FM, the social experience also contributes to the perception of approximate/symbolic authenticity among consumers. Two specific types of social experiences identified from the data was socialization with friends and family, as well as vendor interactions. Consumers view FMs as spaces for socialization, reinforcing an image of authenticity tied to personal and community relationships.

Friends & Family

In this study, only one consumer participant shared that she visits the FM alone a majority of the time. Sarah stated:

I go alone. I've been with like, family and friends before, but typically alone. I am very much a do not really talk to people in public kind of person, but I always find people I do speak with are friendly. That's part of why I like it.

Most of the consumer participants had a shared experience in that they went to the FM with friends and/or family. The time spent with friends and/or family was found to be especially important to participants, with many sharing that they do not often if ever visit an FM alone. As mentioned, most participants considered visiting the market to be an experience, but for the vast majority, the experience wasn't complete without friends or family present. Being able to participate in a shared activity was highly important. Mina shared:

I go with friends mostly. I think it's like a really fun experience, especially when you're with friends, so you can kind of like, exchange perspectives. They joke around through the entire experience. A lot of times before we actually shop, we'll get like a coffee and a little breakfast from one of the vendors and spend time catching up with everything. I don't think it would be as fun if I just went by myself, because then I would have nobody to talk to and it's just not the same by yourself.

The shared experience of visiting FMs with friends and family was emphasized as a fundamental part of the experience, and aligns with approximate/symbolic authenticity by framing FMs as community-oriented spaces rather than purely transactional environments. For example, Mina mentioned the ritual of getting coffee and catching up with friends before browsing the market, underlining how for her, the FM functions as mostly a social place. This reinforces the perception of authenticity, as consumers feel that they are participating in a communal activity instead of just running errands. Consumers are not considering FM patronage as a chore like grocery shopping, but instead as an opportunity to engage with their community and be among friends and

family for an outing. This showcases links to approximate/symbolic authenticity by reinforcing the perception that FMs offer a more “genuine” and socially rich experience than traditional grocery stores.

Interestingly, only three vendor participants considered social experiences with friends and/or as important to their customers. The majority of the vendors had a different perspective, describing their customer base as more concerned with purchasing products than socializing. One vendor, Derek, stated:

You see, the market is a, you know, a great variety of products and our customers are actually more there for their groceries and not there to socialize. So they’re kind of the people that arrive early and try to avoid traffic and they get in and buy their groceries and they get out.

This shows a large gap between how consumers view FM spaces compared to vendors. Most of the vendor participants seemed to view FMs as a transactional space more closely related to traditional grocery stores, which highly contrasts with consumer participants view of the market as being a place to socialize and connect.

Vendor Interaction

The ability to interact with vendors was another important factor linked to consumer perceptions of authenticity. While interaction with vendors was not as crucial to the consumer participants as socializing with friends and family, four participants discussed the ability to interact directly with vendors as important to them in the context of being able to ask questions about the products, and also to “put a face” behind the products they are buying. Unlike grocery stores, where products are generally sourced from anonymous (to consumers) supply chains, FMs allow consumers to connect with

the people producing their food. This aligns with authenticity as a whole, as well as approximate/symbolic authenticity by reinforcing the perception that FM products are more genuine, trustworthy and rooted in tradition. Jennifer stated:

I like that I can ask the farmer, or ask the vendor about the thing they're selling, and they'll explain. I think it's good to know about the products I can consume, and being able to ask right there is easy for that. I think there's also more of a social aspect with vendors. Sometimes they'll say like, oh we grew these here [location], and sometimes they'll talk about how they grew it. Its definitely different than going in the store and picking up a bunch of bananas or something, because then I can know who actually grew the stuff I'm buying.

Jennifer's account highlights how these interactions contribute to the perception of authenticity. By speaking directly with vendors, consumers can learn about the origins of their food and who grew it, reinforcing the idea that they are purchasing a "genuine" and more ethically sourced product compared to other options. The emphasis on putting a face behind the products that consumers buy contributes to the perception that FMs are more transparent and personal.

All of the vendor participants shared the opinion that vendor interaction was a key contributor to FM patronage, with the general consensus being that when farmers interact directly with consumers as FM vendors, it helps to build relationships and build recognition and branding for themselves at the market. Blake shared:

We don't send employee to the market. My wife and I do the market ourselves because we think it is important that we be there representing our farm in the summer. When things are really busy we usually have an employee here helping

out. We really feel it's important to, you know, show our faces there at the market, especially when you start to see the same customers, it really builds a rapport with them.

As seen in the above quote, vendors also recognize the importance of interactions with their customers as a way to foster a perception of authenticity. The vendor above described the significance of personally attending the market instead of one of their employees, as it allows them to build relationships with customers and establish a recognizable presence at the market. This personal engagement aligns with authenticity through reinforcing the idea that FM products are part of small-scale and community-based food production supply chains. The vendor-customer relationship fostered at FMs develops a positive psychological experience of the market and is one consumer motivation for patronage of the market (Arabska, 2018).

Community

A third contributor to the FM experience was the sense of community that consumers and vendors both associated with FMs. Many of the consumer and vendor quotes seen within the discussion of previous themes referenced community, especially in the context of supporting local farmers and having direct vendor interaction. The references to community within other contexts indicated a deeper social theme that helped to shape consumer and vendor perceptions of the overall experience of FMs.

For example, within the context of supporting local vendors, Lyn shared:

I like something with meaning, definitely. I really like supporting people that you know, do everything themselves. I like supporting people's dreams.

Additionally, Kristen noted that:

I enjoy supporting the vendors and honestly I have, like, I don't really do my research that well. So, I'm not totally sure how much of like a "small business" that actually is and how local things actually are. But I do feel better just like shopping there than at like a huge corporation.

Lyn wanting to support people's dreams and Kristen's preference for shopping at FMs based on feeling "better" supporting vendors instead of traditional grocery stores ties into valuing community engagement through participating in a local market setting. The perception of symbolic authenticity is seen within these quotes, where Kristen has not directly verified the authenticity of a product or vendor but purchases from vendors based on trust, and where Lyn preferred supporting something she considered to have meaning.

Similarly, vendors also emphasized how the relationships formed with consumers contributed to their success and reinforced the FM experience as being a community space. Katherine shared:

During COVID, we were closed down when it first started and that was a really difficult time for our farm and lots of others, as we get a lot of our income from the markets. But it was really nice to see the community rallying around us farmers when the markets reopened, we had lots of conversations about it especially with our loyal customers.

Another vendor, Joseph, commented on the long-term connections they had built with their customers and how these relationships created a sense of mutual belonging:

We have been farmers here for over 20 years, and one thing we really love about it is the community support. We get into conversations with some of our long-

term customers that, you know, we talk about how long we've been selling and they'll bring up how they've been buying our stuff for a long time... It's just that feeling of support, and you know, belonging, that really keeps us going.

These quotes highlight how the presence of trusting, long term customer-vendor relationships contribute to fostering a sense of community at the market and provide evidence that reinforce the perceived authenticity of the FM experience for both consumers and vendors. Additionally, community within FMs appears to contribute to perceived authenticity not just as a factor of the overall atmosphere or as a product of social interactions (between friends, family and vendors), but through the creation of a social institution that embodies shared values. The relationship-based character of FMs differentiates them from traditional retail environments, reinforcing their identity as authentic community spaces. Community appears to create a perception of authenticity rooted in connection, social identity and a shared ethos of supporting local small-scale food systems.

Other Factors

Outside of the identified themes of pure, symbolic and moral authenticity, one other factor was found to contribute to consumer patronage of FMs, price. Interestingly, the topic of price had quite opposing opinions among consumer participants.

Price

Price was mentioned as a factor both contributing to FM patronage and preventing desired levels of FM patronage among consumer participants. Three participants mentioned that the prices between products sold at FMs and retail grocery

stores were relatively similar, and due to this similarity, they were more likely to purchase from the market due to other motivations, even if the price ended up being slightly higher at FMs. Hanna shared:

Price does play a huge factor, but then again you have to think about this is not like, factory made when we're talking about a farmers' market. So price does play a role but the other thing is maybe the uniqueness, so that draws me in. It kind of justifies why I would buy it for a higher price. I think anyways, if you know what's in season you can shop specifically for that, and I notice a lot at the market in-season stuff is usually the same price as the grocery store and sometimes even cheaper.

In contrast, two consumer participants mentioned how price is a barrier to them, and that they view purchasing from vendors at the market as more of a luxury and not something they could replace their typical grocery shop with. Stephen mentioned:

I'm a grad student and with that comes a really tight budget. I love the idea of farmers' markets, and I do visit a lot, but a lot of the time I can't justify the higher prices even though I really want to support the farmers. I do try to buy vegetables and other food when I get paid, but most of the time I have to buy my groceries at Walmart. I'm not saying the farmers should lower prices at all, I understand why they are higher, it's just not in my budget unfortunately.

Seven of the vendor participants discussed pricing in comparison to grocery stores, and they shared how they acknowledged that the prices are often higher, which can be a barrier to some people. Emma said:

I would say, age wise, our customers are 30s to 60s, in that group and most of them would either be young families or retired couples and that's sort of the demographic we work with, families that are very conscious of what they are eating. And it certainly has to be, you know, people that have a little more disposable income just because for some stuff, our price point is a little bit higher than what you can get at a grocery store, at least pre-inflation. That's due to economies of scale, you know, we have a much smaller operation here than what grocery stores can offer, and we have to price accordingly in order to support ourselves.

In addition to the themes of supporting local, product characteristics and atmosphere and social interaction, price emerged as a factor influencing FM patronage for consumers. While some consumers viewed the slightly higher prices at FMs as justified by the unique offerings and local nature of the products, others found the cost to be a barrier. Vendors also recognized the challenge of competing with grocery stores, mentioning the higher cost to operate their smaller-scale operations. However, many of the consumer participants recognized the other factors mentioned above as highly motivating to FM patronage compared to the smaller impact of price.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

In summary, through thematic analysis of the data FM patronage motivation was broken down into three major themes associated with authenticity, with one additional theme without a connection to authenticity. The findings are summarized in the following list:

- **Theme 1: supporting local**
 - For many consumers, buying local products connects with moral authenticity, reflecting values such as community solidarity and environmental sustainability which can be linked to a consumer's self-identity. Consumers may feel a sense of moral fulfillment from supporting local vendors, motivating FM patronage.
- **Theme 2: product features communicating authenticity to consumers**
 - Product characteristics such as fresh and locally grown are valued by consumers, with the perception that FM products taste better, last longer and are more genuine than grocery store products, which is linked to pure authenticity. Additionally, the presentation of products including imperfections and a lack of packaging reinforced perceptions of pure authenticity.
- **Theme 3: market experience**
 - Consumers value the nostalgic and community-oriented atmosphere at FMs, linked to symbolic authenticity where FMs are seen as valuing tradition and personal connection. Social experiences enhanced the perception of

authenticity, viewing FMs as community-oriented spaces that allow consumers to connect with both friends and family, as well as vendors.

- **Theme 4: price**

- Price emerged as both a contributing factor and a barrier to FM patronage between consumer participants. Some participants felt a higher price was justified to due to the perceived superiority of products compared to grocery stores, and some considered a higher price to be out of their budget.

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivations that influence consumer patronage of FMs in Nova Scotia and to understand how both consumers and vendors perceive their market experiences. The first research question was focused on identifying the main motivations that attract consumers to frequent FMs in Nova Scotia. Analysis of the consumer interviews showed that these motivations were multidimensional and often interconnected. Three overarching themes of supporting local, product features and market experience captured the variety of factors that influence patronage. Consumers frequented FMs because they valued supporting local farmers and businesses, fresh, high-quality products, and the enjoyment of the market's atmosphere and social interaction. Together, these findings demonstrate that motivations for market attendance extend further than basic purchasing intention, to include ethical and social dimensions. To consumers, FMs were valued as spaces that fostered relationships, supported their local community, and offered "better" products than traditional retail environments.

During the initial stages of data analysis, authenticity emerged as a central and recurring concept through which participants described their preferences, values and relationships within the market setting. Although the study did not originally focus on

authenticity as a guiding framework, the analysis revealed that participants consistently used language reflecting ideas related to authenticity, such as genuineness, trust, and transparency. These patterns led to the incorporation of authenticity as a key interpretive lens through which the interview transcripts were analyzed. Through analysis of the data from semi-structured interviews with both consumers and vendors, the study confirmed that perceptions of authenticity were a key influence on FM patronage. Consistent with previous literature, authenticity was found to be multifaceted, dynamic and influenced by social identity among consumers. It was found that the main motivations that attract consumers to frequent FMs in Nova Scotia, and the expectations of authenticity for FMs and their vendors and products, aligned with three dimensions of authenticity identified in previous research: pure authenticity, symbolic authenticity, and moral authenticity. Product features, such as freshness and appearance, reflected pure authenticity, as consumers often equated visible product qualities such as freshness and a lack of packaging with being “real” or “better” than grocery store alternatives. The theme of supporting local reflected moral authenticity, where consumers preferred purchasing from FMs as it aligned with their values. Buying directly from small-scale vendors was seen as a form of ethical consumption through supporting local communities and minimizing environmental impact. The overall market experience including atmosphere, social interaction and community, was associated with symbolic authenticity. Consumers frequently mentioned the market’s general atmosphere, ability to form relationships with vendors and a sense of community as reasons to shop at FMs. Consumers mentioned visiting FMs as more of a social outing than an errand when compared with traditional grocery stores. These symbolic cues created a perception of FMs as trustworthy, meaningful and worth supporting. Price was found to be an additional motivation for FM

patronage for a minority of consumers. All consumer participants expressed an overlap in motivations, where several motivations were provided by each participant, showing that authenticity assessments in this context were multi-dimensional.

The second research question asked how consumers assess authenticity and the expectations they have of FM products, vendors and experiences. Consumers tended to evaluate authenticity through visible and relational cues. They looked for signs that products were genuinely produced by the vendor, valued transparency about sourcing and production practices, and formed trust-based relationships with vendors who were consistent with their product offerings. Expectations of authenticity were tied with the perceived integrity of vendors and the overall market environment and the experiences it provides. Participants associated authentic markets with friendliness, openness and trust that developed through repeated interactions and purchases.

Research question three focused on how vendors perceived authenticity and what they believed to be important for consumer patronage of FMs. Their responses were generally consistent with the motivations that consumers described. Vendors also viewed authenticity as central to customer relationships, with a focus on production practices and their reputation as an honest vendor. They emphasized the importance of being transparent about how their products were made and/or grown. Vendors believed that consumer loyalty was built on long-term trust established through personal interactions and consistent product offerings.

Some gaps emerged between the consumer and vendor groups beliefs. For example, some vendors believed that consumers placed less value in social experience, noting that some consumers preferred to visit FMs alone for utilitarian purposes, in

comparison to the importance of social experiences among family, friends and community members as described by the consumer participant group. Additionally, a few consumers expressed trust in vendors but lacked knowledge of their production methods or where products were sourced from. Some vendors, in turn, did not always actively communicate their practices and assumed consumers did not place importance on the topic. This reflects an opportunity for vendors to validate the authenticity consumers assume. They could use signage that contains stories about the history, ownership, and operation of their farms. They could post information about their values and how they avoid unnecessary chemicals along with verbal communications about the quality and heritage of their products. Such communication would increase knowledge and transparency about their products and practices which in turn could increase trust through communication.

Overall, the findings support a relational and contextual understanding of authenticity perceptions within FMs. During the data analysis, it became clear that both consumers and vendors considered authenticity to be a central element of FMs. Authenticity assessments were not just determined by objective measures such as certifications or labels, but also constructed through the interaction of values, social experience and communal identity. Participants frequently described authenticity in terms of honesty, transparency and connection, emphasizing the importance of being able to trust vendors and verify where and how products were made and/or grown. The study affirms that authenticity should be considered as both a product-centered and relationship-centered phenomenon, and in the context of FMs, co-created by consumers and vendors and sustained through relationships and mutual trust. Consumers often

equated face-to-face interaction with vendors and the communication that products were grown by the vendors themselves as evidence that the products were “real” or “genuine.” Vendors associated authenticity with integrity in production practices and honest communication with consumers.

While numerous definitions of authenticity exist in the literature, participants in this study tended to describe authenticity in a way that aligns with the common definition of authenticity as being “what is genuine, real, and/or true” (Arnould & Price, 2000; Bendix, 1992; Berger, 1973; Bamossy & Costa, 1995; Thompson et al, 2006). Consumers and vendors both associated authenticity with honesty, transparency and trust, which they perceived as observable through interaction. Additionally, consumers preferred products that were ethically produced, environmentally friendly, and local. Authenticity assessments were evident in participants’ preferences for verifiable product characteristics such as freshness and minimal packaging. In this way, participants’ views on authenticity most closely reflected Beverland’s (2008) forms of moral, pure/literal and symbolic authenticity.

These findings demonstrate that both consumer and vendor interpretations of authenticity were based in lived experiences and shared values. This perspective underscores the role of social connection and beliefs about ethical conduct in shaping how participants perceived and assessed authenticity within FMs. It also suggests that authenticity partly functions as both a personal and collective perception, emerging from repeated, trust-based interactions within the members at FMs.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to theoretical understandings of authenticity by providing an account of how authenticity is assessed by both consumers and vendors at FMs in Nova Scotia. A major theoretical implication of this study involves the provision of additional research on the topic of authenticity and what variables it encompasses, which can assist with the development of a more robust definition of authenticity, as there are several different definitions of authenticity with no academic consensus on how it is defined, or how that definition may change in different contexts or among different consumers (Beverland et al., 2008; Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). The findings of this study provide insight into what variables make up a consumer's multi-dimensional assessment of authenticity in the specific context of FMs, through the lens of consumer motivations for patronage of FMs. Building on Beverland et al.'s (2008) framework of pure, symbolic and moral authenticity, this study affirms the multidimensional nature of authenticity while extending current theory in key ways.

The use of a qualitative process in the form of semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity to capture the complexity and contradictions that may be present within consumer and vendor perspectives, that would not be possible to capture with the use of quantitative methods. Two major contradictions between consumers and vendors arose within the findings of the study. First, consumers placed much more importance on social interactions between friends, family and the larger community at the market as a motivator for FM patronage than vendors did. Second, while consumers trusted vendors they were not necessarily aware of product origins or vendor practices, while some vendors assumed this was implied and not necessary to communicate.

Additionally, the authenticity research in an FM context within academia has largely centered around the experience and perceptions of the consumer group, with little research into the experiences and perceptions of FM vendors. Vendors shared valuable insight into what they believed motivated consumers to visit and purchase from FMs, as well as their perspective on authenticity within the FMs they sell at. By including both consumers and vendors, the study advances a co-constructive understanding of authenticity. While consumers seek alignment with personal values based on their individual and social identities and use these to assess authenticity, vendors engage in communicating authenticity through cultivating transparency, relationships and trust. This dual perspective shows that authenticity may be negotiated through interaction, and is not fixed but sustained through ongoing communication.

The most significant theoretical contribution is the identification of the importance of community as a core element of both symbolic and moral authenticity, While previous research has acknowledged the community as a benefit of FM participation, the results of this study shows that community may actively shape how authenticity is perceived and assessed. Consumers described social interactions and feelings of connection and trust as motivations for FM patronage and a major part of their overall experience at FMs. These perceptions reinforced symbolic authenticity by connecting consumer's preferences for FMs over grocery stores as aligning with their personal values and identities, and moral authenticity by situating FM patronage within preferences for support of local community members (vendors). This finding supports a perspective on authenticity where social and community embeddedness is central to authenticity assessments. It supports existing authenticity models within research by

highlighting that authenticity assessments are not only derived from product cues, but also in the social infrastructure in which transactions take place.

Community could potentially be conceptualized as its own distinct type of authenticity, as in “community authenticity.” While importance of community overlapped with symbolic and moral authenticity within the findings, participants described experiences that may suggest that community is not just a part of authenticity assessments that fit previous categorizations of authenticity, but a standalone type of authenticity itself. Previous research has shown that there are community-based constructions of authenticity. For example, Smithers et al. (2008) provided findings that FMs are spaces where authenticity and community are co-constructed, and Johnston & Baumann (2010) suggest that food practices are authentic when they feel communal and value driven. Additionally, the literature has shown that relationships between participants are a key factor supporting alternative food systems like FM (Barbara & Dagnes, 2016). However, the previous literature does not isolate community as its own category of authenticity. Community is not fully captured by the current definitions of pure, symbolic or moral authenticity as considered within the findings of this study, or other definitions of authenticity outlined by the extant literature. Community authenticity appears to be a created by a sense of belonging to a larger group, where relationship building, social identity, and mutual trust give participants the feeling that their patronage of FMs is meaningful within a collective context.

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, this study provides beneficial implications for FM vendors and FMs as a whole, providing valuable insight into consumer patronage of

FMs, and what may encourage purchase behaviour at the market. FM vendors can use the results of the study to learn more about their customers' preferences and purchasing habits to develop communication and brand strategies to boost sales and further develop consumer-vendor relationships. For example, consumer participants shared that they consider the freshness and local nature of FM produce as major reasons they shop at FMs. Vendors could create signage that shows the growing location of their products, as well as signage that provides consumers with the date and time specific products were harvested or made, to communicate how fresh each product is. This would also have the benefit of reducing the gap between consumer and vendor understanding of FM products. As mentioned within the discussions section, consumers often are not sure of how products are grown or where they are sourced from, but trust vendors due to assumed authenticity perceptions. Increased communication would validate consumer's perceptions and improve vendor transparency.

FM co-ops such as FMNS can use the findings of the study to develop a marketing strategy that attracts consumers based on providing information that consumers desire, such as environmental benefits, local vendor profiles, organic produce availability, and more. FMNS specifically could increase advertising their "make it, bake it, grow it" policy for vendors, communicating this to consumers so that they are aware of the authenticity of the products provided at FMs that are part of FMNS. Additionally, advertising FM participation as contributing to environmental sustainability and supporting local small-scale producers could leverage the consumer motivation created by the desire to purchase goods that align with their personal and ethical values. Considering the importance of atmosphere and community determined by the study,

market organizers could invest in atmosphere-building efforts and cultivate a community-oriented environment. This could include live music from local artists, small spaces within the market dedicated to informal socializing, highlighting vendor and customer stories on social media, and advertising other adjacent community events to increase awareness.

Policy makers could find it beneficial to provide communication regarding what is considered local, as there is no set definition. Consumer and vendor participants of the study largely considered local to be within Nova Scotia, and this information could potentially be used to predict what consumers would consider local in other areas.

Limitations of the Study

Research limitations describe the potential weaknesses of the study that are based on factors outside of the researcher's control. The largest limitation to the study is that the author is a single analyst, and there were no other researchers to verify the author's interpretation of the data. Due to constraints of the thesis requirements of which this thesis is held to, this limitation could not be mitigated. The problem that this limitation poses is that a researcher interprets the data through a lens affected by their potential personal biases (contributed by factors such as cultural background, age, gender, previous experience with the subject matter, etc.) that create a unique perspective when analyzing the data. Researcher bias in qualitative research may impact the validity and reliability of the findings derived from the data. A researcher must be aware of these disadvantages and consider them when analyzing and interpreting data to attempt to avoid biases whenever possible. When analyzing the data of the study, the researcher

considered the biases they may hold and made an effort to view and interpret the data in a bias-free manner.

Another limitation of the study was the limited access to data, with the concentration of seven consumer participants within the Halifax Regional Municipality, an urban area in Nova Scotia. Results of the study may not accurately reflect the motivations of FM patronage in rural Nova Scotia, with only three consumer participants residing outside of the Halifax Regional Municipality. The time restraints imposed on the research due to the academic deadlines associated with the study affected the number of participants that could be recruited and interviewed. However, the data was determined to have sufficient saturation, as determined by the overlap of themes discussed by participants during the research process.

An additional limitation is the lack of diversity within the participant sample. As the initial planned participant recruitment at FM locations did not provide enough participants, recruitment was largely completed at Dalhousie University, so many of the participants fall within a younger age group. However, as described within the methodology, the snowball method for recruitment was also used, which provided samples from differing age groups and no major difference in results was found between age groups.

Additionally, due to many of the participants being young adults (students and early-career professionals), this demographic does not fully align with the consumer groups that vendors identified as their most loyal and consistent customers which were young families and seniors. As a result, the findings may not fully reflect the motivations and perceptions of these key consumers. Future research should aim to include a broader

cross-section of participants especially within the demographic groups described by vendors as their core customers, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer motivations at FMs.

Due to the qualitative method chosen, consisting of semi-structured interviews, another limitation of the study was the findings consisting of self-reported data by participants. Self-reported data cannot be independently verified, and can contain potential sources of bias due to its nature.

Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study suggest several potential areas for future research. While this study focused on authenticity within the context of FMs in Nova Scotia, the findings have a broader theoretical relevance within a larger scope. A key contribution of this study is the emergence of community not just as a factor affecting authenticity assessments among consumers, but potentially as a distinct category of authenticity itself. Future research should explore the conceptual validity of “community authenticity” and how meaningful social relationships and shared values could be key contributors to the experience of community authenticity. This research could explore questions such as “Does community authenticity operate as a new standalone type of authenticity, or is community just a key factor that contributes to the perception of existing definitions of authenticity?” It would be important to determine how consumers distinguish community authenticity from other definitions, such as symbolic authenticity.

Additionally, if community authenticity was to be found as a valid type of authenticity, it would be interesting to expand the contextual scope and discover how community authenticity may vary across market size, geography or demographic

contexts. Similar dynamics of community authenticity could potentially be found in other tight-knit social spaces such as craft markets, social clubs, fitness and wellness communities, etc. Community authenticity may be seen within small, local alternative food systems such as FMs, but could it be seen on a much larger scale (such as consumer groups having brand loyalty for multinational companies)? One thing to consider would be how social media has allowed for large groups of consumers to discuss topics together from across the globe; could community authenticity be fostered within online spaces without the physical connections and relationship building seen within the small local FMs of this study? It would be important to investigate whether community authenticity could be perceived in digital spaces, such as within online brand communities, virtual marketplaces and social media subculture groups.

Future research on authenticity should also consider how authenticity in general is affected by digital spaces. Do consumers experience and perceive authenticity differently within digital spaces vs in person shopping, and if so, how? Many of the cues that consumers rely on for authenticity assessments would not be available when browsing digital spaces. How could brands effectively communicate authenticity to their customers online?

Another suggestion for future research within authenticity would be to continue to examine how different consumer groups define and assess authenticity, and why these assessments differ. The results of this study demonstrated similar findings within previous research on authenticity by Beverland et al., (2008) which suggested that authenticity can be broken down into three types: pure, symbolic and moral authenticity. These three types of authenticity should be explored further and in wider contexts, to

provide more insight into how they interact and overlap, as well as if one type may carry more weight than another when a consumer is making an authenticity assessment that may affect purchase behaviour.

While much of the research on authenticity focuses on defining authenticity as is there no consistent definition, a consideration could be made to focus more on how an individual's self-identity, group membership and underpinning goals may create a unique definition of authenticity within different consumer groups and individuals in general. For example, future studies could investigate how consumers express their lifestyles, values or social positioning in the context of authenticity. It would be valuable to explore how collective social identities influence what is seen as authentic within different subcultures (such as fashion), and how perceptions on what is considered authentic for an individual is used as a way to either differentiate or conform to mainstream consumption and trends.

Research on how brands manufacture and commodify authenticity as a selling point and how consumers react would be valuable as many companies have recognized the value of authenticity as part of their brand identity. What are the limits of authenticity when it is commercialized and not organically created, and when do consumers begin to perceive authenticity as staged or dishonest? How do consumers determine what is truly authentic, and how do they react to inauthenticity? Investigating consumer reactions to genuine authenticity compared to strategic commodified authenticity would expand on current consumer research surrounding authenticity and provide more clarity in how authenticity assessments are made by consumer groups.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Recruitment Poster

DO YOU LOVE FARMERS' MARKETS?



Are you:

- ✓ 18+ years of age?
- ✓ Visit a farmers' market at least twice a year?
- OR
- ✓ Are a vendor at a farmers' market in Nova Scotia?

JOIN OUR RESEARCH STUDY!

What you'll be asked to do:

Help us learn more about why people visit the farmers' market!

Participate in an open-ended, discussion style interview about your assessment and opinions of farmers' markets.

The interview will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

**Dalhousie REB #:
2022-6153**

Participants will receive compensation of \$15!

For more information, please contact the lead researcher:

**Kaitlyn Pritchard
kt657191@dal.ca
705-303-7877**



APPENDIX B

Information Letter



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Project title: Real Good Food: Motivations for Consumer Patronage of Farmers' Markets in Nova Scotia

Lead researcher: Kaitlyn Pritchard, MSc (Business) candidate, Rowe School of Business, Dalhousie University

Email: kt657191@dal.ca

Supervisors: Dr. Peggy Cunningham, Rowe School of Business/Faculty of Management, Dalhousie University

Email: peggyc@dal.ca

Dr. Hamed Aghakhani, Rowe School of Business/Faculty of Management, Dalhousie University

Email: Aghakhani@dal.ca

Introduction

We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Kaitlyn Pritchard, who is a MSc student at Dalhousie University. Choosing whether or not to take part in this research is entirely your choice. There will be no impact on yourself in any form if you decide not to participate in the research. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience or discomfort that you might experience.

You should discuss any questions you have about this study with Kaitlyn Pritchard.

Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have questions later, please contact Kaitlyn Pritchard or Dr. Peggy Cunningham.

Purpose and Outline of the Research Study

This research study intends to gain a better understanding of why people shop at Farmers' Markets. The study will utilize a qualitative approach, consisting of in-depth open-ended discussion. This will consist of interviews, with two groups of participants – farmers' market vendors and customers. The data gathered will be analyzed for common sentiments and themes surrounding authenticity that emerge.

Who Can Take Part in the Research Study

You may participate in this study if you are either a customer or established vendor of a farmers' market or farmers' markets in Nova Scotia. In order to participate, all participants must be 18 years of age or older.

What You Will Be Asked to Do

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to attend a meeting with lead researcher Kaitlyn Pritchard, either virtually (Microsoft Teams) or in person at a location convenient for you. The visit will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour. During the visit you will be asked to engage in an interview with the researcher, Kaitlyn Pritchard, who will ask you to discuss your opinions and feelings about topics surrounding the farmers' market and your experience there.

Possible Benefits, Risks and Discomforts

Benefits:

Possible direct benefits of participating in the study for Farmers' Market vendor participants include increased knowledge on the motivations of people visiting and purchasing from Farmers' Markets. For consumer groups, possible direct benefits include the opportunity to discuss and potentially discover new information about themselves or how they perceive certain things, such as the concept of authenticity.

Indirect participant benefits also include the social opportunity to share information that will provide valuable data that may have a positive impact on their local market in terms of potential actionable strategies, and/or the satisfaction of contributing to the knowledge in regards to the research topic.

Risks:

For the proposed research, the potential risk to participants is minimal. There are no physical risks involved, and the potential psychological harm is minimal. The possible psychological risks associated with qualitative interviews may include threats to self-esteem, anxiety or distress, and fear of misrepresentation. These risks will be mitigated by using informed consent, offering breaks if wanted/needed during the interview process, ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality, and of course, participants may withdraw at any time.

Virtual interviews will be conducted using Microsoft Teams, using the lead researcher's Dalhousie University credentials. Participating in an interview via the Microsoft Teams platform carries some risk that data will be leaked, but the risk of this happening is the same as when using the platform in daily life. Similarly, in-person interviews carry the risk that conversations may be overheard, but the risk associated is minimal.

Compensation / Reimbursement

To thank you for your time, participants that engage in the interview process will be provided with the compensation for their time of either \$15 cash or a \$15 gift card from Farmers' Markets of Nova Scotia.

How your information will be protected:

Privacy:

Your participation in this research will be known only to the lead researcher Kaitlyn Pritchard. While the supervisors, Dr. Peggy Cunningham and Dr. Hamed Aghakhani, will have access to the interview transcripts, your identity will be removed from them before the supervisors have access to them.

The lead researcher, Kaitlyn Pritchard, will use her Dalhousie University credentials for the Microsoft Teams meeting, which will ensure that the Teams meeting recordings are securely stored in Canada. During the live Teams meeting, audio and video content is routed through the United States, and therefore may be subject to monitoring without notice, under the provisions of the US Patriot Act while the meeting is in progress. After the meeting is complete, meeting recordings made by Dalhousie are stored in Canada and are inaccessible to US authorities.

Confidentiality:

The information that you provide to us will be kept confidential. Only the research team at Dalhousie University – lead researcher Kaitlyn Pritchard and supervisors Dr. Peggy Cunningham and Dr. Hamed Aghakhani, will have access to this information. The people who work with us have an obligation to keep all research information confidential. All your identifying information (such as your name and contact information) will be securely stored separately from your interview transcript. During the study, all electronic records and data sets will be kept secure on an encrypted hard drive only accessible by the lead researcher. Any paper records will be kept secure in a locked filing cabinet located in the researcher's office. Data will be held for a period of 5 years, and then appropriately deleted/ destroyed.

Limits to confidentiality:

No data used in presentations or the writing of papers (including quotes or excerpts from participant interviews) will be attributed to any individual. To disguise individuals' identifies, quotes will be identified using pseudonyms. Interview transcripts will be stored in an anonymous manner, and a separate document that contains participant information (including the transcript number) will be stored separately. If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, their transcript will be matched to their information using the document described above, so that the data can be removed and appropriately destroyed.

Data retention:

Once the study is over your data will be put into secure long-term storage for a period

of 5 years as required by Dalhousie University. Data will be stored in a secure and confidential manner, with physical data locked in a file cabinet and electronic data secured on a hard drive only accessible to Kaitlyn Pritchard. After the five-year period, all forms of data will be destroyed or locked in an appropriate manner. Physical files will be shredded, and data on the encrypted hard drive will be appropriately deleted.

If You Decide to Stop Participating

You are free to leave the study at any time, up to and including the date of January 31st, 2023. If you decide to stop participating during the study, you can decide whether you want any of the information that you have provided up to that point to be removed or if you will allow us to use that information. After participating in the study, you can decide if you want us to remove your data up to and including the date of January 31st, 2023. After that time, it will become impossible for us to remove it because it will be incorporated into paper(s) submitted for publication.

How to Obtain Results

We will provide you with a short report outlining the results when Phase 1 of the study is finished. You can obtain these results by including your contact information at the end of the signature page below, or by contacting Kaitlyn Pritchard (kt657191@dal.ca).

Questions

We are happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact Kaitlyn Pritchard (at 705-303-7877, kt657191@dal.ca), Dr. Peggy Cunningham (peggyc@dal.ca) or Dr. Hamed Aghakhani (aghakhani@dal.ca) at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-3423, or email: ethics@dal.ca (and reference REB file # 2022-6153).

APPENDIX C

Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Real Good Food: Motivations for Consumer Patronage at Farmers' Markets in Nova Scotia

Lead Researcher: Kaitlyn Pritchard, MSc (Business) candidate, Rowe School of Business, Dalhousie University

Contact: kt657191@dal.ca

I have read the explanation provided in the information letter about this study, conducted by lead researcher Kaitlyn Pritchard, and supervisors Peggy Cunningham and Hamed Aghakhani from the Rowe School of Business at Dalhousie University. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I have been asked to take part in an interview that will occur at a location acceptable to me. I agree to take part in this study. I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, until January 31st, 2023.

I agree that my interview may be audio-recorded

Yes No

I agree that direct quotes from my interview may be used without identifying me

Yes No

Name

Date

Please provide an email address below if you would like to be sent a summary of the study results.

Email address: _____

APPENDIX D

Participant Interview Guide

Participants will be briefed on the interview process before beginning. The interview will consist of open-ended discussion that will allow participants to choose the direction of conversation and share their thoughts and feelings about farmers' markets. The questions outlined will not be used as they would be in a semi-structured interview, but instead to move the discussion along if needed. Where necessary, the following questions will be used to guide discussion:

Consumer Participant Guide:

Tell me about why you visit the farmers' market?

How often do you visit a farmers' market?

What do you like best about farmers' markets?

Is there anything that you would change that may provide you with a better experience?

What does the farmers' market have to offer for you over other traditional retail stores?

Do you visit the market alone, or with others? (If so, what is your relation to the people you visit the market with – friends, family?)

Do you meet and/or talk to others you know at the market (that you did not arrive with)?

Do you attend the market to purchase specific products on a reoccurring basis?

- If yes:
 - How often do you purchase goods from a vendor at the farmers' market?
 - Which products do you purchase on a reoccurring basis?
 - What reasons do you have for purchasing these products at the farmers' market and not other retail locations?
 - Do you engage in conversation with the vendors from which you purchase the products?
 - What made you choose the vendors that you purchase from? (If based on quality of products: how do you assess the quality of products that you choose to buy?)
 - Is there a specific vendor from which you prefer to purchase specific products? If yes, why do you choose to purchase from this specific vendor over other vendors at the market (if the product is available from more than one vendor)?
- If not purchasing specific products on a reoccurring basis:
 - What reasons contribute to not purchasing products on a reoccurring basis at the market?
 - What are the main reasons/factors that you attend the farmers' market when you go?
 - Are there specific goods, offerings or benefits that draw you to the market?

- Do you engage in conversation with vendors when visiting the market?

Vendor Participant Guide:

How long have you been a vendor at the farmers' market?

How would you describe your brand to a customer?

What words would you choose to describe your products that you sell at the market?

Why do you think customers choose to frequent your stall(s) and purchase products from you?

Do you find that there are similarities between yourself and other vendors here at the market, and if so, can you describe those similarities? Differences?

Are there any specific characteristics of vendors, products, and/or the market as a whole that you would describe as important to attracting customers?

- If yes, are there specific characteristics that you would consider more important than others?

Do you currently have a brand/advertising strategy?

- If yes, are you comfortable describing your brand strategy?
- If no, do you have any plans to implement any specific strategy, and if yes, what?

Is there anything that you would change about the market in the context of attracting customers?

- If yes, what changes would you like to see happen and why?

APPENDIX E

REB Letter of Approval



Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board Letter of Approval

July 22, 2022
Kaitlyn Pritchard
Management/Rowe School of Business

Dear Kaitlyn,

REB #: 2022-6153
Project Title: Real Good Food: Motivations for Consumer Patronage of Farmers' Markets
Effective Date: July 22, 2022
Expiry Date: July 22, 2023

The Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board has reviewed your application for research involving humans and found the proposed research to be in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. This approval will be in effect for 12 months as indicated above. This approval is subject to the conditions listed below which constitute your on-going responsibilities with respect to the ethical conduct of this research.

Post REB Approval: On-going Responsibilities of Researchers

After receiving ethical approval for the conduct of research involving humans, there are several ongoing responsibilities that researchers must meet to remain in compliance with

University and Tri-Council policies.

1. Additional Research Ethics approval

Prior to conducting any research, researchers must ensure that all required research ethics approvals are secured (in addition to Dalhousie approval). This includes, but is not limited to, securing appropriate research ethics approvals from: other institutions with whom the PI is affiliated; the institutions of research team members; the institution at which participants may be recruited or from which data may be collected; organizations or groups (e.g. school boards, Indigenous communities, correctional services, long-term care facilities, service agencies and community groups) and from any other responsible review body or bodies at the research site.

2. Reporting adverse events

Any significant adverse events experienced by research participants must be reported **in writing** to Research Ethics **within 24 hours** of their occurrence. Examples of what might be considered “significant” include: a negative physical reaction by a participant (e.g. fainting, nausea, unexpected pain, allergic reaction), an emotional breakdown of a participant during an interview, report by a participant of some sort of negative repercussion from their participation (e.g. reaction of spouse or employer) or complaint by a participant with respect to their participation, report of neglect or abuse of a child or adult in need of protection, or a privacy breach. The above list is indicative but not all-inclusive. The written report must include details of the situation and actions taken (or proposed) by the researcher in response to the incident.

3. Seeking approval for changes to research

Prior to implementing any changes to your research plan, whether to the risk assessment, methods, analysis, study instruments or recruitment/consent material, researchers must submit them to the Research Ethics Board for review and approval. This is done by completing the amendment request process (described on the website) and submitting an updated ethics submission that includes and explains the proposed changes. Please note that reviews are not conducted in August.

4. Continuing ethical review - annual reports

Research involving humans is subject to continuing REB review and oversight. REB approvals are valid for up to 12 months at a time (per the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) article 6.14). Prior to the REB approval expiry date, researchers may apply to extend REB approval by completing an Annual Report (available on the website). The report should be submitted 3 weeks in advance of the REB approval expiry date to allow time for REB review and to prevent a lapse of ethics approval for the research. Researchers should note that no research involving humans may be conducted in the absence of a valid ethical approval and that allowing REB approval to lapse is a violation of the University Scholarly Misconduct Policy, inconsistent with the TCPS and may result in the suspension of research

and research funding, as required by the funding agency.

5. Final review - final reports

When the researcher is confident that all research-related interventions or interactions with participants have been completed (for prospective research) and/or that all data acquisition is complete, there will be no further access to participant records or collection of biological materials (for secondary use of information research), a Final Report (available on the website) must be submitted to Research Ethics. After review and acknowledgement of the Final Report, the Research Ethics file will be closed.

6. Retaining records in a secure manner

Researchers must ensure that records and data associated with their research are managed consistent with their approved research plans both during and after the project. Research information must be confidentially and securely retained and/or disposed of in such a manner as to comply with confidentiality provisions specified in the protocol and consent forms. This may involve destruction of the records, or continued arrangements for secure storage.

It is the researcher's responsibility to keep a copy of the REB approval letters. This can be important to demonstrate that research was undertaken with Board approval. Please note that the University will securely store your REB project file for 5 years after the REB approval end date at which point the file records may be permanently destroyed.

7. Current contact information and university affiliation

The lead researchers must inform the Research Ethics office of any changes to contact information for the PI (and supervisor, if appropriate), especially the electronic mail address, for the duration of the REB approval. The PI must inform Research Ethics if there is a termination or interruption of his or her affiliation with Dalhousie University.

8. Legal Counsel

The Principal Investigator agrees to comply with all legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to the project. The Principal Investigator agrees to notify the University Legal Counsel office in the event that he or she receives a notice of non-compliance, complaint or other proceeding relating to such requirements.

9. Supervision of students

Faculty must ensure that students conducting research under their supervision are aware of their responsibilities as described above and have adequate support to conduct their research in a safe and ethical manner.