Empower Your Community's Farmers Markets: Data-Driven Marketing Insights

CLRFS Open Forum Webinar
April 2, 2025

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FARMERS MARKET COALITION

Agenda

- Background and history
- National survey of farmers market attendees
- Social media tests
- Preview of Farmers Market Communication Social Media Ad Guide



Farmers markets are a social good

- There are 8,600 farmers markets in the U.S.
  - 5,200 Walmart and Sams Clubs nationwide
  - Many in areas lacking retail
- Farmers markets benefit small and medium producers and local economies
- Offer more than food:
  - Social interactions
  - Community resources
  - Cultural celebrations
  - Civic engagement
- How can we use evidence-based strategies to grow customer base and increase revenue?



Culture of data collection at farmers markets

Multiple impacts:
Economic
Social
Program level

FMC Evaluation Resources page
farmersmarketcoalition.org/education/evaluation/
or just navigate to it using "Resources" menu to "Evaluation Resources" at farmersmarketcoalition.org



National Farmers Market Week

Designated in 2001.
FMC began to populate it and amplify markets during NFMW in 2010.
Created a Toolkit in 2014, update it annually, share it with 9,000 market sites and 20 state associations.
Use messaging about market organizations at the national level.
FMC's global partner World FMC also uses materials and data for its own campaign.



National Survey

Background

- Study conducted by UW-Madison and Farmers Market Coalition, funded by USDA to grow customer base for farmers markets
- Administered survey through National Opinion Research Center
  - Used a ‘panel’ to ensure inclusion harder-to-reach demographics.

Recent open - access study provides full results

JAFSCD
Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development
ISSN: 2152-0801 online
https://foodsystemsjournal.org

U.S. farmers market attendance and experiences: Descriptive results from a national survey

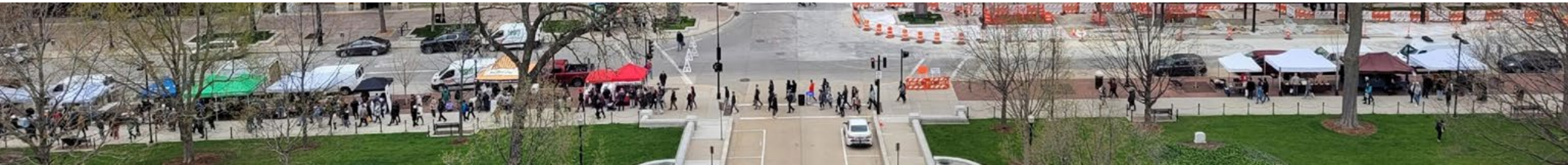
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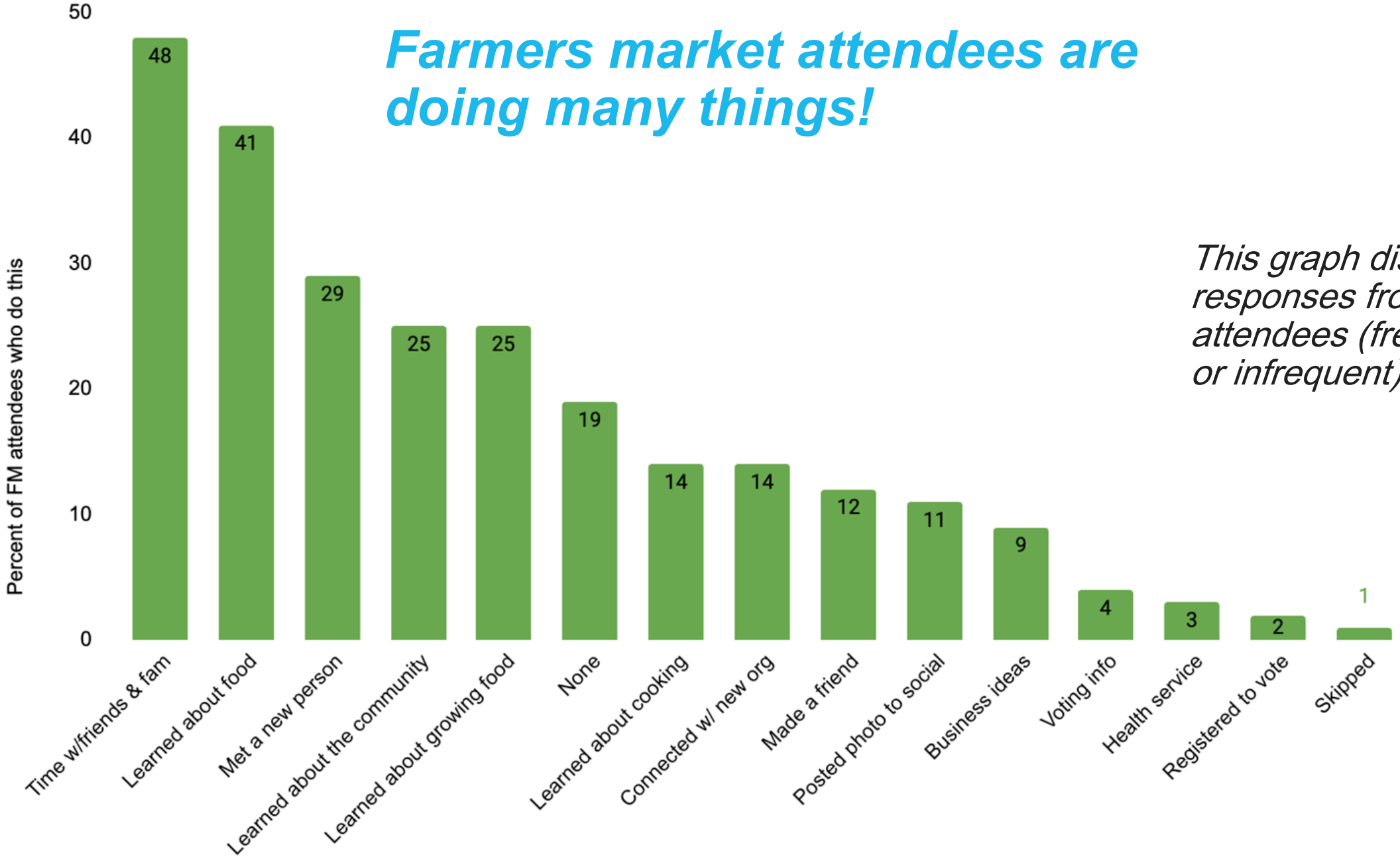
Darlene Wolnik [c]
Farmers Market Coalition

Survey findings

- Nationwide survey, August 2023, *N*=5,141
- 80% of people in U.S. attend a farmers market at least once per year
  - 41% attend 6+ times per year
  - Vegetables & fruits most common purchases
  - Most do at least 1 activity not directly related to shopping while at the market
- Attendees diverse in age, gender, race, and ethnicity
  - But women more likely to attend than men



Farmers market attendees are doing many things!



This graph displays responses from attendees (frequent or infrequent)

Because of farmers markets…

75%
Eat healthier

67%
Look for local products in stores

48%
Save money

49%
Shop at nearby retail

48%
Connect w/ orgs & people in the community

42%
Eat at a nearby restaurant

Proportions of attendees, frequent or infrequent, who reported "Somewhat" or more on these items.

Motivations to attend

- Top motivations:
  - Getting fresh food
  - Supporting local farmers
  - Getting high-quality food
  - Doing something fun
  - Eating healthier
- Younger people especially interested in:
  - Doing something fun
  - Buying environmentally sustainable food



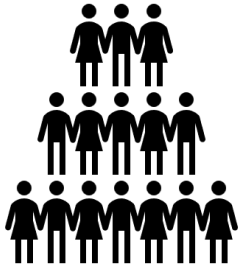
Barriers to attendance

- Top barriers:
  - Forgetting about the market
  - Perceived high prices
  - Crowds
  - Location
  - Parking









Convenience

- “Quite” or “Very” interested:
  - Buying prepared meals (23%)
  - Buying a meal kit (20%)
  - Pre-ordering for pick-up (16%)
  - Pre-ordering for home delivery (16%)

Social Media Message Tests

Message framing

- How information is conveyed influences attitudes and behavior
- Success depends on audience's interests and worldview

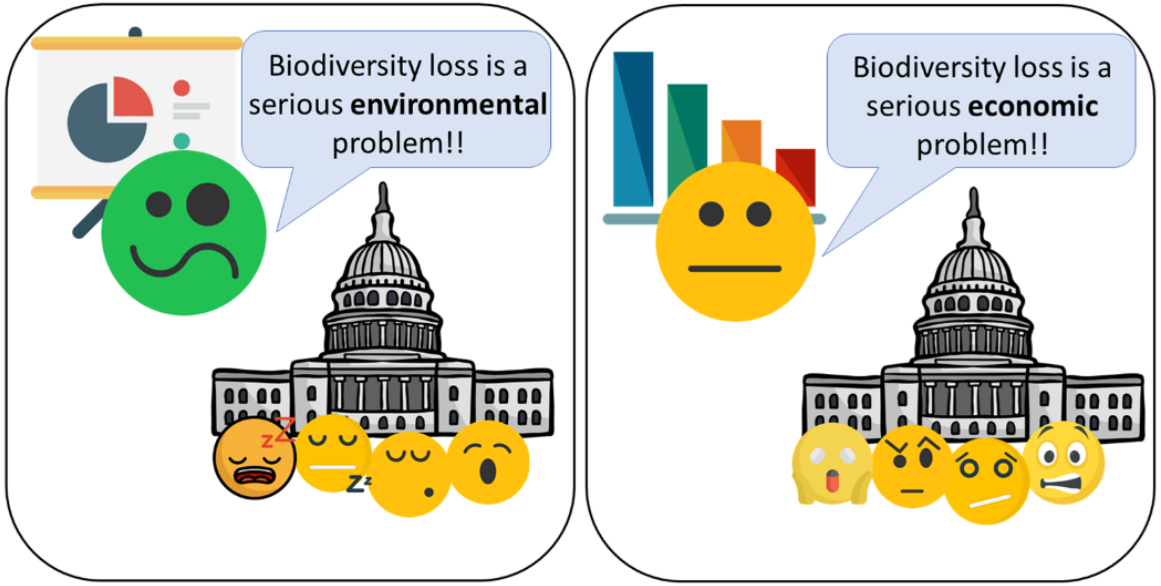
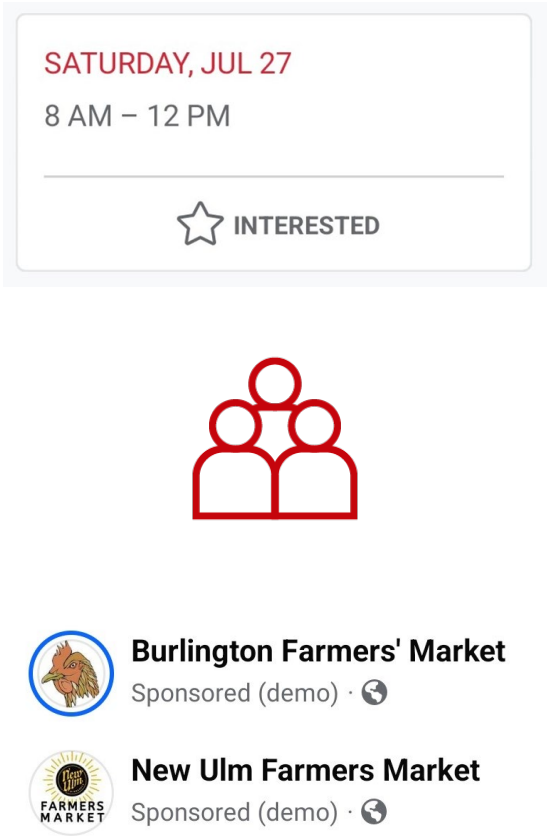


Image: Kusmanoff et al., 2020

Research questions

- Which **ads** are most effective in getting Facebook users to express interest in attending a farmers market?
- How do event response rates vary by **age and gender** ?



Fresh & Healthy

Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market
Sponsored (demo) ·

Find fresh and healthy food at the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market!



Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market
100-198 1st Avenue South , Wisconsin Rapids, WI, United States, Wis...

THURSDAY, JUL 25
8 AM – 2 PM
INTERESTED

SATURDAY, JUL 27
8 AM – 2 PM
INTER

14 1 comment

Like Comment Share

Fun

Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market
Sponsored (demo) ·

Enjoy a fun day out at the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market!



Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market
100-198 1st Avenue South , Wisconsin Rapids, WI, United States, Wis...

THURSDAY, JUL 25
8 AM – 2 PM
INTERESTED

SATURDAY, JUL 27
8 AM – 2 PM
INTER

8

Like Comment Share

Local Farmers

Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market
Sponsored (demo) ·

Support local farmers at the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market!



Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market
100-198 1st Avenue South , Wisconsin Rapids, WI, United States, Wis...

THURSDAY, JUL 25
8 AM – 2 PM
INTERESTED

SATURDAY, JUL 27
8 AM – 2 PM
INTER

19

Like Comment Share

Sustainable Food

Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market
Sponsored (demo) ·

Find sustainable food at the Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market!



Wisconsin Rapids Downtown Farmers Market
100-198 1st Avenue South , Wisconsin Rapids, WI, United States, Wis...

THURSDAY, JUL 25
8 AM – 2 PM
INTERESTED

SATURDAY, JUL 27
8 AM – 2 PM
INTER

3

Like Comment Share

Name and icon of local market

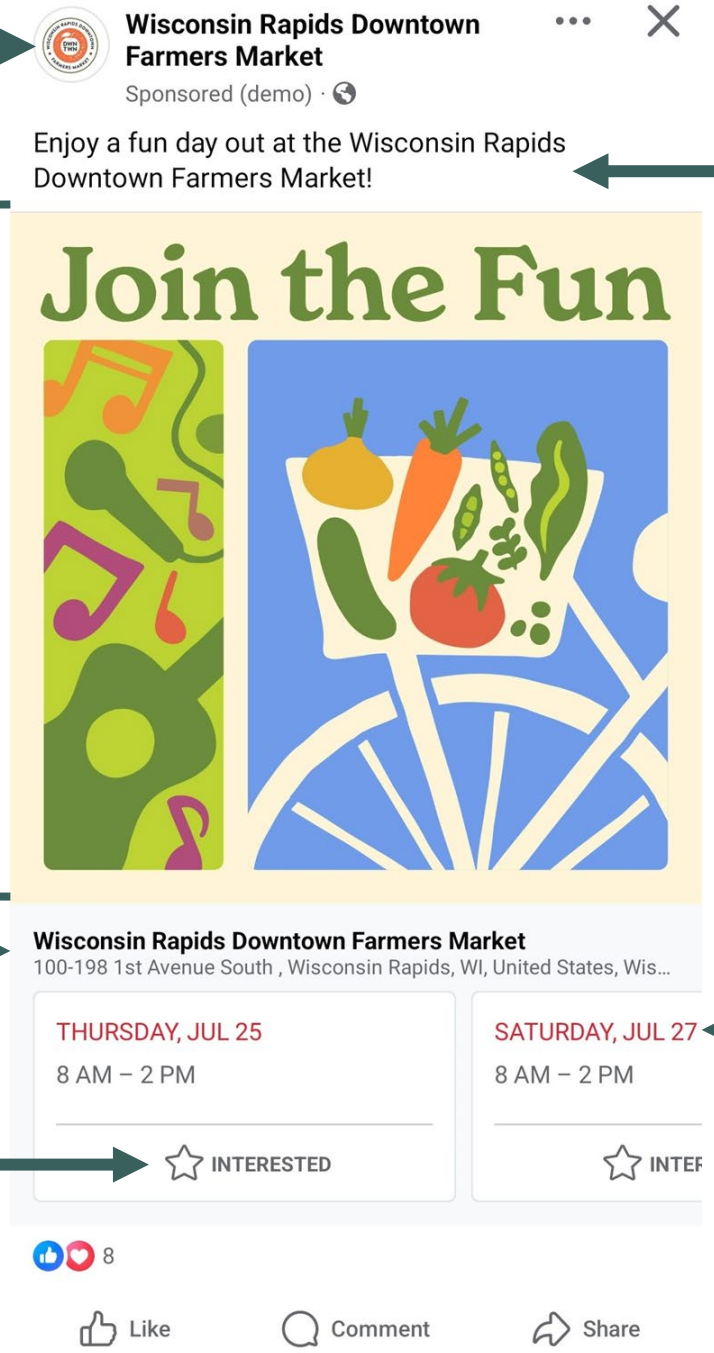
Same sentence structure for each frame

Same artistic style and color palette for each frame

Link to Facebook Event page

Date and time of next two markets (scrolls horizontally to reveal future dates)

"Interested" buttons



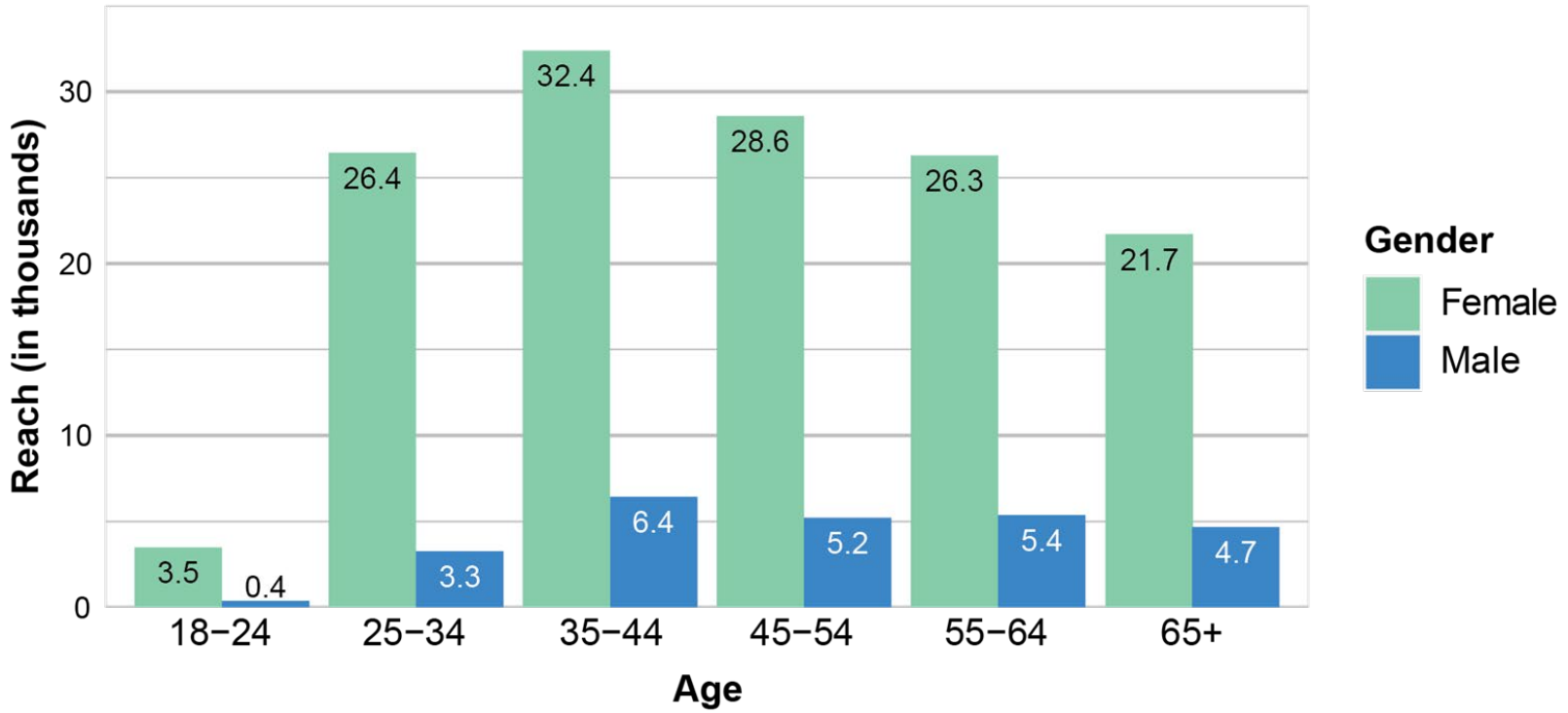
The campaign

- July 2024
- $5,000 split equally between 11 markets
  - Equal spending for each combination of frame and market
  - States represented: AK, CO, MN, WI, IL, VT
- Duration: 7 days, ending on market day
  - Most markets were on Saturdays
- Ads seen >550,000 times
- Reached >165,000 unique Facebook users
- >3,800 event responses (“interested” or “going”)



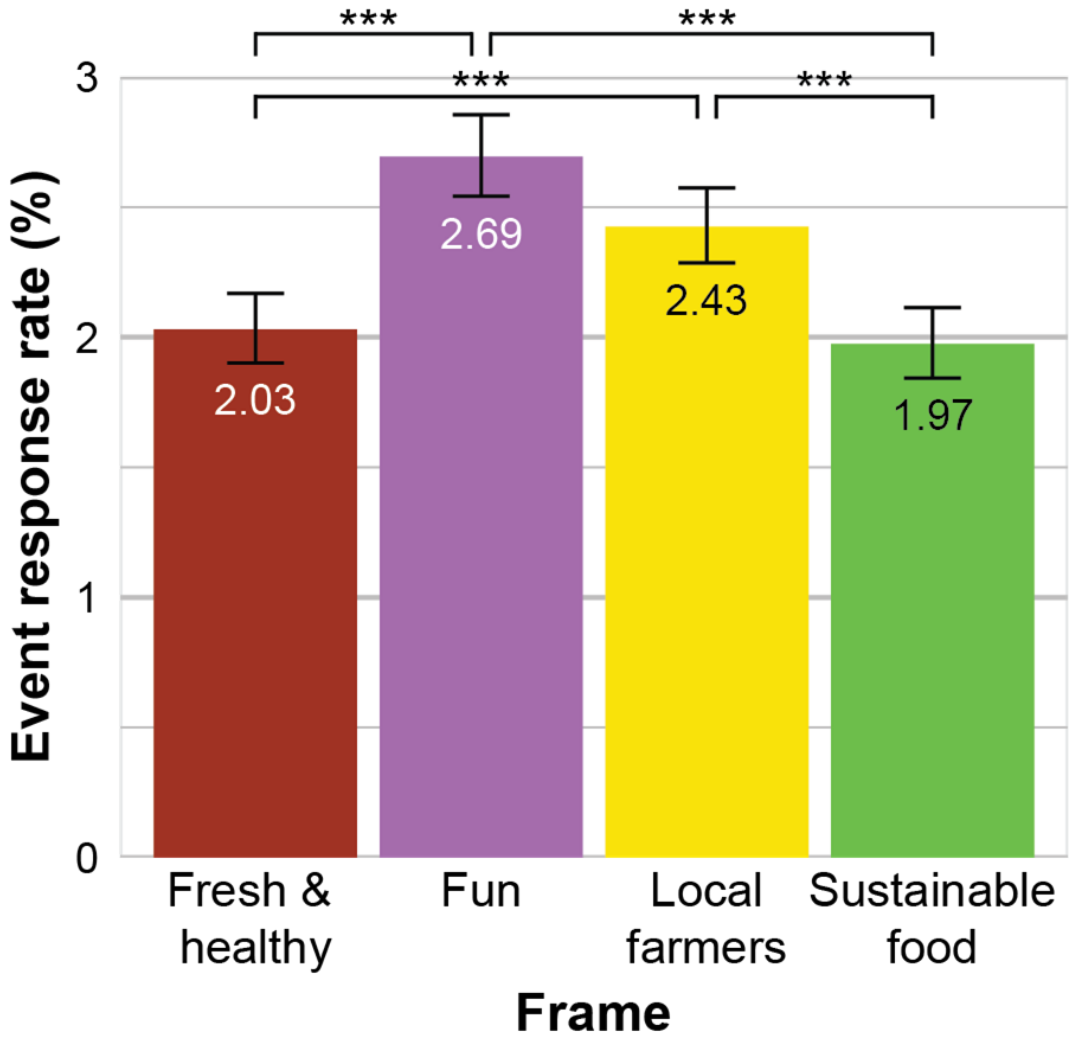
Who saw the ads

- Women:
  84% of the users
  who saw the ads
- Under 25 years old:
  2.4% of the users
  who saw the ads



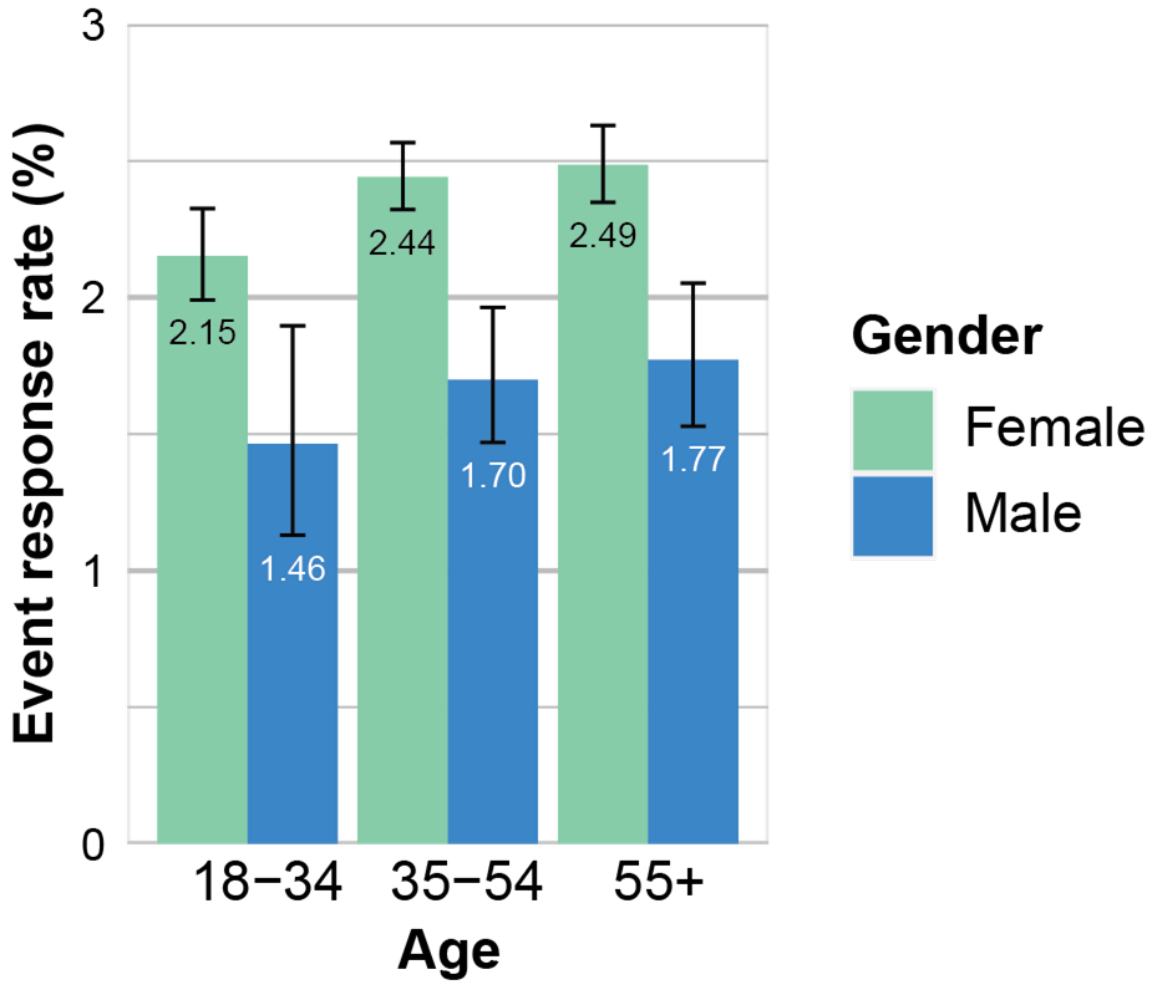
Event response rates by frame

- ERR = event responses / reach
- Highest ERR: *fun*
- Lowest ERR: *sustainable food*
- *Fun* had event response rate:
  - **37%** higher than *sustainable food*
  - **34%** higher than *fresh & healthy*
- *Local farmers* had event response rate:
  - **23%** higher than *sustainable food*
  - **20%** higher than *fresh & healthy*



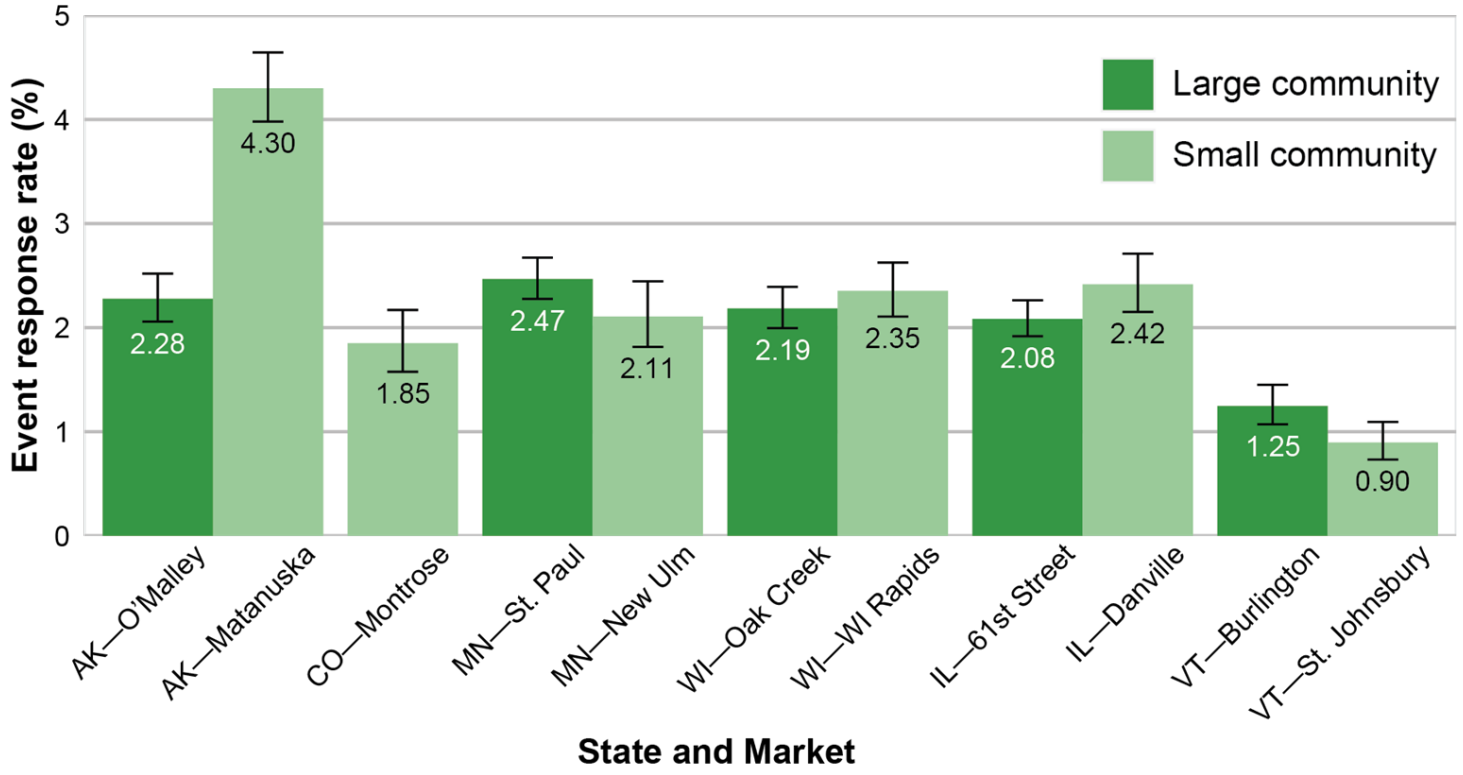
Event response rates by age and gender

- Women were **45%** more likely to respond to the event than men
- Older people more likely to respond than younger people
  - Not statistically significant
- When controlling for age and gender, *fun* still most effective frame



Event response rates by market

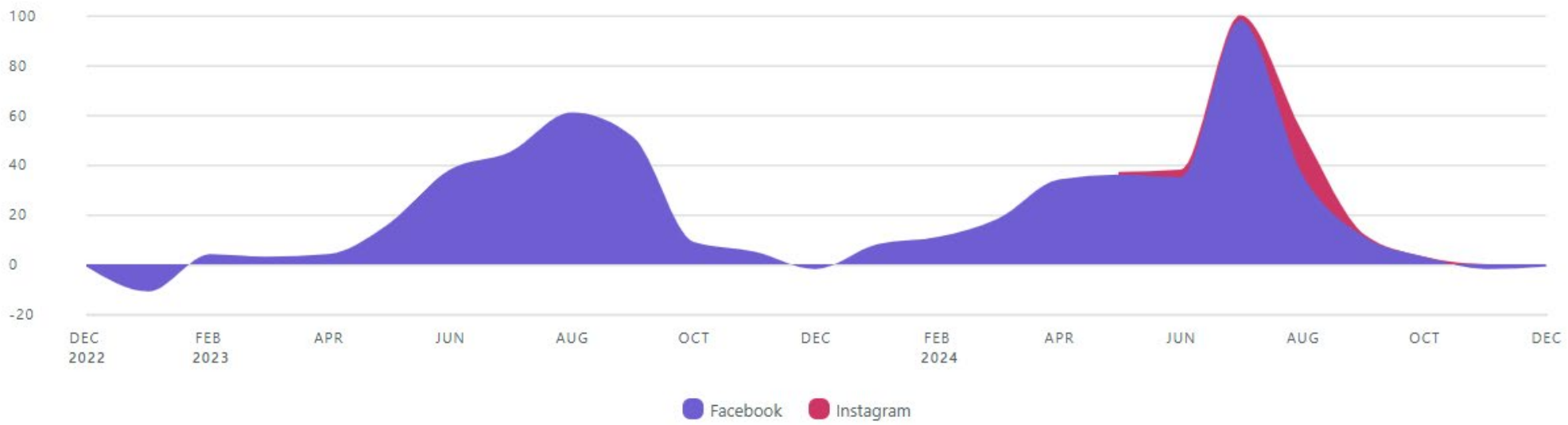
- Most markets had response rates between 2.0% and 2.6%
- Significantly higher:
  - Matanuska (AK)
- Significantly lower:
  - St. Johnsbury (VT)
  - Burlington (VT)
- When controlling for market, *fun* still outperformed all other frames by **>20%**



New Ulm Farmers' Market: Social Media

Audience Growth

See how your audience grew during the reporting period.



Audience Metrics	Totals	% Change
Audience	2,276	↗ 30.6%
Net Audience Growth	533	↗ 94.5%
Facebook Net Follower Growth	509	↗ 85.8%
Instagram Net Follower Growth	24	—

Cost per event response

Frame	CPER ($)
Fun	1.13
Local Farmers	1.18
Fresh & Healthy	1.44
Sustainable Food	1.56

Gender	CPER ($)
Female	1.29
Male	1.39

Age Group	CPER ($)
35–54	1.20
18–34	1.28
55+	1.44

Using Facebook and Instagram Ads to Promote SNAP/EBT Benefits at Farmers Markets

- Focus on ‘reach’
- Assumed less need for ‘engagement’
- Used both Instagram & Facebook
  - $4,350 split with 8 markets
- Tested 3 targeting strategies
  - All adults, parents, zip codes
- Results
  - Ads seen >1.2M times
  - Reached >935K unique users
  - Cost per 1,000 impressions: $3.50
  - Targeting strategies not significant



Limitations

- Algorithm is a black box
  - We took steps to minimize algorithmic influences, but cannot be eliminated
- Survey is snapshot in time (July 2023)
- Other artistic representations of frames could give different results
- Smaller #s of young people and men may have hidden differences in frame effectiveness by age and gender
- Measuring actual attendance and revenue was challenging

Implications for promoting farmers markets

- The idea that farmers markets are *fun* and support *local farmers* appeals to Facebook users more than *fresh, healthy, and sustainable food* does
  - This is true across the country, not just in one state
- Creating Facebook Events and marketing them through paid ads and organic posts can be a good way to help people remember the farmers market
- To reach younger people, other platforms such as Instagram or TikTok might be more effective

Farmers Market Communications Toolkit Preview

Forthcoming

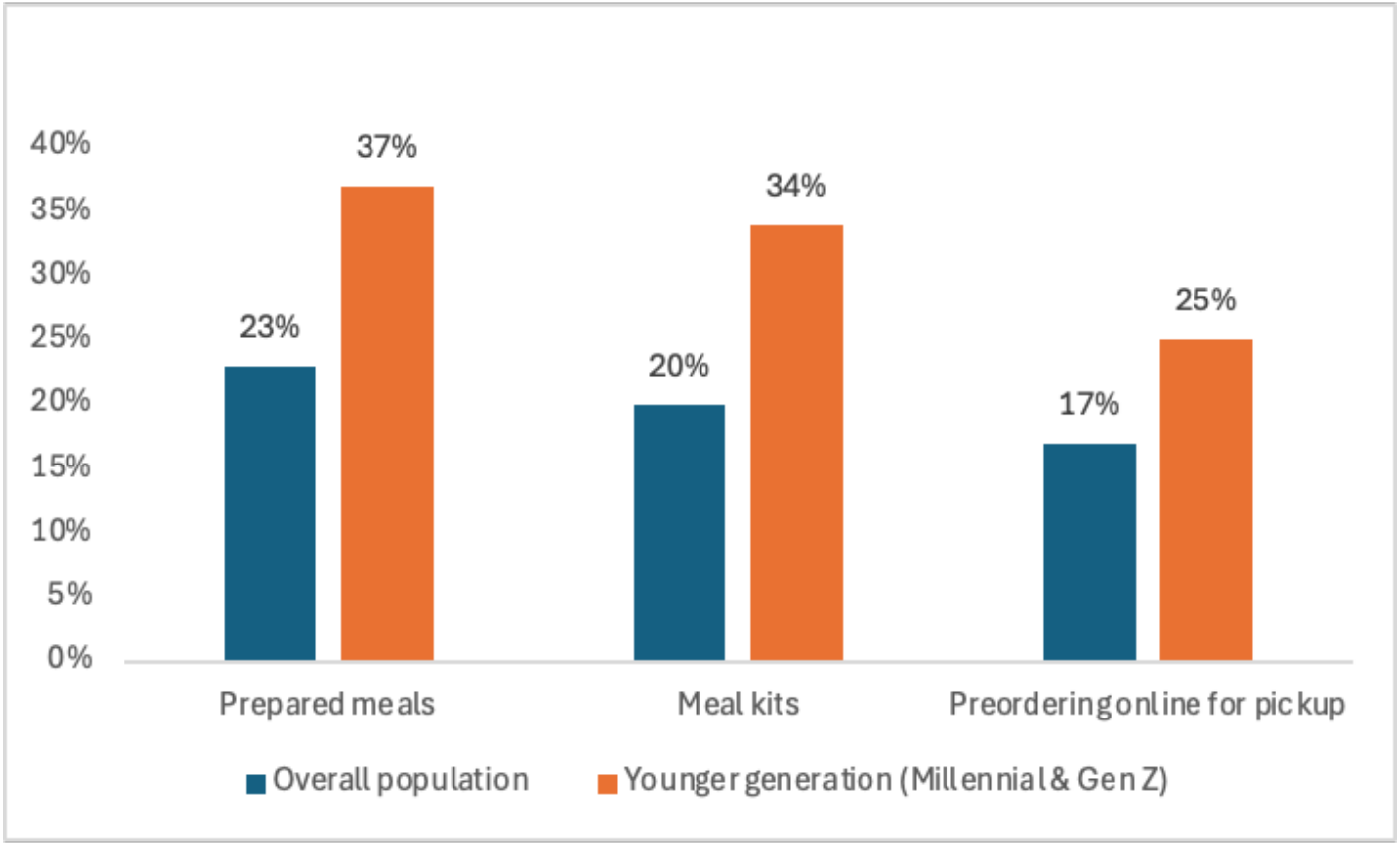
- More peer-reviewed studies on way
  - Audience segmentation
  - Communication Infrastructure Theory
  - Social Media results
- Webinars
  - How-to do social media for farmers markets operators
  - Extension and food systems professionals
- Farmers Market Communication Toolkit

What do we have in our toolkits….?

- A lot of farmers market marketing tips!
- For example… how to get people spend more in the markets…

Knowing the customers better:
How to get people spend more in the markets?

- Interest in convenience options (especially among younger attendees!)



Developing social media graphics based on data from project



Individuals eat healthier

- 75% attendees reported eat healthier



Community building

- Nearly half (49%) reported connecting with others in their community at the market



Local business boost

- 49% shopped at local business
- 42% ate at local restaurants

Encouraging attendees to publicize your market

Word-of-mouth usually most effective





Step-by-Step getting started with social media ads:
How to effectively target customers with specific demographics?

1. Targeting

Young people

2. Message Tailoring

Emphasize fun activities

3. Platform Selection

Instagram and Tiktok

4. Create Event Ads



More coming…. What do you want?

- **Demographic segmentation** to inform tailored marketing
- Understanding **motivations** and **barriers** of going to farmers markets
- **Selling value of market** to stakeholders
- Step-by-step **social media marketing guidance for managers**
- **Free, professionally designed graphics** to support your outreach
- Learn how to evaluate **social media performance and metrics**
- **And more….**

Questions?



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