Embracing Culture at the Centre of Hope Food Bank

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Embracing Culture at the Centre of Hope Food Bank

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Introduction

- 13.9% of London, ON households are food insecure (Statistics Canada, 2014).
- 18.5% of the London population are visible minorities; the three largest populations are Arab, South Asian, and Black (Statistics Canada, 2016).
- The cultural aspect of food insecurity is often overlooked (London Food Bank, 2013).
- Food acquisition in minority groups is restricted due to limited financial resources, poor language proficiency, lack of culturally-specific foods, and insufficient knowledge of community-based food services (Vahabi & Damba, 2013).
- The Salvation Army Centre of Hope (COH) aims to reduce the burden of food insecurity. They believe that everyone should have access to nutritious & culturally relevant food.

Project Aims

- Mitigate the lack of culturally-diverse foods offered at the COH Food Bank using four deliverables:
  1. Food preferences survey (paper): Collect food preferences to cater to the different cultural groups of London, ON.
  2. Food preferences survey (online): Increase accessibility of the food preferences survey for online audiences.
  3. Flyer: Advertise the existence of the food preferences survey.
  4. Food inventory list: Specify possible culturally-diverse food options to purchase and stock by the COH.
- Provide all individuals with the opportunity consume food they are familiar and comfortable with, using a food choice-model system.

Methods

1. Identify the Problem & Establish a Mission
   - Virtual meeting with COH to identify the problem.
   - Collaboratively determined the most suitable deliverables.

2. Gather & Analyze Data
   - Collected data from the COH (formal policies, shopping lists, food inventories, London population statistics).
   - Determined major cultural groups in London, ON.
   - Researched essential cultural food items using USC cultural clubs, personal connections, and primary/review literature.
   - Search terms: Middle Eastern, Asian, essential, popular, non-perishable, staple, culturally-relevant

3. Production & Approval of Deliverables
   - Created food list and surveys tailored to the major cultural groups in London using a variety of online platforms.
   - Gathered feedback and approval from the COH throughout the project.

Deliverables

1. Cultural food preferences survey (paper version)
2. Cultural food preferences survey (online version)
3. Flyer to promote food survey
4. Food inventory list relevant to the major cultural groups in London:
   - Middle Eastern: basmati rice, bulghur wheat, falafel, pita bread, etc.
   - East Asian: dried noodles, mISO paste, sesame oil, kimchi, nori, etc.
   - South Asian: chickpeas, jaggery, curry powder/paste, etc.
   - Latin American: tortillas, salsa, canned corn, tomatillos, etc.
   - Halal: lentils, barley, tahini, tofu, eggs, cereal, etc.

Impact

LEVEL 1: Individuals who access the COH Food Bank
   - Create a more dignified and culturally-appropriate experience at the COH.
   - Help reduce food waste at the COH by providing food options that are preferred.
   - Increase quality of life of individuals who visit the COH and bring them joy.

LEVEL 2: Minority communities in London, Ontario
   - Reduce the food insecurity disparity seen in minority groups compared to majority groups by providing foods that are more familiar and enjoyable.

LEVEL 3: Food banks across Canada
   - Our project can serve as an example to other food banks. They can use our survey model to expand their services to include cultural relevance.
   - Seek to reinforce equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Future Directions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Next Steps (Short-Term)</th>
<th>Qualitative Goals (Long-Term)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1: Administer food survey and collect responses.</td>
<td>Goal 1: Promote cultural inclusivity at the COH.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2: Use survey responses to expand food inventory list.</td>
<td>Goal 2: Provide a more dignified experience at the COH.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3: Purchase and supply preferred culturally-specific foods.</td>
<td>Goal 3: Expand definition of food insecurity to encompass cultural-relevance.</td>
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<td>Step 4: Conduct satisfaction survey based on improved cultural food options.</td>
<td>Goal 4: Expand initiative to other food banks in London, ON (and beyond).</td>
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Overall, we hope to stay in contact with the Centre of Hope to evaluate the long-term success of our project.

Barriers for future directions:
- Ensure the collection of a sufficient number of responses.
- Acquire funding to provide foods specific to several cultures.
- Incorporate the next steps into the Centre of Hope’s busy schedule.

Limitations of current project:
- Unable to collect survey responses within the timeline of MS4300.
- Only focused on the major cultural groups in London, ON; not feasible to accommodate to all cultures due to resource limitations.
- Unable to find a reliable Spanish or Arabic translator; next steps would be to translate our deliverables to additional languages.

Literature Cited & Acknowledgements


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