The Influence of Demographics on Trust of Food Related Information

GEOG*2260

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Introduction
This study explores consumer demographics, specifically those that impact the varying perspectives that University of Guelph students have in regards to food and trust of information. The following research question was crafted to guide the study; “How do different demographic factors influence perspectives regarding food among university students?” Within the city of Guelph students make up a considerable portion of the population. As a result, these individuals are a valuable and easily accessible resource for information or research pertaining to public opinions and perceptions of food. Farm and Food Care, a non-profit organization seeking to educate the public in order to challenge misinformation and social media fabrication, served as a partner to this research project. This institution was interested in determining the factors that dictate or constitute consumer trust, especially among individuals between 18 and 30 years of age, thus indicating that University students would make the most insightful study subjects.

In the early stages of this research project a series of objectives were created, all of which were either surpassed or met. Each of these goals continue to be connected to trust concerning food or nutritive information. They are as follows:

1. The first objective of this research project is to determine what sources of information concerning food are trusted.
2. The second objective is to find out why these sources are trusted or rejected.
3. Finally, the third objective is to correlate this information concerning levels of trust with an assortment of demographic factors such as community size, gender, and socio-economic status.

These specific goals guided the research process and aided in further revision at the conclusion of the study. For example, it was initially assumed that a student’s place of upbringing or background dictated specific spending habits and beliefs surrounding food. At the conclusion of the study however, this was not the case. After extensive research it appears as though the location in which in individual is raised plays little to no role in their perception of both the production and distribution of food information. In fact, individuals choose to trust certain outlets containing nutrition facts and news if they believe that the source in question has their best interests at heart. Regardless of whether this information originates from a doctor, nutritionist, or online source this opinion remains the same.

There are connections between the findings of this study and the results of other similar studies completed throughout different areas of the world and within other participant populations. These other studies have produced interesting data regarding trust of information and sources of information, as can be gathered from an in-depth analysis of other research reports.

Literature Review
There is a large bank of information contained within scientific journals and online sources concerning food trust and perceptions of information. A significant amount of this research exhibits trends between a broad range of demographic groups, specifically those that can be easily associated with student trust. As a result of this, the study illustrated throughout this report can be easily connected to additional articles and literature.

Ozilgen (2010) investigated the influence of education or the development of knowledge regarding food safety to the general perceptions and practices maintained within society. In the study, a total of 39 written questions across a multitude of topics with closed answers were given to a total of 845 Turkish university students in order to identify what sources of food information were trusted (Ozilgen, 2010). Ozilgen identified several trends within the data received at the conclusion of this
specific study. For example, 43 percent of students who were enrolled in health or food-related programs chose to trust scientists, while those enrolled in non-food or non-health programs trusted doctors at an even increased level (Appendix I, Ozilgen, 2010). As a result of this, it is clear that there is a significant difference among different groups of Turkish students. The highest amount of trust was placed in both doctors and nutritionists, while online sources associated with social media were viewed with caution and unease (Appendix I, Ozilgen, 2010). The results of the research conducted by Ozilgen can be closely compared to the results of the questionnaire used to target Guelph students. In this particular case, medical professionals were also considered as trustworthy and advertising, social media, and news outlets were thought to be misleading.

Another research paper composed by Papadopoulos et al. can provide additional information that can be used to support the study originating in Guelph. According the individuals responsible for this study, the aim of the research was to explore public trust in food safety regulations (Papadapoulous et al., 2012). By initially analyzing online databases, the authors discovered that the transparency of information was an important factor in determining levels of trustworthiness (Papadapoulous et al., 2012). Those organizations perceived as reliable are also deemed as to be a more knowledgeable source for information concerning physicians, medical personnel, public health officials, and community leaders. Due to this, this study confirms that doctors produce the the most stable or reliable information pertaining to food. On the other hand however, individuals are unlikely to trust state and government sources as they were routinely found to be mistrusted as a result of perceived food safety cover ups (Papadapoulous et al., 2012). This is supported within the survey results collected on the University of Guelph campus.

Fifty percent of students surveyed on the Guelph campus trust the government as a result of their large public presence within society. This result, which will be further discussed in this report, can be supported by a scientific article composed by Lise Hellebø Rykkja, an individual discussing consumer trust in terms of the government. According to Rykkja (2004), the government is viewed as an organization that supports the needs and desires of the majority. This is especially true when examining issues with food safety and the standardization of policies (Rykkja, 2004). These processes are used to gain public trust and generally have a positive reputation.

Additional linkages can be observed between gender, age, and the impacts of either the lifestyle or background of a specific individual. A study conducted by Rachel Bryant and Lauren Dundes can further validate the point illustrated above. In research applied to University students from Spain and the United States, differences in priorities exist when considering the acquisition of fast food (Bryant & Dundes, 2008). These differences are strictly connected to gender. According to the article, the results of a survey indicated or demonstrated that University students’ priorities are varied in regards to nutrition, product value, and convenience (Appendix 2, Bryant & Dundes, 2008). Approximately 61 percent of male American students considered monetary value to be a priority when compared to other participants in the study. In contrast, only 35 percent of people deemed this value as a priority (Appendix 2, Bryant & Dundes, 2008). Relatively few male individuals in the United States, exactly 29 percent, thought that nutrition was important. Roughly 60 percent believed otherwise. Despite these statistical differences, it appears as though students from both genders in each area generally choose to select foods that are convenient rather than those that are nutritious. This result implies that although there are slight differences in food preferences, there is little to no distinction between gender or country or origin. This was also illustrated throughout the University of Guelph study.

Similarly, there is other research available that suggests that food preferences do not change as a result of an individual’s background or home location (Boecker, Hubbard, & Scarpa, 2012). This specific study collected research concerning consumer preferences for certified animal-friendly foods in
an assortment of European countries such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom (Appendix 3, Boecker, Hubbard, & Scarpa, 2012). This study utilized the use of population demographics and socioeconomic factors such as age, gender, and level of education in order to achieve results. After a thorough analysis of the data collected, it was concluded that demographics was not an indicator of consumer preference (Boecker, Hubbard, & Scarpa, 2012). Again, this can be illustrated throughout the Guelph study. Demographic alone cannot sufficiently explain why consumers choose to trust specific sources of information.

Other articles can further illustrate that socioeconomic or demographic factors are unable to account for differences in consumer food preferences and access to information. An example of such a project was conducted by John Cranfield, Spencer Henson, and Jose Blandon at the University of Guelph. These researchers examined how Canadian consumers select fresh versus non-fresh food products (Cranfield, Henson, & Blandon, 2012). The results of this study indicated that participants in the study were more concerned with ‘brand specific quality’ rather than sociodemographic factors when choosing to purchase specific foods. The main reason for this is simple; the participants in question were reluctant to procure certain foods, specifically those that were local, due to a lack of information or knowledge concerning providers and the produce in question (Cranfield, Henson, & Blandon, 2012). Despite the above results however, many participants continue to evaluate local products in a positive manner. The results of this study demonstrate the contradictory purchasing habits and opinions of Canadian consumers. Overall, consumers evaluate local foods as high quality, but still continue to purchase brand name products as a result of their superior reputation within society (Cranfield, Henson, & Blandon, 2012). In terms of the Guelph study, this is the case as well. Students were less likely to trust sources of information that derived from unknown sources. As a result, these outlets of information were deemed as illegitimate, misleading, and unreliable.

Cranfield also undertook a study investigating the factors that consumers considered to be the most important when purchasing food. The study in question divided results into two groups: individuals who were price oriented and those whose motivations were categorized as ‘non-price’ (Cranfield & Innes, 2009). Of those whose motivations were ‘non-price’ based, a series of sub-groups were created concerning “naturalness” and “ethical production” (Cranfield & Innes, 2009). It was found that every individual’s personal perception of food varied across different socioeconomic and demographic factors.

**Methods**

Throughout this study a variety of strict ethical guidelines were followed in order to ensure that participants were treated with both respect and consideration. The most important concepts addressed through the use of ethics involved voluntary participation, informed consent, risk of harm, confidentiality, and anonymity. Before research could commence, preliminary certification was required for all researchers, and was obtained by all members of the study to ensure that later research proceedings would be handled in an ethically appropriate manner. Several reviews of the research proposal, consent documents, and survey were completed by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board, which served to validate the safety of research that would be conducted using human participants. The form of research this study focuses on is the use of surveys.

There are an assortment of reasons as to why the use of a questionnaire was selected in order to complete this study. This form of research has the capacity to utilise the input of a large amount of people over a short amount of time. This is valuable as it generates the opportunity for a significant amount of data to be collected from the targeted demographic in order to contextualize the study in question. As a result of this, a saturation point was reached early on in the research schedule, indicating that data collection should come to a close, and that the process of data analysis should begin.
The distribution of surveys was conducted using a random convenience sampling method. Questionnaires were distributed to students at various locations on the University of Guelph campus, specifically those that contained high concentrations of student traffic or movement. These areas included the Mackinnon Building, Rozanski Hall, and the University Centre. In order to optimize data collection to best fit the needs of this study, a series of screening questions were generated and posed to participants. The screening questions were to (a) ensure that the participant in question was a University of Guelph student and (b) ascertain that the individual was responsible for purchasing their own food. In this way all the data collected from the participants included in the study could be applied to the research question correctly. Students were selected using a method of approaching any individual who was not occupied with a time-consuming task and appeared receptive to participating in the survey process. In order to ensure full randomization and a variety of participants, questionnaire locations were occupied on different days of the week and at different times for a total of four days. Specifically in the morning between 10:30 am to 12:30 pm and in the afternoon between 2:30pm to 4:00pm. This can be illustrated in the table below (Table 1).

### Table 1: Survey Distribution [Times and Places]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>10:30am - 11:30am</td>
<td>Vanessa Lightle &amp; Becky Stein</td>
<td>University Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>11:30am - 12:30pm</td>
<td>Lisa Raggente &amp; Nozomi Nakazawa</td>
<td>Mackinnon Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:30pm - 4:00pm</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>University Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>10:30am - 11:30am</td>
<td>Becky Stein</td>
<td>University Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2:30pm - 3:30pm</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>Rozanski Hall (3) Mackinnon Building (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hard-copy paper surveys and information letters were numbered in order to establish anonymity and to create connection between the participant and researcher in the case of an unanticipated need for communication or the destruction of survey results. Surveys were handed to participants along with a letter of information and consent document, which were completed face-to-face with the researcher. A total of 70 surveys were completed and returned, with 65 having been filled out correctly and 5 filled out incorrectly and/or incompletely. This was the result of a distinct Japanese language barrier, participant misinterpretation, and lack of understanding. Fortunately, most if not all of these issues could be solved as a result of consulting and supplementing the missing information with scientific literature. Additionally, it was possible to translate the surveys composed in Japanese.

The survey is a combination of qualitative and quantitative questioning, with a stronger focus on the quantitative data, which is more useful when generating a numerical analysis of trends. Questions were divided into two main sections: the first considering attribute-type questions of the participants such as place of residence and purchasing habits. These closed-ended questions establish the necessary demographic information of the participant. The second section employs more open-ended questions, exploring the attitudes and beliefs of the participant in regards to information about food. These open-ended questions allow the participant to explain choices they made in the first section of the survey. The decision to use surveys as the main research tool was twofold, as it is not only the best option for researchers to reach the broadest range of participants within the study population, but also to clearly establish correlations between the varying demographic factors that were explored throughout the study. It is important to note that the survey illustrated in detail was subjected to a stringent editing process. It was revised a total of five times, the final adaption being piloted by three individuals who were not involved throughout the entirety of the research process. The feedback generated as a result of this process was both valuable and insightful, as it created an opportunity to enhance the survey and
optimize potential results.

The results of the questionnaire were evaluated in several ways. The most critical to the research process however, was the conversion of data from written short-answer-style questions into a numerical format suited for analysis within Microsoft Excel. Information was organized in a manner where specific columns were associated with the data collected from a certain research question. Qualitative data was generalized into one term that could be analyzed numerically, while any originally numbered information was derived into percentages and later graphed.

**Findings**

After analyzing the survey results, it was found that overall doctors were the most trusted source of information regarding food, closely followed by family advice. 42 percent of respondents listed doctors as their most trusted source and 25 percent listed their family and friends as being their most credited and dependable source for information (Figure 1). When it came to factors influencing purchasing decisions, price dominated as the most important factor. 43 of the 64 respondents cited price as being the most significant aspect of their buying decisions. This was followed by nutrition and ingredients as second and third ranked answers, and brand and place of origin falling into lower ranks (Figure 2).

Comparing these results with the demographic information collected from the questionnaire yielded several interesting results. It is important to note however, that it also served to eliminate an assortment of factors from consideration. Gender, for example, was found to bear little to no relationship with trust, with both genders having very similar distributions of rankings for the different sources of information in the survey. Only 23 percent of respondents to the survey were male and 77 percent were female; a fairly accurate microcosm of the Guelph student population, of which 63 percent are female (Intini, 2013). As a result, the two populations were difficult to compare directly. Regardless, within this study there was no major difference observed between the responses of both males and females.

**Figure 1:** Relative Trust of Each Source by Rank

![Figure 1](image1.png)

**Figure 2:** Importance of Different Factors on Food-Buying Decisions

![Figure 2](image2.png)
The question surrounding an individual’s living arrangement or circumstances, which asked if the respondent lives with their family, roommates, alone, and with how many people, also failed to yield any significant trend. There was no relationship present between living conditions and sources of food information. Furthermore, there was no visible association between weekly grocery spending and what people valued the most in their food decision making processes, as most respondents fell into the same spending brackets, making the results fairly homogenous.

The questions on program size and hometown were closely analyzed, as these questions were initially thought to yield the strongest relationships with food trust. A robust relationship was established between program of study and trusted sources, with science students trusting academic and government sources more than those in art programs, who chose to trust family and friend advice at an increased level (Figure 3).

**Figure 3:** Trust for Each source of Information by Program, Weighted by Rank
Overall however, the opinions of doctors and health officials were most often selected as being the most trusted across nearly all programs, with greater variation occurring in respondents’ choice of second and third-ranked sources. While doctors were well trusted across the board, high trust in family members was mostly found in arts students and in those from the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC). OAC students overwhelmingly trusted their families the most and were the only sample group who selected family opinions more frequently than doctors as being the most trustworthy source of information (Figure 4).

It was originally assumed for the purposes of this study that small population sizes correlated with decreased distance from food production. There was no function between the relative trust of different sources and the size of the community. However, a vast majority of respondents originated from urban centers, and so the data was highly skewed towards the opinions of people from small and medium sized cities (defined in our survey as population centers of 100,000 - 500,000 and 500,000 – 1,000,000 people respectively) (Statistics Canada, 2011). While strong differences can be observed between the answers of respondents from one category to the next, no trend is established that increases along with a community’s population size. What the analysis does show however, is the overwhelming support and trust for doctor opinions across all segments of the sample population and the trailing support for government sources (Figure 5).

Figure 4: Comparison of Trust Between CBS and OAC, Weighted by Rank
Trust in the government was fairly low; 9.3 percent of respondents selected the government as their most trusted source. The government was frequently excluded in the top three sources and was indicated as being one of the least credible sources by a small number of respondents. Overall, the government was not viewed in an overwhelmingly positive or negative light, unlike doctors which were unambiguously viewed in a positive manner and advertising which was overwhelmingly negative in comparison.

**Figure 5:** Relative Rank of Each Source by Hometown Size

Looking at the least trusted sources, advertising and media sources were overwhelmingly distrusted. 56 percent of respondents listed advertising as being the least trustworthy response, of which
65 percent cited financial bias as being the reason for the distrust. 42 percent of respondents distrusted media or online sources the most, citing largely similar reasons of perceived biases. Overall, nearly every respondent cited either bias, financial motivation, or misleading information as being a factor as to why they do not trust a given source. Interestingly, the vast minority of individuals who cited the government, family, friends, or other sources as being least trusted outlets of information also said that perceived biases, deception, misleading facts, or otherwise incorrect information were the reasons why. Returning to the most trusted source, one question asked participants to justify why they chose a given source as their most trusted. Recalling that 42 percent of respondents cited doctors, it makes sense that 66 percent of respondents said they trusted professional opinions and valued a high degree of education. This included not only those who trusted doctors, but also those who trusted academic and government publications. Of everyone who responded that they value education or professional opinions, 62 percent were referring to doctors, while 12 percent were referring to government publications and 26 percent were referring to academic publications.

The second most common reason to trust a source was that they held a personal connection with the respondent. Overall, 31 percent of people valued a personal connection. Of this, 80 percent trusted their family the most, while 15 percent were referring to their doctor.

Overall there was a high degree of homogeneity within the sample population, and while some interesting differences did appear, particularly between programs, the fact remains that 98 percent of people distrusted either advertising or media / online sources the most. The remaining 2 percent were primarily those who distrusted the government. In contrast, 67 percent of respondents trusted either doctors or their family the most, with the rest being divided between academic, government, and other sources. Thus, while people are largely united in what they do not trust, there was a much higher degree of variation in what was most trusted. Despite this, overall the results were fairly homogenous across the sample and this likely reflects the Guelph student population well.

Discussion

After research had been collected, conducted, and analyzed, several themes became apparent. The main finding of the study showed that most surveyed students place their trust in doctors. This is largely due to the fact that individuals trust ‘education’ and a ‘professional opinion’ in comparison to sources of information that originate from an online database. As mentioned above within the section containing literature reviews, Papadopoulos et al. (2012) determined that doctors and professionals within the medical community are the most trusted sources of information as a result of their education and connections to the local community. Likewise, Rykkja (2004) reports that society values the government as a trustworthy source for information for an assortment of reasons, the most important being that this national administration supports community needs and desires for food safety policies. Moreover, according to the survey results, students who are enrolled in certain programs of study at the University of Guelph have varying confidence levels for different sources of information concerning food. The best example found within the research concerns individuals registered in the College of Arts or the College of Biological Science. Arts students generally exhibit an increased level of trust towards family and friends. Those enrolled in the biological sciences are more likely to hold doctors and academic sources or literature in high regard. This tendency is also discussed throughout an article. According to research conducted by Ozilgen (2010), University students who are closely associated with health or food majors are more inclined to select doctors as their most trusted source when compared to those individuals enrolled in non-health or food majors.

However, the strongest trend overall in the survey data indicated that students at the University of Guelph consider price as the most significant factor when considering food information. Meanwhile, nutrition facts, ingredients, and brand scored all relatively close to one another, but still far below that of
price. As illustrated above, a study conducted by Bryant and Dundes (2008) supports that individuals select different sources of food for similar reasons. Both Spanish and American students, the focus of the research study in question, indicated that specific foods were largely purchased as a result of convenience, which can be connected to price. It is more convenient for students to spend a limited amount of money on sources of food for economic reasons. A University education is expensive and as a result, students are more frugal with the finances they have available. It is also important to note, that this study supports the information found in regards to nutrition as well. Both Spanish and American students selected this as an important factor for making food related decisions (Bryant & Dundes, 2008).

These trends are important because they explore the opinions of a specific student demographic, which has not been overly exploited or explored for research purposes. Despite this, the University student population continues to be a valuable sources for information as a result of its large representation and the significant amount of people available for investigative purposes. Due to the overwhelming presence of technology within society potential sources of stimuli maintain a legitimacy and value to the populace that will either (a) assist legitimate actors or agencies in finding an avenue to correctly relay information and (b) gain some understanding or insight as to how people filter information that is connected to health.

There are a variety of possible explanations as to why University of Guelph students may be inclined to trust doctors over other sources for information regarding the consumption and production of food products. One likely prospect is that students are able to effectively place trust in doctors due to their understanding of the medical system. As a health professional it is the responsibility of a doctor to listen and provide aid without passing judgement on patients. This is valued by those in vulnerable positions or those seeking health care. Patients innately understand that the purpose of a doctor is to provide help or assistance. This may be a reason as to why the largest number of surveyed students selected doctors as their most trusted source.

Another possible reason as to why students primarily trust doctors is due to their understanding of the educational process. Medical professionals are highly trained. This practice is also thoroughly regulated. These individuals would be likely informed as a result of this. Other survey results additionally illustrated this point. An assortment of individuals listed “good education” as part of their reasoning for choosing doctors as their most credible source for food information. It is also important to note that “professional opinion” was listed as another reason why students selected doctors as their most trusted source, indicating that participants value the training and educational processes in which doctors experience in order to remain credible.

There is a continued discussion in regards to food information and safety. Currently, the operations behind food processing and consumption are topics that continues to dominate conversation. There is a mounting pressure from consumers for producers and distributors of food to focus on ethical and sustainable meat, produce, and dairy. The study conducted on University of Guelph students is important as these individuals represent the next generation of food consumers. These individuals will represent society, take action, and manage food systems or industries in the future.

Additionally, the findings of this research generate insight into how millennials or individuals view online sources or information associated with food. As illustrated throughout the study, the legitimacy of the internet is questionable, but despite this, many individuals continue to view this form of information as trustworthy.

If this study were to be repeated, there would be several things done differently in the next iteration. First, collecting data from a broader range of participants would likely prove beneficial, as it would shed light on a greater variety of perspectives from the larger community. Limiting research to University of Guelph students may not have been completely beneficial, as this demographic represents a narrow cross-section of the public. These individuals come from several backgrounds and regions that
are not specific to Guelph alone. As a result, the information possibly contains a bias or flaw as a wider variety of opinions are not available. By examining a broader participant pool, different trends in data may have been collected or discovered.

There is research available that helps to contextualize sociodemographic factors that do not affect an individual’s food preference. For example, Boecker, Hubbard, and Scarpa (2012) conducted research in European countries concerning social and demographic variables that determine food preference. As a result, it was discovered that these factors do not play a role in influencing a consumer’s preference for specific food products. Similarly, Cranfield, Henson, and Blandon (2012) demonstrated that people purchase food based on information excluding sociodemographic characteristics as well. Although these research articles illustrate that the above characteristics do not impact consumer trust or activity, it is beneficial to conduct further research on a larger scale in order to compare the research results collected from University of Guelph.

The methods used in order to collect data throughout this study could have been further refined or improved. For instance, if the time allotted for research purposes was expanded there are several changes that could have been made in order to advance the study. First, an increased number of pilot studies would be completed in regards to the survey content or questionnaires. This would ensure that the line of questioning is clear in order to limit further participant error. Once this is completed, it would be possible to administer a first round of surveys to the target population. These surveys would then be completed, collected, and analyzed in an ethical manner and then further assessed for their effectiveness at providing answers to the central research question. If the questionnaires fail, the refinement process would continue. On the other hand, if the survey is successful, the results collected will be completely analyzed and discussed.

However, it is most likely the case, as was proved by this study, that the results of the first round of surveys would raise questions as to whether there is a more effective way to glean information from participants. If this is the case, the research question itself should be re-evaluated based on answers given. As a result, the research question will be re-molded, followed by changes to the original survey content. For example, some demographic questions may be left out entirely, while others can be reconstructed to determine a different set of statistical or demographic variables. More specifically, it would greatly benefit the research if there was greater distinction between options in ranking questions—for example, differentiating between doctor, nutritionist, and dietitian would provide a better variety of sources to choose from; therefore, more insight into who people place more trust in. After re-assessing the questions, the following step would be to administer the new survey to the participant population, and collect those results for analysis.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

In summary, the main findings of this study indicate that the majority of students at the University of Guelph consider price to be the most important factor when purchasing food, followed by ingredients and nutrition facts. When students seek out information regarding food, the sources they trust the most are doctors, family, and friends, which is largely due to a perceived personal connection between themselves and the source. There is a prevalent mistrust of the media and social media among university students, which can be explained by the fact that these sources are viewed as having financial motivations instead of consumer interests at heart.

Further examination of the study results yielded some interesting trends among different student groups on campus—particularly the different academic colleges (Arts, Biological Sciences, Ontario Agricultural College, etc.). It was shown that certain groups tend to trust a particular source of information while other groups place their trust in a different source—for example, arts students are more inclined to trust their family and friends as sources. There is additional research on this topic that has
been conducted by other organizations which supports the findings of this study. This is exemplified best in the Turkish university study which compares majors of students and their opinions on certain sources of information.

Expanding the demographic parameters of the study would prove beneficial in future research, as it would provide a broader cross-section of the population, and therefore additional perspectives to study. Other steps for future research would include different methods of collecting participant data, such as focus groups or key informant interviews. These methods of research would be beneficial to the study as they would provide more in-depth information, as well as data that is more qualitative than quantitative.

There are several recommendations as to how Farm and Food Care can improve their outreach to the community. First, the results of this study have indicated that consumers most trust sources of information that have a ‘face’ attached to them-- ie. a doctor, a family member, or friend. Additionally, these sources are trusted largely because of the personal connection- whether actual or perceived- that is tied to the consumer. The current form of the Farm and Food Care website has articles and posts which display the names and jobs of article authors and contributors, but no further details that indicate to readers that there is a personal element to the information they are absorbing and observing. Thus, there is an immediate improvement that Farm and Food Care can make to their website, which would be to add personal profiles and photos to articles and blog posts written and posted for general public consumption, as personalized information is shown to promote trust.

Another area of improvement for Farm and Food Care to explore is in the ‘Best Food Facts’ and ‘The Real Dirt on Farming’ sections of their website, which contain articles that have a clickbait-type appearance. These include article titles that have end in a question, have a personal pronoun attached, and an element that indicates shocking information within the body of the article. Findings from this study indicate that large numbers of people are distrustful of internet sources for this very reason. ‘Clickbait’ is defined as “[a headline] designed to make readers want to click on a hyperlink especially when the link leads to content of dubious value or interest.” (Merriam-Webster). This directly echoes sentiments from the long-answer section in the survey, which indicated that social media sources were least trusted due to the presence of clickbait, which many participants felt was present for corporate benefit, and not that of the consumer. Farm and Food Care may be able to improve trust of their information if they were to find alternative ways to name their articles and blog posts in a way that does not imitate popular clickbait formulas.
Appendices

Appendix 1: The main trusted sources of information about food risks among the students majoring in different disciplines (Ozilgen, 2010)

Appendix 2: Gender and country differences regarding fast food (FF). (Bryant, R. & Dundes, L. 2008)

Appendix 3: Socio-Economic Characteristics by Country (Boecker, Hubbard & Scarpa, 2012)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socioeconomic Variable</th>
<th>France (n = 114)</th>
<th>Germany (n = 156)</th>
<th>Italy (n = 678)</th>
<th>Spain (n = 164)</th>
<th>United Kingdom (n = 182)</th>
<th>Total (n = 1294)</th>
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<td>Gender: females</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>729</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age: below 40</td>
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<td>119</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>97</td>
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<td>752</td>
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<td>Children: yes</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>428</td>
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<td>Income: ≥€2500</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>462</td>
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1. Briefly describe yourself (circle one in each column):

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>17-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>23-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>26+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Select your college (check one):

- College of Arts
- College of Biological Science
- College of Business & Economics
- College of Physical & Engineering Sciences
- College of Social & Applied Human Sciences
- Ontario Agricultural College
- Ontario Veterinary College

3. Describe your living arrangements during the school year (check one):

- Single, alone
- Single, living with roommates
- Living with partner
- Living with partner and children
- Living with parents
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify) ______________________________________

4. On average, how much money do you spend on groceries in a week (check one)?

- Less than $50
- Between $50 and $75
- Between $75 and $100
- Between $100 and $125
- Between $125 and $150
- Between $150 and $200
- Over $200
- Unsure
- Prefer not to say
5. What is the name of the city/town/place where you grew up?

______________________________________________________________________________

 ______

6. What information do you consider when shopping for food at the store? Rank in order of importance, with 1 being most important and 6 being least important.

  ___ Nutrition Facts
  ___ Ingredients
  ___ Price
  ___ Brand
  ___ Where the product is made/grown
  ___ Other (please specify):

______________________________________________________________________________

7. Who do you trust to tell you about your food? Rank your top three choices, with 1 being the most trusted.

  ___ Advertising
  ___ Government publications (eg. Canada’s Food Guide)
  ___ Media sources (eg. Newspapers, blogs)
  ___ Academic sources (eg. Scholarly articles)
  ___ Family and friend recommendations
  ___ Social media recommendations
  ___ Doctor/Nutritionist recommendations
  ___ Other (please specify):

______________________________________________________________________________

8. Explain why you consider your highest ranked source to be trustworthy:
9. Of the whole list, what source would you consider to be the least trustworthy, and why?