

Inclusive Language for Farmers' Markets

Kimberly Hoffman

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Dr. Sarah Misyak, Department of Human Nutrition, Food and Exercise

Dr. Melissa Chase, Department of Food Science & Technology

Dr. Tiffany Drape, Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education

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Abstract

As of 2021, 38.3 million people lived in food-insecure households in the United States (USDA, 2021c). Nutrition-related health inequities may be exacerbated by limited consumer access to nutrient-dense foods (Ver Ploeg, M., et. al., 2009). Farmers' markets (FMs) give consumers direct access to locally-grown produce, as well as meats, eggs, and dairy products directly to consumers (Wetherill, M. S., & Gray, K. A. 2015). However, farmers' markets are not utilized equally by all demographic groups. When markets use electronic benefits transfer (EBT) for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits, and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, increased marketing targeting low-income and minority consumers can connect these populations to affordable produce. (Wetherill, M. S., & Gray, K. A. 2015). There are limited research studies involving equitable communications through farmers' markets, particularly in Virginia. Through this project, a farmers' market communication guide for SNAP-eligible audiences was created to help facilitate farmers' market managers and/or other farmers' market outreach coordinators in developing inclusive messages for SNAP-eligible populations through communications, advertisements, and other outreach strategies.

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Introduction

Background and Setting

In 2020 38.3 million people lived in food-insecure households and 584,000 children (0.8 percent of the Nation's children) lived in households in which one or more children experienced very low food security (USDA, 2021c). Very low food security is defined by the USDA as food insecure to the extent that eating patterns were disrupted (skipped meals) and food intake reduced because the household could not afford enough food (USDA, 2021a). According to the most recent data from the United States Department of Agriculture, single-mothers households had the greatest rates of child food insecurity (CFI) whereas married-couple households have had the lowest rates: 27.7% versus 9.5%. (USDA, 2021b). In the United States, nonprofit organizations and other local community organizations are driving a variety of measures to expand food availability and reduce food poverty and hunger. Farmers' markets are a food outlet that is stepping up to increase food access for families with children, women, and seniors facing food insecurity in their communities through the acceptance of nutrition assistance benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). The farmers' market may assist in boosting the local economy while also providing the community access to fresh fruit and vegetables (Schmit, T. M., et al. 2016).

The implementation of a farmers' market in a community that is located in a food desert and lacks grocery stores can provide residents with an additional food access point for fresh fruits and vegetables (Dutko, P., et al. 2012; Freedman, D. A., et al. 2021). Although many farmers' markets accept federal nutrition assistance benefits and offer additional incentives to shop at the farmers' market, these incentives may not benefit the community unless they are promoted via outreach and marketing (Freedman, D. A., et al. 2016). It is critical to be able to educate and market to the surrounding

community and neighborhoods about what is offered and the benefits of shopping at their community farmers' market.

Farmers' markets are trying to reach out to all members of the neighborhood and make it well known that the market is an inclusive place to shop for groceries, meet farmers, and truly be a member of the community. There is a new emphasis on diversity and inclusion due to the movement for social justice and farmers' markets are no exception (Martinez, S., et., al. 2010). Rustein (2021) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison stated that “seeing as farmers markets often play the role of community gathering places or community hubs, markets must position themselves to be part of the community just as a farmers’ market relies on support from the surrounding community to be successful and to develop a culture of inclusivity”. Farmers’ markets managers need to consciously think about whether their advertisements and communications reflect the audience they are trying to reach and whether it is the appropriate language (Dimitrieska, S., et al., 2019). Everyone should see themselves reflected in the content and that it is approachable as well as accessible.

This research process of this project provides insight into health communications and messages on how to effectively communicate to limited-resource families using inclusive communication strategies. Understanding how clear and consistent messages can increase customer traffic and retention at the farmers’ markets. Recommendations can be made and then be utilized by farmers’ market managers as well as organizations that serve and support farmers’ markets such as Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) and the Virginia Family Nutrition Program (FNP). FNP provides nutrition education programming for limited-resource families by facilitating evidence-based nutrition programs described in the SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance that is released annually through the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (SNAP-Ed Connection, 2021). These interventions include direct education methods and those designated as policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change strategies for multi-level programming. The Fiscal Year 2022 Plan Guidance includes the recommendation that SNAP-Ed

implementing agencies partner with local organizations, including farmers' markets, to maximize the consumption of healthy food resources through PSE initiatives (SNAP-Ed Connection, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

There are limited research studies involving inclusive language at farmers' market locations, particularly those from limited resources or minority populations. An abundance of the available research regarding these topics pertains to schools, retailers, and other industries. Due to the minimal sources available, this project fills a gap for Farmers' Market Managers to help craft and develop effective messaging to improve inclusive marketing at their locations for diverse consumers and to increase equitable food access.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a farmers market messaging guide as a tool for farmers' market managers to develop inclusive messaging practices to effectively communicate and interact with their community and develop their communication materials.

The questions guiding this project were:

- 1) What do market managers need to create equitable messaging for their market?
- 2) How do decisions regarding inclusive language within their communication impact their clientele?

Project Objectives

The objective of the project was to provide a practical resource for farmers' market managers for creating equitable messaging for their markets. The Theory of Reasoned Action was used to guide the suggested messaging. The Theory of Reasoned Action is a commonly used theoretical framework for health communications (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). This theory has long been employed in health

communication research since it relies on knowing the attitudes and beliefs of the individual about carrying out a behavior (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). Individual motivation, such as behavioral intention and associated performance, is the emphasis of the Theory of Reasoned Action, as seen in Figure 1. This idea proposes that changing one's attitude might enhance one's chance of engaging in a certain action, and it has been utilized in several health education research to predict and explain intentions and behavior. (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008; Hinsz & Nickell, 2015). This theory was utilized to guide and better understand what could be occurring at farmers' market locations and the decisions that are being made at the markets based on the current perceived attitudes and behaviors of the managers.

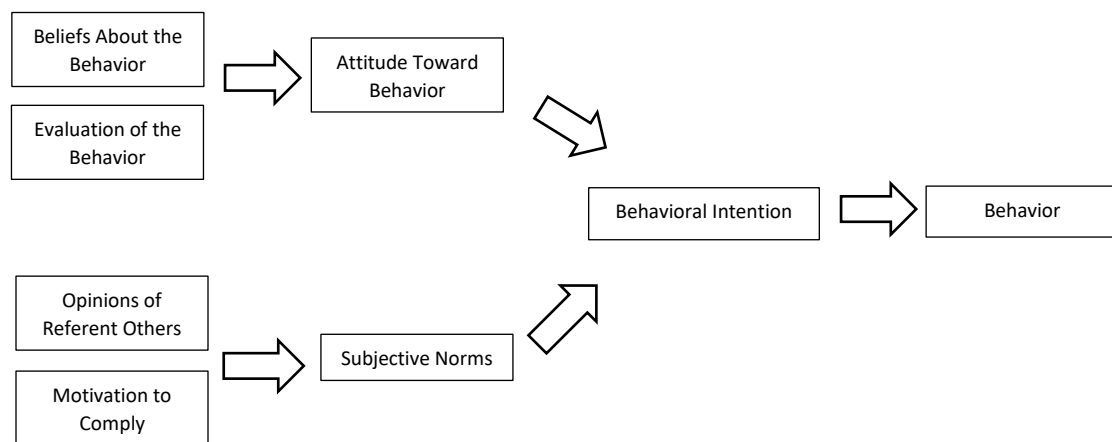


Figure 1. Theory of Reasoned Action (Montano and Kasprzyk, 2008).

Definition of Terms

1. Farmers' Market- A public and recurring assembly of farmers or their representatives selling the food that they produced directly to consumers (Farmers Market Coalition, 2020).
2. Health Equity- When every person has the opportunity to attain his or her full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances. (CDC, 2022)

3. Inclusive Communication- This is an approach that enables as many people as possible to be included in that interaction (Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists, 2022).
4. SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance- Document for States regarding policy for the SNAP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program (SNAP-Ed Connection, 2020).
5. Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)- The educational outreach program of Virginia’s land grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, that provides non-formal classes, workshops, and events to all localities in Virginia to improve the quality of life (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2020a).
6. Virginia Family Nutrition Program (FNP)- Chronic disease prevention program offered through VCE for limited-resource families on how to make healthier food choices based on their available food resources. Funded by the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) as the education outreach arm of SNAP (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2020b).

Reviews of Literature

Hunger and Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is a growing concern throughout the county. In December 2020, 10.5% of households reported being food insecure sometime during the year (Coleman-Jensen, A., et al., 2021). As defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) low food security means “reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake” (USDA, 2021a). Whereas very low food security is defined as “food insecure to the extent that eating patterns were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household could not afford enough food” (USDA, 2021a). Hunger and food insecurity are two different concepts and are defined by the USDA as “*Hunger* referring to a

personal, physical sensation of discomfort, while *food insecurity* refers to a lack of available financial resources for food at the household level” (USDA, 2021a).

In 2020 over 38 million Americans (11.8 percent) lived in households that struggled with food insecurity, which represents a nine percent increase from 2019 (FRAC, 2020). Food insecurity, which defined by the USDA, means limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (USDA, 2021a). In the United States, one in twenty-five (3.9 percent) households suffered extremely low food security, a more severe form of food poverty in which households report skipping meals or limiting intake due to a lack of resources. (FRAC, 2020). The prevalence of food insecure and very low food insecure households has increased since 2019 (FRAC, 2020). In 2020, 7.6% of U.S. families with children experienced food insecurity, up from 6.5 percent in 2019; very low food security afflicted 0.8 percent of U.S. households with children, up from 0.6 percent in 2019 (USDA, 2021c).

Nearly 800,000 Virginians, or 1 in 11 people of Virginia's total population, face food insecurity at any given time, and of those 215,00 are children (Feeding America, 2019). “Extensive research reveals food insecurity is a complex problem. Many people do not have the resources to meet their basic needs, challenges that increase a family’s risk of food insecurity. Though food insecurity is closely related to poverty, not all people living below the poverty line experience food insecurity and people living above the poverty line can experience food insecurity” (Feeding America, 2019). Food access and nutritional adequacy are the worst we have seen in decades in America, with 14 million children nationally missing meals regularly (Bauer, 2021). Without adequate resources, children are not eating enough to thrive developmentally, which can be detrimental to their health (Feeding America, 2021). Because of systemic racial injustice, children from minoritized populations are experiencing higher levels of food insecurity and are twice as likely to face hunger than white children (Bauer, 2021; Feeding America, 2021).

“Food insecurity at any age carries the risk of poor physical and mental health outcomes, but food insecurity in households with children is particularly concerning because poor outcomes may influence health and well-being at sensitive points in human development, including both early childhood and adolescence” (Waxman E., 2020). Children living in food-insecure households are more likely to repeat a grade in elementary school, experience developmental impairments in areas like language and motor skills, and have more social and behavioral problems (Feeding America, 2021).

Feminization of Poverty

Hunger and food insecurity can affect everyone differently and it is already known that food insecurity has long-term health implications for both adults and children but these impacts often hit women and especially mothers hard (FRAC, 2017). According to the USDA, household food insecurity is particularly high among families with children headed by a single mother (30.3%) and women living alone (14.7%) (USDA, 2021c). “The feminization of poverty describes a phenomenon in which women represent a disproportionate percentage of the world’s poor. This trend is not only a consequence of lack of income but also of lack of opportunities due to gender biases and fixed in some societies” (Social Science, 2021). Gender biases and sexism often deprive women of opportunities to pursue education or careers and limit employment opportunities and societal expectations that women are responsible for childbearing and caregiving responsibilities (Social Science, 2021; Bleiweis, Boesch, Gaines, 2021). These are some of the reasons that women and particularly women of color have higher rates of poverty.

Despite the fact that low wages are the main cause of female poverty, it is caused not only by gender bias and discrimination but also by occupational segregation and motherhood penalties (Miller & Vagins, 2018; Fin, 2020). Due to a lack of income, women are unable to meet basic needs such as food and shelter, and their possibilities for progress are limited (Social Science, 2021). Women disproportionately receive less income than men as a result of the variables that increase the pay gap,

and they are penalized for discussing salaries in the job, which lowers their lifelong earning potential (Miller & Vagins, 2018; Social Science, 2021). The demands of motherhood further impede women's economic advancement, and lone mother families, or homes without a second parent or guardian, are the most vulnerable to poverty (Social Science, 2021). In comparison to men, female-headed households are more vulnerable to poverty since they have fewer income earners to support the household financially (Social Science, 2021).

Women experience higher rates of poverty than men (Bleiweis, Boesch, Gaines, 2021). In 2019, eleven percent of women lived in poverty compared to eight percent of men, also five percent of women lived in extreme poverty compared to the four percent of men (Fins, 2020). Nearly 46 percent of women lived in high rates of poverty, which is defined as falling below 50 percent of the federal poverty line in 2019 (Fins, 2020). Women of all races and ethnicities face higher rates of poverty than their male counterparts. Poverty rates are higher among women of all races and ethnicities than among men. American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) women, Black women, and Latinas have the greatest poverty rates. One in every four AIAN women live in poverty, the greatest incidence of any race or ethnic group (Bleiweis, Boesch, Gaines, 2021). The poverty rate for women with disabilities was higher than their male counterparts being 25 percent versus 20 percent (Fins, 2020).

Food Access and Farmers' Markets

According to the Pew Research Center (2019), in U.S. households with one or more children under the age of 18, 80% of mothers say they are the household member who not only prepares the meals but they are also the primary grocery shopper. This is showed that women and mothers are crucial in purchasing power and is the main food decision-maker for their family. Farmers' markets can help with providing access to fresh local fruits and vegetables as well as fill a gap in communities that may be in a low food access area. "While nutrient-dense foods are lacking in low-access, low-income

communities and farmers market customers tend to be affluent, college-educated, married, and identify as white increasing access to farmers' markets for low-income and minority consumers can link people with affordable products, while simultaneously supporting the economic stability of small, local farms" (Wetherill, M. S., & Gray, K. A. 2015). A great example is how farmers' markets helped their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A survey done by Virginia Cooperative Extension for Farmers' Market on how to market managers adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic stated that despite all the challenges they faced during the season, managers still saw an increase in vendor sales as well as SNAP usage at the markets (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2021). Elizabeth Borst director of the Virginia Fresh Match Program in Virginia stated that "more people received SNAP benefits for the first time because of economic losses; the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) cards were given to low-income families to match the value of meals their children would have received in schools; and shopping outside appealed to more people amid COVID-19 concerns" (E. Borst, personal communication, Dec 13, 2021).

Virginia Department of Social Services Commissioner S. Duke Storen in a press release stated, "COVID-19 has exacerbated food insecurity for many households, particularly those with children who depend on meals provided by schools. In Virginia, we've witnessed the number of families struggling with hunger increase from 10% pre-pandemic to an estimated 23%. We know that programs like Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) are helping families bridge the gap in meeting their nutritional needs, and are committed to leveraging both short- and long-term avenues that help families keep food on their tables." (Virginia Department of Social Services & Virginia Department of Education, 2021, March 15).

Even with the increased usage at farmers' markets because of P-EBT, farmers' markets can be an unfamiliar and intimidating place if a person has never shopped at one, let alone using their EBT benefits

at the market. A common barrier that managers have seen within their markets is that they have to educate the community that they can bring their EBT card to the market manager's table, choose the amount to charge to their card, then swipe and enter their PIN, just like at the grocery store (Virginia Fresh Match, 2021). Also, reminding individuals if they don't spend all their tokens, they are allowed to keep their tokens and spend them the next time they visit the farmers' market. Market consumers that are purchasing with SNAP find it difficult and a challenge that vendors can't give change for tokens, so they have to work with vendors to make whole-dollar-amount purchases (Virginia Fresh Match, 2021).

A study by Chaklader (2017) found that farmers' markets in northern Virginia are located in areas with many individuals that have a higher level of education, as well as more financial resources. When farmers' markets are located in these types of areas the "buy-local" movement can reflect a culture of elitism, exclusivity, and inequity (Chaklader, 2017). Farmers' markets can increase their community's health equity by participating in these supplemental nutrition programs, which provide an increase in food accessibility to families and increase diversity within the customer base of the farmers' market. However, farmers' markets must educate and develop outreach materials for their local community. Farmers' markets are trying to reach out to all members of the neighborhood and make it well known that the market is an inclusive place to shop for groceries, meet farmers, and truly be a member of the community.

Connectivity to not only customers of the market but as well as connectivity to the local neighborhood helps develop a farmers' market that is representative of the community it is located in. Outreach to the local community public figures and finding the market champions that represent the community will help spread the word about the incentives of the market to the individuals that need it most. "Inclusive marketing strives to create a visual culture that is more representative. It endeavors to appreciate and understand various identities, differences, and histories. Simply speaking, it's creating an

advertising campaign mindfully, to respectfully include and relate to the complex individuals who make up the target audience.” (Dimitrieska, S., et al., 2019, p. 115).

Creating messages and communication strategies that are marketed through local media like the newspaper or a local radio station can help target the intended audience. Having flyers and newsletters that reflect the common language spoken in the community also helps build mutual respect. Campaigns to educate customers and vendors about the market’s diversity may strengthen the culture of inclusion at the farmers’ market. The variety of languages spoken at the market or different produce that are linked with various cultures could be celebrated through outreach. This information could be disseminated through physical signage, smartphone apps, or social media. (Watson, G., 2021). Everyone and anyone should see themselves reflected in the content.

This project provides insight into health communications and messages on how to effectively communicate to limited-resource families while the messages are inclusive and equitable. It is important to understand how clear and consistent messages affect the increase and retention at the markets so that recommendations can be made for future research and program development at Virginia Tech. These developments can then be utilized in testing communication strategies that will help Extension professionals communicate effectively with SNAP-eligible shoppers.

Theoretical Framework

This research used the Theory of Reasoned Action as guidance for understanding what may be happening at farmers' market locations regarding how inclusive language and communication methods are used by the managers. This theory is traditionally used in to explain the relationship between attitudes and behaviors since it relies on knowing the attitudes and beliefs of the individual about performing the behavior (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008).

The Theory of Reasoned Action was developed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen (1970) who formulated the theory after trying to determine the differences between attitude and behavior. Two elements influence an individual's intention in an activity: a) attitude toward a behavior, and b) subjective norms derived from social influence. These characteristics are primarily influenced by a person's views. In other words, the attitude is shaped by the belief in the outcome of conduct and the appraisal of the outcome. (Hosseini, Z., et al., 2015). The Theory of Reasoned Action focuses on individual motivation, such as behavioral intention and associated performance. This theory proposes that changing one's attitude can increase one's likelihood of performing a specific behavior, and it has been used in many health education studies as well as campaign evaluations. For example, it helped guide the large-scale evaluation of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign (Hornik, R. et. al., 2008; Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008; Hinsz & Nickell, 2015).

One study examined job satisfaction and organizational commitment as ways to predict adherence to food safety standards and found that increased satisfaction and positive attitudes revealed greater safety behaviors (Hinsz, Nickell, 2015). The perceived societal norms can be understood in an organizational hierarchy or from personal and familial viewpoints. The study concludes that individuals will ultimately perform behaviors they want to, but will just as easily perform behaviors they think others want them to do (Hinsz, Nickell, 2015). New societal pressures of being inclusive and performing the behaviors of inclusive language can improve cultural competence in the community.

For this project, the theory was primarily used to help guide the attitude, subjective norms, and behavioral intention for inclusive language as well as examine how guidelines from an overarching organization affected local procedures within individual farmers' market locations. This could provide details about the decisions market managers make based on perceived consequences from the result of communications, such as internal and external relationships and fear of a disconnected partnership between customers and vendors. The Theory of Reasoned Action predicts that educational resources

would increase knowledge of such topics amongst the managers and volunteers at farmers' market locations (Hosseini et. al., 2015). Therefore, creating an inclusive language messaging guide for farmers' markets would increase the behavioral intention to increase inclusive language for their communication methods at the farmers' market.

Methods

Within my role with Virginia Cooperative Extension, as an FCS SNAP-Ed Agent, I work very closely with farmers' markets and am engaged in many community-based meetings. Within my service region, we were having an issue with getting new customers to the local farmers' markets. An individual came and spoke about their experience and stated that they didn't come to the market because they didn't feel welcomed and as they belonged which is how this project was conceptualized. This project was developed using practitioner action research, which helped address a particular problem or a specific practical issue (Creswell, 2005, p.550) within one's own workplace. It is therefore about change for those involved; change of practice and often change of one's theories of learning, underpinning beliefs and values. This project focused on providing insight into health communications and messages on how to effectively communicate to limited-resource families while developing messages that are equitable, inclusive, accessible, and culturally competent. The first step in action research is to plan and explore – determine what is happening now, review relevant literature, invite honing in on what is problematic (disorienting dilemma) (Creswell, 2005, p. 552). For the first step, it was important to map all the relevant messaging guides that have been released as well as the corresponding research on how the guides were developed be organized. Reviewing the relevant literature and writing a literature review helped focus and framed the issue of inclusive language at farmers' markets and the need for a messaging guide.

The next step in action research is to plan action/intervention – based on one’s research question to determine experimental action and the roles/orientations that one wants to take (Creswell, 2005, p. 552). Planning the what information should be included in the guide, how might we analyze it, and what is its validity. The intervention is the messaging guide and to plan out the guide, the *CDC’s Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication* was used. It was important to look through a health equity lens while planning communication and development, and intentionally looking at the potential positive and negative impacts of proposed messages to be inclusive, avoid bias and stigmatization, and effectively reach the intended audiences (CDC, 2021). The notions of systemic social disparities, community participation, intersectional diversity, and health literacy were all vital to consider when creating this messaging guide. Within the context of social inequity, it was critical to evaluate how racism and other forms of discrimination unfairly disadvantage people in order to avoid perpetuating inequities in communication (CDC, 2021). The process of developing culturally relevant, unbiased communication for health promotion, research, or policymaking should include community interaction. Health equality is multifaceted; diversity exists within and across communities and can be described by a number of characteristics that are more likely to succeed when they are recognized and reflect the variety of the population they are attempting to reach (CDC, 2021).

The final step of action research is to act, which is to develop and create a product or process to help solve the problem (Creswell, 2005, p. 553). The development of the messaging guide was made to fill the gap and provide a resource for market managers to reach their target audience. The messaging guide was developed to catch the attention of the reader and clearly convey a message to the reader while understanding the concepts, language, and priorities of different cultures and settings. Inclusive marketing communication includes verbal and written strategies to influence and empower individuals, populations, and communities to make healthier choices. Inclusive marketing communication often integrates components of multiple theories and models to promote positive changes in attitudes and

behaviors (Rural Health Information Hub, 2018). Inclusive messaging allows farmers' markets to increase their visibility and role within the community, expanding outreach to attract new customers and increasing the number of returning customers. Consistent inclusive messaging allows individuals to receive information, advice, and guidance from key target audiences to promote action that will improve the health of individuals, families, and communities (WHO, 2017). Consistency ensures that markets are easily recognizable across all marketing channels and touchpoints. This creates a cohesive, consistent brand identity for both new and repeat customers.

Project Outcome and Discussion

From this project, a messaging guide was created and has been designed to help farmers' market managers create inclusive messaging for diverse consumers to increase equitable food access from farmers' markets. The guide is to assist farmers' market managers and/or other farmers' market outreach coordinators in developing inclusive messages for SNAP-eligible populations. This messaging guide could bring new shoppers to the markets to increase the diversity of shoppers at the market due to equitable marketing. Market managers are the intended audience to develop and create messaging for new or returning shoppers from individuals/families visiting their local farmers' market.

Developing the goals and objectives that are in line with the theoretical model to increase diversity for the communication guide which was to assist farmers' market managers and/or other farmers' market outreach coordinators in developing inclusive messages for SNAP-eligible populations through communications, advertisements, and other outreach strategies to increase diversity and food access. The comprehensive messaging guide was developed by collating and curating communication strategies and frameworks from authoritative sources and adapting the language specifically for farmers' markets. Contributing frameworks included CDC Health Communication Playbook, WHO Strategic Communication Framework, NACCHO Messaging Guide, The Arizona State Language of Health,

Voices of Health Racial Equity messaging guide, Native American Journal Association Indigenous terminology, The Rockefeller Foundation Reset the Table messaging guide, and University of Wisconsin Madison Bias-Free Communication Guide.

Examples of what to say and what not to say were provided based on audience characteristics including gender, race and ethnicity, age, and empowering language for poverty. The information and examples provided can help the reader to craft inclusive and targeted messaging. Suggestions for testing the messages should be used to help market managers develop their communications based on the goals needed for the community. It is organized based on objectives for the market and identifies communication that can be used by market managers to test messages in their communities. The application of clear and inclusive messaging principles gives the reader side by side comparison of proper communication vs improper communication and why the wording is incorrect. Creating accessible visuals for people with disabilities is important to remember when creating messaging and communications for the community. Market managers should be aware of possible disabilities individuals may have when reading and viewing communications, accommodations that should be used when creating messages include easy to read fonts, text alignment, spacing, coloring, as well as print paper guidance.

Recommendations

Practitioners

Farmers' markets need regular ongoing education in diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as marketing training for market operators, especially at unaffiliated venues that lack the resources of a parent organization. While some farmers' markets provide such training, it is often only provided once a year and is not mandatory. If the manager is there, they are in charge of relaying the information to the volunteers. All markets, however, struggle to fully educate new volunteers, especially those who are

one-time season or short-term, due to a lack of staff and time. A short, abbreviated training, as well as a communications resource guide, are now needed for market managers and outreach coordinators to review on-site. Long-term managers would benefit from these instructional resources as reminders of best practices.

Continuing Research

When conducting future research, it may be advantageous to collaborate with local farmers' markets wherever possible, since this will develop a more trusting and productive relationship with the participating markets. By forming a relationship with the farmer's markets, the organization can ensure that resources are not duplicated and that services are provided in accordance with the organization's criteria. Additional research into the most effective means of communication for farmers' markets, such as text, social media, newsletters, and so on would be accommodating to effectively reach the market's target audience. To effectively satisfy the needs of farmers' market managers, future research and program development at Virginia Tech should focus on the issues specific to farmers' market sites, as well as interviewing farmers' market managers at their local markets to gather feedback on this guide.

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