

505 Walnut Avenue, Syracuse, NY 13210

December 8, 2021

Dear Mr. Benz,

For the past two months, my team and I have been working diligently to conduct beneficial research for Oh My Darling with the goal of increasing restaurant traffic in the summer. As we discussed back in October, we ultimately decided to focus our research on Syracuse University graduate students because they are often in the university area during the summer months. While we originally planned on conducting focus groups with this public, we later changed gears and instead collected detailed responses to a series of questions through an online survey. This survey allowed participants to remain anonymous and give well thought-out answers to each question. The data we collected will be presented throughout this report, and the findings can be used in devising a highly effective plan to increase Oh My Darling's restaurant traffic in summer 2022. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns, and if you feel that any further research is necessary, we would be happy to discuss this with you. It has been a pleasure working with you, and we look forward to monitoring Oh My Darling's progress in the future.

Best,  
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Oh My Darling Research Report

8 December 2021

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## Executive Summary

After deciding to focus our research on graduate students that currently attend Syracuse University, our initial goal was to conduct a focus group so we could accurately assess each students' opinions and suggestions face-to-face. However, amidst the ongoing pandemic and differing busy schedules, our team decided to alter our plan and instead create an in-depth survey for our participants to complete. The purpose of this survey was to figure out what might drive more student traffic to Oh My Darling.

Our survey included an opening question with "How often do you go off campus to eat? Explain why", followed by 7 questions related to costs and motivations of each student's average meal experience, and a closing question of "Considering Oh My Darling's close proximity to campus, would you be more likely to go if they offered a discount for graduate students? If a discount does not entice you, what would".

The survey provided us with excellent insight into how 14 graduate students feel about spending their money and time at restaurants surrounding campus in the local Syracuse area. Furthermore, it highlighted crucial ideas from students such as creating an event that supports the graduate student community or running deals on drinks for special occasions or promotional events.

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## Part II

### A.

#### 1. *Research question or problem*

Oh My Darling has become a staple of Armory Square in downtown Syracuse. During the school year, one can find students from various nearby campuses, as well as visiting families and faculty flocking to the restaurant for its specific city-like atmosphere and tasteful menu. Despite its popularity between the months of May and September, Oh My Darling faces a decrease in restaurant traffic when its student population leaves the city for the summer months. Statistically, Oh My Darling loses about 40% of its business during this time period each year. Our proposed research study will focus on emphasizing the restaurant's current summer traffic in an effort to drive more business.

The goal of this research is to increase summer restaurant traffic at Oh My Darling. Objectives of this research include increasing profits of Oh My Darling by 10% this summer in comparison to last summer (May 10th - August 20th).

#### 2. *Public and concepts to be studied*

The existing public we plan to focus on is Syracuse University graduate students. Many graduate students remain on campus during summer months. The age group is older than typical Syracuse students due to their higher level of education, but knowing this can be helpful when discussing marketing tactics specific to summertime. The majority of Syracuse's graduate students would fit into Oh My Darling's typical customer age range, which is 21-35 years old.

Conducting research on these publics will allow us to focus on potential markets to drive more business to Oh My Darling when most students leave the city of Syracuse and colleges in surrounding areas. Through our research, we will begin to dissect current marketing strategies and find opportunities for growth.

#### 3. *Review of related research*

##### [College towns without college students have small businesses struggling](#)

This article emphasizes how restaurants and small businesses located in college towns have been struggling financially due to COVID 19 evacuating campuses. The article goes into detail about surrounding universities allocating resources to local businesses to keep them going through the pandemic. This is crucial to our study because it provides valuable information. Although Oh My Darling is doing a phenomenal job post pandemic, the Syracuse campus evacuation leading into summer (which is their struggling months) created a financial hole for the company to rebuild upon.

##### [Staffing issues among small hospitality businesses: A college town case](#)

This study takes a different look at the hospitality industry. Instead of looking at how we can attract customers to a local business, it looks at how the staffing can be managed to attract

more customers based on service. The evidence prevalent in this article is important to our study because Oh My Darling is constantly rearranging their staff to find the best ways to deliver service. We would love to see how Oh My Darling may be able to arrange staff to promote traffic in summer months.

#### [How Do Individual Personality Traits \(D\) Influence Perceived Satisfaction with Service for College Students \(C\) in a Casual Restaurant Setting \(I\)?: The CID Framework](#)

This study illustrates how and when college students eat outside their regulation dining hall. The study provides information regarding personality traits, perception of satisfaction and relational benefits offered in casual dining restaurants. This is crucial to our study because it allows us to gain insight on what makes people spend their money on outside services and why.

#### [Consumer research in the restaurant environment. Part 2: Research design and analytical methods](#)

This study goes in more of a sociological direction. In this study, different social, psychological and cultural concepts are brought into play to solve dining satisfaction. This study is beneficial to our research because it allows us to look at the problem at hand from a different perspective. By learning about these theories ideas and strategic methods may be taken and implemented.

#### [Determinants of eating behaviour in university students: a qualitative study using focus group discussions - BMC Public Health](#)

This study discusses possible factors that influence not only college students' eating behaviors but also their decisions of where to eat. The study specializes in five components: individual, social environment, physical environment, macro environment and university characteristics. This qualitative study provides a practical example of professionally using the research method of focus groups to have a content analysis about determinants of eating choices. Especially for the physical environment, the subcategories include the appeal of food and food prices. These are things that our targeted restaurant should take into account. Furthermore, the macro environment brings socio-cultural norms and values, and media and advertising into the pull factors of choosing eateries. These are instructive references for us to know students' intents and expectations of eating in an off-campus restaurant.

## **B.**

- *Research designs*

Our research was conducted through a survey. The questions in this survey were open-ended and helped us to learn more about aspects such as the preferences, interests and buying habits of Syracuse University graduate students. We chose this type of study because we wanted in-depth explanations from our participants and we felt that not only did a survey option provide participants with the opportunity to think about their responses, but it allowed them to

complete their answers according to their busy schedules. Furthermore, it limited the possibility of participants altering their own answers upon hearing others' responses in the room in a design such as a focus group.

- *Publics sampled*

As mentioned prior, the public we sampled was Syracuse University graduate students. We asked 14 graduate students of various Syracuse University colleges to complete our survey to assist us in our research for our Public Relations course. We utilized a detailed survey and found any Syracuse graduate student we could get connected to to fill it out. This was an example of convenience sampling, due to our close proximity and ability to reach the participants. In addition, due to it being a convenience sample, we were unable to regulate which identities were being represented in our data collection. However, we can confirm that both men and women participated in this survey.

- *Data-collection procedures*

When using google forms to share a survey, you get detailed responses for each of the questions each participant answers. From those responses, we were able to check each individual's answers and sort the data based on similar or dissimilar responses.

- *Instrument*

Our complete instrument can be viewed in part III. In general, we made sure to phrase our questions in an unbiased manner to ensure accurate results. At the end of most questions, we asked "why?" so that we could learn more about why participants act how they do and how our research relates back to graduate students. Time, money, and proximity to campus were three major justifications for buying habits. We also made sure to order our questions purposefully and included elements such as opening questions and an "all things considered" question.

- *Analysis of Data*

When possible, we turned our responses into numerical data. For instance, we asked participants which meal they preferred to go out for (breakfast, lunch, or dinner) and why. Although this was an open-ended question, we could still easily sort the responses into one of the three categories. From there, we tallied up the amount of responses for each meal time and then converted these numbers to percentages. These numbers could then be interpreted more easily and displayed in graphs. We could also use the percentages as a point of comparison for the population. For example, we know that eating at a restaurant versus eating to go resulted in a 50/50 split among those who took the survey. If we went on to survey the entire Syracuse University Graduate School, it would be justified to expect that around half of the students will prefer dining. While we used numbers when possible, we still find the "why" of each question extremely helpful because this is what will help Oh My Darling cater to the needs and wants of graduate students most accurately.

### C.

For the survey, we started to ask several opening questions to know about these graduate participants' preferences and frequency of eating outside the campus. First, we asked how often participants go off the campus to eat. Most participants said they go off-campus to eat at least a few times per month and that they were most likely to go out for dinner over other meals. Half of the participants chose to eat at a restaurant because it would have a great atmosphere with friends. The other half of participants choose to order food to go because it is faster to eat. Next, we asked whether they have heard of Oh My Darling. Only one person had never heard of Oh My Darling. Of all the people who had heard of the restaurant and eaten there, 100% said their experience at Oh My Darling was average or better.

To learn more about their preferences and spending habits at restaurants, we asked participants whether they were more enticed by a deal on drinks or food. 71.43% of people preferred a drink deal because they said they often have multiple drinks, and it ends up being more expensive than their meal. Over half of participants would not pay for an entree that is over \$20, while most capped a reasonable price for a drink at about \$8-\$10. Every single participant agreed that they would be more likely to visit Oh My Darling if the restaurant offered a food or drink discount for graduate students.

### D. Conclusion and Recommendations

- *Overview*

Overall, Oh My Darling operates fairly efficiently. Of the graduate students who had been to the restaurant, 100% had an average or better experience. While this is positive, the key is to make sure that graduate students continue to return to the restaurant, specifically throughout the summer months. We advise Oh My Darling to be a bit more cognizant of the financial limitations that many students face. Of the 14 participants surveyed, 10 were more likely to go to a restaurant with a deal on drinks instead of food. About 64.29% of those surveyed said that the most they would be willing to spend on a cocktail was between \$8-\$10. After examining Oh My Darling's cocktail menu, we found that the average price of a cocktail was around \$10.83, with some being as expensive as \$15. We recommend that Oh My Darling advertises a special happy hour or other deal specifically for grad students in the area. To see a measurable uptick in traffic, each drink would probably have to be about \$2 less during the promotion. We believe this would not only attract graduate students over the summer but keep them coming from May-August. Although we are aware one of Oh My Darling's main goals is keeping their current customer and not attracting new ones specifically, a single promotional event aimed to attract a new college age group could help create a consistent traffic even when undergraduate students leave the city during the summer months.

- *Limitations*

The most difficult aspect of this research was trying to find a flaw in Oh My Darling's business to focus on. While their summer months are not quite as successful as their school-year



months, the restaurant itself is not in dire need of more traffic. As researchers, we executed our opportunity to attract more customers to the best of our ability by narrowing down the target public to graduate students. A major limitation that we faced during our research was finding willing participants for a focus group. Unfortunately, we did not have enough of a budget to offer incentives that people actually wanted. We advertised that participants would receive free pizza, but no one came forward who was willing to participate. For this reason, we had to switch our method to a survey so that people would participate without an incentive because a survey was much more convenient.

- *Future Research*

Going forward, we would propose continuing to conduct research such as surveys or a potential focus group motivated by more enticing rewards. A free cocktail or appetizer at the restaurant itself would be a great way to capture interest while simultaneously attracting new customers to the restaurant. This plan would be contingent on the support of Oh My Darling's leadership.

## E.

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### Part III

#### A.

1. How often do you go off campus to eat? Explain why.
2. Which meal are you most likely to eat out? Why?
3. Are you more likely to eat at a restaurant or order food to go? Why?
4. Have you heard of Oh My Darling? If so, where did you hear about it?
5. If you have been to Oh My Darling, how was your experience?
6. How much are you willing to spend on a meal on average?
7. How much are you willing to spend on a cocktail on average?
8. Would you be more enticed by a deal on drinks or food?
9. Considering Oh My Darling's close proximity to campus, would you be more likely to go if they offered a discount for graduate students? If a discount does not entice you, what would?

#### B.

Allison, Caroline, Wendy and Sophie all study public relations at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications where they study areas of public relations such as communications principles, PR writing, and PR research. They are all members of the Public Relations Student Society of America where they hear from guest speakers who work in the industry. Additionally, they all have prior experience interning at agencies. These classes and experiences have left them well-equipped with the skills they need to perform successful research for Oh My Darling.

#### C. Infographics



