Abstract

This study will attempt to determine whether or not Harrisonburg is a viable option for expanded retail options. Since this is more complicated than a yes or no question, 15 stores will be examined that have performed well throughout the United States over the past several years based on several different metrics. Additionally, several stores that are already in operation in Harrisonburg will be assessed to serve as a comparison group. By the end of this study, I will offer recommendations on which of the 15 stores in the study would likely perform well in Harrisonburg and which ones would perform poorly.

Limitations of Study

When attempting to determine whether or not a store will be successful in a certain location, there are many factors to be considered. In this study, the only factors that were considered were the median income of Harrisonburg compared to the average median income of the cities where the 20 closest stores are located, the distance from Harrisonburg to the closest location of each store, and the retail preferences of James Madison University students. Some other factors to consider when attempting to determine how successful a store will be in a certain location are: the gender make up of a city, the average age of residents within the city, and the retail preferences of full time residents. It is also important to consider these same factors when applied to residents who live outside of Harrisonburg, but still come here to shop.

Limitations of the survey:
- 113 responses received from students (only .5% of student body population)
- 70% of students surveyed stated that they will definitely not live in Harrisonburg after graduating JMU
- 70% of survey respondents identified themselves as female, while only 60% of the student body is female

Methodology

For this study, 15 different stores were chosen from Stores.org’s list of Top 100 Retailers of 2018 that are currently not located in Harrisonburg to assess their fit with the Harrisonburg community. These retailers are: Nike, Forever 21, Vans, DSW, Gap, Banana Republic, Macy’s, J Crew, Whole Foods, Trader Joe’s, Wegmans, Apple, Bass Pro Shops, Five Below, and Guitar Center. In addition, six other stores were chosen from the same list that are currently located in Harrisonburg to act as a control group. These stores are: Target, Walmart, Lowes, H&M, Hollister, and Dicks. In order to assess whether a store could be successful in Harrisonburg or not, 3 measurements were used: median household income, distance of existing stores from Harrisonburg, and student preferences from responses to an online survey. Point values ranging from 1-3 will be given to each store based on these 3 criteria, and the stores with the highest point values will, in theory, have the highest likelihood of succeeding in Harrisonburg.

Findings

This graph shows the average median household incomes in the cities where the twenty closest retail stores are located. The are compared with the median household income for Harrisonburg after being adjusted for JMU students’ median family income.

This graph shows the average distance of the twenty closest stores from Harrisonburg. Higher points are given to stores that do not have locations close to Harrisonburg currently.

This graph shows the average ranking that students gave the retail stores on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most favorable.

Conclusion

This list shows the overall score each store received based of the criteria of median household income, distance of current stores from Harrisonburg, and student preferences. The stores that scored highest on this list should theoretically perform better in Harrisonburg than those that scored on the lower end.