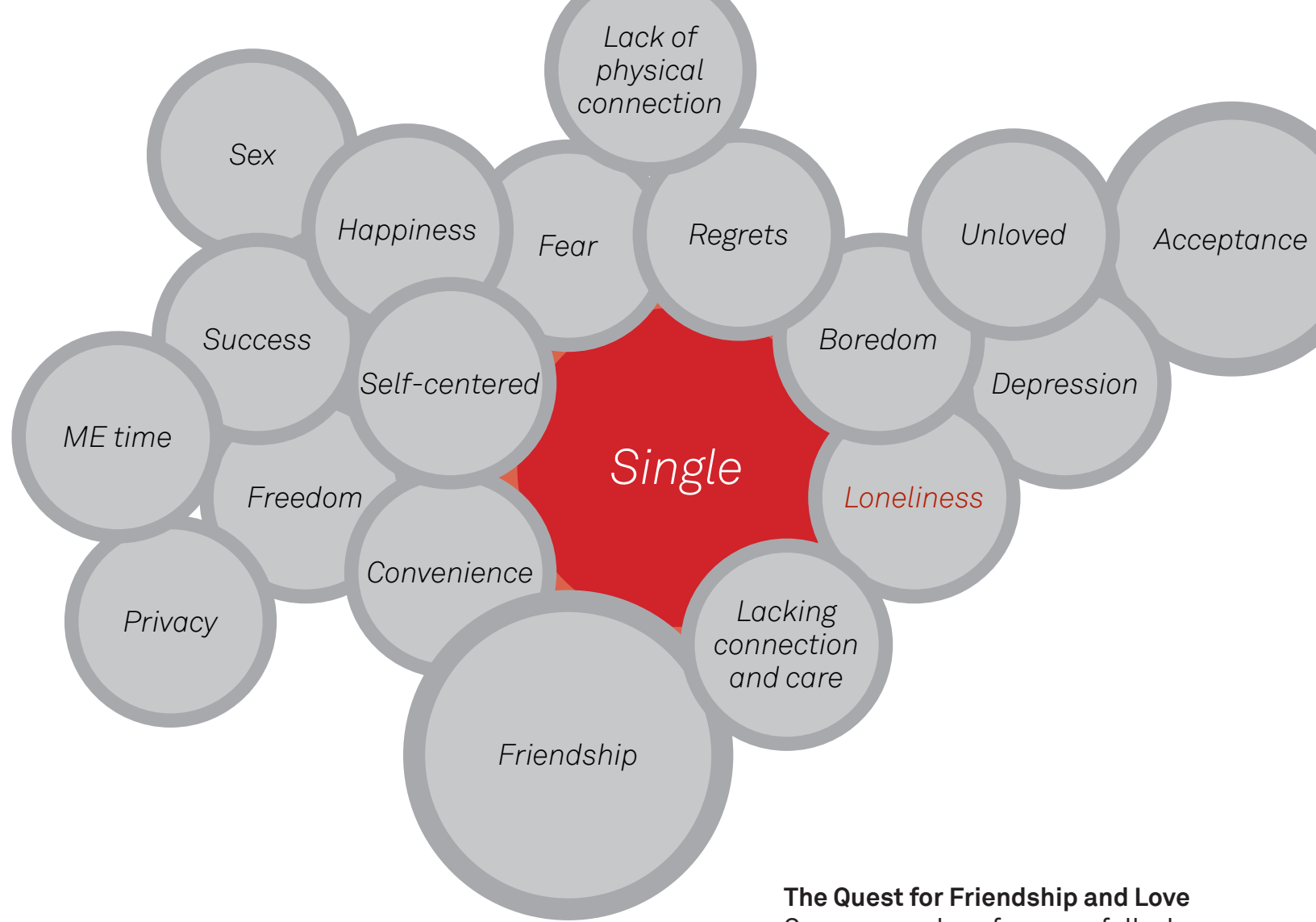*Single.*

CZA&D

A brand experience
Strategy case study
by Lee Changzhi
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"I pretend to be on my phone so that I won't look like I'm alone."

The definition of Singleness is to be alone physically, and emotionally. Single adults are a growing demographic more frequently now than ever. People are more free to make choices in their love lives, to marry, divorce, or even remain single.

I believe Singleness is a part of society that has been largely overlooked or forgotten. Society seldom thinks of Singleness as a negative state to be in, or assumed to be "the time of your life."
It has been a state glanced over by the media or associated only with images of freedom, youth, and hedonistic living. But when the lights go down, as much fun and freedom as it brings, Singlesness has many other problems as well.

For this reason I looked at the emotions and needs for single people & I noticed an extreme mix of issues and constraints this state of being imposes on a person. The Need of 'me' time, freedom, sex, success, boredom, fear,loneliness and lack of connection are all issues faced by Single people. After a careful study of the entire realm of Singlehood, we decided to focus on the area of loneliness, a consequence of being Single.
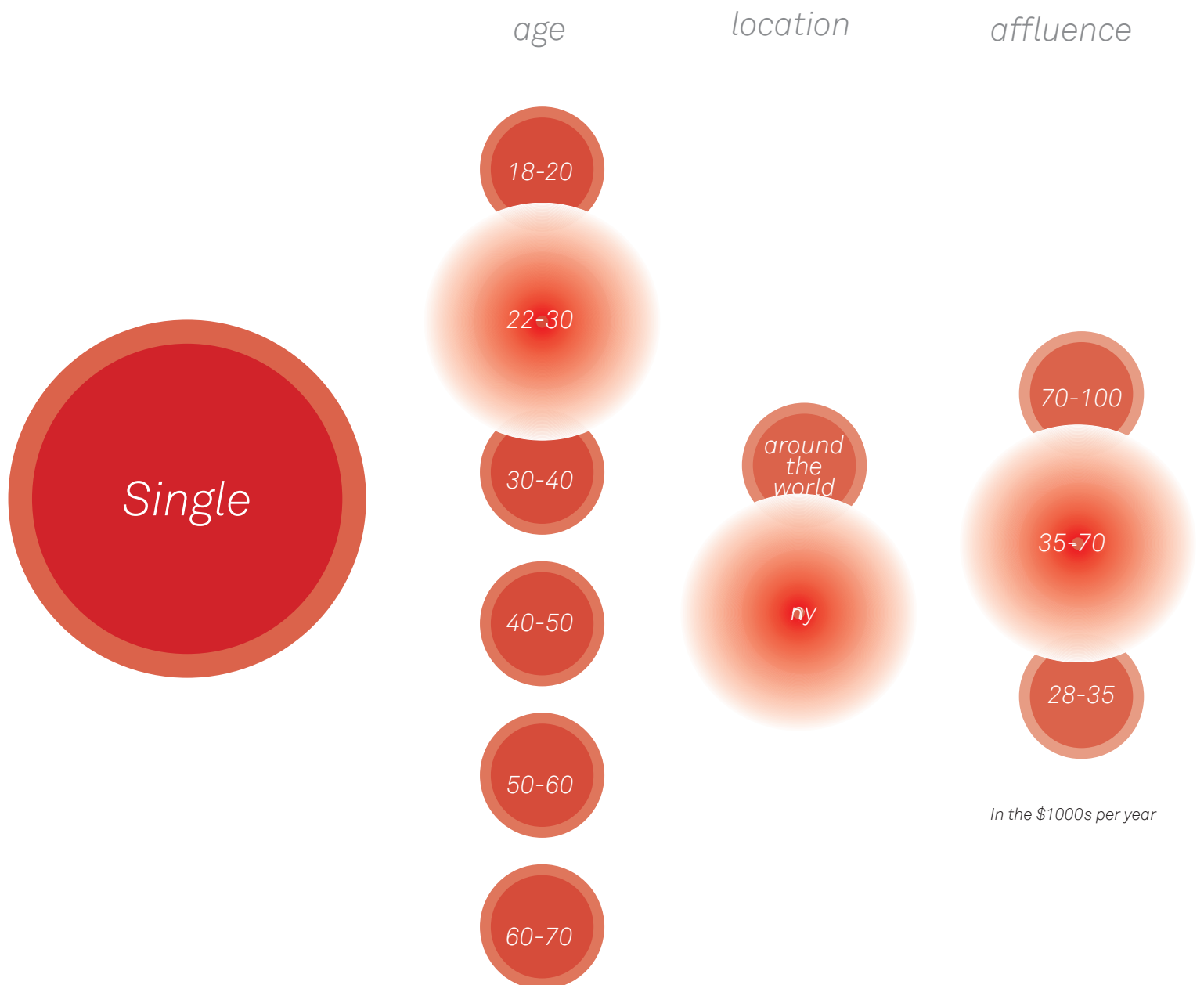
The Quest for Friendship and Love
Some examples of my carefully documented relationship bubbles between Singleness and the quest for friendship and love. The quest for friendship is wrought with anxiety, and the main obstacle to overcome is that of loneliness.
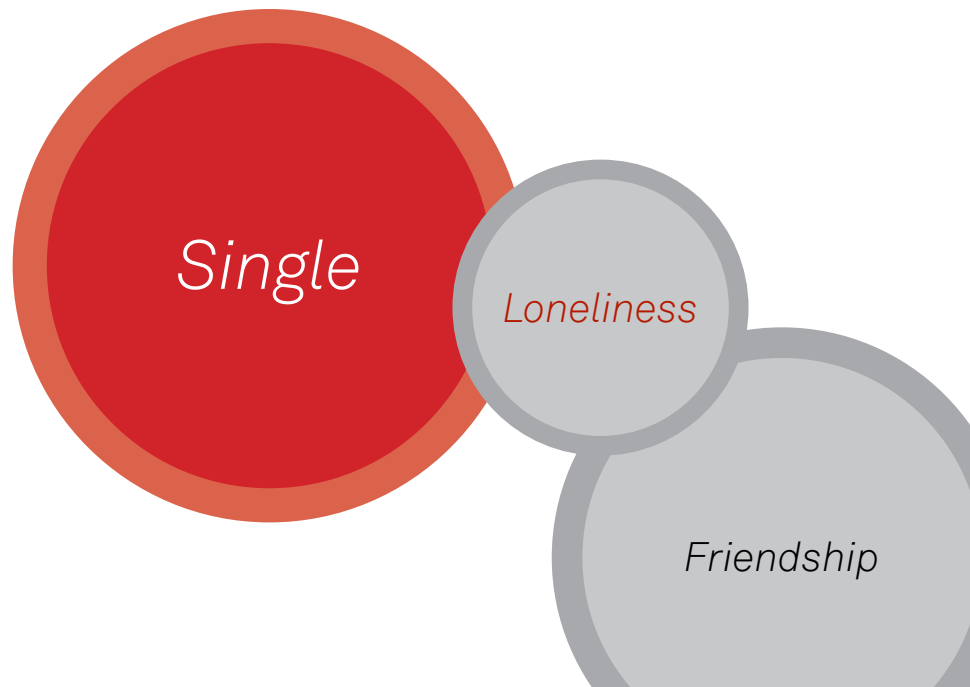
Narrowing the target.

Within the category of single hood, I decided to narrow my target demographic. We thought Singlehood is in all age-groups teens, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and even when you retire. It's not based on geography ...any one in the world can be single, and its not even based on wealth or yearly income.
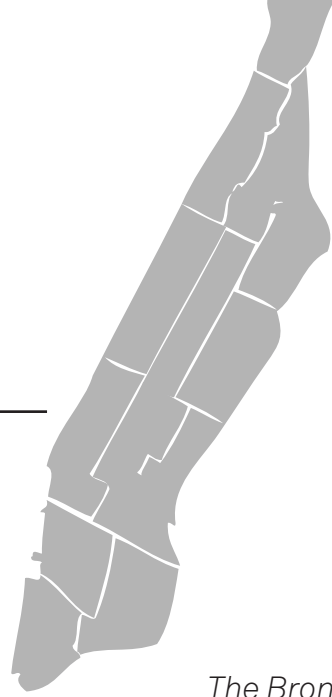
We decided to break it down and talk about a specific age group 20s, living in New York City, middle class, working adults.

age

location

affluence

18-20

22-30

30-40

40-50

50-60

60-70

Single

around the world

ny

70-100

35-70

28-35

In the $1000s per year

NYC Demographics

Manhattan
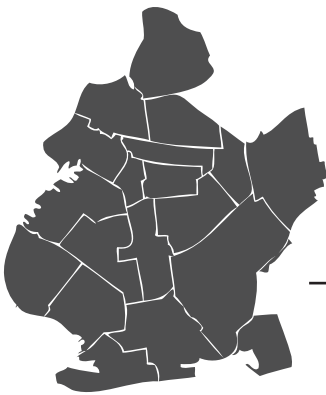## 50.6%

The Bronx
21.6%
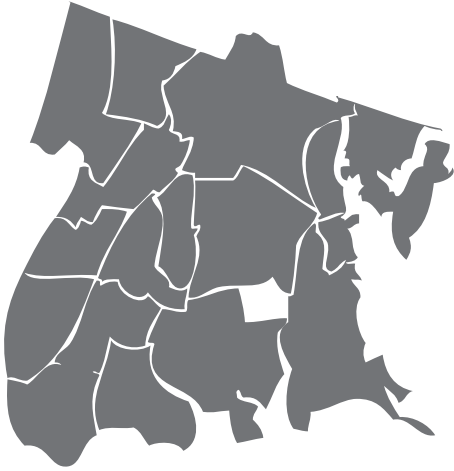
Brooklyn
29.5%

Queens
34.1%

Staten Island
29.3%

Of all of 3,141 counties in the United States, New York is the unrivalled leader in single individual households.

Insights from interviews...

We interviewed a considerable number of single people as well as some married individuals or someone who's in a relationship living in New York, to get an overall scope of the differences in how people feel.

We found out that there is a lot of alcohol association. Almost everyone speaks of the need to go out, avoid home, and be with friends. Friends and alcohol are their companions, but this doesn't fill their void.

Fear of Getting Hurt

I don't want to be hurt again

Skepticism about love and marriage

I'd rather be alone than in a bad marriage

Confusion about the rules

I do not even know how to date

Lack of Faith in God's Provision

I'm not sure if I have a soul mate

Concern that the marriage will fail

I do not want to get divorced

"Cell phones are the prisons of the 21st century."
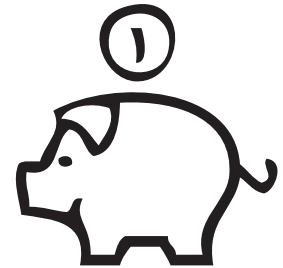
Challenges faced by Singles

Loneliness
Coming home to an empty house. In general, people living to-
gether reported being less lonely than one with no partner.

Less money
Partners who combine their incomes usually have more income
than single people living alone.

Identity
Single people must establish an identity in terms of both social
roles and domestic rituals. Many singles report that they find
their self work through how they are perceived at work and by
their colleagues.

Therefore, my response was:

Can I provide a platform to give singles the opportunity to meet other people? That meets and solves these three challenges faced by Singles?

Targeted Personalities

Practical Lee

Lee is a practical person who wants simple things in life and needs things to work and be reliable. He does not want to have to clean up after himself if he doesn't need to, nor does he like an untidy home. His consumption choices are never too extravagant as he does not want to spend more than he needs to. He does not realize that he's lonely because he's always thinking about how to maximize functionality, and may not think going out and meeting new people is practical.

Choosy John

John wants variety in his life, whether it's food or clothing. He likes to switch it up but understands that to be able to cook a lot of different varieties of food, he'd need to buy a lot of groceries. He is a skeptic when it comes to dating and meeting people.

Budget Conscious Lucy

Lucy goes out of her way to find the best value for her money. She is conscious about her spending and thus does not like to waste anything. She is, however, not cheap. If she knows she can get good quality at a lower price somewhere, she would commute for it.

Trending towards the solution.

I identified four trends that I used to guide the way I navigated towards my final solution. These are trends I observed that are culturally relevant to the age demographic I am designing for, as well as a careful study on what appeals to them emotionally, financially and sociologically.

The Trend of Urbanization

People are moving to cities for a number of factors, which includes jobs, convenient public transportation, and lifestyle. According to a study by the national Association of Home builders, 88% of generation Y wants to be in an urban setting for these reasons. We will see an uprise of city living, so we must think of ways to accommodate this increase of people and - singles.

The Trend of Simplification

People are beginning to lead simpler lives in terms of the objects they own. As the world becomes more mobile, people moving between cities have greatly increased leading to the owning of less objects. In terms of information and knowledge however, things have becoming far more complicated. Those who are able to navigate and curate their lives around the massive amounts of unsorted information we get each day are the ones who will lead successful careers and lives.

The Trend of Urban Roots

Following the previous point, people have started appreciating the value of sustainable, organic living both in the literal and figurative sense. With the onslaught of the overwhelming amounts of information and wastage we produce each day, people value the concept of distillation and getting to the 'root' of the information they are receiving. Sustainable living is a new way of surviving in cities which are becoming ever more inflated in pricing, health, and cost.
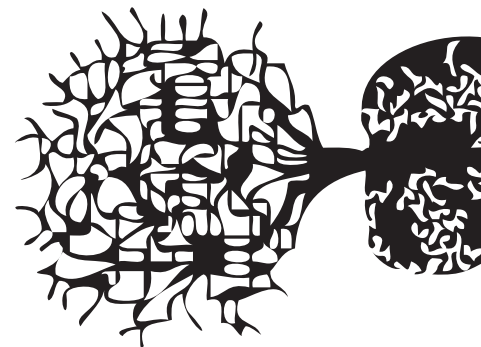
The Trend of Digitalization

The 21st Century has brought with it the digital world. Computers have become one with us and we have become inseparable from them. There is a rising trend of communication online being treated with more priority then in person. This has resulted in people becoming more and more unwilling, or unable to deal with face to face communications due to an over dependence on computers fulfilling that task of communication.
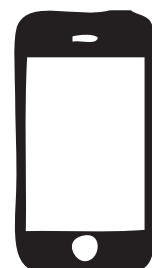
Finding and charting the loneliest moment of the day.

Studies by anthropologist Jonathan Harris has shown that people's happiness and sense of satisfaction fluctuates with the time of day, the activity they are taking part in, and the people they spend it with. On an average weekday for a middle to upper income working adult in New York City, their happiest moment of the day for a couple or a family is at the end of the work day, when spouses are reunited with their children around the dinner table. Harris' study can be seen recreated in this graph below that shows dinner time being the most enjoyable and uplifting ritual of the average work day, for a couple/ multi- person family unit.

TIme of Day Happiness Index for Couples/ Family units

Happiest	
Happy	
Neutral	
Slightly sad	
Sad	
Depressed/ lonely	
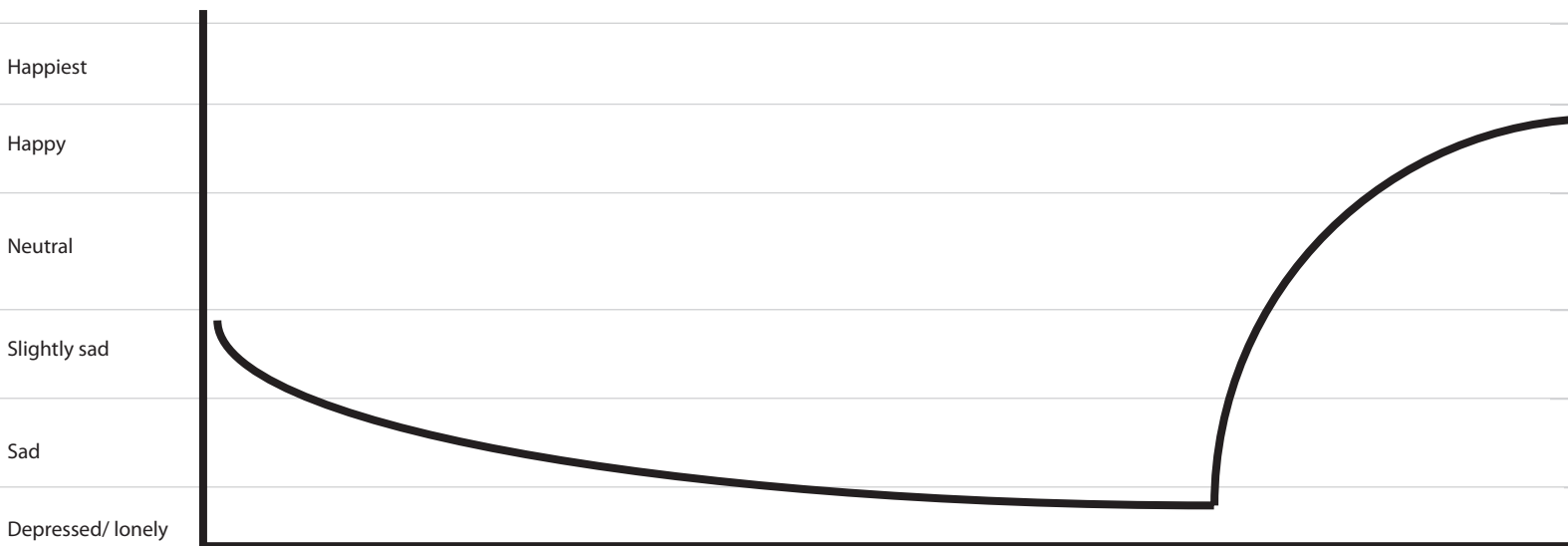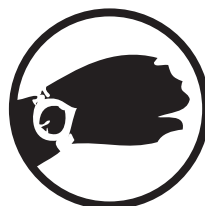
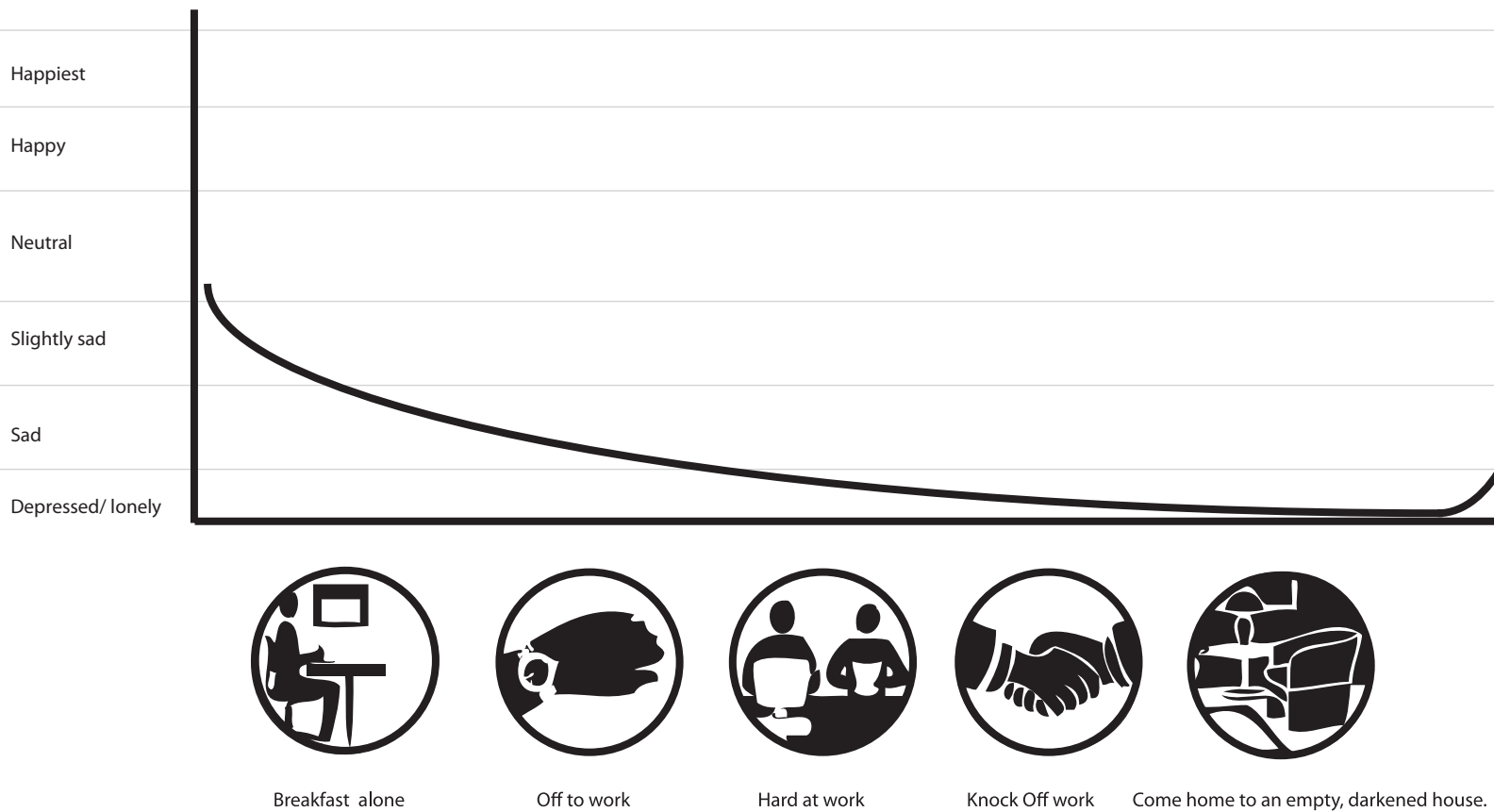Breakfast / Meal Time   Off to work   Hard at work   Knock Off work   Home for dinner with loved ones

Meanwhile, studies ironically show that for singles living alone, the end of the work day is the most depressing moment. Many return home to an empty darkened house with no one to come home to. The end of the work day signals for them not a warm cooked meal to look forward to, or young children to greet them at the door, but silence and perhaps unwashed dishes from breakfast. Single people are also statistically more likely to move into the realm of depression and loneliness at this time of day as the realities of singlehood and the burdens of living alone sink in.

TIme of Day Happiness Index for Singles living alone

Happiest	
Happy	
Neutral	
Slightly sad	
Sad	
Depressed/ lonely	

| Breakfast alone | Off to work | Hard at work | Knock Off work | Come home to an empty, darkened house. |

Based on this interesting and very contrasting data, I decided to focus on the ritual of dinner as a social event, and design a human-centered experience based on the idea of food as a cultural symbol of community and love.

The Meaning of food.

Food is much more than just eating.

It's a powerful symbol. It is considered in many cultures to be a spectacle, an event marking the passage of time each day.

You cook something to serve it, to share it with others. There are cookers and there are eaters. To eat it is far more meaningful than for pleasure, or even necessity. Through food, we express love, we bring comfort, and hope. we forge new relationships, and strengthens old bonds. In fact, the word "companion" is derived from a Latin word that means "one who eats bread with another". Food reaffirms not only our humanity, but the joy of being alive. Food is life, and the celebration of it.

Also, according to the Culture Code book by Coltaire Rapaille:

The reason why people strongly connect food with love and life is because of our earliest memories of being fed and cared for by our mothers. Feeding is associated with being held, cuddled, and made to feel safe, and even though our mothers do not feed us anymore, we were conditioned to have this association, and the intense feeling of satisfaction that comes with food remains. It is our basic instinct to seek out similar feeling/relationship we had when we felt safe and secure as babies in our mothers' care. Notice how in relationships, our voice gets softer when talking to the other person. We talk baby-ish talk sometimes and call the other person "baby".

So how do you start a conversation with someone you do not know ?

...by creating a communal place where people can participate in an activity either communally or alone. I looked at creating a space within a place where people will have no choice but to visit. Besides the bathroom and perhaps the trash shoot, the only other place people go on a regular basis would be the grocery store, because they have to eat for physical nourishment. Grocery shopping moves in tandem with cooking. The two activities come hand in hand and together as one.

Introducing the concept of:

Open Kitchen
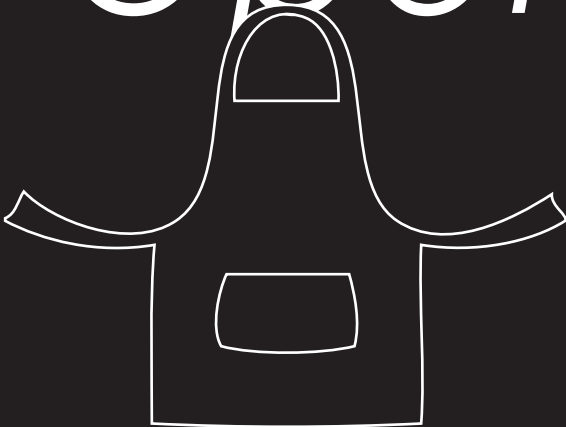
A place for one
and all to come, learn,
Interact and socialize!

Instilling core values:

"Freedom versus Constriction"

Designed For Freedom:

The Open Kitchen is designed for Freedom. In my research, I found the current layout of grocery stores to be inhibiting and not constructive to communal interaction.

Freedom of Space:

The idea of freedom comes in many forms, but one of the first and most obvious barriers to liberty is the environment/ space we have surrounding us.

By looking at existing grocery store designs, I propose a remodelling of the space to cater to greater interaction between people. By having an open space, we are celebrating and championing the dream everyone desires, a kitchen with space to move around.

Freedom of Choice:

At the Open Kitchen. We believe in giving people the freedom of choice with regards to what they want to choose to eat, when and where, and they should only pay the amount for one meal. We want to reach out to as many people as possible, and we want to reduce wastage as a way of life. You will be able to pay for a single egg, and an ounce of milk, as opposed to a traditional grocery store where you are required to buy a whole carton. No meal would cost over $4.00 at the open kitchen.
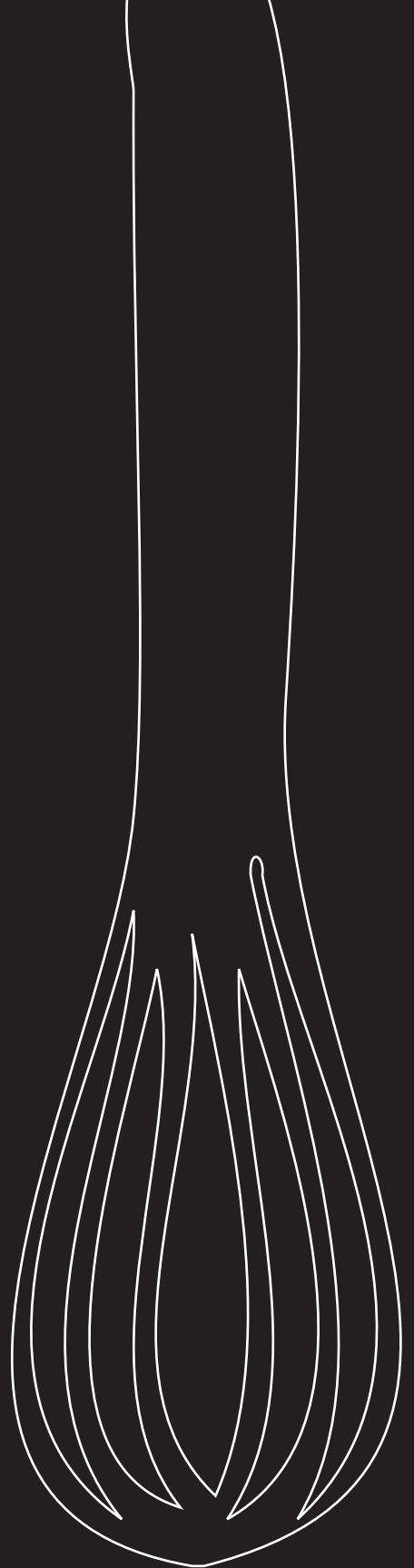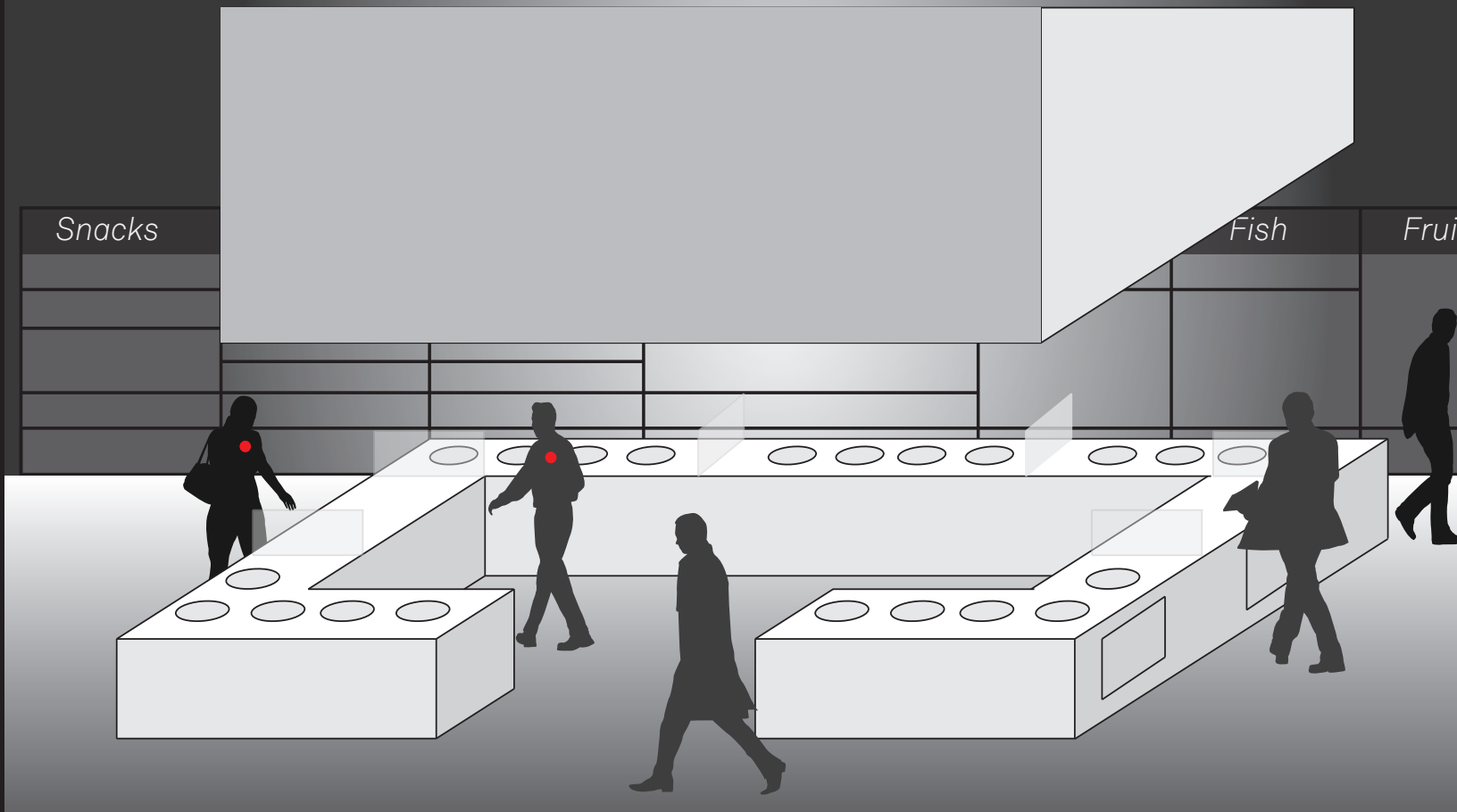
Snacks

Poultry

Vegetabl

Snacks

Fish

Frui

How we're positioning ourselves:
functionality + practicality

We believe through a combination of functionality, fun and practicality, we would be able to reach out to our designated target audience and address their needs for both their physical nourishment and their emotional well-being. These are a few functional and emotional benefits the Open Kitchen addresses.

Functional/ Practical Benefits:

1. No more throwing away cooking ingredients such as expired milk, bread, and poultry.

2. Fast meals: lunch and dinner

3. No more dirty dishes, cleaning after yourself, and less trash to take out

4. No more carrying heavy grocery bags home.

5. Spend less on groceries

Emotional Benefits:

1. Large open spaces

2. Fun and inviting atmosphere

3. Someone else washes the dishes for you

4. Clean and well stocked.

Conversation Starters

He who fears being conquered...

...is sure to defeat!
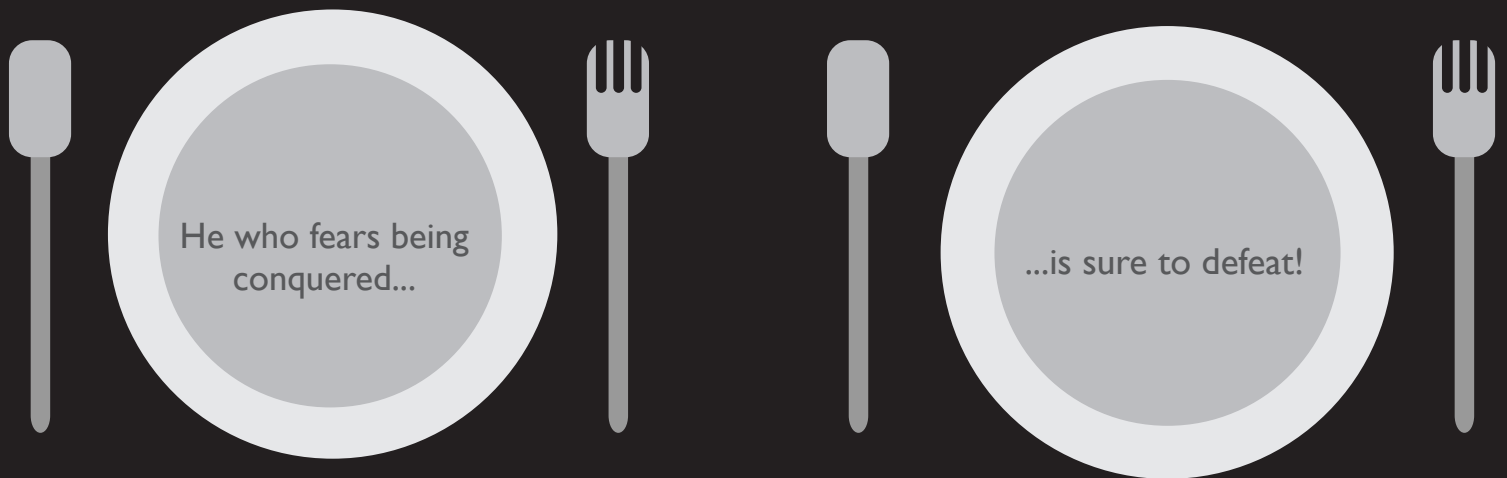
The kitchen would have plates and napkins which would have quotes, or topics that would act as conversation starters. This would help the potentially single chef strike up a conversation with a fellow kitchen mate. The idea to get in the subconscious of this person, so that he or she would have an easy conversation starer and not have to stress about thinking anything up to say.

All good things come to those who are patient.

Though it may not happen on the first or second visit, we belive as grocery shopping is a routine, so too will visit to Open Kitchen. We hope people would warm up over time to each other over the course of a few months of repeated visits, and seeing the same people around.
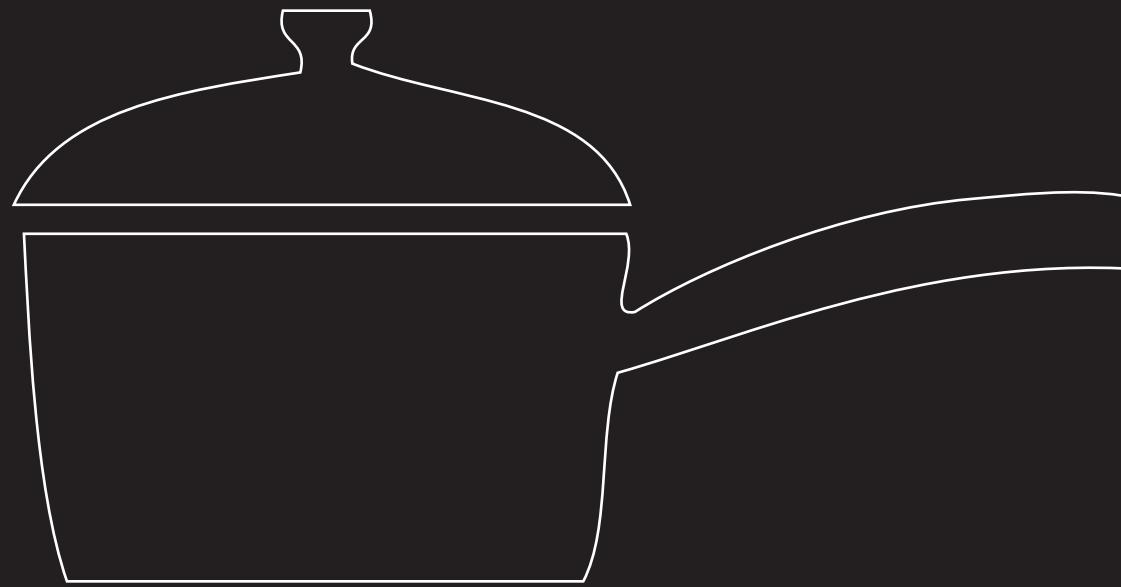
So what's next?

Bringing the idea to life...

A successful implementation would first begin with a test 'Pop Up' Open Kitchen over the summer. We are considering a few locations that are currently points of congregation, and using that to our advantage. We have identified two locations in Manhattan, Union Square and Bryant Park. We would be able to monitor two different demographics of workers at these two locations, both hubs for businesses and experience large crowds during lunch and after work. We want to champion buying fresh and per piece, and both Bryant Park and Union Square are locations of fresh produce. We believe this concept would resonate well with people who frequent these locations.

Potential Tie Ups:

We are looking eventually at selling this concept to established grocery stores frequented by our age demographic as drawn up at the start of this strategic case study. We are looking at Whole FoodsUnion Square to be the first tie-up, and we are positioning this concept as a link between work place and home, and a kitchen away from home with all the comforts and amenities of the best kitchen you could ever have.

Potential Competitors:

We looked at Eataly at 23rd Street as a potential competitor to our concept. This grocery store currently has an in-store resturant where people are able to dine and to hang out. However Eataly is positioned as an upmarket grocery store and resturant, while we are positioned as a kitchen where you will have to cook for yourself. While you are served at Eataly, you are cleaned up after at the Open Kitchen.

Measurements of Sucess

We looked at success as achiving our goals on multiple levels. These levels include:

1) Surveying how many people prefer to use Open Kitchen compared to dining at a resturant, take-out or buying groceries to go home to cook.

2) Measuring the time of day and how many people use Open Kitchen.

3) Measuring how many people are return visitors and how many friendships are forged from that pool of return visitors.

4) Measuring if happiness has increased as a result of communial cooking & dining.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, the goal of Open Kitchen is to give people the opportunity to find happiness through dining with other people. The Open Kitchen will provide guests with the chance to define how they want to interact, who they want to connect to, all on the mutal and very human topic of food. They may choose to do so alone, or with friends, or take this as a chance to share tips with fellow cooks.

Ultimately, we want to start conversations with people because in a very busy city, the cubical lifestyle is our competitor. We want to bring people out of their cubicals and build memorible moments with other people. We want to leverage on humanity's cultural associations with food. Food has been at the center of celebration and community throughout history and we believe that is is vital for people to share meals together to be happy.

We intend to built equity on those relationships our guest forge. Afterall, if someone meets their soulmate at our store, they are bound to remember our brand for the rest of their lives.