

**BUSINESS**

# **Snackpass app partners with local businesses, supports them during lockdown**

by Michal Ruprecht  
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University of Michigan alum Claudia Haimovici discovered the order-ahead food app **Snackpass** when the company launched on campus last spring. She said the app was not yet partnered with many restaurants, so she decided to join the company as the growth marketing manager.

“As a (University of) Michigan student, I was like, ‘OK, this is such a great app, let’s bring this to as many stores as possible and as many stores that people really like,’” Haimovici said. “At the end of the day, this is for the users and we want to have the right restaurants for them.”

Since its launch, Snackpass has partnered with more than 30 Ann Arbor businesses, including Wild Poké and Zingerman's Delicatessen. Haimovici said the app distinguishes itself from other ordering apps like Uber Eats and DoorDash with the app's Venmo-like social feed. The feed allows users to gain rewards for visiting restaurants and send them to friends.

Haimovici also said the app doesn't deliver food, which eliminates commission fees and forces users to interact with the business.

"College campuses are just more condensed areas, and people are always going back and forth, whether it's back to the library or on the way to class, and so a lot of people just don't have enough time to wait in line or sit down to grab a meal, so it's the perfect way to order ahead," Haimovici said. "(The feed is) really fun and huge for the college environment because people are so into social media and looking at what everyone else is doing."

LSA sophomore Emma Wong downloaded the app last March after seeing flyers around campus advertising the app. She said ordering is more convenient with the app, adding that the feed makes the process more fun.

"I like Snackpass because you could order in advance and then when you go to pick it up, it's already ready, so it's definitely nice," Wong said. "I think (the feed is) kind of a fun feature of the app as well because when I go to restaurants a lot of times, I get a reward. I think things like that definitely make the app a lot more fun and gives people a reason to use it."

Brian Kung, co-owner and general manager at Wild Poké on East Huron Street, said his business began a partnership with the app last March. He said he hasn't seen an effect on his business yet, but he hopes the app will lead to more foot traffic.

"We are always trying to find services to attract more foot traffic to our location, and we like that Snackpass is not a delivery service, so customers have to come to our store," Kung said. "The social feature of the app is also interesting, but we haven't seen any direct impact from that part of the service."

Jennifer Hall, assistant to the managing partner at Zingerman's Delicatessen in Kerrytown, wrote in an email to The Daily that her company began a partnership with the app last September and it has helped her off-campus business get more student traffic.

"We know that we are off the beaten path for many students," Hall wrote. "We're always looking for ways to make our delicious reubens and other sandwiches more accessible to the campus population. Snackpass helped bring our restaurant closer to students by making us more visible to them through their app. We're

really thoughtful about the companies we choose to work with, and Snackpass is a good fit for us as they share many of our same values.”

Wong said she has tried new restaurants like Snap Custom Pizza and plans to visit restaurants farther from campus in the future. She said she doesn't think the distance to off-campus restaurants will pose an obstacle.

“People love getting food delivered to their house or apartment, but Snackpass, I feel like, just makes the ordering a little bit more expedited ... when you want to pick something up, and I don't really mind that it doesn't have a delivery option,” Wong said. “I think maybe in the future I will try some of the other restaurants that are further away.”

Haimovici said the app also provides users with promotions and discounts. She said this strategy brings in new customers when they hear about discounts from friends or learn about new menu items.

“Those kinds of discounts are really meant to get people talking,” Haimovici said. “Because it's so big and, in general, it's going to bring a lot of new customers into that restaurant.”

Haimovici said the app has provided prospective partners with free online ordering services during the COVID-19 pandemic. She added that the company's cultural mission has been affected.

“Culturally, it's impacted us in that a lot of college students have left campus, so obviously that kind of (changed) our marketing strategy,” Haimovici said. “One thing we are working on is really spreading local outreach because we want Ann Arbor locals to use our platform, not just college students.”

Since classes moved online, Wong said she hasn't used Snackpass in about a month since she left campus as her hometown doesn't have any partner businesses.

Hall and Kung also said they've seen a decrease in business. Hall added that though there isn't as much activity, her company's partnership with the app has helped them adapt to the situation.

“I would say that our partnership with Snackpass has been incredibly helpful during this pandemic,” Hall wrote. “Since all of our ordering and paying is happening with no contact right now, that means that more people are ordering online. We are glad we already had this system in place before we were required to close for in-house dining.”

Haimovici said the app will continue to support businesses during the pandemic. She highlighted her company isn't collecting commissions from partner businesses, unlike the app's competitors.

“100 percent of the orders are going to go to the restaurants right now,” Haimovici said. “It’s just a really good way to support our businesses during this time.”

*Reporter Michal Ruprecht can be reached at [mrup@michigandaily.com](mailto:mrup@michigandaily.com).*

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