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Competitive Sustainability of "Mom and Pop Shops:"
A Case Study of Portman's Farm Market



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by

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Submitted to The Department of Economics

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I hereby recognize and pledge to fulfill my responsibilities as defined in the Honor Code and to maintain the integrity of both myself and the College as a whole.

Signature

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Acknowledgements

"You can never be unfaithful to your one true love. You always come back to her." – Cheers

This Senior Project is dedicated to the family that has helped me become the person I am today. At thirteen years old I suffered a traumatic experience losing a crucial piece to growing up, my father. For three years I was lost, uncertain, and lacking a sense of confidence that had previously allowed me to thrive throughout life. When I was sixteen I found not only a job, but so much more. July 16, 2006 was my first day at Portman's Farm Market and my life has never been the same.

Through working in the relentless summer heat, fourteen hour overnight Thanksgiving shifts, and directly next to my Mom I was able to find myself. It's corny and it's not something that most people can understand, but the people at Portman's helped me grow up. They filled a void in my life that I felt impossible to ever fill. With their help and never ending support I was able to do so much more than I ever thought possible, and become a person my father would be proud to see.

I do not have enough space to thank each one individually, but as an entity I hope they always know just how much they helped me, and how I keep a little piece of their spirit with me always. The Portman's Crew will be extremely hard to leave in May, but knowing they support and encourage me in everything I do, gives me the confidence to go forward in any endeavor I choose. One day I hope to return to the Big Green Barn and help it through its next stages in development. As Norm said when he left his beloved *Cheers*, "It doesn't matter what you love. Could be a person, could be a thing - as long as you love it totally and completely…you always come back to her."

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Abstract

This Senior Project explores how a small business like Portman's Farm Market is able to maintain competitiveness. The project investigates what drives, motivates, and distinguishes small scale firms and allows them to remain competitive. By conducting a case study of Portman's Farm, the project provides insights into what has enabled it to evolve with the changing times, yet remain a staple in the local economy since its founding in 1932. By looking at Portman's evolution, conscious economic decisions made by the owners, and data found from studies on other small scale firms, I conclude that the following are important for competitiveness amongst small, family-owned firms: adaptive strategy making, owner knowledge, excellent staff, and quality products.