

Ottawa flea market spotlights small businesses amidst the rise of e-commerce platforms.

By Grace Bestard



613flea inside Lansdowne Park's Aberdeen Pavilion

Over 150 small business owners gather twice a month at Ottawa's leading flea market. 613flea showcases local businesses amid the growing influence of digital commerce and an increasingly competitive market.

Even in the chilled November air, 613flea attracts hundreds of people from all over the city to Lansdowne Park's Aberdeen Pavilion. The market's popularity comes from vendors selling handmade goods, antiques, vintage clothing, and food.

Jihan Abbas, a market vendor, says the market helps her connect with customers and the community. "Being able to explain the company and products in person has been really positive. Plus, people can feel the quality," Abbas said.

Abbas owns Black Coffee Apparel, a brand selling ethical and locally made clothing inspired by skateboarding, outdoor activities, and tattoo culture.

For vendors like Abbas, the market provides solutions to issues associated with online business. "There's so much competition online; algorithms are always changing," Abbas said. "Here, we can connect with people face-to-face and tell them our story without worrying about that."

Another vendor, Barb Harris, is one of many small business owners selling handcrafted products. She sells cement decor items and soy candles. Other handmade items in the market include food, jewelry, posters, accessories, and home decor. Artists like Harris

spend countless hours perfecting their products by hand, offering unique, one-of-a-kind items.

"This is probably one of the best-attended markets in Ottawa," said Harris. "It's really helped to like promote our brand." Sellers across the market often use it as a form of promotion. They display business cards, signs with website names, or QR codes directing visitors to their online stores.

The market's diversity enhances its appeal and serves as a valuable promotional tool. "This particular market is extremely diverse. So it's amazing for that," said Harris. Through the market, small businesses become more visible to various communities, where they may have been previously hidden or difficult to discover online.

However, there are some drawbacks for small businesses in the market. Abbas says competition is steep, with many vendors in the same space, and customers are often easily distracted.

The costs include a vendor fee of \$100 plus tax and a \$30 parking fee. Transporting goods and booth setup are also included.

Both Harris and Abbas note that running their businesses online has occasionally been more beneficial to their companies than the market. "It's actually pretty self-sufficient like there are such great technologies in place right now. It's very easy to run an online store," said Harris. Abbas shares this sentiment, explaining how she can run most of the business from home.

Sources

Barb Harris, Vendor and small business owner of Emri Home

Interviewed in-person

Contact: emrirosemarket@gmail.com

Jihan Abbas, Vendor and small business owner of Black Coffee Apparel

Interviewed over the phone

Contact: 613-218-1160