# Menu Design in the UK Food Service Sector: Nudging Consumers Towards More Environmentally Sustainable Food Choices (Study Protocol)

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# **Objectives:**

There is a growing recognition of the importance of pro-environmental behaviour and an increasing level of conscious consumerism of sustainable and plant-based eating<sup>1</sup>. Eating out is an integral part of modern society, thus the food sector can make a substantial contribution to a more environmentally sustainable food system.



In previous studies, changes to menu labelling and layout, and manipulating the type of information provided<sup>2</sup> have been used to influence consumer food choice. This study will investigate the design of menus in restaurants (specifically small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)).



AIM

To investigate if menu design in the restaurant sector can influence food choice and promote sustainable food when eating out?

RQ2

What are consumers' perceptions and perspectives of sustainable food when eating out?

RQ2

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RQ3

Can menu design promote the selection of environmentally sustainable food choices by consumers in restaurants?

RQ4

Develop and test a pilot intervention to provide evidence on recruitment, fidelity, and whether a change in food choice can be evaluated using Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) data

Figure 2: Research aim, questions and objectives

### Methods: Stage 2: Customer focus Stage 3: Menu-based Stage 1: Chef interviews pilot intervention groups • 20 semi-structured 25-30 participants Evaluation of menu sustainability from 2 interviews • 4-6 in each group participating restaurants • 45-60 minutes • 75-90 minutes (plus 1 control) Face to Face MS Teams Design, validate and test Head chefs of restaurants Customers of participating intervention that meet the inclusion restaurants • 4 week baseline, 6 week criteria

intervention

• Minimum 6000 transactions

from 3000 customers

Figure 3: Research stages

✓ Stage 1 & 2: Qualitative components will explore participants' awareness and perceptions of sustainable food. Data will be analysed using an inductive thematic approach and will inform the development of a menu-based pilot intervention.

✓ Stage participating Menus trom evaluated be using a Sustainable Food Profiling Model dishes' environmental impact and be promoted as intervention. Using the restaurants' data (e.g., choice ordered, dish category) will be collected and analysed to determine whether selection of the promoted sustainable dishes changed during the intervention

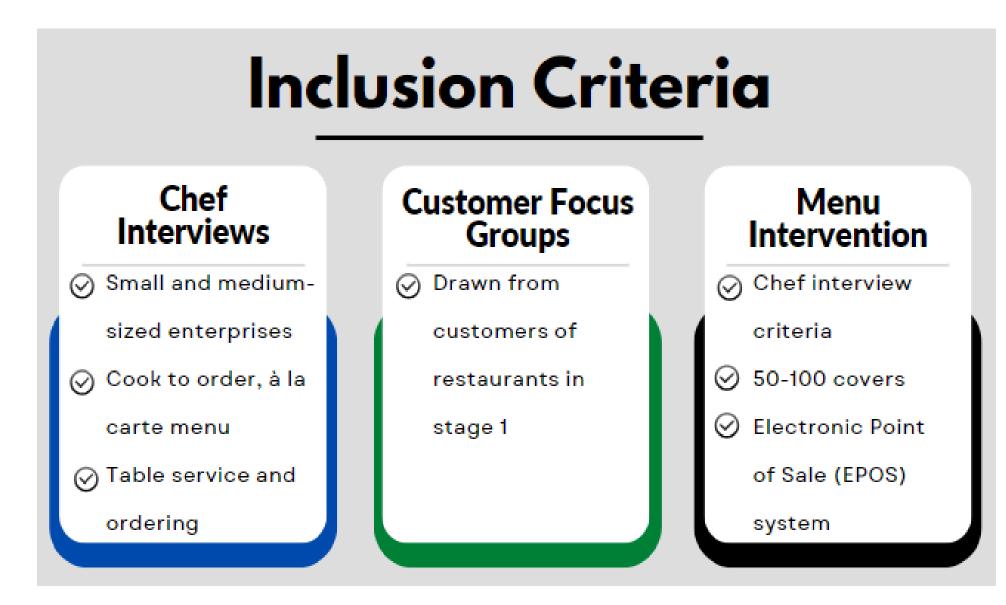


Figure 4: Inclusion criteria for each research stage

# **Conclusions:**

It is argued that the 'great reset' of the visitor economy is long overdue<sup>3</sup> and Covid-19 has highlighted the necessary move from a linear to a circular economy; this Build Back Better ethos is crucial to ensure a resilient recovery. This study will extend the evidence on menu design and restaurants' sustainability performance. The work will inform the discussion on nudgebased approaches in influencing consumer behaviour.

# **Project Timeline:**

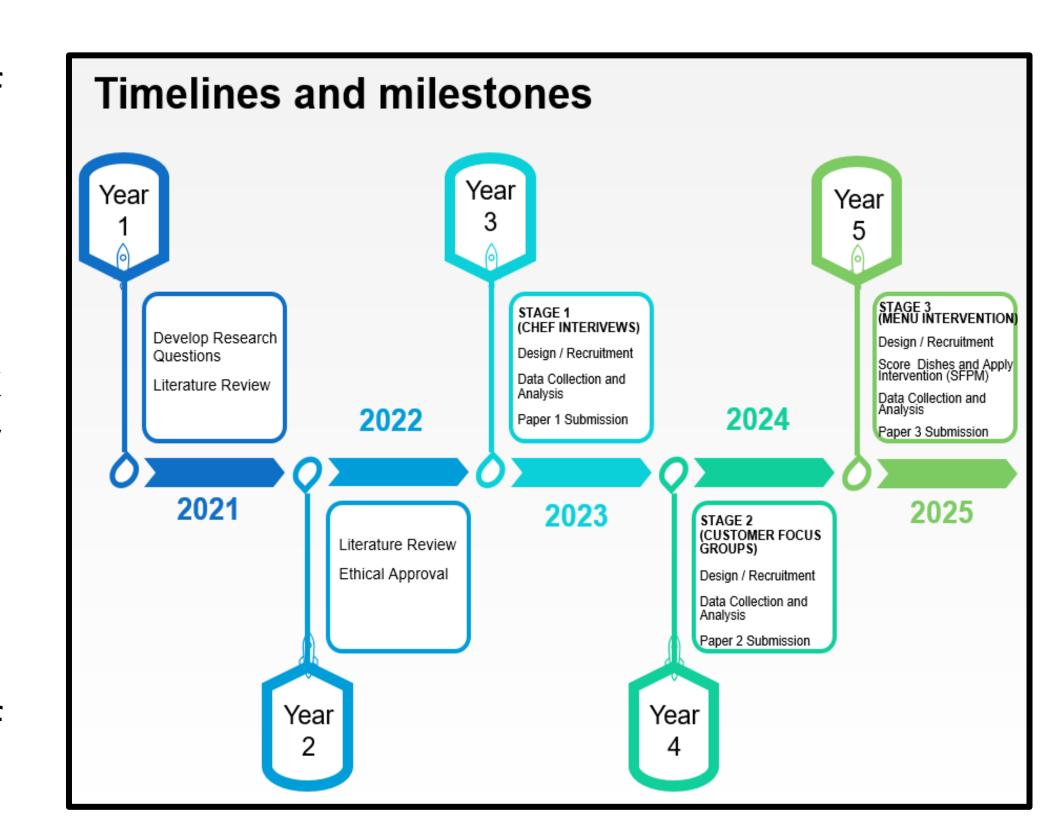


Figure 5: Project timeline and milestones

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Figure 1: Example of a restaurant menu

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**References:** <sup>1</sup>Krizanova, J. *et al.* (2021) 'Pro-environmental behavior predicts adherence to plant-based diets', *Appetite*, 163, p. 105243. <sup>2</sup>Fernandes, A. C. *et al.* (2016) 'Influence of menu labelling on food choices in real-life settings: A systematic review', *Nutrition Reviews*, 74 (8), pp. 534–548. <sup>3</sup>Sigala, M. (2020) 'Tourism and COVID-19: Impacts and implications for advancing and resetting industry and research', *Journal of Business Research*, 111, pp. 312-321.