

Report Summary: Marketing sustainable food at the University of Cambridge

Florence Best, sustainable food intern, July – September 2017 (8 weeks)

Overview: This project developed the University Catering Service's work to promote sustainable food options across its outlets through improved marketing and merchandising.

Project objectives: To encourage customers to choose more plant-based food options and promote general engagement and awareness around broader issues of food sustainability.

This consisted of five main parts:

- i. Reviewing the current sustainability marketing in UCS outlets.
- ii. Researching insights from behavioural psychology to use in marketing and merchandising.
- iii. Conducting a trial at West café to test these ideas in practice.
- iv. Developing an actionable sustainable marketing plan.
- v. Compiling sustainable food case studies from Cambridge colleges.

Results:

- i. Reviewing the current sustainability marketing in UCS outlets - despite the fact that the UCS has many sustainability initiatives and practices in place, the communication of these to customers is currently limited.
- ii. Researching insights from behavioural psychology to use in marketing and merchandising - research shows that people do not prioritise environmental factors when deciding what to eat, and that it is difficult to change people's behaviour through educational campaigns which aim to alter people's deeply held values. Instead, research on 'nudging' suggests that we should make small, subtle changes which work with people's 'automatic' thinking.
- iii. Conducting a trial at West café to test these ideas in practice - the main intervention was to re-order food so vegetarian options were presented first, and create new communications material to try and engage staff and customers. The trial has significant limitations due to its short running period and issues with data collection.
- iv. Developing an actionable sustainable marketing plan - online, instore and branding strategy action points have been developed which aim to encourage the consumption of sustainable food options and promote key issues of sustainable food to customers.
- v. Compiling sustainable food case studies from Cambridge Colleges - 13 Colleges provided information about their initiatives, policies and practices, compiled to form a [sustainable food feature](#) on the Environment & Energy Section website.

Recommendations/ next steps:

1. Set up tills to register the sales of vegetarian/meat/fish items.
2. Increase the capacity available for a sustainable marketing/merchandising project through creation of another internship/student project or full/part-time role.

3. Begin trialling interventions (such as those laid out in the marketing plan) is an essential step to discover what works and what doesn't, before these can be successfully rolled out across multiple outlets.

Conclusions: Further developments which draw on the current strengths and new insights from the behavioural sciences will be able to propel this work further, helping to move customers towards more sustainable habits and increase engagement with these issues by both customers and staff.



About you: *Florence Best, Geography graduate.*

Personal outcomes from project: *I have gained much more knowledge about different aspects of food sustainability, including in-depth knowledge about aspects such as sustainability labels and food waste processes. The internship has contributed to my CV with the responsibility to individually manage a project, work with a variety of stakeholders to develop communication skills, and advanced my knowledge of the sustainability & HE sector.*

Thank you for a wonderful experience, I have felt really supported throughout my time, but also given fantastic opportunities to grow and learn. I can't recommend it highly enough to people with similar interests/career goals.

What next?: *I'm going to be taking up a paid internship in London at the RSA, working on digital communications, to expand my experience in this area.*