

Review of FSA Social Science: Annex 2F Assessment of the Psychologies of Food Choice

Outputs: Psychologies of Food Choice: Public views and experiences around meat and dairy consumption

Authors: Caitlin Connors, Melanie Cohen, Sam Saint-Warrens, Fan Sissoko, Francesca Allen, Harry Cerasale, Elina Halonen, Nicole Afonso Alves Calistri & Claire Sheppard.

Date: October 2021

Overall Rating: A high quality research output.

Assessment of the Psychologies of Food Choice: Public views and experiences around meat and dairy consumption using GSR Code

Rigorous and impartial

Rigorous and impartial	Rating	Comments
Based on sound methodology and established scientific principles	Medium	This study is based on 'remote' ethnography and mixed methods iterative qualitative research, and has been designed, executed and reported in accordance with established principles. Given the length and format of its final report it does not present the amount of detailed observational and interview data one might expect from this approach. Nonetheless, it does present summary data from which the main themes of the report are generated.
Quality assured	Medium	The report was quality assured by the FSA social research team with some external peer review comments using track changes.
Based on best design, given constraints	High	More of a mixed methods iterative qualitative investigation than what is commonly considered ethnography. But its design is appropriate and well executed.

Rigorous and impartial	Rating	Comments
Conclusions are clearly and adequately supported by data	High	This study does indeed meet this dimension. It makes clear conclusions, draws attention to the non-linear complexity of a capability-motivation-opportunity behavioural model, and supports claims with well collected and well-reported qualitative data.

Relevant

Relevant	Rating	Comments
Anticipates future policy issues as well as addressing current ones	Medium	To some extent this study meets this standard, but this was not its primary task. The team had 'senior expertise in food and public policy research' and it anticipates that "overly linear and simplistic policy responses are inappropriate given the complexity of the capability-motivation-opportunity behavioural model". This point is valid.
Answers clear and researchable questions	High	The purpose of the study is clear. It "aims to explore the situational, social, emotional and psychological roles of meat and dairy and how these influence buying and eating decisions". It asks: "what motivates consumers to cut down on or cut out meat and dairy, and their experiences in doing so".
Contributes to all stages of the policy and delivery process	Medium	This study does not intend to contribute to all stages of the policy and delivery process. That is not its primary purpose. It does, however, address some of the implications of the complexity of the capability-motivation-opportunity behavioural model for policy making. A one-size-fits-all policy approach is inappropriate. The policy and delivery process needs to be more nuanced and contextualised.
Delivers solutions that are viable, actionable and represent value for money	Medium	This study does not meet this standard directly. It does, however, provide some 'Implications for Policymakers' based on the "rich lived experience evidence on what shapes meat and dairy consumption behaviours for a wide variety of UK residents". It delivers knowledge of the potential barriers and behavioural facilitators that influence meat and dairy consumption.

Accessible

Accessible	Rating	Comments
Published	High	Freely available and downloadable as a PDF from the FSA website.
Data made available where possible	Medium	Given the length of the published report the authors were unable to give detailed transcript data or field notes. They do, however, provide good summary data on fieldwork observations and participants' responses in interviews and groups.
Clear and concise	High	This report of this study is well presented in a clear and concise manner.
Related to existing work in field	High	The report identifies and uses other existing work in the field, including research on the COM-B Model of behaviour. It also has good linkage to the early literature review findings of the University of Bath team.

Legal and ethical

Legal and ethical	Rating	Comments
Complies with relevant legislation	High	These reports seems to comply with relevant legislation that outlines the FSA's regulatory role, and its law enforcement function on food crimes and food hygiene.
Complies with GSR ethical guidelines	High	These study complies with GSR ethical guidelines.

* External contractors are not always in a position to “anticipate future policy issues as well as addressing current ones”, “contribute to all stages of the policy and delivery process” and “deliver solutions that are viable, actionable and represent value for money”. Hence, a low or medium score reflects the limitation of using the GSR Self-Assessment tool for assessing the quality of research outputs.

FSA QAT Assessing Research Reports Checklist

Psychologies of Food Choice: Public views and experiences around meat and dairy consumption Checklist 2 – Assessing research reports

Q1. Title, lead author and year

Q2. Has a clear research need been outlined?

Yes – fully - The research need for this study was to fill some gaps in the existing knowledge of the drivers of behaviour and the triggers to try eating differently.

Q3. Has a precise research question/aim been specified?

Yes – fully - The precise aim of the study was “to explore the situational, social, emotional and psychological roles of meat and dairy and how these influence buying and eating decisions”.

Q4. Is the research design...

Ethnographic and behavioural.

Q5. Is the research method...

Qualitative

Q6. Is there a good match between the research question/aim, research design and research method?

Yes – fully - The use of an ethnographic and mixed methods qualitative research to study a ‘capability-motivation-opportunity’ model of behaviour is a good match

Q7. Is the study population and setting specified?

Yes – fully - The population is food consumers in England. The sample was 33 participants, and the setting was at-home tasks and online interviews and workshops.

If Q5 = Qualitative, go to Q8a. If Q5 = Quantitative, go to Q8b. If Q5 = Both, go to Q8a and Q8b.

Q8a. Is the sampling method...

Purposive sampling.

Q8b. Is the sampling method...

Quota sampling - Structured quotas and screeners were agreed with the FSA team.

Go to Q9.

Q9. Is the sampling method appropriate for addressing the research question?

Yes – fully - The sample represented a broad cross section of the UK: including residents of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and representing a range of variables including age, gender, lifestage, household composition, meat consumption habits, ethnicity and religion.

If Q5 = Qualitative, go to 9a. If Q5 = Quantitative, go to 9b. If Q5 = Both, go to Q9a and Q9b.

Q9a. Is the sampling method appropriate for addressing the research question?

Yes Fully - The sample was based on the questions addressed and the expertise in recruiting complex quotas for rigorous social policy research.

Go to Q10.

Q9b. Has a sample size calculation been conducted?

Yes fully - Sample size was calculated based on a power simulation, run using a logistic regression model. The authors used a power of 0.999 to detect a difference of 8%, and a power of 0.843 to detect a difference of 5%.

Q10. Are the research instruments valid and reliable?

Yes – fully - The research instruments included a set pro-forma using the COM-B structure, structured reviews of data, record of ‘key findings’ from brainstorm sessions and structured analysis documents. These are valid and reliable for iterative qualitative research.

If Q5 = Qualitative, go to Q11a. If Q5 = Quantitative, go to Q11b. If Q5 = Both, go to Q11a and Q11b.

Q11a. Is the analytical approach...

Thematic analysis.

Got to Q12.

Q12. Is there a good match between the analytical approach, the research method and the research question?

Yes – fully - The analytical approach and the methods used for data collection and analysis are appropriate for this type of ethnographic and iterative qualitative research.

Q13. Has a relevant checklist from the EQUATOR Network been used in the reporting of the results?

No - The study would have benefited from using the 'standards for reporting qualitative research: a synthesis of recommendations' (in the EQUATOR Network). The reporting that is provided meets many of these standards.

Q14. Have descriptive data on the characteristics of participants been presented?

Yes – fully - These descriptive data are presented on page 4 of the report.

If Q5 = Qualitative, go to Q15. If Q5 = Quantitative, go to Q19. If Q5 = Both, go to Q15 and Q19.

Q15. Have two or more researchers been involved in the analysis process (for example, through double coding)?

Yes – fully - The team shared and compared emerging findings throughout fieldwork (viaWhatsApp). After each fieldwork week, the full research team (sometimes including FSA colleagues) conducted a structured review of data - noting new emerging questions or gaps and comparing audience groups.

Go to Q16.

Q16. Is there consistency between the data presented and the themes?

Yes – partly

Yes – fully

The data presented were mostly extracts of verbatim data from interviews and workshops. These were generally consistent with the themes identified, though there is an element of de-contextualisation of these verbatim data.

Go to Q17.

Q17. Have similarities and differences between participants been explored (e.g., negative cases)?

Yes – fully - The authors found that usage of definitions of meat and dairy alternatives labels was wildly inconsistent between participants, and often even within single participants' language.

Go to Q18.

Q18. Did participants provide feedback on the findings (i.e., member checking)?

Yes – partly - The workshops allowed some degree of participant feedback.

Go to Q21.

Q20. Have unadjusted and adjusted point estimates and confidence intervals been presented alongside statistical significance?

Yes - fully - Confidence intervals (CI) are reported around Odd Ratio (OR) throughout the data analysis.

Go to Q21.

Q21. Has generalisability been considered in the interpretation of the results?

Yes – fully - The main generalised finding of this study was that there is considerable variety, difference & conflict in understanding food products and in dietary choices. The study concludes that a one-size-fits-all policy approach is inappropriate for understanding how to influence food

consumption behaviour.

Q22. Has causality been considered in the interpretation of the results?

No

Yes - partly and directly - Causality in the interpretation of the results is not mentioned explicitly, nor is it the focus of ethnographic research. However, the observation that “not one participant in this work reported a ‘clear line’ of behaviour across the COM-B framework”, and that “a one-size-fits-all policy approach is inappropriate for understanding how to influence food consumption behaviour, both suggest that there is no direct causality between drivers/triggers and food consumption behaviour.

Q23. Has uncertainty been considered in the interpretation of the results?

Yes – partly - The corollary of the above observations (Q22) is that there is uncertainty in the relationship between drivers and outcomes of behaviour.

Q24. Has a clear study conclusion been presented?

Yes – fully - The study concludes that a one size fits all policy approach is inappropriate for understanding how to influence food consumption behaviour.