



Title:

Exploring the Barriers to Growth for
Small Food Businesses in London
and Strategies for Sustainable
Expansion

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**PROGRAMME: BA(Hons) Leadership and Management
Skills in the Workplace**

MODULE CODE: LCLM6005

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ASSIGNMENT TITLE: Dissertation

DATE FOR SUBMISSION: 01 May 2026

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree or qualification. All sources of information used in this study have been appropriately acknowledged and referenced in accordance with academic standards.

I confirm that this work complies with the university's regulations regarding academic integrity and plagiarism.

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Acknowledgements

I hereby express my sincere gratitude to my dissertation supervisor for their guidance, support, and valuable feedback throughout the development of this research project. Their insights and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping this study.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued support and encouragement throughout my academic journey.

Abstract

In this study, the barriers to growth experienced by small food businesses in London were evaluated. The relevance of small food businesses to the hospitality industry in the United Kingdom was highlighted. However, it was established that such companies operated in a highly competitive and tough business environment, where issues such as increased operational costs, workforce shortages, regulations, and technological changes prevailed.

A qualitative secondary data research approach was used in this project. Information was gathered from academic sources, government documents and industry reports. In the interpretation of data, an interpretive research paradigm was followed. Thematic analysis was employed during the identification of themes.

Increased operational cost, shortage of workforce and lack of financing were found to be the top three barriers. Regulatory requirements and the competitive nature of the market worsened these barriers to create a harsh business environment. In addition, resilience could be improved through the adoption of digital technology, product differentiation, better customer experience, and operational efficiency.

From the results, it was clear that for sustainable growth in a business to occur, certain internal as well as external factors should be considered. Limitations of this study include the use of secondary data whose authenticity cannot be guaranteed.

This study must reveal the need to understand how various business barriers can interact with each other. This way, a holistic perspective can be taken into consideration in small business sustainability.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter introduction

The hospitality industry in the UK is a major source of revenue, creating about £93 billion per year in revenue and employing around 3.5 million individuals (UKHospitality, 2023). The industry is made up of small food businesses such as restaurants, cafes, and takeaways, which contribute significantly to the creation of local jobs and economic development. For instance, the sector creates 568,000 jobs in London alone and comprises about 11,400 food outlets in the city.

The growth of small food businesses in the sector can be considered difficult as the operations are faced with several challenges. For example, high costs of doing business, shortage of labour, strict regulations, and stiff competition have made conducting business increasingly difficult in the sector. These difficulties apply to London, where high rent for premises and saturation create high risks for small businesses.

Recently, economic instability, disruptions in the supply chains, and fast changes in technology have further affected the growth of small food businesses. Being constrained by a lack of finance and skills in management makes small food businesses unable to deal with any shocks in the market. As such, identifying the barriers to their growth and suggesting ways to improve their sustainability becomes essential.

This chapter introduces the theme of the study and provides the context for the research. The chapter introduces the background and the research problem, the concepts, the research aim, objectives and research questions. It also provides insights into the significance of the research and outlines the methodology and the dissertation's structure.

1.2 Background of the Research Study

Firstly, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been identified as the foundation of economic growth. According to the UK Office for National Statistics (2023), more than 99 percent of firms in the United Kingdom fall into this category. Additionally, they account for a

significant share of the employment and economic output. Small food businesses constitute a special case in the context of the hospitality industry.

London is one of the most attractive cities for small food businesses. On one hand, its multiculturalism and popularity among tourists increase the demand for diverse food services. On the other hand, there is high competition and many expenses. Firstly, there is the issue of high rent rates, and secondly, expensive energy. Moreover, food entrepreneurs must deal with the rising cost of ingredients and the shortage of labour.

Besides economic factors, there are also regulatory requirements. In terms of food services, they concern food safety guidelines, hygiene, allergens labelling and obtaining licences, which are critical from the point of view of health. These requirements imply significant effort in terms of education and paperwork.

The technological revolution has also impacted the hospitality industry. Now it requires entrepreneurs to engage in online marketing and use delivery apps and order management software. Even if it offers new possibilities of business development, for some small food businesses, it might become an additional difficulty rather than a resource.

Accordingly, for this research, the term '**small food business**' means a privately owned enterprise providing food services on a small scale with limited access to capital and manpower resources.

Sustainable expansion means the growth of a business that allows it to maintain the level of service quality and financial viability while ensuring long-term operation and development.

The issues listed above clearly indicate that this study should pay attention not only to the challenges facing small food businesses but also to the potential sources of support.

1.3 Research Problem

Though important for the development of the hospitality sector, small food businesses encounter difficulties in realising sustainable development. Their owners must deal with financial limitations, an increase in operational expenses, regulatory requirements, and strong competition in the market. All these factors can hinder the process of business expansion and cause business losses.

The problem of these barriers is intensified in London due to the relatively high cost of conducting business within the city centre. Furthermore, fast-growing technological changes force business owners to implement digital solutions, such as online ordering websites and

deliveries, in their businesses. Though some businesses can cope easily with these obstacles, not all of them are able to do so.

Even though these barriers are rather well understood, the available academic literature mostly explores them independently and at a general level among SMEs. Little is known about the impact of these barriers on small food businesses in London, as well as the strategies that help to manage them.

Thus, this research aims to address the identified gap by exploring how business owners overcome barriers for small food businesses in London.

This research is needed since, despite increasing levels of complexity in the economic environment in which small food businesses function, there is still not enough knowledge regarding the impact of multiple barriers on their growth.

1.4 Research Aim

This study aims to investigate the barriers to growth faced by small food businesses in London and explore strategies that support their sustainable expansion.

1.5 Research Objectives

To achieve this aim, this study shall undertake the following objectives:

1. To determine the main internal and external obstacles that affect the development of small food firms in London.
2. To analyse how economic, regulatory, and competitive factors affect the success of small food firms.
3. To assess strategies used or suggested to ensure the sustainable development of small food firms in London

1.6 Research Questions

The research will be conducted based on the following questions:

1. What are the major obstacles that small food businesses face in their growth in London?
2. How do economic pressures affect the performance of small food businesses?
3. What can help achieve sustainable growth for small food businesses in London?

1.7 Significance of the Research Study

There are various reasons why this paper is important.

Firstly, from an economic perspective, the study will be significant since it brings to light the potential role played by small food businesses in terms of employment creation and economic stimulation within the city's hospitality industry. Understanding the problems faced by such businesses could be useful when developing measures to improve the sector.

Secondly, there is practical importance attached to the research, as its findings would prove helpful for entrepreneurs and business owners.

Thirdly, there is academic importance related to the research, as the topic has not been explored before in relation to the context of London. While other researchers have investigated the problem of SME growth in general, the issue of how barriers influence each other within this field and what strategies businesses adopt to overcome these problems has not yet been examined in London.

1.8 Brief Research Methodology

Qualitative secondary research methodology was used for this study, with the purpose of obtaining an in-depth understanding of the barriers that are faced by small food firms operating in London. The use of secondary data from journals, industry reports, and other governmental documents helped in the research to review the existing body of literature about the topic.

Interpretivism provided a theoretical foundation for examining patterns and themes found within secondary data. Thematic analysis was used in order to find out what the main barriers and strategies are.

The above-mentioned methodological choice proved appropriate since it allowed synthesising a wide array of reliable literature on the subject matter in the time frame available for the research process.

1.9 Structure of the Dissertation

The current dissertation consists of five main chapters, all of which contribute to the realization of the overall objective of the study.

The first chapter focuses on introducing the topic of discussion by providing the necessary background on the subject matter of the research, along with an elaboration of the problem that underlies the study, its research objective and research question(s).

The second chapter includes a critical review of the existing literature on the issues of growth among small businesses, barriers to sustainable development of SMEs, and strategies for sustainable development, pointing out the existing gaps in the literature that necessitate the focus of the current study.

The third chapter focuses on providing information about the methods used in the process of conducting the study, including research design and methodology, data analysis process, as well as ethical considerations during the course of data collection. It also outlines how the data were analysed to address the research objectives.

The fourth chapter presents and analyses the findings derived from secondary data and discusses these findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical perspectives.

The fifth chapter provides the overall conclusions of the study and presents practical recommendations. It also discusses the limitations of the research and identifies areas for future research.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the research topic and provided context for examining the challenges faced by London's small food businesses.

It has demonstrated the sector's significance to the economy and highlighted the key issues that companies must resolve to remain in operation. Along with the dissertation's structure and methodology, the chapter also discussed the research goal, objectives, and questions.

In order to develop a theoretical framework for the study, the following chapter critically reviews the literature on small business growth, challenges, and sustainability tactics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Introduction

Small food businesses make an important contribution to the hospitality sector through employment generation, local economic activity, and the diversity of food provision within urban environments. Despite this contribution, their growth and long-term sustainability are often constrained by a range of financial, managerial, regulatory, and competitive pressures. The existing literature on SMEs and hospitality businesses provides a useful foundation for understanding these issues, but much of it remains either too broad or insufficiently focused on the specific realities of small food businesses operating in London.

The purpose of this chapter is to critically review the literature relevant to the study. It examines how small business growth has been understood in academic research and explores the barriers that may prevent such growth from being achieved sustainably. The chapter first reviews internal barriers, including finance, managerial capability, staffing, and digital capability. It then considers external pressures such as inflation, supply chain disruption, regulatory burden, and competitive intensity. The discussion then moves to strategies associated with resilience and sustainable growth, including dynamic capabilities, digital transformation, and collaborative approaches.

Rather than simply describing previous research, this chapter evaluates the strengths and limitations of the literature and identifies areas of debate. In doing so, it builds the case for the present study by showing that, although a considerable body of work exists on SMEs and hospitality, there remains limited London-specific, secondary research evidence on how these barriers interact in the context of small food businesses and how owners respond strategically to them.

2.2 Research Areas / Topics

2.2.1 Internal Barriers to Growth

Internally generated barriers represent impediments to SME development created internally within the organisation. Examples include financial limitations, managerial capabilities/limitations, labour issues and staffing limitations, and operational limitations. Financial barriers are identified as one of the most common barriers SMEs face. According to Adams et al. (2007), SMEs' inability to secure capital often prevents them from making

investments related to new equipment, advertising, marketing, and innovative practices. Specifically, for many small food-based organisations, profit margins are low, and their ability to reinvest is dependent upon their daily cash flow. While financing represents a well-documented constraint for many SMEs, research typically examines the issue of financing in a vacuum rather than examining the interaction of financial constraints with other potential constraints to growth.

While financing represents a recognised constraint for many SMEs, some research focuses solely on access to funding and fails to examine how these financial constraints interact with other operational constraints (i.e., labour shortages, increasing costs). Similarly, managerial capability is another significant internal factor. Many SMEs rely on the owner-manager to perform multiple functions, including financial management, personnel/human resource management, product and service management, customer service, and promotion. The multiple roles required of SME owner-managers can lead to strain and stress. The overall body of knowledge surrounding SME owner managers recognises the significance of owner manager capability; however, it does not consider the specific requirements and stresses associated with operating a restaurant or small food business.

The workforce capacity of a company is extremely relevant to our analysis. Because many restaurants are operated with a limited number of employees, this creates additional operational pressure and limits opportunities for expansion. Furthermore, high employee turnover rates found in the hospitality industry exacerbate the workforce capacity issues. Labour shortages are typically considered to be a market-based issue; however, they also have an internal component. The internal component includes the ability of companies to provide adequate systems, incentives, etc., necessary to attract and maintain quality employees. Thus, we suggest that workforce-related challenges are both a function of external factors (recruitment) and internal factors (management and organisational capabilities).

Although existing literature identifies labour shortages as a critical issue facing the hospitality industry, little discussion exists regarding how staffing-related challenges impact long-term business growth and strategic decision-making in small food businesses. An additional internal constraint faced by small food businesses relates to their digital capability and technological readiness. With the increasing need for small food businesses to engage with digital technologies (e.g. online ordering platforms, digital payment tools, inventory tracking software and social media marketing tools Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) highlight that digital technology has become increasingly important in facilitating customer interaction and providing increased visibility into markets. Digital capabilities will require sufficient internal resources (both

physical and financial) as well as appropriate levels of employee skills, training and confidence to allow for effective adoption. Therefore, if a small food business lacks the internal capacity to appropriately implement digital technologies, then digital transformation will serve as a barrier to innovation rather than a facilitator of the same.

In summary, literature has demonstrated that internal barriers to SME development exist. Moreover, these internal barriers cannot be examined individually. Rather, each barrier (finance, management, staffing and digital capability) has inter-relationships among them. Additionally, the presence of a single barrier (for example, a company's limited financial resources) can increase weaknesses in other areas (for example, labour shortages due to reduced employee base). These relationships are especially pronounced in smaller-sized food-based businesses, where fewer resources make a business more vulnerable

2.2.2 External Pressures Affecting Small Food Businesses

Small food businesses face additional barriers, including economic conditions, regulations, market competitors and changing consumer behaviours outside of their immediate control. The influences these pressures exert on the profitability, operational viability, and growth prospects of a small food business are substantial.

Inflation is a major factor in the hospitality industry. Increasingly high prices resulting from inflation, higher energy costs and greater costs associated with raw ingredients can significantly increase expenses and make it much more difficult for small food businesses to confidently develop long-range plans.

Furthermore, compared to large chains, the margin of error for small food businesses when confronted with increased costs is even narrower. While the broad literature concerning the impact of economic uncertainty upon SMEs recognises that economic fluctuations can negatively affect these organisations, their impact may be more extreme in the hospitality industry, where businesses are dependent upon a variety of fluctuating input costs and highly sensitive consumer demand. Therefore, while cost inflation provides a backdrop against which many small food businesses operate, it can also act as a limiting factor on the ability of these businesses to invest in new initiatives or hire staff.

Another significant external barrier faced by restaurants, cafes and takeaways is supply chain disruption. Small food businesses generally rely upon consistent delivery of fresh ingredients from reliable suppliers. However, disruptions to this supply chain can increase costs, lead to

shortages of critical products, and compromise product quality consistency. Supply chain instability has frequently been reported as a short-term shock. However, the evidence presented above suggests that this instability may represent a longer-term structural risk, particularly for smaller firms without diverse supplier networks. Consequently, the resilience of small food businesses will be influenced by the reliability of external supply chains in addition to their internal operations.

Finally, changes in consumer behaviour also contribute to the evolving market context in which small food businesses operate. Changes in dietary preferences, health awareness, concern about environmental sustainability and demands for convenience have all impacted how small food businesses deliver their products.

Such trends may be more prevalent in urban areas such as London due to the relatively high level of demographic diversity among residents of urban areas, combined with the presence of time-constrained consumers who are seeking convenient options for obtaining meals. Failure to respond to these changes may render a business irrelevant.

However, responding to these changes may require investment in innovation and or greater flexibility in strategy. Thus, like other types of change in consumer behaviour, there is both the potential for opportunity and pressure for businesses operating in this space.

Given the evidence presented in the previous section, it appears that external pressures are not simply passive or neutral background influences affecting business outcomes. Instead, these pressures are active agents influencing business results and potentially combining with internal vulnerabilities to restrict expansion. Therefore, there is an evident need for studies examining how these pressures are perceived within discrete industries and geographies.

Additional research by various industry organisations supports the significance of economic pressures facing small businesses. For example, OECD (2023) found that many SMEs across developed countries are being adversely affected by increasing levels of inflation combined with rising costs of operation. As a result of these negative forces, profit margins have decreased, and growth opportunities have diminished.

Similarly, Deloitte (2023) reported that hospitality businesses in the United Kingdom continue to experience extended periods of increased costs, including those related to energy, labour,

and supply chains. Both of these sources of information confirm prior scholarly research documenting similar challenges facing small food businesses. Additionally, both authors indicate that recent economic conditions have exacerbated these challenges to an extent beyond what was observed during previously recorded periods.

2.2.3 Economic, Regulatory and Competitive Pressures

The hospitality industry is regulated in a way that protects consumers and their rights. All food establishments are required to follow food safety guidelines; health and safety policies; labeling guidelines related to ingredients and allergens; and licensing regulations. These regulations protect the community and create an environment of fairness among competitors.

However, there are many problems associated with the need to regulate food establishments. One major problem is that there is an excessive amount of paperwork required to meet regulatory requirements.

Small businesses find it difficult to complete the additional work required. There is a conflict of interest in research about how regulatory requirements affect food establishments. On the positive side, regulations help build trust with customers, increase safety, and establish minimum quality requirements for the food industry.

On the negative side, meeting the requirements needed to ensure compliance requires time, training, and administrative effort, which small food establishments may find difficult to accomplish. In fact, according to Crowther and Lancaster (2009), the weight of regulatory requirements typically falls on smaller companies since they do not have full-time compliance departments nor specialized compliance staff.

As stated before, the issue is not that regulation is inherently bad; it is just that the impact of regulation can vary greatly depending on the size of the company and the capabilities of that company.

Regulation and economics interact. Many food establishments have been experiencing high inflation rates, increased labour costs, and increased rent prices. Therefore, it seems like complying with new or existing regulations adds to the stress and financial burden experienced by food establishments.

Another important analytical point regarding barriers is that they seldom occur independently. For example, a regulation that would be easy for a business to comply with under normal economic conditions could be very difficult for that same business to comply with if the economy was experiencing a downturn and the firm was experiencing employee turnover issues and or increased pricing pressures.

Competitive forces also play a crucial role. London's food establishment market is extremely saturated with numerous restaurants, cafes, takeout shops, etc., vying for customer attention. Johnson et al. (2020) argue that achieving competitive advantage is at the heart of a business's long-term success; however, the methods through which small food establishments can obtain sustainable competitive advantages remain unestablished.

Large enterprises tend to possess larger brand recognition, economies of scale, greater access to technology, and more effective digital marketing strategies compared to smaller food establishments, which tend to compete based on flexibility, authenticity, quality, and niche positioning. Porter (2008) argues that differentiation provides a key source of competitive advantage; however, differentiating themselves in a crowded marketplace can be extremely challenging for most small firms.

Therefore, competition in the small food business market is not simply about price. Competition is also about factors such as physical location, digital presence, type of cuisine offered, quality of service, and overall customer experience. Thus, analysing competitive pressures will require a detailed examination of the manner in which small food establishments attempt to differentiate themselves in the marketplace

Despite this reality, much of the literature takes a generic strategic view toward competition and fails to consider the resource constraints inherent in small food establishments that limit their ability to develop sustainable competitive advantages.

In addition, recent studies of markets indicate that competition in the foodservice segment continues to escalate. According to Statista (2024), the U.K.'s foodservice market continues to grow, thereby creating an increasingly saturated market, especially in urban areas like London. Furthermore, the escalating competition in today's foodservice market also reflects Porter's (2008) model of competitive pressure but indicates that competitive pressure in today's food service market is now more intense and dynamic as a result of changing consumer behaviours and growing use of digital platforms.

2.3 Strategies for Sustainable Growth and Resilience

While the literature has demonstrated many potential barriers to resilience and sustainable growth for small businesses, there are several strategies that may help promote both concepts. Sustainable growth is defined here as long-term growth, which will continue to support ongoing operations and financial success while maintaining customer satisfaction and quality.

Dynamic Capabilities is another concept related to sustainable growth. Teece (2007) states that companies succeed in a volatile environment based upon the firm's ability to recognise opportunities and threats, act on those opportunities through strategic actions, and alter the way it uses its assets in order to respond to environmental changes. The Dynamic Capability Theory is relevant to this study since it goes beyond the argument that growth is solely dependent on the amount of resources a company possesses.

It identifies adaptability as key in the development of dynamic capabilities. For example, small food businesses might adjust menus based on consumer trends, revise pricing models, offer online ordering and delivery options, or modify employee schedules to accommodate consumer needs.

However, the literature does not typically evaluate whether all small firms have equal abilities to build dynamic capabilities, especially where the existing constraints of resources limit the development of capabilities.

The literature often presents digital transformations as a significant opportunity for hospitality companies. Tools, including online ordering systems, payment processing, customer feedback platforms, and social media, enable hospitality companies to connect with consumers and engage with their audience (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). These tools may provide affordable ways for small food businesses to contact consumers and grow market share.

There are some qualifications required for the generally favourable view of digital transformations. A negative aspect of using digital technologies could be the additional costs associated with implementing them (for example, online ordering platforms charge commissions, and advertising expenses need to be covered)

Additionally, relying too heavily on third-party delivery platforms could lead to reduced control over the customer experience and potentially smaller profit margins. Thus, digital technology

cannot be considered a completely easy fix, its effectiveness will rely on how well it is implemented and whether the business can implement it at a cost-effective rate.

In addition to digital transformations, collaboration and networking are also argued as resilient strategies in the literature. By establishing connections with suppliers, local community members, and other organisations involved in the industry, small businesses may gain access to knowledge, support, and shared learning.

Networking theoretically increases resilience by reducing the feeling of isolation and increasing the adaptability of a small business.

However, little research exists on how networking functions among small food businesses located in urban hospitality settings. Further research is necessary to better understand how networking actually occurs among small food businesses operating in urban hospitality environments.

Product and service differentiation is another strategy used to achieve sustainability. Businesses differentiate themselves via unique menu offerings, authentic cultural experiences, the use of quality products, superior customer service, and/or strong local brand identity. With increased competition in densely populated areas such as London, differentiating itself may be one of the best methods available for small food businesses to compete against large chain restaurants.

Product and service differentiation, however, relies on resources and can be difficult for small food businesses to maintain due to continued operational stressors.

Overall, the literature implies that successful resilience and sustainable growth involve a combination of adaptable practices, innovative processes, and operational control. When barrier-based strategies are applied together, they tend to perform best.

Therefore, an analysis-based approach for identifying barriers and viable strategic responses is ideal for this study.

Although the strategies identified above appear to be supported by much of the literature regarding sustainable growth and resilience in small businesses, each strategy may be more or less successful depending upon the specific level of financial and operational capability of the particular small food business studied.

2.4 Literature Gap

Although prior research has provided significant information on the growth and development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) generally, there still exists an absence of specific, context-based research into small food businesses operating in highly competitive urban areas such as London. The majority of previous studies examine SMEs either at a general or at a national level, ignoring the distinct structural, economic, and competitive influences on food-related businesses in large metropolitan areas.

Additionally, much of the current research isolates individual barriers to the success of small food businesses, such as financial limitations, labour shortages, or regulatory pressures. In contrast, very few studies have investigated how individual barriers impact upon each other and consequently affect both business performance and sustainability.

As a result, there exists a void in fully appreciating the complexities associated with the numerous obstacles encountered by small food businesses.

There also exists a requirement for additional research that combines current academic and industry knowledge to create an integrated framework for identifying business impediments and growth strategies.

Utilising a secondary research methodology, this study will fill this gap by combining findings from various sources to provide an overarching view of the challenges being confronted by small food businesses located in London, along with potential strategies supporting resilience.

2.5 Conceptual Framework of Small Business Growth

Small and medium-sized enterprises are recognised globally as being at the centre of economic development. Within the United Kingdom, they make up the vast majority of all businesses (Office for National Statistics, 2023).

However, while business growth is considered an indicator of success, it is not always a simple matter. Storey (2016) stated that business growth can take many forms, such as increasing in

terms of size, turnover, market share or operational capability. For small businesses, however, the growth of their operations needs to be both successful and sustainable.

In respect to this dissertation, the definition of sustainable growth relates to the long-term sustainability of business growth. That is, the growth of a business's operations can continue over time without jeopardising the financial sustainability of the business, the quality of services provided, or the operational sustainability of the business.

The theoretical framework for this research is based upon the premise that the growth of small food-related businesses is influenced by the interrelationship between internal barriers to growth, external pressures to grow and strategic response.

Internal barriers to growth are defined as including issues with finance, management and staffing capabilities within a business. Additionally, some small businesses lack digital capabilities, which could limit their growth potential.

External pressures to grow include inflation, changes in regulations, increased levels of competition from other businesses and changes in consumer demand.

All these influences will have an impact on a business's performance. Affecting a business's ability to achieve profit margins, provide sufficient capital to invest in new products and/or processes and maintain operational stability.

Businesses do not act passively to these influences. Businesses may choose to implement various strategies to reduce the negative effects of barriers to growth and increase their resilience. Strategies may include implementing digital solutions into their operations, developing unique features and characteristics of their products, enhancing customer experiences and improving the operational efficiencies of their organisations. These strategies may mitigate the adverse impacts of barriers to growth and enhance the resilience of small food businesses.

Therefore, this framework hypothesises that sustainable expansion depends upon a combination of the barriers to growth experienced by a business, together with the business's strategic response to those barriers.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Barriers and Strategic Responses in Small Food Businesses

Internal barriers

- Limited financial resources
- Managerial capability constraints
- Staffing limitations
- Digital capability gaps

External pressures

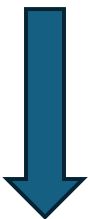
- Rising operational costs
- Regulatory burden
- Market competition
- Changing consumer behaviour



Influence

Business performance

- Profitability
- Operational stability
- Growth capacity

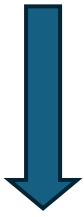


Moderated by

Strategic responses

- Digital technology adoption
- Product differentiation
- Customer experience

- Operational efficiency



Leading towards

Sustainable expansion

- Greater resilience
- Improved competitiveness
- Long-term business sustainability

This framework helps organise the study by linking the literature directly to the research questions and later to the methodology and findings. It also clarifies that the dissertation is not only concerned with identifying problems, but with understanding the relationship between barriers, business performance, and strategic adaptation.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a critical overview of the existing literature on Small Business Growth and Barriers to Growth for Small Food Businesses within the Hospitality Industry.

In particular, it has highlighted the significance of SMEs to Economic Development and outlined major internal and external barriers to growth for businesses, such as Financial Constraints, Regulatory Pressures, Market Competition, and Technological Challenges.

It has also explored ways in which the resilience of small food businesses can be enhanced through Digital Innovation, Adaptation and Collaboration. It was identified as a significant gap in the literature, the need for an integrated London-based analysis that considers how different barriers are interlinked to affect small food business growth.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Chapter Introduction

The research methods employed in this investigation are outlined in detail within this chapter; further details on how the research was carried out to address each of the research aims and objectives are also included.

Research methodology refers to the systematic process that is followed when collecting, analysing and interpreting data to provide answers to research questions (Saunders et al., 2019). A secondary research approach has been adopted for this study. Secondary research involves investigating the barriers to growth experienced by small food businesses operating within the city of London using existing academic literature, industry reports and Government publications.

Further details regarding the research philosophy, research design, data collection process, data analysis methods and ethical considerations are provided below.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The methodologies used to carry out this investigation will be detailed throughout this chapter, as well as how the investigations were conducted to meet each of the Research Aims and Objectives.

Research methodology can be described as a systematic procedure for collecting, analysing and drawing conclusions from data collected to answer questions raised during an investigation (Saunders et al., 2019)

In respect of this Study, a secondary research method has been utilised. Secondary research is defined as "the use of existing data or evidence" (Saunders et al., 2019) - it provides insight into the barriers to growth faced by small food businesses trading within the City of London through existing academic literature, industry reports and Government publications.

Below you will find additional information concerning the Research Philosophy, Research Design, Data Collection Process, Methods of Analysis and Ethical Considerations.

3.3 Research Design

This project uses a qualitative secondary research methodology based upon the analysis of academic articles, Industry Reports and Government Publications.

Secondary Research was chosen as this method allows researchers access to large amounts of quality, peer-reviewed, and industry-relevant data. Secondary Research also facilitates cross-study comparisons, enabling a greater understanding of the barriers faced by Small Food Businesses.

Limitations are associated with using Secondary Data. The data may not provide up-to-date information about current business conditions or the specific experiences of Individual business owners.

Additionally, there is no control over the way in which the data were initially collected. Despite these limitations, the methodology is justified as it will allow a sufficient amount of depth and breadth to address all aspects of the research objectives.

3.4 Data Collection- Methodology (Secondary Sources)

Secondary data was sourced from a variety of secondary sources, including:

- Peer-reviewed academic journals
- Government publications (e.g. Office for National Statistics)
- Industry reports (e.g. UKHospitality, Lumina Intelligence)
- Professional and business reports

Data was selected based on:

- Relevance to small food businesses
- Credibility/Reliability
- Timeliness of publication

This ensured that the data used is credible and applicable to present-day industry circumstances. Further credibility of using secondary data can be demonstrated through the provision of high-quality, recent data by reputable organisations such as OECD (2023), Deloitte

(2023) and McKinsey (2022). This provided insight into current market trends, giving the research applicability at the time of undertaking.

Some 30-40 sources have been searched, including peer-reviewed journal articles, industry reports and government documents.

These searches have been undertaken via online search engines, e.g. Google Scholar, and university library resources, using the keywords 'small business development', 'hospitality SMEs UK', 'food business challenges London' and 'SME sustainability'.

3.5 Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis according to Braun & Clarke (2006) to extract the findings. Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify and analyse patterns found throughout qualitative data.

Because of the nature of the secondary research, thematic analysis was especially appropriate since there was a large amount of information that had been compiled from multiple data sources and needed to be organised into meaningful categories. The themes identified and analysed in this study included financial pressure, staffing shortages, and high levels of competition.

One benefit of thematic analysis is that it can allow for the development of insightful understandings of complex issues. A limitation of thematic analysis is that due to the fact that it is dependent on the researcher's interpretations, which may be biased. To limit potential bias when developing themes. Each theme developed was based upon repeated reviews of the data collected, as well as cross-referencing with other sources of data.

3.6 Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

Qualitative research using secondary data, therefore, requires a high degree of reliability and validity. Reliability was achieved through systematic data selection and a consistent analysis procedure. The selection of sources for inclusion in this study was made with reference to

explicit criteria (relevance, credibility, recency), thus supporting consistency within the research process. Nevertheless, given the secondary nature of the data, it is impossible to guarantee complete reliability due to the differing perspectives provided by the various authors.

Validity relates to the extent to which the research represents the phenomenon under investigation. In this study, validity was enhanced by utilising multiple data sources (academic journals, government reports, and industry publications). Triangulating the data sources used in this study provides increased confidence in the results because it reduces dependence upon an individual viewpoint.

Transparency has been maintained throughout the research process. The method of selecting, analysing and interpreting the data has been explicitly outlined. Therefore, trustworthiness has also been enhanced. It should, however, be acknowledged that due to the use of secondary data only and the absence of first-hand, primary data, the ability to validate any findings through comparison with 'real-time' experience is limited. This potentially affects the validity of the study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical Approval for the Research:

As per university guidelines for ethics approvals, the research will be using secondary data only. There are no human participants involved in this study. Therefore, formal ethical risk was minimal. Although the ethical principles have been adopted for this study, all of the sources used in this study have been referenced appropriately, to ensure against plagiarism, and credible (publicly available) data have been used.

Adherence to academic integrity standards as required by the institution, along with transparency of data use in the study, has been adopted in this study. Thus, ensuring that the research meets the ethical expectations set out in the assignment brief.

3.8 Methodological Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged:

- The study relies on existing data, which may limit control over data quality.
- Findings are dependent on the availability of relevant literature.
- Secondary data may not fully capture real-time business experiences.

Despite these limitations, the approach is appropriate for providing a comprehensive overview of the research topic.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the qualitative secondary research methodology adopted in the study. The research used existing academic and industry sources and applied thematic analysis to identify key barriers and strategies.

The following chapter presents and discusses the findings derived from the secondary data analysis.

Chapter 4

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will report on, analyse, and discuss the results obtained through a review of secondary data. It aims to summarise and interpret the findings as they relate to the research objectives by bringing together the academic literature, industry reports and governmental documentation.

The Chapter has three distinct parts. Firstly, the results for each Research Objective are reported. Secondly, the results are examined for their underlying patterns and inter-relationships. Lastly, the Results are reviewed against other Literature to improve our understanding of what impedes sustainable development within Small Food Businesses in London and which Strategies could enable sustainable development.

4.2 Presentation of Findings

4.2.1 Objective 1: Internal and External Barriers

A variety of internal and external barriers have been reported in the literature to affect the growth of smaller food companies. An example is that of an increase in operating costs. Examples include higher raw material costs (ingredients), increased energy costs, and overall higher overhead expenses. Many authors report these factors to be directly related to decreased profit margins and reduced business viability.

Another common theme reported by many authors was staffing. A shortage of labour in the hospitality industry has resulted in difficulty for smaller food companies to hire and maintain employees. This is resulting in many food company owners working longer hours and being less able to devote time to long-term planning.

Lastly, many authors note the limited availability of financial support as a major barrier to growth for smaller food companies. Often, smaller food companies find it difficult to secure loans or other forms of financing; hence, they are unable to invest money into growing their businesses through such methods as innovation and or expansion.

4.2.2 Objective 2: Economic, Regulatory and Competitive Pressures

. The secondary research findings show that the current economic trends play an important part in determining how well a company operates. As inflation rises, companies will experience rising operational costs. Additionally, many studies report the changes in consumer buying behaviour as additional negative impacts on profit.

Equally, there is evidence showing that consumer purchasing behaviour has become one of the biggest influences on how well a business performs. KPMG (2023) states that because of cost sensitivity and demand for better quality and convenience, consumers are creating an increasing amount of pressure on all small food businesses to keep their prices low at the same time as providing better services and products.

In addition to customer demands and behaviours, regulatory pressures are also stated by many researchers as another large obstacle for small food businesses. In order to operate in this sector, small food businesses must comply with very strict regulations related to health and safety and food hygiene, in addition to obtaining various licenses. These are all necessary; however, they can be administratively and financially difficult for smaller businesses who do not have access to or cannot afford the resources needed to comply.

4.2.3 Objective 3: Strategies for Sustainable Growth

Although there are many different factors that can hinder business performance, there are also various ways for small businesses to be resilient and grow sustainably. For example, digital technology provides an opportunity for companies to expand their customer bases through online ordering systems, delivery services, and using social media to promote their brands.

Another area where companies can differentiate themselves from others is through product offerings and customer experiences. Businesses that provide unique products with excellent service, create positive customer experiences, and have a solid brand identity will typically keep their existing customer base longer than those who do not.

Additionally, operational efficiency is a crucial element. Companies may improve cost management by streamlining processes, better management of relationships with suppliers, and effectively utilising resources and ultimately be able to remain profitable despite increasing overheads.

4.3 Analysis of Findings

It appears from an examination of the studies that were reviewed that there are inter-relationships within the problems of small food businesses; they do not exist independently. For example, a business's profit margin will be reduced due to economic constraints, which also limits the business's ability to spend money on employees, technology, etc.

Additionally, employee shortages will create issues relative to service quality and operational effectiveness, which could result in decreased customer satisfaction and, or increased competition.

Additionally, recent data provided by the BCC (2023), supports this finding. The BCC states that, although energy cost increases and supply chain disruptions continue to be a concern for all small food businesses, it has increased exponentially in the last few years. Therefore, it appears that the previously reported issues have worsened as a result of our current economic situation.

Regulations and economic pressures are additive for small food businesses. As such, it illustrates that the obstacles faced by small food businesses are compound in nature, resulting in a difficult operating environment for those businesses.

In addition, the literature reports that small food businesses can counteract their problems through adaptive strategy. Examples of adaptive strategy include: implementation of digital technologies; concentration on customer experience; and attention to operational effectiveness.

Similarly, research conducted recently regarding digital technologies has stated that digital ordering systems, platforms and delivery services have become fundamental elements of food service today. Similar to the findings of this study, however, such technological tools typically serve as necessary items for small businesses lacking adequate resources.

4.3.1 Interrelationship of Barriers and Compounding Effects

One of the major findings stemming from analysing the secondary data was that small food businesses experience barriers to success that do not occur in isolation; rather, they function together in an integrated manner.

The most basic example of how these barriers interact is found through looking at labour shortages. Labour shortages will generally lower service quality, therefore reducing customer satisfaction and ultimately leading to lost customers, which leads to a reduction in income and potentially higher financial burdens.

Additionally, if a regulatory requirement requires a business to spend money on complying with certain regulations, then the cost of doing business has increased. These interdependent issues demonstrate that small food businesses operate in an extremely limited environment that includes numerous restrictions to achieving sustainable growth.

The findings of this study extend current research as it suggests that barriers cannot be studied in isolation. As Storey (2016) finds that one of the biggest obstacles facing small food businesses is financial constraints, this study also shows that financial constraints have an amplified negative effect when combined with other operational and external barriers.

Therefore, examining the interdependence among barriers is vital to developing successful strategies to ensure business sustainability.

4.3.2 Structural Challenges within the London Market

The London location offers some specific structural issues which add to the obstacles faced by small food enterprises.

As well as having an intense competitive market (due to high density of food establishments), the high rental prices and associated costs of commercial properties create a major fixed cost for many small food enterprises, reducing their ability to be financially flexible and therefore significantly raising the potential for enterprise failure.

Additionally, while there is strong consumer demand for new and varied food products and options due to the diverse nature of consumers in London, consumer expectations are also

changing rapidly. Many small food enterprises will have to adapt to changes in consumer preferences; for example, the growing trend towards healthy eating, sustainability and convenience, etc. This requires continuous capital outlays for product development and advertising, etc.

Therefore, these structural elements indicate that small food enterprises operating in London experience a more demanding environment than those operating outside of large cities such as London. These findings support the need for contextual research as national-level studies can only provide limited insight into the pressures faced by entrepreneurs working within urban markets.

4.3.3 The Role of Digital Transformation in Business Adaptation

. Digital transformation's role in supporting business resilience & growth is growing significantly. Online ordering systems, food delivery apps and social media platforms are now key elements of food retailing.

Strategically speaking, digital allows for expansion of customers, improvements in efficiencies and improvement in customer experience.

However, there are many digital barriers for small food businesses. Barriers include a lack of digital skills, financial resources and reliance upon third-party platforms, which typically take a very large percentage of sales.

Therefore, the benefits of technology can be at odds. Technology provides access to larger markets; however, it increases operational costs and decreases profit margins.

The success of technology implementation depends on whether the business is able to implement it strategically or reactively.

As Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) state, digital marketing is critical to improving business performance; therefore, small food businesses need to develop a strategic, rather than reactionary plan.

4.3.4 Strategic Adaptation and Business Resilience

Resilience was found to play a significant role as an indicator of both the survival and continued growth of small food enterprises. The capacity for small food enterprises to adapt demonstrates their ability to manage external factors and ultimately to continue to perform at an optimal level."

The authors reference several examples of adaptation from prior research studies, including cost control, developing positive relationships with suppliers, developing new menu items and enhancing the quality of customer service experiences.

These all exemplify the concepts of "dynamic capabilities" introduced by Teece (2007) and provide insight into how small food enterprises can dynamically utilise available resources in order to effectively react to environmental changes.

It is important to recognise that while resilience in part depends on external circumstances, it also depends on the decision-making process and managerial competencies of the enterprise owner. Proactive entrepreneurs who have demonstrated the willingness and ability to innovate and be flexible in response to change will have a greater chance of sustaining long-term business growth.

As such, this study implies that there needs to be a combination of government assistance programs and internal strategic abilities in place to ensure that small food enterprises can grow sustainably.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

This research has identified commonalities with some current literature regarding the effects on small business growth within the Hospitality Sector.

The results confirming rising operational costs as the primary obstacle to small business growth do support Storey's (2016) assertion that financial constraint is an overarching limitation to small business development. However, Storey does not indicate the interconnectivity of the various barriers faced by small food businesses; for example, such as staff shortages and unstable supply chains.

As a result, it appears that the financial constraints facing small food businesses may be far more complicated and multi-dimensional than initially reported in the literature.

The findings relative to staff shortages are consistent with recent industry reports from organisations such as UKHospitality (2023). These reports have highlighted the persistent nature of labour challenges across the industry.

In addition, whilst this study confirms the existence of labour challenges, in the context of service quality and operational capacity, it further extends the body of knowledge in this area by providing evidence of the direct impact of these challenges on service quality and operational capacity.

This provides greater clarity around the operational implications associated with Labour shortages than previous studies.

The regulatory pressures identified in this study are consistent with those presented by Crowther & Lancaster (2009). They argued that compliance requirements placed on small food businesses represent an administrative burden. However, the findings of this study indicate that these burdens are exacerbated in London due to the high concentration of businesses operating in proximity to one another and tighter enforcement regimes.

Therefore, this study introduces a new contextual dimension into the broad SME literature. Regarding competitive pressures, the findings confirm Porter (2008), who emphasised the importance of differentiation within competitive markets. However, this study also demonstrates that differentiation alone is insufficient; businesses must additionally contend with cost pressures and operational constraints. Therefore, competitive strategy must be integrated with operational efficiency in order to be successful.

Finally, the findings related to digital adoption support Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019) and Teece (2007), highlighting the importance of digital marketing and dynamic capabilities. However, whereas previous studies emphasise digital transformation as a growth driver, this study finds that digital tools are generally being utilised defensively to maintain competitiveness rather than to drive expansion.

In summary, the findings provide evidence that although individual barriers to growth have been identified within existing literature, this study contributes by illustrating how these barriers interact within a highly competitive Urban Environment such as London.

4.4.1 Critical Evaluation of Existing Literature

Although the results of this study fit into current literature, it would be beneficial to consider how much current research captures all aspects of the complexities small food enterprises encounter.

A large amount of the current literature addresses each barrier (financial difficulties, labour shortages and increased competition) individually. In contrast, this research has shown that these factors are interrelated and therefore should be examined on a holistic basis. This contributes to the body of knowledge as it identifies the need for a more integrated view of the challenges that small businesses face.

Moreover, while most studies address SMEs generally, they may overlook specific characteristics within the Hospitality Sector. Furthermore, based upon the findings of this study, there appear to be sector-specific challenges facing small food businesses related to their operational requirements, such as perishable inventory, customer expectation levels, and regulatory compliance.

Therefore, the value of conducting sector-specific research to understand enterprise performance and develop relevant support initiatives is reinforced.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview, analysis and discussion of the data found via secondary research. In particular, it was possible to identify some important barriers to development for small food businesses based in London. These included economic pressure on the business, staff shortages, legal (regulatory) restrictions and high levels of competition from other food businesses.

Analysis of the above barriers shows that they are interrelated and often compound each other, creating a complex environment with respect to growing the business. Additionally, as noted in the findings section, whilst much of what is reported supports previous studies on this subject, this study provides new knowledge as it explores how different types of barriers operate in combination in a highly competitive city centre context.

Finally, the results show that there may be ways of improving resilience and supporting long-term growth amongst small businesses in the food industry via strategic adaptation, such as

adopting technology (digital), increasing operational efficiency and developing differentiated products.

In the next chapter, conclusions will be drawn on the whole study, practice recommendations will be made, potential weaknesses or limitations will be highlighted, and ideas for future research will be proposed.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter concludes the research with a review of how the research aims and objectives were met. The small food business has been researched in order to find out what barriers are preventing them from growing and to identify ways that will allow them to sustain themselves over time. Qualitative secondary data has been used as evidence to synthesise the key points made during the dissertation and to provide an evaluation of their relevance to theoretical perspectives and practice.

Beyond providing a summary of the findings, this chapter provides an interpretation of the findings' significance to the hospitality sector.

It will also present practical and prioritised recommendations for policy makers, industry stakeholders and business owners. Lastly, the chapter will evaluate the study's limitations and identify avenues for further research.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

Objective 1: Internal and External Barriers

The results from this research show that small food enterprises in London experience numerous interrelated factors (internal & external) which affect their ability to grow and sustain operations. The primary barrier facing small food enterprises is the financial issues they experience due to increasing operating expenses, such as higher ingredient prices, increasing energy and rental costs.

Due to these expense increases, many small food enterprises do not have the necessary capital to pursue new ventures or invest in employees.

Additionally, labour recruitment and retention issues were identified as another significant internal challenge. Small food enterprises reported an extreme shortage of available employees and high levels of employee turnover. Both of these issues can significantly impact the day-to-day operation of a small food enterprise by forcing its owner(s) to perform many

different jobs. As a result, the efficiency of management will be reduced along with the capability to engage in long-term planning and or growth initiatives.

External factors also impact small food enterprises. Economic conditions such as inflationary pressures and increased costs continue to create pressure for small food enterprises. Furthermore, changes in consumer preferences and supply chain disruptions create further uncertainty for small food enterprises.

Objective 2: Economic, Regulatory and Competitive Pressures

There is evidence from this research that economic, regulatory and competitive factors significantly influence how well small food-based enterprises perform. Inflationary pressure and decreased levels of consumer expenditure have both negatively affected revenues, with many of these enterprises being forced to take difficult decisions concerning their pricing strategies, staffing numbers, and their product lines.

The study identified regulatory demands as another major issue facing small food-based enterprises. While food safety and compliance-based regulation is necessary, it can place considerable bureaucratic and fiscal burden upon the administrative resources of small food-based enterprises, many of whom do not possess specialised personnel or equipment required for managing such aspects.

Intense competition exists for all food-related enterprises in London. With so many similar types of food outlets operating in proximity to one another, there is great pressure placed upon each business to establish itself as distinct, whilst still offering consumers reasonable value for money. Therefore, for many of these establishments, survival will depend upon continually adapting to changes in the market environment.

Objective 3: Strategies for Sustainable Growth

The research found that despite the many issues, there are strategies which can help businesses remain resilient and grow. One of the most obvious is digital adoption. Online ordering platforms, delivery services and social media marketing have helped businesses find new customers.

The two other main areas of strategy were product differentiation and customer experience.

By differentiating their products through quality, by focusing on delivering good customer service, and by developing strong brands, businesses will be able to keep their customers.

It has been shown that operational efficiency (including how well costs are managed and the relationship with suppliers) is vital for maintaining profits. Therefore, whilst the impact of external factors cannot be ignored, internal adaptability remains an essential component of business success.

5.3 Overall Conclusions

The growth and longevity of small food businesses in London occur as a result of multiple interdependent elements, as opposed to individual problems. A combination of financial constraints, labour shortages, government regulations, and marketplace competition can create a multi-faceted and dynamic atmosphere for small food businesses to grow. One of the most important aspects of this study is the fact that small food business success is not solely dependent upon overcoming the external issues facing them. The ability of small food business owners to make adaptive decisions, implement new strategies, and manage resources effectively, among other solutions, will ultimately be the defining factor in determining how well these businesses succeed.

This study has shown that many studies on small food businesses have an inadequate view of what creates barriers to success. Rather than looking at each barrier individually, studying how all the barriers affect each other will allow us to gain a greater understanding of how small food businesses deal with multiple intersecting obstacles.

Moreover, this study suggests that the conventional methods used to measure the growth of a business, such as linear growth, may not be the best measures to evaluate the growth of small food businesses operating in extremely competitive urban markets. As such, successful small food businesses in London should not be judged based on just whether they are expanding, but whether they are sustainable, resilient, and adaptable.

5.4 Recommendations

The next recommendations are based upon research findings and have been ordered by short-term, medium-term and long-term recommendations.

Short Term Recommendations (0 – 12 months)

1. Adopt Low-Cost Digital Solutions

Food businesses must take advantage of low-cost digital solutions, such as social media advertising, online ordering systems and digital payment systems. These will create greater exposure to customers, better customer interaction and an opportunity to generate income from current customers.

2. Strengthen Cost Management Practices

Establish a system of regularly reviewing costs. Review contracts with your suppliers to control increased costs. There are many ways to reduce costs; negotiate with your suppliers, eliminate unnecessary waste and adjust the size of portions to be served. All these measures will establish a way to increase profits.

3. Focus on Customer Retention Strategies

Do not just concentrate on finding new customers. Concentrate on creating customer retention programs, providing personalised services to customers and consistently serving good products. It is less expensive to retain current customers rather than constantly searching for new ones.

Medium Term Recommendations (1 – 3 years)

4. Create a Business Brand Identity and Differentiation

Develop a brand that will differentiate your business from others in the marketplace. This could be a speciality product, a culture-based product, etc. Businesses need to find a niche to attract certain groups of customers.

5. Train Employees to Improve Workforce Retention

Businesses need to develop their employees' skills to meet staffing needs. Businesses can do this by establishing employee-friendly work environments and offering some form of basic education. Small businesses cannot offer higher wages, but they can build strong relationships with their employees by creating a positive work culture.

Long Term Recommendations (3 + years)

6. Policy Support and Regulatory Simplification

Provide clear guidance to policymakers. Encourage policymakers and council executives within each borough to support small businesses in developing by involving them with apprenticeship programs, which can be mutually beneficial. Consider providing training and financial assistance to businesses in adapting to new regulations and technology.

7. Investment in Digital Skills and Innovation

Develop training programs for employees and owners of small businesses to enhance their digital literacy. As time passes, it is expected that the ability of small businesses to incorporate technology into their operations will become an important factor in maintaining long-term viability.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The present research also has some constraints to consider.

Firstly, it is based on secondary data such as literature reviews and industry reports rather than the direct experience that primary data would provide. Literature reviews and reports are an important way to obtain relevant information, but they can reflect the authors' interpretation and may therefore have difficulty providing a reflection of the current situation for small food business entrepreneurs. It follows that the results will certainly appear less complete and immediate than if primary data had been used.

Secondly, this research focuses specifically on London. This limits the generalisability of the findings; it cannot be generalised to all geographic areas. There are differences in terms of economics, regulations and market trends between the various regional zones.

Thirdly, the use of secondary data may introduce a possible bias. In fact, the analysis is based on the authors' interpretations contained in pre-existing texts and therefore may distort the conclusions and reduce their objectivity.

Finally, this study does not capture any evolution or longitudinal changes over time. The hospitality sector is highly dynamic, and future developments may alter the relevance of the findings

5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research that builds upon this study is possible in a variety of ways. Firstly, primary research using interviews and/or surveys will be conducted with small food business owners to gain insight into their actual real-world experience(s) and decision-making process(es).

Secondly, comparative studies (across different cities/regions) will be used to assess if the challenges associated with small food business owners identified in London exist within other cities or regions.

Thirdly, additional research will be conducted to evaluate the role of digital innovation as it relates to overcoming barriers for technology adoption by small businesses.

Lastly, longitudinal research assessing small businesses' ability to adapt to changing economic market conditions over time will also provide important information about the future development of small food businesses.

5.7 Final Concluding Statement

The results of this research demonstrate how small food businesses in London are able to develop strategies which will help them become resilient and sustainable, despite facing a

difficult business environment due to high levels of competition, regulations and financial constraints.

This research provides additional insights into the nature of the relationship between small business growth and their ability to innovate, strategically and to be adaptable in the hospitality industry in London. These factors were found to provide a competitive advantage as well as allow businesses to navigate increasingly uncertain environments.

Therefore, ultimately, the survival of small food businesses in London depends on both strong external support systems and the capacity of each business to make strategic decisions. As such, the need to strengthen this sector is based on supporting individual entrepreneurs, employment, local economic viability, diversity in culture and long-term urban development.

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Appendix

Reflection of the Research Process (Using Gibbs Reflective Cycle, 1988)

This reflection explores the research process used in this dissertation, utilising the Gibbs Reflective Cycle developed by Graham Gibbs (1988). The model offers a systematic way to analyse experience based upon the stages of Description, Feelings, Evaluation, Analysis, Conclusion and Action Planning.

Description

Initially, at the proposal phase, I developed this dissertation as a mixed-method study consisting of surveys and semi-structured interviews with small food business owners in London. I planned to obtain quantitative and qualitative information about obstacles preventing the expansion of these businesses.

However, after commencing the research process, I encountered numerous problems collecting participants and gathering sufficient responses to support my methodology. Furthermore, due to time constraints approaching deadlines, I recognised I lacked adequate, dependable primary data to support the methodology originally proposed. Consequently, I determined to revise the study from a qualitative secondary research study using published academic journals, government reports and trade publications. I then revised chapters 1 – 5 to incorporate consistency throughout methodology, findings and conclusions.

Feelings

Before initiating the project, I was highly motivated and optimistic because I thought primary research would enhance the originality of the dissertation. However, once obtaining participant access became problematic, I started to feel stressed, frustrated and anxious. Most notably, I was very distressed when I realised that my methodology did not match the evidence available. These concerns further diminished my confidence while creating significant stress prior to meeting deadlines.

Following completion of the conversion from primary to secondary research, I felt relief and greater control over the content of the dissertation. After revising to make the dissertation cohesive, my confidence in completing the dissertation increased.

Evaluation

A positive outcome of the process was my ability to adjust when issues arose. Instead of continuing to utilise an inappropriate methodology, I conducted a thorough review of the project and adjusted accordingly. This resulted in an improvement in the academic credibility of the dissertation.

Additionally, one of the strengths of the literature review process was that I was able to engage with a wide variety of academic and professional sources; this greatly enhanced my knowledge of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) development, pressures faced by hospitality enterprises, and strategic adaptation.

Weaknesses existed. Initially, my plan was overly ambitious as I underestimated the amount of time required to recruit participants and collect data. Additionally, I delayed recognising that I needed to alter the methodology to meet the needs of the project; this caused unnecessary pressure towards the end of the project.

Analysis

Primarily, my inability to adequately conceptualise feasibility was a major contributor to many of my challenges. According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2019), researchers should formulate methodologies based upon accessible time, access and resources. Similarly, in my case, I placed too great an emphasis on an academically appealing methodology rather than a pragmatic methodology.

Additionally, the experience reinforced the need for flexibility in research management. Gibbs (1988) indicates that reflection facilitates learning by analysing past behaviours and results. Through reflection, I acknowledged that a secondary research design was most suitable for the time available.

Moreover, this process reinforced my belief that quality in research is contingent upon both ambition and coherence. Often, a simple methodology that is well executed is superior to a complex methodology that cannot be properly carried out.

Conclusion

Collectively, I acquired three important lessons. Firstly, researchers must develop realistic and attainable methodologies. Secondly, all chapters must be consistent. Thirdly, critical reflection is imperative when problems arise.

While the project posed challenges, it significantly improved my skill sets in academic writing, source evaluation, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

Action Plan

To improve success with future research projects, I will conduct a preliminary feasibility assessment prior to finalising methodology. Additionally, I will establish a weekly project schedule outlining specific milestones for literature review, data collection, drafting, and proofreading.

In addition to establishing a timeline for each stage of the project, I will solicit feedback from supervisors earlier and more frequently so as to allow for the identification of potential problems earlier in the project.

Lastly, I intend to continue expanding my analytical capabilities by engaging more thoroughly with recent academic literature and evaluating methodologies more thoroughly before commencing future research

Research Methodology Poster

The Barriers to Growth and Strategies for Sustainable Development in Small Food Businesses in London

Christine Collins-Mears
2243935 UWTSB



AIM OF THE RESEARCH:

To investigate the barriers affecting small food businesses in London and explore strategies that support sustainable growth.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative secondary research approach.

Data were collected from academic journals, government reports and industry publications.

An Interpretivist approach was used to understand patterns within existing data.

SAMPLING

Data sources included:

Academic journals, UK government reports (ONS, Parliament), Industry reports (Hospitality, Lumina Intelligence)

Sources were selected based on: Relevance, Credibility, and Recency.

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected from

- Academic journals,
- Industry reports and
- Government publications

DATA ANALYSIS

The study used Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Key themes identified: Financial pressures, Staffing shortages, Regulatory Burden, Digital Strategy, Intense Competition

KEY FINDINGS

The findings show that rising operational costs, staffing shortages, and competition are key barriers. Also, regulatory pressure and changing consumer behaviour impact business sustainability

CONCLUSION:

Small food businesses face interconnected challenges that limit growth. However, strategic adaptation through digital tools, differentiation and efficiency can support long-term sustainability.

References

- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology', Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), pp. 77-101
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- Porter, M. (2008) Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analysing Industries and Competitors. New York: Free Press
- Storey, D.J. (2016). Small Business and Entrepreneurship London: Routledge.
- Teece, D.J. (2007) 'Explicating dynamic capabilities', Strategic Management Journal, 28(13), pp. 1319-1350.
- UKHospitality (2023) Economic Contribution of the Hospitality Sector. Available at: <http://www.ukhospitality.org.uk> [Accessed: 20 March 2026]

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Christine Collins-Mears			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	UWTSD			
4	Campus:	London			
5	E-mail address:	2243935@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07884317663			
For students:					

7	Student Number:	2243935
8	Programme of Study:	BA (Hons) Leadership and Management for the Workplace
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	MD Kalam

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in)	☒		12/03/2026

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice	☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy	☒
3	<i>[List any other relevant documents here]</i>	☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	
2	Contact person name	
3	Contact person e-mail address	
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES ☐ NO ☒
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES ☐ NO ☒
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary YES ☐ NO ☒
7		Employed YES ☐ NO ☒
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered. YES ☐ NO ☒

9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐
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Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Exploring the Barriers to Growth for Small Food Businesses in London and Strategies for Sustainable Expansion			
2	Proposed start date:	From 26/02/2026	Proposed end date:	01/05/2026	
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>				
3	Purpose of Research Activity The purpose of this research is to understand the barriers to successful growth and formulate strategies for sustainable expansion. (this box should expand as you type)				
4	Research Question - What are the key barriers to growth for small food businesses in London, and how do economic, regulatory, and competitive factors influence their operations? - What strategies have successful small food businesses employed to achieve growth? - What recommendations can enhance sustainability and competitive advantage within this sector? (this box should expand as you type)				
5	Aims of Research Activity To investigate the key barriers to growth faced by Small Food businesses in London and to examine effective strategies for achieving sustainable business expansion. (this box should expand as you type)				

6	Objectives of Research Activity To identify the primary internal and external barriers affecting the growth of Small Food Businesses in London To analyse how economic, regulatory and competitive pressures influence business performance. To develop practical recommendations to support long-term sustainability and growth. (this box should expand as you type)	
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.	
7	This study adopted a qualitative secondary research approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of the barriers affecting small food businesses in London. Secondary data were collected from academic literature, industry reports, and government publications, enabling the analysis of existing knowledge within the field. An interpretivist approach was used to explore patterns and themes within the data. Thematic analysis was applied to identify key barriers and strategies discussed across multiple sources. This approach was considered appropriate as it allowed the study to synthesise a wide range of credible information within the scope and time constraints of the research, while ensuring consistency between the methodology, data, and findings. (this box should expand as you type)	
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.	
8	London, UK (this box should expand as you type)	
	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.	
9	N/A (this box should expand as you type)	

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales.		

	(this box should expand as you type)
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	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☐	☒
2	Use of interviews?	☐	☒
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒
4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☐	☒
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒

17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☐	☒
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	N/A (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	N/A (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants?	N/A (this box should expand as you type)

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☐	☐	☒
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☐	☐	☒
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☐	☐	☒
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☐	☐	☒
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☐	☐	☒
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☒
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☐	☐	☒
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☐	☐	☒
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☐	☒
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☐	☒
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☐	☒
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☐	☒
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>				

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them.			
If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.			
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes	☐
		No	☒
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants:	How you will mitigate the risk to participants:	

	(this box should expand as you type)	(this box should expand as you type)
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities	
	(this box should expand as you type)	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: N/A (this box should expand as you type)	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: (this box should expand as you type)
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: N/A (this box should expand as you type)	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: (this box should expand as you type)
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: N/A (this box should expand as you type)	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: (this box should expand as you type)

Disclosure and Barring Service				
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	N/A (this box should expand as you type)
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before

	data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	N/A (this box should expand as you type)
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	N/A (this box should expand as you type)

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	YES	NO
1	"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	(this box should expand as you type)		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	"Special category data" means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	(this box should expand as you type)		

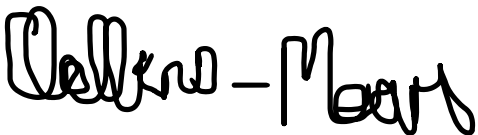
	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒

8	Home or other personal computers?	☐	☒
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☐	☒
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☐	☒
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☒
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not.		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☐
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☐

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:		Date: 02/03/2006

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Dr Muhammad Hasan Tariq	Date: 08/04/2026
3	Signature:	<i>Dr MH Tariq</i>	

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

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