

BDP Topic Approval Summary

Item	Detail
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Proposed startup location	East London, United Kingdom

Topic summary

Information required	Student response
1. Proposed topic or working title	Plate & Post: Feasibility Study & Business Development Plan for a specialist social media marketing agency for independent restaurants and cafés in East London.
2. Business problem or unmet need	Restaurants are now being discovered via social media, with 45% of UK diners discovering new venues on social media (SevenRooms, 2025) and it representing the primary discovery channel for Gen Z Londoners (Square, 2025). So independent restaurants and cafés should ideally have a new photo or video each week, and high quality. Most have small teams and do not have marketing staff, so content is sporadic or non-existent. The pricing for larger agencies is for chains, and freelancers can be unpredictable. The problem is that independents are in direct competition with chains, which have in-house marketing departments, but also small operators' profit margins are being squeezed by increasing costs such as wages, property and National Insurance (BDO, 2025). Thus, poor online visibility can lead to loss of covers and revenue.

3. Proposed business response	Plate & Post will be a social media agency dedicated to hospitality with three social media packages with fixed monthly prices, geared towards micro and small venues. Services include: (1) monthly on-site photo and short-form video shoots; (2) content planning and posting on Instagram, TikTok and Google Business profile; (3) comment, message and review management; (4) small, geo-targeted paid social campaigns; and (5) a simple monthly report connecting activity to bookings and enquiries. It bridges the need because it is offered without the time and skills burden of the owner, and at a predictable cost with sector knowledge not offered by the generalist agencies.
4. Target customers and scope	Industry: Independent food and beverage service businesses (SIC 56) including restaurants, cafés and takeaways (except chains and franchises). The area is the Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham in East London. In these boroughs, there are about 3,200, 2,500 and 2,500 food businesses on the Food Standards Agency's hygiene register, respectively, with the highest proportion of these being restaurants and cafés (41% in Tower Hamlets) (Hygiene Scout, 2026). Segment: Small venues, owner-managed, with about 1-20 employees having social media pages, no marketing person. The BDP does not cover other sectors and the rest of the UK.
5. Early evidence of demand	(a) In the UK, 56% of online adults use TikTok and 78% use Instagram, demonstrating that the social platforms are popular with consumers (Ofcom, 2025). (b) Social media plays a role in dining decisions: 45% of diners in the UK discover new restaurants via social media (SevenRooms, 2025, survey of 1,000 consumers and 250+ operators) while more than half of 1,000 London diners see shareability as a key factor when choosing where to eat (Square, 2025). (c) Small business

	faces challenges with digital marketing: 32% of UK businesses don't have a website (UK Business Data Survey 2024, as cited in Whito, 2026), and website marketing is one of the biggest challenges facing UK hospitality operators (Toast, 2025). (d) Large addressable base: SMEs make up 99.85% of UK private sector businesses (DBT, 2025). The willingness to pay will be measured by conducting primary research with the local owners.
6. Aim and feasibility	Goal: To assess the commercial viability of Plate & Post and develop: Business Model, Competitor analysis, Marketing plan, Operations plan, 3-year financial forecast. Resources available: DBT Business Population Estimates and ONS UK Business Counts (Nomis) to understand the size of the market; FSA open data to understand how many venues are in each borough; Ofcom Online Nation to understand platform usage; a small survey or 5-10 interviews with restaurant owners in East London to understand demand and willingness to pay; Companies House records and competitor websites to understand the competitive landscape and pricing; Mintel/IBISWorld via University library. Access issues: agency fees/margins are generally not made available, and it's possible that very busy owners will give a low response rate to the surveys; some complete industry reports may require registration or paywalls.

Location justification

The startup's location is in the UK, aligning with the preferred location. East London was chosen as it is an area with a high concentration of independent food businesses, strong and up to date English language evidence and verifiable evidence.

- **Market sizing:** Count of businesses down to borough level is available from DBT, ONS (Nomis) and FSA open data.

- **Consumer behaviour:** Ofcom data covers the UK and a diner survey by Square (2025) relates specifically to London.
- **Competition:** Local competitors can be mapped and priced with Companies House records and Agency Web Sites.
- **Primary research:** The venues are concentrated in a small area and the interviews with the venue owners can be carried out within the project time horizon.

References

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