

# Social media listening: emerging trends

Area of research interest: [Emerging challenges and opportunities](#)

Study duration: 2019-01-01

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## Background

In 2019 we commissioned an open listening project, drawing on 13.7 million conversations on social media about food throughout 2018, to hear what people talk about spontaneously on social media when they talk about food.

## Objective and approach

The project aimed to identify what food topics people were talking about, particularly any issues which we might not have previously identified. A combination of social listening and profiling, desk research, qualitative research and search term analysis were used to discover, analyse and future-proof findings of UK food trends and help understand the behaviours and attitudes that are influencing and propelling these emerging trends.

### Stage 1

The first stage of the research identified, explored, classified and quantified emerging trends in food in the UK, through social media conversations. Desk research was also used to identify emerging trends and consumer behaviours. From a total list of 46 topics, four super-categories were identified (meat reduction, health, food system and sustainability).

### Stage 2

In this stage, the super-category topics were re-analysed to identify the audiences, core features of the conversations, pain and passion points and influencers within each trend. Qualitative interviews with consumers were then used to better understand context, motivations, barriers, behaviours and other influences of consumer behaviour outside of public social media.

### Stage 3

In this stage, the super-categories and audiences identified can be used as a starting point to monitor movements in trends and conversations around the food topics.

## Results

The project listened to 13.5 million conversations about food across 14 online sources, categorised into 46 topics, refining these into four super-categories (meat reduction, food system, health and sustainability). Outputs from the project will inform our future horizon scanning exercises and our understanding of emerging risks. It will also feed into the Food Strategy.

Research report

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