

Increasing Online Vegan/Vegetarian Accessibility & Awareness in Greece



An Interactive Qualifying Project Submitted to the Faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Science/Arts

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This report represents work of WPI undergraduate students submitted to the faculty as evidence of a degree requirement. WPI routinely publishes these reports on its website without editorial or peer review. For more information about the projects program at WPI, see <http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects>.

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1.0 Introduction

Across Europe, interest in plant-based diets has steadily increased due to concerns about health, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare. According to a study reported by HellasVeg, around 10% of Greek civilians reported reducing their meat consumption to once per week, with over half of those civilians' reporting health and animal welfare as the primary reasons for this change. Research links plant-based (see Appendix A) diets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improved long-term health outcomes (Alexandropoulou et al., 2025; Faber et al., 2024). However, a lack of access, convenience, trust, and visibility within local food environments (see Appendix A) strongly shape dietary choices (Faber et al., 2024). In other words, even when individuals feel motivated to adopt vegetarian (see Appendix A) or vegan (see Appendix A) diets, they depend heavily on how easily they can find reliable plant-based options in their communities.

In Greece, traditional cuisine and a growing modern vegetarian and vegan movement shape plant-based eating practices. In a study reported by HellasVeg, the number of Greek citizens who reported reducing meat consumption has increased by 42% over the past three years (Pinto, 2025; HellasVeg, n.d.). However, consumers who desire plant-based options (see Appendix A), and restaurant owners who offer plant-based options lack a centralized, reliable, and user-friendly way to communicate with one another. Individuals often rely on scattered online searches, general mapping platforms, or word-of-mouth recommendations, which frequently provide inconsistent or outdated information (Wang & Strong, 1996; Wright et al., 2019). These limitations create barriers for consumers trying to locate suitable restaurants and for restaurants that seek visibility within the plant-based community (Perez-Cueto et al., 2022; Faber et al., 2024). As interest in plant-based eating continues to grow across Europe, the need to

improve digital access to trustworthy food environment information becomes increasingly important (Rosenfeld et al., 2022; Pinto, 2025).

A potentially important tool used for improving accessibility is a digital map that displays information about vegan and vegetarian restaurants. Researchers have conducted limited studies on how effectively such platforms meet stakeholder needs or how designers can strengthen them through user-centered design and community feedback. Research on food environments emphasizes the importance of accessibility and trust in supporting sustainable dietary shifts (Faber et al., 2024), yet few studies have examined how existing digital platforms contribute to these goals. Our project examines how plant-based consumers and restaurant stakeholders interact with, perceive, and rely on the Veggie Map as an online tool for discovering and promoting dining options.

The Hellenic Vegetarian Association (HellasVeg) works to promote a healthier and more sustainable lifestyles throughout Greece. The organization developed a Veggie Map in 2023 as an interactive digital platform to help users locate vegetarian and vegan-friendly restaurants as seen in Figure 1.

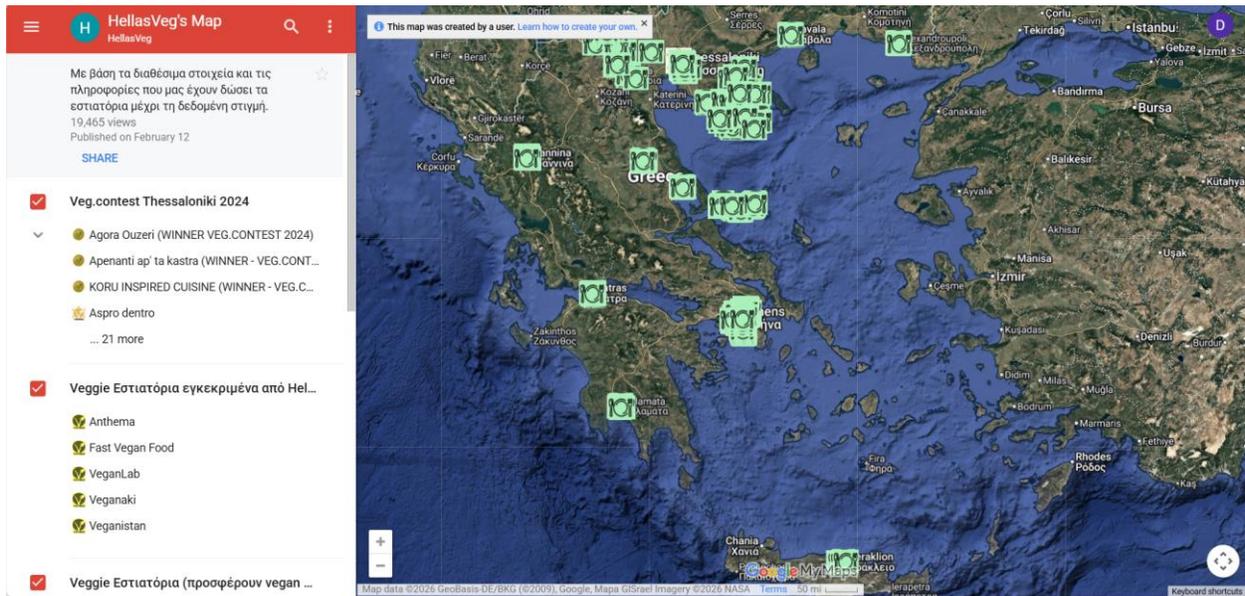


Figure 1: Current HellasVeg Veggie Map interface from the HellasVeg website.

Researchers still lack a clear understanding of how vegetarians and vegans in Greece access information about suitable restaurants. It remains unclear whether current tools provide ease of use, accuracy, and reliability, or whether restaurants feel adequately represented on these platforms. Addressing this gap will improve the Veggie Map and strengthen connections within Greece's broader plant-based food community.

The goal of this project is to redesign and enhance the HellasVeg Veggie Map to improve access to reliable vegetarian and vegan restaurant information across Greece. The team will accomplish this goal through the following objectives:

1. Examine the experiences that plant-based consumers and restaurant owners face when accessing or promoting vegetarian and vegan information through digital platforms in Greece.

2. Develop practical, evidence-based enhancements that strengthen the current platform's functionality, reliability, and overall user experience.
3. Evaluate the functionality of the HellasVeg Veggie Map as an online information platform.

2.0 Background

This chapter provides background information on plant-based eating in Europe and Greece to establish its relevance within the scope of this project. Section 2.1 examines consumer and social insights on plant-based eating in Europe and Greece, including factors that influence dietary intentions and the role of food environments. Section 2.2 explores plant-based travel in tourism, focusing on dietary influences on destination selection, pre-travel planning, and on-site food access. Section 2.3 reviews key principles of website design, including interactivity, structural layout, and online uncertainty in digital platforms. Finally, Section 2.4 introduces how the Hellenic Vegetarian Association work has provided a foundation that guides our project.

2.1 Consumer and Social Insights on Plant-based Eating in Europe and Greece

Understanding consumer behavior around plant-based eating is essential to grounding this project within its broader social context, particularly in explaining the gap between awareness and action in Greece. While individuals understand the importance of healthy and sustainable diets, their eating patterns often do not reflect this knowledge. Alexandropoulou et al. (2025) found that 94.6% of Greek adults identified as flexitarian, indicating openness to plant-based meals but not restricted, yet 86.8% did not meet the recommended daily intake of fruits and vegetables. These findings suggest that the relatively low adoption of plant-based eating in Greece may not be driven by a lack of information, but rather by difficulties in translating awareness into action. The high prevalence of flexitarian identification among Greek adults

indicates a population that may be receptive to choosing plant-based options when those options are convenient, visible, and easy to access.

2.1.1 Shaping Consumer Intentions

Across Europe, researchers consistently show that consumer motivation is supported by a favorable food environment to produce behavioral change (Faber et al., 2024; Perez-Cueto et al., 2022). As demand within the European plant-based market continues to grow (see Figure 2), the need for accessible, reliable infrastructure that supports plant-based consumption becomes increasingly important. Expanding market size reflects not only consumer interest but also the necessity of systems that facilitate practical access to plant-based options. Faber et al. (2024) found that perceived barriers including price, availability, unfamiliarity, and trust significantly mediated consumers' intentions to consume plant-based meat and cheese alternatives across ten European countries. For example, many participants perceived plant-based alternatives as more expensive than conventional meat products, while others reported limited availability of plant-based options in restaurants and grocery stores. Unfamiliarity with plant-based products and uncertainty about taste or quality also reduced consumers' willingness to try them. Additionally, some consumers expressed concerns about the processing, labeling, or nutritional value of plant-based alternatives, which reduced trust in these products (Faber et al., 2024; Perez-Cueto et al., 2022). These findings demonstrate that motivated consumers may fail to change their behavior when they perceive plant-based options as expensive, unfamiliar, or difficult to access within their local food environments (Faber et al., 2024).

Europe Plant-Based Food Market

Market Size Overview

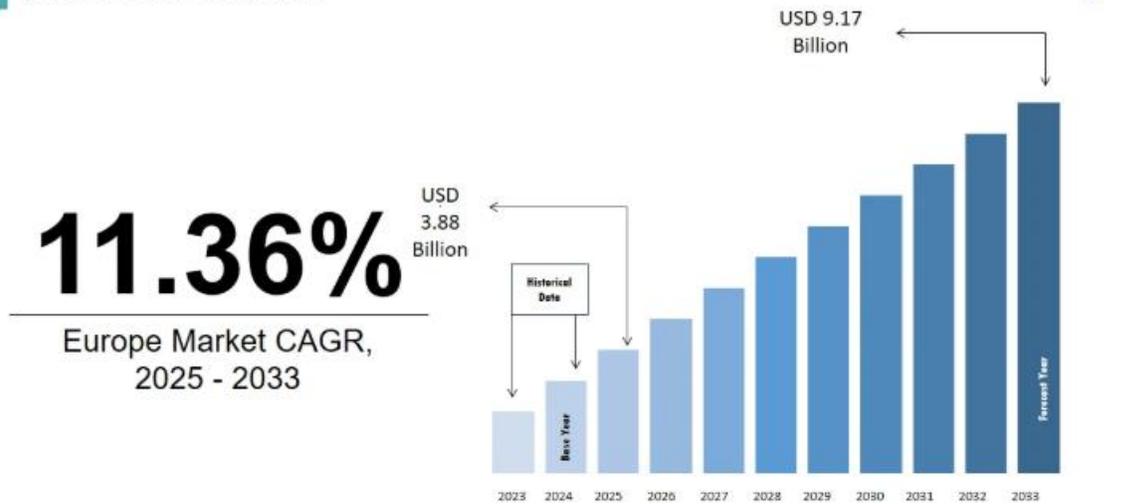


Figure 2: Projected growth of the European plant-based food market, 2025–2033 (CAGR 11.36%).

Perez-Cueto et al. (2022) reinforce these findings by showing that barriers to eating plant-based foods vary by dietary identity. They also identified cultural and sensory concerns, such as beliefs that meat should be central to meals and concerns about taste, as stronger barriers than informational factors. This evidence suggests that structural and perceptual influences, rather than knowledge deficits alone, shape dietary decision-making. Taken together, this research indicates that reducing structural barriers and improving practical accessibility may play a critical role in supporting plant-based food choices. For example, increasing the visibility and availability of plant-based options in restaurants and digital food platforms may help reduce perceived barriers and make plant-based choices easier for consumers to adopt in everyday dining situations.

2.1.2 The Impact of Structured Food Environments

Hollands et al. (2019) demonstrate that modifying food environments can shift consumer behavior without requiring changes in individual beliefs or motivations. Parkin and Attwood (2022) found that participants were significantly more likely to choose a vegetarian meal when 75% of menu options were vegetarian compared to menus where only 50% were vegetarian. This effect occurred even without educational learning, indicating that increasing the proportion of plant-based options can directly influence decision-making. Evidence from restaurant settings further supports this conclusion. Rosenfeld et al. (2022) analyzed over 167,000 restaurant purchases and found that the structure and presentation of menu options significantly influenced consumer purchasing patterns. Specifically, when plant-based options were easier to notice and compare, for example when they were integrated throughout the menu rather than hidden in a separate section or described with clearer names and categories, customers were more likely to purchase them.

Together, these findings suggest that availability and environmental structure exert measurable influence over consumer behavior. Rather than relying on individuals to change their preferences independently, modifying the surrounding food environment alters the practical ease of selecting plant-based options. This reinforces the idea that structural accessibility plays a central role in shaping dietary choices. Restaurants therefore serve as influential intervention points, where the design and availability of options can directly affect behavior at the moment of decision.

2.2 Plant-based Travel in Tourism

With the rise of vegetarian, vegan, and flexitarian diets around the world, plant-based travel has become an important area of research in tourism. Rather than contrasting plant-based diets with so called “traditional” food preferences, which differ across cultural and religion, scholars recognize that many plant-based diets reflect broader value systems that emphasize environmental, ethical, religious beliefs, and health-related concerns (Yang et al.). Plant-based travelers consider food availability and food transparency from restaurants as important deciding factors in travel satisfaction because they influence travel decisions and experiences. Existing research suggests that the availability of vegan and vegetarian food options can affect travel decisions and travel experiences for plant-based tourists (Ottenbacher et al., 2025; Yeşilçimen & Akın, 2025; Zouni & Klouvidaki, 2020). Research further suggests that plant-based tourists have more engagement in information seeking behaviors when making travel decisions than compared to those who are omnivores. This type of behavior involves evaluating the accessibility of digital platforms, food transparency, and restaurant availability to reduce uncertainty in food accessibility.

2.2.1 Dietary Influence on Travel and Destination Selection

Dietary preferences can play a major role in how vegan and vegetarian travelers choose their destination. Yeşilçimen and Akın (2025) found that vegetarian tourists rank food availability as the primary factor influencing destination choice. Tourists who integrate dietary practices into their personal identity experience this influence more strongly because vegetarianism and veganism function as forms of value expression and identity formation

(Hargreaves et al.). These tourists prioritize destinations that accommodate plant-based diets and avoid destinations that fail to provide adequate support.

Comparatively, vegan travelers actively research food options before traveling and often select destinations that offer a wide variety of plant-based options (Kansanen, 2013). Many plant-based travelers prioritize destinations where they can easily find suitable meals and avoid locations that provide limited plant-based options. Most travelers will return to a destination that offers reliable vegan food while others may prepare meals for themselves when vegan options are not available on restaurant menus. The study also found that travelers who emphasize the importance of food quality and variety of options prioritize dietary factors when selecting and planning travel experiences (Kansanen, 2013).

These patterns also raise important economic consideration for restaurants and destinations. When restaurants expand plant-based menu offerings, managers must evaluate customer demand across dietary segments. Research shows that increasing the proportion of plant-based dishes on a menu can reduce the selection of meat-based options, which demonstrates that menu composition directly shapes consumer choice (Volgger et al., 2025). Restaurant owners who heavily target vegan and vegetarian consumers may attract a growing plant-based market but risk pushing away customers who strongly prefer meat-based options. Restaurant managers therefore must assess market demand and strategically balance menu offerings to maximize profitability while accommodating diverse dietary preferences.

2.2.2 Pre-Travel Planning and Digital Information Use

When it comes to food, plant-based travelers demonstrate higher levels of pre-travel planning. Ottenbacher et al. (2025) notes that vegans actively research food options before traveling to use online resources and community-based platforms in their research. Practical dietary needs and a desire to maintain ethical standards while traveling drive this behavior.

Another study found that plant-based travelers heavily rely on digital resources to plan their food options before traveling. Their survey included 218 vegan participants and revealed that 87.2% use the internet as their primary source of information about vegan options at their chosen destinations (Zouni & Klouvidaki, 2020). Internet searches consisted of accommodations, restaurants, and food stores through Facebook, Google, and vegan websites. In addition, this study found that 54.6% of travelers were concerned about a lack of vegan options available at their destination (Zouni & Klouvidaki, 2020). This suggests that vegan travelers feel more confident when food information is clearly accessible online, and a lack of accessibility to vegan options can negatively affect their travel experience. Such websites provide information that helps these travelers navigate the uncertainty that accompanies dietary restrictions.

2.2.3 Food Access and the On-Site Travel Experience

The presence of plant-based food options at travel destinations helps determine how satisfied travelers become with their complete travel experience. Ottenbacher et al. (2025) discovered that vegan travelers face dining difficulties because restaurants provide too few menu choices, fail to display their food ingredients and their staff members lack proper product knowledge, which results in customer rating their hospitality services as poor (O'Brien). The presence of

vegan dining options fails to improve travel experiences when customers face difficulties accessing information about those options. Zouni & Klouvidaki (2020) observed that although 22.1% of survey respondents reported that their dietary preferences present obstacles while traveling; the vast majority stated they are not limited by their dietary preferences. However, 68.8% indicated they are more likely to revisit destinations where they were satisfied with prior services, which suggests that positive experiences may determine destination loyalty rather than diminishing it.

This all suggests that better access to accurate user-friendly digital information will provide people who follow plant-based diets with improved dining experiences. Travelers who use online platforms to find restaurants that serve vegan or vegetarian food options report experiencing less stress and more control over their dining choices, which leads to greater overall happiness. The need for digital accessibility represents an essential element of building inclusive tourism facilities, making internet-based solutions that help plant-based travelers accessible through websites.

2.3.1 Webpage Interactivity

With the established idea that website layout is an integral factor in consumer behaviors, exterior factors to this conclusion also hold weight and factor into consideration. While users are drawn to certain parts of the screen, the visuals and setup of the tasks also heavily contribute to the user's experience. Adding interactive and engaging features to a website improves consumer experience by creating memorability and ease of use. Țichindelean et al (2021) conducted a study that explored how well highlighted areas led to both increased user interaction and user

attention and determined that users lengthened engagement with these highlighted tasks “directly correlates with a higher preference.” From a web-developers perspective, it is important not just to make the tasks easy to see and understand, but the tasks must also contain a level of notability that sticks in the minds of users to add familiarity. With this added dimension of notability, websites can better cater towards consumers by drawing attention in an engaging and streamlined manner.

2.3.2 Online Product Uncertainty

While there are numerous factors that can maximize a website's potential, there is an additional factor, or lack thereof, that hinders website performance: Online product uncertainty. Product uncertainty means that when customers have less evidence that a product or service is high quality, then the less likely they are to invest or engage in that product. From a web design standpoint, this factor plays a significant role in drawing in consumers, as a digital service strips users from physically interacting with a firsthand, a key contributor to determining quality. Websites with well-designed interfaces will reduce the negative aspects that product uncertainty has on consumer satisfaction. A 2012 study confirmed this phenomenon, showing results that indicated that the correlation between website design and consumer satisfaction was “statistically significant”, and that a properly formatted website can promote user satisfaction when users cannot evaluate products directly. (Luo, Ba & Zhang, 2012) In a context where we are trying to address vegan and vegetarian accessibility, these findings play a significant role, as consumers will be more apt to use a website that is proven, trusted, and consistent at easing their search for

vegan/vegetarian dining options. Tied in with the findings on website efficiency and layout, it becomes glaringly evident that every decision about a website's functionality and appearance is vital to creating an effective tool for consumers to access.

2.4 Hellenic Vegetarian Association

The Hellenic Vegetarian Associations (HellasVeg) mission is to create a more improved quality of life for vegetarians around Greece. Their mission is to encourage people to reduce meat consumption for animal welfare, health, and environmental reasons. They accomplish this by attending festivals, providing recipes for people interested in trying a plant-based diet on their own, and through their veggie map. The veggie map has an interactive interface where consumers can access a map of Thessaloniki and other major cities in Greece to explore restaurants that offer plant based or vegetarian options. The map has a multitude of functional purposes that have been helping vegetarians find relief in exploring places to eat.

Currently their veggie map does have limitations that we will be attempting to improve upon. Their map lacks many search filters that we believe would make their map significantly more user-friendly. Additionally, their database is not scalable, which means that they must manually enter changes to their website, which is inconvenient, time consuming, and nearly impossible to keep up to date. Although there are improvements to be made on their current veggie map, HellasVeg has done an excellent job with providing us with a strong foundation and a large stakeholder network. Since we will only be assessing restaurants in Thessaloniki, HellasVegs database will give us access to restaurants that we would not have been able to use

otherwise. HellasVegs work has provided our team with a useful template on how to build a more accessible and user-friendly veggie map while we are in Greece.

3.0 Methodological Approach

The goal of this project is to redesign an enhanced version of the HellasVeg Veggie Map to improve access to reliable vegetarian and vegan restaurant information across Greece.

The team will accomplish this goal through the following objectives:

1. Examine the experiences that plant-based consumers and restaurant owners face when accessing or promoting vegetarian and vegan information through digital platforms in Greece.
2. Develop practical, evidence-based enhancements that strengthen the current platform's functionality, reliability, and overall user experience.
3. Evaluate the functionality of the HellasVeg Veggie Map as an online information platform.

The project examines how plant-based consumers and restaurant stakeholders interact with, perceive, and rely upon the Veggie Map as an online tool for discovering and promoting dining options. The research design uses a survey-style approach that will integrate qualitative and quantitative data collection. Structured surveys collect quantitative data on usage patterns, frequency of engagement, perceived trust, preferred features, and overall satisfaction with the platform.

Data collection will take place over a seven-week period in Greece, with Thessaloniki serving as the primary research location due to its concentration of plant-based dining

establishments and active vegetarian and vegan community. Outreach will extend to additional regions as feasible to ensure geographic variation. Participant selection will reflect variation in dietary identity (vegan, vegetarian, plant-curious), age, and geographic location. Restaurant stakeholders will represent different cuisine types and levels of engagement with HellasVeg.

The project focuses on strengthening web-based information access rather than altering restaurant operations. The team will evaluate the Veggie Map as a digital system, including its structure, search functionality, information clarity, credibility, and accessibility. Integrated analysis of qualitative and quantitative findings will generate actionable recommendations that strengthen the platform's effectiveness as a centralized digital resource for plant-based dining in Greece.

3.1 Understanding Consumer and Restaurant Experiences

We will address our first objective by creating a cross-sectional survey (See Appendix B) that will allow HellasVeg to further investigate restaurant experiences, challenges, and needs of plant-curious consumers in Thessaloniki. The goal of these surveys is to give our team insight into what the needs, experiences, and barriers plant-based consumers are facing. Our target population is vegans/vegetarians and any plant-curious consumers in Thessaloniki. The purpose of the survey is to find out what difficulties vegans/vegetarians are experiencing when they go out to eat. We will also be able to identify patterns between groups, which will let us prioritize which groups, if any, are struggling the most when they are eating out. Our team will break up

into groups of two and select participants inside of restaurants based on their willingness to take the survey. Moser & Kalton (1972) specify the importance of increasing your sampling size to decrease sampling error as much as possible. We will be attempting to reach a sample size of 50-100 respondents. This will give us a large enough sampling size to develop subgroups, which will let us compare the experiences and challenges each group has experienced. If there are issues or wants that multiple subgroups are experiencing, our group will know how to prioritize a solution to them. This could include making reviews more accessible for users, increasing the number of search filters, or better upkeep of restaurant information. We will be able to find this information from our survey once we are in Greece.

Question one of our surveys from Appendix B will help us specifically identify which type of consumer is filling out the survey, and data collected from this question will be used as evidence to address our objectives. Questions two, three, five, six, nine, and ten of our survey will give us insight to how accessible plant-based options are to the consumer. Finally, questions four, seven, eight, and eleven provide insight into what challenges consumers face when looking for plant-based options, which are needed to approach our first objective.

From the HellasVeg database we know there are 68 restaurants in Thessaloniki, our goal is to visit all 68. We will reach our target population by going into these restaurants and asking customers to fill out our online survey, with owner permission. The survey will be accessible through a QR code printed on a note card where people can fill out the form later.

3.2 Implementation to the New HellasVeg Veggie Map

As we collect data through surveying, we will compile our findings into an action plan. This action plan will consist of taking these research findings and using them to make educated decisions towards improving our Veggie Map in terms of layout, usability, interactivity, and convenience in a mobile context.

3.2.1 Technological Mapping Foundation

Currently, HellasVeg uses Google MyMaps software to integrate the Veggie Map into their website. While this platform is straightforward and easy to program from a designer perspective, it severely lacks customizability and advanced features. For example, one key feature in this new map that HellasVeg is requesting from our group is the ability to search and add filters for different restaurants. These are features that are impossible to integrate using the MyMaps software.

Meetings with our sponsor and advisors as well as research exploring potential mapping software, the team identified two potential software platforms-- WordPress and React—that had the capabilities needed to improve Hellas website. WordPress, which is a website builder, was our initial option for rebuilding the website. When integrated with the Interactive Geo Maps plugin, our team can install a fully functional map containing all our desired and considered features. This was a great starting point for the map, as the integration involved minimal coding; a topic where our group lacked experience. However, upon further examination, this option introduced major drawbacks. Namely, the cost of the WordPress and Interactive GeoMaps software was near the upper end of HellasVeg's spending budget of 500

Euros per year. This meant that if we were to pursue this method, any future additions would face severe budget restrictions. This setback caused our group to turn to the alternative and current method, React. React is a coding software, based in JavaScript, that is specifically catered towards building websites (Moses, E. et al., 2016). Unlike WordPress, React is a free software, making it a risk-free option for creating the Veggie Map. Additionally, React has full customizability compared to both WordPress and MyMaps, as it uses JavaScript. This means the only restriction for our map would be time and technical abilities within the group. These attributes alone were enough of an indicator to redirect our focus towards using React entirely. While our group does lack experience in JavaScript, we determined collectively that the time given to spend on this project justified the challenge of working with a foreign coding language. Two of the group members could dedicate time to developing the mapping system, while the other two could spend time focusing on gathering information through the surveys mentioned previously.

3.2.2 Research Applications to the Map

To properly implement our research findings into an efficient mapping website, we must have a solid foundation on strategic methods for incorporating the features that our research deems valuable, which we will collect through on-site research. When dealing with online services, efficient website design can reduce user effort and contribute to organizational sustainability. In a study conducted in 2021 led by Mihai Țichindelean et al, most online users draw their attention to the top, left, and right parts of a webpage, with these areas closely contributing to task efficiency and memorability. (Țichindelean et al., 2021, Table 3) This

alludes to the idea that the more visible tasks appear on a website, such as a button to press, a search bar to type in, or a graphic to view, the quicker and easier users will carry out the tasks' intended function. This is a crucial finding in website design, as this also suggests that poor website design can lead to forgettable websites that fail to promote repeat users (Tichindelean et al., 2021, p.9). With everything streamlined in the online sector, there is little room for compromise in terms of efficiency when it comes to a successful website. HellasVeg will need precise decision-making in their website design to guide consumers to the desired features. This information can help our group in the mapping design process, as this will allow us to properly emphasize the features that our research findings reveal to be the most important. For example, if our research shows that consumers value the search bar of the map the most, then we will highlight that by placing it at the top of the webpage, making it as easy as possible to locate and utilize. Once we reach a conclusion and decide which mapping features should take priority, this process can begin, kickstarting our final product.

3.3 Evaluating the Veggie Map

To develop evidence-based recommendations that enhance the functionality, credibility, and user experience of the HellasVeg Veggie Map website as a digital information system, the team will conduct a structured survey targeting two key stakeholder groups, consumers of vegetarian and vegan restaurants and vegan/vegetarian restaurant owners. Participants will first be shown in the updated version of the Veggie Map, including improvements made to navigation, accessibility, and overall design. Immediately following this, they will complete a structured questionnaire designed to systematically evaluate their experience (i.e. a survey tailored to restaurant use and a survey for consumer use of the Veggie Map).

Survey research provides a standardized method for collecting comparable data from a defined population, allowing researchers to measure perceptions, generate actionable findings, and identify patterns (Moser & Kalton, 1972). We will use a structured survey (see Appendix E & F) to measure ease of navigation, satisfaction, confidence in using the platform, and likelihood of continued use. This approach allows us to ground our recommendations in user data rather than informal observations. We will use the results to identify strengths, generate solid recommendations, and detect usability barriers for final improvements to the Veggie Map.

3.3.1 Participant Recruitment

We will recruit participants by revisiting the vegan and vegetarian restaurants visited during the first objective and inviting both restaurant owners and customers to complete this survey (with help from our sponsors). During these visits, we will provide a QR code that links directly to the survey so participants can access it easily on their mobile devices. Instead of

setting a fixed recruitment target, we will encourage participation from as many volunteers as possible throughout the data collection period. The survey will include questions that apply to all respondents and then branch into separate sections for restaurant owners and consumers using WPI Qualtrics surveys. We will also invite additional volunteers from our personal networks, including individuals from our home communities who can participate as prospective tourists exploring plant-based dining options.

3.4 Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

After we publish the improved version of the Veggie Map on the website, we will distribute one structured survey to gather feedback from both consumer and restaurant owners. Publishing the updated map will allow participants to view and interact with the platform before answering the survey questions. At the beginning of the survey, we will ask participants to identify whether they participate as a consumer of vegetarian or vegan restaurants or as a restaurant owner. All participants will first answer a shared set of questions that evaluate their overall impressions of the Veggie Map, usability, and perceived usefulness (Appendix). Within WPI Qualtrics, it will direct them to two separate sets of questions tailored for the consumer and the restaurant owners.

In the consumer section, we will ask questions about search efficiency, ease of navigation, confidence in using the platform, and likelihood of recommending the Veggie Map to others (Appendix). In the restaurant owner section, we will ask questions about business visibility, accuracy of restaurant information, and willingness to maintain or promote their restaurant listing on the platform (Appendix).

Surveys will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involves carefully reviewing transcripts, identifying recurring ideas and key phrases, developing initial codes, and organizing those codes into broader themes. Attention will be given to themes related to accessibility, trust, usability, digital engagement, and barriers to plant-based dining information.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without consequence. No identifying information will be included in project reports unless explicit permission is provided. These procedures ensure that ethical standards regarding confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation are upheld.

The Project team will be conducting surveys through an online form, WPI Qualtrics, which respondents can access and will not violate any data privacy laws in Greece. We developed twelve multiple choice survey questions for analyzing the challenges the respondents face when going out to eat. This form will be accessible through a link distributed online or through printed out QR code that will bring them to the WPI Qualtrics. Participants will provide informed consent before completing the survey, which will be completed within four minutes. If a restaurant gives us permission to hang up a printed out QR code, we will hang a printed out QR code to our survey for customers to fill out.

We will analyze consumer and restaurant owner survey responses separately to identify stakeholder-specific patterns in overall experience and usability. First, we will compile responses and calculate descriptive statistics, including percentages and Likert-scale scores, drawing on survey research principles established by Moser & Kalton (1972). Next, we will compare findings across the two stakeholder groups to identify areas of alignment and

divergence in how consumers and restaurant owners interact with the Veggie Map. This comparison is necessary because the two groups rely on the platform for different purposes. Consumers primarily use the map to locate reliable plant-based dining options, while restaurant owners use the platform to increase business visibility and communicate accurate information about their establishments. By comparing responses between the two groups, we can identify shared priorities, such as navigation clarity or information accuracy, as well as differences in feature preferences. These insights will help guide design decisions by ensuring that improvements to the Veggie Map address the needs of both users searching for restaurants and businesses seeking representation on the platform. We will also use open-ended responses and group recurring themes related to accessibility, trust, navigation, and representation accuracy.

The International Review Board (IRB) will review the survey questions before distribution to ensure that the questions we are asking are ethical by nature and follow all consent and privacy laws.

By integrating descriptive statistical findings, the thematic insights from surveys, we will generate clear, evidence-based recommendations that strengthen the Veggie Map's functionality and overall user experience while directly reflecting the priorities of both consumer apps and restaurant owners.

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Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Flexitarian: a person who has a primarily **vegetarian** diet but occasionally eats meat or fish.

Food environment: The physical, social, economic, and cultural context in which individuals' access, choose, and consume food, including the availability, affordability, accessibility, and marketing of food options.

Plant-based: (of food or a diet) consisting largely or solely of vegetables, grains, pulses, or other foods derived from plants, rather than animal products.

Plant-curious: an individual interested in increasing their intake of **plant-based** foods—such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains—without committing to a strictly **vegetarian** or **vegan** diet.

Vegan: an individual who avoids the consumption of all animal-derived products, including meat, poultry, fish, dairy, eggs, and honey, and whose diets consist entirely of **plant-based** foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains.

Vegetarian: an individual who avoids the consumption of meat, poultry, and fish, while typically including **plant-based** foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains—and in many cases dairy products and/or eggs.

Appendix B: Restaurant Customer Survey

B.1 How would you describe your diet?

- a. Vegetarian
- b. Vegan
- c. Mostly plant-based
- d. Flexitarian / plant-curious
- e. Other

B.2 Plant-based options are accessible in Thessaloniki.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Somewhat agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Somewhat disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

B.3 How often do you avoid a restaurant because of limited plant-based options?

- a. Very often
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely
- e. Never

B.4 Rank the biggest challenge you face when dining out in Greece?

- a. Limited menu options

- b. Lack of clear labeling
- c. Staff misunderstanding vegan/vegetarian needs
- d. Cross-contamination concerns
- e. Higher prices
- f. Social pressure from others
- g. No major challenges
- h. Other

B.5 How do you find vegetarian/vegan-friendly restaurants?

- a. Word of mouth
- b. Social media
- c. Google Maps
- d. Apps
- e. Websites like HellasVeg
- f. Other

B.6 How clearly do restaurants label vegetarian/vegan dishes?

- a. Very clearly
- b. Somewhat clearly
- c. Neutral
- d. Poorly
- e. Not at all

B.7 Menu descriptions accurately reflect ingredients?

- a. Strongly agree

- b. Somewhat agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Somewhat disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

B.8 In your experience, does the restaurant staff understand the difference between vegetarians and vegans?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Somewhat agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Somewhat disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

B.9 How do you feel plant-based dishes are priced compared to meat-based dishes?

- a. Much cheaper
- b. Slightly cheaper
- c. About the same
- d. Slightly more expensive
- e. Much more expensive
- f. Do not know

B.10 In which type of location do you find the best plant-based access?

- a. Major cities (e.g., Athens, Thessaloniki)
- b. Mid-sized cities
- c. Small towns

- d. Rural areas
- e. Tourist islands
- f. Do not know

B.11 Overall, I am satisfied with plant-based restaurant options in Greece?

- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat disagree
 - e. Very disagree
-

Appendix C: Restaurant Owner Survey Questions

1. How important are online mapping platforms for attracting plant-based customers?

- A) Extremely important
- B) Very important
- C) Moderately important
- D) Slightly important
- E) Not important

2. How do most customers discover your restaurant?

- A) Google Search / Maps
- B) Social media
- C) Word of mouth
- D) Delivery apps
- E) Vegan/vegetarian directories

3. What information is most important for your listing to include?

- A) Clear vegan/vegetarian labeling
- B) Updated menu
- C) Photos
- D) Location & contact info
- E) Certification/verification badge

4. How do you typically advertise your Restaurant?

- A) Social media (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, etc.)
- B) Google listings or online maps (Google Maps, directories)

- C) Food delivery apps (e.g., Uber Eats, Wolt)
- D) Word of mouth / customer recommendations
- E) Paid advertising (online ads, flyers, local media)
- F) Other

5. Which feature would most increase the value of the Veggie Map for your business?

- A) Customer reviews
- B) Featured/promoted listings
- C) Business analytics (views, clicks)
- D) Event promotion
- E) Multi-language support

6. What is your biggest challenge in reaching plant-based customers?

- A) Limited marketing budget
- B) Low public awareness
- C) Seasonal tourism fluctuations
- D) Competition
- E) Supply/sourcing challenges

7. Would a verified “100% Vegan” or similar badge increase your interest in the platform?

- A) Yes, significantly
- B) Yes, somewhat
- C) Neutral
- D) No

8. How likely are you to actively maintain and update your listing if the system were easier to use?

A) Very likely

B) Likely

C) Neutral

D) Unlikely

E) Very unlikely

9. Would you support a redesigned Veggie Map if it improved visibility and reliability?

A) Yes, definitely

B) Yes, if free

C) Yes, if benefits outweigh costs

D) Maybe

E) No

Appendix D: Survey Consent Form

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Worcester Massachusetts, USA and are working on a collaborative project with HellasVeg to better understand and improve access to vegetarian and vegan restaurant information in Greece. The purpose of this survey is to learn more about current experiences, challenges, and perspectives related to plant-based dining and how tools like the Veggie Map could better support the community. We will be asking questions about experiences, eating habits, and design considerations. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw, or skip at any time. Please remember that your answers will remain anonymous. No names or identifying information will appear on the questionnaires or in any of the project reports or publications. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Should you have any questions or concerns, we can be reached at gr-hellasveg-D26 or through our advisors Melissa Butler, (mbutler@wpi.edu) Robert Kinicki, (rek@wpi.edu) For more information about this research or about the rights of research participants, please contact irb@wpi.edu.

Appendix E: Consumers Using the HellasVeg Veggie Map

Section 1: First Impressions & Overall Experience

E.1 My overall experience using the Veggie Map was enjoyable

- a. 1 = Strongly agree
- b. 2 = Somewhat agree
- c. 3 = neutral
- d. 4 = Somewhat disagree
- e. 5 = Strongly disagree

E.2 Did you experience any confusion when you first used the map?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. If yes, please describe what felt confusing or unclear.
- i. (paragraph)

Section 2: Usability (Ease of Use & Navigation)

E.3 How easy was it to navigate the Veggie Map?

- a. 1 = very difficult
- b. 2 = difficult
- c. 3 = neutral
- d. 4 = easy
- e. 5 = very easy

E.4 How quickly were you able to find **vegan/vegetarian** options?

- a. Very quickly
- b. Somewhat quickly
- c. Neutral
- d. Somewhat slowly
- e. Very slowly

E.5 Which features did you find most helpful? [checkbox]

- a. Search function
- b. Filters (**vegan, vegetarian**, etc.)
- c. Map layout
- d. Restaurant details
- e. Reviews/ratings
- f. Other: _____

E.6 Did you encounter any features that felt unnecessary or difficult to use?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. If yes, please explain
- i. (paragraph)

E.7 If you were searching for a restaurant in a new city, how confident would you feel using the Veggie Map?

- a. 1 = Not confident at all
- b. 2 = slightly confident
- c. 3 = neutral

- d. 4 = confident
- e. 5 = very confident

E.8 What improvements would make the Veggie Map more user-friendly?

- a. (short answer)

E.9 Do you believe the Veggie Map would be helpful for travelers or people unfamiliar with an area?

- a. Definitely yes
- b. Probably yes
- c. Not sure
- d. Probably no
- e. Definitely no

Section 3: Loyalty & Future Use

E.10 How likely are you to continue using and recommend the Veggie Map?

- a. 1 = very unlikely
- b. 2 = unlikely
- c. 3 = neutral
- d. 4 = likely
- e. 5 = very likely

E.11 How likely are you to recommend the Veggie Map to other **vegans** or **vegetarians**?

- a. 1 = very unlikely
- b. 2 = unlikely
- c. 3 = neutral

d. 4 = likely

e. 5 = very likely

3. In what situations would you most likely use the Veggie Map? [checkbox]

a. Traveling

b. Everyday dining

c. Special occasions

d. Trying a new restaurant

e. Finding options in an unfamiliar area

f. Other: _____

E.12 How important are community features (reviews, ratings, photos) to you when choosing a restaurant?

a. 1 = not important at all

b. 2 = slightly important

c. 3 = neutral

d. 4 = important

e. 5 = very important

E.13 What were your initial thoughts when you first saw the Veggie Map?

a. (short answer)

E.14 What stood out to you most about the Veggie Map?

a. (short answer)

E.15 What country are you from?

a. (short answer)

Appendix F: Restaurant Owners Listed on the HellasVeg Veggie Map

Section 1: First Impressions & Overall Experience

1. What were your initial thoughts when you learned your restaurant was featured on the Veggie Map?
 - a. (short answer)
2. What stood out to you most about how your restaurant appears on the Veggie Map?
 - a. (short answer)
3. How would you rate your overall experience with being listed on the Veggie Map?
 - a. 1 = very poor
 - b. 2 = poor
 - c. 3 = neutral
 - d. 4 = good
 - e. 5 = excellent
4. Did you experience any confusion about how the Veggie Map works or how your restaurant is represented?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. If yes, please describe what felt unclear.
 - i. (paragraph)

Section 2: Website Usability & Business Value

1. How easy was it to understand your restaurant's listing and information on the Veggie Map?
 - a. 1 = very difficult
 - b. 2 = difficult
 - c. 3 = neutral
 - d. 4 = easy
 - e. 5 = very easy
2. Do you feel the Veggie Map accurately represents your **vegan/vegetarian** offerings?
 - a. Definitely yes
 - b. Probably yes
 - c. Not sure
 - d. Probably no
 - e. Definitely no
3. Which aspects of the Veggie Map do you find most valuable for your business? (select all that apply)
 - a. Increased visibility
 - b. Reaching **vegan/vegetarian** customers
 - c. Being part of a **plant-based** network
 - d. Customer reviews
 - e. Location-based discovery
 - f. Other: _____
4. Have you noticed any increase in customer engagement due to being listed?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
5. What improvements would make the Veggie Map more beneficial for your business?
- a. (short answer)

Section 3: Future Collaboration & Engagement

1. How likely are you to continue participating in the Veggie Map website?
- a. 1 = very unlikely
 - b. 2 = unlikely
 - c. 3 = neutral
 - d. 4 = likely
 - e. 5 = very likely
2. How interested would you be in additional features such as customer reviews, promotional opportunities, analytics or insights about user visits, direct communication with customers.
- a. 1 = not interested at all
 - b. 2 = somewhat interested
 - c. 3 = neutral
 - d. 4 = interested
 - e. Very interested
3. How important is it for your restaurant to be visible on a website specifically focused on **vegan** and **vegetarian** dining?

- a. 1 = not important at all
 - b. 2 = slightly important
 - c. 3 = neutral
 - d. 4 = important
 - e. 5 = very important
4. Would you recommend participating in the Veggie Map to other **plant-based** friendly restaurants?
- a. 1 = very unlikely
 - b. 2 = unlikely
 - c. 3 = neutral
 - d. 4 = likely
 - e. 5 = very likely

Appendix G: Website/Mapping Testing Consent Form

Project Title

Redesign and Evaluation of an Enhanced HellasVeg Veggie Map Platform with website.

Investigators

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this project is to redesign and evaluate an enhanced version of the HellasVeg Veggie Map to improve access to reliable **vegetarian** and **vegan** restaurant information across Greece. This study examines how **plant-based** consumers and restaurant stakeholders interact with, perceive, and rely upon the Veggie Map as an online tool for discovering and promoting dining options.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, you may be asked to:

- Review and test the HellasVeg Veggie Map prototype by navigating the website and providing feedback on usability, accessibility, credibility, and functionality.

Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. There are no direct benefits to participating; however, your feedback may help improve digital access to **plant-based** restaurant information in Greece.

Confidentiality and Use of Data

All information collected will be used for academic research purposes only as part of the HellasVeg Veggie Map project. Responses will be analyzed in aggregate to identify patterns and themes related to usability, trust, accessibility, and digital engagement. No identifying information will be included in reports or presentations unless received consent.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. If you have questions about the study, you may contact the research team at: gr-HellasVeg-D26 By proceeding with the survey or website testing, you indicate that you have read this information and voluntarily agree to participate.