

The “student bag”: development of a new concept based on the Mediterranean diet to improve the diet of university students in Croatia

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INTRODUCTION

- Dietary and other health-related habits established during young adulthood, especially university, may represent an important factor in maintaining health and preventing chronic diseases later in life.
- Student restaurants play an important role in shaping dietary habits and promoting healthy and sustainable dietary patterns such as the Mediterranean diet.

AIM

- This study aimed to examine the opinions of university students in Croatia regarding meal proposals ("to go" options) that could improve the offer in student restaurants and enhance resemblance of one's diet to the Mediterranean dietary pattern, namely, to contribute to food groups intake that could be increased regarding previous evaluation of menus in student restaurants in Croatia: whole grains, olive oil, seafood, nuts and seeds, and eggs. Also, the conditions that the "to go" proposal for "student bag" should comply with are defined by the aim of the project MedDietMenus4Campus and include convenience, practicality, affordability, food safety, contribution to food and nutrition literacy and education.

METHODS

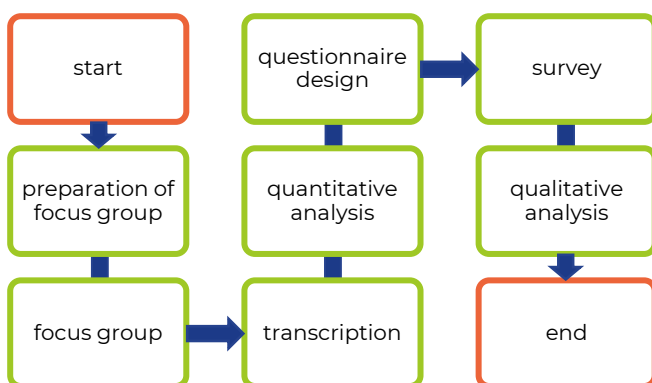


Figure 1. Overview of the sequence of research phases and procedures

RESULTS

- Female students, older, students, and those living in private accommodation were more inclined to choose Mediterranean dietary options, while the region of study had no impact.

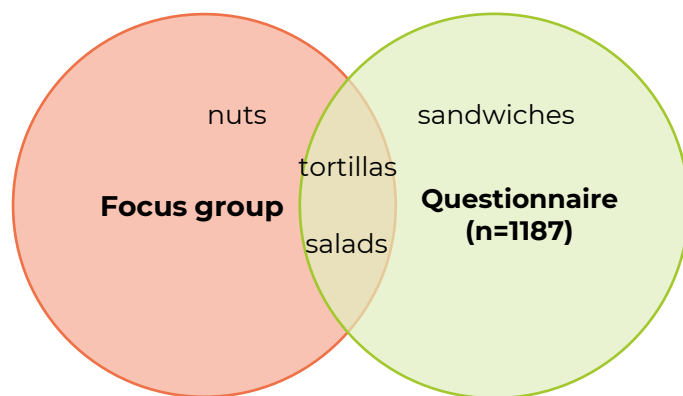
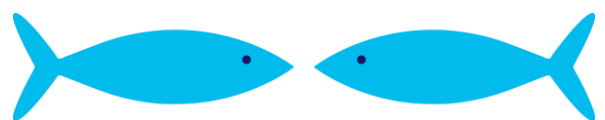


Figure 2. The three preferred options of the focus group participants and the survey respondents



CONCLUSION

- The focus group findings were confirmed by the survey, with tortillas and salads (as complete meals) highlighted as preferred options for the “student bag” content.
- Incorporating foods characteristic for the Mediterranean diet could contribute to healthier eating habits, academic success, and the long term well-being of the student population.

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