

# CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: OVERLAPS BETWEEN HEALTH, SAFETY, WASTE & SUSTAINABILITY

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Intersections in sense making:  
the examples of nut allergy and horsemeat

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Methodological challenges

Food choices with an nut allergy

The horsemeat adulteration incident

# the examples: horsemeat adulteration

Two studies using online engagement tool - VIZZATA™ (www.vizzata.com)

## Study 1: January 2013

- Characterised consumer reactions ( $N = 42$ ) in 'real time' as the news of the horsemeat incident broke

## Study 2: May 2013

- Investigate how consumers' confidence ( $N = 67$ ) and trust had been impacted by the horsemeat scandal



Regan, A., Barnett., J et al., (in press) Conceptualising responsibility in the aftermath of the horsemeat adulteration incident: An online study with Irish and UK consumers, *Health, Risk and Society*  
Barnett et al., (under review) Consumers' confidence and reflections following the horsemeat incident, *Food Control*

# the examples: food choice with nut allergy

FSA project: Understanding the food choice reasoning of nut allergic consumers: 2009 –2010

Triangulation of 3 qualitative methods

- Accompanied shop
- Interviews
- Product Choice Reasoning Task

Barnett, J., Leftwich, J., Muncer, K., Grimshaw, K., Shepherd, R., Raats, M., Gowland, H., & Lucas, J. (2011) How do peanut and nut allergic consumers use information on the packaging to avoid allergens? *Allergy*, **66**: 969–978

Leftwich, J., Barnett, J., Muncer, K., Shepherd, R., Raats, M., Gowland, H., & Lucas, J. (2011) The challenges for nut allergic consumers of eating out, *Clinical and Experimental Allergy*, **41**, 243-249

Barnett, J., Botting, N., Gowland, M.H., Lucas, J.S. (2012) The strategies that peanut and nut-allergic consumers employ to remain safe when travelling abroad. *Clinical and Translational Allergy*, **2**, 12

Leftwich, J., Barnett, J., Muncer, K., Shepherd, R., Raats, M., Gowland, H., & Lucas, J. (2011) The challenges for nut allergic consumers of eating out, *Clinical and Experimental Allergy*, **41**, 243-249



Final Technical Report T07058

*Understanding the food choice reasoning of nut allergic consumers*

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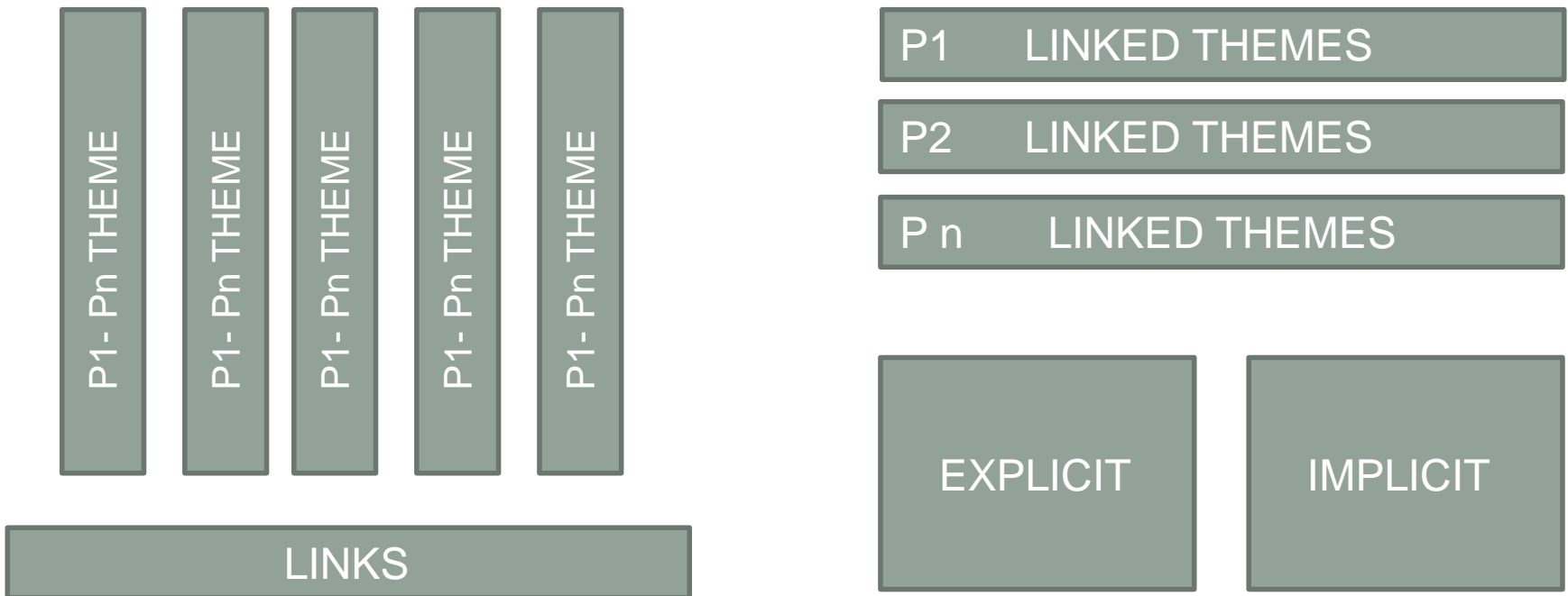
*University of Southampton School of Medicine, Division of Infection, Inflammation and Immunity*

**Hazel Gowland (Project Advisor)**

*Allergy Action*

# Challenges to methods and analysis

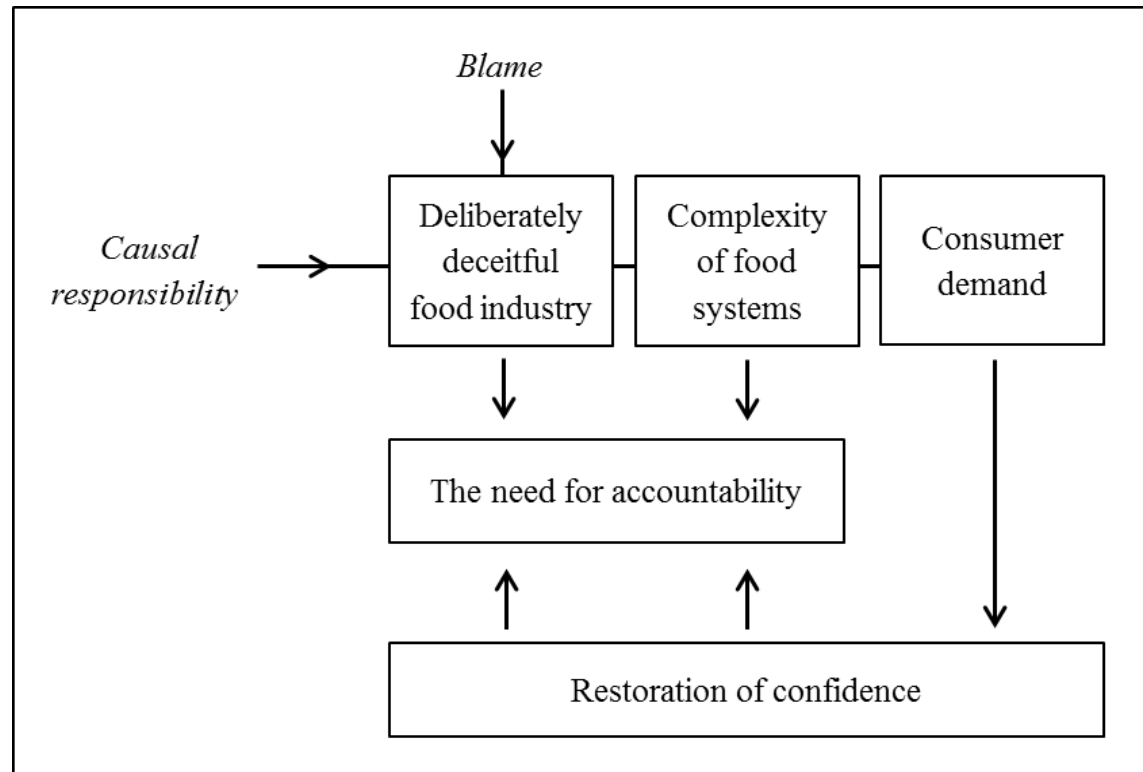
Conventions of using thematic analysis – we rarely focus on identifying co-occurring themes in single accounts



Is there value in being more attuned to linkages people make in their accounts of a phenomena?

# an example from research on horsemeat

Thematic map reflecting how consumers constructed responsibility, blame, and accountability in the aftermath of the horsemeat adulteration incident.

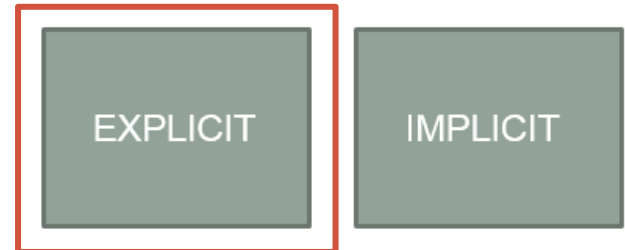


Regan, A., Barnett, J et al., (in press) Conceptualising responsibility in the aftermath of the horsemeat adulteration incident: An online study with Irish and UK consumers, *Health, Risk & Society*

# explicit links – an example from research about nut allergy

Saw that participants integrated the demands of the nut allergy with other food choice considerations

Decisions about *safety* in relation to allergy and avoiding allergic reactions were just one consideration in making food choice decisions; participants also considered *price, special offers* and a range of *nutritional and health* related considerations.



## safety & cost

*I'm probably going to get some of the fresh soup stuff. (Brand name) food, which I tend to buy quite a few of, so I know they're usually quite good with their description if it has nuts in or not. And the Carrot & Coriander is going cheap, so I think that one...that one will be a good one.*

(1017 AS, M, Moderate)

*Right... I've got cereals, jam, flour... I need some raisins... Just having a look at the raisins... I'm looking at the difference of the (Brand name1) or the (Brand name2). These are for the party and also for lunch box. And...they don't have any warnings...and neither do those, so then we look at price, which is...they're cheaper.*

(1042 AS, F, Severe)



# safety, health & nutrition

*I'm looking at a (supermarket brand ) Jalfrezi cooking sauce, [...] I've just found a lower fat version, so I'm just looking to see what the difference is... It's got almost half everything in, so we'll have the lower fat version, and since it's three for £2, we'll have three of them. I'll stay away from the Korma, but I'll get the Tikka Masala. Two so far... I need another one. Tikka Masala .. looks quite safe... Just checking that one for any nuts, and it's just got the "May contain traces of". We need a third, so I'll have another Tikka Masala.*

(1060 AS, M, Moderate)

*I'm thinking about what I want to eat for dinner tonight, because I've been very lazy and haven't organised myself at all. So I was going to have a pizza or something like that, so I'm looking for a small one...which will involve me reading the back, because I don't like particularly buying processed food, it kind of takes a while, but I'm being very lazy and can't be arsed to cook so...The problem is, you start reading the label for nuts, and you start reading the fat content as well and it kind of puts you off! So I might just go and grab a jacket potato.*

(4013 AS, F, Severe)

# explicit links – an example from research about horsemeat

Links to the concept of *signal value*

- the incident being perceived to be an indicator of further, yet unknown, threats or hazards

*To be honest the horse scandal made me worry more about other issues, e.g. if these factories and processors are happy to sell us horsemeat for profit, how lax are their hygiene preferences?*

F 32, UK, #2049

*Yes [it is worrying] as it makes me think that other foods could be being sold in a similar manner*

Male, UK, #1185

*In this case it is not a health risk but who is to say that other dangerous additives are not included in the production of food items*

F, Ireland, #1201

P1 LINKED THEMES

P2 LINKED THEMES

P n LINKED THEMES

EXPLICIT

IMPLICIT

# ps about methods

Less examples of explicit linkages in the interview data – generally evident in the think aloud accompanied shop task

## accompanied shop

- ‘Think aloud’ technique used in store for routine shop
- Explored information participants used to assist their decision making in real life context

*“Right, coming into cooking sauces now, which is always a bit of an issue. A lot of them, you wouldn’t expect that they have nuts in, so we always have to look at the ingredients for these”.*



# returning to horsemeat data

## Top down

- Is there any evidence of these 4 themes co-occurring in single accounts?
- Are there any links/contingencies between them?
- If yes, what are they?

## Bottom up

- Is there any evidence of these 4 themes co-occurring in single accounts with other themes?

# safety

Questions of safety/breaches of safety was the major theme (of the four) in individual accounts

Questions about safety become visible because of the lack of correspondence between legitimate expectations of product content and actual content.

Safety not the primary issue - rather industry processes/governance

Views that it is not a safety issue seem unrelated to the assurances of safety/no risk to health

*"I think that that overstating there is no danger to human health is annoying the public. We knew from day 1 that there is no danger to health but still when we buy a beef burger we expect to eat beef and not 27% horsemeat"*

F, Ireland, #1214

# safety and health

What sorts of relationships do we see between safety and health?

- Horsemeat is potentially safety issue but in this case, few - if any - direct implications for health
- Lack of safety means being at risk of eating horsemeat... not risk to health
- Cheaper products are less healthy/can be linked to ill-health
- Being health conscious means being alert to ingredients - so it is a problem if you don't know what the ingredients really are
- Put off eating processed meat but fully aware there are no health concerns
- Raises the issue of general food safety even though no threat to health in this instance

# Safety and waste

What links to people make between safety and waste?

- Might be unsafe but if there is no health risk why are we wasting so much food
- If people are fully informed they should be able to eat the burgers that would otherwise be wasted
- Uncertainty about presence of disease in the meat alongside regret at waste alongside suggestions that some would be happy to eat this
- Waste resulting from this incident is shocking – things could have been done with the food (pets or the hungry)

*There is no need to destroy good food as it is just contaminated not food safety issue so donate this to the charity within the country or outside*

F, Ireland #1208

*I think the way the burgers were disposed of is of great importance and also I think that they should have been offered to people free of charge with the knowledge that they had the horse DNA trace elements but were also NO HEALTH THREAT*

F, Ireland, #1208



# conclusions

- There is value in considering points of intersection and contingency from both academic and policy perspectives
- Some methods and types of analysis lend themselves to this better than others
- Qualitative software tends to direct attention away from links made in single accounts
- Lack of links may be as interesting as their presence – especially if links are generally assumed
- Important policy learning from the ways in which people extrapolate from one area to another