

## Innovative Design Solution on ‘Vegetarians facing an issue in becoming a Chef’

<sup>1</sup>Niharika Sarda  
<sup>1</sup>TYBBA-G063, NMIMS, ASMSOC, Mumbai

**Preface and Acknowledgement:** I took this course (Innovation Design) as part of the interdisciplinary module course offered by the Balwant Sheth School of Architecture (BSSA) at NMIMS, Mumbai. The main goal of this project is to be able to apply all of the concepts and theories learned throughout the course into reality. To support my work, I've included several points and references from the Double Diamond Model in this project report. This project has taught me how to identify the important steps in developing a unique solution to a large-scale challenge. I've also learned how to produce the optimal design solution by following the steps. I would like to thank Ar. Shweta Manikshetti for her guidance without which I would not have been able to complete the project and get deep insights on the topic, applicable to real-life challenging problems.

**ABSTRACT:** "Vegetarians facing an issue in becoming a Chef" is the title of the project. The project's goal is to comprehend the intricacies of the specified title and utilize the "Double Diamond Model" to discover the most optimal design solution for the problem statement. Through design thinking, this project attempts to investigate, review, and compare the primary tensions, concepts, and develop the ideal solution for the problem. This report's primary data sources are personal interviews including field observations. The secondary data was gathered based on a general survey of previously published articles from reputable sources.

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### II. DISCOVER

**Research Phase :** Out of the various problems and briefs available, “Vegetarians facing an issue in becoming a chef” was chosen as the **problem statement** as it identifies a problem that caters to a significantly vast

audience and the project will help get the optimal solution for the same.

**Desk Research :** Desk research was carried out in order to identify and contextualize the actual problem, its severity, its presence, and any opportunities that may or may not have already existed. Existing sources were explored to review them and widen the perspective of the topic at hand.

Rather of operating on an assumption, the desk research technique assisted in identifying and clarifying the true problem. Few articles for desk research:

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/budding-chefs-seek-pure-veg-course/article19107938.ece>

Article talks about how students who are **vegetarians also have to cook non-vegetarian dishes for their practical exams**. Several institutes and boards have said it is 'impractical' as further down in the industry, the students will need practical knowledge of both. Many students who prefer only vegetarian cooking cannot opt for courses.

- <https://www.thebridgchronicle.com/pune/students-can-opt-%E2%80%98veg-only%E2%80%99-course-ihms-17574>

Article is a narrative of a student who wanted to pursue culinary arts but could not as he was not comfortable cooking non vegetarian dishes. He later on had to shift his career choices but his father was adamant in changing this system. He went ahead and wrote letters to institutes, boards and many more to finally achieve the change. From then, a **vegetarian only course was introduced in IHMs**.

- <https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/156-hotel-management-students-choose-veg-only-practicals-8-from-mumbai-choose-the-option/story-1Tx7fpfsOcbRuSqLACXmmI.html>

Article mentions the impact of the vegetarian only course. 156 students applied for it. The kitchens weren't separate nor was the course material provided hence it was a bit difficult for more students to opt for it. Also, it highlights that even if the students opted for vegetarian only course, they were the ones who wanted to start something of their own in future like a restaurant as the chances of **finding an internship or job was difficult for them**.

- Country where meat consumption is less. India has people who have non vegetarian food but not all days of the week. Some have non vegetarian only at a social gathering and many are eggetarians. The below graphs show the percentage of vegetarians in India compared to other countries Fig (1) and also the average annual consumption per person. Fig (2)



Fig (1)

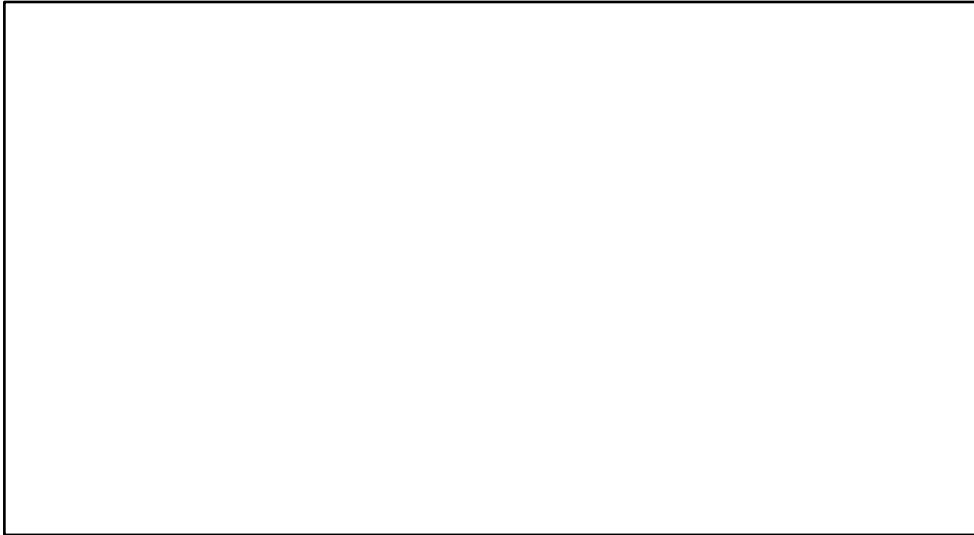
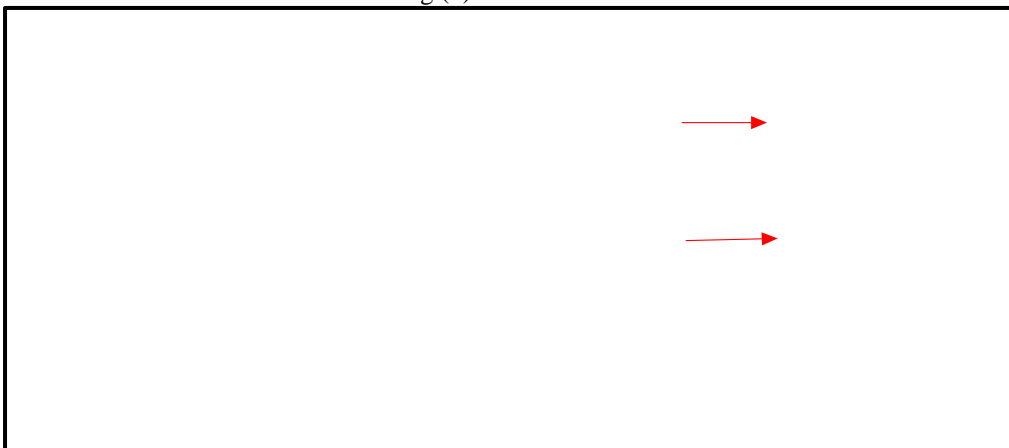


Fig (2)

- The difference in salaries is seen in Fig (3)

Fig (3)



- The qualifications required for an executive chef position at Marriott in Fig (4)



Fig (4)

**Field Research : The field research was done to obtain primary data firsthand.**

**Interviews:** In-person, on-site, telephonic and textual interviews were conducted with a couple of college students, chefs, managers, professors and general public in Mumbai. Various questions related to the project problem statement were asked to gain insights for moving in the right direction.

**Field Report:**

**(i) With a corporate chef at Socials Field worker:** Niharika Sarda

**Setting:**

1. Inorbit Mall, Malad West's newly opened Socials
2. Right before the rush hour as there was an event happening later that night.

**Interview Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2022

**Interview Time:** 5:30 pm, Sunday

**Project Aim:** The project/interview aim is to find out how the vegetarian chefs are hired and if they have special chef for just vegetarian menu/dishes.

**Session objective:** The objective was to understand how a quick restaurant industry works and if they have any specific form of hiring process for dedicated cuisines.

**Researcher Roles:** Conducted research in casuals to make the interviewee comfortable.

**Name of Interviewer:** Niharika Sarda

**Concrete Observations:**

- No specific only vegetarian chef hired. Every chef needs to have knowledge since it a casual dining restaurant and bar.
- The chef if knows only vegetarian cooking, then is comparatively paid lesser.

**With a manager at Kailash Parbat Field worker:** Niharika Sarda

**Setting:**

1. Inorbit Mall, Malad West's Kailash Parbat outlet
2. Rush hour was manageable **Interview Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2022 **Interview Time:** 5:30 pm, Sunday

**Project Aim:** The project/interview aim is to find out how the vegetarian chefs are hired and if they have special chef for just vegetarian menu/dishes.

**Session Objective:** The objective was to understand how a quick restaurant industry works and if they have any specific form of hiring process for dedicated cuisines.

**Researcher Roles:** Conducted research in casuals to make the interviewee comfortable.

**Name of Interviewer:** Niharika Sarda

**Concrete Observations:**

- Needs to make on the spot customizations hence knowledge is essential.
- The chef if knows only vegetarian but can be making non vegetarian at home.
- They are hired through promotion. From working at chopping station to being the chef happens over years at their restaurants.

**(ii) With a professor at Just Appetite Field worker:** Niharika Sarda

**Setting:**

1. A stall at 18<sup>th</sup> Upper Crust Food and Wine show
2. The stall had students selling their baked goodies as a project

**Interview Date:** 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2022

**Interview Time:** 5:30 pm, Sunday

**Project Aim:** The project/interview aim is to find out how the vegetarian chefs are hired and if they have special chef for just vegetarian menu/dishes.

**Session objective:** The objective was to understand if the students at culinary schools were taught about non vegetarian cooking as well, even if they opted for vegetarian course.

**Researcher Roles:** Conducted research in casuals to make the interviewee comfortable.

**Name of Interviewer:** Niharika Sarda

**Concrete Observations:**

- The course was designed with vegan options and substitutes of eggs but still it was advisable to learn how to use eggs as it might be required in future.

**(iii) With a third-year student sitting for placements Field worker:** Niharika Sarda  
**Setting:**

1. A telephonic and in person conversation took place
2. A garden in Juhu

**Interview Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2022

**Interview Time:** 7:30 pm, Monday

**Project Aim:** The project/interview aim is to find out how the vegetarian chefs are hired and if they have special chef for just vegetarian menu/dishes.

**Session objective:** The objective was to understand if the students at culinary schools were taught about non vegetarian cooking as well, even if they opted for vegetarian course.

**Researcher Roles:** Conducted research in casuals to make the interviewee comfortable.

**Name of Interviewer:** Niharika Sarda

**Concrete Observations:**

- There were courses which only taught vegetarian cooking
- However, at times during exams they had to cook non vegetarian.
- Male dominant industry where women were given less opportunities to work in the hot kitchen. They were preferred for managerial job roles.

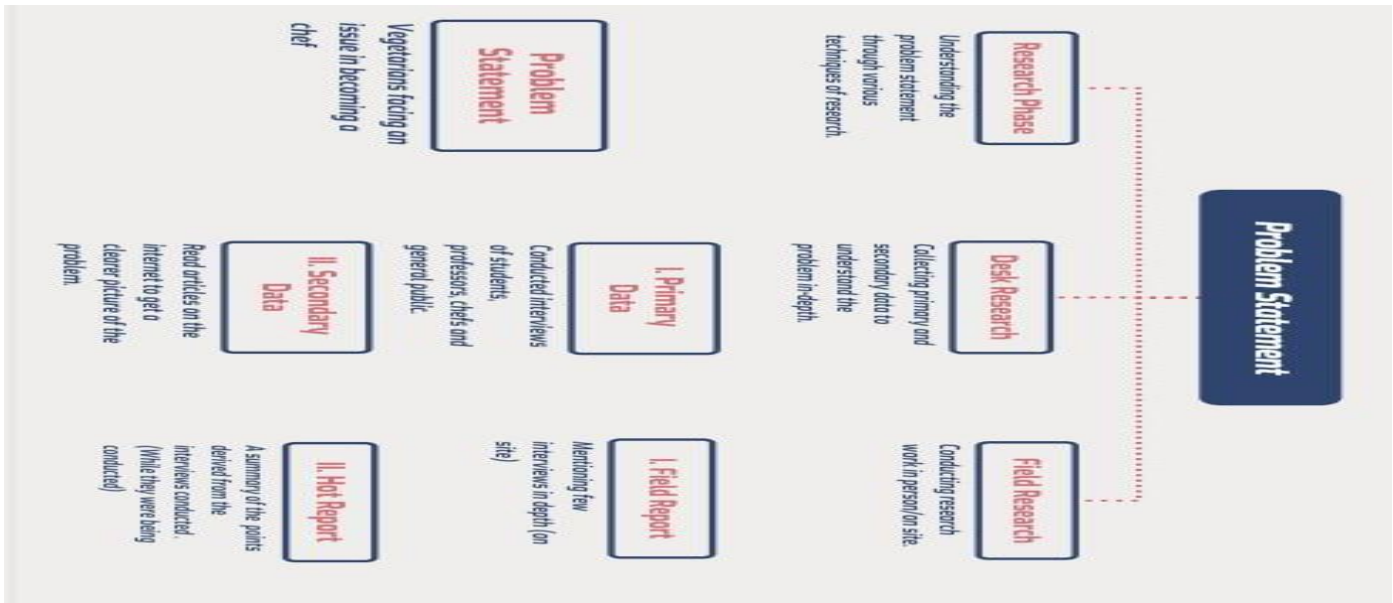
**Hot Report:** The questions included as a part of the hot reports were asked to specific groups.

**Hot Report of Students Interviewer:** Niharika Sarda

**Insights:** This is a brief summary of all the points that the students had tried to highlight.

- Not only are vegetarian families not comfortable with their children learning non vegetarian cooking but also the students themselves are a bit skeptical about it.
- Even if they opt for the vegetarian course, the chances of them landing an internship or jobs are slim.
- A student was asked to filet a fish even though he was a vegetarian (assumption made that everyone knows all cooking styles)
- Many discontinued or not planning to pursue it ahead because of less job opportunities, low pay and personal reasons.

**Setting:** The questions were asked over a telephonic or textual conversation



**Questions:**

1. Why did you opt for culinary arts?
2. Which university/college and course are you pursuing?
3. How is the course/
4. Is there any course for vegetarian only?
5. How is the course structure and examinations conducted?
6. Any personal experience at internship or finding jobs?

**Hot Report of Interviews conducted at 18<sup>th</sup> Upper Crust Food and Wine Show Interviewer: Niharika Sarda**

**Insights:** This is a brief summary of all the points had been collected from the exhibition interviews comprising of professor, students, brands selling vegan and vegetarian products and general public.

- The students were learning all egg free and gluten free baking courses/diploma. They found it easier as being vegetarians themselves, they get to taste while making.
- The professors do encourage their students to still know how to use eggs if in case they are asked to do so in future.
- There were 4 mock meat that is plant-based meat stalls where people were being asked to try and educated about the same.
- Many seemed interested but the public in general found it difficult to switch.

**Setting:** The questions were asked in person at the event.

**Questions:**

1. Why plant-based meat?
2. How was it while pursuing culinary arts?
3. Did you find an internship/job?
4. Do you think India's switch to non-vegetarian food a good thing?

**Hot Report of Managers and Corporate Chefs Interviewer: Niharika Sarda**

**Insights:** A brief summary of all the managers and corporate chefs answers to understand how the hiring and deciding of pay works.

**Setting:** Questions were asked in person at their respective restaurants.

**Questions:**

1. How many years have you been working here?
2. What is your job role?
3. Are there separate kitchens for non-vegetarian and vegetarian cooking?

4. Do you hire chefs for vegetarian cooking only?
5. How are they paid?
6. Will you hire someone who only knows how to cook vegetarian dishes only?
7. Any personal experience you would like to share?

**A summary in infographic form cum mind map:**

**Define:** After gathering data through the discovery phase various impressions, themes, takeaways and challenges were identified.

**Impressions:** There is a scope of giving the vegetarian course equal importance and recognition to the chefs. Hiring of vegetarian chefs can be possible.

**Themes:**

- a) Equal importance to the vegetarian course structure
- b) Equal pay upon skills and not on basis of cooking style
- c) More job opportunities and internships to be available.

**Takeaways:** This topic is very vast and there are multiple aspects which need to be considered. Taking the problem of not being equally paid and vegetarians facing an issue is feasible as of now.

**Problem Statement:** Vegetarians facing an issue in becoming a Chef.

**Tensions:** The following are the four main tensions involved in the topic that were identified from the thorough discover phase. These tensions were then worked upon in the develop phase of the process.

- Less percentage of only vegetarian chefs getting a job at a 5-star hotel
- Earnings of only vegetarian chefs is less compared to ones which know cooking both styles.
- Women are not given hot kitchen job roles and are preferred at front desk or as a cabin crew.
- Students who are vegetarian are skeptical before joining any hotel management program.

**(a) Tension Table**

<b>Tensions</b>	Less percentage of only vegetarian chefs getting a job at a 5-star hotel.	Earnings of only vegetarian chefs is less compared to ones which know cooking both styles.	Women are not given hot kitchen job roles and are preferred at front desk or as a cabin crew.	Students who are vegetarian are skeptical before joining any hotel management program.
<b>Evidence</b>	No specific hotel chain has a separate vegetarian only chef.	Mentioned by people working at restaurants and online.	As per the pattern at individual restaurants, 10-15% women are chefs.	Only 156 students took the only vegetarian course in 2018.
<b>Speculation</b>	Almost none to minimum interest of hotel chains to hire them.	Lack of skills recognition and appreciation.	Rigid mindset of people while hiring.	Lack of awareness and resources.
<b>Opportunities</b>	Increased awareness through social media and newspapers about vegetarianism.	Highly skilled chefs with abundance knowledge.	Increase in women chefs and bring equality.	Take inspiration from own country and change the course structure.
<b>What if?</b>	What if there was a fixed way to eradicate the lack of job opportunities at 5-star hotel chains?	What if they incorporated a rule to pay equally on merit and skills?	What if they uplifted the women and give the opportunity to work in hot kitchens?	What if they make an extensive course for vegetarians only with industry experience?

**DEVELOP**

Tensions 1,2,4 were combined to form a tension statement upon which, concepts were drawn and developed to

find the optimal most solution for the initial problem statement.

Pointers obtained from the discover phase were used as a method to create solutions.

**Tension Statement:** There is a lack of recognition for vegetarian courses and the employees are underpaid even after finding a job through many difficulties.

**Concepts:** In India, MasterChef Season 4 was entirely vegetarian based which can become an inspiration to have separate MasterChef for vegetarians only. Another could be implementing a same pay range available for the chefs. They should be hired on their skills and knowledge of the cooking style they choose. Having a course structure which has teaching of relevant skills is essential. The concept is a 3-year plan as it will take time to develop a course, find and train professors and implement it fruitfully.

## **DELIVER**

### **Design Solution**

- An in-depth course structure where students get practical knowledge as well.*

This will only happen if there are job opportunities for which the government can come up with a plan where the hotel chains are asked to have pure vegetarian chefs' team which only prepare vegetarian dishes. It could be just 5% of total hiring in the start. The students must be given opportunity on the basis of their knowledge. Expecting a student knowing all the cooking styles will not specialize them in any particular preferable cuisine type.

- An equal pay to all the chefs at the same level*

Having the above solution in mind, the only vegetarian chef should not be paid less due to cooking only one style of food. They must be paid equally as the knowledge required is same.

- An 'All Vegetarian MasterChef' must be there*

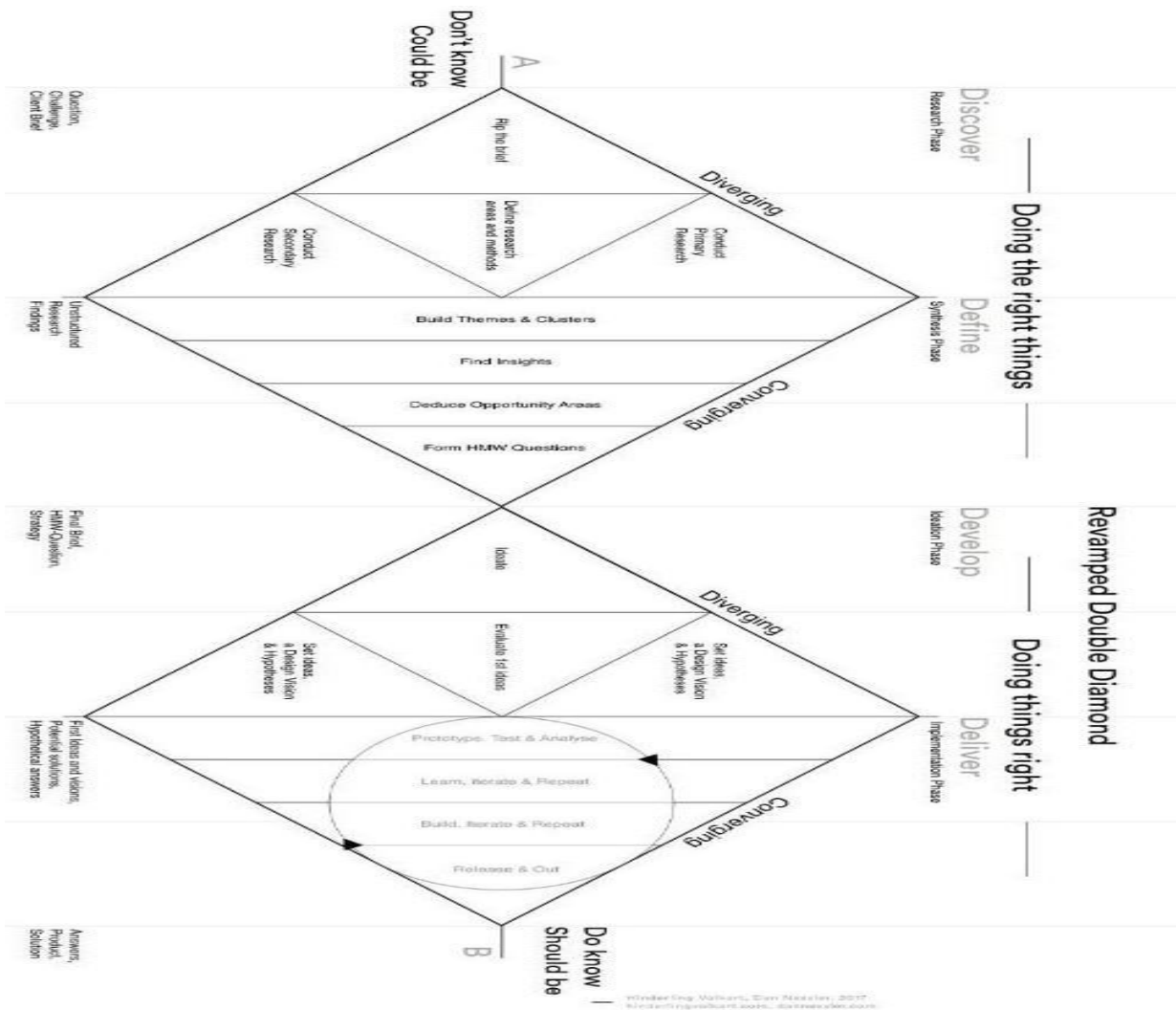
If there are vegetarian chefs, they must equally have the opportunity to showcase their talent. Considering now more and more people are shifting towards vegetarianism and veganism, this could be the best way to highlight our country's talent.

## **Annexure**

### **Assumptions:**

1. The research conducted was not Pan India hence is limited till certain extent.
2. The solution of 'All Vegetarian MasterChef' could be a separate solution all together.
3. Students have opted for culinary arts course but are vegetarian and cooking non vegetarian now.
4. The hiring process by managers across all the outlets are considered similar.





The Double Diamond Model used for reference: