

Trading Insight

nuS charity
national union of students

January 2025

Inside:

*Rise of the Adaptogens
Fast Food - A Growing Problem?
Women in India Supervisors Training Project
Merch That Looks Good and Does Good
SU Sustainability Charter update*

MAKE IT A DATE WITH YOUR NEW CHERRY CRUSH



LAUNCHING
Q1 2025

LIMITED
EDITION

**Try
More
Weird**

It's January!

2025 is here and the new year stretches out in front of us...



The planning stages for the next academic year are in progress with many colleagues looking for innovation and reinvention to deepen engagement with services in our students' unions. We know that the trading climate in retail and hospitality remains challenging but as spring draws nearer, there are signs of growth to take note of.

Since the start of the year we've been having a good number of conversations about commercial reviews, engagement in student bars, whether competitive socialising is the next big thing and how much should a students' union invest into being in this space. Whilst challenges are clear, there is a good level of optimism and confidence about member SUs bidding and taking on spaces and the services that can be delivered for students.

There's a renewed discussion about the difference of a students' union service from a social enterprise perspective, not just as a commercial entity. From these conversations grow opportunities to test and trial approaches to innovative ways of delivering services differently and together we can make great things happen.

Just a reminder; we have an insight hub that gives you access to the latest market data and its interpretation for students. If you want to join this group drop me an [email](#). If you're considering a commercial review or would just like to be part of the conversa-

tion with other members on social and commercial development, please [get in touch!](#)

This year's tender submissions for clothing and promotional merchandise, hot beverages, spirits and PPS' catering and soft drinks are in their closing stages. There's more tender submissions than previously with lots of innovation in each of these categories - especially in the automated food and retail space. Keep an eye out for more on these.

The trading figures for the first term in 2024 showed licensed trade is resilient. Where there are declines in spirits, beer and cider more than make up the balance and are in good growth. Foodservice and Meal Deal continue to perform well across the board, with challenges in coffee, clothing and retail evident. However there are some exciting developments that can influence this picture and we look forward to sharing them with you.

As the first Trading Insight of 2025, The Trading Support team would like to wish you a very happy new year and the best start to the new term of trading ■

Jo Heuston

Jo Heuston, Assistant Trading Director

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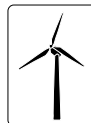
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Rise of the ADAPTOGENS

With the rise in healthy living trends, consumers are increasingly turning to trusted brands for expertise, advice, and products that offer natural benefits to promote wellbeing and alleviate the rigors of life.

What Are Adaptogens?

Adaptogens are plant-based substances, such as herbs and roots, that help the body manage stress and restore balance. Post-pandemic, 60% of consumers are prioritizing their mental health, up from 41% in 2018. Products that relieve anxiety have also seen a year-on-year growth of 293%. This shift has made wellness drinks featuring adaptogens a must-have, with their popularity soaring by 132% CAGR since 2020.

Top Adaptogenic Ingredients

Magnesium:

Known for its calming and balancing effects, magnesium has become the top health and wellbeing trend for 2023/24.

Ashwagandha:

This herb is believed to lower stress hormone levels and reduce anxiety. It's the latest plant-based calming ingredient to go viral on TikTok, with around 1 billion views.

L-theanine:

Extracted from green tea, L-theanine is linked to improved memory and sleep, and is popular for balancing out caffeine jitters.

Lion's Mane:

Renowned for aiding mental clarity, this mushroom has been used for centuries and is now gaining mainstream popularity.



Zebra Striping

The practice of moderating alcohol consumption by alternating alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic alternatives is known as zebra striping.

While the idea isn't anything new; the move to more mindful drinking has meant venues now need to develop their menus to reflect the societal shift in drinking habits.

The zebra striping trend is gaining momentum with Gen Z and millennials who are mindful about staying in control and safe while socialising. This presents a clear opportunity for more appealing non-alcoholic beverages that go beyond the usual soft drink options.

Join the uprising of adaptogens with these great ranges:

Plenish:

A range of natural, plant-based drinks with clear health and wellness goals.

Available from AF Blakemore.

Kefir:

A cultured, fermented milk drink similar to yogurt but thinner, rich in nutrients and gut-supporting probiotic bacteria.

Available through AF Blakemore and Suma Wholefoods.

Vitamin Well:

Drinks enriched with vitamins and minerals.

Available from AF Blakemore

TRIP:

A brand new supplier offering CBD-infused drinks to help promote wellbeing and calm.

Available to order through LWC or the Co-op.



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#1

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#1

TRIP HOLDS 78% OF
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DRINKS MARKET





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SHINING A LIGHT ON THE LINKS TO HEALTH AND THE PLANET

Ultra processed food, how it affects our waistlines and our overall health is top of the agenda as the House of Lords Food, Diet and Obesity committee recommends that large food businesses report on the healthiness of their sales, calling for policy formulation to curb obesity and poor health and stating that regulation is needed. The climate is intensifying on fast food.

On the subject of climate, The UK fast food industry is a major contributor to carbon emissions as a result of its heavy use of meat. A 2021 study calculated that McDonalds global emissions in 2019 exceeded those of several European nations. Students Unions can influence their students consumption by developing carbon reduction initiatives whilst still serving fast food favourites. Warwick University Students Union reduced their beef by 50% through menu engineering and saved over 13 tonnes of carbon through a variety of measures in the first eight weeks of term. Their sales have been buoyant.

The Food Foundations [State of The Nation Report 2024](#) found there to be a lack of transparency on the reporting of scope three emissions and net zero targets in big food businesses with 17% seeing emissions rise rather than fall.

YOUR SU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

It's absolutely achievable to deliver fast food in a healthier- for-you way.

York Students' Union has developed a [pizza concept](#) that uses a light sourdough base, fresh toppings and has successfully ensured the entire menu delivers a low impact carbon rating.

Warwick Students' Union has introduced a commercial air fryer to their kitchens which they estimate will save 4000 litres of oil per term. That's a lot of fat!

If you're serving a burger, students' unions are now trialling serving salad as an option instead of chips and making sure they use lower fat sauces and dips. There's also menu development for better, more nutritious plant-based foods where members are working together to devise solutions.



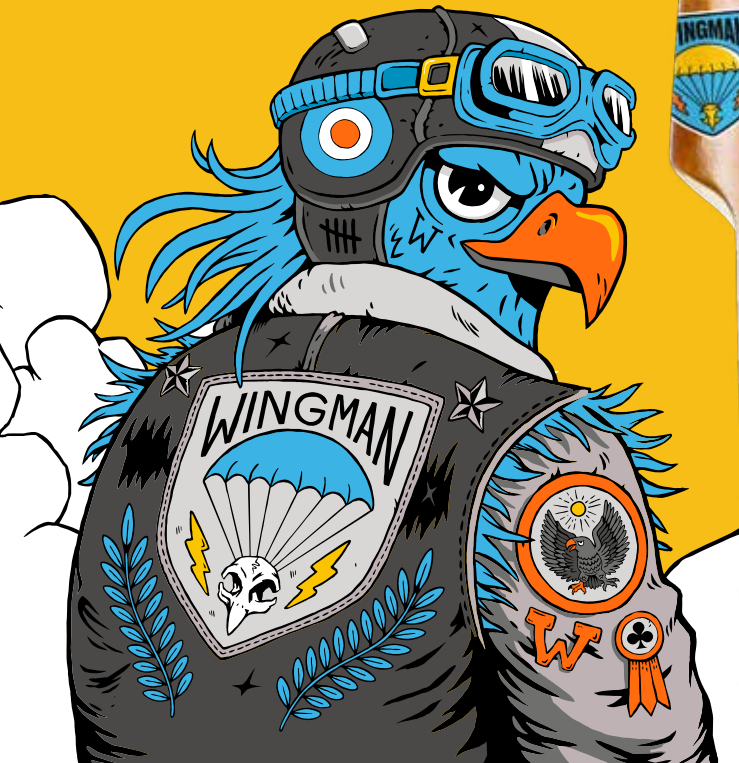
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TIPS

- Build out the plate with greens where you can to add vegetable content to dishes
- Reduce the size of burgers from 4oz to 3oz and remove the double-up option
- If you're making a dish using beef, substitute some of the meat for mushrooms or lentils to add texture and replacing some of the meat content discreetly
- Reduce that carb hangover by reducing the amount of toppings and cheese you use on pizzas
- If you're running promotions on your menu, put the offer on the healthier items
- If using a servery - place the healthier options at the front. You'll increase the likelihood they'll be chosen - especially if it's bright, colourful and visually appealing ingredients
- Introduce carbon labelling to engage your students with the impacts of their food choices. We've partnered with [Klimato](#) to help you with this.

LET'S BE VOCAL ABOUT OUR MISSION!

In our digital world, effective marketing is crucial. Social media marketing helps you to tell the story about your food and how it helps your customers health and that of the planet. You can demonstrate how your food does more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared to fast food chains. You can also engage students in messaging about the work you do to prioritise their wellbeing over profit.

By taking these steps, students' unions can play a pivotal role in promoting healthier eating habits, create a positive impact on student health and the environment, working together to ensure students make the right choices and choose your students' union food over big chain fast food outlets.

Extra reading:

The [Fuel Us Don't Fool Us report](#) published by [Bite Back](#) asks if big food chains are growing responsibly and looking out for our health: .

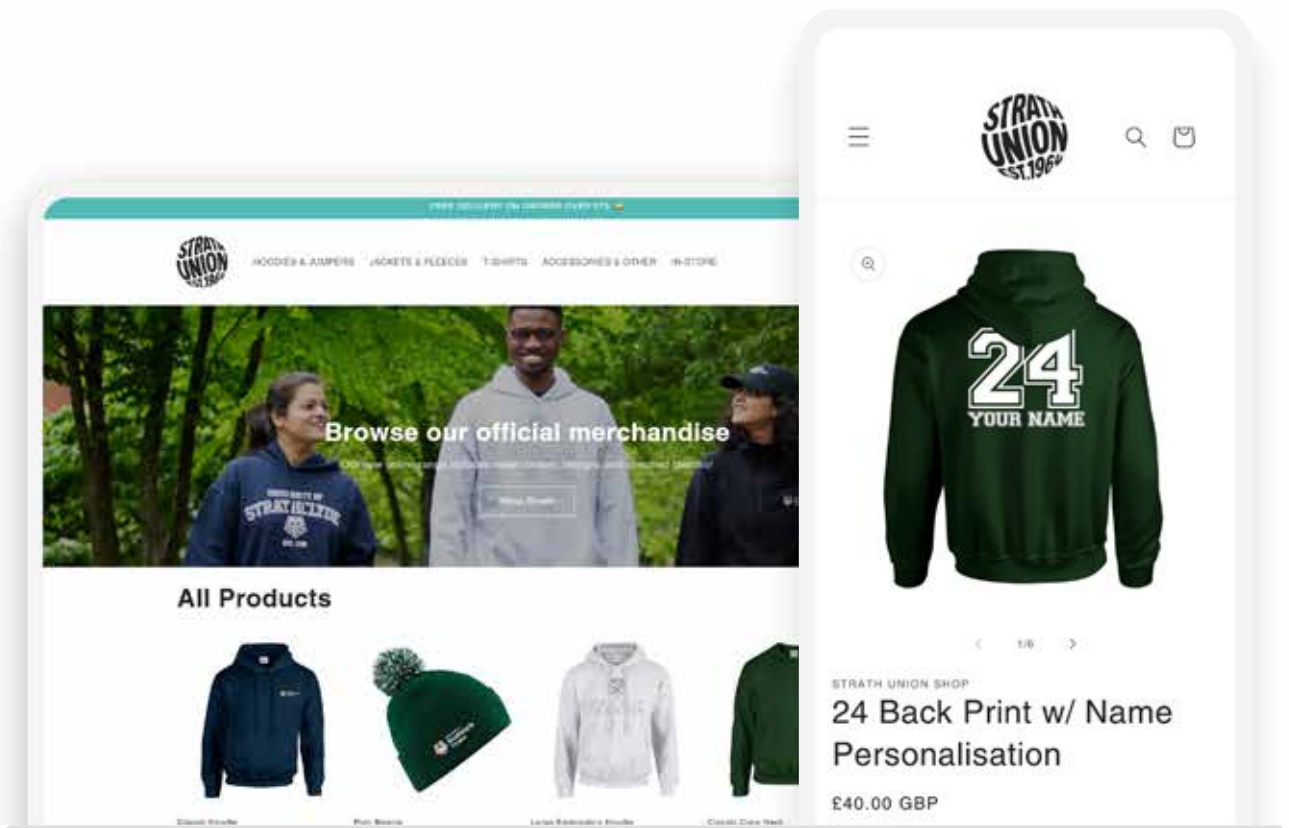
The State of the Nation Food Foundation [report](#).



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WOMEN SUPERVISORS TRAINING PROJECT

NUS charity members have given the female voice a real boost in the Indian garments industry by supporting an innovative women supervisors training project.

A lack of female participation in supervisory roles is a worldwide phenomenon in factories in many sectors, but it is a particular problem in the clothing industry. Textiles factories employ a disproportionately high percentage of women in low-paid roles, and often exploit them whilst they work in appalling health and safety conditions.

Throughout India, very traditional cultural norms hold women back - gender stereotypes and bias, limited access to education and training, a lack of mentorship and role models and unsupportive working environments. These barriers to women reaching their full professional potential play out in many Indian rural districts, where deeply embedded cultural codes translate into women being repressed and under-valued in the workplace.

On a brighter note, in our March 2024 [edition](#) we reported on the ground-breaking work that is being done to support female garment workers in India and challenge the status quo, through support from NUS charity members.

In early Autumn 2023 NUS services, administering NUS charity member funds, joined forces

with Andy Ashcroft, the MD at Koolkompany Limited (KK Ltd), an NUS-contracted consortium supplier trading in the sector as Koolkools/SUustainable, and through Andy with their India factory. An innovative year-long project was launched to train women supervisors in a bid to shatter traditional cultural glass ceilings at KK Ltd's progressive Fairtrade-licensed Eco-factory in Tamil Nadu, Dibella (India).

The training project has now come to fruition, with impressive results.

Dibella's factory is based in a very "traditional" region of Tamil Nadu, about 80 kilometres from Bengaluru. Of their 773 employees, 710 are from local towns and villages, and 54% of the employees are either single women or single mothers. Many of those single mothers, who may often be effectively ostracised by their families, would not otherwise have gained employment if not for Dibella's admirably progressive, pro-active on-going policy of recruiting single women.

The project, which concluded its first phase towards the end of 2024, has surpassed expectations. 12 new female supervisors have been trained and are already working in their newly promoted roles at the factory - six on the production lines, and six as Technical Trainers training the workers on new/additional sewing operations.

Before the women supervisors training programme, the factory's production lines comprised 16 men and only four women. Following its successful completion, the male/female ratio is now equal, with 10 men and 10 women supervisors working on the production lines. The remaining 6 successfully trained supervisors are working as technical trainers - training workers on new/additional sewing operations, and also covering other supervisor absences.

The idea is that some of these newly trained and empowered women ultimately move through to positions of even greater responsibility. Some of the supervisors are being lined up to move to managerial roles in the near future, on the back of further envisaged training, and depending on the results of the current close monitoring of their progress in their new roles up to June 2025.

Dibella India's CEO, Sreeranga Rajan ("Ranga"), is hoping that at least four of the newly promoted women will move further up into Section Head and Production Manager roles within the next 12 months, subject to further training. Commenting about the training programme, Ranga said:

"...We remain very grateful to NUS charity members for providing the funds for this pioneering project. The first phase of the training, in Autumn 2023, was designed to boost the self-esteem and assertiveness of the trainees, and equip them with the confidence to 'step up'. Our 12 newly trained women supervisors are living proof that there has been genuine and sustainable impact in terms of further elevating the role of women in our factory, not only in supervisory roles but also into potential future managerial positions.

"The important thing to remember here is that there is a joint benefit to this training programme in that it not only gives our female workers a huge boost in confidence and much more opportunity to progress in their work, but it also tangibly benefits the factory as these women are extremely hard working and highly motivated...so a real 'win/win'"



Manimegalai newly trained and promoted under the training women supervisors programme sharing her expertise on the production line in Dibella.

ZERO CALORIES 100% WIIINGS.



NEW

Andy attended a few of the initial training sessions during his India visit towards the end of 2023 and expressed his delight at the results and wider impact of the training programme:

“...Our ideal over-arching outcome would have been not only to achieve the objectives of the course for the benefit of the trainees and the factory, but also to start something that could have a wider impact on the industry.

“We’re delighted that senior managers from other garment factories in the Tamil Nadu region visited the factory during the training period to learn about the project. Those other factories have expressed a wish to introduce such training of their own, so Ranga and his team are sharing the framework to assist this ripple effect.

“It’s also great to note that, as part of this wide impact, four of our factory’s other international

ethical brand customers have been impressed to the point not only of sharing with their other India factories, but also beyond, for example in Turkey, where female workers face similar challenges and barriers. This is a fantastic result from a standing start barely 18 months ago, and we’re enormously grateful to NUS charity members for helping us to make this happen”.

Koolkompany Ltd, trading as “Sustainable” has been contracted with NUS since 2019. Together with Dibella they developed a high-end range of luxury fleece fabric garments made with a heady ethical mix of Fairtrade-organic cotton and recycled polyester – hoodies, sweatshirts, tote bags, chef’s aprons and so on. If you’d like to know more about the “Sustainable” range, contact Andy at: andy@koolkskools4u.co.uk.



Trainer Anto hears the women trainees’ feedback from a practical exercise as part of “soft skills” learning, which comprised: 1. Me as a Person 2. Me as a Supervisor 3. Me as a Team Member 4. Me as a Leader



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Your merchandise is something students and their friends and family will cherish forever as valuable keepsakes. That's a big responsibility so it's vital your t-shirts, leavers hoodies and graduation accessories are made the right way, designed to last, and represent the values of your students' union. After all, every piece is an advertisement for studying with you.

It's about more than just selling great merch though...

Did you know the equivalent of one dump truck of textile waste is burned or buried every second? Or that only 1% of clothing is recycled back into new clothing when it's worn out? Fashion's waste problem is getting out of hand. It's one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and it doesn't seem to be slowing down. You can be a part of the solution.

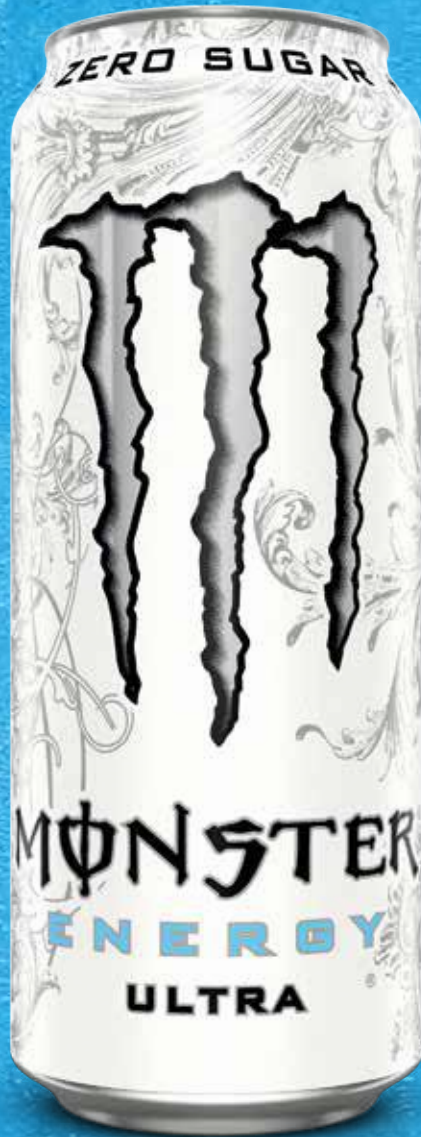
With more and more students' unions making moves to be more climate-conscious, making sure your merch aligns with your values of sustainability, ethics and transparency is increasingly important.

That's where Teemill comes in...

Their GOTS-certified organic products, printed with water-based inks using renewable energy, are the way to go. They commit to taking back worn-out tees and hoodies to remake them into new products at the end of their life, saving them from landfill. Teemill's mission is to Help Brands End Waste by redesigning the fashion industry to be circular.

Lofty ambitions, but they have the reputation to back up this vision. On top of working with students' unions and universities across the UK, they've also collaborated with a myriad of charities, organisations, creators, influencers and artists including Greenpeace, BBC Earth, Surfers Against Sewage, Mr Beast and Yoga With Adriene to create sustainable merch that looks good, feels good and does good too.

GOOD VIBES UNLEASHED



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When you set up a Teemill store, limitless personalisation is at your fingertips for even more memorable merch experiences. Your students can add their own names, departments, dates or even photos to hoodies, t-shirts, bags, bottles, notebooks, caps, mugs and more.

"Everything about this app is fantastic, it just works. The quality of the merchandise is also outstanding as well as being the most ethical clothing on the market." - The University of Edinburgh

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SUSTAINABLE SUs
FOR OUR FUTURE

January update

Since our last update, we've welcomed four new students' union members to the Sustainable SUs Charter, bringing the group total to 14 SUs. We're thrilled to welcome University of Cardiff Students' Union, University of Kent Students' Union, University of Coventry Students' Union and University College Birmingham Students' Union.

Each member joining The SSU Charter, goes through a carbon footprint baselining exercise to ascertain their SUs individual carbon footprint as well as using Klimato sustainability software to measure and monitor the impact of any changes they make to catering menus.

It's been a busy time for the group, working with our sustainability partners to collect the data for baselining and also upload their current menus to not only understand their current sustainability impacts, but to help their students to understand the choices they're making from an environmental perspective.

As we enter the new year, the consortium net zero strategy is very nearly ready with actions in beer, beef and clothing that charter members are driving forward in their own operations.

The focus in this quarter is to finalise an editable template for sustainability impact reporting so that every member of the charter group has a framework they can follow to ensure they can share a robust fit-for-purpose document with their stakeholders that each member union brands themselves.

In December, member unions attended a two-day professionally accredited bespoke sustainability course where they were assessed and accredited on skills for sustainability managers. The training took place at Warwick Students' Union and in addition to the training, members were able to try the lunch options served by the team at Warwick and tour the commercial operations first hand.

At the event, Human Society International held an immersive plan-based menu session to discuss the opportunities for plant-based cuisine on campus stimulating discussion about developing a menu that's right for students' unions. Three SUs will also be taking part in menu development sessions in London at community kitchen and plant based charity; Made in Hackney.

We're inspired by all the great work taking place in member unions and excited to see all the developments 2025 brings.





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join the movement

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Want to learn how your students' union can achieve similar results?

Join our upcoming webinar, where we'll dive deeper into the success stories and provide a live demonstration of ClearCOGS in action.

Send **Fiona Knowles** an email and she'll send you the invite for the meeting.

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FIREBALL

