

Virtual reality burger game tests the appetite for playing by the rules

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Credit: University of Nottingham

Can you play by the rules and make lots of money or is it worth taking risks? That's the question researchers at the University of Nottingham are asking with a unique virtual reality game.

The Corrupt Kitchen VR Experience puts players in charge of a burger business and gives them ten minutes to make as much money as possible. But as they face challenges along the way they may find taking risks with legal responsibilities can backfire.

The project is a collaboration between academics in the Schools of Politics, Law and Computer Science and facilitated by the University's Digital Research Team, who look at new ways of using digital technology.

Its aim is to teach people about corruption and engage them in topics

about food hygiene, the law and training in a competitive environment.

In the game players act as a chef in the Paradise Café – a burger joint. They have an endless queue of customers and need to prepare the food to feed them. But when the floor gets dirty do they stop to clean it? When the health inspector arrives will they bribe them to go away? Will they wash their hands, take cash only, employ an illegal worker or cut corners in other ways?

By using the immersive experience of virtual reality players face the pressures they may face in the real world and have to decide what their priorities are, while also trying to make a profit.

It throws open debate on food and hygiene legislation and whether operating a corrupt business pays dividends in the long run. At the end of [game players](#) are shown what would have happened if their decisions had been taken in reality.

Looking at the results is Dr Richard Hyde, an expert in Food Hygiene, from the School of Law, who believes the tool can also act as a training programme.

He said: "This should increase our understanding of how [virtual reality](#) might help create a more compliant environment but even if it doesn't, it will make the users think about their actions, and probably not look at the local café in the same way in future."

The results will also feed into research into institutional corruption, and why people act in unethical ways, carried out by Professor Jan-Hinkrik Meyer-Sahling, in the School of Politics and International Relations.

The room-size game which used wireless VR was built by Paul Tennent, a research fellow in Computer Sciences, working alongside Dr Martin

Flintham. Players wear a headset and can walk around the room, they also have controls to react to the different challenges they face.

Dr Flintham said: "The broad scope of this project was to look at how we could use new [digital technology](#) to drive public engagement with some existing research.

"The question was - how could we, as computer scientists, do something interesting from a computer science point of view that would also create new engagement with the research Law and Politics were doing.

"We settled on the Corrupt Kitchen as something where we could ask the public to play a food preparation game with lots of opportunities for them to ignore various bits of legislation. The legal side of how they should act and what they do about it – how much do they own up to it or try to get away with it?"

And the game can be modified to change the options open to the player. It can also run alongside training videos about money, health and safety and ethics, where researchers can look at whether the [game](#) is played differently after taking part in training.

More information: For more information, see [blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/digital ... chen-vr-dev-diary-3/](https://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/digital-dev-diary-3/chen-vr-dev-diary-3/)

Provided by University of Nottingham

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