How an Organisation Can Connect Customer Relationship Development and Environmental Friendliness: Food Preparation and Consumption in Small and Medium-Sized Restaurants and Food Service Companies

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Laurea University of Applied Sciences **Abstract**

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If an organisation aims to be successful in the current and future market environment, it cannot ignore environmental sustainability factors or the importance of developing and managing its customer relationships.

This research investigates how small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies can connect customer relationship development and environmental friendliness. The purpose of this research is to develop a framework that connects customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption.

The theoretical framework combines existing theory from relationship marketing and environmentally friendly literature from the perspectives of customers and consumption, businesses, and food. The research was conducted using qualitative and constructive research approaches. The research process was conducted via service design methods and tools.

Based on the existing literature and the empirical research, essential items were identified that need to be considered when connecting customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption in the context of small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies. These findings include three relationships, four main elements, three questions for an organisation, and answers to those questions. The findings were gathered into a framework which includes two parts: the triangle framework and the rectangle framework. The triangle framework shows the organisation's customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food connection at a high level. The rectangle framework explains the findings in more detail and on a more practical level.

The scientific value of the research is that it broadens the knowledge of the literature on relationship marketing and environmental sustainability. The practical value of the research is that it has developed a framework that is transferable to other industries and is applicable in real life through practical examples.

Keywords: Customer relationships, Environmentally friendly food, Environmental sustainability, Environmental sustainable business

Contents

1 Introduction

The economy demands constant growth and consumption whilst we live on a planet with limited resources. Is a customer-centric approach to business compatible with an environmentally sustainable future?

This research started as a response to the need for organisations to think differently about their purpose and practices. This is required for organisations to remain relevant and resilient in today's business that is impacted by the demand for building sustainable prosperity and customer-centricity. Sustainable prosperity is investigated from the point of view of environmental friendliness and food, whilst customer-centricity will be researched through customer relationship development. The research tries to find a solution to connect small and medium-sized restaurants' and food service companies' customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption. This chapter introduces the topic and background of the study. The purpose of the research is then described along with the key concepts followed by the structure of the study.

1.1 Background of the research

Organisations are increasingly becoming more interested in organising operations around their customers. At the same time, organisations face pressure for environmental sustainability issues from stakeholders and regulations and many organisations are trying to embed sustainability in their business models, targets, and processes. (Müller 2014, 202.) The importance of this is supported by the message from the UN Climate Change Conference - companies will lose if they do not align their business strategy to sustainability (COP26 the Glasgow Climate Pact, 2021).

Customer-centricity means an organisation's ability to understand the circumstances, viewpoints, and expectations of customers. Customer-centricity mandates that the customer is at the centre of all decisions related to the delivery of services, products, and experiences to generate customer satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy. (Gartner, no date.) Part of customer-centricity is how the organisation develops, improves, and manages its customer relationships. This is vital because it offers an organisation the ability to detect and respond to customer concerns that can increase the company's profits and offer a competitive advantage from deep and longer-term customer relationships. Hence developing and managing customer relationships is critical for an organisation's survival. (Seth & Parvatiyar 2000, 172; Müller 2014.)

Bringing sustainability issues into customer relationship strategy and processes helps the organisation differentiate itself from competitors and ensure business continuity since environmental and societal limits are taken into account. When an organisation makes sustainable choices, it can become a crucial part of its customer relationships and brand experience. Showcasing this value opens the possibility of creating more loyal customers. Since trends, customer-centricity and sustainability are influencing business strategies by changing operations and fostering competition it is meaningful to see them in an integrated manner. (Ruhwinkel 2013, cited in Müller 2014, 205).

The following three dimensions are typically used to describe sustainability: environmental, economic, and social (Purvis, Mao & Robinson 2018). Sustainability is often used in everyday life with a focus on environmental concerns. The most important environmental problems have been climate change, loss of ecosystem services, biodiversity loss, land degradation, water and air pollution. (UNEP, 2021.) When it comes to climate change, the discussion tends to focus on the use of renewable energy and improvements in energy efficiency. But together with energy, the food system also creates greenhouse gas emissions. Even though food accounts for lower emissions (around 26% less compared to energy), the food system is a problem, especially because there have not yet been developed viable technological solutions as compared with clean energy. (Poore & Nemecek 2018; Ritchie 2019.) Therefore, the main focus areas for reducing greenhouse gas emissions are both decarbonising energy systems and reducing emissions from the food system (Ritchie, Roser & Rosado 2020). Food is a key issue for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2015) which emphasise the significance of food system sustainability as an overarching aim in the context of climate change and economic development (Allievi 2017, 11). In addition, consumers are becoming more concerned about the sustainability of food concerning food origins, carbon footprints, and social practices in value chains (Zanella 2020, 29). However, it is worth noting that although many people have positive attitudes toward environmentally friendly food, there is a significant gap between positive attitudes and actual purchases of environmentally friendly food (Vermeir et al. 2020, 1.)

This study originates from the larger project of Laurea University of Applied Sciences “Mission Zero Footprint”. The project was implemented between January 2019-December 2021. The main goal of that project was to support small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies develop their businesses and products to become more resource-oriented and carbon-neutral, as well as to strengthen companies' cooperation and environmentally friendly image.

The current research investigates sustainability from the point of view of environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. Customer-centricity is researched from a

customer relationship development perspective. Little research has been done on where these concepts have been merged.

1.2 Research purpose

The purpose of this research is to develop a framework that connects customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption in small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies.

To reach the purpose of this research the following research questions are intended to be answered:

- What are the elements for an organisation to focus on when developing customer relationships?
- How can an organisation embrace customer-centricity in its customer relationships and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption?
- How can small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies connect customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption?

The research is conducted using qualitative and constructive research approaches. Qualitative research is used because it gives a deeper, more unique understanding of the topic than a quantitative approach. With a qualitative approach, it is possible to capture the customer's experiences, perspectives, and meanings. (see Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey 2016.) The target of constructive research is to develop a construct to solve problem based on qualitative research data (see Kasanen, Lukka & Siitonen 1993). The constructive approach supports reaching the purpose of the study by creating the framework. The research process is conducted via service design methods and tools. Service design is used in the study because it supports customer understanding and embraces customer-centricity in the research. The service design approach is favoured because it offers methods and tools to ideate something new by connecting ideas with unknown things (see Stickdorn, Lawrence, Hormess & Schneider 2018). In this study, that means developing a new concept by connecting the organisation's customer relationship development and the aspects of environmentally friendly food.

1.3 Theoretical framework and key concepts

The theoretical framework of this research is presented in Figure 1. The theoretical framework shows the literature applied in this research and brings structure to data.

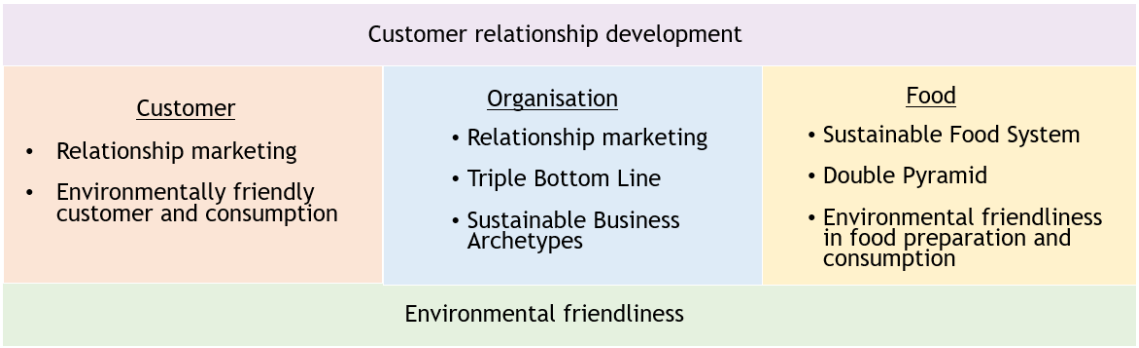

Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the research

The theoretical framework illustrates the linkage between the theories and the main dimensions of this research; the customer, the organisation, the food, customer relationship development and environmental friendliness. The existing theories used in this research are: relationship marketing, environmentally friendly customer and consumption, Triple Bottom Line, Sustainable Business Archetypes, Sustainable Food System, Double Pyramid and Environmentally friendliness in food preparation and consumption.

Relationship marketing theory focuses on the critical elements when building and improving relationships between the parties in the relationship. Environmentally friendly customer and consumption describe the perspectives of the environmentally friendly consumer. The Triple Bottom Line describes business success in the long term by expanding the business success metrics to include contributions to the environment, people, and economy. Sustainable Business Archetypes offer concrete methods and tools for organisations to move toward a more sustainable future. The Sustainable Food System highlights the importance of understanding food as part of the bigger ecosystem that includes economic, social, and environmental dimensions with a target to create food security and nutrition in the future. The Double Pyramid brings together food and its impact on environmental and human health. Environmental friendliness in food preparation and consumption shows the micro-level practices that small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies, and also consumers can use to support emission reductions in food production and consumption.

Key concepts of this study are relationship marketing, small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company, environmentally friendly food, environmentally friendly customer and consumption, Triple Bottom Line, Sustainable Business Archetypes, Sustainable Food System, Double Pyramid, and Service Design. Next, each of these is briefly explained.

Relationship marketing

The concept of relationship marketing was first emerged in literature in the early 1980s to describe a longer-term marketing strategy in a service context (Berry 1983, cited in Berry 1995, 236). Relationship marketing is understood in this study as a strategy to focus on

developing and sustaining long-term customer relationships. Relationship marketing is covered on a deeper level in section 2.1.

Small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company

“Small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company” refers in this study to lunch buffets, cafeterias, and à la carte restaurants. The à la carte restaurant is referred to as a "small and medium-sized restaurant". "Food service company” refers to both the lunch buffet and cafeteria.

The reason for these terms is that the very initial idea of the current research was to investigate customer relationships and environmentally friendly food from the perspective of lunch buffet, cafeterias and à la carte organisations. These were the organisation types that had been used in the larger project from which this study originated. However, as the research progressed, the researcher realised that it would be more appropriate to zoom out a bit more in terms of organisation types and use one common term to cover all three. This led to the usage of the term "small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company”. It was the same term that had been used in the larger project. However, before deciding to use one common term, the in-depth interviews had been conducted from the point of view of lunch buffet and à la carte customers, and focus group interviews had been conducted from the cafeteria, lunch buffet and à la carte perspectives. Luckily, this did not hinder the research process because, in the data analysis phase, the researcher did not find any differences between lunch buffet and cafeteria focus group data. Because after all, all the data was quite high-level. Therefore, the researcher decided to include data from the cafeteria focus groups as part of the lunch buffet focus group data.

Environmentally friendly food

There are various terms to describe food and environmental friendliness, for example environmentally friendly food, environmentally sustainable food, or eco-friendly food. There are no legal or official definitions for these. This study mainly uses the term environmentally friendly food as the same term was also used in the larger project from which the current study originates. The study focuses on environmentally friendly food from the perspective of lowering carbon footprint. Greenhouse gases create a carbon footprint that is measured in grams of equivalent CO2 per kilogram or litre of food. A carbon footprint describes how much greenhouse gas a product or service emits throughout its life cycle. The main greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide, but methane and nitrous oxides are also important. Accurately calculating the carbon footprint is difficult because the organisation's overall carbon footprint is impacted by energy consumption, raw materials used, and, for example, food waste. (Ritchie 2020a.) The food system accounts for about 25–35% of global greenhouse gas emissions (see Poore & Nemecek 2018; Xu et al. 2021.) Environmentally friendliness and food are further discussed in section 2.2.3.

Environmentally friendly customer and consumption

The customer's perspective on environmental friendliness and environmentally friendly consumption is looked at through the different concepts presented in section 2.2.1. These concepts look at the customer and environmental friendliness through different factors such as the customer's lifestyle, values, mindset, images, perceptions, preferences, experiences, behaviour, purchasing and consumption habits, satisfaction, knowledge, and attitudes related to environmentally friendly issues, food, and the organisation itself.

Triple Bottom Line

The Triple Bottom Line (also known as the 3Ps, TBL, 3BL) is a sustainability framework developed by John Elkington 1994. Triple Bottom Line assesses the organisation's social, environmental, and economic impact. Triple Bottom Line includes 3Ps, which describe organisation's impact on People (social impact), Planet (environmental impact), and Prosperity (economic impact). (see Elkington 1999; Elkington 2018.) Triple Bottom Line is used in this study to understand better the organisation's connection and opportunities in environmentally friendly issues. Triple Bottom Line is described and discussed in section 2.2.2.

Sustainable Business Model Archetypes

Sustainable Business Model Archetypes are solutions and groupings that support building up the business model and processes for environmental and societal sustainability. The goal of the archetypes is to create a common language that can be used in research and practice to accelerate the development of sustainability. (see Bocken, Short, Rana & Evans 2014.) Sustainable Archetypes are explained in detail in section 2.2.2.

Sustainable Food System.

A Sustainable Food System consists of the entire network of actors and their interconnected value-added activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food products. A Sustainable Food System provides food security and nutrition for all while ensuring that the economic, social, and environmental foundations for future generations are not jeopardized. (Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations, no date.) The Sustainable Food System is discussed in section 2.2.3.

Double Pyramid

Double Pyramid is a visual way of communicating the characteristics of a healthy, balanced, and environmentally sustainable diet. The model's target is to encourage the adoption of eating habits that are both environmentally friendly and healthy for humans. (see Allievi 2017.) Double Pyramid is further described in section 2.2.3.

Service Design

Service design can be explained in many ways. Service design is a mindset that seeks for a

balance between human needs, business relevance, and technological opportunities. Service design as a process tries to find solutions through iterative research and development cycles. Service design also provides a set of tools to facilitate meaningful conversations, common understanding, implicit knowledge, and the development of a common language. Furthermore, service design can be seen as a shared and neutral set of terms and activities for cross-functional collaboration. Finally, service design can be viewed and applied as a management approach when embedded in an organisation. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 21-22.) In this study, service design is used as a mindset, a research process and a toolset to reach the purpose of this study. Service design as a process and toolset is described and discussed in further detail in section 3.2.

1.4 Structure of the research

This research moves from theory to practice and finally to conclusions. The study is divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on a theoretical basis by investigating customer relationship development and the environmentally friendly aspects of customers, business and food. The theoretical part provides the necessary context for understanding the full research. However, as this is qualitative research, the theoretical investigation occurs simultaneously with the empirical research that is presented in the second part of the study. The second part of the study builds upon the theoretical framework by gathering empirical data.

Chapter 1 introduces readers to the topic and explains why this area needs to be researched. The research purpose and research questions guiding this work are explained together with the key concepts and the structure of the study is laid out.

Chapter 2 focuses on the theoretical aspects of customer relationship development and environmental friendliness in business, as well as the food preparation and consumption context. The literature review starts by investigating customer relationship development. This chapter aims to recognise the main elements of customer relationship development from the point of view of relationship marketing theory. The second part of the chapter builds on the investigation of the environmentally friendly aspects of customer, business, and food preparation and consumption.

The research approach and the process are explained in chapter 3. This study follows a qualitative research cycle (see Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2020) and a constructive research approach (see Kasanen et al. 1993). The research process is based on service design which methods and tools are explained. The service design process supports creating the construct and framework that will be an output of this research.

Chapter 4 describes the findings of the empirical research. In chapter 5 the results are discussed and the outcome of the study is presented. Finally, chapter 6 concludes the

research with a summary and key findings and discusses the scientific and practical contributions, the study's delimitations, and opportunities for future studies.

2 Theoretical background and the literature review

This chapter reviews the literature supporting the research topic. As the topic of this study is about connecting small and medium-sized restaurants' and food service companies' customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption, the literature is investigated from the perspectives of the customer, business and environmentally friendly food. As a starting point for the literature review, relationship marketing and its determinants are reviewed to understand and analyse how a relationship between a customer and an organisation can be developed. Then, the customer's perspectives through consumer roles in environmental friendliness are briefly investigated. Following this, environmentally friendly literature linked to business (Triple Bottom Line, Sustainable Business Archetypes) and food (Sustainable Food System, Double Pyramid, environmentally friendly food practices) is provided.

2.1 Relationship marketing

The goal of this section is to use relationship marketing literature as a guide for discussion to an organisation developing its customer relationships. The emergence of relationship marketing has been a rediscovery of a strategy that has been long shown to be the foundation of many successful businesses (Payne & Frow 2017, 11). Therefore, customer relationship marketing theory is examined here at a general level that is applicable to any organisation in any industry, as well as to small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies.

The term "relationship marketing" originates in the areas of services marketing and industrial marketing. The concept of relationship marketing was first introduced in 1983 to describe a longer-term marketing strategy in a service context (Berry 1983, cited in Berry 1995, 236). But not until the 1990s, relationship marketing became a widespread term (Gummesson 2004, 137) and developed fast as a global phenomenon through various research (see Payne & Frow 2017, 12).

Definitions of relationship marketing

There are a variety of definitions and theories focusing on the extensive content of the phenomena of relationship marketing (Möller & Halinen 2000, 30). According to Berry (1995, 236) Berry (1983) defines relationship marketing as "attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships." Berry (1983) states that relationship marketing can be applied when a customer can control the selection of service providers and can choose from many alternatives. Berry (1983) outlines five strategy components for relationship marketing

practice: creating a core service around which to develop a customer relationship, tailoring the relationship to the specific customer, enhancing the core service with additional benefits, pricing services to encourage customer loyalty, and engaging and training the employees so that they will perform well for customers. (Berry 1983, cited in Berry 1995, 236.)

Grönroos (1990) defines relationship marketing as follows: "Relationship marketing is to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and other partners at a profit so that the objectives of the parties involved are met." This is achieved through mutual exchange and the fulfilment of promises. (Grönroos 1990, cited in Grönroos 1994, 9.) According to Grönroos (1994), relationship marketing focuses on two parts: attracting customers to the company and then creating relationships with these customers to achieve the desired economic goals. These relationships can only be maintained and expanded if promises to customers are kept.

Morgan and Hunt (1994) agree with Grönroos (1990), and they highlight that relationship marketing includes various forms of relational exchange, not only customer relationships. Morgan and Hunt state (1994, 22) that "relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relationships." Morgan and Hunt’s (1994) definition has been attacked by some scholars for being too broad because they include in their definition relationships with a buyer and supplier, as well as relationships with internal and lateral stakeholders. Critics have said that these partnerships are outside the domain of marketing. (Peterson 1995, 278-279.)

Shani and Chalasani's (1992, 34) definition of relationship marketing is "an integrated effort to identify, maintain, and build up a network with individual consumers and to continuously strengthen the network for the mutual benefits of both sides, through interactive, individualised, and value-added contacts over a long period."

According to Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2016, 138), relationship marketing aims to develop and maintain a loyal customer base that benefits the company. Lindberg-Repo and Dube (2014, 42) highlight the mutual value in their relationship marketing definition: "Relationship marketing is building and sustaining the mutually beneficial connection between the business and the customer."

Sheth (2017) suggests a shift in the objective of relationship marketing. The objective should change from "share of wallet" to "share of heart". In addition, seeing relationship marketing as "managing customer relationships", the relationship marketing process should move towards "managing contractual or virtual joint ventures with customers." "Share of heart" means creating emotional bonds with customers beyond offering just the economic or functional value of the service or product. Share of hearts goes beyond measuring the relationship strengths in terms of numbers and financial results for both the organisation and its

customers. Therefore, it goes even beyond the two pillars of relationship marketing - trust and commitment (see Morgan & Hunt 1994). Share of hearts highlights the importance of mutual purpose and respect. This will result in at least three new fields of research and practice: emotive feedback, purpose-driven, and brand communities. Emotive feedback means that an organisation measuring only numerical, mechanical, and impersonal customer satisfaction is not enough. More holistic customer understanding is needed that offers insight into what drives the customer, what the customer thinks, and what her/his feelings or prejudices are about the organisation and its services. Purpose-driven is about giving meaning to consumption. This is about making and marketing brands and products so that the customer feels she/he is supporting a higher purpose in life when buying, using, and disposing of products and brands. A purpose-driven relationship enables a customer to live a meaningful life through the consumption of a product or brand. This may include encouraging the customer to reduce consumption as opposed to encouraging and supporting mindless consumption; it may involve educating and informing the customer about the social impact or ethical dilemmas of her/his choices, or it may imply that the brand itself serves as a moral compass. Nurturing and developing brand communities through social media will require an organisation to take a more holistic approach to the development of skill sets for sensing, intervening, and mentoring the brand community. (see Sheth 2017.)

Gummesson (2017) claims that relationship marketing offers only ideas that are raised as a part of a series of developments. According to Gummesson (2017) this is not enough and these ideas need to be synthesised to form a more general, grand theory. Referring to this, Gummesson (2017) introduces the term "total relationship marketing". According to him, relationship marketing should not be treated as a special case of marketing but as part of a bigger synthesis. As an example of syntheses, Gummesson (2017,18) cites Payne and Frow (2013) who have merged relationship marketing and customer relationship management (CRM).

Customer Relationship Management

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been significant progress in the field of relationship marketing, and the broader perspective of relationship marketing has progressively gained a foothold. During this period, there was an increase in technology used to manage customer relationships and generate customer insight. It resulted in the creation of the concept of customer relationship management (CRM). The two terms – relationship marketing and customer relationship management – are often used interchangeably. (Payne & Frow 2017, 12.) While relationship marketing provides a framework for building relationships, customer relationship management offers the tools to manage those relationships. Customer relationship management aims to build a systematic method to efficiently manage customer relationships to reach longer-term targets. However, there is no single definition for customer relationship management. The definition relies on the perspective taken. (Müller 2014, 203.)

It can be viewed from the relationship perspective by enhancing long-term relationships with customers (Jayachandran, Sharma, Kaufman & Raman 2005; Kotler & Armstrong 2004, cited in Müller 2014, 203). It can be seen from the business strategy perspective as a customer-focused strategy with a target to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty by offering more customised and responsive services to each customer (Croteau & Li 2003, cited in Müller 2014, 203). It can also be considered a strategic initiative aimed at increasing shareholder value through valuable and long-term customer relationships by coordinating the activities of marketing, sales, and service departments and by employing IT systems. (Goodhue, Wixom & Watson 2002, Payne & Frow 2005, cited in Müller 2014, 203). Finally, customer relationship management can also be defined in terms of sustainability. For this, Müller (2014) suggests the concept of sustainability-oriented customer relationship management. Sustainability-oriented customer relationship management requires taking ecological, economic, and social targets into account when creating and sustaining profitable customer relationships over the long term. More specifically, sustainability-oriented customer relationship management aims to increase customers' awareness of the organisation's sustainability issues and to draw in and retain sustainability-conscious customers. To be successful here, the organisation needs to stay close to customers and comprehend their needs throughout all stages of the relationship. This requires efficient operational customer relationship management processes in the core areas of service, marketing, and sales. (Müller 2014, 205.)

2.1.1 The drivers of relationship marketing and customer relationships

Relationship marketing literature covers a wide range of components that drive the development of customer relationships. Of the many drivers, the most intensively discussed in the literature and the most appropriate ones considering the topic of this research will be discussed in this section. Based on the literature, these relationship development drivers can be divided into leading drivers and basic drivers. The leading drivers are formed by the customer’s satisfaction, trust, and commitment. Basic customer relationship drivers include quality of the service and product, customer expectations and perceptions of value, communication and reciprocity between the organisation and the customer, the organisation’s empathy towards the customer, the engagement of the customer, cooperation, shared value, benefits and bonds, as well as delight created for the customer.

Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has become one of the leading factors for monitoring and controlling activities and outcomes in relationship marketing (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner & Gremler 2002, 237). According to Kotler (1994) customer satisfaction is the key to customer retention and loyalty (Kotler 1994, 20, cited in Hennig-Thurau & Klee 1997, 738). Customer loyalty measures the likelihood of customer repurchasing and the degree of customer involvement in other activities. According to Shoemaker and Lewis (1999, 352-353) customer satisfaction is

an important requirement but not a prerequisite for customer loyalty. Thus, customer satisfaction can exist without loyalty, but loyalty is difficult to create or maintain without customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is defined as a customer's emotional or psychological reaction to a perceived difference between the overall performance and expectations (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 232). Satisfaction can be viewed as the degree to which a customer experiences a satisfying level of consumption-related fulfillment that is related to the total service itself (Bowden-Everson, Dagger & Elliott 2013). Customer satisfaction can be measured by how well a customer's expectations are met in a service transaction. Measuring satisfaction is also about determining whether a customer believes that she/he made a wise purchase decision, feels good about it, and is happy with the purchase and therefore would recommend the service or product to other customers (Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003, cited in van Tonder & Petzer 2018, 7). All of the above is at the end related to the customer's perceptions of satisfaction. Perceptions are formed as a result of the customer's previous interactions with a service provider (van Tonder & Petzer 2018, 7). Thus, it can be said that the customer's past service encounters affect how customer satisfaction develops in the short term (see Bowden-Everson et al. 2013, 55).

Trust and commitment

Morgan and Hunt (1994) concluded in their research that trust and commitment are not only important variables but also key mediating variables in the development of long-term relationships. The model stresses that commitment and trust lead to cooperative actions, which are important to relationship success. (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 232-233.)

Trust can be defined as a person's level of trust in another person or the relationship between them. Trust implies a customer's desire to have a positive expectation of an organisation while faced with a risk or a disadvantage. (Hsu et al. 2010, 294.) Trust is an assessment of outcomes or the likelihood that things will go as planned. Trust includes features of vulnerability and expectation. A risk exists when there is a gap between what is known and what is unknown. (Botsman 2017, 19.)

Customer trust is formed by perceptions and determining whether the provider can be trusted to maintain its promises, offer good service, and whether the provider prioritises the customer's interests (Verhoef, Franses & Hoekstra, 2002). Perceptions of trust develop over time and are based on various service encounters with a service provider. Mutual trust among stakeholders can lead to tacit information sharing, non-opportunistic behaviour, and the formation of committed, long-term relationships. (van Tonder & Petzer, 2018, 5.) It is argued that trust brings customer benefits, including reduced risk and increased confidence in the service provider (Bowden-Everson et al. 2013).

Commitment can be defined as a customer's long-term attitude toward a service provider relationship, which is based on both emotional bonds and the customer's belief that staying in the relationship will result in more net benefits than terminating it (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 232). Commitment is about the customer's "psychological attachment, loyalty, concern for future welfare, identification, and pride" in being connected with the organisation (Garbarino & Johnson 1999, 73). Customers are more willing to develop a commitment to companies that they believe acknowledge and reward their unique customer status (Lacey, Suh & Morgan 2007, 244).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that there is a distinction to be made between affective and cognitive commitment. Affective, emotional commitment indicates the customer's emotional relationship with the organisation, whereas cognitive commitment reflects the customer's brand beliefs. Customers who are emotionally connected invest more in their connections than customers who are not emotionally committed. (Mattila 2001, 75.) Affective commitment is evaluated by determining a customer's level of attachment to the service provider, sense of belonging and desire to be a customer and use the service or product (van Tonder & Petzer 2018, 8).

Quality, expectations, and perceived value

The customer perceives the organisation's uniqueness in terms of service quality, which impacts customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment (see Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry 1988; Bove & Johnson 2000). Service quality concerns the customer's evaluation of a service provider's performance based on the customer's expectations, previous experiences, and perceptions (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 232). In evaluating the service quality, the customer compares the expectations with what the customer receives or perceives she/he receives. The difference between a customer's expectations of the service and their perception of the actual experience determines how the customer perceives service quality in the end. (Parasuraman et al. 1991, 37.)

Parasuraman et al. (1988, 17) argue that a key to providing superior service is recognising and responding to the customer's expectations. Expectations can be viewed as desires or wants of the customer; they are what the customer feels and believes a service provider should offer rather than what they would offer (Parasuraman et al. 1988, 17). Therefore, expectations can be defined by both desired and adequate service levels, which change depending on the context and a variety of factors. The desired level is the level of service that the customer hopes to get. It is a mix of what the customer thinks can and should be. (Parasuraman et al. 1991, 17, 42.) If the customer's experience with a service provider meets or exceeds expectations, the outcome is likely to be customer satisfaction. In contrast, a negative experience will most likely lead to dissatisfaction. Therefore, rather than providing adequate

service, an organisation needs to aim to provide the customer's desired level of service, be proactive in addressing service problems, and quickly fix any issues that arise.

The customer’s perceived value can also be evaluated in terms of the outcomes of the process or the process itself. Value regarding the outcomes refers to what the customer desires, and what the customer's ultimate objective is. Value concerning the process itself means how the customer experiences the process through single factors of pursuing the goal itself. The single factors in the process mean any elements that affect the actor’s experiences during the process of pursuing the goal. (Higgins & Scholer 2009, 3-4.) Value from the process refers to the customer’s overall evaluation of a service’s or product's utility based on perceptions of what is received and what is given (Zeithaml 1988, cited in Teng & Wu 2019, 2).

The customer’s perceived value can be also explained as a construct made up of two parts: one of the customer's benefits (economic, social, and relationship) and the other of the customer's sacrifices (price, time, effort, risk, and convenience) (Kainth & Verma 2011, 2). In conclusion, it can be said that the customer’s perceived value is influenced by different factors, for example, the price paid, the quality received concerning the price paid, and what the customer receives in comparison to what they have provided in the transaction. (van Tonder & Petzer 2018, 6.)

The concept of SERVQUAL embodies the importance of service quality and how an organisation can measure the quality. SERVQUAL supports measuring the service quality through different dimensions, which are grouped around the customer’s service expectations. These dimensions are tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Tangibles refer to physical facilities and the appearance of personnel. Reliability is the capacity to deliver the promised service consistently and precisely. Responsiveness refers to an eagerness to help customers and deliver prompt service. Assurance includes employees' knowledge and courtesy, as well as their ability to inspire trust and confidence. Empathy implies the company's caring, personalised attention to its customers. The final two dimensions, assurance and empathy, contain elements that have been identified as relevant in previous service quality studies. These elements are communication, credibility, security, competence, courtesy, understanding and knowing customers, and access. (Parasuraman et al. 1988, 23-24; Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml 1988, 37.) To evaluate service quality Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996, 44) propose that behavioural-intentions questions could be incorporated into the measurement systems of service-quality assessment. By asking the following types of questions, an organisation would get a continuous source of information.

- What service quality levels must be delivered to retain a customer?

- Should money be spent on handling complaints or proactive service improvement?
- How can we encourage customers to recommend the company, spend more money, or pay a higher price?
- If there is a problem, what should be done to reduce the likelihood of a customer spreading negative word-of-mouth?

Ryu and Lee (2017) researched quality in upscale restaurants. In their research, they used four quality dimensions that could be considered resources that restaurants should spend money on to develop customer relationships. These quality dimensions are price fairness, service quality, food quality, and physical environment. (Ryu & Lee 2017, 69.) Ryu and Lee (2017) argue that when the customer perceives high investments from the restaurant's side into the relationship, the customer evaluates all quality dimensions positively. Whereas when the customer perceives low investment from the restaurant's side, the customer rates the quality dimensions negatively.

Communication and reciprocity

Communication refers to the formal and informal exchange of information between the customer and organisation (Sin et al. 2005, 187). Successful communication leads to an increase in customer satisfaction and trust. Communication is a crucial source of satisfaction since it can result in alignment and shared knowledge of performance outcomes and expectations. (Selnes 1998, 310, 317.) Selnes (1998, 308) refers to a study by Anderson and Narus (1990) who found the essential role of communication in relationships for the formation of cooperation and trust. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994, 25) communication improves trust by integrating expectations, perceptions, and resolving conflicts. Building trust requires communication that is relevant, timely, and reliable.

To be good at communication with the customer, the organisation needs to master open communication, proactive conflict resolution, and dedication. An open type of communication implies that communication should be initiated by both the organisation and the customer. However, customers are less likely to feel they have a relationship with a company if they are the contact initiator all of the time. (Parasuraman et al. 1991, 46.)

The organisation should use customer information obtained through communication to build and maintain its customer relationships by shaping appropriate responses to the customer's needs. This means systematising communication and information processes. Systematising processes support the organisation to prevent ineffective relationship-building efforts due to poor communication, information loss and overload, and inappropriate information use. Information processes between the organisation and the customer can be divided into five dimensions: information reciprocity, information capture, information integration, information access, and information use. Information reciprocity guarantees effective

communication; information capture and integration limit information loss, information access prevents information overload, and information use makes sure that customer information is used in line with customer relationship management needs. (Jayachandran, Sharma, Kaufman & Raman 2005, 178.)

Communication can be said to be a reciprocal process. This refers to two-way communication where parties communicate to understand each other better via information reciprocity. Information reciprocity includes the processes that allow customers to communicate with and exchange information with the organisation and that enable the organisation to respond to customers. Information reciprocity is crucial because trust and commitment, the foundational elements of a strong relationship, are unlikely to evolve in the absence of mutually interactive communication. (Jayachandran et al. 2005, 178.)

Overall, reciprocity is the attribute of a relationship that encourages one party to do something for the other in exchange for that other party doing something similar at a later date. Houston, Gassenheimer and Maskulka (1992) present the links between reciprocity and relationship marketing. This is further supported by Ellis, Lee and Beatty (1993) who argue that relationship marketing is characterised by ‘‘...interactions, reciprocities, and long-term commitments.’’ (cited in Sin et al. 2005, 187-188.)

Reciprocity can also be described as a social norm stating that any action taken by one party must be followed by a compensating movement by the other party. This shared expectation creates a stable set of rewards that directs interactions between parties in a relationship by influencing their present behaviour with suggestions of potential future outcomes. Reciprocity thereby strengthens the bonds between exchange partners and lays the foundation for long-lasting relationships. (Hoppner, Griffith & White 2015, 65-66.)

Empathy

Empathy is a prerequisite for the development of a healthy relationship between two parties. Empathy enables the parties to understand one another's point of view on the situation. Empathy is making an effort to understand the aspirations and goals of others. Empathy is caring, individualised attention the organisation offers to the customer. (Sin et al. 2005, 187.) Berry et al. (1988) name empathy as one of the main elements in measuring service quality in their SERVQUAL framework. This framework was briefly explained earlier in this same section.

Engagement

If the organisation manages to get a holistic approach to customer engagement it has advantages for long-term relationship building. Customer engagement consists of both psychological (e.g., commitment) and behavioural (e.g., referrals, feedback, purchases) dimensions. Building trust through a psychological dimension appears to be particularly

important in business-to-business relationships where trustworthiness is built through mutual reciprocation. For many consumer services and goods, especially those with lower perceived risk, organisations may want to place more emphasis on encouraging behavioural engagement, such as by inviting customers to participate in contests, sweepstakes, or the product development process. (Alvarez-Milán, Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch 2018, 68.)

The organisation's customer engagement strategy should involve mapping the holistic view of different stages of the customer relationship into acquisition, growth, retention, and win-back stages. In these stages, the customers engage with the organisation through different journeys that include various touchpoints between the customer and the organisation. Through the touchpoints and journeys, the customer's experiences are created and formed. The customer journey can be divided into pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages. Managing this multidimensional view of the customer experiences and journey maps is crucial for developing customer engagement-based processes and business models. (Venkatesan 2017, 290.)

An engagement orientation pushes organisations to co-create a wider range of activities with their customers. It also requires that employees are engaged with the organisation and understand the value of customer engagement. (Venkatesan 2017, 293.) Some organisations offer online and offline platforms to boost engagement through exchanging ideas between customers and organisations, such as ideas about new services and products. Customer interactions with organisations mainly comprise compliance, feedback, and cooperation. Compliance measures the degree to which customers respect the organisation's policies and procedures. Feedback enables customers to interact with the organisation through suggestions for service improvement and participation in new product or service development. Cooperation is the customer's benevolent act to assist the organisation's employees and facilitate service exchanges. (Roy, Gruner & Guo 2022, 4-5.)

Cooperation

According to Gummesson (2012, 20), the core of relationship marketing is seeing the organisation and a customer create mutual value with a win-win outcome where parties increase value for each other. This refers to cooperation. Cooperation means situations where parties have a common goal and work towards it. Cooperation is the only outcome posited to be directly influenced by both relationship commitment and trust. Parties who are committed to the relationship will cooperate with one other because of a desire to make the relationship work and be successful. Cooperation is facilitated by trust. (Morgan & Hunt 1994, 26.)

Cooperation supports parties in co-creating value. In the co-creation of value, there is a need to establish objectives and create mission-driven results for value co-creation with shared accountability. The goals of co-creation can range from the tangible to the intangible. Co-

creation's targets can be cost reduction, quality improvement, co-branding, co-marketing, co-learning and co-sharing of resources. Overall, co-creating value can be viewed from performance, price, and personalisation perspectives. Performance value can be improved through quality, customisation, and innovation. The price value is created through lean operations and target costing. Service value is created through easy access, fast response, and nurturing relationships. (Sheth 2017, 9.)

Shared value

Shared value has long been regarded as a crucial element in developing relationships. When parties have shared values, they are more committed to the relationship. (Sin et al. 2005, 187.) Shared value is identified as the level to which relationship parties share beliefs regarding what behaviours, targets, and policies are appropriate or inappropriate, important or unimportant, and right or wrong (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Benefits

One popular multivariate approach for understanding relationship marketing outcomes is the relational benefits approach (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002). The relational benefits approach is based on the idea that for a long-term relationship to exist, mutual benefit between the service provider and the customer is necessary (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 234.) According to the relational benefits approach, there are three types of benefits that a customer in a long-term relationship receives beyond the core service. These benefits are confidence, social, and special treatment benefits. The amount and nature of benefits the parties get from the relationship define how the relationship will be developed and grow (Altman & Taylor 1973, cited in Bove & Johnson 2000, 494). It is good to keep in mind, that the customer benefits discussed in this section partly overlap but also complement each other.

Confidence benefits

Confidence benefits are “perceptions of reduced anxiety and comfort in knowing what to expect in the service encounter” (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 243). They are concerned about building trust by reducing the risks in services. This is the key to creating a feeling of assurance. (Lima & Fernandes 2015, 329; Wilson et al. 2016, 242.)

Social benefits

Social benefits consist of a sense of familiarity that a customer develops over time with the company. Social benefits make it less likely that the customer will switch, even if they learn about another service provider that might have better quality or a lower price. Social benefits are related to personal relationships, such as those that result from a salesperson or a waiter getting to know a customer and the customer’s needs and wants, or a hairdresser who becomes almost like a friend to a customer. (see Wilson et al. 2016, 139.)

Special treatment benefits

Special treatment benefits involve getting the benefit of the doubt, receiving a special offer, price or preferential treatment. Examples of special treatment benefits are discounts, free upgrades, complimentary services, and service rewards offered through loyalty programmes. (Wilson et al. 2016, 139; Lacey et al. 2007.) The special treatments make customers feel privileged, important and appreciated. They are effective in stimulating relationships with profitable customers. (Han & Ryu 2009, 71; Ryu & Lee 2017, 6.)

Bonds

Through the benefits discussed in the previous section, an organisation can start building bonds, which in the long run will support the development of lasting customer relationships. Shani and Chalasani (1992) recognised the concept of bonding between the parties through the use of relationship marketing. Bonding involves developing and enhancing customer loyalty, which leads to feelings of affection and a sense of belonging to the relationship as well as indirectly to the organisation. Bonds can be categorised as being either financial, social, structural, customised or emotional. Each of these bonds will cause customers to feel differently about a particular organisation and can affect a customer's loyalty toward that organisation. Bonds maintain the relationship, or they can be exit barriers. (Lima & Fernandes 2015, 328.)

Financial bonds

Financial bonds refer to pricing incentives. This is the weakest bond to gain a competitive advantage because customers who might be interested in this type of offer are easily vulnerable to competitors' pricing incentives. (Berry & Parasuraman 1991, 137; Berry 2000, 158-159.) Financial bonds are connected to switching costs, which include the customer's perception of time, money, and psychological effort needed to change a service provider. (Lima & Fernandes 2015, 328).

Social bonds

Social bonds overlap with the social benefits discussed already. Social bonds form through social interaction and there might be developed personal bonds that keep relationships together. If there is a strong personal bond between the parties, both are more committed to maintaining the relationship. (Wilson & Mummalaneni 1986, cited in Sin et al. 2005, 187.) Social bonds refer to personal ties where customers are not viewed as nameless faces but as individuals with rapport and personal recognition whose needs and wants the company seeks to understand. (Wilson et al. 2016, 149.) Through social encounters, for example, using personalisation, a company can foster relationships. Examples of this could be expanding the core service with entertainment or educational activities, ensuring continuity and consistency of service through the same representative, communicating with customers regularly, or just using the customer's name during transactions. Social bonding might help the company in a

situation where the customer has had a bad experience – the customer might be more tolerant of an organisation with whom she already has some kind of social bond. (Berry 2000, 159.) Social bonds can have a considerable indirect impact on loyalty and word-of-mouth communication through commitment. (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002, 243.)

Emotional bonds

Emotional bonds are formed when satisfying experiences are repeatedly reinforced positively. (Bowden-Everson et al. 2013, 56). Emotional bonding is a prerequisite to strong customer relationships by being a central element in service quality and satisfaction (Mattila 2001; Mattila & Enz 2002). Therefore, it can be said that emotional bonds are connected directly or indirectly to all other relationship drivers already explained in the current section. For instance, a sense of community is about the customer's feeling of influence, integration, membership, and creation of relationships through the community that has similar interests and goals. (Hsu et al. 2010, 295.) Thus, when the customer feels a sense of community in a relationship, it is about both emotional and social bonding.

Emotionally involved customers may be less likely to switch service providers if there is an emotional connection. Emotionally involved customers are, for example more willing to recommend the restaurant and may be more "forgiving" if there is an occasional service issue. This leads to emotional commitment resulting in more favourable brand attitudes and behavioural responses. (Mattila 2001, 74.)

Mattila (2001, 74) highlights the importance of creating an emotional bonding between the customer and the restaurant through employee-customer ties. According to Ladhari, Brun and Morales (2008, 563) customer's emotional bonding is also influenced by the restaurant's atmosphere (e.g., cleanliness, crowdedness, music, noise, and lighting), which affects the customer's general satisfaction with the service delivery process and outcome. In this case, the customer evaluates not only the service's functional outcome (food), but also every aspect of the dining experience: the experience is judged not only on what the customer tastes but also on how the customer interacts with the various service-related elements as well as the emotions that these elements generate in the customer.

Structural bonds

Structural bonds may have value-adding benefits that are not available elsewhere. These benefits provide a foundation for maintaining and developing relationships. Structural bonds and the benefits they offer are usually designed right into the service delivery process. At this level, the benefits offer a structural solution to the customer’s problem. This means that structural bonds should not be dependent on an individual service provider’s relationship skills. (Berry 2000, 160; Wilson et al. 2016, 151.)

Customisation bonds

Customisation bonds are about improving customer relationships through intimate knowledge of individual customers and by developing one-to-one solutions that fit the customer's needs. (Wilson et al. 2016, 150). This might involve, for instance, gathering customer information and feedback to support the restaurant in customising services to meet the changing customer needs.

Delight

According to Bowden-Everson et al. (2013, 54) customer delight is a significant concept that has gotten limited attention in the literature. Delight is a result of the customer's emotional response to a positive surprise that exceeds the customer's expectations (Schneider & Bowen 1999).

According to several studies, customers who are "just" satisfied are not loyal, whilst customers who are fully satisfied, further identified as "delighted customers", are loyal (Jones & Sasser 1995; Verma 2003, cited in Vanhamme 2008, 114.) Delighted customers tend to ignore competing brands (Kumar, Pozza & Ganesh 2013, 249). Thus, customer delight provides a source of competitive advantage (Vanhamme 2008, 113) and it is not enough just to satisfy customers; there is a need to delight them (Oliver, Rust & Varki 1997, 330).

Delight is impacted by emotion in the customer's response, which raises the question of what emotions are required for delight to occur (Oliver et al. 1997, 314). Ensuring that surprise is received and experienced positively is an additional challenge that organisations must face. This requires a thorough understanding of customers' characteristics, needs, and behavioural patterns (Vanhamme 2008, 134.) Bowden-Everson et al. (2013) suggest that restaurants should focus on service strategies that identify particular service attributes that lead to delight for current and new customers. This refers that the strategy of delighting customers would support the organisation in exceeding customers' expectations and going beyond a merely satisfactory service experience. As a result, customer loyalty should rise.

2.1.2 The outcomes of relationship marketing and customer relationships

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002, 231) argue that the profitability of an organisation serves eventually as the benchmark for evaluating all relationship marketing initiatives. According to Seth and Parvatiyar (2000, 172) the benefits of relationship marketing for an organisation are dependent on how willing and able the customers are to support and engage in their relationship with the organisation despite the numerous other choices available in the market. However, when examining outcomes and drivers of relationship marketing, it seems appropriate to conceptualise relationship marketing outcomes in more detail. Two constructs are referred to as key relationship marketing outcomes: customer loyalty and positive word-

of-mouth communication (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 231.) Customer loyalty refers to customer retention and positive word-of-mouth is about customer attraction. Loyalty and word-of-mouth are both essential because for an organisation it is impossible to achieve long-term economic success by concentrating only on the retention of current customers at the expense of attracting new customers. (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 232.)

Loyalty

Although there have been various studies on customer loyalty drivers, the existing knowledge is scattered, and the results have been inconsistent (see Lima & Fernandes 2015). Customer loyalty is commonly viewed to include both attitudinal and behavioural components. (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 231). Attitudinal loyalty is normally reflected as a psychological process that is led by an emotional bond that leads to a customer developing a commitment to a brand (Lima & Fernandes 2015, 328). This means that considering the customer's perspective and understanding what motivates the customer to become loyal is important for the organisation to understand (Seth & Parvatiyar 2000, 173). Behavioural loyalty refers to the customer's historical purchasing and usage behaviour related to the brand. The idea of loyalty as a behavioural concept believes that the customer's loyalty to a particular brand can be captured by repeat purchases (Lima & Fernandes 2015, 328).

According to Lima and Fernandes (2015, 327), Oliver et al. (1997) states that satisfaction is a necessary step towards loyalty, but other factors, such as bonding, are ultimately important for this construct as well. Therefore, loyalty can be defined as a strongly held commitment to consistently repurchase or advocate for a preferred service or product in the future. This leads to repetitive purchases of the same brand or group of brands despite situational factors and marketing initiatives that might encourage switching behaviour. However, seeing loyalty simply as a repeat purchase, is today regarded as a poor definition because loyalty can be a lot more than just a customer's favourable buying behaviour towards an organisation: customers' loyalty is not what determines repeat business; rather it is how consistently an organisation continues to offer a specific and distinctive customer value.

Loyalty can also be described as the "glue" in developing relationships (Lima & Fernandes 2015, 327). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002, 231) refer to a study by Sheth (1996) that shows that loyalty is a primary aim of relationship marketing, and sometimes loyalty equates to the concept of relationship marketing itself.

Mattila (2001) researched customer loyalty at restaurants and according to her loyalty is an emotional and complicated phenomenon. While some restaurants attempt to increase repeat sales by offering appealing programmes such as memberships, loyalty cards, and special discounts, it has been shown that loyalty is built on a deeper degree of attitudinal and behavioural commitment. True loyalty goes beyond making repeat purchases and includes

advocating for the restaurant.

Word-of-mouth

Another outcome of relationship marketing is word-of-mouth among the customers and other stakeholders in the market. Positive word-of-mouth refers to favourable communications, vivid or novel experiences, and recommendations about an organisation that a customer is happy to share with others. (Anderson 1998, 6; Lacey et al. 2007, 245) Positive word-of-mouth communication includes all unofficial communications between a customer and others regarding evaluations of services or goods. (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 232).

Word-of-mouth has a significant impact on future purchasing decisions, especially when the service being delivered carries a high level of risk for the customer. This is because personal communication is regarded as a more reliable source than non-personal information. Positive word-of-mouth has long been recognised as one of the most significant factors in attracting new customers. Attracting new customers has been considered part of the relationship marketing concept. Both customer retention and attraction are essential because long-term success cannot be gained by solely focusing on current customer retention at the expense of attracting new customers. (see Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002, 232; Lacey et al. 2007, 245.)

2.1.3 Conclusions

According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002, 231) a key target of relationship marketing theory is the recognition of the main drivers that influence outcomes for the organisation, and an understanding of the causal links between these drivers and outcomes. Therefore, when an organisation wants to discover why its customer relationships succeed or fail, it should look at the relationship between the drivers and outcomes of their customer relationships. The most appropriate customer relationship development drivers and the outcomes to support this research were recognised based on the relationship marketing literature reviewed and discussed in the previous sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. Based on this a one-dimensional model of the customer relationship development concept is created. Figure 2 illustrates the concept called a "customer relationship flywheel" created and named by the researcher.

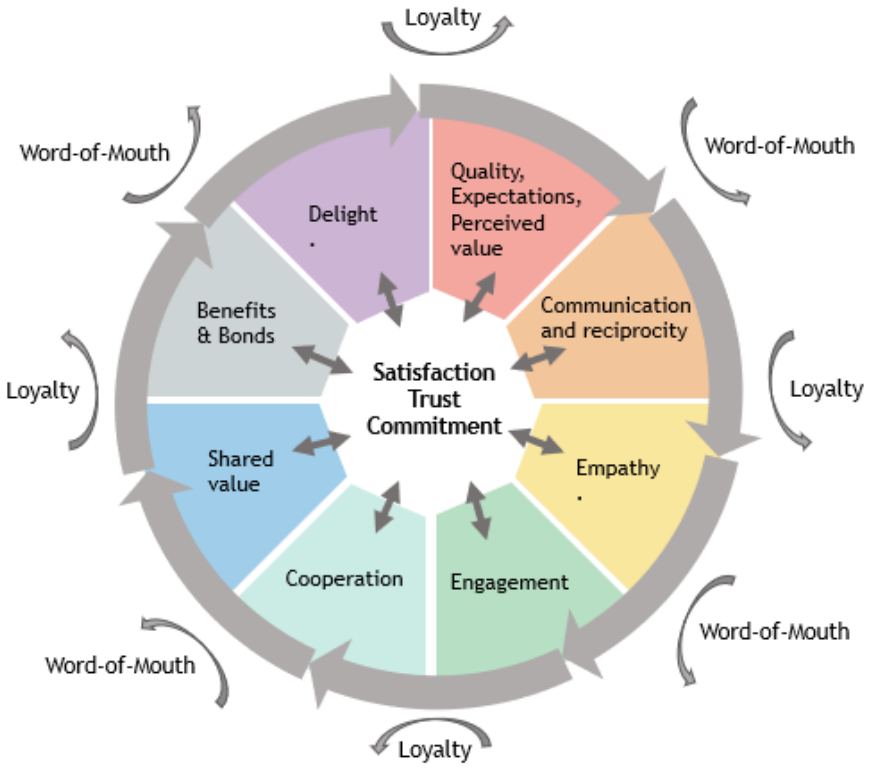

Figure 2: Customer Relationship Flywheel (figure owned by the author)

The flywheel brings together the elements impacting and needed for customer relationship development. Satisfaction, trust, and commitment in the middle of the flywheel describe the core drivers of the relationship. In many studies, they are regarded as crucial components or predictors of relationship quality. (see Morgan & Hunt 1994; Selnes 1998; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002; Bowden-Everson et al. 2013). Commitment is an essential component of long-term relationship success, and the main determinants of commitment are trust and satisfaction. (Bricci, Fragata & Antunes 2016, 173.) From the customer's standpoint, the development of customer satisfaction, commitment, and trust corresponds to the customer's interest and willingness to engage with the company (Wilson et al. 2016, 138). These three main drivers are in constant interaction with the other drivers (quality, expectations, and perceived value, communication and reciprocity, empathy, engagement, cooperation, shared value, benefits and bonds and delight) and outcomes (word-of-mouth and loyalty) around them. Word-of-mouth is needed for attracting and starting to develop relationships with new customers, whereas loyalty as an outcome refers to retaining existing customers.

2.2 Nature of environmental friendliness

This section investigates the connection between environmental friendliness, customers, organisations and food. The investigation starts by looking at existing customers and consumption related environmentally friendly concepts. After this, environmental friendliness is viewed from the organisation's perspective. Finally, environmental sustainability is reviewed from a macro-level perspective in the food industry, after which micro-level practices in environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption in the restaurant and food service industry are presented.

2.2.1 Environmental friendliness and customer

There are various approaches linked to environmentally friendly consumption and environmentally friendly customers. Next, these are briefly described. The target of this is to get perspectives from the customer's side and recognise some of the elements that affect environmentally friendly consumption.

Green consumer and consumption

A green consumer is considered anyone whose purchase decisions and behavior are affected partly or entirely by environmental concerns (Shrum, McCarty & Lowrey 1995, cited in Müller 2014, 205). Green consumption refers to purchase decisions made by consumers, based at least in part on environmental criteria (Peattie 1995, cited in Müller 2014, 205). Green consumption aims to increase the use of green products, which have a smaller environmental impact, and footprint throughout their life cycle, including the production and post-use phases. (Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas 2011, 26.) Some characteristics shared by green consumers include a commitment to leading green lifestyles, a critical perspective on environmental issues, a tendency to exaggerate green behaviour, a desire for an easier way to protect the environment, and a tendency to distrust organisations that claim to comply with green practices (International Institute for Sustainable Development, no date).

Environmentally sustainable food consumption

Environmentally sustainable food consumption can be described as "the use of food products that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, whilst minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials, and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations" (Oslo Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption, no date). Examples of environmentally sustainable food consumption include consuming more plant-based or insect-based foods, consuming less meat, and choosing seasonal food. Buying locally produced and/or organically produced food may also be more environmentally friendly, however, this is not always the case. (Vermeir et al. 2020, 2.)

Mindful consumption

Mindful consumption is “a customer-centric approach to sustainability” (Sheth et al. 2011). Mindful consumption is about being conscious of the effect of consumption on thought and behaviour. Mindful consumption assumes that one has the freedom to decide what and how much one consumes. This means that the customer is not forced or constrained by circumstances or market conditions to consume in a particular way. The customer makes a deliberate decision about consumption based on their preferences and values. Thus, the mindset directs and shapes the behaviour of consuming sustainably. For mindset, the core attribute of mindful consumption is a sense of caring about the implications and effects of one’s consumption. For behaviour, the core attribute of mindful consumption is temperance in consumption. (Sheth et al. 2011, 27.)

Green brand image, Green satisfaction, Green trust

According to Chen’s (2010) study, green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust are positively related to green brand equity. Therefore Chen (2010) suggests that organisations should invest more in developing and increasing their green brand image, green satisfaction, and green trust.

Green brand image means “a set of perceptions of a brand in a consumer's mind that is tied to environmental commitments and environmental concerns”. Green satisfaction can be defined as ‘‘a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment to satisfy a customer’s environmental desires, expectations, and green needs”. (Chen 2010, 309.) Green satisfaction is the outcome of consumption when the performance meets or exceeds the green needs of consumers, environmental regulations, and the expectations of society (Chang & Fong 2010, 2837). Green trust is a customer’s willingness to buy and rely on environmentally sustainable services, products, or brands based on their reliability, effectiveness, benefits, credibility, performance, and previous qualities (Chen 2010, 309.) Customers' buying intentions are most significantly influenced by green trust, which acts as a mediator between consumption values and green purchase intentions (Amin & Tarun 2021).

Green loyalty

Green loyalty is the commitment of a customer to regularly repurchase or re-patronise a preferred product to maintain a relationship with an organisation that involves environmental or green concerns. Green loyalty is the desire to recommend, the desire to repurchase, the ability to tolerate a higher price, and the desire to buy additional services or products from an organisation. (Chang & Fong 2010, 2837.)

It can be concluded that various factors can influence customer behaviour in the context of environmental sustainability. It is also good to note that according to Ginsberg and Bloom (2004) in buying green services or products, consumers are unlikely to make concessions on

service and product attributes such as convenience, availability, price, quality, and performance.

Environmental knowledge and attitude

Environmental knowledge is about the degree of concern about natural environments, such as environmental protection (Lo & Fryxell 2003, cited in Nekmahmud, Ramkissoon & Fekete-Farkas 2022). Customers who are aware of environmental issues have a positive attitude toward green services and products. Environmental attitude refers to the customer's cognitive and affective assessment of the object of environmental protection. Thus, the level of environmental knowledge the customer has can have a significant impact on the customer's green choices. (Hasan, Nekmahmud, Yajuan & Patwary 2019; Nekmahmud et al. 2022.)

2.2.2 Environmental friendliness and businesses

Triple Bottom Line

John Elkington (1994) created the Triple Bottom Line framework to be a sustainability framework that explores an organisation's environmental, social and economic aspects, development, and impact (see Elkington 1999). The Triple Bottom Line framework implies that exploring the environmental, social, and economic aspects of a phenomenon offers a holistic approach to better appraise understanding and practice. The Triple Bottom Line provides a holistic lens through which to examine an organisation's sustainability practices and how to integrate sustainability into an organisation's strategy and processes. The Triple Bottom Line has been widely adopted in both research and practice (e.g., Bocken et al. 2014; Joyce & Paquin, 2016; Shim, Moon, Lee & Chung 2021). The Triple Bottom Line's target is to support organisations in their transformation towards a more regenerative and sustainable future. In this research, Triple Bottom Line lays the foundation for understanding an organisation's environmental sustainability as part of the bigger sustainability concept, including economic profitability and social responsibility dimensions.

The three Ps of the Triple Bottom Line

The Triple Bottom Line is also called the three Ps, which refer to the framework's three dimensions: people, planet, and profit. The Three Ps in the Triple Bottom Line combine a company's economic, social, and environmental value creation by giving equal importance to each of the three dimensions. (Elkington 2018.)

In this study, the original term "profit" in the Triple Bottom Line is replaced with "prosperity". This is due to that in terms of interpretations of the three Ps, the term "profit" is the one that consistently causes the most misunderstanding and confusion. Usually, it is understood in the traditional sense, referring to a company's financial profit. However, this viewpoint is too restricted and incorrect: it is only concerned with the financial and monetary

aspects. The concept of "economic impact" includes much more than just "financial impact". Additionally, "profit" is typically understood only as an organisation's profit. The initial focus was, however, on societal impact and, hence, societal profit. Organisations, for instance, make a significant contribution to society by creating employment, generating innovations, paying taxes, and not only maximising profit for themselves. The term "prosperity" is close to what Elkington originally had in mind when discussing economic impact. (Kraaijenbrink 2019.)

The core value of the Triple Bottom Line is sustainable development simultaneously in the areas of economic prosperity, environmental quality, and social equity. The idea is to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on all three Ps. (Elkington 1999; Elkington 2018.) Businesses have traditionally functioned purely for the benefit of their financial bottom line. However, the Triple Bottom Line converts the current financial accounting-focused business system into one that holistically measures success, making a connection between the organisation's environmental health, social well-being, and financial performance. Figure 3 illustrates the connection between the three Ps and sustainability.

Figure 3: Triple Bottom Line (modified from Elkington 1999)

The Triple Bottom Line outlines the interconnected circles of environmental (planet), economic (prosperity), and social (people) dimensions. These reflect the positive and negative influence the organisation has on its natural surroundings (carbon footprint, using fewer natural resources, removing waste, restoring natural damage done) on local, national, and international prosperity (employment, innovation, paying taxes, generating wealth), and on key stakeholders (customers, employees, suppliers, communities). (Kraaijenbrink 2019.)

The circles of the Triple Bottom Line are never disconnected. This connectivity can also be seen in the Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations in September 2015. SDGs represent an urgent call to action for all countries and are the

priorities to be achieved in a global partnership by 2030. The SDGs offer “a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet today and in the future”. (United Nations, no date.)

The flexibility of the Triple Bottom Line framework allows organisations to tailor it to their specific industry and specific needs (Slaper & Hall 2011, 6). Tailoring it to the needs of the restaurant industry is easy, especially because the restaurant industry is closely related to customers’ environmental, health, and economic concerns (Shim et al. 2021, 3).

Shim et al. (2021) study regarding the association between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the value of restaurant companies by employing the Triple Bottom Line demonstrated that the Triple Bottom Line is essential when talking about sustainability in the restaurant industry. When a restaurant adopts the Triple Bottom Line, it indicates they care about how its business affects people (customers, employees, and communities) as well as the environment. A restaurant that focuses on zero waste makes sense not only from an environmental aspect but also from a cost-cutting perspective in terms of food waste management and energy efficiency. When considering prosperity in the context of the Triple Bottom Line and a restaurant, an example could be a restaurant exploring new ways to support environmentally friendly food preparation while raising public awareness and educating customers about the value of low-carbon food. (see Shim et al. 2021.)

The Sustainable Restaurant Association (SRA), a British not-for-profit organisation, has created a holistic sustainability framework representing an approach for the restaurant industry to Triple Bottom Line criteria. This framework provides a rating system to assist customers in selecting a restaurant that meets their sustainability priorities. The SRA framework separates the three main areas of sourcing, society, and the environment into ten consideration areas. Under sourcing, they advise restaurants to "celebrate local and seasonal, offer more vegetables and better meat, source fish sustainably, and support global farmers." The facet of society advises "treat people fairly, assist the community, and feed people well." Lastly, the environment programme emphasises three key points: "value natural resources; reduce, reuse, and recycle; and waste no food." (Higgins-Desbiolles & Wijesinghe 2019, 4–5.)

Sustainable Business Model Archetypes

As discussed in the previous section, the Triple Bottom Line supports embedding sustainability into a company’s purpose and processes. However, the Triple Bottom Line does not offer a structured view of how companies could in practice connect sustainability and business. To solve this, Bocken et al. (2014) developed an approach to sustainability through the categorisation of business model archetypes. The archetypes offer a systematic and comprehensive approach to how companies could embed sustainability in their business models, processes, and concrete activities. Archetypes function as a common language to

speed up the development of sustainable business models, both in research and practice. Archetypes can be seen as activity systems that cover both internal and external activities that the organisation is engaged in. (Ritala, Huotari, Bocken, Albareda & Puumalainen 2018, 219.) Companies can use archetypes to shape their transformation by using one or a selection of Sustainable Business Model Archetypes (Bocken et al. 2014).

The original archetypes developed in 2014 (Bocken et al. 2014) were further developed by Bocken and Short (2016) and Ritala et al. (2018). In this study, the further developed taxonomy of Sustainable Business Model Archetypes is used, including nine sustainable archetypes that are divided into environmental, social, and economic categories derived from the Triple Bottom Line. The archetypes support recognising the connections and opportunities between the key concepts in this research: environmentally friendly food, organisations, and customers. The target of using the archetypes is also to understand the value of this research in a broader context and to support the research topic in transforming it into business value.

The nine sustainable archetypes are: Maximise material and energy efficiency; Closing resource loops; Substitute with renewables and natural processes; Deliver functionality rather than ownership; Adopt a stewardship role; Encourage sufficiency; Re-purpose the business for society/environment; Inclusive value creation and Develop scale-up solutions. (Bocken et al. 2014; Ritala et al. 2018, 219.) These are next briefly explained.

Maximise material productivity and energy efficiency (environmental category)
This archetype means generating less waste, emissions, and energy with fewer or more efficient resources through product or process design. Examples of this are using and inventing low-carbon products and solutions, moving from non-renewable to renewable energy sources, using lean manufacturing principles, and dematerialisation of products and packaging. (see Bocken et al 2014, 48–49.)

Closing resource loops (environmental category)
This archetype refers to reusing, recycling, re-manufacturing, and the circular economy. The focus is on creating new value by minimising waste, reusing material, and turning waste related processes useful and valuable in other production streams (Bocken et al. 2014, 49). A concrete example of this is the utilisation of fruit and vegetable peels in cosmetics, food, textiles, and pharmaceutical industries (see Kumar et al. 2020).

Substitute renewables and natural processes (environmental category)
This archetype emphasises taking inspiration from processes occurring in nature, focusing on renewable resources, and being concerned about current resource constraints. Hence, the value of this archetype derives from imitating natural systems and innovation with new products and services. (Bocken et al. 2014, 50.) This includes zero mission initiatives, moving

from non-renewable to renewable energy sources. An example of this could be a restaurant focusing on serving seasonal products.

Deliver functionality rather than ownership (social category)

This archetype is about offering services that satisfy the customer's needs without the customer having to purchase and own physical products. Business priorities shift from product manufacturing to optimising and boosting consumer use of products. (Bocken et al. 2014, 54; Ritala et al. 2018, 219.)

Adopt stewardship role (social category)

Adopting a stewardship role refers to additional responsibility that an organisation might take on to address a particular environmental or social issue. An organisation might, for instance, sell only appliances that are labeled most energy-efficient whilst banning others. (Ritala et al. 2018, 219.)

Encourage sufficiency (social category)

This archetype aims to address favouring solutions and processes that actively seek to influence consumer behaviour. This can be done by moderating overall resource consumption through education and customer engagement, making longer-lasting products, avoiding built-in obsolescence, satisfying customers' needs rather than promoting "wants", doing conscious marketing and sales; and innovative technology solutions. The challenge here is not only to minimise consumption; it is to change the nature of what people consume so that both humans and natural systems may prosper. (Bocken & Short 2016, 41-42.)

Repurpose for society/environment (economical category)

Repurpose for society/the environment involves altering the corporate structure to promote sustainability. Prioritising social and environmental benefits rather than maximising financial profit through close collaboration between the organisation and other stakeholder groups. Examples of this archetype are securing livelihoods and regenerating fauna and flora. (Bocken et al. 2014, 53; Ritala et al. 2018, 219.)

Inclusive value creation (economical category)

Inclusive value creation means sharing knowledge, resources, ownership, and wealth creation. Peer-to-peer product-sharing platforms as well as innovation adding value for previously underserved customer segments. (Ritala et al. 2018, 219.)

Develop sustainable scale up solutions (economical category)

This archetype is about maximising sustainability benefits by delivering sustainable solutions at a large scale. Examples of this are incubators and crowd-sourcing platforms focused on sustainable initiatives. The archetype focuses on a sustainable business model solution that

can be scaled by using the appropriate channels and partnering with new and unusual business partners. (Bocken et al. 2014, 54.)

2.2.3 Environmentally friendliness and food

Environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption are part of a larger theoretical research stream, a sustainable food system (see Allievi 2017). Therefore, it is essential to understand what is meant by a sustainable food system. This chapter will cover the Sustainable Food System and focus on its aspects of food preparation and consumption. This chapter also presents the Double Pyramid theory which forms environmentally friendly dietary guidelines. Lastly in this chapter, the research-based environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption practicalities are discussed.

The Sustainable Food System

The Sustainable Food System is a food system that ensures food security and nutrition for everyone while not risking the economic, social, and environmental foundations that create food security and nutrition for future generations. The Sustainable Food System is vital as it requires action from all supply chain participants. (Allievi 2017, 11.) All supply chain participants have a role in putting in place solutions that produce more food on the same amount of land while reducing food demand, particularly for resource-intensive foods (Baldwin 2015, 194). The Sustainable Food System comprises all the elements (environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions) and activities involved in the production, processing, distribution, preparation, marketing, and consumption of food. The food system also consists of the outcomes of the activities, such as nutrition and health, socioeconomic growth and equity, and environmental sustainability. (Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations, no date; Allievi 2017, 11.)

The Sustainable Food System is the main focus of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs. SDGs (adopted in 2015) call for major changes in agriculture and food systems to stop hunger, ensure food security, and improve nutrition by 2030 (Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations, no date).

Figure 4 depicts the Sustainable Food System concept. It shows that a food system does not exist in isolation and how other systems, such as health, energy, and transportation, interact with the food system. (Allievi 2017, 11.)

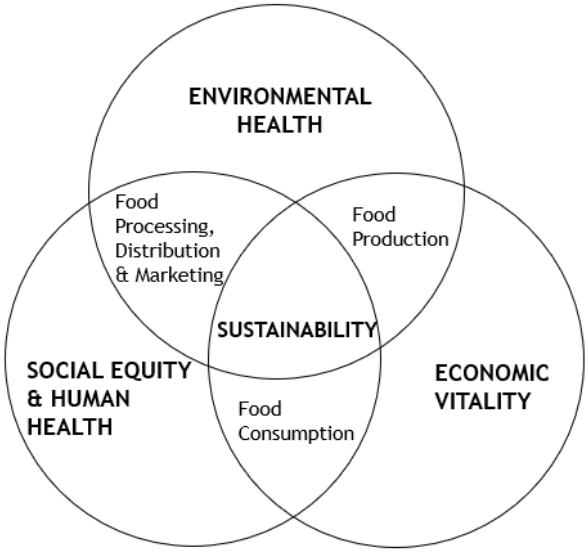

Figure 4: The Sustainable Food System (modified from Allievi 2017, 12)

In the Sustainable Food System, sustainability is examined holistically: to be sustainable, food system development must result in positive value in all three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. (Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations, no date.)

From the perspective of the economic dimension, a food system is sustainable if the activities carried out by each actor in the food system or service provider are financially and commercially viable. The operations should generate benefits, or economic value-added, for all stakeholders: wages for people, taxes for governments, profits for companies, and improved food supply for consumers. On the environmental dimension, sustainability is considered by ensuring that the effects of food system operations are neutral or positive, taking into account biodiversity, soil, water, plant and animal health, the carbon and water footprint, food waste and loss, and toxicity. A food system is considered sustainable from the social dimension perspective when the distribution of the economic value added takes into account vulnerable groups categorised such as gender, race, age, and so on. Above all, food system operations must contribute to the improvement of important socio-cultural outcomes, including health and nutrition, culture, work conditions, and animal welfare. (Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations, no date.)

The Double Pyramid

Barilla Center for Food & Nutrition (2010) developed the Double Pyramid that forms the guidelines for environmentally friendly dietary. The Double Pyramid consists of two frameworks: the food pyramid and the environmental pyramid. The food pyramid emphasizes the relationship between food and nutritional value, whereas the environmental pyramid focuses on the connection between food and environmental impacts. The Double Pyramid sets

the guidelines for selecting food that is beneficial for human health while simultaneously being good for the environment. (Ruini et al. 2016; Allievi 2017, 42.) The Double Pyramid is shown in Figure 5.

The Double Pyramid is a powerful tool to illustrate that the consumption of meat, and animal products, should be kept to a minimum for both health and environmental reasons. At the bottom of the food pyramid is the food on which consumption is recommended because it has the smallest environmental impact. The environmental pyramid is based on the life cycle assessment, a method for evaluating energy and environmental impact for a given process, including greenhouse gases, consumption of water resources, and the earth's capacity to regenerate resources and absorb emissions. (Allievi 2017, 42.)

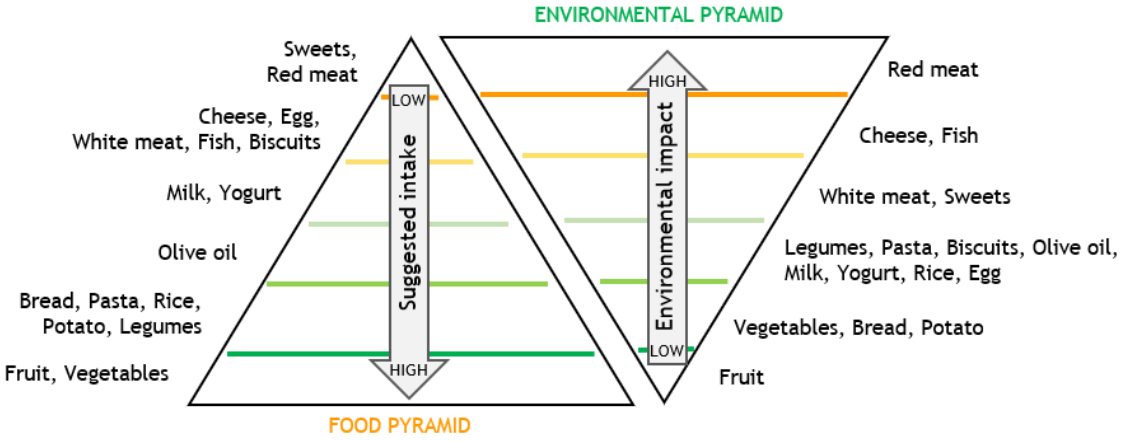

Figure 5: The Double Pyramid developed by the Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition (modified from Allievi 2017, 43)

The Double Pyramid data is supported by the research by Poore and Nemecek (2018) who investigated the global food system and created the biggest meta-analysis of global food systems that there is so far. The data shows that there are enormous differences in the greenhouse gas emissions of different foods. The main greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide, but methane and nitrous oxides are also important. Greenhouse gases create a carbon footprint that is measured in grams of equivalent CO2 per kilogram or liter of food. Beef, lamb, and cheese have significantly more greenhouse gas emissions compared to pork, chicken or plant-based alternatives. For instance, producing a kilogram of beef emits 60 kilograms of greenhouse gases (CO2-equivalents), while peas emit only 1 kilogram per kg. (Ritchie 2020a.) The planet's ecosystems are necessary for agricultural and food production, but their acceptable use limits have been exceeded. (Will et al. 2015). The food system generates about 25–35% of greenhouse gas emissions (see Poore & Nemecek 2018; Ritchie 2021; Xu et al. 2021).

Environmentally friendliness in food preparation and consumption

There are various studies on reducing emissions in food production and consumption (e.g., Hospido et al. 2009; Poore & Nemecek 2018; Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2019; Ritchie et al. 2020). The main four emission-reducing activities recognised in the previous studies supporting this research are explained next.

1. *Reduce meat and dairy consumption in countries of higher income and shift dietary intake toward lower-carbon food products.*
   Meat and dairy production will not be cut out completely in the near future, but large reductions are required. Beef production has the highest emissions, and a big part of that comes from land use and methane production through cows' digestive processes. Reducing meat and dairy consumption would mean eating less beef, lamb, and dairy and also substituting higher-carbon meat for vegetables, fish, chicken, or eggs. (Ritchie et al. 2020).

2. *Focus on what is eaten, not transportation.*
   Contrary to popular belief, transportation has a minor role in food production emissions. There has been some research on this topic, and very little actually matters if the beef or lamb is local or shipped from a different continent. (Hospido et al. 2009; Carlsson-Kanyama, Ekström & Shanahan 2003; Weber & Matthews 2008.) For most food products, transportation is less than 10% of emissions, while meat, dairy, and eggs account for 83%. Eating local food would have a major impact only if transportation was responsible for a large portion of the final carbon footprint of food. This is not the case for most foods. Greenhouse gas emissions from transportation account for a very small portion of food emissions. In addition, not only transportation but all processes in the supply chain following the food leaving the farm – processing, transportation, packaging, and retail – account for a minor portion of emissions. Therefore, what is eaten is more crucial than where the food came from. When talking about transportation and low emissions, we need to remember that there is an exception – air-freighted food. Some vegetables and fruits, where the emphasis is on freshness, are transported via air because of their perishability. Green beans, asparagus, and berries are examples of these foods that are transported by air, and their transport emissions are very high. People assume that many foods are air-freighted but actually most food is transported by boat, and for example, avocados transported by boat from Mexico to Europe have lower emissions than locally produced animal products. Consuming less meat and dairy or substituting ruminant meat for chicken, pork, or plant-based alternatives reduces footprint more than eating, for example, lettuce air-freighted from Spain to Finland in the wintertime. (Hospido et al. 2009; Poore & Nemecek 2018; Ritchie 2020a.)

3. *Reduce food waste and enhance the circularity of the food system*.
   One-third of food emissions comes from food that is wasted by consumers or lost in supply chains (Poore & Nemecek 2018). About 6% of the world's total emissions of greenhouse gases come from food waste. To understand this in a bigger context, it means that food waste is around three times the emissions of global aviation, or that global food waste is the third largest emitter after China and the United States. (Ritchie 2020b.) Therefore, the food system must eventually become more circular. It requires customers to accept the waste-to-value idea. It can consist of growing one's own food, accepting foods from urban and vertical farming, or meat from animals fed with insects or waste. (Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2019, 184.)

4. *Communicating and promoting a dietary shift towards more sustainable food and diets*. Research has shown that consumers do not have adequate information on product-related environmental issues and the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions (Leire & Thidell 2005). Information and communication supporting dietary change should be pursued because changing consumers' consumption patterns towards a more climate-neutral behaviour can substantially reduce emissions (Poore & Nemecek 2018, 992; Lombardi, Berni & Rocchi 2017, 257). However, changing consumer behaviour in a short timeframe will be challenging to achieve while also having an impact on climate change. When communication with producers is included, the effects of smaller consumer changes are multiplied. (Poore & Nemecek 2018, 992.) At the same time, climate-neutral characteristics of consumer products should be included in labeling schemes to provide consumers with the information needed to make environmentally responsible purchase decisions. (Lombardi et al. 2017, 258.)

   The shift towards an environmentally friendly diet decreases the environmental impact of diets and improves the food chain's performance to guarantee universal access to food. The target of the promotion of dietary shift is to explore how to foster positive expectations and a willingness to attempt, then satisfactorily meet or surpass expectations, to improve liking, acceptance, and adoption of sustainable food. This can be accomplished by lowering barriers to trying new foods and developing positive expectations for new products. The dietary shift focuses on both specific foods and dietary patterns, such as enjoying vegetables or using a variety of methods to reduce meat consumption. (Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2019, 183-184.)

Zanella (2020) identified from the literature principles of environmentally friendly practices that combine the macro-level systems with the micro-level practices in restaurant kitchens.

These principles focus on environmentally friendly food operations in the restaurant's kitchen. The identified principles are:

1. Embrace diversity and seasonality as the basis for food sustainability.
2. Cook real food: minimal processing, and prioritising wholesome, fresh, and nutritious products.
3. Prioritise local, but do not close borders.
4. Prefer organic and/or agro-ecological food; labels are important, but what really matters is how food is produced.
5. Adopt a vegetable-oriented diet, but keep in mind that many food systems require animals to achieve sustainability.
6. Favour small producers: their personal efforts pay off in quality, while income stays in the local economy and the benefits will be more fairly shared across the food system.
7. Reduce waste to a minimum: reduce, reuse, recycle. Be efficient and adopt a nose-to-tail approach to cooking.
8. Be innovative, but do not always reinvent the wheel; in many situations, being innovative means returning to our roots and traditions.
9. Consider that the food industry needs fixing, but we are addicted to it. Radical solutions inspire but do not always lead us to the needed, gradual transformative change.
10. Change recipes, techniques, ingredients; never sacrifice taste.

2.2.4 Conclusions

Figure 6 illustrates the environmentally sustainable theories discussed in the previous section from the perspectives of customers, businesses and environmentally friendly food.

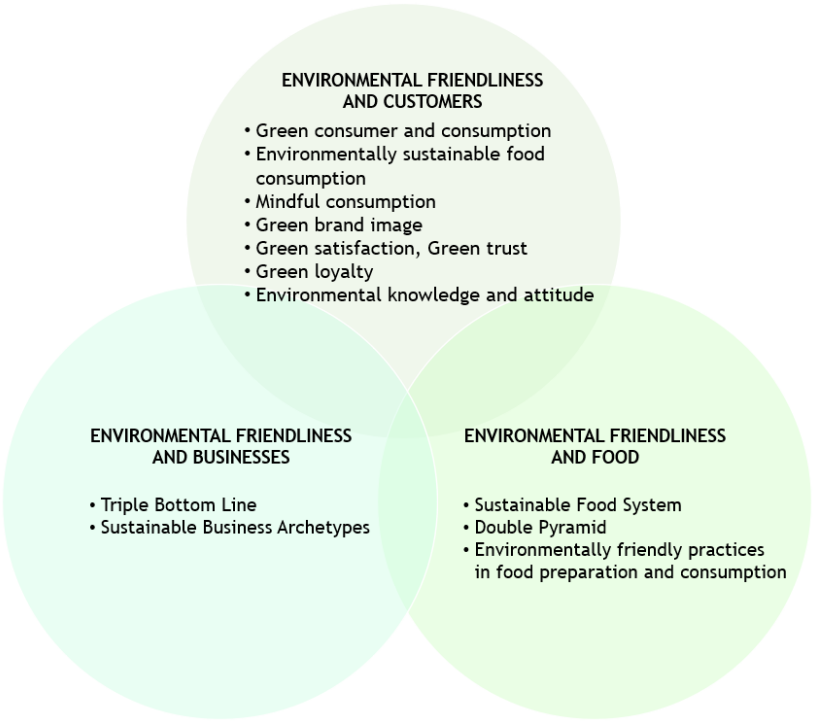

Figure 6: Environmentally sustainable theories from the perspectives of customers, businesses and food

The customer's environmental friendliness is explored through the concepts connecting environmental friendliness and the consumer. These concepts assess customer and environmental friendliness by utilising factors such as lifestyle, values, mindset, images, perceptions, preferences, experiences, behaviour, purchasing and consumption habits, satisfaction, images, mindset, knowledge, and attitudes related to environmentally friendly issues, food, and the organisation itself.

Environmental friendliness in a business context is depicted through the Triple Bottom Line theory and its 3P framework: People, Prosperity and Planet. The Sustainable Business Archetypes provide a more detailed approach to the topic by offering solutions to incorporate sustainability into organisations' operational procedures.

Environmentally friendliness and food are viewed from the perspectives of the Sustainable Food System, Double Pyramid, and environmentally friendly practices in food preparation and consumption.

3 Research methodology

This chapter explains the research approach and process used in this research. Both of them need to support the motivation and target of this study. In the introduction chapter, the background and motivation for this study were already explained: if an organisation aims to be successful in the current and future market environment, it cannot ignore environmental sustainability factors or the importance of customer relationships. The purpose is to find a solution in constructing an artefact, i.e., a framework that connects customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption in small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies.

The need for a "construction" and the need to gather insight and understand the context indicate that constructive (see Berger, Luckmann & Zifonun 1967) and qualitative research supports solving the problem and purpose of this research. This requires methods to focus on customer-centricity, collect deep customer insight, and methods to understand the complexity of the topic. This indicates that a service design process would be an appropriate and helpful concept in supporting the research. Within the service design process (Stickdorn et al. 2018) the key activities are to understand the problem, learn through experience, collaborate, and attempt to implement and test. These same activities can be found in constructive research as well. Hence, in finding the solution of how an organisation can connect customer relationship development and environmental friendliness, the research followed a combination of qualitative and constructive research combined with the service design process.

3.1 Qualitative and constructive research

Qualitative research

This research approaches holistically the phenomena of customer relationship formation and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption. The target is to explore customers' experiences, how meanings are formed, and discover relevant variables in the areas not yet thoroughly researched. (see Corbin & Strauss 2015, 5.) All of this is supported by qualitative research; it enables the identification of issues from the perspectives of research participants and supports understanding the meanings and interpretations they give to behaviour, objects, and events. It embraces the contextual influences on the research issues. (Hennink et al. 2020, 10.)

The qualitative research cycle framework described by Hennink et al. (2020) forms the structure of this research. The qualitative research cycle framework includes three interlinked cycles describing the phases of research. The cycles are called the research design cycle, the data collection cycle, and the analysis cycle as shown in Figure 7.

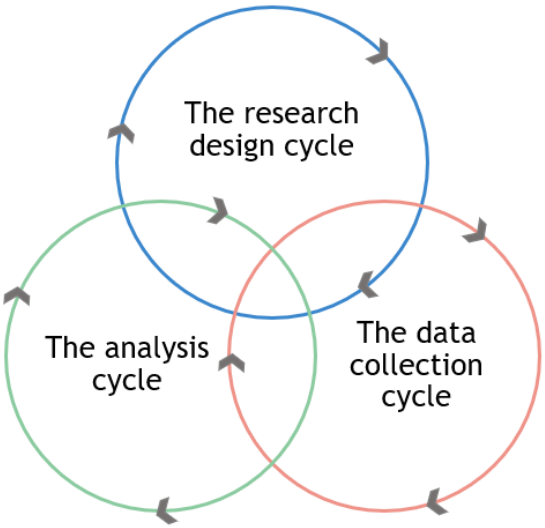

Figure 7: The qualitative research cycles in the current research (modified from Hennink et al. 2020, 5)

All three cycles in Figure 7 include various tasks as outlined below.

1. The research design cycle: formulation of research questions, reviewing research literature and theory, developing a conceptual framework, and selecting the methods of how the data will be collected.
2. The data collection cycle: designing research instruments, recruiting participants, and collecting data.
3. The analysis cycle: data analysis, coding, categorisation, conceptualising data, and developing theory. (Hennink et al. 2020, 5–6.)

The circles are interlinked, and the researcher needs to go back and forth between the circles to refine the research questions, explore the issues and fill the gaps in the data. The researcher reviews the data and learns more from it, and as the research progresses, richer data is generated. At the end of the qualitative process, the analysis cycle links back to the original design cycle as data analysis is informed by theory from the research design cycle. Simultaneously, findings from the analysis cycle are compared with the framework developed in the design cycle. (Hennink et al. 2020, 4-6.)

Constructive research

Solving the research questions in this study is based on a thorough understanding of the problem and existing theory. The solution is found through a heuristic search process (Lukka 2003, cited in Piirainen & Gonzalez 2014, 20). In the constructive research approach, the theory is used by designing "constructions" to solve problems. Hence, the role of theoretical knowledge is critical in tying the problem and its solution together. (Kasanen, Lukka &

Siitonen 1993, 246; Lukka 2003, cited in Piirainen & Gonzalez 2014, 8.) According to Kasanen et al. (1993) constructive research is characterised by six critical elements, which are described below and illustrated in Figure 8.

1. *Practical relevance*: identification of the problem. Focus on real-life problems that are interesting to practitioners and have research potential. This demands a motivating problem as well as a set of background theories.
2. *Theory connection*: Understanding the topic by creating a synthesis via analysing and comparing practical experience and existing theory.
3. *Design of a construct*: Finding a solution to solve the problem by designing a construct by innovating and collaborating.
4. *Demonstrating that the solution works*: implementing, testing, and validating that the solution works.
5. *Research contribution*: Demonstrate the theoretical connections and the research contribution of the solution concept.
6. *The applicability of the proposed solution and further studies*: Examine the scope of applicability of the solution to the problem and recognize further studies.

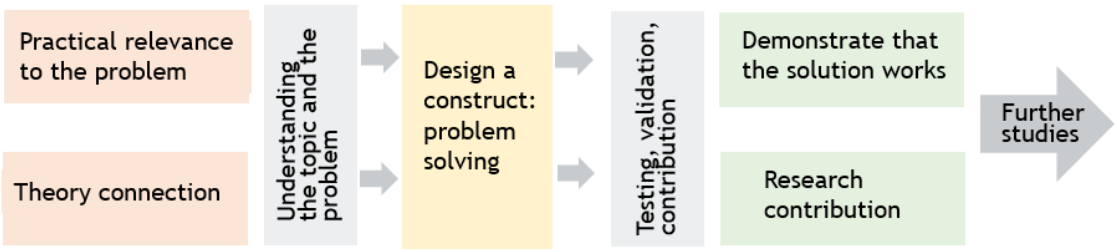

Figure 8: The critical elements of constructive research
(modified from Kasanen et al. 1993, 246)

Figure 8 illustrates the constructive research approach and how its elements combine problem-solving and theoretical knowledge. A key activity in this approach is to design a construct, a solution to the problem.

Constructive research supports the interests of this study because the aim is to understand real-life problems and produce an artefact to solve the problem in a collaborative effort. Also, highlighting the linkage to existing theoretical knowledge and creating a theoretical contribution is important in constructive research as well as in this study. (see Piirainen & Gonzalez 2014, 21.)

Thus, this study is qualitative and constructive research. The study uses both abductive and inductive reasoning in problem-solving and reaching conclusions. Inductive reasoning is used through the bottom-up approach, by capturing data from the informants' experiences in theoretical terms (see Gioia, Corley & Hamilton 2013, 22; Verschoor 2005, 47). Abductive reasoning conclusions are reached based on data and observation. Abductive reasoning takes the most reasonable and logical explanation as the leading one. However, abductive reasoning is not final, and it allows the researcher to continue to learn, develop, and iterate while making the most of the information available. (see Verschoor 2005, 77.)

3.2 Service design as a research process

This section outlines service design and describes the service design principles and various approaches to explaining the service design process. Service design as a research process in this study is discussed in section 3.2.1. Service design methods and tools used in this research are covered in section 3.2.2.

Service design principles

Research literature has defined various service design processes, which in the end all share the same principles and mindset. Each of the service design processes requires divergent and convergent thinking, is iterative, and emphasises human-centricity and collaboration. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 88–89.)

Divergent and convergent thinking

The goal of divergent thinking in the service design process is to seek a variety of choices to create opportunities. This is accomplished by generating a large amount of information through different service design methods and tools. Convergent thinking follows divergent thinking in the design process. Convergent thinking is a method for deciding between different alternatives. It is about filtering through the opportunities revealed by divergent thinking, making decisions, and reducing those opportunities down to a few promising ideas. (Brown 2008; Stickdorn et al. 2018, 85.)

Iteration

The service design process is an iterative cycle of research and development with the goal of finding innovative solutions. It is the process of working in a series of loops that repeat, explore, and deepen. In the service design process, the iteration process never ends; it may slow down, but it is always present as prototypes iterate into pilots, and then those pilots iterate into implementation. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 21.)

Human-centricity

"Services should be experienced through the customer's eyes" (Stickdorn, Schneider, Andrews & Lawrence 2011, 26). A human-centred view in service design provides a common language

for all actors, including employees, customers, users, and other stakeholders, in a process. (Stickdorn et al. 2011, 30; Stickdorn et al. 2018, 25.) A human-centred view of the process concentrates on the exploration of the needs, dreams, behaviours, and experiences of the people involved in the solution. This offers organisations the possibility to better connect with their stakeholders and discover new opportunities for change. (Meroni & Sangiorgi 2011, 38.)

Collaborative

Collaboration means that all stakeholders should be involved in the service design process. By involving people from different backgrounds and functions in the process, it is possible to break down silos and be more creative in designing a new service or improving an existing service. Through collaboration, the service provider understands the customer better, and customers will become more engaged. (Stickdorn et al. 2011, 26, 30; Stickdorn et al. 2018, 24, 26.)

Service design processes

Seven different service design processes are next explored and compared to identify a relevant process for this study. Finally, the researcher formulates a service design approach that is most suited for this particular study, taking into account the study's purpose, setting, and topic.

Double Diamond model (Design Council 2002-2004)

The British Design Council created between 2002-2004 the Double Diamond model, which is a visual map of the design and innovation process (Cat 2019). Figure 9 visualizes the Double Diamond model and its stages of the four D's: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver.

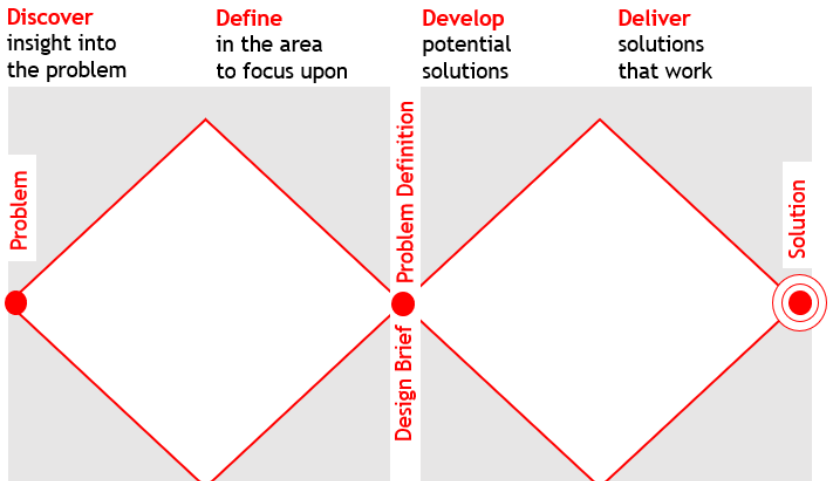

Figure 9: Double Diamond model (Design Council 2002-2004)

Discover – Insight into the problem: Discover is the beginning of the design process through research and exploration of inspiration through new ideas and insights. It is about identifying the problem. In this phase, qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used to build knowledge by deep diving into the problem. (Ball 2019; Design Council 2019.)

Define – The area to focus upon: In the define stage, insights gathered in the discovery phase will be analysed. Patterns are made to make sense of the data gathered and gain insights into the needs and values of the customer and redefine the challenge. (Ball 2019; Design Council 2019.)

Develop – Potential solutions: Develop phase is about finding various solutions to a clearly stated problem. This phase is characterised by generating and evaluating ideas, developing, and refining solutions or concepts. The development phase leads to creating prototypes that need to be tested, iterated, and improved. (Ball 2019; Design Council 2019.)

Deliver – Solutions that work: In the final delivery phase, product or service prototypes will be experimented with on a small scale. Products and service solutions are created, produced, and launched during this phase. (Ball 2019; Design Council 2019.)

Service design process Moritz (2005)

Moritz (2005) has created a service design model that is composed of six overlapping phases with different goals and tasks. The model is illustrated in Figure 10. The phases in the model are: understanding, thinking, generating, filtering, exploring and realizing.

Figure 10: Service design process (modified from Moritz 2005, 123)

The goal of the understanding phase is to understand the customer's motivation, needs, and wants as well as the business and technical constraints. The thinking phase directs the process by identifying the main problem and establishing parameters for the following phases. During the thinking phase, all of the information from the previous phase should be transformed into insights. At the generating phase, ideas and solutions are generated and turned into concepts. It is critical at this phase to find appropriate people for a team and a suitable working environment. The filtering phase is distinguished by the assessment of solutions and concepts. During the explaining phase, the main goal is to visualise concepts to have a clear understanding of how the entire concept works. In this phase, prototypes of the most promising solutions should be created in order to test and evaluate their performance. During the realising phase, a service is implemented and taken to the market. (Moritz 2005, 123.)

Four Questions (Liedtka, Ogilvie & Brozenske, 2011)

According to Liedtka et al. (2011) the service design process includes four basic questions that correspond to the four stages of the process:

1. What is – explores the current situation
2. What if – envisions the future
3. What wows – shows different choices
4. What works – shows what works at the market

Figure 11 visualises these four stages, including the widening and narrowing bands, which represent divergent and convergent thinking. The target is to generate a new set of concepts through understanding, empathy and open-mindedness, after which there is a need to reverse the design thinking process by converging and narrowing down options to the most promising. (Liedtka et al. 2011, 21.)

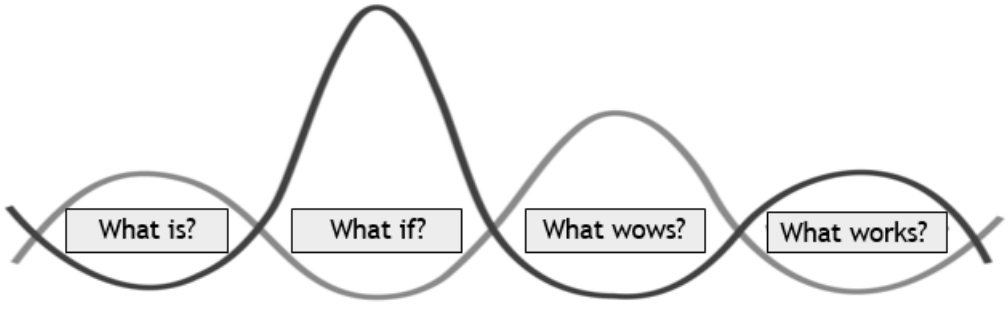

Figure 11: Four questions (modified from Liedtka et al. 2011, 21)

The "What is" stage explores the present situation. The correct problem needs to be understood and appropriately framed in this first stage. Research needs to be done on what is going on in the current reality to identify the real problem or opportunity. (Liedtka et al. 2011, 23.)

In the "What if" stage, the ideation happens, and new possibilities will be envisioned, which supports the vision of a desirable future. It is crucial to start with possibilities instead of constraints because, to identify a new set of possibilities, some key constraints need to be ignored. (Liedtka et al. 2011, 27.)

The "What wows" stage refers to the phase when the sweet spot is found, where customer value meets attractive profit potential. In this stage, the concepts are generated, and prototypes are created from the ideas that have been innovated in the “What if” stage. The target in this stage is to create visual concepts that help generate conversation and the feedback needed for improvement. (Liedtka et al. 2011, 30-32.)

In the "What works" stage, everything should be ready to go into the real world. The prototype should be launched to some customers, get feedback, and improved accordingly. (Liedtka et al. 2011, 32.)

The four main activities (Meroni & Sangiorgi 2011)

Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011) outline four main service design activities:

1. Analysing
2. Generating
3. Developing
4. Prototyping

In the first, Analysing phase, information is collected, recorded, and shared. The goal is to explore users' perceptions and experiences. In the second phase, called Generating, shared meanings are constructed from collected experiences. Service ideas are developed in the Developing stage, and their feasibility is evaluated. In the last Prototyping phase, new service ideas are tested. (Meroni & Sangiorgi 2011, 239.)

Four core activities (Stickdorn et al. 2018)

According to Stickdorn et al. (2018) the service design process is constituted by four core design activities:

1. Research
2. Ideation
3. Prototyping
4. Implementation

The first core activity, Research, is about data collection, visualisation, synthesis, and analysis. Research supports understanding people, their motivations, and behaviours towards a service or product. Research helps to empathize with people, deep dive into an unfamiliar

area, and move beyond assumptions. Using a user-centred approach throughout the project is possible thanks to research. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 91, 96, 97.)

The second activity is Ideation. Stickdorn et al. (2018, 91) point out that ideas are only the beginning of the more significant evolutionary process. The value of ideas lies in the outcomes that stem from them.

The third core activity is Prototyping which is used to explore and show how future service situations might work and how people might experience them. Prototyping helps to identify important features of a new concept and investigate and evaluate alternative solutions that might work in reality. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 91.)

The final activity is implementation. Implementation means moving from experimenting and testing into production and rollout. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 91.)

Service Innovation Process Grounded on Service Design and Foresight (Ojasalo, Koskelo & Nousiainen 2015)

The framework for the service innovation process created by Ojasalo et al. (2015) is based on service design and foresight. The framework is shown in Figure 12.

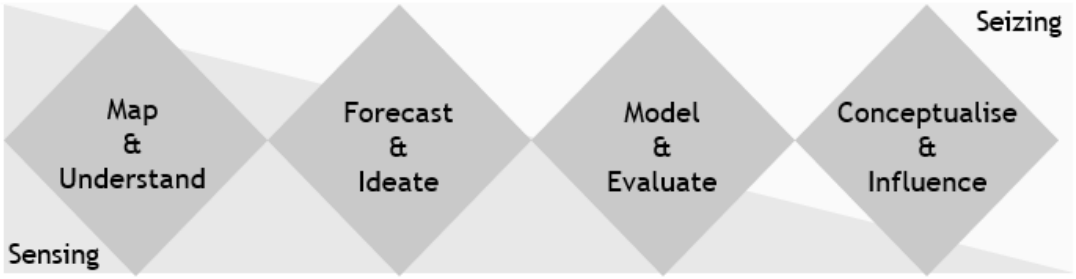

Figure 12: Service innovation process grounded on service design and foresight (modified from Ojasalo et al. 2015, 202)

The framework includes four phases:

1. Map and understand
2. Forecast and ideate
3. Model and evaluate
4. Conceptualise and influence

Ojasalo et al. (2015) emphasise that the service innovation process is rarely linear but more of an iterative process and that its phases might overlap. Future and design thinking are useful for sensing and seizing new service innovation opportunities. Sensing-related methods are essential at the beginning of the service innovation process. When a service is

conceptualised for implementation at the end of the process, seizing capabilities and related methods become more critical. (Ojasalo et al. 2015, 202–203, 208.)

The insight gathered from the first phase of mapping and understanding inspires ideation and forecasting of the future. After this comes modeling, where a new service solution shifts the service design process from a sensing focus to a seizing the opportunity focus. Modeling solutions early helps in evaluating solutions' true value before resources are used for actual implementation. In the final phase of the service innovation process, the new service is conceptualised for implementation, and the future will be influenced by this new concept. (Ojasalo et al. 2015, 205, 207–208.)

Service design framework (The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, no date)
Institute of design at Standford has developed a five-step service design process. These five stages of design thinking are: empathise, define, ideate, prototype, and test. Figure 13.

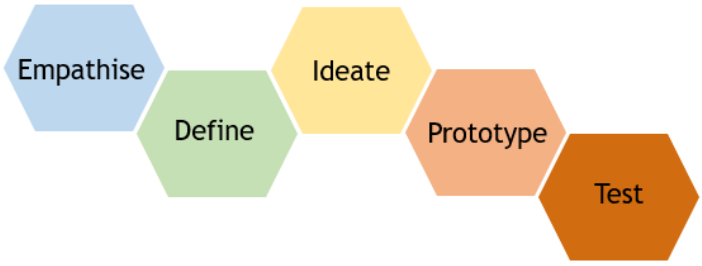

Figure 13: Service design framework
(The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, no date)

The first stage is empathy, where the focus is on understanding the users' experiences, emotions, motivations, and targets. The second stage is about defining the current problem based on the evidence gathered during the empathise stage. In the define phase, data gathered is interpreted to identify patterns or insights that reveal the deeper needs of the target users. The third stage focuses on generating as many solutions to a problem as possible. In this phase, ideas are evaluated, and the top ideas are selected for the next, prototyping, phase. The prototype stage involves building ideas into a tangible form and crafting physical artefacts or experiences. New questions can be proposed, and ideas will be iterated and refined. The test phase is the final stage in the service design framework. It is about gathering feedback on the prototype, testing stakeholder assumptions, learning, and iterating the prototype. (Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, no date.)

The design frameworks and procedures explained in this section are compared in Table 1. All these service design frameworks comprise stages that show how design and innovation can be executed through specific phases and actions. The stages begin with defining the problem and

continue through insight gathering, idea generation, and service implementation. Although the stages differ slightly, they all represent similar activities that support the entire service design process. The key differences between service design frameworks are what they emphasise and the number and names of their stages.

Service Design Process Phase / Service Design Processes	Phase 1	Phase	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Double Diamond Model (British Design Council 2002-2004)	Discover	Define	Develop	Deliver	
Service Design Process (Moritz 2005)	Understanding	Thinking	Generating	Filtering	Realising
Four Questions (Liedtka et al. 2011)	What is?	What if?	What wows?	What works?	
The Four Main Activities (Meroni & Sangiorgi 2011)	Analysing	Generating	Developing	Prototyping	
Service Innovation Process Grounded on Service Design and Foresight (Ojasalo et al. 2015)	Map and understand	Forecast and ideate	Model and evaluate	Concep-tualise and influence	
The Four Cour Activities (Stickdorn et al. 2018)	Research	Ideation	Prototyping	Implemen-tation	
Service Design Framework (Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford, no date)	Empathise	Define	Ideate	Prototype	Test

Table 1: Service design frameworks and processes

All the service design processes described in this section emphasise the importance of converging and diverging thinking and the iterative and overlapping nature of the process. The process developed by Moritz (2005) seems to be one of the most practical approaches to the service design process because it includes practical goals and tasks. Other service design processes focus more on designers' perspectives, approaches, and activities. The research phase and understanding of the correct problem are highly emphasised in the Double Diamond model. Liedtka et al. (2011), Meroni and Sangiorgi (2011), Stickdorn et al. (2018) highlight the importance of prototyping. The framework developed by Ojasalo et al. (2015) is the most future-oriented.

3.2.1 Service design process in qualitative and constructive research

As the target of this study is to develop a concept rather than a tangible prototype, some of the service design processes described in the previous section cannot be used as such. The researcher felt that despite there being a lot of iteration, overlap, and interlinking between the phases in all of the service design processes described, most of them place too much emphasis at the end on individual phases. The current study is highly iterative, and the researcher wanted to highlight this in the service design visualisation process. Therefore, the

researcher constructed a separate service design process for this study. The visualisation and labeling stages are based on the service design processes outlined in the previous section. The service design process of this study, together with the main and substages and the targets in the stages, and service design methods and tools used are summarised in Table 2.

	Main stages in the service design process	**The target of the service design substage**	**Service design methods & tools used in the stage**
1.	Problem	Recognise: Identify the fuzzy problem and plan the research.	• Desk research • Mind mapping
2.	Research	Explore: Conduct the research. Define: Start analysing empirical insight.	• Boundary objects: - Initial customer journey - Customer profiles - Iterated customer journey • In-depth interviews • Focus group interviews • Brainwriting and brainstorming • Voting
3.	Solution	Define: Continue analysing the data and define opportunities. Build a data structure. Develop: Create and iterate a concept. Show theoretical and empirical contributions.	• Grouping • Coding • Affinity diagramming
4.	Revise	Realise: Test, iterate and demonstrate the solution works.	

Table 2: The service design process of the current research

The four main stages of the service design process in this study are: Problem, Research, Solution and Revise. These four main stages are divided into five more detailed substages describing also the targets in the stages. The five substages are: Recognise, Explore, Define, Develop, and Realise. In this study, the last step, Realise was left out for further studies.

Figure 14 shows the whole research process used in the current study by illustrating the service design process merged with qualitative and constructive research. The figure also shows the service design methods and tools used together with the timeline.

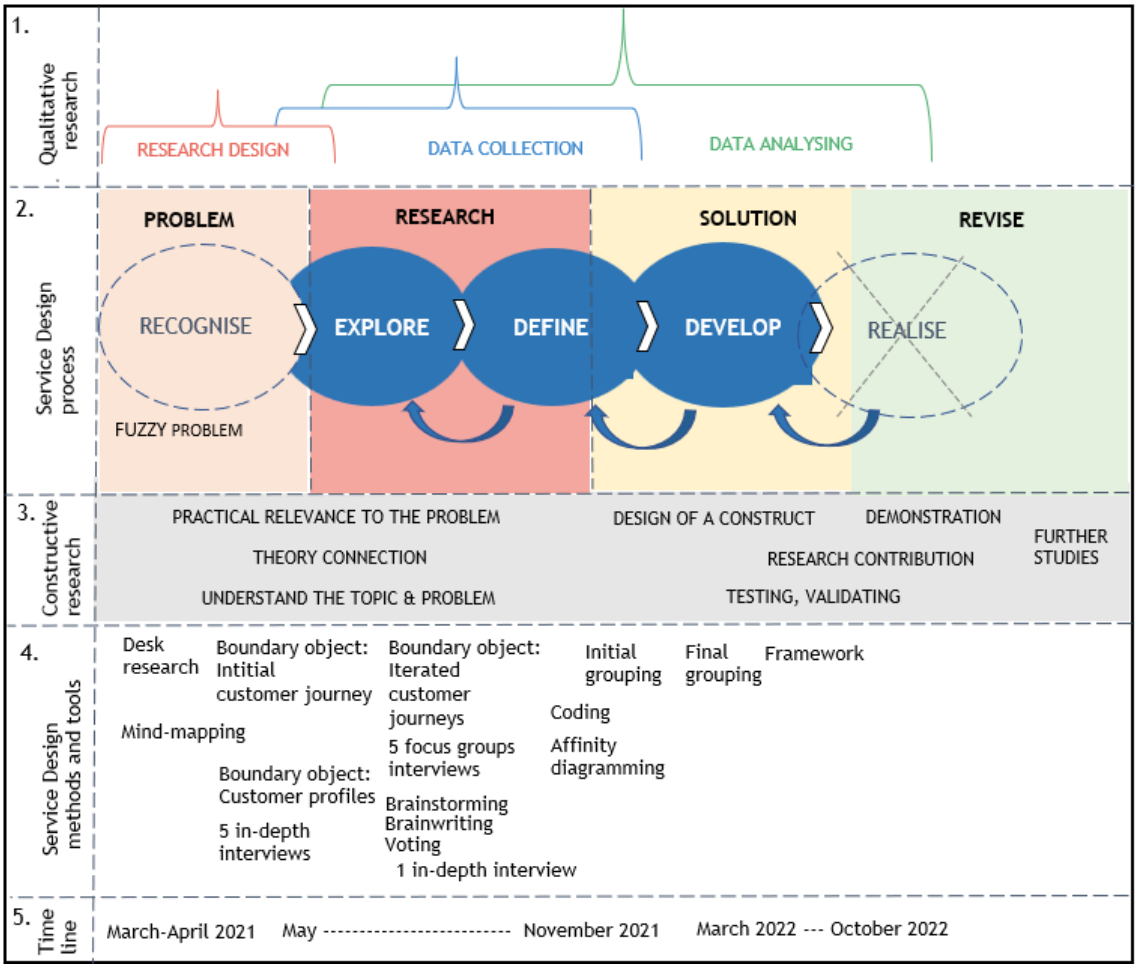

Figure 14: The service design research process of this thesis combined with a qualitative constructive approach

The first top line in Figure 14 describes the three interlinked phases of qualitative research (Research design, Data collection, and Data analysing) (Hennink et al. 2020) and how they relate to different stages of the service design process. The second line visualises the main stages (Problem, Research, Solution, Revise) and the substages describing the target (Recognise, Explore, Define, Develop, Realise) in the service design process. The third line shows the elements of constructive research by combining problem-solving and theoretical knowledge. The elements of the constructive approach are Practical relevance to the problem, Theory connection, Understanding of the topic and problem, Design of a construct, Testing and Validation, Research contribution, Demonstration and Further studies. The fourth line gathers service design methods and tools used in the different stages of the research process. At the bottom, the fifth, line illustrates the timeline of the research process.

The stages in Figure 14 are described in a linear order to simplify the visualisation. However, it is critical to note that this was not a linear process in practice. Lots of iterations were done, and the stages overlapped. In each of the stages, the appropriate service design

methods and tools were selected to reach the target of the stages. Service design methods and tools used in this study are described in the following section.

3.2.2 Service design methods and tools

The service design methods and tools orchestrate the whole design process to move forward. With the support of methods and tools, process, people, and insight come together to deliver new solutions, services, and experiences. Service design tools represent what is used, and methods describe what is created and how the work is done. Methods are procedures to approach something. For example, conducting an in-depth interview is a method, and a journey map is a structured tool. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 37.) Next, the service design methods and tools used in this study are explained in theory.

Desk research

The goal of desk research is to recognise possible research areas and specific elements to focus on. Desk research provides components to understand the opportunities and challenges, define the scope of the research, and, in the end, formulate the initial research questions. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 118.)

Mind-map

Understanding connections is the starting point for the design. A mind map is a diagram that helps analyse information and identify relationships. A mind map represents the connections between several ideas or things. (Curedale 2019, 389.)

Boundary object

Boundary objects are artefacts, stabilised objects that offer a common language. They provide a unified form of communication with different stakeholders and help to create a shared understanding. Boundary objects facilitate meaningful communication and support the exchange of information and views. Boundary objects can be abstract or concrete (Lagesen 2010, 129; Stickdorn et al. 2018, 43.) In this study, customer profiles and customer journeys were used as boundary objects in the in-depth and focus group interviews.

Customer persona profiles

Creating personas means creating a "character," a synthesis of the characteristics of different people who have been interviewed. Personas help to bring stakeholders to life. A persona supports engaging a customer's various interests and helps build empathy to create solutions that address real problems (Liedtka et al. 2011, 56; Stickdorn et al. 2018, 128). Personas focus on customer motivations and behaviours - persona's goals, issues, unmet needs, challenges, and hopes (Liedtka et al. 2011, 56; Stickdorn et al. 2018, 128).

Osterwalder, Bernarda, Papadakos, Pigneur and Smith (2014) discuss about customer profiles instead of customer personas. A customer profile describes a specific customer segment in a detailed way by breaking the customer profile into its jobs, pains, and gains. Customer jobs include functional, social, and emotional tasks that customers are trying to complete. They describe the problems the customer is trying to solve and the needs the customer wants to satisfy. Functional jobs refer to a situation when the customer tries to perform a specific task or solve a specific problem. Social jobs describe how customers want to look and be perceived by others. Emotional jobs describe a specific emotional state the customer seeks. Customer pains describe bad, undesired outcomes, negative experiences, risks, and emotions related to customer jobs. Pains can also be related to obstacles preventing or slowing down customers. Customer gains are the outcomes customers want to obtain. They can be concrete benefits that the customer requires and expects or benefits that would delight or go beyond the customer's expectations. Gains can include social gains, positive emotions, functional utility, and cost savings. (Osterwalder et al. 2014, 9, 12, 14, 16.)

Customer lifecycles and journeys

Customer lifecycle and journeys are an essential part of service design. The customer lifecycle is like a backbone and structures the customer relationship by describing the journeys in different stages customers move through during their relationship with a service provider (Reason, Løvlie & Flu 2016, 133, 135). Customer journeys can be viewed as a series of experiences that occur throughout the lifecycle of services (Reason et al. 2016, 28).

Creating a customer journey map forces an organisation to focus on customers instead of itself. The customer journey encourages a contextual understanding of the customer experience, which allows for iteration and provides a visual representation of the problem. A journey map identifies the major elements of a service and illustrates the various interactions that the customer has with the service. It represents the stages taken by the customer from the start to the end of a service experience. (Micheli, Wilner, Bhatti, Mura, & Beverland 2019; Brown 2008.)

The customer journey allows the researcher to concentrate on the customer experience at various phases. It helps bring an outside-in perspective on analysing the specific issues that may block a journey's effectiveness. (Reason et al. 2016, 133, 136.) Customer journeys can be used at many stages of the design process to explore ideas, identify novel elements, and prototype new experiences. A journey map helps to understand the customer's pain points and gaps in touchpoints, find the customer's unmet needs, and thus audit and plan better customer experiences. (Liedtka et al. 2011, 61.)

Journey maps can be the customer's actual journey by visualising existing experiences or future-state or ideal journey maps by visualising planned experiences. First, journey maps can

be assumption-based initial journey maps, but as time goes on, assumption-based journey maps should be developed into research-based ones. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 54.)

Qualitative interview – in-depth and focus group interviews

To collect data for this study, qualitative interviews were conducted in the form of in-depth and focus group interviews. Interviews differ from other research methods because they provide an opportunity to research relevant issues in depth with participants (Polaine, Løvlie & Reason 2013, 50).

In-depth interview

An in-depth interview means conducting an intensive individual interview to discover and understand different perspectives on a specific theme. In-depth interviews allow time to get into the details and learn how people construct their realities - how they interpret, define, and experience the world. In-depth interviews are a useful tool for learning about the interviewee's perspectives, expectations, feelings, needs, and behaviours. During the in-depth interviews, the researcher can hear detailed personal stories about unique experiences. This supports revealing the interviewee's values, perspectives, and hidden facts, seeing the topic from new perspectives, and getting inspiration for new ideas and opportunities. (Polaine et al. 2013, 50; Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault 2015, 102; Stickdorn et al. 2018, 122.) Portigal (2013, 3) divides the key steps in the interviewing process into the following: studying individuals deeply, discovering the meaning behind answers and behaviours, making sense of the data acquired, and using this knowledge to find a solution. Thus, in-depth interviews are useful for identifying key themes, identifying what could be designed, refining hypotheses about a possible new solution, and guiding the redesign of an existing solution (Portigal 2013, 11).

Focus group interview

A focus group is a moderated group discussion to collect quality data and generate a rich understanding of participants' experiences, opinions, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about a given topic (Morgan 1997, 11; Krueger & Casey 2009, 2; Patton 2015, 475). A focus group is a small group of people, typically with similar backgrounds, being interviewed on a specific topic in a one to two-hour interview (Patton 2015, 475). The size of the group can vary between four to twelve participants (Portigal 2013, 8). Smaller focus groups are preferable when the participants have expertise or experience with the topic of discussion or when a topic is complex and there are a lot of questions (Krueger & Casey 2009, 68).

Focus groups operate best when the researcher's interests are shared by the members of the groups (Morgan 1997, 10). The advantages of group discussions are their explicit utilisation of group dynamics and interaction to provide data and insights that would be less available without group interaction. Thus, group discussion can demonstrate a synergy that individuals alone lack. (Morgan 1997, 2; Krueger & Casey 2009, 19.) Group discussion gives its members

more control over the issues that are discussed. Participants can question each other by asking for more information on a topic that has been raised. Therefore, focus groups are likely to find unexpected issues and generate rich data (Hennink et al. 2020, 157.) The conversation evolves as in the focus group as people's perspectives change and they learn new things that shape their attitudes and opinions (Krueger 1997, 20). All in all, focus groups have the potential to become more than the sum of their parts (Krueger & Casey 2009, 19).

Brainstorming and brainwriting

Brainstorming is a process of generating many solutions and ideas quickly in a group. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 180). Brainstorming helps to visually structure the problem space (Martin & Hanington 2019, 22) by supporting participants to stay in a productive, democratical mode while producing ideas (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 115; Curedale 2019, 462-463). This offers a creative zone without judgment. At the same time, brainstorming gives less assertive participants a voice. The core ideas in brainstorming are to "build on each other's ideas," to "welcome oddity," and "quantity over quality." (Martin & Hanington 2019, 8; Stickdorn et al. 2018, 119.)

Brainwriting is a silent technique that generates more diverse ideas than brainstorming. It can be used when ideas are more complex, the group is big, or the target is to empower quiet participants. In brainwriting, participants write silently and individually, one idea per page. Papers can be passed to others for development, posted on the wall right away, or kept secret for a while. In the end, all ideas will be displayed on the wall, grouped, and discussed. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 180.)

Affinity diagramming

An affinity diagram is a way to organise various ideas into groups with common themes. Affinity diagrams allow the analysis of complex and large amounts of information and the discovery of hidden relationships between data. Affinity diagrams help in understanding key aspects of data, bringing simplicity to complexity, identifying connections and common themes in data, and supporting the creation of hierarchies. Affinity diagrams encourage new patterns of thinking and can help people think beyond their boundaries. (Curedale 2019, 334-335.)

Voting

Voting is a method of selecting a favoured idea collectively. It is about getting the majority view in groups. Voting is a quick way to reveal decisions or rank ideas formed in a group discussion. (Stickdorn et al. 2018, 186; Curedale 2019, 342.)

3.3 Research design

In the first phase of the design process, the initial research planning starts. In this phase, the research needs, and opportunities are identified, and the scope and constraints are defined. The target is to recognise the fuzzy problem by focusing on a relevant and topical research problem that interests practitioners and has research potential.

In this study, desk research was used to find and understand a topical research problem. Through desk research, the researcher focused on finding a relevant and topical perspective aligning with the high-level target to research an organisation's customer relationships and environmentally friendly food.

As the current research is linked to another, larger project, the existing material from the larger project was investigated. Development areas from the existing project materials were identified and compared to other desk research materials. Online search engines and research platforms were used to check market research reports, specific topics in journals, whitepapers, conferences, and expert talks and articles. Potentially interesting information was explored in more detail. (see Stickdorn et al. 2018, 90–102.)

An existing applicable theory is required to recognize a topical problem. Based on the desk research, relationship marketing theory was selected as the leading theory for researching customer relationship development. The Triple Bottom Line and Sustainable Business Model Archetypes were selected to understand environmental sustainability and organisation. The Sustainable Food System and Double Diamond theories support exploring environmentally friendly food topics on a higher level. Environmentally friendly customer and consumption related concepts and practices offer a more detailed view of environmentally friendly food consumption and preparation. These theories were presented and discussed in Chapter 2.

A desk research summary was created using mind-mapping. It supported organising and understanding the relationships between different aspects of customer relationships and environmentally friendly food. Based on mind-mapping, a summary of desk research was created and discussed with the stakeholders of the larger project to which this study is linked. In the end, in light of the summary of desktop findings, clarification and the focus of this research were defined.

3.4 Data collection

This section explains the methods for collecting qualitative data for this study. The sources for collecting data were in-depth and focus-group interviews.

3.4.1 In-depth interviews

Six in-depth interviews were conducted to gather data and insights to understand customers' perspectives on visiting small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies and their environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption. Semi-structured interviews were used because they allowed the researcher to maintain consistency and ensure that each concept was covered in each interview. (see Corbin & Strauss 2015, 39.) This means that each interview covered the same topics. As a starting point for the in-depth interviews, the following targets were used.

- To understand how the customer defines and understands environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption in small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies.
- To gain insight related to the customer's expectations, needs, and pain points in her/his journey with small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies.
- To identify the critical moments and opportunities in the customer's journey with small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies.
- To recognise possible ideas on connecting environmentally friendly food, customer experience, and customer relationship development.
- Validate the initial customer journey.

A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix 1) was used based on the in-depth interview targets. The questions for the interview guide were chosen based on the preliminary theoretical research and the interview targets. The interview guide ensured the researcher covered the themes and offered a structure to ensure all relevant questions and themes were covered. At the same time, the researcher wanted to leave the interview structure loose enough to coax out details to ensure that the researcher understands the participants' perspectives (see Polaine et al. 2013, 52). Hence, the interview guide served as a reference during the interviews, although specific questions were frequently asked to clarify issues and gain a clear understanding.

The interviews took place between May 2021 and August 2021. Altogether, six in-depth customer interviews were conducted. Table 3 captures some of the features of the in-depth interviews. Each of the interviews was audio-recorded and, after each interview, a written record of the interview, a transcript, was then made for data analysis. All the informants agreed to have their interviews recorded for anonymity. Five of the interviews were done via Zoom, partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One interview was a face-to-face interview. The interviews lasted 40 minutes to an hour. Five of the interviews were conducted in Finnish, one was held in English. The in-depth interviews were carried out from the perspectives of a lunch buffet and an à la carte customer.

Informant ID	Date and duration	Interview perspective on the topic	Interview type	Recording	Transcription
Informant 1L	May 16th, 2021 40min	Lunch buffet	Videoconference	Audio	Manual
Informant 2L	May 17th, 2021 35min	Lunch buffet	Videoconference	Audio	Manual
Informant 3L	May 19th, 2021 45min	Lunch buffet	Videoconference	Audio	Manual
Informant 4A	May 12th, 2021 45min	À la carte	Videoconference	Audio	Manual
Informant 5A	May 13th, 2021 35min	À la carte	Videoconference	Audio	Manual
Informant 6A	July 4th, 2021 30min	À la carte	Face-to-face	Audio	Manual

Table 3: Overview of the interview data

Informants were found among the researcher's acquaintances who regularly visit à la carte or lunch buffet restaurants. Because the interviewer already had a well-established relationship with the informants, it was easy to create an atmosphere where informants talked freely. After each interview, the researcher learned more and made inferences, which led to going deeper into the issues in the following interview. After the 6th interview, the researcher felt that she had found out what she needed to know and that there was not much new information anymore. This was where the point of saturation had been reached (see Glaser & Strauss 1967, cited in Glaser & Strauss 1999).

The boundary objects used in the in-depth interviews were customer persona profiles and an initial customer journey map. Personas were taken from the earlier study related to the main project from which this study originated (see Rajala, 2020). Personas were used to bring informants closer to the interview topic and support them in thinking deeply about their thoughts and habits as consumers and as restaurant customers in the context of environmentally friendly food.

Another boundary object in the in-depth interviews was an initial journey map with four main phases illustrating the customer’s visit to a small and medium-sized restaurant or a food service company. The journey map was created partly based on the researcher's own experience and assumptions. Also, the investigation of research papers on the restaurant industry and customer experiences gave insight into the topic and supported the creation of the main journey map. The goal of the journey map’s visual illustration was to serve as a basis to zoom out on the main phases of the customer's journey and to zoom in on the detailed interactions and touchpoints the customer might have with the organisation during the journey. As a result, the journey map supported the informant in the interviews in considering both single eating experiences and zooming out to different journeys and

touchpoints the informant might have during the whole relationship lifecycle with the small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies. In addition to customer persona profiles and customer journeys, some of the earlier ideas related to decreasing the restaurant's carbon footprint from the main project were used as conversation starters in the in-depth interviews.

The boundary objects appeared to be an efficient way to generate discussion and structure around the issues at hand. The researcher was aware that the boundary objects might have directed the discussion too much. However, as the time in the interviews was limited, the researcher felt the boundary objects were necessary to get a versatile discussion around the topic and gain insight from the informants' thoughts, experiences, and motivations. The boundary objects visually supported informants in zooming in and out of their thoughts, experiences, motivations, and needs when thinking of themselves as consumers and customers.

3.4.2 Focus group interviews

The goal of the focus group interviews was to get a more solution-oriented perspective on the research topic compared to the focus of the in-depth interviews. Focus group interviews were conducted to reveal additional factors and obtain a better understanding of the linkage between the customer, small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption.

In June 2021, five focus group discussions were held. All of the interviews took place on the same day and at the same time. Each group had 3-5 participants and a facilitator. Focus group discussions lasted two hours, and they were conducted via Zoom because of COVID-19. A digital whiteboard, Mural, was used in the groups. The discussions were guided by a moderator in each of the five groups. Each moderator had experience in moderating group discussions. One of the moderators was the researcher herself. The other four moderators were personnel from the larger project, to which this study was partly linked. This larger project also had its own stakeholder group, from which the focus group participants were recruited. The stakeholder group had a strong background or interest in the restaurant industry and environmentally friendly food. According to Patton (2015, 478) focus groups appear to work best when people in the group are strangers to each other but share similar backgrounds. Participants were recruited through email invitations and a Facebook group that was part of the larger project. No incentives for recruiting participants were needed because they were already interested in the topic because of their background. In the end, 14 informants participated in the group discussions. The focus groups were divided between à la carte, lunch buffet, and cafeteria groups because the very initial idea of this research was to investigate customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food from the

perspectives of these three restaurant types, as explained earlier. There were two à la carte and lunch buffet focus groups and one cafeteria focus group. The backgrounds of the focus group informants are shown in Table 4.

Date and duration	Organisational role	Experience in the restaurant or environmentally sustainable industry
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Restaurant manager	> 10 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Restaurant manager, sustainability	> 10 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Customer success manager, consult	> 10 years
June 9th, 2021,2h	Entrepreneur advisor, the restaurant industry	> 10 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Restaurant service management teacher	> 10 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Kitchen manager	> 10 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Environmentally sustainable student	> 10 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Senior food authority expert	> 10 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Foodservice expert	> 10 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Project Manager	4-9 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Project coordinator	4-9 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Entrepreneur, customer communication	1-3 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Customer experience consultant	1-3 years
June 9th, 2021, 2h	Student	No experience

Table 4: Profile of the focus group interview informants

The informants were professionals with backgrounds in the restaurant or environmental sustainability industry. One informant was a student. All of the informants had voluntarily registered for the focus groups, which means they all were motivated by the topic.

The preliminary data from the focus group interviews showed that there was not much data related to cafeterias and that the data was extremely high-level. Therefore, the researcher decided to merge the data from the cafeteria groups into the lunch buffet data and consider both of them represented in this study as “food service companies”.

For the focus group interviews, a semi-structured interview guide with the main topics and schedule was created to ensure the same structure and phases were followed in each group discussion. The semi-structured focus group interview guide is given in Appendix 2. Before the actual focus group interview day, the moderators had a preparation meeting to go through the interview guidelines, agree on all the practicalities, and go through different elements of being a good moderator. In this way, it was guaranteed that the results from the interviews were comparable; each group discussion was based on the same structure, and similar questions were raised in the groups.

The topic of the focus group discussion was "How to develop customer relationships within small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies from the point of view of environmentally friendly food?" The focus group discussion was divided into four parts: the introduction to the topic, the introduction between the participants, the introduction and short training on how to use Mural, the discussion, and the ideation parts. The introduction was based on the literature review, and the target was to tune the focus group members closer to the topic. The introduction between the participants helped create an open atmosphere for the discussion and ideas. The training part on how to use Mural helped everyone feel comfortable using the tool as a working platform. The discussion and the ideation parts were the focal points of the focus groups.

The iterated version of the customer journey map was used as a boundary object in the focus group discussions. The iterated journey map includes the customer's and the organisation's perspective. Each of the four stages (pre, arrival, during, post) in the journey map included issues raised in the in-depth interviews (customers' pain points, expectations, experiences, needs, wants, motivations, etc.) as well as data found in the literature. An example of the iterated journey map used in the focus group interview can be seen in Appendix 3. The focus group's task was to discuss each stage of the customer journey from the perspectives of the customer, the small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies, and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. The focus group discussed, developed, and brainstormed ideas and solutions on how an organisation could respond to the issues raised in the journey maps. The target was to find ideas on how to improve the customer experience, develop relationships, and how to link everything to environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption in the context of small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies.

As a field note in the focus group interviews, electronic sticky notes were used on the Mural platform. The discussion in the group was captured through the ideas participants brainwrote alone and brainstormed together. This process supported that the ideas were built on top of others, which is one of the perquisites of successful idea creation. After the brainwriting and brainstorming, a group reviewed the ideas and voted for the most appropriate ideas for each phase of the customer journey. In the end, each focus group gathered the most appropriate ideas around the different phases in the customer journey. An example of the customer journey with the selected ideas is illustrated in Appendix 4.

At the end of the focus group sessions, all the focus groups came together in one Zoom room and a summary of the results from each of the five focus groups was presented. The presentations of the summaries were recorded, but the recordings failed due to technical reasons. Luckily, this did not hinder the researcher from having access to the data discussed in different focus groups because the researcher had made manual notes during the final

presentation session and all the ideas and thoughts brainstormed in the groups were available in electronic post-it notes in Mural.

3.5 Data analysis

After collecting the data from the interviews, the next step in the research process was data analysis. Data analysis is about systematically sorting and classifying collected data. (Green et al. 2007, 548). Data collection and analysis go hand in hand with qualitative research. The most critical activity in this process is a continuous discovery. The target of the data analysis is to develop a better understanding of what was examined earlier by analysing and continuously refining the researcher's earlier interpretations of the data. (Taylor et al. 2015, 160.)

3.5.1 Data analysis approaches

The data analysis process of this study was guided by the research questions and a goal to create a visual representation, a data structure, of the data discovered. According to Gioia et al. (2013, 20) creating a data structure is maybe the most important step in the entire research approach. The data structure enables the organising of data logically and serves as a visual representation of how the data analysis evolved from raw data to main themes.

Inductive and deductive data analysis approaches

The researcher felt that she needed to use a mixture of inductive and deductive approaches in coding data to get the best possible outcome. According to Taylor et al. (2015, 169), a mixture of analyses is accepted because there is no systematic technique for data analysis in any qualitative research approach. Therefore, the researcher should feel free to borrow and mix techniques.

An inductive data approach to analysis is recommended when the data about the phenomenon is fragmented or there is not enough prior knowledge about the phenomenon. In inductive coding, the researcher develops the codes as the data is reviewed; the codes are derived from the data by combining instances into a more extensive statement. The inductive approach allows the data to speak for itself, and the codes reflect the issues of importance to participants themselves. (Hennink et al. 2020, 220-221.)

A deductive approach is appropriate when the overall goal is to test a theory or existing data in a different or new context - analysing starts from general statements, from a prior theory to specific instances. In deductive coding, the researcher creates a list of codes based on established research questions and theory before reviewing the data. (Elo & Kyngäs 2008, 107, 109; Curedale 2019, 389.) The deductive approach allows the researcher to keep the connection between the research and theory (Brinkmann & Kvale 2009, 227).

By following the deductive approach, the following main categories for the codes were derived before the actual analysing of the data began.

1. Environmentally Friendly Food Preparation
2. Environmentally Friendly Food Consumption
3. Customer and Environmentally Friendly Food
4. Small and Medium-sized Restaurants and Food Service Companies and Environmentally Friendly Food
5. Customer and Small and Medium-sized Restaurants and Food Service Companies

The inductive approach in this study followed the steps suggested by Harding (2013): recognising initial categories based on the transcripts, writing codes alongside the transcripts, reviewing the codes, revising and updating the categories, and searching for themes and findings within each category. The inductive approach offered the researcher the opportunity to be open to additional categories than the deductive approach suggested.

Mixing the inductive and deductive methods in this research proved to be a good tactic. In some parts of the later analysis, the researcher went through the data in a more abstract sense and thought about what was going on here, and based on this, a code was created. Then again, in some parts of the data, a detailed analysis was easier to do using ready-made categories for the codes.

3.5.2 Data analysis phases

The 1st and 2nd level analysis

Various terms have been used to describe the phases and activities in the qualitative data analysis process (see Gioia et al. 2013; Elo & Kyngäs 2008; Corbin & Strauss 2015; Green et al. 2007; Pinho, Beirão, Patrício & Fisk 2014; Saldaña 2013). For example, Gioia et al. (2013) share the data analysis for 1st level of and 2nd level of analysis in which they use the terms 1st order concepts, 2nd order themes, and aggregate dimensions. Green et al. (2007) present the four data analysis steps: data immersion, coding, categorising, and identifying themes. In this study the synergy of the data analysis process described by both Gioia et al. (2013) and Green et al. (2007) is used: the 1st level analysis consists of data immersion and coding. The 2nd level analysis includes creating the categories and identifying themes.

The 1st level of analysis gives a clearer understanding of the topic under investigation, guides further analysis, and allows for faster analysis (Green et al. 2007, 547; Gioia et al. 2013). By using the coding, keywords from the data are connected to a text segment to allow later identification of a sentence (Brinkmann & Kvale 2009, 227).

In the 2nd level data analysis, the aim is to find shared meanings for pieces of information found. This is accomplished by comparing and combining data elements and structuring the data to a higher level. (see Gioia et al. 2013; Elo & Kyngäs 2008; Corbin & Strauss 2015; Saldaña 2013, 13.)

The data analysis process is a constant comparative method - by comparing different pieces of data, ideas will be refined and tightened up and gradually move to a higher level of data structure (Taylor et al. 2015, 179; Glaser & Strauss 1967, cited in Glaser & Strauss 1999.)

Figure 15 visualises the data analysis process in this study: how raw data immersion from qualitative in-depth and focus group interviews is gradually built up through coding to categories into major themes to understand the data and proceed toward the data structure.

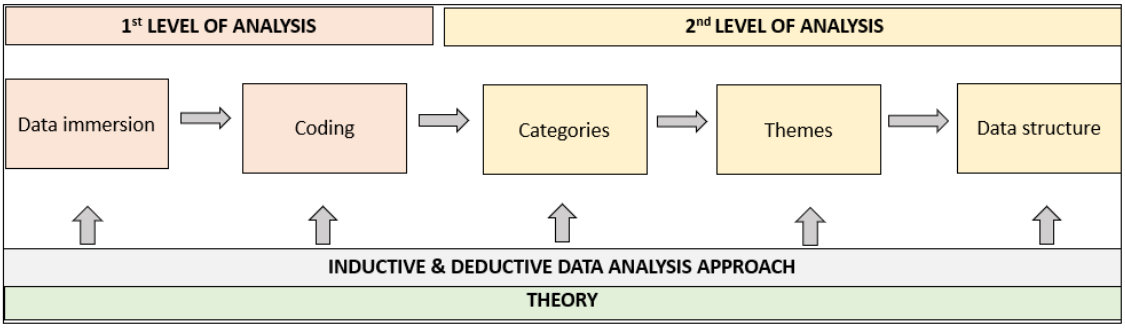

Figure 15: Data analysis process towards data structure

The 1st level analysis - data immersion and coding

The analysis started with immersion in the data, which means that the researcher focused on a detailed examination of various aspects of the data. The immersion began during the in-depth interviews as the researcher noticed and recorded concerns that might arise during the study's progress.

After each in-depth interview, the researcher transcribed the recordings. By deep diving and re-reading the transcripts, the researcher mirrored the data to the research questions and manually assigned the first set of codes to interesting quotes, terms, phrases, and words. The target was to identify codes that answer the research questions (see Braun & Clarke 2013; SAGE Research Methods Datasets 2019.) The researcher moved back and forth to get a broad overview of the content. The researcher made data notations by creating codes in the margins and keeping track of interesting insights and interpretations. Coding helped to put the meaning of information into a more understandable format (see Curedale 2019, 387).

The insights from the data were first colour-coded in the Word file, after which a coding keyword was added into a margin next to the transcribed text. Soon after, other patterns and

codes emerged in the data, some of which remained more relevant while others were further redefined. As more codes emerged, the researcher started to use symbols instead of colour codes and keywords. From the Word file, the researcher transferred the data into an Excel sheet.

The first set of codes from the in-depth interviewees was linked to the interviewees' needs, pains, opinions, feelings, behaviours, and interactions with the restaurant and environmentally friendly food. These initial codes worked as guidelines when the researcher created a structure and questions for the focus group interviews. At this stage, inductive coding guided the study's progress and analysis. The initial main findings served as a guideline when preparing for the next phase – the focus group interviews.

The 1st level of focus group data analysis started during the focus group interviews at the same time when the content was created and the process of sorting and mapping the content began. The focus group data consisted of the discussed and brainstormed solutions and ideas in the groups. The participants in the focus groups were directly involved in the analysis by sharing their ideas, discussing, brainstorming, and selecting the final ideas and solutions together. The data from the focus groups was analysed on the digital platform Mural, where the participants had also initially worked with data.

The more detailed coding and final categories were created after all the in-depth and focus-group interviews were conducted. When coding, the researcher asked herself questions like: How do interviewees talk about the topic and understand it? What are their assumptions? What is going on here? What can I learn about this note? What surprises me? What disturbs me? (see Saldaña 2013, 21-22). At some point, the researcher felt that there was saturation in coding - codes represented the research topic well and widely, and no new insights emerged for further coding. (see Krueger & Casey 2009, 21; Brinkmann & Kvale 2009, 227.)

According to Hennink et al. (2020, 224, 226) a valuable and practical code is relevant to the research topic, represents the issue well, is recognised and repeated across data, and is raised by participants. Because reviewing data and selecting codes includes the researcher's subjective interpretations, it is vital to use some validity checks. The researcher had this in mind and was aware of her bias, especially when coding informants' indirect statements. The indirect statements revealed the latent content, underlying aspects of issues, assumptions, and emotions expressed by participants. (see Elo & Kyngäs 2008, 109.) To "get beyond of own biases" and truly "get inside" the data, the researcher considered various definitions of a word and thought in terms of metaphor (see Corbin & Strauss 2015, 216). The researcher also kept all the time in mind that the coded data should support the purpose of the research.

The 2nd level analysis – categories, themes, data structure

The 2nd level of analysis consists of the diversity of data combined into high-level categories

and further themes. (see Gioia et al. 2013; Elo & Kyngäs 2008; Corbin & Strauss 2015.) In the categorisation phase, codes were classified through iteration into more general, higher-level categories, representing a group of content that is internally homogeneous and has a commonality. (Weber 1990, cited in Elo & Kyngäs 2008, 109.)

In the 2nd level analysis, the coded data from the in-depth interviews was copied from the Word document into an Excel sheet. Next, the raw data was put into groups. Each group was given a header that encapsulated the theme of each group. Each Excel row included the coded data, while each column represented the initial categories. As mentioned already, the initial five categories were derived from the theory using a deductive approach. The initial five categories were: Environmentally Friendly Food Preparation, Environmentally Friendly Food Consumption, Customer and Environmentally Friendly Food, Small and Medium-sized Restaurants and Food Service Companies and Environmentally Friendly Food, Customer and Small and Medium-sized Restaurants and Food Service Companies.

In Excel, the researcher looked at the relationship between the codes and the coded data with the initial categories. The codes and data were grouped under the category if there was a match. The codes and data that did not fit into any initial categories were left alone at this stage. As the analysis iteration progressed in Excel and through re-reading the in-depth interview transcripts, new categories were formed, compared, and combined by redefining existing categories. In this way, all the coded data was grouped under some category in the end.

Regarding the 2nd level analysis of the focus group, the researcher went through all 144 electrical post-it notes created in the focus groups. The electrical post-it notes included comments, ideas, and solutions brainstormed in the focus groups linked to issues related to the customer journey with the à la carte or lunch buffet restaurant.

The keywords and main ideas in the post-its were recognised, sorted, and integrated into the groups. There was an overlap in the data as some pieces of data fit into two or more categories. According to Taylor et al. (2015, 176), in this case, data points should be coded to all relevant categories. The researcher followed this advice when categorising the data in this study.

Finally, the categories from in-depth and focus group interviews were brought together in the Mural platform to explore patterns and analyse data affinity diagrams. Affinity diagrams enabled the researcher to explore, understand, and establish relationships between pieces of insight and come up with new understanding within complex data. Affinity diagrams and Mural offered an excellent way to visualise the data as a whole, which supported the creation of a holistic understanding of the research topic. In affinity diagramming, each group was given a header to describe the group's attributes. Different colours in the electrical post-it

notes were used to separate the findings. As a result of this process, some groups emerged, some new groups formed, and some were replaced. Gradually, in this process, the final first-order categories were refined, which then formed second-order categories. As the process continued by exploring the dimensions and relationships between categories more abstract theoretical themes emerged. (see Hennink et al. 2020, 248-250.) The relevance of a theme is evaluated by whether it captures anything important concerning the overarching research question. Themes do not have to include all of the data; rather, they must be selected because qualitative research tells a story about the data that answers the research questions. (Braun & Clarke, 2013.) When recognising the themes, it becomes easier to understand how the data elements fit together and start to form a data structure. A data structure is a larger conceptual framework that clarifies data-to-theory connections. A data structure is a static picture of a dynamic phenomenon that theoretically captures the informants' experience (Gioia et al. 2013, 22). The data structure of this research is illustrated in Figure 16.

The data structure in Figure 16 describes the first and second order categories as well as the themes. Three themes were recognised based on data analysis using open and selective coding and affinity diagramming. The three themes identified are: “the relationship between the customer and environmentally friendly food”, “the relationship between the customer and the organisation”, “the relationship between the organisation, the customer and environmentally friendly food”.

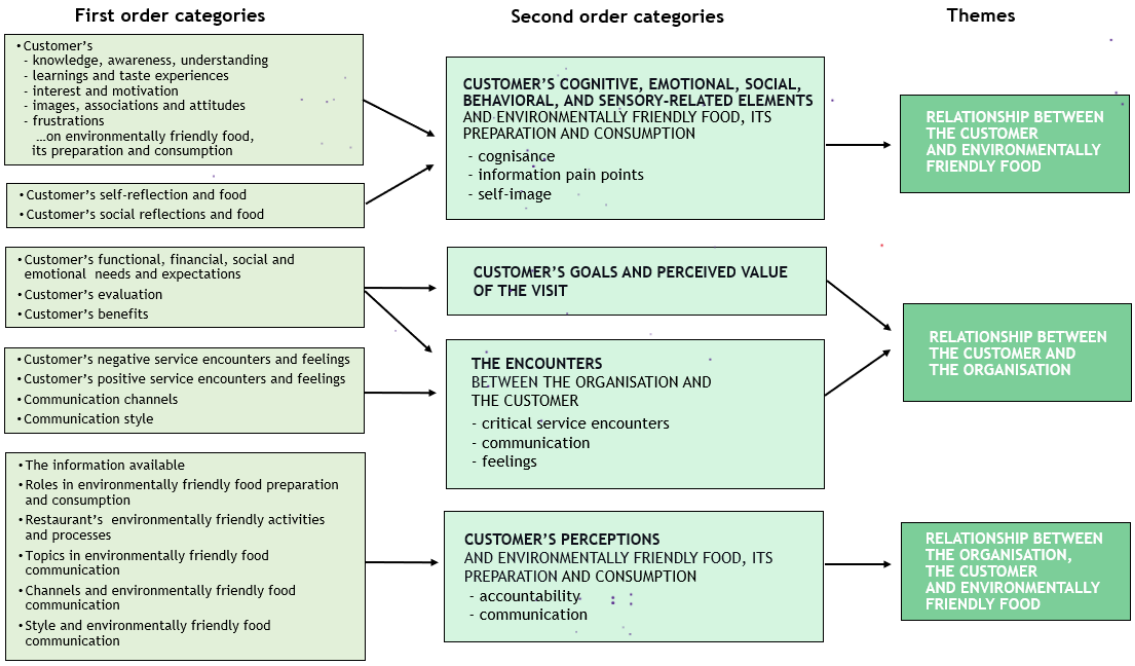

Figure 16: Data structure of the current research

The data structure forms the foundation to explain the topic researched and supports the purpose of this research, which is to design a framework connecting customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption.

4 Empirical findings

In this chapter, the key findings of the research are presented based on the themes and second order categories in the data structure presented in Figure 16. The data structure helps identify relationships in the research data while, at the same time, it forms a starting point in designing the framework for this study.

4.1 Relationship between the customer and environmentally friendly food

The first theme in the data structure, the relationship between the customer and environmentally friendly food is dependent on the various elements connected with the customer's cognitive, emotional, social, and sensory drivers. Through these drivers, the customer evaluates environmental friendliness and food and what they mean to her/him. In the end, this all influences how the customer positions the environmentally friendly food in her/his mind. From the data related to customer's cognitive, emotional, social, and sensory drivers, particularly three categories emerged that sum up the customer's perspectives on environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. These categories are customer's cognisance, information pain points, and self-image. These are summarised next and after that, they are discussed in detail.

1. **The customer's cognisance and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption**
   The customer's cognisance includes in this study the customer's awareness, knowledge, and understanding of environmentally friendly food and its preparation and consumption. The data suggests that the customer's cognisance influences how interested and motivated the customer is in the environmentally friendly food topic.

2. **The customer's information pain points and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption**
   This category relates to the customer's frustrations, obstacles, and overall pain points in understanding environmentally friendly food concept, and the availability of information about it.

3. **The customer's self-image and environmentally friendly food**
   This category refers to how the customer defines her/himself as a person and as a

consumer. According to the data, the customer's self-image is connected to how the customer reflects her/himself to others when it comes to environmental friendliness and environmentally friendly food.

4.1.1 The customer's cognisance

The informants associated environmentally friendly food in the context of medium-sized restaurants and food service companies with vegetarian food, vegetables, Finnish food, local food, local suppliers, and food leftover management, as exemplified by the following quotes:

> *"The first thing that comes to my mind is vegetarian food. Then Finnish food. Can I also say, to minimise food leftovers? " (Informant 4A)*

> *"I see environmentally friendly food only as a vegetarian and Finnish food. I link environmental friendliness to local and Finnish food." (Informant 1L)*

Also, recycling, sorting, packaging, and serving dishware and how the restaurant handles its food-preparation and consumption-related processes were mentioned:

> *"..local food, vegetarian, avoiding food leftovers, recycling. For example, when being a customer at a lunch buffet, sorting and recycling when I take the dishes away... I can not say what kind of serving dishware contribute to environmental sustainability..." (Informant 2L)*

> *"Nothing comes to my mind related to food itself, but instead sorting and recycling the waste and packaging, taking care of the fat, how the restaurants take care of all these things, and how the restaurant makes decisions and choices based on these." (Informant 5A)*

> *"At least recycling and minimising the amount of food waste come to my mind first." (Informant 6A)*

In addition, meat substitutes were brought up when the informants shared their thoughts on environmentally friendly food consumption:

> *"I am sorry, but I am not excited about these meat substitutes... I would rather have vegetarian food as vegetarian food, not any seitan steak. If the meat substitutes are poorly seasoned, it can drive you away and leave you with the impression that vegetarian food is generally bad… There was only one vegetarian dish on the menu, I could not believe it. It was a veggie burger, and it was the worst... I do not know how you can ruin a veggie burger, it tasted really bad. There was some kind of a broad bean thing, kind of like a big, thick*

dry steak. If someone eats a vegetarian hamburger like this, she/he will probably never eat again." (Informant 3L)

Meat substitutes can evoke negative reactions in some customers. Reasons for this seem to be bad experiences in taste, meat substitutes quality has not been what was expected, or the customer's strict beliefs about a particular food overall, for example how a hamburger should be prepared and served:

"Actually, in my opinion, a meat patty is a patty, and it should be included in the hamburger. I have never eaten a veggie hamburger." (Informant L2)

Most of the informants highlighted the importance of the quality and tastiness of the vegetables used in the food, as stated in the following.

"When I make a veggie burger, I always use just real vegetables. But when restaurants use fake meat, many times it just ruins the food. This is mainly because, in my opinion, a meat substitute does not improve the food, but good vegetables do it much better." (Informant 3L)

"If I eat vegetables, I want to eat fresh vegetables, some good pasta, or some roasted vegetables, in other words, there must be high-quality and tasty ingredients. I could even pay for that lunch buffet that does not use frozen vegetables but vegetables from a local producer." (Informant L2)

Maybe I am a self-centered person because I want to eat something that tastes good. A large part of many vegetables tastes good, but I do not eat them because they are vegetables, but because they are just fine and, for example, as a side dish, vegetables are the best." (Informant 5A)

Informants also revealed their earlier childhood experiences related to food waste and how it impacts their thinking today:

"..when I think about where all that food goes if you do not eat it in a restaurant… I feel bad... We were brought up and taught in the 80s, that you should not leave any food." (Informant 3L)

"My parents taught me to finish the whole plate. If you give me 10 kilos of anything… I will eat it all." (Informant 2A)

Thus, the customer's memories, feelings, and learnings can also have a strong impact on how the customer perceives the food. This indicates that the customer's memories, feelings, and

learnings could be used to influence the customer's attitudes and thoughts about environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption in a restaurant context.

4.1.2 The customer's information pain points

The data shows the importance of information on environmentally friendly food issues. The information and various challenges or bottlenecks related to it were either directly or indirectly referred to in the data many times. This can be seen, for example, from the following comments.

> *"Does the rice always come from abroad? Could someone tell me if there are rice farms in Finland… I did not know before how bad meat processing is for environmental friendliness. But now when I know it, I could have a meat-free day in a week." (Informant 5A)*

> *"I am not so interested in the carbon footprint, or I do not have enough information. I do not know how to calculate it concretely, how much it destroys the earth, isn't it the whole supply chain... I have not thought about it..." (Informant 4A)*

> *"Understanding environmental friendliness is difficult, and I feel even bamboo straws are just a marketing trick. I remember hearing that the biggest plastic waste problem is fishermen's nets". (Informant 6A)*

The findings show that there is confusion with the concept of environmentally friendly food - what is meant by different food terms and how to know which environmentally friendly food item or practice is more environmentally sustainable than the other. When the informants talked about "meat" it was used in various contexts. "The meat" was used when informants referred to "red meat", "white meat", "hamburger steak", "fake meat" or "meat substitute". When "meat" was mentioned, ethical aspects were also brought up. One informant, for example questioned what is actually meant by "white meat":

> *"Others say that chicken farms are full of murder and fish is expensive, and there is not enough food if the restaurant is not serving meat. Confusing… What is even meant by white meat…" (Informant 5A)*

Another informant brought up the material of the serving dishware and the contradictory information related to that.

> *"Someone once said that even paper dishes are sustainable products if they are made from recyclable material because no energy is used to wash them." (Informant 2L*)

As mentioned, the informants stressed many times the importance of information and its availability, as stated below.

> *"Easy access to information would support becoming automatically more aware of environmental friendliness. It would certainly "normalise" people's behaviour towards sustainable food." (Informant 1L)*

> *"I am really interested in food, whether it is eaten at home or in a restaurant, but I need to admit that I have not paid that much attention to whether the food is environmentally friendly or not. Perhaps it is partly because I have not seen any restaurant promoting or branding themselves in the context of environmentally friendly food, and in addition, I do not have much knowledge about the topic." (Informant 6A)*

Also, the role of the media and in what light everything is understood and seen was brought up in the discussions:

> *"In my opinion, the media has a huge role in how I see and understand environmental friendliness. It all depends on how environmentally friendly related issues are related and to whom and what trust." (Informant 1L)*

> *"I think that environmental friendliness is overhyped..., I can not get excited about it except by doing my part. I am a bit tired of that environmental friendliness topic in general." (Informant 5A)*

Thus, for the customer, it is not just about environmentally friendly food but environmentally friendly topics overall. The way general environmentally friendly information is presented, both on its own and with other topics in the media, impacts how the customer understands environmentally friendly food.

4.1.3 The customer's self-image

The findings indicate that the customer's relationship with environmentally friendly food is linked to how the customer identifies her/himself and what is the customer's self-image related to food and environmental friendliness overall. This self-image is based on the customer's experiences, the level of knowledge, assumptions, images, and overall interest related to environmental friendliness and environmentally friendly food. The customer's self-image naturally affects how the customer reflects her/himself to others in a social setting. This can be seen in the following comments.

> *"I ordered a vegeburger at ABC (a petrol station chain in Finland) when we went to Ruka, I have to explain why we stopped to eat at ABC..." (Informant 3L)*

> *"Selling lunch as food leftover for a low price or giving it away for free to the unemployed and residents of alcohol sanatoriums would be good. However, I would not eat lunch that is made from the leftovers." (Informant 2L)*

Thus, the above comments suggest that based on what food the customer eats and where the customer consumes food influences how the customer sees her/himself and others in a social context. A restaurant selling leftover food is seen as a good concept. However, depending on the customer's images, associations, and attitudes toward the leftover food and the types of people who consume it, the customer might not want to have leftover food her/himself.

The findings also indicate that the customer's images, associations, and attitudes towards overall environmental friendliness and issues related to that impact her/his opinions and self-image in environmentally friendly food:

> *"I alienate the term "vegetarian food" because I do not want to be vegan or a supporter of the green party. It seems as if all activities up to the very end would be guided through the environment, which is a distant idea to me... For example, the green party should have the environment and sustainability at the top of everything, as their name suggests, but in reality, they do not make environmentally friendly decisions as a whole." (Informant 5A)*

The above quote suggests that if you eat vegetarian food, you are a vegan and support the green party. The customer might consider environmentally friendly food to be something extreme, you either practice it in all your activities or you do not care about the topic at all. In addition, if the customer has negative associations with something related to environmental friendliness, it might directly impact the customer's attitude toward environmentally friendly food.

Based on the findings, the knowledge and awareness the customer has of environmentally friendly food are linked to the customer's interest, motivation and self-reflection about consuming environmentally friendly food. This all naturally impacts the customer's belief in how much she/he can influence environmental friendliness through her/his behaviour as shown in the following comment.

> *"I feel that I do not have a lot of knowledge. I do not know the relationship between environmental friendliness, environmentally friendly food and the whole sustainability concept. I am not aware of how I could contribute. I do*

not consider myself a sceptic, but I do not know how I could make an impact..." (Informant 4A)

Next, the main findings from the customer's cognitive, emotional, social, and sensory drivers are summarised from the customer's cognisance, information pain points, and self-image point of view.

Cognisance

- The customer connects environmentally friendly food with elements that are linked to her/his cognitive, emotional, social, and sensory-related experiences and elements.
- The customer's knowledge, awareness, and understanding of environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption influence the customer's interest and motivation in the topic.
- The customer links environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption in small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies to food preparation and consumption processes and activities, food ingredients, suppliers, the origin of the food, and consumption materials.

Information pain points

- The customers have various pain points related to information, messages and content, concerning environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption:
    - Difficult for the customer to find clear, correct, and trustworthy information.
    - The customer lacks interest, feels the message does not concern her/him, the information is complex, confusing, and not appealing enough.
    - The customer is tired of the topic of environmentally friendly food and climate change.
    - The customer's level of trust is low - the customer does not trust the sources of information or the reliability of the message and content.

Self-image

- The way the customer perceives her/himself compared to others is partly connected to the customer's images and thoughts on environmentally friendly food.
- Even if the customer has a positive attitude towards environmentally friendly food, it does not mean that the customer will behave in an environmentally friendly way.
    - Environmental friendliness as a concept can create in some customers strong assumptions and beliefs, which the customer reflects on environmentally friendly food. At times, this might create conflicting situations for the customer. For example, the customer might have some level of interest in environmentally friendly food consumption, but at the same time, the

customer is afraid that others might think the customer supports the green party or is poor because she/he buys food leftovers.

4.2 Relationship between the customer and the organisation

The second theme in the data structure focuses on the relationship between the customer and small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company. This theme can be divided into two categories: the customer's goals and perceived value, and the encounters between the organisation and the customer. Next, the findings from this theme are presented and discussed in detail.

1. **Customer's goals (needs and expectations) and perceived value**
   Findings show that the customer's needs and expectations create the customer's goals for a restaurant visit. The target of the customer's needs and expectations is to create the customer abstract or concrete benefits. The way the customer experiences the benefits and perceives their value in relation to the customer's initial goals creates the perceived value. The nature of the perceived value depends upon whether the organisation meets, lowers, or exceeds the customer's goals (needs and expectations) in the service encounters along the customer's journey. This finding is also aligned with the earlier studies (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml 1991; Teng & Wu 2019).

2. **Encounters between the customer and the organisation**
   - **Critical service encounters**
     Findings show that the service encounters between the small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company and the customer create the basis for the relationship's creation. The service encounters are connected to the customer's needs, expectations, perceived value, and, in the end, feelings. From all the service encounters, it is possible to recognise the most critical service encounters. Critical service encounters are the ones that matter the most and evoke strong feelings in the customer. The customer's feelings are based on the difference between the customer's expectations and actual experiences in specific service encounters. Critical service encounters can become opportunities or threats for the restaurant depending on how it manages them in the eyes of the customer.

   - **Communication and feelings**
     The organisation influences the customer's feelings through communication in the various service encounters. Important from the point of view of the customer's feelings are what is communicated, what is not communicated,

what is the style of the communication, who/what communicates, when the communication happens or does not happen, where it is communicated, and where it is not communicated.

4.2.1 Customer's goals and perceived value

When choosing between the restaurants, the à la carte customer highlights the context and the expected experience from the visit. The context refers to why and with whom the customer visits the restaurant. Both the context and the expected experience are connected to the customer's social and emotional needs and expectations. Examples of the informants' selection criteria for an à la carte restaurant include the following:

> *"My selection criteria are influenced by many things, such as trendiness, taste, nice interior, friends, service, and quality. Trendiness, or how popular the place is in the restaurant industry, is a pretty important feature. If it is a special occasion, the price is not so important because then you are just after the experience. " (Informant 4A)*

> *"Selection criteria for à la carte depends on who you go with - a trendy place with a friend, an atmospheric place with the wife." (Informant 5A)*

Also, functional and financial needs and expectations in terms of price and quality of food were highlighted in informants' comments about à la carte restaurants:

> *"The restaurant's food and style are important factors. I am also always looking for good value for money." (Informant 4A)*

Expectations for an à la carte restaurant are partly built on word of mouth and reviews. Also, the image the customer gets from the website seems to have an essential role in defining which restaurant the customer chooses as shown by the following comments.

> *"I many times ask for restaurant recommendations at work." (Informant 4A)*

> *"If there are pictures on the website, it makes the choice easier. My expectations of the restaurants are often formed based on the reviews and the website." (Informant 5A)*

> *"I always look at the restaurant reviews before deciding where to go." (Informant 6A)*

Thus, various online and offline channels create an image of the restaurant that impacts the feeling that the customer gets from the place. With this image, the customer reflects her/his

expectations of the restaurant visit. Ultimately, this image and the feelings it creates will likely determine which restaurant the customer prefers in the short and also in long run.

The data revealed that the lunch buffet customers' needs and expectations are focused on the efficiency and easiness of the processes of visiting the restaurant. Contrary to à la carte customers, lunch buffet customers usually have a limited time for lunch:

> *"I want efficiency and taste from a lunch buffet. Everything needs to be clear and sensible: here is the salad, here is the main course, so I do not have to think about where to get food and drinks for example. Fluency is important in a lunch buffet, for it means that all touching points have been thought out well and everything is smooth. The lunch buffet should be planned in such a way that the customer takes as few steps as possible, for example, a bad example would be if a door is in a completely different direction than sorting dishes." (Informant 2L)*

> *"The choice of the lunch buffet could be made even easier by the fact that you can get and finish your food within 25 minutes." (Informant 1L)*

> *"It should be easy, you need to get the food quickly, the advantage of the buffet is that you can get it right away, you do not have to wait in line." (Informant 3L)*

> *"The lunch buffet payment must be smooth." (Informant 2L)*

Aligned with efficiency, the importance of the location was also mentioned when selecting the lunch buffet:

> *"We have three places close to the office that we go to." (Informant 3L)*

> *"I am quite loyal to the lunch buffets near my current workplace. The location is the most important factor, it should be within 10 minutes walking distance from work. It is not an option for me to go by car." (Informant 2L)*

> *"Near the office, there are only two bad options to choose from, but in those places, we visit." (Informant 1L)*

Another element that was part of the informants' expectations and needs in regards to the lunch buffet was a certain price level:

> *"Must be the price of a lunch coupon." (Informant 2L)*

"We use lunch coupons, which is the reason we visit those specific lunch buffets." (Informant 3L)

"I do not think about the price at lunch because everything is the same price." (Informant 1L)

Both à la carte and lunch buffet informants highlighted the need for quality and tastiness of the food as can be seen from the below comments.

"I choose the à la carte based on the good food and good price-quality ratio." (Informant 4A)

"Definitely, the quality and taste of the food are one of the main criteria for me when deciding to which restaurant to go to." (Informant 6A)

"The main criterion for choosing a lunch restaurant is the good taste of the food. At the lunch buffet, the euros are pretty tight, and I hope that all the euros are put into the taste of the food." (Informant 2L)

For vegetarians and groups, the variety of food at the lunch buffet is essential, as explained in the following comments.

"I choose the lunch buffet based on the menu - what food is available and which is the best food. I am vegetarian." (Informant 1L)

"A wide selection of food is great because there are many of us going to eat out - many of them are men, many are steak lovers and then there is I who wants a vegetarian version. So both options should be available." (Informant 3L)

"It is important that the salad section at the lunch buffet is versatile." (Informant 1L)

The informants did not mention directly that they consider weekday lunch buffets also from a socialising point of view. But based on latent meanings in data, it is evident that social needs emerge in the context of a lunch buffet as well. This can be seen in the following comments.

"I could go to lunch later, but I often go early because that is the habit at my workplace and most colleagues go to lunch already at 11 a.m." (Informant 1L)

"We go for lunch with a group of colleagues, and, of course, if we cannot find a table in the restaurant, we go somewhere else." (Informant 3L)

Hygiene factors seem to be the most important needs and expectations when it comes to lunch buffet restaurants:

> *"Of course, my attention is primarily focused on cleanliness in lunch places." (Informant 1L)*

> *"The lunch place must be clean, hygienic, and looking clean. The saying "cleanliness is half the food" is a really important factor. And of course, when it is a nicely made place, or if you can go to the terrace in the summer... I think the dirtiness was such that I would not go there again." (Informant 3L)*

Findings demonstrate that lunch buffet customers are easily satisfied.

> *"I often get a wow effect when I go for a lunch buffet because if you pay only 10.90€ for it.. and I will eat in a very nice place somewhere by the riverside, the food is good and affordable and in good company, the restaurant is nice, so it is money well spent." (Informant 3L)*

> *"I know that lunches are made with very small margins, so they cannot be fancy." (Informant 2L)*

In addition, restaurants' service mistakes at the lunch buffet are easily forgiven.

> *"I can forgive bad food more easily than bad service at lunch. Or even bad service; it is not such a big deal, as long as no one sniffs. If that happens, normally, they are some young or inexperienced waiters, so it is not such a big deal for me now." (Informant 3L)*

> *"Once I said at lunch that the chicken was raw, and the waiter said that it was cooked in some special oven, and it could not be raw. But I continue going to the same lunch buffet." (Informant 2L)*

> *"The reason I would not go to the same lunch restaurant again would be food poisoning." (Informant 2L)*

As a result, it can be said that lunch buffet customers' expectations are not high as long as their basic needs and expectations will be met. The findings related to the customer's goals and perceived value are summarised below.

Customer's goals and perceived value

- Both the à la carte customer and the lunch buffet customer have a mixture of needs and expectations related to emotional, functional, social and financial aspects when

choosing and visiting the place. These needs and expectations form the customer's goals for the visit. Based on how the organisation manages to meet or exceed the customer's needs and expectations, defines how the customer evaluates the benefits and value she/he gets. In the end, this influences customer relationship development.

- There exist some basic needs and expectations that à la carte and lunch buffet customer automatically expects from the organisation. The customer pays attention to them only if they do not work. Therefore, before the organisation starts to get loyal customers or positive word-of-mouth, the organisation needs to make sure that the customer's basic needs will at least be met.
    - Basic needs and expectations for the à la carte customer are related to factors about hygiene, tasty and quality food, quality-price ratio, friendly personnel, moderate waiting times for getting a table, food, and a correct invoice. The interesting fact was that hygiene was not directly mentioned by à la carte restaurant informants, unlike food service company informants. This does not mean that à la carte restaurant customers would not care about hygiene, but that it is something that is taken for granted if visiting an à la carte restaurant. It just needs to be there if the restaurant wants to continue its business.
    - The basic needs of lunch buffet customers are focused on factors concerning hygiene, location, taste, and quality food within a certain price range, as well as the efficiency of the processes of getting the food, making the payment, and leaving the restaurant within a limited time.

- Once the organisation has met the customer's basic needs and expectations, the organisation can focus on other factors affecting its customer relationships. These are the benefits the customer expects to get, and the experiences the customer has during the visit. Both of these influence the customer's image of the organisation, which reflects also the development of the customer relationship.
    - The data showed that especially à la carte customers' needs and expectations are formed based on the image the customer has of the restaurant, and the context of the visit – with whom, when, and why the customer visits the restaurant. The image the customer uses in selecting the restaurant is formed based on the restaurant reviews, the customer's own and network's experiences, and everything the customer has seen and heard about the restaurant.
    - In addition to basic needs, à la carte customers are always seeking some kind of extra experience, such as socialising, food, service, or overall atmosphere. The findings show that the lunch buffet customer does not

usually have high expectations or extra needs regarding the visit, which is mainly due to the low price of the lunch buffet.

4.2.2 Encounters between the organisation and customer

In this research, the encounters between the customer and a small and medium-sized restaurant or food service company refer to three closely interlinked elements impacting the customer's and the organisation's relationship. These three elements are discussed in this section, and they are: the critical service encounters, the communication the customer has with the organisation, and the customer's feelings. These are all closely connected to the customer's goals (needs and expectations) and perceived value, which were discussed in the previous section.

The critical service encounters, communication, and feelings

According to the findings, along the customer's journey, there are some service encounters where the customer has precise expectations (critical service encounters) and other service encounters where the customer has fewer and more loose expectations. Findings indicate that a variety of factors influence how critical service encounters are formed, but the main nominator appears to be the customer's feelings and expectations. In critical service encounters, not only the personnel's verbal but also non-verbal communication emerged in the data as an essential factor impacting whether the customer is left with positive or negative feelings. The service encounters and feelings were brought up many times in the data, especially concerning à la carte restaurants:

> *"But we came to spend time, and if the staff is busy, it immediately creates a negative feeling... The worst is ignorance, completely leaving the customer alone, or just doing the very basic service, in the worst situation, not even doing the basics." (Informant 4A)*

> *"... If I have gotten a certain impression of the waiter's style - it gives the impression of how good this person is as a customer service person, based on all the gestures." (Informant 5A)*

> *"Sometimes I may say some funny comments or questions to the waiter but if the waiter does not start to play along it feels a bit uncomfortable situation." (Informant 6A)*

The feeling the customer gets from the first impression was also highlighted in the data:

> *"The first impression is really important; what feeling you get from the decoration, the atmosphere, and of course, from the number of people there are. But most of all the staff. I am very strict about the kind of service I get -*

> *how the staff behaves and how politely I am greeted. I remember one time when.. the beginning of the visit was really bad, we did not feel welcomed... The waiter immediately told us to go to the bathroom to wash our hands. It was a really bad start.." (Informant 5A)*

> *"If I notice from the outside that the restaurant is empty to where I planned to go, I will find another restaurant to go." (Informant 6A)*

The data showed that for service encounters to be successful, customer needs to feel valued, heard, and unique. Especially at à la carte, the personnel's small gestures and friendly behaviour can have an extremely positive or negative impact on the customer's experience. The à la carte informants brought up non-verbal communication many times when they described their experiences at a restaurant:

> *"If, for example, in the winter, the waiter takes off your coat and takes it to a cloakroom on your behalf… that has sometimes happened in a nice restaurant. This immediately gives you a special feeling that they are taking care of the customer. It gives you a great feeling that you are valued and they pay attention to you..." (Informant 4A)*

> *"A friendly gesture is memorable, someone who is attentive to the customer in some personal way. If you see that I am busy, then the waiter pays attention to it in some way. Personal noticing, a coin falling to the floor, picking it up, a baby in a pram – helping in opening the door." (Informant 5A)*

> *"I sometimes asked something from the waiter and the way how he looked at me… I got a right away a feeling the waiter did not like me." (Informant 6A)*

All the informants mentioned, indirectly or directly, their experiences in situations where they had had a bad customer experience and how the restaurant reacted to that. Among other things, long waiting times and getting an incorrect invoice were mentioned as bad critical experiences.

> *"The only critical thing is, the waiting time before they take the order, and how long you need to wait for the food. Usually, the waiting time to get the bill is long... If the waiting time is long, it is not good and feels really annoying. Sometimes you cannot forgive it. And of course, if there is a mistake in the bill, it will create a feeling of the restaurant and waiter not being competent enough." (Informant 4A)*

> *“In the UK, a service charge is automatically included in the bill, but sometimes the restaurant adds the question "please add a service fee" in the machine where you make the payment. So they ask this question although the service fee is already included in the total sum of the bill! The restaurant or the waiter does this purposefully and they are really deceiving customers. The way they behave is horrible and makes almost fun of the customer. I would never go to this type of restaurant again if I notice they try to trick customers like this.” (Informant 6A)*

Customer's bad experiences can be turned into positive experiences depending on how the restaurant manages them. This can be seen, for example from the way feedback is handled, including how feedback is gathered and responded to, as well as how the customer perceives the whole process:

> *"I once sent feedback to customer service because it had taken a long time to get service and food at the restaurant. I received a 50€ gift card as compensation and that felt fine." (Informant 5A)*

> *"The kitchen was really slow, and I was in a hurry, and then when I gave feedback… It was not handled in the right way. Admitting mistakes and making corrections in some way is important, perhaps a short, believable explanation for the fact that this does not normally happen would be enough for me. As long as there is a good explanation I can forgive almost everything. Even a bad experience can be turned into a good customer experience." (Informant 5A)*

> *"Once there was a reclamation situation and the waiter started arguing against us, and he got angry and did not admit a mistake. And the rudeness of the waiter... The willingness to apologise for poor quality is really important. That situation created an arrogant feeling and image of the whole restaurant." (Informant 4A)*

When the informants discussed their service experiences and issues concerning feedback, the organisation's communication style and personnel's role came up frequently:

> *"If there is a mistake with the food and you tell the waiter about it and if they just take care of the situation but do not even apologise, it feels bad, there is the emotional experience..." (Informant 4A)*

The way the waiter shows or does not show interest to the customer was brought up in the discussions with both à la carte and lunch buffet informants:

“The welcome given by a waiter was far from a warm welcome. And then the same person happened to be our waiter, but he got better towards the end and started chatting a bit, even joking, and in the end, we managed to get on the same frequency." (Informant 5A)

"Sometimes the waiter passes by and asks if you like the food, and it doesn't seem like they are even interested in the answer." (Informant 4A)

I guess the ignorance and sometimes the character of the waiter are probably the reasons why I do not give feedback." (Informant 5A)

"At the lunch buffet, there is hardly any conversation with the waiters, no deep discussions... then again I am not even expecting that from them. (Informant 1L)

"I do not think that anyone from the personnel at the lunch buffet has ever asked how I like the food." (Informant 3L)

According to the informants’ comments, it could be said that customers do not easily and actively give feedback, or if they do, there needs to be a good reason for that, or then they just give feedback but are not honest.

" If the food is bad then I will give feedback. But many times if the waiter asks how was the food I can say it was amazing even though it would have been a bit tasteless... Maybe I just do not want to make a big mess about it, and I am not sure how the waiter would react to it." (Informant 6A)

"I often just do not feel like giving any feedback. It also depends on your own situation. if, for example, I am at a restaurant celebrating a wedding day or just having a regular lunch. If I have strong emotional expectations from the visit, I will give feedback easily." (Informant 4A)

“Sometimes I give feedback, sometimes I do not. I guess many times I do not give feedback because I want to save the waiter. I do not think it would make any difference even if I gave feedback. I do not think they would believe it or would give any discount if I did not like the food.” (Informant 5A)

“Once I gave feedback at the lunch buffet but it seemed that the personnel did not care about it.” (Informant 1L)

"I have probably never given feedback, but it is not even asked at a lunch place". (Informant 2L)

Some informants mentioned restaurant review sites and social media as a channel for sharing experiences and feedback and deciding which restaurant to go to:

> *" I do not think I have written any reviews online. Probably I have given more to the restaurant directly." (Informant 4A)*

> *"I always ask for restaurant recommendations from my friends or check restaurant reviews and pictures of the food on TripAdvisor, and most of the time I choose a new restaurant based on that." (Informant 6A)*

> *“I usually check lunch buffet menus online, especially when I know that I need to select one lunch buffet place from three bad options.” (informant 1L)*

The findings indicate that service encounters in which customers may not have any specific expectations can turn out to be critical and make a difference in the end when choosing the restaurant. Suppose the lunch buffet can offer something a little extra compared to other lunch buffets - it might impact when the customer chooses between the places that provide the same type of food at the same price level:

> *"Of course, when a place is nicely done, it makes an impact. In the summer, you might choose a lunch buffet just because of the sunny terrace." (Informant 3L)*

Another examples of service encounters where the informants did not have any expectations were connected to situations when the informants were about to leave the à la carte restaurant:

> *"We were at Henri Alen's restaurant, and when we were leaving, we were thanking the waiter a lot. It was extremely nice when the owner of the restaurant was cooking in the open kitchen and even agreed to take a photo with me. It was a great moment. And then we were able to directly thank him and give feedback." (Informant 4A)*

> *“The waiter was not friendly at all, but when we went to pay the bill, there was another person, she seemed to be the manager of the place, she was really friendly and gave us even a free tasting in the end, that left a nice feeling.” (Informant 6A)*

The above quotes are an example related to peak end-rule (see Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993). According to the peak end-rule rule, the customer's memory of her/his experience is not the average of all moments, but rather the positive or negative feelings the customer had

at the peak moment and the end of their customer journey. The following customer experience quotes also refer to a peak end-rule:

> *"If there is a special occasion, e.g., birthday or wedding day, and you have written this down in the additional information on the reservation. And if the restaurant has read it and they notice the special day right away when you arrive at the restaurant, you will feel unique. My husband had let the restaurant know that it was my birthday. It was a Lapland restaurant, and at the end, I got a small reindeer necklace. It was pretty special." (Informant 4A)*
>
> *"Wau, exceeding expectations were related to the COVID-19 time, when at the lunch buffet, the food was brought to the table, it was quite a wow moment.*
>
> *The fact that there was not a buffet, but that the food was brought to the table on plates, influenced the choice of the lunch place at that time." (Informant 1L)*

Thus, the peak end-rule can also be connected to the delight factor, which is something positive that the customer does not expect. According to Schneider and Bowen (1999) delight is the result of the customer's emotional reaction to a positive surprise that goes above and beyond the customer's expectations. Bowden-Everson et al. (2013) suggest that restaurants should concentrate on service strategies that identify specific service attributes and encounters that delight both existing and potential new customers.

To conclude, below are the main findings related to encounters (critical service encounters, communication and feelings) between the customer and small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company:

Critical service encounters

- For à la carte customer the critical service encounters are connected to:
    - hygiene factors, the quality and taste of the food, the quality-price level, the quality of the service, waiting times related to getting the table and food as well as making payment, the customer's first impression, bad customer experience management as well as feedback management. Some of the critical service encounters are part of the customer's basic needs and expectations discussed earlier.
- For lunch buffet customers the critical service encounters are built around the customer's basic needs and expectations discussed already:
    - hygiene, location, tastiness, and variety of the food, as well as the efficiency of the processes of getting the food at a specific price, making the payment, and leaving the restaurant within a limited time.

- Based on the findings, the organisation can create “positive critical moments". This study defines these as moments of opportunity for the organisation to create extremely positive experiences for the customer through positive surprises and moments of delight. “Positive critical moments” are something that the customer does not consider as part of her/his needs or expectations. The organisation and its employees can create and link “positive critical moments” to the customer’s first impression, feedback management, bad customer experience management, and overall, management of creating positive experiences along the customer’s journey.
- If the organisation ruins one critical service encounter, it does not automatically mean that the entire customer journey will be ruined and that a customer will leave the organisation unsatisfied. If the organisation knows how to manage the bad experience and turn it into a positive experience, the customer’s overall perception of value and outcome of the whole journey might end up being a positive memory and experience.

Communication and feelings

- Two-way communication:
    - Two-way communication in this study means that communication cannot be seen only as communication from the organisation toward the customer but also as the customer’s communication toward the organisation.
    - The organisation needs to listen to the customer by making communication easy for the customer by offering relevant communication channels and tools, as well as supporting and encouraging the customer to be active in communication with the organisation.
    - Through two-way communication, the organisation can increase its knowledge and understanding of the customer. This can provide valuable customer insight that will support the organisation to develop its customer relationships in the long run.
- Communication creates feelings for the customer.
    - The desirable customer feelings are the customer feeling valued, unique, cared for, and overall feeling of easiness. These types of feelings can be created by:
        - The organisation and its personnel being empathic, open, and expressing that they listen to the customer.
        - Using delight factors to create positive surprise moments for the customer is a small effort for the organisation but its impact on building customer relationships will be even bigger.
        - Organisation and personnel admitting their mistakes and trying to correct them.

    - Easiness and efficiency of the processes.
- In the end, the customer's feelings are linked to the customer's image of the restaurant, which impacts the customer relationship, how the customer talks about the organisation and whether the customer recommends the place to her/his network.

4.3 Relationship between the organisation, environmentally friendly food, and the customer

The third theme in the data structure is the relationship between the organisation, environmentally friendly food, and the customer. The category under this theme is focused on the customer's perceptions (experiences and observations) of accountability and communication related to environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption in the context of small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies. The next section describes this category and explains then the findings in more detail.

1. **Customer's perceptions and accountability of environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption**
   The customer's perceptions and accountability refer to how the customer perceives the roles between the organisation and the customer in the context of environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption.

2. **Customer's perceptions and organisation's communication of environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption**
   The customer's perceptions and communication are linked to how the customer experiences and observes the organisation's communication related to environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption.

4.3.1 Customer's perceptions and accountability

The data shows that environmental friendliness is not considered to be on the top list when the customer chooses which small and medium-sized restaurant or food service company to go to:

> *"I do not experience a restaurant visit through environmental friendliness. You can be environmentally friendly in everything else. I do not think that my biggest contribution to being environmentally friendly is choosing a restaurant." (Informant 5A)*

> *"A restaurant has to do many things well - it is not enough to have good service; the restaurant must also have a good and quick chef, all parts of the*

business need to be in order, and environmental friendliness is only one part in this, and for me, it has not risen in the main factors when choosing a restaurant." (Informant 4A)

“In a sushi restaurant, for example, there is a vegetarian day once a week. It is, of course, an environmentally friendly action in my mind that I eat environmentally friendly food. Though it does not affect the choice of that restaurant.” (Informant 2L)

"I must say that environmental friendliness and environmentally friendly food are important and good as such. But I implement it at home and in my own shopping. I would very much like to implement environmental friendliness in the restaurant as well, but I do not know... I would not expect or demand that from the restaurant either." (Informant 3L)

“I think I have never decided to go to a restaurant based on any sustainability factor.” (Informant 6A)

For many customers consumption of environmentally friendly food might be just something extra that they do not think about too much.

"I think environmentally friendly food is a good thing but I have not thought about what my eating and consumption mean in the bigger picture - I do not have a bad conscience about it." (Informant 4A)

One reason why the customers do not include environmental friendliness in their restaurant selection criteria could be that environmental friendliness is seen purely as the organisation’s responsibility:

"A restaurant can have a lot of influence on food leftovers. I believe that, through money, they need to have an interest in that, and I, as a consumer, do not have to control it.” (Informant 5A)

"I will forgive myself my environmentally unfriendliness in the restaurant if I do other things for the environment." (Informant 2L)

"When I go to a restaurant, I just want to enjoy the moment but If I notice something environmental friendliness from the restaurant’s side of course I will appreciate it. But I think it is the restaurant’s own thing, not something that I should worry about." (Informant 4A)

> *"Environmentally friendliness is a good thing, of course, but I think it is totally restaurant's responsibility." (Informant 6A)*

It could even be said that the customer might see her/himself as a benefactor when an organisation applies environmental friendliness in its strategy and processes:

> *"How could the restaurant make me more motivated about environmentally friendly food... offering information and selling buffet food at a discount, then I will support them in reducing their food waste." (Informant 2L)*

> *"If a restaurant wants to brand itself as being purely environmentally friendly, of course, I as a consumer can support this restaurant by visiting the place. But this also means that I should know about the restaurant and also the quality and price level in this restaurant should be a good deal for me as a consumer." (Informant 6A)*

Findings suggest that the customer's level of knowledge and understanding influence how the customer perceives the accountability related to environmental friendliness and how much value they give to it if they see a small and medium-sized restaurant or food service company practising any type of environmentally friendly activity:

> *"Frankly speaking, I do not know what could be done to get my attention and interest in the restaurant's environmental friendliness, Or what I do know is that sorting and recycling are absolute values in a restaurant today, and that's a great thing. But I do not know what else there is that the restaurant could do and what could impact me." (Informant 5A)*

> *"I know that certain wines can be produced more naturally and organically than others. If a restaurant has these types of wines on their wine list, the restaurant gets more points from me... because they show they have a good selection of wines, which also indicates to me that they have an interest in environmental friendliness. But of course, if the restaurant wants to brand itself more towards environmental friendliness, it should be shown on the entire food menu as well." (Informant 6A)*

The findings related to accountability and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption, and the customer's perspectives on those are summarised below.

- The small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company visit is not seen from an environmentally friendly point of view. The customers do acknowledge the importance of environmentally friendly food, and customers have generally positive

attitudes towards it. However, this does not mean that the customer will implement environmental friendliness purposefully in her/his behaviour.

- Environmentally friendly food accountability is viewed as solely the restaurant's responsibility.
- The level of how much the customer knows about environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption, and how interested and motivated she/he is in the topic influence how the customer perceives the organisation's environmental friendliness.

4.3.2 Customer's perceptions and organisation's communication

The data suggests that environmental friendliness would add value to the customer's image of a small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company if the customer was aware of the organisation's environmental friendliness, its impacts, and how it is applied in the organisation's internal and external processes. This refers to the importance of communication. Based on the data it is evident that the visibility of the organisation's processes and easy access to environmentally friendly food related information would increase the customer's interest in the topic:

> *"In a certain way, I am interested in local food, but I am not ready to go to the trouble of looking for information, whether this is an environmentally friendly restaurant..." (Informant 2L)*

> *"If some restaurant really takes the environmental issue as their core issue in a way that makes me interested in it and appreciate the work that has been done for it, it would certainly be a good thing. But there are quite a lot of other things that should be done correctly as well." (Informant 5A)*

> *"If a lunch buffet were to profile that 80% of the ingredients come from within a 20km radius, I might even be willing to pay a little more for the high-quality local products." (Informant 3L)*

> *"I would need more information... If the restaurant could interestingly tell me that it is important to them, and if it could tell me practically and understandably some details that interest me and will stick in my mind." (Informant 4A)*

> *"Well, the easier and more information is available, the more aware customers would probably be..." (Informant 1L)*

Data shows that visuals, concrete objects and simplicity are preferred in the information concerning environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption:

> *"Are there any certificates that would increase customer's trust or if there would exist, for example, a label that the restaurant could use for "using only Finnish meat." (Informant 2L)*

> *"I guess on the menu there could be offered some carbon footprint related or similar information..." (Informant 4A)*

> *"A coloured scale of the food's carbon footprint would work well. The simple symbol of carbon footprint would be similar to lactose-free and gluten-free, and it would not get people's attention that well. Especially if you do not have allergies, you do not pay attention to basic symbols." (Informant 3L)*

> *"Flyers about environmentally friendly food on the lunch buffet tables would be good. It would not bother me at all if the walls were full of posters about environmentally friendly food." (Informant 2L)*

Transparency and communication about food leftover management emerged strongly in the data:

> *"It is a good thing if a restaurant sells food leftovers out cheaply or donates the food. Those are activities I would appreciate if I knew about it." (Informant 4A)*

> *"When I asked, the waiter said that the avocado and onion waste is used for dyeing — why these types of activities are not promoted more?" (Informant 6A)*

> *"I wonder why I like it, why it seems environmentally friendly - they bring food and sushi to the table all the time. So they do not serve it from the huge containers, because then you would think that all the food goes to waste if people do not eat it. The fact that it is being filled slowly all the time, does not make it look like it has been there for the previous three days. Plus, there would not be lots of leftovers." (Informant 3L)*

> *"It would be interesting to know what type of proactive activities the restaurant does to avoid food leftover." (Informant 6A)*

Furthermore, the information regarding the suppliers and the origin, and locality of the food is seen as valuable, as well as the stories around them:

> *“There could be something connected to local food - the producers from the nearby area could be there, and you could buy for example Maija's milk cheese, Lassi's lazy cow meat. This way the restaurant could bring a face to its local food producers." (Informant 2L)*

> *"In some fancy restaurants, they have promoted local food. They tell stories about food, and you can read the stories from the menu... the waiters tell you that the spinach has been grown in the roof garden, or the sheep's cheese comes from the farm in the neighbourhood. It gives a wow feeling that this is a responsible restaurant." (Informant 4A)*

Data showed that customers are ready to try more vegetable related food as long as they know what is being served. If the restaurant tries to control or patronise too much about customers’ eating habits or preaches about environmental issues, it will be experienced negatively. Overall, the informants were trustful regarding the restaurant’s communication about its environmentally friendly activities, as seen in the following comments.

> *"I would not suspect that this is just a marketing trick. I would think that these are important things for this restaurant, and that is a good thing. " (Informant 1L)*

> *"I guess I believe that it is ok (restaurant’s environmental friendliness efforts) if the restaurant says so." (Informant 4A)*

Nex the data related to the organisation’s communication and the customer’s perceptions are summarised.

- The customer might pay attention to single environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption activities and elements whilst visiting the restaurant but a more holistic view of environmental friendliness is usually missing.
- The organisation should look at communication from the whole customer journey perspective and plan the communication style, topics, and channels accordingly.
- Rather than just promoting the environmental friendliness of the organisation, the focus should also be on educating the customer by offering interesting and valuable content and information.
- The organisation’s environmentally friendly message might work better if it focused on environmentally friendly food being "normal" instead of emphasising it as something "different." Furthermore, emphasising in communication the food's quality, taste, healthiness, and locality might create positive images in the customer’s mind.
- The findings highlight the necessity of communication being easy, simple, and interesting from the customer’s perspective. Positive, personalised, encouraging,

engaging, and non-patronising messages might work well. Visuals, symbols, and colours may help to make communication clearer and more understandable. Certificates, transparency of the processes, and the employees' openness could increase the customer's trust.

5 Results

In this chapter, the findings are presented in the form of a framework. The framework connects the empirical findings from the in-depth and focus group interviews to the theory through the researcher's analysis and interpretation.

5.1 The framework

The framework shows that when a small and medium-sized restaurant's or food service company's target is to connect customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food, the organisation should focus on the main four elements and the relationships between the elements. The main elements of the framework are: the customer, the organisation, environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption, and dialogue.

The framework consists of two parts: the triangle and rectangle frameworks. The triangle framework is a zoomed-out version and it shows on a high level the main elements, their relationships as well as the questions the organisation should consider when connecting customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. The second part of the framework is a zoomed-in version, the rectangle framework. The rectangle framework explains the main elements in more detail by offering focus areas for answering the questions in the triangle framework. The triangle framework is presented in Figure 17 and the rectangle framework in Figure 18.

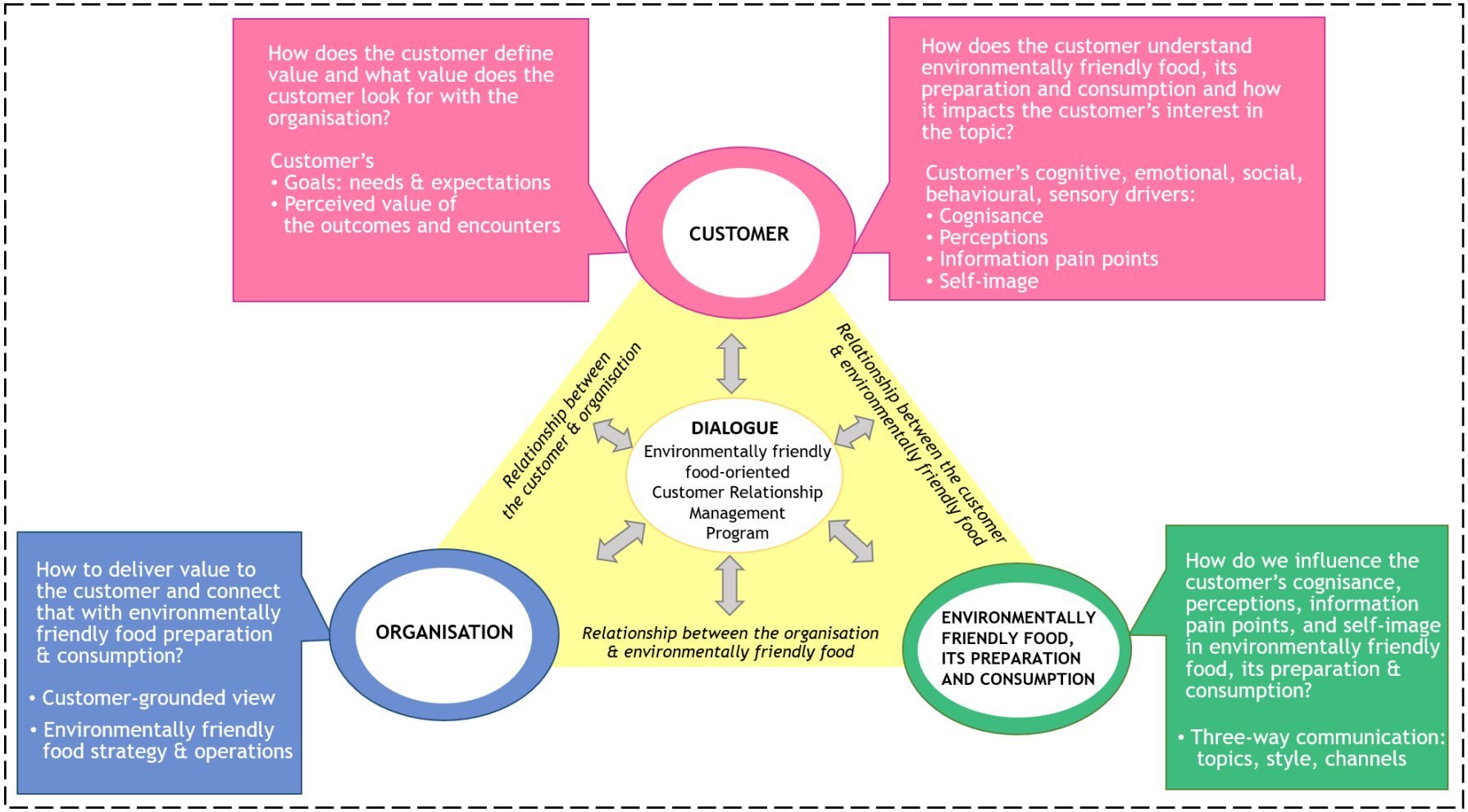

Figure 17: The Triangle Framework

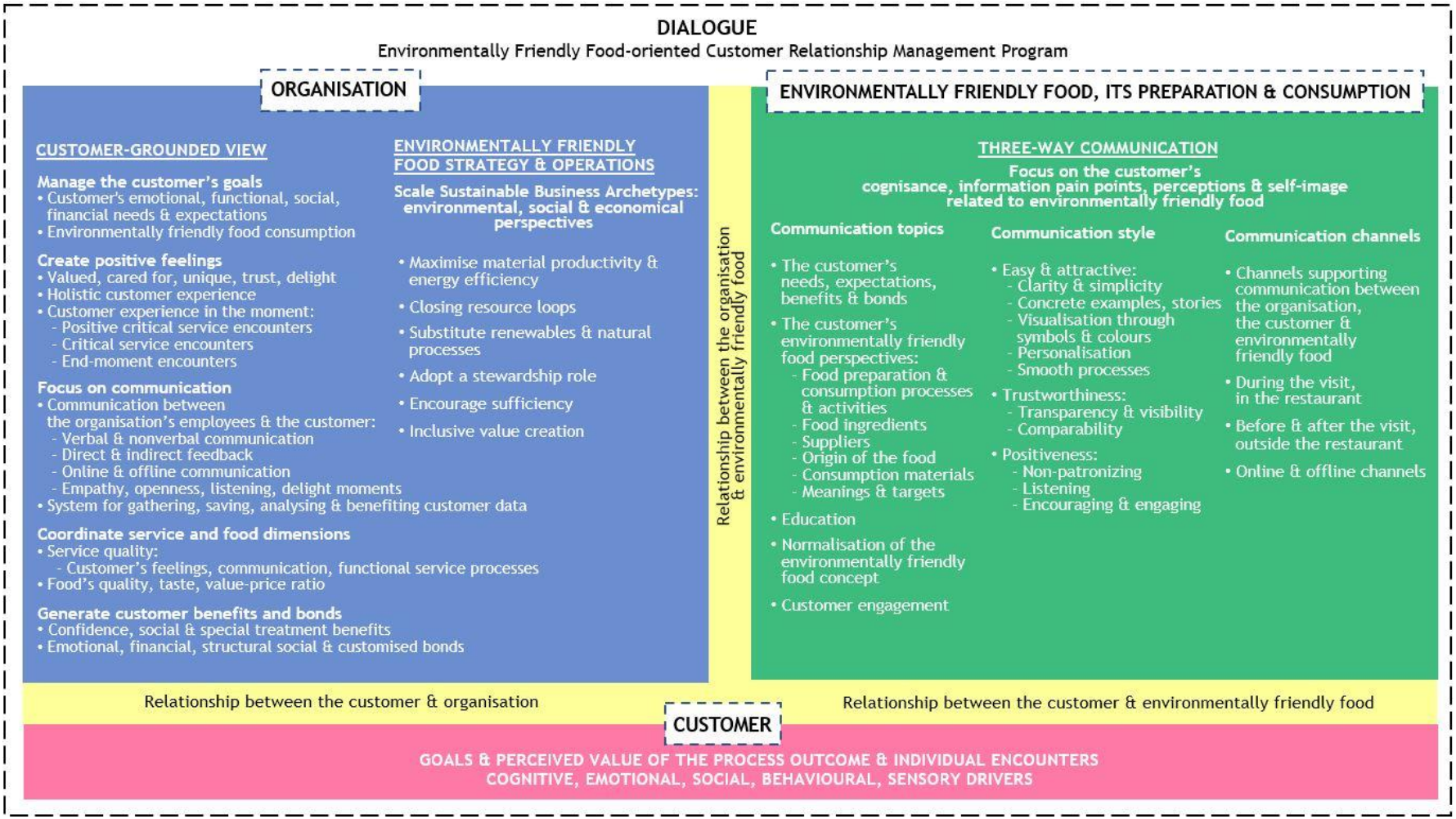

Figure 18: The Rectangle Framework

5.2 The main elements of the framework

The framework highlights the interconnections and relationships among its main elements: the customer, the organisation, environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption, and dialogue. The customer, organisation, and environmentally friendly food elements include questions and focus areas that give perspective and guidance to a small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company in bringing together customer relationships and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. The glue that connects all the main elements is the dialogue. Next, the framework and its elements are introduced in detail.

5.2.1 The customer

The purpose of the customer element in the framework is to offer the organisation a way to be in the customer's position and understand the customer's perspective in the relationship, as well as to consider the customer's perspective with environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. In the following, the questions related to the customer's view and focus areas supporting finding answers to the questions are described in detail.

Questions for an organisation:

- How does the customer define the value?
- What value does the customer look for in the organisation?
- How does the customer understand environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption and how it impacts the customer's interest in the topic?

To find the answers to the questions above:

- Focus on the customer's goals and perceived value
- Focus on the customer's cognisance, information pain points, perceptions (experiences and observations), and self-image related to environmentally friendly food

<u>Focus on the customer's goals and perceived value</u>

This study reinforces the importance of understanding the customer's *expectations and needs* (see Parasuraman et al. 1991) and notice the essential concept of the customer's *perceived value* (see Berry et al. 1988; Parasuraman et al. 1991; Teng & Wu 2019) in the development of customer relationships.

Parasuraman et al. (1991) argue that "a key for an organisation to provide superior service is recognising and responding to customer's expectations in the relationship". The expectations

are the customer's desires and wants, and what the customer feels a service provider should offer rather than would offer (Parasuraman et al. 1991). In addition to customer expectations, the customer's needs must be recognised. Customer needs are defined in this study as the factors that motivate the customer to use the service and become the organisation's customer. As a result, the findings support that the customer goals can be considered to include the customer's expectations (desires and wants) and needs (motivations).

The findings about the customer's perceived value are in line with those of Higgins and Scholer (2009). The current study demonstrates that small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies should try to distinguish perceived value between two sources: *the value of the outcomes* and *the value of the process*. The value of the outcomes means the nature of the end-state and refers to how the customer perceives her/his goals (expectations and needs) will be met in the end. The value of the process means the customer's journey and how the customer experiences its various individual encounters and moments while pursuing the goal, the value of the outcomes. For example, the customer's personal long-term goal might be preparing for a marathon. In this case, the value of the outcome for a workday lunch buffet customer could be to get in a relaxing atmosphere tasty maximum 25 minutes lunch that supports nutrition-wise preparation for the marathon. In this case, the value of the process could be to see the food's nutritional value, get the lunch and make payment quickly, find a nice place to enjoy lunch, and leave the place in 25 minutes.

Focus on the customer's cognisance, information pain points, perceptions, self-image related to environmentally friendly food

This study recognised the connection between the customer's understanding and interest in environmental friendliness, food, environmentally friendly food and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption in a restaurant context. Thus, the organisation should try to understand this connection better and explore and find ways to impact the customer's *cognisance, information pain points, perceptions*, and *self-image* related to environmental environmentally friendly food in general and environmentally friendly food in a restaurant context.

Customer cognisance

Customer cognisance is the term used in this study to describe the customer's knowledge and awareness of environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. According to the findings, customers connect various elements with environmentally friendly food in the context of small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies. These elements are: vegetarian food, vegetables, Finnish food, local food, seasonal food, food origin, suppliers, food leftover management, recycling, sorting, serving processes, meat substitutes, serving dishware, serving packages, quality, taste, "normalisation", and health. On a high

level, these elements are connected with the organisation's *food preparation and consumption processes and activities, food ingredients, suppliers, the origin of the food, consumption materials, abstract and concrete experiences and meanings*. When the organisation focuses on these topics from the customer's point of view, there may be a better chance of capturing the customer's interest as the customer already links these elements to environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption.

Customer's information pain points

The data shows that customers experience the concept of environmentally friendly food being complex and broad. This refers to the information pain points, including the obstacles, challenges, and frustrations in the customer experiences concerning environmentally friendly food information. Information pain points can be linked to difficulties in finding (the correct) information, understanding and comparing information, difficulties in trusting the information, the information not being interesting or attractive enough, or the customer is just lacking the interest to know and learn more about the topic. The findings also revealed that the customers who seem to have more knowledge about environmental friendliness were also more interested in environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. This is supported by the earlier literature showing the level of environmental knowledge the customer has can have a significant impact on the customer's green choices (see Hasan et al. 2019; Nekmahmud et al. 2022). Therefore, this study suggests that when an organisation tries to connect customer relationships and environmentally friendly food, the organisation should focus on relieving the customer's environmentally friendly food information pain points. This could be done, for example, through education and making communication related to environmentally friendly food more understandable and attractive.

Customer's perceptions

The results demonstrate that the customer's perceptions influence how the customer understands environmentally friendly food and its preparation and consumption in a restaurant context. The customer's perceptions in this study mean how and what the customer experiences and observes, what the customer feels and sees. According to earlier literature (see Bowden-Everson et al. 2013; van Tonder & Petzer 2018), perceptions are based on repeated service interactions, and over time, perceptions impact satisfaction and trust in the long run. This indicates that the organisation should systematically influence the customer's perceptions. As a result, the study emphasises that the organisation should *focus on the customer's perceptions both at the individual service encounters level and on a holistic level in various customer journeys throughout the whole customer lifecycle*. This includes, for example, online and offline, as well as onsite (at the restaurant) and offsite (outside the restaurant) channels. Findings showed that before going to a restaurant, the customer's perceptions of the restaurant and environmentally friendly food are related to the customer's current knowledge and experiences, reviews and referrals, the organisation's

website, and overall public discussions as well as topical news on environmentally friendly food. At the restaurant, the customer perceives the restaurant's processes and activities related to food preparation and consumption based on what she/he sees, feels and understands. Therefore, by combining positive images of the restaurant with appealing environmentally friendly information in the aforementioned channels in different customer encounters, the restaurant may be able to positively influence the customer's perceptions. This supports the organisation to bring its customer relationships and environmentally friendly food closer together.

Customer's self-image

The findings indicated that the customer identifies and reflects her/himself toward other consumers in the context of environmental friendliness and food. This refers to the customer's self-image and how the customer sees her/himself compared to others. The picture that we have of ourselves naturally impacts our mindset and behaviour as consumers. This means the organisation should try to deep dive into the customer's mind and motivations for consumption behaviours concerning environmental friendliness and food. In this case, the organisation may benefit the customer and consumption concepts discussed in the literature. The current study demonstrates that when the organisation wants to connect customer relationships and environmentally friendly food, the concepts of Mindful consumption (Sheth et al. 2011) as well as Green brand image, trust, satisfaction (Chen 2010) and loyalty (Chang & Fong 2010) might support. Mindful consumption offers a mindset and methods for how the organisation should see its customers. The customer is not restricted to consuming in a particular way but the organisation should support the customer in making a deliberate consumption decision based on the customer's values and preferences. (see Sheth et al. 2011.) Green brand image, trust, satisfaction, and loyalty provide longer-term targets to incorporate environmental friendliness into the brand and customer loyalty. Green brand image refers to the customer's perceptions of a brand linked to environmental commitments and environmental issues. Green satisfaction is about the fulfillment of a customer's environmental goals through consumption. Green trust relates to the customer's willingness to rely on a service or brand based on the expectation and belief that it has credibility and the ability to perform well in terms of the environment. (Chen 2010.) Green loyalty is the customer's commitment to repurchase or advocate a preferred service or organisation to maintain a relationship with an organisation that has environmental concerns (Chang & Fong 2010).

5.2.2 The organisation

The organisation in the framework refers to the small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company that needs to manage and synchronise the relationships between its

customers and its environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption. From these perspectives, the organisation should consider the following issues.

Questions for an organisation:

- How do we deliver value to the customer and connect that with our environmentally friendly food preparation & consumption?

To find the answers to the questions above, the organisation should:

- Focus on the customer-grounded view:
    - Manage the customer's goals
    - Create positive feelings
    - Focus on communication
    - Coordinate service elements
    - Generate benefits and bonds
- Focus on the environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption strategy and procedures on an operational level:
    - Scale Sustainable Business Archetypes

Focus on the customer-grounded view

The findings emphasise the importance for organisations to look at things from the customer-grounded view when creating and delivering value to the customer in a relationship. This means the organisation should manage its customer's goals (needs and expectations), create positive feelings through communication, coordinate service elements and generate customer benefits and bonds.

Manage the customer's goals (needs and expectations)

The results demonstrated that the organisation should identify, and, in the end, manage the customer's goals from the point of view of the customer's *emotional, functional, social, and financial needs and expectations*. The findings also showed that the customer's goals are linked to the customer's self-image, which was already discussed in section 5.2.1. This means that the restaurant should also try to understand the customer's deeper motivations, and the role of environmentally friendly food in those motivations. The target should be to identify and innovate ways to support the customer's *environmentally friendly food consumption*. As already mentioned, the concepts from the earlier literature - Mindful consumption (Sheth et al. 2011) as well as Green brand image, trust, satisfaction (Chen 2010) and loyalty (Chang & Fong 2010) might benefit the organisation to move forward from an environmentally friendly food consumption perspective

The findings indicate that for an à la carte customer, emotional, functional, social, and financial needs and expectations all play an essential role. Which perspective is more emphasised is defined by the context, when, why, and with whom, the customer visits the restaurant. For a lunch buffet customer, it seems like functional and financial needs and expectations are the most important ones but also social and emotional aspects are involved. For both, à la carte and lunch buffet customers, there are some basic needs and expectations that just need to be met if the restaurant wants to run its business and keep its customers. For the à la carte customer, these are factors related to hygiene, tasty and quality food, a quality-price ratio, friendly personnel, moderate waiting times for getting a table, food, and correct invoicing. The lunch buffet customer's basic needs are focused on factors concerning hygiene, location, tasty and quality food within a certain price range, as well as the efficiency of the processes of getting the food, making the payment, and leaving the restaurant within a limited time.

Based on the results, one essential element linked to the customer's need and expectation in the relationship with a small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company is service quality. Service quality was emphasised especially among à la carte restaurant customers. Service quality is connected to the concept of SERVQUAL explained in the literature (Parasuraman et al. 1988). SERVQUAL is a concept that supports measuring service quality through different dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. This suggests that, especially, an à la carte restaurant could apply the SERVQUL approach to coordinate and follow-up on its customers' needs and expectations as part of its customer relationship development.

After the organisation has a better understanding of the customer's goals (needs and expectations), the organisation should support the customer in reaching those goals. At the same time, the organisation should try to manage the customer's goals (needs and expectations) so that it is realistic for it to meet or, even better, exceed them. This suggests there should be some kind of a *customer relationship management system* in place for the organisation to coordinate how value is delivered, follow up on the outcomes related to the customer's goals, and react accordingly. This would support the organisation in taking its customer relationship to the next level. This finding is consistent with the earlier literature related to customer relationship management (see Müller 2014; Payne & Frow 2017).

<u>Create positive feelings</u>

The findings concerning customer feelings are consistent with previous findings that positive customer feelings and emotional bonds are a prerequisite for customer satisfaction and developing strong customer relationships. (see Shani & Chalasani 1992; Mattila 2001; Mattila & Enz 2002; Hsu et al. 2010; Bowden-Everson et al. 2013). According to Mattila (2001, 79), the ability of the restaurant to identify and monitor the customer's feelings becomes crucial

because a large portion of the customer's emotional experiences come from direct encounters with the service provider. The positive customer feelings for which an organisation should aim for in these encounters were recognised in the current study as follows: the customer should feel *valued, cared for, unique, trust*, and *delight*. The term "delight" describes the result of the customer's emotional response to a positive surprise. (Oliver et al. 1997; Schneider & Bowen 1999; Bowden-Everson et al. 2013).

In the moment and holistic experiences

This study demonstrated that the customer evaluates her/his experiences and feelings with an organisation based on *specific service encounter moments* and more holistically, remembering back the *whole customer journey*, its different touchpoints, the overall feeling the customer got from the place, and whether the customer's goals were met. Many prior studies (Zacks & Tversky 2001; Bitner, Ostrom & Morgan 2008; Zomerdijk & Voss 2010, cited in De Keyser, Keiningham, Klaus & Lemon 2015) have also demonstrated these same issues related to the customer experiences by using terms such as "CX in-the-moment" and "dynamic CX" (see De Keyser et al. 2015). When researching and discussing customer experiences it is always also good to remember Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman's (2010) statement: "We do not choose between experiences. We choose between memories of experiences".

Positive critical service encounters and end moments

The findings showed that the creation of positive feelings for the customer is easier in service encounters where the customer's expectations are low. Thus, in these types of situations, the organisation has an opportunity to easily exceed the customer's expectations with small positive surprises. Through positive surprises, the organisation can create memorable "wow moments". This finding led to the creation of the term "*positive critical service encounter*". "Positive critical service encounter" means a service encounter where the customer has basically zero expectations but where the service provider manages to create a memorable "wow"-effect through positive customer feelings. According to the results, with the creation of "the positive critical moments," the organisation also has an opportunity to compensate the customer's earlier bad experiences. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated the essential role of "*the end moment*", which means the final moments and feelings when the customer is about to leave the journey. These findings related to the role of feelings in customer relationships are consistent with what has been found previously regarding the delight factor (see Oliver et al. 1997; Schneider & Bowen 1999; Bowden-Everson et al. 2013) and peak end - rule (see Fredrickson & Kahneman, 1993).

Critical service encounters

This research provides evidence of "*critical service encounters*", which are defined in this study as service encounters where the customer has certain and stronger expectations and feelings involved compared to other service encounters. The critical service encounters

recognised are related to the customer's experiences in the moments, and they are almost the same as the basic needs and expectations the customer has in the relationship. This refers to the fact that critical service encounters are extremely important also from the perspective of the customer's perceived value (see Higgins & Scholer 2009). Therefore, critical service encounters are crucial for the organisation to identify, manage, and at the very least meet the customer's expectations in these encounters. The critical service encounters identified in this study are connected to the customer moments linked to the *hygiene factors* (à la carte and lunch buffet), *the quality and taste of the food* (à la carte and lunch buffet), the value-price ratio (à la carte), the *specific price* (lunch buffet), *the location* (lunch buffet), *smooth service processes* (à la carte and lunch buffet), *the first impression* (à la carte), *bad customer experience management* (à la carte), *the feedback process management* (à la carte), and the *personnel's communication* together with *the feelings* the customer is left with (à la carte and lunch buffet).

Focus on communication

The results indicate that, different perspectives in communication would offer opportunities for small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies to develop their customer relationships. The study identified the role of two-way communication. This means that an organisation should not only communicate toward the customer, but also *listen* to the customer, gather and understand *direct* and *indirect feedback* through *offline and online channels* and use this insight in developing the relationship. This finding is supported by Parasuraman et al. (1991) who propose that there should be an open type of communication that can be initiated by both the organisation and the customer.

From the results, it is clear that the *organisation's and its employees' verbal and nonverbal communication* play a significant part in shaping the customer's feelings. This is consistent with Mattila's (2001) and Mattila and Enz's (2002) research, which show that employees' interactions account for a large portion of the customer's affective experiences. The results of the current study highlight the importance of personnel being *empathic*, personnel and the organisation being *open* in their face-to-face communication as well as being open concerning the organisation's food preparation and consumption processes. Examples of these are organisation and its employees showing that the customer is truly cared for and listened to, processes being transparent, as well as the organisation and employees admitting and correcting service mistakes. Lastly, as discussed already, the findings showed that the ability to create positive surprises, *delight moments* plays an important role in the communication and customer relationship development for small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies.

The findings indicated that small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company would benefit from putting efforts into training their employees in customer communication.

This is also linked to the improvement of the organisation's processes for gathering, understanding, and using customer data in various communication moments with the customer. As pointed out already, this refers to the importance of the organisation having a *system for managing its customer data,* which refers to the concept of *customer relationship management*.

Coordinate service and food dimensions

The results show that there is a mixture of abstract and concrete elements that the customer expects and perceives in a relationship with small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies. From these elements, this study identified the most essential ones that form the basis of the customer's needs and expectations when the customer visits or is in contact with the organisation in other ways. These elements are divided in this study into *service dimension and food dimension*.

The service dimension refers to the importance of creating positive customer *feelings* through empathic and open *communication* as well as the transparency and smoothness of the *functional processes*, which were discussed in the previous section. Transparency refers to the openness of the processes, such as informing about the food ingredients, food origin, food preparation processes, and food leftover management processes. Smoothness means easiness and efficiency in the processes such as getting the table, getting food, making the payment, and giving feedback, as well as the perception that it will be taken care of.

Food dimension in the service elements naturally means the food itself and how the customer experiences that. This includes how the customer perceives the food's *quality, taste, and value-price ratio*.

Benefits and bonds

The findings identified different customer benefits and bonds that will support small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies in their customer relationships. The research showed that benefits and bonds go hand in hand and are partly overlapping (especially social benefits and social bonds) in the development of customer relationships. The study recognised *confidence (*Hennig-Thurau et al. 2002; Lima & Fernandes 2015, Wilson et al. 2016), *social* (Wilson et al. 2016), and *special treatment benefits (*Lacey et al. 2007; Han & Ryu 2009; Wilson et al. 2016;) as being important in customer relationship development. In addition, all the bonds discussed in the literature were also identified in the results. These bonds are: *emotional* (Mattila 2001; Mattila & Enz 2002; Hsu et al. 2010; Bowden-Everson et al. 2013;), *financial* (Berry & Parasuraman 1991, Berry 2000; Lima & Fernandes 2015), *structural* (Berry 2000; Wilson et al. 2016) *social* (Wilson et al. 2016), and *customisation* bonds (Wilson et al. 2016).

According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) *confidence benefits* are about reducing the risks of services by knowing what to expect. For a lunch buffet customer, a confidence benefit represents that there is always quality and tasty food at a certain price within a specific time frame. For an à la carte customer, the results suggest that confidence benefits relate to the quality of the service and food, as well as the quality-price ratio and atmosphere being aligned with the needs and expectations the customer has.

According to Wilson et al. (2016) *social benefits and bonds* are about a sense of familiarity through the relationships between the organisation's personnel and the customer. The results suggest that social benefits and bonds focusing purely on personal relationships would be challenging for the small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company. However, the results demonstrate the importance of social benefits and bonds related to the companion with whom the customer visits the à la carte or lunch buffet restaurant. This means that an organisation should at least to offer possibilities for the customer to gain the social benefits and bonds she/he is looking for from the visit. Creating this type of social benefit would be easier than relying purely on the personnel. An example of a social benefit of a lunch buffet could also be that the customer has the possibility of having lunch in a place where the customer does not need to be social. This is because the findings showed that sometimes lunch on a workday might be the only time of the day when the customer can be alone, and she/he may want to take advantage of that possibility by not being social then.

Special treatment benefits make the customer feel important and appreciated. They are considered efficient in relationships with profitable customers (Han & Ryu 2009; Ryu & Lee 2017;). Based on the results, special treatment benefits could support especially an à la carte restaurant in developing its relationship with existing customers.

Bonds are essential elements in customer relationship development because they will cause the customer to feel differently about the organisation, and they can help the organisation create better customer loyalty (Lima & Fernandes 2015, 328).

The results showed that an à la carte restaurant customer judges her/his visit and experiences from various perspectives that are connected to feelings. This indicates that *emotional bonds* play important role in customer relationship development with the à la carte customer. This is supported by Ladhari et al. (2008) according to whom it is crucial for service providers to keep track of their customer's emotions throughout the service delivery process because there is a strong correlation between the emotional component and satisfaction. This is also connected to the fact that emotionally involved customers are more likely to be more forgiving in the case of a service failure and also more willing to spread positive word-of-mouth about the organisation (Mattila 2001). A similar pattern of results was also identified in the current study about the à la carte customer.

According to Berry (2000) and Berry and Parasuraman (1991) *financial bonds* are the weakest bonds to gain true loyalty and competitive advantage because customers who are attracted to them are easily vulnerable to competitors' pricing incentives. However, financial bonds will be included in the results of this research, as price emerged as an essential factor, especially for lunch buffet customers, la carte customers also emphasized the importance of the value-price ratio.

Structural bonding, together with financial bonding, seemed to matter most to a lunch buffet customer. This is because, according to the results, the lunch buffet customer is looking for an efficient and easy service delivery process. This is dependent on how the organisation has built its functional processes for the customer in getting food, paying for the food, and consuming the food. The structural bonds are not dependent on the skills of an individual personnel representative (see Berry 2000; Wilson et al. 2016). Since lunch buffet organisations are typically short on personnel, it would seem that structural bonding would be a simple and efficient way to develop their customer relationships.

Customisation bonds are built upon the deep knowledge of an individual customer and her/his needs (see Wilson et al. 2016). Based on the findings, customisation bonds might offer an opportunity for an à la carte restaurant to develop its customer relationship to offer even more unique service experiences to its customers. However, for this to succeed on a wider scale, as previously discussed, the results suggest that an organisation should have some kind of customer relationship management system in place to gather and coordinate its customer data.

Focus on environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption strategy and operations

The results acknowledge the importance of an organisation's need to have a clear strategy and operational processes supporting its environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption. This is essential because the strategy will guide the operational processes and activities that the customer perceives (experiences and observes) which in turn affects the customer's relationship with the organisation.

Scale Sustainable Business Archetypes

Bocken and Short (2016) suggest that Sustainable Business Archetypes can support organisations in their sustainable journey. The results of the current study found evidence that Sustainable Business Archetypes could facilitate the organisation in concretising its environmentally friendly food strategy at the operational level. Therefore, the Sustainable Business Archetypes (Bocken & Short 2016) are considered in this study as the base for an organisation to start building on and planning its strategy and operational procedures around environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption.

The study identified concepts and individual activities related to some of the Sustainable Business Archetypes in the context of small and medium-sized restaurant's and food service company's environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption. The Sustainable Business Archetypes together with their equivalence activities identified from the research data are listed below. In parenthesis are described the Triple Bottom Line categories (environmental, economical, social categories) to which they are linked (see Ritala et al. 2018).

- Maximise material productivity and energy efficiency (environmental category) > findings related to food leftover management
- Close resource loops (environmental category) > findings related to recycling and sorting
- Substitute renewables and natural processes (environmental category) > findings related to seasonal products and substitutes
- Adopt stewardship role (social/environmental category) > findings related to using local food
- Encourage sufficiency (social category) > findings related to customer education
- Inclusive value creation / Repurpose for society (economical category) > findings related to food and charity

When comparing the results of this research with the Sustainable Business Archetypes like this, it becomes clear that when an organisation plans its environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption it should also consider not only *environmental* but also *social* and *economic* aspects.

5.2.3 The environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption

When discussing organisation's environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption, this research recognised the importance of communication and the customer's point of view in that. Communication is the key when the organisation needs to connect separate dimensions such as the customer's cognitive, emotional, social, behavioural, and sensory drivers with environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. As a result, communication needs to be considered from various perspectives, which leads to the following questions and focus areas.

Questions for an organisation:

- How do we influence the customer's cognitive, emotional, social, behavioural, and sensory elements related to environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption?

To find the answers to the question above:

- Focus on three-way communication throughout the whole customer journey:
    - Communication topics
    - Communication channels
    - Communication style

Focus on three-way communication throughout the whole customer journey

The findings showed that the customer does not consider a small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company visit from the perspective of environmentally friendly food. The findings also demonstrated that the customer considers environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption to be the organisation's responsibility. To influence customer's views on these, the organisation should focus its communication and information exchange between the three parties - the organisation, the customer, and environmentally friendly food. In this study, this is called *three-way communication*. It involves three parties, and it implies that communication should be considered from three perspectives: communication topic, style, and channels.

According to the findings, the organisation should consider its communication holistically on a strategic level as well as at the operational level in various encounters with the customer. The target of the three-way communication should be influencing the customer's cognisance, information pain points, perceptions and self-image related to environmentally friendly food aspects. Organisations can do this by focusing on the appropriate communication topics, style and channels that enable open communication between the customer, organisation, and environmentally friendly food.

Communication topics

The customer's needs, expectations, benefits, bonds and perspectives on environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption

When the restaurant manages to positively link the customer's *needs* and *expectations* in its communication to the elements the customer connects with the concept of environmentally friendly food and there may be a good chance to get their attention. In addition, if the restaurant still manages to add customer *benefits* or *bonds* into the interaction with the customer, the chances of improving customer relationships should increase.

As mentioned earlier, the elements the customer connects with environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption can be grouped under *food preparation and consumption processes and activities*, *food ingredients*, suppliers, *the origin of the food*, *materials related to consumption,* as well as the *meanings and targets*. The findings showed that the customer's environmentally friendly food meanings and targets refer to more

abstract issues built around quality, social status, self-image, health, transformation, change, impact, or even politics. When embedding the meaning in the communication and building customer relationships connected to environmentally friendly food, the longer term outcome could be a purpose-driven relationship (see Sheth 2017). According to Sheth (2017), a purpose-driven relationship enables customers to achieve meaning through consumption. A purpose-driven relationship aims to make customers feel like they are part of something bigger when they consume the product, service, or brand.

Customer education

Also, as pointed out in the literature, (see Leire & Thidell 2005; Allievi 2017; Lombardi et al. 2017; Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2019) educating the customer on environmentally friendly food issues would increase the customer's knowledge and decrease the customer's pain points in finding and understanding environmentally friendly food related information. The results indicate that the customer is more open and tolerant when a lunch buffet restaurant is active in its education and uses various communication channels compared to the à la carte restaurant's communication. An à la carte restaurant's communication related to education is expected to be more subtle, unique, and more driven by the personnel.

Normalisation of the environmentally friendly food concept

The findings raised the question of the "normalisation" of the concept of environmental friendliness. This refers to customers becoming tired of organisations promoting being environmentally sustainable and seeing it more as an organisation's trick to staying competitive by following market trends. As a result, the concept of environmental friendliness may have lost its true meaning in the customer's eyes. Therefore, if the organisation manages to maintain environmental friendliness in its communication while at the same time considering it completely "normal", something that just naturally exists for everyone, it might work better in attracting customers in the long term.

The customer engagement

According to the results, engaging the customer with environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption topics might narrow the gap between all the parties; the organisation, the customer, and environmentally friendly food. Customer engagement activities could consist of both psychological and behavioural dimensions (see Alvarez-Milán et al. 2018) through a wide range of activities via online and offline channels, (see Roy et al. 2022) as well as onsite and offsite. Examples of customer engagement could be the restaurant inviting the customer to taste new environmentally friendly food dishes, involving the customer in planning the menu from an environmentally friendly food point of view, or attractively challenging the customer to learn more about the environmentally friendly food topic.

Communication style and channels

When the organisation's target is to impact, through communication and information exchange, the customer's cognisance, information pain points, perceptions and self-image it is not enough for organisation just think about the communication topics, it also needs to think about the communication style and channels.

As the findings demonstrated, the customer might find the topic of environmentally friendly food complex and not interesting. This is why the style of the communication should be *easy* and *attractive* from the customer's point of view. This means that the communication style should solve the complexity by focusing on *clarity* and *simplicity*. Clarity refers here, for example, using plain language and simplicity to limit the amount of data. Based on the findings, for instance, *concrete examples, activities*, and *stories* related to environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption, would support making the topic and its communication more understandable. The findings imply that *visualising* information through *symbols* and *colours* would help in understanding and also make environmentally friendly food more attractive. Easiness refers also to the *smoothness of the processes* the customer experiences. Furthermore, creating *transparent* and *visible* processes and making data *comparable* by using, for example, *certificates* would increase the *trustworthiness* of the message and the organisation.

The findings showed that some of the customers might be tired of the negative and patronising tone of the messages they have heard and seen about environmental friendliness. Therefore, by emphasising *positivity* instead of using threatening environmental images or patronising, through focusing on *listening* and *encouraging*, the customer might be more interested in learning and changing her/his behaviour concerning environmentally friendly food.

In addition to style, small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company must consider and select the channels through which they will reach the customers at different times in various service encounters along the customer journey. As mentioned already, the channels recognised in this study represent *online* and *offline* channels as well as *onsite (at the restaurant)* and offsite *(outside the restaurant)*. As the findings showed the importance of listening to the customer, the communication channels should be considered *not only as a way for the organisation to reach the customer but also as a way for the customer to reach the organisation*.

5.2.4 The dialogue

The dialogue element in the framework is the glue that ties together all the other elements and the relationships. Contrary to Morgan and Hunt (1994) research, which stresses commitment and trust as the main pillars between the relationship parties, the current study

defines dialogue as the main pillar in customer relationship development. Dialogue refers to "three-way communication" between the organisation, the customer, and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. The small and medium-sized restaurant and food service company could concretise the dialogue through the "environmentally friendly food-oriented customer relationship programme". This suggestion reinforces the findings pointed out by Müller (2014) about the importance of sustainability-oriented customer relationship management. The environmentally friendly food-oriented customer relationship programme's target would be systematically connecting customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. The programme would offer tools and methods that could support the organisation in developing customer relationships with longer-term targets (see Müller 2014). This is also supported by Jayachandran et al. (2005) who argue that through systematising communication and information processes, the organisation can develop and maintain its customer relationships. The strategic part of the customer relationship programme would offer a roadmap guiding the relationships between the customer, the organisation, and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption. The operational level would include the practical processes and activities needed to move forward. The framework developed in this research and its elements could be used as building blocks and guidelines for small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies to build their environmentally friendly food-oriented customer relationship programme.

6 Conclusions

This chapter provides an overview of the research process and results in relation to the research questions. In addition, the value and contributions of the study are described. The chapter concludes by suggesting opportunities for further research.

6.1 Summary and reflection of the process and results

The purpose of this research was to create a framework that connects customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption in small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies. This led to the following research questions.

1. What are the elements for an organisation to focus on when developing customer relationships?
2. How can an organisation embrace customer-centricity in its customer relationships and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption?

3. How can small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies connect customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption?

Existing literature provided support in replying to the first question in the form of a customer relationship flywheel created (Figure 2). The flywheel and its driver and outcome elements describe where an organisation should focus when developing its customer relationships.

The second question was answered through existing literature and empirical analysis. The relationship marketing theory and environmentally friendly customer and consumption concepts in the theory offer a foundation for bringing customer-centricity to environmental friendliness. The framework developed offers an organisation three questions and focus areas to answer those questions. All the questions and focus areas are devised such that an organisation must think about the customer's point of view in environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption.

The third research question is answered through the framework developed based on the existing literature and empirical findings. The framework offers a holistic and more detailed approach connecting small and medium-sized restaurants' and food service companies' customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption.

Considering how complicated the field of study is, Chapter 1 clarifies the research topic and discusses the research purpose and research questions. In addition, the key concepts and structure of the research are presented.

In Chapter 2, existing literature in customer relationship marketing and environmentally friendly theories related to customers, businesses, and food are discussed, resulting in the creation of the study's theoretical framework. The theoretical framework supported the objective of the study effectively. It included the perspectives of the customer, organisation and environmentally friendly food on the research topic in an integrated manner.

Chapter 3 explains the research approach and process. At the end of Chapter 3, the collection and analysing of empirical data are described. A qualitative and constructive research approach supported by a service design process was chosen to accomplish the objective of the study – to create a framework connecting customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption. For the purpose of this research, a combination of different service design processes was created. The service design tools and methods used were explained both in theory and practice. The service design process was then visualised to offer a better view of the whole process. The service design supported bringing a customer-centric perspective to the current study, co-creativeness helped in

identifying various opportunities, and the iterative nature of service design supported identifying the focus areas in analysing the data and creating the framework. Visualisation and holistic consideration of the topic helped in finalising the framework.

Chapter 4 explains in detail the empirical findings of this research. Finally, in Chapter 5, the results are explained through the framework that consists of two parts: the triangle and rectangle frameworks. The triangle framework represents, on a high level, the main elements as well as the main questions the organisations should consider when connecting customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption. The rectangle framework provides a more thorough explanation for the main elements by offering an organisation specific areas to focus on.

Challenges

At the start of the research process, due to the topic's complexity, the researcher felt it was challenging to focus on relevant literature. This was the case, especially with regard to environmentally sustainable literature. After narrowing down the topic to environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption at the restaurant, it was easier to progress with the research. During the research process, one of the most challenging parts turned out to be the data analysis. This was due to the amount of data covering various aspects of the research topic. However, the iterative nature of service design and affinity diagramming used for the purposes of this part of the process were effective in structuring preconceived ideas from the data. One challenge was for the researcher to be aware of her own biases and challenge her first interpretations of the data. The researcher tried to avoid looking at data with any preconceived ideas by stepping back and letting the data drive in organising everything around the research questions.

6.2 Research contribution

This research has shown both scientific and practical value. The research affords a wider perspective and more theoretical avenues into relationship marketing and environmental sustainability literature. From the practical perspective, the research has developed a framework that is applicable in real life. The contributions of this research are discussed next more closely.

6.2.1 Scientific contribution

The contributions of this research to scientific value can be listed as follows:

1. *Broaden the knowledge* of relationship marketing and environmental sustainability.

2. *The customer's perspective* embedded in the environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption in a restaurant setting.
3. *An empirical framework* for small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies to connect customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption.

Broaden the knowledge of relationship marketing and environmental sustainability

Sustainability provides the fundamental strategy and value issues that have rarely been linked to customer-centricity strategy (see Müller 2014). This study reinforces previous relationship marketing research by adding an environmentally friendly factor to it. The current study also reinforces previous environmentally sustainable research by adding a customer relationship factor to it.

This research reinforces the findings of Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Grönroos (1990, cited in Grönroos 1994) that relationship marketing does not include only customer relationships, but it is rather a complex network of relationships. This results that the study proposes that relationship marketing theory is connected to systems thinking theory.

According to Sheth (2017) the objective of customer relationships should be a shift from a share of wallet to a share of heart by creating emotional bonds and mutual purpose instead of creating only functional or economic value. The findings of the current study support this, but the study also confirms that the emotional bonds alone are not enough, and the customer expects functional (taste, quality, health, hygiene, efficient processes) as well as financial (expected price level, cost-quality ratio) value.

This research also reinforces the suggestion that customer relationship management can be defined in terms of sustainability (Müller 2014). However, instead of including all dimensions of sustainability (ecological, economic, and social dimensions), the current study defines customer relationship management from the perspective of environmental friendliness. The study has been able to generate terms for relationship marketing that have not yet been introduced as such. These terms are "*the customer relationship flywheel*" and "*positive critical service encounters*". The customer relationship flywheel refers to the concept connecting customer relationship drivers and outcomes. A positive critical service encounter means a service encounter in which the customer has zero expectations and where the service provider manages to create a memorable "wow"-effect through the creation of positive customer feelings.

Environmentally friendly literature has so far mainly focused on how organisations can decrease their own carbon footprints through their own actions. The current study also takes into account the customer's perspective on reducing carbon footprint and how organisations

could reduce their carbon footprint customer-centrically. The research indicates that impacting the customer's environmentally friendly knowledge and perceptions is at least as important in the long term as changing the organisation's own carbon footprint activities. This refers that the current research reinforces the importance of looking at environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption also from the perspective of a climate positive environmental handprint. While the term footprint refers to negative environmental impacts, the term handprint is about positive environmental impacts. A handprint describes the positive environmental impacts that organisations can have and communicate by offering services and products that decrease the footprints of others. (see Pajula et al. 2021.)

The customer's perspective and definition of environmentally friendly food, its preparation and consumption

In the literature, there is no exact definition of what environmentally friendly food preparation or consumption means and which elements it includes in small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies from the customer's perspective. The current research supports the complexity of this phenomenon but also contributes by increasing the knowledge in defining environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption and bringing the customer's perspective on that.

An empirical framework for small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies to connect customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption

The existing literature related to environmentally friendly food, environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption, customer relationships, as well as an organisation's perspective on the topic is scattered. The current research brings the existing literature together. The study offers an overarching framework, that captures the complexity of customer relationship development and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption in small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies. The literature has not previously emphasised this kind of holistic view of the organisation's customer relationships and environmental sustainability as was done in the current study.

The study finds it relevant not only to use the term communication, as it is used in the relationship marketing literature (Parasuraman et al. 1991; Morgan & Hunt 1994; Selnes 1998), but to use the term dialogue, which emphasises the importance of listening and discussing with all the relationship parties involved around the topic. In order to have a successful dialogue, the research emphasises the importance of having a customer relationship management system integrated into the whole dialogue process.

6.2.2 Practical contribution

The following is a list of the practical contributions of this study:

1. *Offering a mindset and tools* for small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies to develop their customer relationships and integrate environmentally friendly food into those customer relationships.
2. *Transferability* of the proposed framework to other organisations and industries.

Offering a mindset and tools for small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies to develop their customer relationships and integrate environmentally friendly food into those customer relationships

The study challenges organisations to think about business, customer relationships, and environmental sustainability in a broader, more interconnected way across the organisation's strategy and operations. The study demonstrates that it is possible to integrate customer relationships and environmental friendliness, look at them in the same context as the organisation's strategic plans and realise them on the operational level. The study also includes practical examples that offer tools for connecting customer relationships and environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption in the organisation's operations.

This research supports looking at business, customer relationships, and environmental sustainability as part of a bigger system of integrity. This refers to embracing broader thinking and benefiting from systems thinking. Systems thinking is an approach that supports an understanding of how complex systems, their processes, people, and technology work. To understand how systems work, they need to be analysed as a complete system instead of breaking down into individual parts. Systems thinking refers to a holistic view of the various components of an entity in the context of their interactions and relationships with each other. (see Monat & Gannon 2015.)

Transferability of the proposed framework to other organisations and industries

An empirical framework proposed here is developed from the perspective of small and medium-sized restaurants' and food service companies, but the framework is built at such a level that it can be applied to different sizes of organisations or other industries that seek to enhance their perspective on environmental sustainability or customer relationships. Thus, the transferability of the framework can help various organisations in different industries design their business towards customer- and environmentally friendly centricity.

6.3 Limitations

The findings of this study must be seen in the light of some limitations and interpreted with caution. Some of the limitations are typical for qualitative research, while others are more specific to the topic and the current research itself.

Qualitative research includes a labour-intensive analysis process, including data recording, data coding, categorisation, etc. Thus, the data cannot be analysed mathematically and is

usually based on a researcher’s judgment. In addition, the research was carried out by a single researcher who had a personal interest in the topics of customer-centricity and sustainability within organisations. Therefore, the researcher’s internal preconceptions and biases may have affected the gathering and analysis of data. Furthermore, the lack of the researcher’s experience in conducting research increases the risk that there are flaws in selecting and implementing the methods.

Regarding the data collection, the informants in the in-depth interviews were close stakeholders to the researcher. The informants' replies might have been different if the researcher and informants had not known each other. However, this also made it possible to have an open and trusting atmosphere during the interviews. Additionally, the in-depth interview questions were initially created to be aligned with the timeline and targets of the bigger project from which this study originally emerged. The researcher feels that if there had been more time to investigate the theories before the interviews needed to be conducted, the in-depth interview questions would have been perhaps slightly different. Data collection for both in-depth interviews and focus group interviews was done virtually. Even though the researcher feels that the quality of the data was good enough, at the same time, the researcher feels that the data would have been more versatile and have more depth if it had been possible to gather data in face-to-face interviews in the same room.

Concerning the literature, the current research aims to provide a thorough understanding based on the literature from various sources and disciplines. Thus, the theoretical part of this study is based on the assumption that the researcher has managed to find relevant literature. However, it is neither feasible nor intended to include all the research on the numerous pertinent factors. When considering the limitations of this study, it is also important to take into account the researcher's lack of experience in writing scientific papers, which might impact the depth and scope of the discussions of this research.

The service design process in this study includes the stages Recognise, Explore, Define, Develop and Realise. The final stage of the process, Realise, where the actual implementation would happen, was left out due to time and resource limitations. In addition, the time frame of this study did not allow for a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of the resulting framework. It would take many years to estimate the success. In addition, the validity of this study is limited as it is based only on the background of the focus group members. To successfully validate the framework would have required more time as well as more stakeholders.

Finally, the topic of the study was broad and complex, and the study only scratched the surface. However, this lays the foundation for future studies to find different perspectives and take a deep dive into the surface of this study.

6.4 Opportunities for future research

This research offers plenty of opportunities for future research. These opportunities for future investigation are covered next.

The research focused on the restaurant and food service industry and had a business-to-consumer view. Therefore, opportunities for future research would be to expand the empirical framework developed in this study to other industries and also to study the topic in a business-to-business context.

The study focused on building a framework of relationships between the customer, the organisation, and environmentally friendly food. However, these relationships are influenced directly or indirectly by several factors and stakeholders that were not considered in the study. This has some relation to the systems thinking approach discussed in the context of the practical value of the study. This implies that the system, together with various stakeholders influencing the organisation's customer relationships and environmental friendliness, creates an opportunity for future studies. For example, researching the same topic from the organisation's partners' point of view would be an interesting topic. This would add value to this research because the customer does not differentiate whether the experience impacting the customer relationship was created by the organisation itself or by a partner of the organisation - the customer sees only one experience from her/his own point of view, no matter who is the service provider.

Natural allies with customer relationships are customer experiences and customer value. Therefore, customer experiences and customer value would both offer their perspectives to further investigate the relationship between the customer, the organisation, and environmental friendliness.

This study investigated the research topic more from a customer-centric point of view. In the future, it would be interesting to research a single case study of an organisation that has successfully implemented environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption at its strategic and operational levels.

The concept of the brand came up in the literature as well as in the informants' interviews. This could offer a research topic to investigate how small and medium-sized restaurants and food service companies can build their whole brand around environmental friendliness. This topic is connected to the organisation's business model, which would inspire research on how to develop a successful business model that integrates customer relationships and environmental sustainability.

This research confirmed the important role of the customer in the organisation's environmentally friendly strategy and operations. The findings showed the essential role and the relationships between the customer's knowledge, understanding, self-image, perceptions, motivation, and interest in food and environmental friendliness. Further research into these relationships would offer opportunities for further research.

Sheth (2017) suggests as one future research area for relationship marketing the use of social media in creating and maintaining brand communities. However, it seems like the future of business will be linked to Web3. Therefore, an interesting opportunity for future research would be to investigate the opportunities of Web3 for connecting customer relationship development and environmental friendliness. For example, future studies could focus on what would be the shift in relationships and how the new technology would impact customer understanding, interactions, engagement, collaboration, ownership, or roles in the Metaverse.

This research was a qualitative study and was done by one researcher. Expanding the research team could enhance the quality and depth of the study. By increasing the number of researchers in the qualitative study, the likelihood of researcher bias influencing the results would decrease. Another further research area related to this research would be conducting the study as a quantitative study with a larger number of participants.

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Figures

Tables

Appendices

Appendix 1: In depth-interview guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE IN THE IN DEPTH-INTERVIEWS (À LA CARTE RESTAURANT)

I BACKGROUND

- Introduction of the interviewer and the background of the interview.

II INFORMANTS AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY FOOD

- How would you describe yourself as an à la carte restaurant customer?
- How do you understand and define environmentally friendly food?
- How would you define environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption at a restaurant?
- Which of the following personas (adapted from Rajala 2020) would best describe you as a consumer in terms of making environmentally friendly decisions in general and in relation to food?

SUSPICIOUS CONSUMER
"I am not interested in the steak's carbon footprint"

- Does not believe she/he can impact.
- Has not changed habits because of the environment
- Not interested in food ingredients
- Directed by old habits when selecting food
- Suspicious regarding new food and environmental sustainability

Hinders for environmental sustainability:
- Lack of interest
- Old habits when making choices

AWAKENED CONSUMER
"I would like to have information that I can trust."

- Believes that her/his choices can positively impact environmental sustainability
- Has changed own food habits for the environment
- Conscious when selecting food
- Interested in food ingredients
- Open mind to new food
- Wants more information

Hinders for environmental sustainability:
- Lack of information
- Confusing information

MAYBE TOMORROW CONSUMER
"I do not usually pay attention what food I select, and many times I just select something automatically."

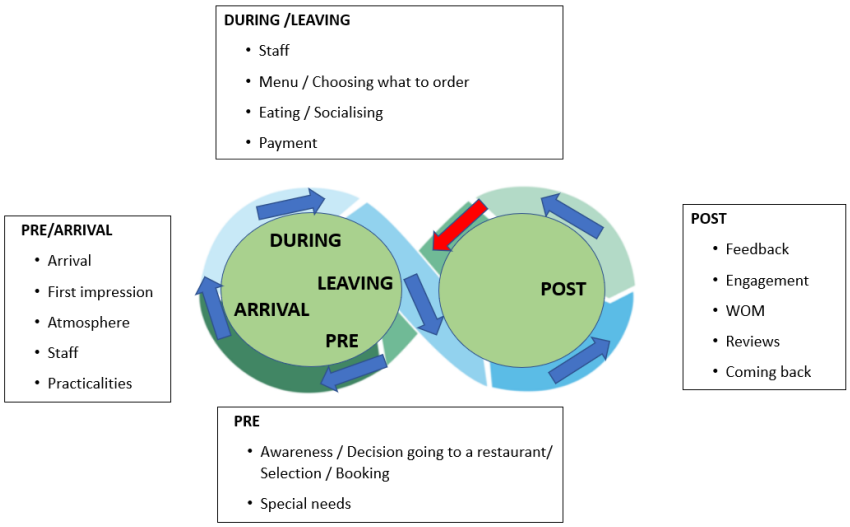
- Believes that her/his choices can have a positive environmental impact.
- Has not changed habits for the environment.
- Makes food selections based on feelings at that moment
- Open mind to new food
- Slight interest in environmental sustainability

Hinders for environmental sustainability:
- Not now, but maybe in the future
- Food selections directed by ease and automation

III CUSTOMER JOURNEY – SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED RESTAURANT AND FOOD SERVICE COMPANY AND ENVRIRONMENTALLY FRIENLDY FOOD PREPARATION AND CONSUMPTION

1. Customer journey and the customer's experiences and expectations in different phases of the journey:

   Imagine that you are going to an à la carte restaurant where environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption are preferred. Think about your journey from beginning to end: from choosing a place, going there, being there, and leaving the place so that you want to go there again.



Customer's assumed journey with an à la carte restaurant.

PRE-PHASE

- What factors influence your choice of a restaurant?
- When you think about environmentally friendly food and selecting which restaurant to go to, what would impact your trust and image of the restaurant in an environmentally friendly food context?
- What kind of expectations do you normally have from the restaurant? What do you wish and expect to get at the very least?
- What would make you think twice about going to a restaurant? What would lower the uncertainty in selecting the restaurant?
- How would you be positively surprised and what would exceed your expectations?

ARRIVAL-PHASE

- What would make a good impression for you?
- What would spoil the impression?
- How would you be positively surprised and what would exceed your expectations?

DURING/LEAVING -PHASES

- What information do you value when choosing what to order?
- What do you expect from a waiter when you think about environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption?
- What do you expect from the menu and from food selection when thinking about environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption?
- How should the restaurants' communication be to make you interested and motivated in environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption? How could the restaurant support you?
- What is needed for you to be a satisfied customer?
- How the encounters should be in order for everything to be as easy as possible for you?
- What would make you feel uncomfortable or annoyed?
- Where can you forgive and where not?
- What adds value to you as a customer when being at the restaurant?
- What would make you come again, be different from the others and bond with you?
- How would you be positively surprised and what would exceed your expectations?

POST-PHASE

- What are the important things the restaurant could do after your visit?

- What are your expectations after visiting the restaurant?
- In order you to return to the restaurant, what the restaurant could do between the time you have left the restaurant and returning?
- In what situation would you give positive or negative feedback to the restaurant?
- What prevents you giving feedback?
- In what situation would you share negative or positive word-of-mouth and write a review?
- What prevents you from sharing your experiences?
- What would make it easier for you?

2. The overall customer journey and the customer's experiences and expectations

- What needs to happen in order for you to become a committed and loyal customer? This means that you would return regularly and recommend the restaurant to others.
- In which situations can the restaurant fail such that you will forgive it and it will not impact your decision to come back?
- In which situations must the restaurant not make a mistake? What would need to happen before you gave a negative reference about the restaurant to your network? What would need to happen so that you would not come back anymore?
- How can a restaurant increase your interest and motivation towards environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption at the restaurant?

IV FACTORS IMPACTING SELECTING THE RESTAURANT

On which bases you choose a restaurant?
If you would need to choose 3-4 items from the "general elements" list and 4-5 "environmental elements" list what they would be? Why these?

General elements

- Recommended by a friend
- Good service
- Good price and quality level
- Tasty food, the price doesn't matter
- Close location
- Atmosphere
- Others, what else comes to your mind?

Environmentally friendly food related elements

- Saving energy and water in food preparation
- Minimising food waste
- The origin of the food ingredients mentioned
- Local food
- Favouring the seasonal food
- Wide selection of vegetarian options - minimising beef
- Sustainable packaging
- Other, anything else that comes to your mind?

V RESTAURANT AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY FOOD PREPARATION AND CONSUMPTION COMMUNICATION

When you are in a restaurant, how do you feel about the options below in embracing environmentally friendly food consumption and preparation? What thoughts come to your mind?

1. A symbol on the menu that shows the food is an environmentally friendly choice.

2. Different portion sizes available at different prices.
3. Communication about the climate effects of food.
   - e.g., a leaflet on the table or information in the menu about the importance of minimising food waste or information about the positive impact of environmentally friendly food.
4. The exact carbon footprint of the food is presented
5. At a pizzeria, a dip is sold separately so that the edges of the pizza will be eaten
6. Replacing rice with Finnish grains
7. Preferring Finnish meat
8. Surprise menu – the restaurant decides the menu according to what food ingredients they have in stock (quality of the food guaranteed)
9. Vegetarian and vegan options marked with symbols
10. Any other options that might interest you or be beneficial to you?

11. If you had to choose the five most interesting options from the above (1-10), which would you choose and why?

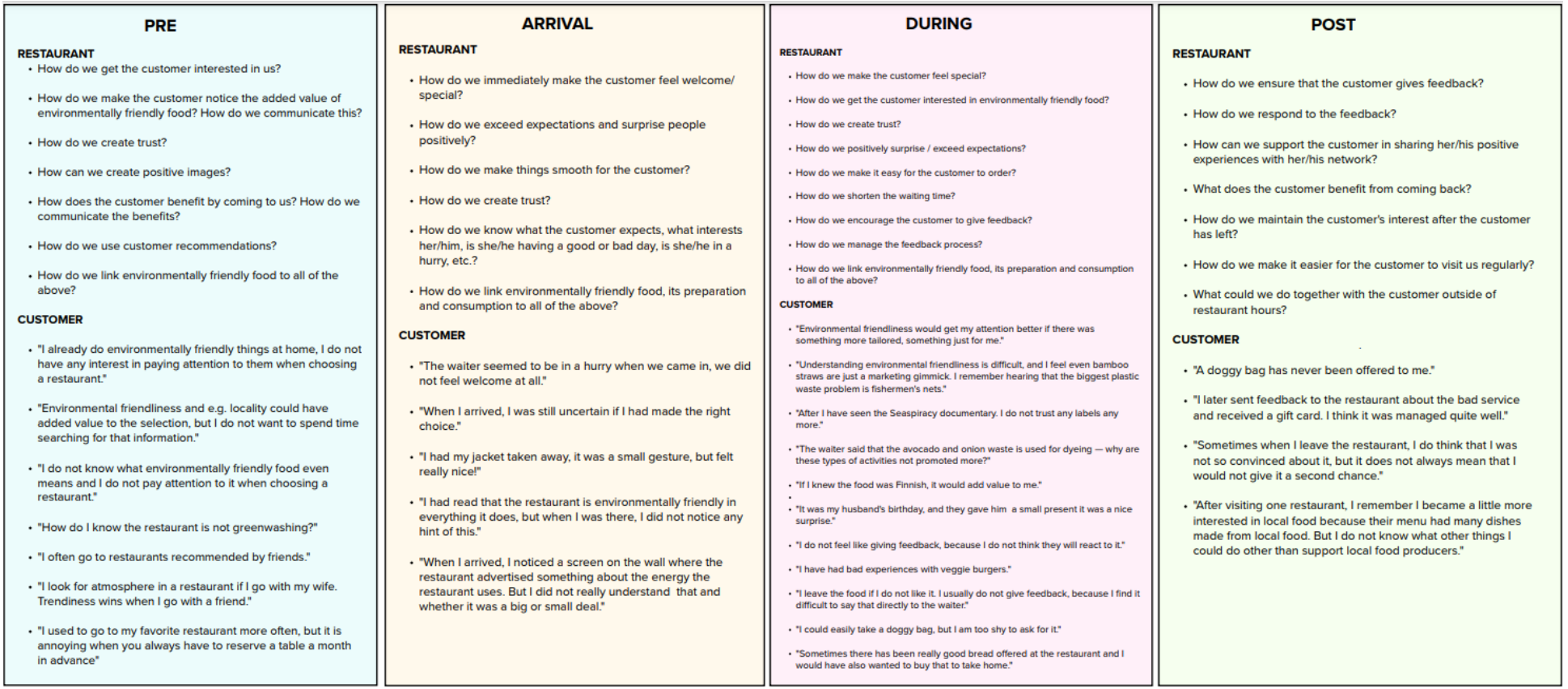
Appendix 2: Focus groups interview guide

How to connect customer relationships and environmental sustainability?

June 6th, 2021

CONTENT & TIME	CHANNEL
HIGH-LEVEL INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC • "Restaurant culture and successful environmental sustainability", 12 min *Sami Koponen, doctoral researcher, Helsinki University* • "From customer service encounters to meaningful customer relationships", 12 min, *Viljami Hoffrén, Customer Experience Consultant, Futurelab*	Zoom, All informants
ORGANISATION INTO 4 FOCUS GROUPS • 2 a la carte, 2 lunch buffet, 1 cafeteria focus groups • Group's introduction • Introduction to Mural & rehearsal exercise • Facilitator's introduction to the topic: - customer experiences and customer relationships - environmentally friendly food preparation and consumption at the restaurant - customer journey - pre, arrival, during, post phases	Zoom rooms & Mural Focus group
CUSTOMER JOURNEY: PRE-PHASE • Facilitator's introduction, 1min • Read the customer's and organisation's perspectives, 2min • Brainwriting alone 3 min • Discussion and brainstorming together, 6 min • Voting for the most appropriate ideas, 4 min	Zoom rooms, & Mural Focus group
CUSTOMER JOURNEY: ARRIVAL-PHASE • Facilitator's introduction, 1min • Read the customer's and organisation's perspectives, 2min • Brainwriting alone 3 min • Discussion and brainstorming together, 6 min • Voting for the most appropriate ideas, 4 min	Zoom rooms, & Mural Focus group
BREAK 5-8 min	
CUSTOMER JOURNEY: DURING-PHASE • Facilitator's introduction, 1min • Read the customer's and organisation's perspectives, 2min • Brainwriting alone 3 min • Discussion and brainstorming together, 6 min • Voting for the most appropriate ideas, 4 min	Zoom rooms, & Mural Focus group
CUSTOMER JOURNEY: POST-PHASE • Facilitator's introduction, 1min • Read the customer's and organisation's perspectives, 2min • Brainwriting alone 3 min • Discussion and brainstorming together, 6 min • Voting for the most appropriate ideas, 4 min	Zoom rooms, & Mural Focus group
THE MOST APPROPRIATE IDEAS EMBEDDED INTO ONE CUSTOMER JOURNEY • Copy and paste the most appropriate ideas voted from each customer journey phase into the final journey, 3-4 ideas for one journey phase, 2min • Discuss the whole journey and ideas selected 5min	Zoom rooms, & Mural Focus group
FOCUS GROUPS PRESENT THEIR IDEAL CUSTOMER JOURNEY & IDEAS SELECTED	Zoom, All informants

Appendix 3: The iterated customer journey used in the focus groups



Appendix 4: An example of the customer journey created in the focus groups