

**Fizaz Khandakar**

**ITSUDEMOMO SUSHI BAR**

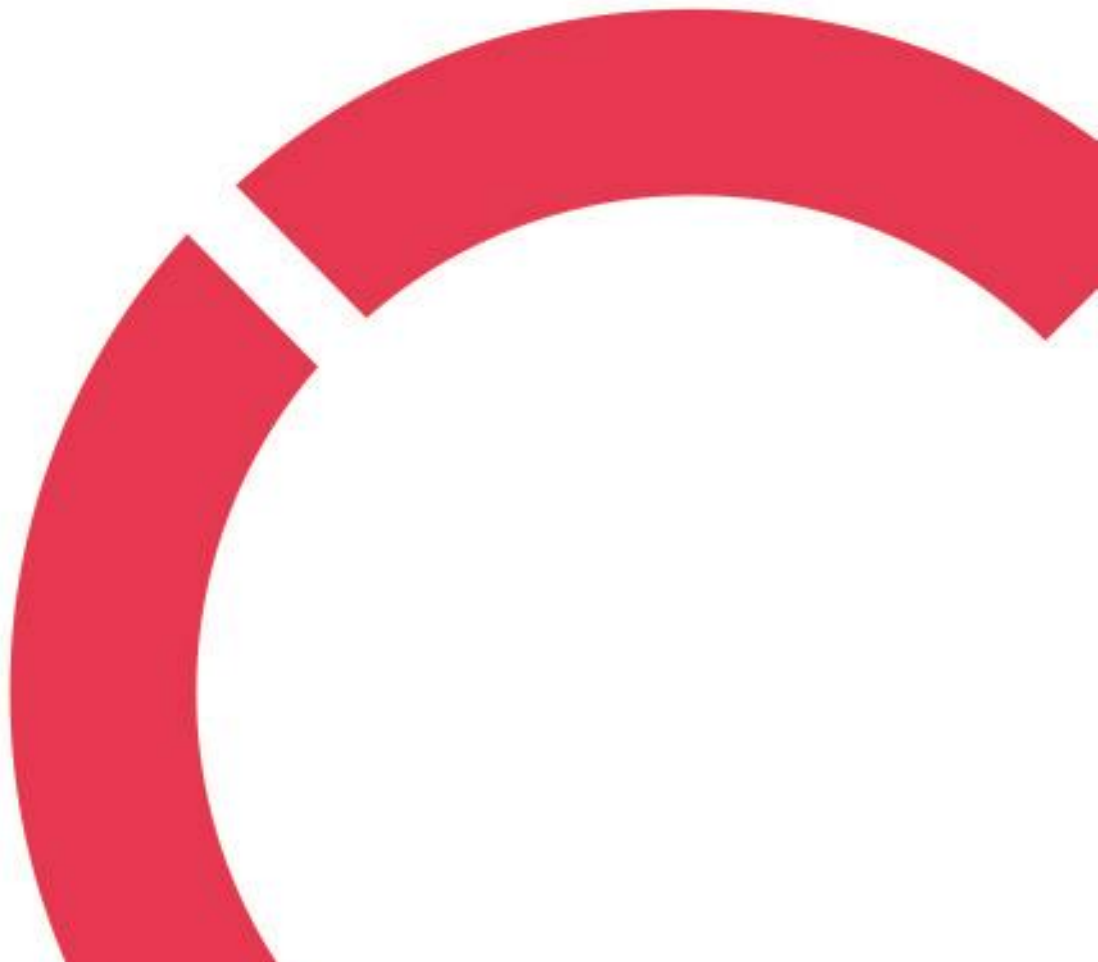
**An Interview Study of a Sushi Restaurant Chain's Success Factors and Business Strategies in Finland**

**Thesis**

**CENTRIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES**

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**ABSTRACT**

<b>Centria University of Applied Sciences</b>	<b>Date</b> December 2023	<b>Author</b> Fizaz Khandakar
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<b>Name of thesis</b> ITSUDEMO SUSHI BAR. An Interview Study of a Sushi Restaurant Chain's Success Factors and Business Strategies in Finland		
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<p>Sushi is a famous Japanese food. Like many other countries in Finland the food item is also becoming popular. Considering the scenario, the aim of the thesis was to conduct an interview with relevant sushi consumers to find the success factors of the business. The goal was to identify the key factors influencing their success in Finland's highly competitive market, as well as to assess the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty associated with Itsudemo sushi bars. The customer satisfaction results will help identify areas for improvement in sushi restaurant marketing to attract and retain customers.</p> <p>Additionally, the thesis explored the Finnish restaurant industry and focused on Itsudemo sushi bar. It aimed to identify success factors and customer attraction strategies. The research is of great importance to industry stakeholders including investors, entrepreneurs, industry associations and the academic community. It covers branding, customer experience, menu options and marketing strategies and has the potential to help sushi restaurants grow and succeed.</p>		
<b>Key words</b> Business strategies, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, sustainability, sushi restaurant marketing.		

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Food is not only a need to survive but also it can be a passion. People throughout the world are very conscious about the food that they are eating. Tasty food is not considered firstly rather food safety and hygiene and healthiness take more consciousness. Among famous food items of the human food habit sushi, which is a Japanese food, is rapidly growing on the table of new food lovers. The popularity of Japanese food has undoubtedly increased over the past few decades in the world, particularly sushi, which is considered to be the most important dish in Japanese culture. Moreover, in Japanese ‘sushi’ and ‘zushi’ are mainly pronounced separately but the meaning is same along with the food itself. (Mouritsen 2009.)

It is very widely known that the word “sushi” is well recognized in every corner of the world nowadays (Tsukiji cooking 2018). Sushi, the food from Japan is extremely popular among the people from all around the world and Finland can’t be away from it. Especially, they love the aromas, spices, and presentation. With its fusion of favours, fresh ingredients, and artistic presentation, sushi has become a beloved culinary phenomenon in Finland, appealing to both locals and visitors alike. Originating in Japan centuries ago, sushi has evolved from a simple method of preserving fish to an art form celebrated for its balance and harmony.

Traditionally, a range of ingredients, including raw fish, vegetables, and seaweed, are mixed with vinegared rice to make sushi. These rolls are a delicious reflection of Japan's rich cultural legacy, thanks to their expert craftsmanship. In addition, in recent years, sushi's popularity has surged in Finland, driven by a growing appreciation for diverse global cuisines. (Shurtleff & Aoyagi 2014.) The Finnish market's increasing demand for healthier and more exotic dining options has undoubtedly played a role in sushi's prominence. Additionally, its visually appealing presentation and the option of customizing rolls to suit individual preferences have contributed to its widespread appeal.

Today, you can find sushi restaurants and kiosks dotted across major cities in Finland, ranging from casual spots to high-end establishments. Whether it's a quick lunch on the go or an elegant dining experience, sushi provides a culinary adventure that transcends cultural boundaries. The success of sushi in Finland can be attributed not only to its delicious taste but also to the inclusive and welcoming atmosphere it creates. As Finland's culinary landscape continues to evolve, sushi stands tall as a testament to the country's openness to embracing global flavors while preserving the essence of its cultural

heritage. With its ever-growing popularity, sushi remains a vibrant and cherished part of Finland's gastronomic tapestry, inviting both locals and visitors to indulge in the pleasures of this culinary masterpiece.

In the following thesis focus of the writer is on those issues to understand the operation strategies of Itsudemo Sushi Bar in Finland. What sort of plan did the sushi authority implement within their business. It helps other restaurants understand how to succeed in a new country by looking at what Itsudemo did right. They can learn from Itsudemo's strategies to make their own restaurants better. People who want to start their own restaurant can get good ideas from this study. They can see what worked for Itsudemo and try similar things to make their restaurant successful.

The business strategies of Itsudemo Sushi show how a restaurant can respect both its own culture and the culture of the country it's in. This helps people understand how different cultures can come together and create something everyone likes. The study gives insights into how being creative and trying new things, like Itsudemo did with their menu, can make a restaurant stand out and attract more customers. Itsudemo Sushi highlights the importance of adapting to the local culture and tastes, which is crucial for any business entering a new market.

## 2 COMMISSIONER

Itsudemo Oy, an Asian dining establishment, has been operating successfully for five years. The company gained recognition in March 2018 with the launch of its inaugural sushi buffet restaurant located in the center of Tampere. Since then, it has expanded its presence to multiple cities such as Espoo, Vantaa, Helsinki, and Turku. So far, the company has established a total of 12 sushi buffet restaurants for customers across Finland. The popularity of sushi, recognized for its nutritional value and convenient, quick consumption, has grown rapidly among Finnish consumers in just a few years. (Ngai, Suk & Lo 2008.)

The company is growing into various sushi bar and fire wok business types in addition to the sushi buffet model (Siniver, Mealem & Yaniv 2013). Likewise in 1980 the Sushi bar has been registered in the Official Gazette of the United States Patent and Trademark (Official Gazette of the United States Patent and Trademark Office 1983). The company's motto is "Always a bit more," which means that they are continually striving to enhance their food quality and customer service to provide customers with the best possible experience (Yorgov 2022).

Several recently opened sushi bars are making their mark on the Finnish market, including establishments such as Prisma and S-Market. This emerging approach aims to provide consumers with healthy, convenient, and enjoyable meals, eliminating the need for them to travel to restaurants and possibly contributing to the growing popularity and profitability of sushi bars. The company's mission is to "bring Asian food culture to the world!" With a focus on authentic Japanese recipes, allowing everyone to participate in the culture and experience fulfilment. Core values include contributing to the Finnish community and economy, providing customers with delicious food and an exceptional dining experience, and creating employment opportunities, especially for international students. (Chavez 2023.)

Itsudemo currently has over 350 employees across three concepts sushi bar, 17 restaurants and fire-works. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the company is experiencing rapid growth. However, in the coming years of 2022-2023, the corporation plans to undergo a restructuring phase, with the primary focus on improving restaurant quality, including aspects such as branding, culinary excellence, employee service and overall performance.

In terms of cuisine, most of the sushi buffet restaurants within the company's portfolio offer similar dishes, including sushi, sake, fried foods, and desserts. This similarity in offerings often makes it difficult for customers to discern the unique qualities of each restaurant. (Itsudemosushi 2023.)

Consumer loyalty within the industry appears to be remarkably low, as indicated by frequent switching between different sushi buffet restaurants. Consequently, it is imperative for the company to focus on identifying its competitive advantage, improving overall restaurant quality, and differentiating itself to attract a larger clientele.

The table has about eighteen displays of sushi items for customers. Among these items, "maki" refers to any type of sushi made in a roll with fillings as varied as sushi rice or toasted seaweed nori. The word "maki" translates to "roll" and is a common experience for people who have indulged in sushi. Some variations of maki, like uramaki, are complex and demand the skills of a skilled chef, while others, like temaki, are easy to make and are often enjoyed at home and during social gatherings. (Larsen 2022.)

Maki sushi exists in different forms, which are determined by the thickness of the roll and the method of preparation. A common type is hosomaki, also known as thin rolls. They are made by placing a narrow strip of sushi rice with one or two ingredients on one end of a nori sheet and rolling it tightly to form a thin roll. Before serving, hosomaki is usually cut into small pieces and presented on a platter alongside various other types of sushi to provide contrast. Common variations of hosomaki include cucumber rolls, carrot rolls, and tuna rolls. (Quiet 2018.)

Like many other countries worldwide, maki sushi enjoys great popularity in Japan. In April 2001, surveyors distributed surveys to approximately 5,000 individuals who were part of the Japan division of the Pen Pal service, specifically targeting those who expressed their willingness to participate. From this outreach, 835 valid responses were collected from Japanese residents living in Japan. As usual, a significant majority of respondents, more than two-thirds, are under the age of thirty. It is important to recognize that this survey does not provide a representative overview of the entire Japanese population. However, it provides valuable insight into the preferences and trends of Japan's younger generation. Given the ease and quick preparation of this type of sushi, the researchers chose this variety for our meal. (Roka 2019.)

The three staples of the Japanese diet are soy products, rice, and seafood. Sushi, possibly the most well-liked dish in Japan, is made up of these three foods as well as veggies and sauces. According to Shurtleff and Aoyagi (2014), a long and healthy life is prescribed by the diet. Let's examine the health advantages of the common ingredients found in sushi. In terms of nutrition, fish is thought to be low in calories and fat but high in protein and a good source of iodine and vitamin B12 and crab and oysters may lower cholesterol. (Petre 2019.)

Moreover, salmon and tuna, common ingredients in sushi, are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, known for their benefits in preventing heart disease and stroke. Rice contributes both carbohydrates and protein to the meal. Vinegar, another ingredient, not only has antibacterial properties but also aids in digestion and acts as a natural skin conditioner. Nori, a type of seaweed used in sushi, is rich in protein and minerals, especially iodine. (WebMD 2022.)

Additionally, nori is a source of vitamins A, B1, C and niacin. Ginger and wasabi, commonly associated with sushi, also have antibacterial properties and aid in digestion. Ginger is known for its anti-nausea properties, while wasabi is rich in potassium and vitamin C. Fresh and pickled vegetables, often included in sushi, provide fibre, minerals, and vitamins. (Zschock 2005.) It is clear that sushi is a simple but highly nutritious food. Japanese people, who usually eat sushi as part of their daily diet, often look younger than their age, perhaps attributing their youthful appearance to their healthy diet. Sushi, with its combination of proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals, stands out as a valuable resource for maintaining overall health. (Martenz and Cramp 2011.)

### **3 BUSINESS STRATEGY AND CLASSIFICATION OF BUSINESS STRATEGIES**

An overarching strategy deals with the various strategic choices within a plan of action designed to achieve a company's mission and objectives. Depending on the growth goals of a business, it can choose one of the primary types of business strategies. This category of objective seeks to increase or expand a specific segment of the business by a specific percentage. For example, this expansion may relate to new products, customers, or locations. (Boyles 2022.) Another example may involve strategically expanding operations to multiple countries. A concentrated growth strategy channels all resources and opportunities toward improving existing products in established markets, prioritizing specialization, expanding market presence, and improving both sales and profitability. This focused growth strategy is executed through three strategic paths: market penetration strategy, market development strategy and product development strategy. (Ngai et al. 2008.)

The strategy of integration development focuses on advancing business growth by creating and expanding connections with intermediaries and competitors within specific regions. This approach is usually implemented in three primary ways: upward integration strategy, downward integration strategy and horizontal integration strategy. (Luu 2023.)

Diversification strategy, on the other hand, is a growth strategy that incorporates fundamental changes in technology, products, and business areas to create new product-market pairs for the business. This technique includes several variants, including concentric diversification, horizontal diversification, and aggregate diversification. (Luu 2023.)

#### **3.1 The role of business strategy**

Regardless of their scale, businesses need well-defined strategies to manage their growth and progress. Business strategy addresses key issues critical to the management and operation of a business, such as pricing, supplier relationships, employee hiring, and resource allocation. In the absence of a strategy, business operations lack a sense of direction, often focusing only on immediate concerns rather than planning for the future. The basic purpose of a business strategy is to provide a distinct and efficient path for companies to follow, which serves as a blueprint for effective operations. (Coupey 2005.)

Furthermore, it helps businesses build strong funds for research, investment, and development initiatives, as well as enhance training and human resources to optimize their capabilities. Additionally, it empowers companies to verify, evaluate and forecast potential opportunities and threats. This analysis helps identify strengths and weaknesses, enables proactive actions to capture opportunities, mitigate risks and improve competitive advantages. (Boyles 2022.)

### **3.2 Strategic management process**

Strategic management plays an important role in helping organizations achieve their objectives, adapt to change and maintain a competitive position in a dynamic and constantly evolving business environment. The strategic management process includes four key phases, beginning with environmental scanning. This stage involves the collection and examination of information necessary for strategic decision-making. (Tucci 2022.) Environmental scanning allows for the assessment of both internal and external factors affecting the organization. After this analysis, it is essential for management to regularly review and refine it to ensure continuous improvement. (Business Jargons 2018.)

Strategy formulation constitutes the process of defining a business mission, recognizing external opportunities and threats, identifying internal strengths and weaknesses, establishing long-term goals, developing alternative strategies, and making strategic choices for pursuit (Business Jargons 2018). Strategy implementation, often considered the most challenging phase, involves executing the formulation strategies. This requires establishing annual objectives, formulating resource allocation policies and ensuring that strategies can be effectively executed. (Coupey 2005.)

The challenge of implementing a strategy lies in aligning the efforts of managers and employees within the organization to achieve established goals. The next phase, strategy evaluation and adjustment, primarily evaluates the results of strategy formulation and implementation. This step includes re-evaluating the factors influencing the strategy, measuring results against established standards and comparing them with desired results. After this assessment, the strategy is adjusted to improve, and timely policies are developed to address emerging issues in the business environment. (Juneja 2008.)

### **3.3 Developing strategies for decision making and strategy implementation**

The strategy development and selection process involve three primary phases. At the input stage, analysing the environment, obtaining comprehensive and timely information to identify opportunities, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses is crucial. Using various tools like internal factor evaluation (IFE) matrix, external factor evaluation (EFE) matrix and competitive profile matrix is essential to select the best strategy. The second stage, known as the matching stage, involves combining the information gathered to formulate strategic alternatives within the strategic planning process. (Planellas 2019.)

At this stage, the SWOT matrix stands out as a key and highly effective tool. In the third phase, which is the decision-making phase, decisions are informed by the results obtained, the results from the second phase and the factors analysed from the initial phase. Leadership and management teams engage in discussions to develop a set of strategies. Subsequently, the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM) is employed to determine and identify the most effective strategies. (David 2001.)

The process of implementing a strategy involves executing a plan to achieve specific objectives or goals. It starts with generating ideas through brainstorming, followed by the execution process that transforms these strategies into real action. The success of strategy implementation relies heavily on feedback and regular status reports to ensure effectiveness and identify areas that may require improvement (Indeed, Editorial Team 2023). Furthermore, strategy implementation includes how an organization develops, uses, and integrates its organizational structure, control system, and culture in alignment with strategies that create a competitive advantage and improved performance (Juneja 2008).

The significance of strategy implementation lies in the transformation from concept to reality. It serves to demonstrate the practical feasibility of proposed strategies and can encourage team building by involving everyone in the process. Effective strategy implementation requires transparent and open communication with the use of appropriate tools to support strategy implementation. (Indeed, Editorial Team 2023.)

### **3.4 Human resource management**

The success of a service operation depends significantly on human resources, which, despite being an important contributor, also constitute a significant cost factor due to the labour-intensive nature of service operations. In addition to supervising employees, handling customers is an integral function of service operations. Customers are considered either a labour resource or a resource that must pass through the system smoothly, requiring appropriate training to ensure appropriate behaviour. (Dwivedi & Pandey 2020.)

Human resource management responsibilities include manpower and customer planning, job design, recruitment, selection, termination, training and development, promotion, workforce motivation, payment, health and safety, and industrial relations. (Armistead, Johnston, & Voss, 1986.)

Human resource management plays an important role in organizations by ensuring that people with the right skills are in the right positions. It is instrumental in motivating, developing and effectively managing the right people to achieve the organization's strategic goals and objectives. (Armistead, Johnston, & Voss, 1986.)

## 4 KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

The concept of key success factor, also known as critical success factor, has originated from the field of management information system for the purpose of designing information systems for top managers. According to Asana (2022) critical success factors are number of areas in which satisfactory results will ensure successful competitive performance for the individual, department, or organisation. Critical success factors are the few key areas where “things must go right” for the business to flourish and for the manager’s goals to be attained. In short, the core idea of key success factor is that it is a “statement about causal relationship, namely between success and some cause of success”. (Grunert & Ellegaard 1992.)

Hence, it is considered impossible to draw comprehensive conclusions about the key success factors in an industry or to formulate a comprehensive knowledge base or strategy for a business community. According to Mintzberg (1990), the only applicable research method to identify key success factors is through case studies. The underlying theory behind this view is that "every business is unique in every way" and therefore, "must find its own unique match with its environment". As a result, the use of this concept is limited to training business executives involving numerous individual field experiments to increase understanding and insight for business ecology. (Grunert & Ellegaard 1992.)

### 4.1 Planning tools

The concept serves as a planning tool designed to create “planning instruments” that aim to help businesses identify the most appropriate strategy (Grunert & Ellegaard, 1992). The essence of this concept lies in the idea that considering key success factors at the planning stage enables business leaders to make more informed decisions and improve the strategy formulation process.

This approach inherently forces decision makers to focus on a select number of factors, promoting centralized reasoning. This, in turn, can improve skills related to strategy formulation, problem solving and decision making. Similar to the objective of using key success factors as business attributes, this ap-

proach emphasizes the importance of training and enhancing the capabilities of decision makers. Furthermore, it has the potential to build a knowledge base regarding the decision-making process, explaining how success factors influence and shape the formulation of strategies. (Coupey 2005.)

## **4.2 Service Management**

The service industry has grown considerably, spreading its influence across various forms and sectors. This section will explore the fundamentals of service management and examine the factors that contribute to the success of service-based businesses. Service management includes activities such as supervision, planning, organizing, staffing, and controlling the integral processes of service management. (Appannaiah, Krishna, Raghavan & Reddy 2010.)

A distinct aspect of service management involves unique challenges arising from significant changes in staff/operator and customer behaviour. This variability makes establishing standards and maintaining consistent standards particularly challenging. Functions within service management include many aspects, including manpower and customer planning, job design, recruitment, selection, termination, training and development, promotion, workforce motivation, payment, health and safety, and industrial relations. (Bullock, Morris, & Atwell 2012.)

## **4.3 Capacity Management**

Capacity management is a strategic and tactical process that involves the organization's resources, supervision, and optimization to ensure their effective and efficient use to meet current and future needs. It stands as an important element within operations management and finds application across various business types, including IT, manufacturing, and services.

The primary objective of capacity management is to align operating levels with demand levels, achieving the best balance between cost and service levels, as described by Armistead in 1985. It involves two main tasks: consideration of issues related to medium to long-term needs; and developing strategies for resource utilization to accommodate short-term demand fluctuations.

There are two main strategies for adjusting capacity: changing capacity to match changes in demand or managing demand to reduce the need for changing capacity. The accuracy of demand pattern forecasting plays an important role, as more accurate forecasting contributes to better planning and resource allocation to effectively meet demand. (Loorbach, Bakel, Whiteman & Rotmans. 2010.)

#### **4.4 Operation Control**

The primary objective of operations control is to ensure that the service package is delivered to the customer at the right time and location. It involves two main areas of focus: production control and the role of receivers/dispatchers. The receptionist is tasked with contacting and assigning customers, managing schedules, and dispatching service delivery plans to customers. On the other hand, the production control role is responsible for operations at the interface between the "front office" and the "back room". (Reider 2008.)

It serves as the critical link between people in the "front office" who have extensive interaction with customers and those in the "back room" who have minimal or no customer contact. Its significance lies in ensuring timely delivery of the promised service package to the customer by the service-producing unit. (Reider 2008.)

#### **4.5 Quality Management**

Quality management is concerned with quality assurance of total service package. Quality management is not merely a list of topics to follow rather it is a consistent process to follow for the sustainability of an organization (Sartor & Orzes 2019). It encompasses activities and functions such as design, specification, and quality control, aimed at delivering service packages in alignment with customer expectations established by the marketing department. Quality management is associated with various factors including organization, personnel, processes, facilities, and materials. A basic quality control system consists of five steps: (a) defining service management phases, (b) specifying variables and characteristics, (c) establishing limits for measurement, (d) measuring and evaluating against standards, and (e) ) to implement corrective measures as necessary. (Early 2012.)

Moreover, queuing systems are essential for the design and management of services, services are perishable and cannot be stored. Unlike goods, a service system cannot rely on stocking to cope with demand variability. As a result, queuing systems become an integral component of service operations. Key features of a queuing system include queue length, reservation system, queue structure and design, and queue discipline. While planning the queuing system, managers must take into consideration factors such as ensuring reasonable waiting time for customers, fair priority in service, optimal waiting conditions, number of serving channels or serving time, establishing different service points based on customer segment. It is imperative that managers reduce distractions for customers who are waiting. (Early 2012.)

#### **4.6 Material Management**

Materials management includes activities related to the acquisition and administration of materials. This includes processes like purchasing or procurement, inventory and stock management, store control and distribution. The objectives of material management include providing service operations with the necessary materials, ensuring a consistent supply through positive relationships with existing suppliers and developing new ones, and maintaining inventories at the lowest cost while maintaining service levels.

In the context of a sushi business, the operational process usually involves two main components: first, the purchasing process (determining what/where/when and how much to buy); And secondly, materials management (stock control system, efficient stores, warehouse management, materials handling and distribution). (Beckman-Love & Nieger 2012.)

The location of a site is an important aspect of a service business, especially in the multi-site service industry where the development of a systematic site selection process is essential. This approach should describe both financial and non-financial criteria for decision making. Financial criteria may include breakeven calculations, discounted cash flow analysis, and potentially more advanced cash flow evaluations. On the other hand, non-financial criteria may involve factors such as potential supply, expected demand, competition, traffic flow and local regulations. (Farida & Setiawan 2022.)

## 4.7 Operations Strategy

Operations strategy refers to a collection of plans and policies to achieve an organization's objectives. It is commonly associated with the product life cycle concept, which has recently been extended to the service industry and includes three stages: entrepreneurship, growth, and maturity. Strategy is concerned with operational structure, amount, size and location of units, distribution between front office and back room, technology selection, extent of technology use and level of vertical integration. (Indeed 2022.)

For service firms, there are four primary operations strategies: strategically locating units, establishing economies of scale, advancing technology, and differentiating services. The purpose of operations strategy is to provide a framework for the operations department, allowing it to optimize the use of resources. This strategy describes the guidelines and procedures for deploying the organization's resources to maintain a competitive advantage. (Indeed 2022.)

## 4.8 Service Marketing

In the Basic Concepts section, it is highlighted that service production forms a component of the "marketing mix" (Armistead 1985). It introduces a distinct aspect of service marketing known as "Interactive Marketing". In traditional product marketing, the role of marketing is to bridge the gap between production and consumption. However, there is no such gap in the service context; The service production process takes place directly between the producer and the consumer. Consequently, marketing services become an integral part of the production process. A key focus of service marketing is how service production aligns with service expectations, ensuring that customers perceive high service quality and are consistently motivated to choose the same service provider. (Grönroos 2000.)

In services marketing, it is crucial to appreciate the metaphor of services as theatre, providing a framework for describing and analysing a service experience. Depicting human behaviour as a drama depicts the service experience as a theatrical "performance" between "actors" who present themselves to create a desired impression in front of an "audience" or what may be called the "front stage". Although the "rehearsal" of the performance occurs "backstage" away from the audience's perspective, some aspects of the actors' presentation can be carefully crafted. (Grove, Fisk & John 2003.)

## **5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

An interview study of Itsudemo Sushi Bar will take place to study and find out the factors for their success. This study employs a qualitative methodology. A series of customer satisfaction and customer views would be presented to know the factors of sales trend. Moreover, recommendation and development advice of the customer will also be taken to emphasise the future development of the strategy.

The study may have certain limitations, but it attempts to provide insightful information about the operations of Itsudemo sushi bar. Research methods are specific methods or techniques used to identify, select, process and analyse information about a topic.

### **5.1 Qualitative Methodology**

Qualitative research is a type of research that aims to gather and analyse non-numerical data to gain an understanding of individuals' social reality, including understanding their attitudes, beliefs, and motivation. (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2020.) In this thesis, semi-structured interviews will be considered to conduct qualitative research. To collect in-depth information and reliable answers to the study questions, the author conducts semi-structured six interviews with a range of customers, the semi-structured interview themes and questions are mentioned in appendix 1 of this thesis.

All the interviews are carried out in English inside the sushi bar taking 5-10 minutes under the supervision of commissioner. The purpose of the research project and the ethics of confidentiality and anonymity of respondent data were clearly communicated to the interviewer. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. I am working in itsudemo sushi bar, so, it was easy to find the customers and ask them for the qualitative research part. In that section, six individuals were selected for interviews, and the conversations took place through various possible means.

The interviewees thoughts, perspectives, sentiments, and impressions were added to the recordings using notes made during the interviews. Furthermore, the interviewees were informed that after transcribing the interviews, the recordings would be destroyed.

## **5.2 Interview analysis**

A thematic analysis approach has been applied to transcribe the recordings and results of the interviews. In this thesis, the thoughts and data from the informants are reported using a thematic analysis approach. Each topic illustrates the fundamental idea underlying the view of the interviewees.

## **5.3 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are the standards by which a quantitative technique or method is evaluated. For validity and reliability, the qualitative researcher employs the words credibility and dependability respectively. The use of standardized data collection methods, consistent interview questions and clearly defined analysis methods ensure the consistency and reliability of the research methodology. (Carmines & Zeller 1979.)

Research methodology guarantees that study methods are reproducible, improving reliability. Validity is established through rigorous analysis methods such as accurate data collection procedures, selective participant selection, and thematic analysis. Validity is further enhanced by limiting bias, linking the objectives of the study to the data collected, and considering alternative causes of the results. (Carmines & Zeller 1979.)

## 6 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter includes the analysis and findings of the interviews at Itsudemo Sushi Bar. The data interpreted from interviews are presented in this chapter. And the aim of the interviewing of the customers focused on the overall experience and feedback relating to sushi food. The research was done with the customers who came in to the sushi restaurant. Therefore, the analysis and findings of the research are furthermore divided into further sub-headings to clearly understand the research. Furthermore, a concrete idea has been identified from the interview on development of that particular food industry.

### 6.1 Feedback on pricing strategy

One of the interviewees said that Itsudemo Sushi Bar's pricing strategy seemed reasonable, citing the justification of prices by the quality of sushi offered. The interviewee appreciated the value received and believed the strategy aligned well with customers seeking a balance between quality and affordability.

Another interviewee acknowledged that pricing at Itsudemo Sushi Bar could be on the higher side but was willing to pay for the quality. The interviewee emphasized the use of fresh ingredients and highlighted the excellent dining experience. Itsudemo Sushi Bar's flexibility in offering a range of options, from affordable choices to premium selections, was a smart move. One of the interviewees noted that this flexibility catered to various customer expectations, allowing diners to choose according to their budget, which was important for a diverse clientele.

A couple of the interviewees including those who mentioned finding some items at Itsudemo Sushi Bar a bit pricey, collectively emphasized that the overall dining experience, encompassing ambiance and service, made it worth the cost.

Half of the interviewees, comprising those who acknowledged the pricing at Itsudemo Sushi Bar, with a mix of opinions on the cost, all highlighted the importance of quality and the overall dining experience.

## **6.2 Factors affecting choice of sushi selling brand**

One of the interviewees said the exceptional quality of sushi was the primary factor that drew towards Itsudemo Sushi Bar. The interviewee noted having tried many sushi places in Finland but consistently found Itsudemo to deliver the freshest and most delicious sushi.

Another interviewee expressed that outstanding customer service was the key reason for being regulars at Itsudemo Sushi Bar. The interviewee highlighted the friendly and attentive staff, emphasizing how they consistently made the customers feel valued.

A couple of the interviewees stated that what set Itsudemo Sushi Bar apart for them was the diversity in the menu. They appreciated the unique fusion of traditional and innovative sushi options, catering to different tastes. Additionally, they highlighted that it was a place where friends with varying sushi preferences could all find something they love and shared positive remarks about Itsudemo Sushi Bar's commitment to using fresh, premium ingredients and preserving traditional Japanese cuisine. They both emphasized the welcoming atmosphere, attentive staff, and unique dining experiences.

Half of the interviewees, comprising those who emphasized factors beyond just the sushi itself, mentioned outstanding customer service, sustainability practices, and a unique Japanese eating experience as key reasons for choosing Itsudemo Sushi Bar.

## **6.3 Food quality and its recommendation for development**

One of the interviewees said that Itsudemo Sushi Bar is preferred for its exceptional quality in both food and service. The interviewee specifically noted the consistently fresh and flavourful sushi and the attentive yet non-intrusive service. Feeling confident about the meal's quality each time dining was a key point.

Another interviewee highlighted being impressed with the quality of food at Itsudemo Sushi Bar. One person specifically mentioned well-crafted sushi with appealing presentations. Additionally, the interviewee commended the friendly and efficient service, contributing to an overall positive dining experience.

A couple of the interviewees said that Itsudemo Sushi Bar sets a high standard for quality. The ingredients tasted fresh, the sushi was excellent, and the service was attentive. They thought it was a trustworthy place with consistently good food and service, and they valued the staff's knowledge of the menu. They shared positive remarks about Itsudemo Sushi Bar's commitment to quality, mentioning the deliciousness of the sushi, polite service, and the restaurant's ability to accommodate special requests.

Half of the interviewees highlighted the exceptional quality of both food and service at Itsudemo Sushi Bar. They specifically praised the freshness of ingredients, well-crafted sushi, and attentive service as key factors that set the restaurant apart.

#### **6.4 Ingredients for sustainability of Itsudemo Sushi Bar**

One interviewee said sustainability was a significant factor in dining choices, and Itsudemo Sushi Bar's commitment to responsible ingredient sourcing aligned with their values. The interviewee expressed appreciation for knowing that the seafood was sustainably sourced, giving a good feeling about supporting the business.

Another interviewee recognized the importance of sustainability but noted that taste was still paramount. The interviewee considered knowing about responsible sourcing as a bonus and appreciated that Itsudemo Sushi Bar allowed enjoying high-quality sushi while supporting ethical practices.

A couple of the interviewees, including those who expressed appreciation for Itsudemo Sushi Bar's dedication to sustainability, highlighted the restaurant's serious approach to sustainability, caring for the planet, and promoting ethical practices.

Half of the interviewees emphasized the importance of sustainability in their dining decisions. They lauded Itsudemo Sushi Bar for its commendable sustainability efforts, specifically mentioning the restaurant's prioritization of responsible ingredient sourcing as a key factor that influenced their choice to dine there. The positive impact of Itsudemo Sushi Bar's commitment to sustainability was a common theme among these interviewees.

## 6.5 Overall recommendations

One of the interviewees expressed a desire for Itsudemo Sushi Bar to expand its vegetarian and vegan menu options to make the dining experience more inclusive for those with diverse dietary preferences. Another interviewee highlighted the convenience of Itsudemo Sushi Bar's online ordering and delivery service but suggested improving delivery times, especially during peak hours, to enhance the overall experience for customers who prefer dining at home.

A couple of the interviewees, including those who shared ideas for enhancing the overall dining experience at Itsudemo Sushi Bar, recommended acoustic improvements during busy times for a quieter atmosphere. They also suggested incorporating interactive features, collaborations with local sake breweries, seasonal events, and cultural activities. Additionally, one interviewee proposed introducing tasting menus or chef's specials to bring an exciting element to the dining experience, showcasing the chef's creativity and providing an opportunity for regular customers to explore new flavors and dishes.

Half of the interviewees, comprising those who offered constructive feedback for improving specific aspects of the Itsudemo Sushi Bar experience, discussed expanding menu options, optimizing delivery times, and introducing new and exciting elements to the dining experience.

## **7 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR THE COMMISSIONER**

In summary, the insights gathered from customers who frequent Itsudemo Sushi Bar shed light on the key success factors and business strategies that have contributed to the restaurant's prominence in Finland. These insights reveal a strong alignment between customer expectations and the restaurant's offerings and practices. Customers appreciate the restaurant's pricing strategy, which strikes a balance between quality and affordability. Itsudemo Sushi Bar's commitment to offering a range of menu options, including both traditional and innovative choices, caters to diverse tastes and preferences, reinforcing its appeal.

The exceptional quality of food and service consistently impresses customers. Their positive experiences highlight the restaurant's dedication to delivering fresh and delicious sushi while providing attentive and knowledgeable service. Sustainability and responsible ingredient sourcing play a significant role in influencing customers' dining choices. Itsudemo Sushi Bar's commitment to ethical and environmentally friendly practices resonates positively with conscientious diners, aligning with their values.

Customers also offer valuable suggestions for enhancing the overall dining experience, including expanding vegetarian and vegan menu options, improving delivery speed, introducing tasting menus, and addressing acoustic conditions during peak hours. Collectively, these insights emphasize that Itsudemo Sushi Bar's success in Finland can be attributed to its ability to deliver on customer expectations, maintain a balance between quality and affordability, and align with ethical and sustainable values. By leveraging these strengths and considering customer feedback, the restaurant is well-positioned to continue thriving in the competitive Finnish restaurant industry.

## 8 CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to analyze the Finnish restaurant industry, focusing on Itsudemo sushi bars and identifying success factors and customer attraction strategies. The research is of great importance to industry stakeholders including investors, entrepreneurs, industry associations and the academic community. It covers branding, customer experience, menu options and marketing strategies to help sushi restaurants grow and succeed.

The thesis also explored the strategies and business success of Itsdemo Sushi, a popular Japanese food item in Finland. Sushi has gained worldwide popularity, and the thesis focused on the unique business patterns of companies serving sushi. The thesis conducted interviews with relevant sushi customers to identify success factors and levels of customer satisfaction. The aim was to identify the key factors influencing their success in the competitive market in Finland and to assess the level of loyalty associated with Itsudemo sushi bars. Customer satisfaction results will help identify areas for sushi restaurant marketing improvement to attract and retain customers.

In conclusion, the interview with the customers of Itsudemo Sushi Bar shows us why it is so successful in Finland and its business strategies in Finland. The thesis used qualitative research method to analyse the results and then thematic analysis method was used to draw conclusions. People liked it because the restaurant did a great job in a few important areas. First, the restaurant is committed to making sure the food is good. They care about using quality ingredients and creating a variety of dishes to suit different tastes and budgets. Second, the restaurant is good at pleasing customers beyond just the food. The service is excellent, and the overall experience, including the environment, is very important to customers. Finally, the restaurant is also doing good for the environment. They are careful about where they get their ingredients, showing a dedication to sustainability.

Especially, the customers of Itsudemo Sushi Bar are impressed by the quality food, varied menu, excellent service and sustainable ingredients. Itsudemo Sushi Bar is popular among customers because they really do what customers want. This means they truly understand the greater value of the customer because every successful business operation depends on the customer's core value. Therefore, various layouts of its Itsudemo sushi bars are open across Finland. Itsudemo Sushi Bar always emphasizes and conveys its dedication to quality in both food and service. Many customers interviewed prioritized sustainability. Itsudemo Sushi Bar must continue to encourage responsible ingredient sourcing and ethical

practices. Promoting these sustainability practices not only attracts eco-friendly customers but also maintains the restaurant's overall brand image.

Overall, the success of sushi restaurant chains comes from doing a lot of things right. They understand what customers want, offer a mix of affordable and fancy options, and take care of the entire dining experience. It's a story that can teach other restaurants how to do well in the competitive food industry, focusing not only on the taste of the food but also on creating a happy and inclusive dining experience for everyone. So, apparently it can be said that the future of sushi has gained a significant customer base due to its high-quality food and professional management in the serving industry. Different items of sushi offer different flavors and tastes, creating a promising future for sushi to lead the market not only in Finland, but also worldwide.

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### Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What are your insights into the pricing strategy, and how do you perceive its alignment with customer expectations?
2. What factors influence your decision to choose Itsudemo Sushi Bar over other sushi restaurants in Finland?
3. Could you share your thoughts on the quality of food and service you have received at Itsudemo Sushi Bar?
4. What role does sustainability and responsible sourcing of ingredients play in influencing your choice to dine at Itsudemo Sushi Bar?
5. Based on your experiences, what suggestions or recommendations would you offer to enhance the overall dining experience at Itsudemo Sushi Bar?