

Vegetarian market research in Southern Ho Chi Minh City – First step to open a vegetarian restaurant

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Degree programme

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<p>The title of your thesis Vegetarian market research in District 7, Ho Chi Minh City</p>	<p>Number of pages and appendices 38</p>
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<p>People are more and more aware of their health care, they go exercising more often, take healthy food, and avoid harmful intake such as sugar, red meat, processed food, etc. Vegetarian food is widely spoken as a healthy diet and eco-friendly. Vietnamese also goes with the trend, especially among the youth. There is already a good vegetarian community in Vietnam, especially Ho Chi Minh City. The market is growing, there are new vegetarian restaurants with good investment in design, theme, and food. They are still crowded, meaning that the offer can be low, especially in Southern area of Ho Chi Minh city, where the thesis focused on. The writer has been interested in the diet for 3 years, now he wants to join and explore the market. However, there is not much information about people diet habit in Vietnam, how they aware of vegetarian food and restaurants, as well as their favor in choosing eating place. Hence, this thesis aimed to research about the people's behaviors in their diet as well as opinions on vegetarian in Southern Ho Chi Minh City. The target audience is office employees, as the thesis writer found some problems that he wants to solve.</p> <p>The thesis was structured with 5 main parts. First thing first, all the information and background of this thesis in details. Then it comes to the theoretical chapter with related theories and information from books, organizations, or journals, etc. Third part is the research, containing 3 parts: Benchmarking vegetarian restaurants, including 1 restaurants observation; a Questionnaire survey among 142 office employees in Southern Ho Chi Minh City, mainly District 7 and Nha Be; and Result analysis. The number 5 chapter will conclude all the findings along with suggestions for the next step of opening the restaurant.</p> <p>All the sources are listed at Reference Chapter, and the Questionnaire is shown at the Appendix 2.</p>	
<p>Key words Vegan, Vegetarian, Diet, Behaviors, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Market research</p>	

Table of contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Motivation and Background	3
1.2	Project Objective	4
2	Theoretical framework – Health & Food habits.....	5
2.1	Being Vegan/vegetarian – Why?	5
2.2	Concerns about Vegan/Vegetarian diet	8
2.3	What is marketing?.....	9
2.3.1	Marketing Mix	10
2.3.2	SWOT analysis	11
3	Methodology – Research approach and methods.....	12
3.1	Primary vs Secondary Data	12
3.2	Market research process.....	13
3.3	Quantitative – Qualitative:	14
3.4	Validity and Reliability	15
4	Restaurants Benchmark	16
5	Results and Analysis	20
5.1	Survey Data.....	20
5.2	SWOT analysis for Chay Hoan Hy.....	26
6	Conclusion and Recommendation	27
7	References.....	30
	Appendices.....	34
	Appendix 1. Survey Questionnaire	34

Figures

Figure 1 Vietnam Religion Demographic (United Nations Human Rights (UNHR), 2014).....	8
Figure 2 Marketing Mix	10
Figure 3: Rou Restaurant outside and inside (Foody, 2018)	17
Figure 4: Rou's dishes (Foody, 2018).....	17
Figure 5: Hum Vegetarian outside (Foody, 2018).....	18
Figure 6: Hum's dishes (Foody, 2018).....	18
Figure 7: Chay Hoan Hy outside and inside.....	19
Figure 8: Chay Hoan Hy's dishes	19
Figure 9: Respondents Demographic 1	20
Figure 10: Respondents Demographics 2.....	21
Figure 11: Diet habit.....	21
Figure 12: Factors affect diet habit.....	22
Figure 13: How they afford their meal.....	23
Figure 14: How people search for eating places	26

1 Introduction

Market research is a base of any business strategy in order to study target markets or customers, the competition, the industry in general. The success of all business project is based on the accurate and thorough information because it allows business owners to determine the possibility before investing significant resources to the venture.

1.1 Motivation and Background

Healthy lifestyle is a new trend globally, including Vietnam. As I am having vegetarian foods occasionally, and want to be a full-time vegetarian, I want to explore whether opening a vegetarian restaurant is positive. I have faced some issue when searching for a vegetarian restaurant for lunch or when hanging out at night, such as lack of places, many of restaurants tends to serve meat-alike vegetarian foods, which one of the most allergies for me, especially I choose vegetarian foods because I don't want to eat meat. There is a need of studying how the market is going now in Southern area, mainly District 7, and Nha Be District. Southern area is one of the most developed and fast growing in Ho Chi Minh City, especially District 7 with modern infrastructure and crowded foreigners.

On the market, there are vegan/vegetarian restaurants from small and casual to fine dining. To have an overview of which restaurants and the criteria people choose their eating place, the research will benchmark 3 top ones having good reviews.

Then Survey is used to study people diet habits, how they eat daily, and how they prefer a restaurants over another one. The main target audience is employees, who have stable finance but less time, and want to add nutritious vegetarian foods and drinks into their meals. Other generations are also welcome, as I believe it affects positively to our life quality.

Hence, the role of this thesis is to get an overview of the vegetarian market, the existing and potential customers as well as competitors.

1.2 Project Objective

This thesis aims to answer the question “is the idea of opening a vegetarian restaurant potential?” The project will provide overview about vegan/vegetarian habit among citizen, also benchmarking popular vegetarian restaurants inside the area. After researching, I wish to get away with useful suggestion or direction for next move. There are sub-questions that I want to explore:

- Why does people eat vegan/vegetarian foods? And why not?
- Are there any issues about existing restaurants? (few number of restaurants, nutrition in meal, too expensive)
- What are the criteria when they choose place to eat? (location, price, food quality, service)

Furthermore, I would like to see how I can apply knowledge in to real-life, as well as how I handle the project, information and suggestions about vegetarian market in Southern Ho Chi Minh. Chapter 2 of the thesis theoretical framework, which include knowledge about marketing and market research. Project gathering will be display in chapter 3, showing the results, suggestions, and answer to the question mentioned above.

There are some challenges for the writer because the target respondents are difficult to approach, both quantitative and qualitative, during their working time. However, this is a good opportunity to apply the theories and methodologies into practice.

2 Theoretical framework – Health & Food habits

2.1 Being Vegan/vegetarian – Why?

There are still several debates about the root (when and where) of Vegetarianism. Though it sounds like a modern term; however, from thousand years back to the Classical Greece era, great minds such as Pythagoras or Plato had the idea of vegetarianism, or “Pythagorean diet” (Spencer, 1996, ss. 33-68, 87-108). However, the diet didn’t popularize among society until in mid-1800s, it became firmly in Western culture. The first Vegan Society was founded in 1944 in England (Davis & Melina, 2014, ss. 1-3). Being vegan/vegetarian has become a lifestyle globally, but many people don’t know full definition as well as full types of vegetarianism.

A vegan is a vegetarian who lives on a diet of plant-based products, including grains, pulses, legumes, nuts, seeds, vegetables, fruits, fungi, algae, yeast and/or some other non-animal-based foods (e.g. salt); they don’t eat foods consist of or be produced with the aid of products consisting of or created from, any part of the body of a living or dead animal. This includes meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, insects, and products of slaughter or any food made with processing aids created from these. Meanwhile, a vegetarian will add dairy products, honey and/or eggs. However, there are some middle types between a meat eater and a vegetarian.

(Melina & Davis, 2010)

- **Semi-vegetarian (or near-vegetarian)** consumes largely of vegetarian foods but may include fish or poultry, on an infrequent basis. However, mostly this type is not considered as vegetarian as fish, birds, and poultry are also animals
- **Lacto-ovo-vegetarian:** the most common type of vegetarian diet, it includes both dairy products and eggs. “Lacto” is for dairy, while “ovo” is egg; hence, there are people who consume dairy but avoid eggs and vice versa.

Benefits of Vegan/Vegetarian:

“When they read me to sleep at night, almost all of the books had animals as heroes, ..., but then the other thing that my family did, we would eat animals” – said the Award-winning Novelist Jonathan Safran Foer – author of nonfiction Eating Animals – New York Times best-seller. (Foer, 2011)

Thing happens for a reason! There is one or some factors that make people choose vegetarianism life style: Morality, Health, Environment, and Religion.

- **Morality Aspect**

Animals do have nerve system, they have feeling, painful, happy, sad, etc. just like us; hence, they should be treated well, not be slaughtered for our own needs such as food, leather goods, or experiment. Nowadays, breeding cattle are artificial to select the best genes (National Geographic, 2008), leading to a doubt of animal rights and welfare. Moreover, the life span of cattle and poultry is much shortened when we breed them for our goods (Psihoyos, 2015). For example, a cow in wild can live to around 20 years, she only lives for 6 years on average in commercial system (Mohd Nor; Steeneveld; & Hogeveen, 2013).

Although Moral is not the only reason, but it usually stands as the key factor when people decide to go vegan or vegetarian and stay. As if people think any sentient creatures should have their real life, staying away from any animal is the nearest way to stand for animal freedom right.

- **Health Benefit**

From 1958, there was study on tens thousands of Seventh-day Adventists, taken by Loma Linda University of California. It was the first showing that vegetarian Adventist had longer life than meat eating Adventists, also having healthier body mass index, waist size, and brain health. The project then received a grant from U.S National Institutes of Health to continue round 2 of the study, branded as Adventist Health Study 2. At the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics' 2012 Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo, it is reported by principal investigator Gary E. Fraser, MD, PhD, that: (Orlich & Fraser, 2014):

- Vegetarian Adventist men live to an average of 83.3 years while it is 85.7 for Vegetarian women – 9.5 and 6.1 years, respectively, longer than other Californians.
- Vegans are 30 pounds (~14 kgs) lighter than meat eaters.
- Vegans are five units lower on the BMI scale than meat-eaters.
- Vegetarians and vegans are less insulin resistant than meat-eaters.

- Lean people also have healthy habits such as exercising regularly, eating plants, and avoiding cigarettes. Their habits are also boosting the overall health of these participants.

- Even semi-vegetarians have “intermediate shield” against diseases.

- **Environment Aspect**

Breeding is inevitably a significant part of ecological problems, including rising temperature, depletion of Earth’s resource, and depression of water supply. A great deal of data convinces that cattle breeding pollutes the air and other resources. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine have studied that if the world go vegan, annual greenhouse gas emissions would halve and there would be near-half of the new land used every year per capita (Aleksandrowicz;Green;Joy;Smith;& Haines, 2016). Here is a small but effective calculation of how breeding affects environment:

- The Carbonic (CO₂) emission globally in 2014 is around 36.2 billion tons (The World Bank, 2018).

- 1 cattle produces 55 gallons (~ 208 liters) methane daily, equally 1,61 kg methane (Psihoyos, 2015).

- Globally, we are breeding around 1 billion cattle (2014) (Statista, 2018), leading to 587.7 million tons methanol is produced by them annually.

- Methane has negative ecological effect 30 times comparing to CO₂ (Kelly, 2014)
→ The methane from cattle breeding in 2014 equals to 17,6 billion tons CO₂ in environment effect!

- **Religion**

In Vietnam, the topic diet goes along with religion. There are many religions that teach people to follow vegetarian diets such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism (Davis & Melina, 2014). In Vietnam, although majority of population don’t have religion, they still have belief in folk (45,3% in 2010), according to Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, 2015). Vietnamese folk believers still go to the shrines, temples, and pagodas for important days or events (such as Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn), some people have altars in their house or shops. Therefore, many of them have vegetarian diet occasionally. The pie chart below is how religions take place in Vietnam.

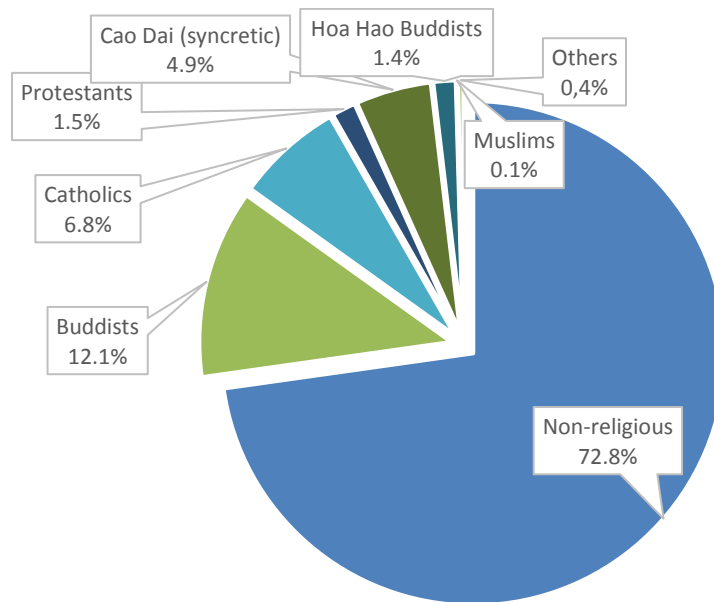


Figure 1 Vietnam Religion Demographic (United Nations Human Rights (UNHR), 2014)

Based on religion statistics, at least 18.5% population, including Buddhists, Cao Dao (syncretic), Hoa Hao Buddhists, and Muslims, across country having regularly Vegan/Vegetarian diets.

2.2 Concerns about Vegan/Vegetarian diet

Even though vegan/vegetarian diet has many benefits, especially Health aspect which is personal physically, there is still concern about nutrition while eating vegan/vegetarian foods

- **Protein:** as meat is the main source of meat eater, when they want to switch to vegetarian diet, they are not sure about protein source from plant. In fact, many plants such peas, beans, soy products, lentils, seeds, nuts, and whole grains (brown rice, oat, wheat, oats, and barley) can provide sufficient protein for us daily. However, as animal protein contains all the amino acids that a human need, while each plant protein will be lack of one or some necessary amino acids, vegetarian is proposed to take a diversity of protein. (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2016)
- **Vitamin B₁₂:** is found only in animal products, including dairy and eggs, but cannot be produced by our own body. In real life, B12 is important to function our nerves, to create blood cells, and some

other functions. Vegetarian can still take dairy and eggs in order to supply enough B12 to their body, on the other hand, vegan need to consume foods fortified with vitamin B₁₂, or take vitamin B₁₂ supplement. Lack of vitamin B12 can cause neurological problems and pernicious anemia. (Skerrett, 2013)

- **Iron and Zinc:** although vegetarian can get the same amount of iron and zinc as meat eater, the iron from meat can be absorbed easier than from plant, or non-heme iron. Non-heme iron can be enhanced by vitamin C and acids found from fruit and vegetables, but it may be prohibited by phytic acid from grains, beans, lentils, seeds, and nuts.

Omega-3 fatty acids: eggs and fish contain a good amount of EPA and DHA, which are necessary long-chain omega-3 fatty acids. Therefore, to have alternatives from plants, vegan/vegetarian can consume ALA from plants, especially flaxseed, soy, or chia seed, then our bodies will convert it in to EPA & DHA. It is recommended that the ALA intake is 1.1gr for women, and 1.6gr for men. (Harvard Medical School, 2017)

2.3 What is marketing?

Normally, when talking about marketing, most of population will bear in mind the image of promotions, advertising, and selling. However, those are just the tip of marketing iceberg, there are more steps at back side. In short, Marketing is the process that the company satisfies customer needs via understanding, creating value, and strengthen customer relationship, so that the company can take value from customers in return. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012, ss. 4-5). One of the most beginning steps is to listen and understand the market, including the general knowledge about market trends, competitors, our own performance, and customers. That is Market Research.

After company has all information about the target market, competitors, and customers, they will use one or multiple Marketing analysis tool. Two of the most popular yet important are Marketing Mix and SWOT analysis.

2.3.1 Marketing Mix



Figure 2 Marketing Mix

The marketing mix refers to the combination of actions, or tactics, that a company uses to determine its brand or product offering. Originally, E. Jerome McCarthy, an American marketing professor and author, created 4Ps typical marketing mix in 1960, including Price, Product, Promotion and Place (50Minutes.com, 2015). As there are thousands of innovations every week nowadays, population behaviors are affected by many ways and aspects. The new marketing mix increases several other Ps such as Physical Evidence, Process, and People. (Richter, 2012, ss. 27-46) (The Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2009, ss. 4-7).

- **Price:** refers to the amount that buyers pay for to enjoy the product. Different factors can affect the price such as brand value, cost, or demand. On the other hand, price also affect consumer's mind set about product image.
- **Product:** the item that is produced to satisfy buyer's demand. It can be tangible or intangible. A marketer should manage its life cycle by doing extensive research, to create a better product than their competitors.
- **Place:** Distribution is very important to catch the eye of the consumer. A good distribution strategy is to make it easy for buyer to buy. In fact, the motto of a successful retail business is 'location, location, location'.

- **Promotion:** all the marketing communication such as advertising, public relation, word of mouth, press reports, sales promotion, commissions and awards to the trade.
- **People:** both target market and internal people relating to business. Company's employees deliver the product and/or service, while the market will test it. It is important to hire and train the right people, who has the right attitude, the belief in their job.
- **Process:** The systems that the company affect the execution of the product and/or service, from procedure to small details such as calling service. The process should be designed not only for the company's benefit, but also so for customers'.
- **Physical Evidence:** It is the service, or product, that is delivered. Those services and products are the evidences for how business' presence and establishment are. For example, nowadays, when we talk about smartphone, we will think about Apple, or Samsung.

What is the importance of the marketing mix?

The 7Ps if handled right, can give the company great success. The marketing mix can help in differentiating business, guiding to create a nice and neat product or service, also reviewing the business to make improvement. They are all connected to each other and it is recommended to create a mix that is balance in seller and customer benefits. Therefore, to make a success full 7Ps mix, it requires a lot of knowledge, consultation from expert people, as well as target market.

2.3.2 SWOT analysis

SWOT is an auditing both internal and external elements which criticize subject's strength, weakness, opportunities and threats (SWOT). From SWOT, the company can analyze which angle(s) it should pay more attention based on its priority. Internal factors are what company is controlling such as Process, Internal People, and Manufacturing Process. Meanwhile, external factors are things that the company cannot directly control such as Distribution, Target Market, and Suppliers. Usually, SWOT analysis only list things that are critical to the business, otherwise, the analysts might lose track. (Kotler & Amstrong, 2012, ss. 58-60)

- **Opportunities and threats**

These two elements are usually for external factors such as shopping behavior trends, competitors, demographic changes, technology, or even politics. From analyzing Opportunities and Threats, the company can foresee important developments as well as expected return on investment (ROI)

- **Strengths and weaknesses**

On the other hand, Strengths and weaknesses are usually for internal elements benchmarking with external elements such as owned technologies, human resources, company's position and reliability, or products. As this is a benchmarking, Strengths and Weaknesses are relative, even if the company is strong at something, but the competitor is stronger at it, then the company strength becomes a thing needed to improve.

3 Methodology – Research approach and methods

There hundreds of ways to define what a market research is. On the language aspect, the definition of "research" in Oxford Learner's Dictionary, is "a careful **study of a subject**, especially to **discover new facts or information** about it". (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2018). According to UC San Diego, research is a systematic investigation that inspects hypothesis. (What is Research?, 2018). From collected data and knowledge, we can conduct suggestions and new questions for future explore.

In short, Market Research is the process of collecting and analyzing data from a sample of individuals or organizations relating to their characteristics, behavior, attitudes, opinions or possessions. It includes all forms of marketing and social research such as consumer and industrial surveys, psychological investigations, observations and panel studies. Research can be done by various methods and research's result can be used in decision-making.

3.1 Primary vs Secondary Data

Investigating process requires different points of view to examine one subject. There are two types of data are used depending on research's purposes and methods: primary data and secondary data. (Stevens;Loudon;Ruddick;& Sherwood, 2006, ss. 90-91)

- **Primary data** is data gained by yourself, gives you original research that is collected for a specific goal; new findings and theories
- **Secondary data** is already available to access, provides information or evaluations of previously presented research

In business, each type has its own pros and cons. (Table 1)

Table 1 Advantages and Disadvantages between Primary and Secondary Data (Adopted from Using Secondary Data in Marketing Research: United States and Worldwide) (Patzner, 1995, ss. 11-15)

	Primary Data	Secondary Data
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored to specific needs • Confidential results • Targeted sample • Can utilize specialist research techniques • More in-depth results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick access to results • Relatively low cost • Can provide good starting point for further research
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater cost vs secondary • Take longer to access results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less relevance • Competitors can also access same information • Lack of accuracy control

3.2 Market research process

Researchers don't need to always study totally new topics. Others' previous research projects can always be reviewed deeper, based on their study which is now secondary data. (Shuttleworth, 2008). A research should be done like building a house, a gradual and logical process instead of focusing on result's assumption. There are 4 big stage in processing a research project: planning, implementing project, summarizing and analyzing results, and report the findings (Ng & Coakes, 2014, ss. 6-8). Besides, researchers need to look for the scholarly literature and theories to have a comprehensive view of the topic, explain the problems, and lead the direction of the project.

A sturdy knowledge base about research methodology is the next thing that the researchers must own, so that they know if one or several should be taken in. In each methodology, there are various methods, tools, or techniques, to achieve

that plan. There are 3 main and popular of methodologies usually used in business research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Case Study Research Design. (Ng & Coakes, 2014, ss. 41-50)

3.3 Quantitative – Qualitative:

Quantitative Methodology explain phenomena by analyzing collected numerical data and using mathematically based methods. In Quantitative Research Design, there are 2 popular strategies: experiments and surveys. Quantitative research need to be done in large scale, hundreds to thousands of respondents depending on the research size (organization, nation, etc.).

On the other hand, **Qualitative** Research Design can study perspective in-depth by using these most frequent methods: interviews, observation, and case study. The research is investigated deeply, leading to the fact that this methodology takes much time than Quantitative. Therefore, Qualitative is done in smaller scale, and occurred in 1 on 1, or in group discussion. (Creswell, 2003).

However, many of research project are done by implementing both Quantitative and Qualitative Methodologies. Hence, the project not only track the general trend of phenomena, but also dig deep down into attitude, opinion toward the topic. For survey and experiments, the data can be collected via offline, such as face-to-face questionnaire and diary; or online, such as online form and scanning application. The process of this research will be detailed in the 5th chapter: Results and Analysis.

After collecting needed information, it is time to summarize and analyze the knowledge bunch. For Quantitative data, the data can be illustrated by using table, charts (pie chart, bar chart, tree chart, etc.). Meanwhile, Qualitative researchers have to face huge data in written or recorded type. The information should be well selected to deliver the right insights to the research problem. The result can be visualized by more interesting ways, such as a person (target interviewee) journey, or mind-map diagram. (Ng & Coakes, 2014, ss. 155-178).

There is a big challenge for researchers while writing research report. They need to review, and reflect the results with their theories, research problems, and research aims. (Ng & Coakes, 2014, 188-200). It is recommended that analysts should stick to the truth; the projects should collect enough evidences to conclude

a general conclusion; and any comparison should be made with enough conditions of targeted subject. (Stevens;Loudon;Ruddick;& Sherwood, 2006, ss. 249-259)

3.4 Validity and Reliability

They are two prerequisites in a research. Validity is the extent which incorporates the experimental concept and shows if the researched result is accurately measured and realistic. Meanwhile, Reliability is to express the quality of the research process (Ng & Coakes, 2014). If the research was done accurately under consistent conditions, and repeated naturally, it is reliable.

Validity divide into 2, internal and external. To achieve a successful research project with good validity and reliability, the core, including internal validity & reliability, should be taken care first. The external validity is the research process, to check whether there are any potentially casual relationships.

On the other hand, a research designed inconsistent or divergent can compromise the integrity, making the commissioner confused even when the result is reliable. One of must-have things is that all researchers have firm knowledge foundation of theories of measurements, and the importance of reliability. Moreover, the researchers should be responsible and trustful at the same time. We see that Reliability is not what we can calculate, yet we can lower the risk of deflecting information.

In this research, I am the only person did the whole process, from building up the study to collecting information. Hence, the study is well understood and managed solidly, along with significant number of respondents – 142 office workers. I believe the collected data is valid and reliable.

4 Restaurants Benchmark

This chapter and the next will express how the project was done and the collected data of the research. In general, in order to achieve the objectives, the research was done by Benchmarking, Observing vegan/vegetarian restaurants, and Survey target respondents – office workers in Southern Ho Chi Minh City. At first, I thought that I would go to the survey first and then conduct the searching about existing vegan/vegetarian restaurants to see if the responds were true. However, I realized that I just came back to Vietnam, especially Ho Chi Minh City, which is growing super-fast, I could miss the market. Therefore, I switched to do the opposite way, which now I realize it made much sense. I could link between my searching and observing to the survey questions

To research about the existing restaurants, I decided to search online for information and reviews, and pick up 3 most popular restaurants on Foody, a reliable platform in Vietnam which is similar to Trip Advisor, to go observing, including visiting, buying foods. I realized that there were not many reviews for vegan/vegetarian restaurants in Southern area, therefore, I decided to look for those in center area. Finally, I found 3 most popular chains, and I visited one of them – Chay Hoan Hy Restaurant, as my friend recommended it.

1. Rou Restaurant

Rou is the pronunciation of foreigners for “rau” (vegetables) in Vietnamese. The design follows retro Vietnamese style, using wood, stone and bamboo material, decorated with old-looking pictures. The theme is peaceful and fresh, simply about vegetables. Price range around 2,5 – 3eur for a main dish, a little over average lunch in my experience, which is around 2eur. One of 2 restaurants stays in District 1 on 1 of the main street, Tran Hung Dao Street (Foody, 2018).



Figure 1: Rou Restaurant outside and inside (Foody, 2018)

The food here is good looking, seems to very tasty. It tends to skew for foreigners, as similar as the name's behind story.



Figure 2: Rou's dishes (Foody, 2018)

2. Hum Vegetarian



Figure 3: Hum Vegetarian outside (Foody, 2018)

Another retro design style, adding some religion symbols, Hum is a vegetarian chain with 3 restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City. Looking at the menu, I would say Hum is expensive for everyday eating, at least 3,5eur (around 80.000vnd) for a dish. However, the chain covers pretty good area in Ho Chi Minh center, including District 1, 2, and 3, crowded by office employees and high-income citizen. Hum offers a delightful diversity of vegetarian choices, from tofu clay pots to pad Thai noodles. The food looks fresh, nourishing, and nice organized.



Figure 4: Hum's dishes (Foody, 2018)

If you want to find a fine vegetarian meal in peaceful courtyard, along with some luxury old-school style, Hum will be a good option.

3. Chay Hoan Hy

Lastly, I visited Chay Hoan Hy (Delightful Vegan) chain after searching on Foody and recommend by my friend, as her old boss opened this chain. Different from other 2 chains, Chay Hoan Hy uses religion with green color as their main theme. People also wear Buddhist robes as working uniform (Figure 7).



Figure 5: Chay Hoan Hy outside and inside

Food and price range here is similar to Rou restaurant, a little over average for lunch, but still affordable. From my experience, the dishes are nice, covered by vegetables, tofu, and mushroom. In fact, I came there 3 times as it is near my working place, and gentle people there made me feel peaceful, even the guard who looked after the vehicles. Maybe religion factor mattered.



Figure 6: Chay Hoan Hy's dishes

For all 3 restaurants, one of the good things I really appreciate is that they intend to organize pure vegetarian, not using any meat-relating name. They also spend for designing the restaurant with clear theme. The design skews to peaceful, delightful, religion elements. As they are all fine design, the price is a little higher than average lunch. However, there were some angles that disappointed me: the sweet soup desert was poor, not much things to bite, I also felt that it was still frozen. In the second time, the staff attitude was not good, they focused on their conversation without taking care of their customers. I called them 3 times when they were just 1 meter away. In the third time, I noticed similar attitude to other customers. Although other staff still served me right, it showed an uneven service level, or lack of management, in their restaurants.

5 Results and Analysis

5.1 Survey Data

The survey was done half online, and another half was offline. For both versions, I asked in advance if they are office workers. For the offline version, in order to pick up easier, I mapped the areas which have many offices. The survey focused on their diet habit and how they considered a restaurant. The full survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2.

In total, there were 142 respondents, the age is divided into 4 groups:

- <25 years old: which is focus on entry level income, including students who are doing internship at a company.
- 25 - <35 years old: who has better income, starts to expand network, tends to start a family, and might have kids.
- 35 - <45 years old: mainly they have family, stable income, even their children are teenagers.
- 45+ years old: their kids mainly grew up, they have more time for themselves, stable income.

The demographic of respondents is shown below in figure 9, 10

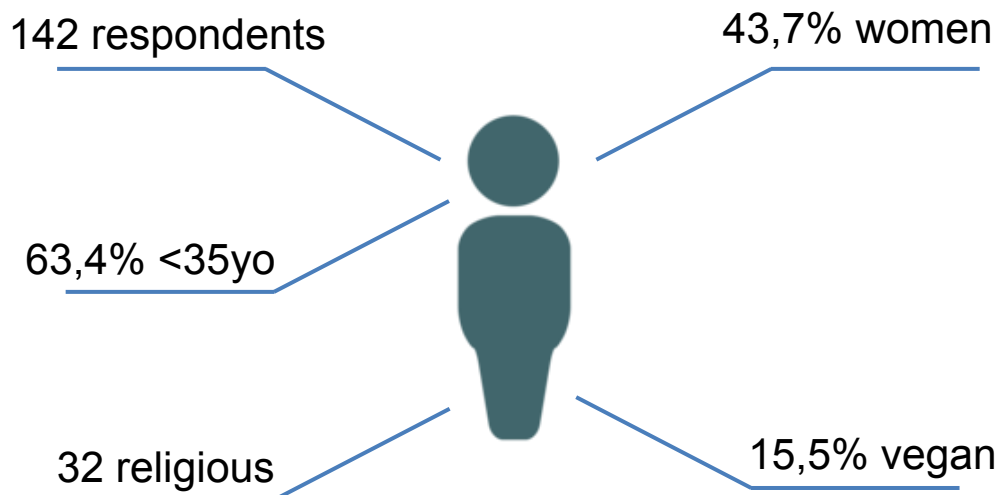


Figure 7: Respondents Demographic 1

Number of respondents

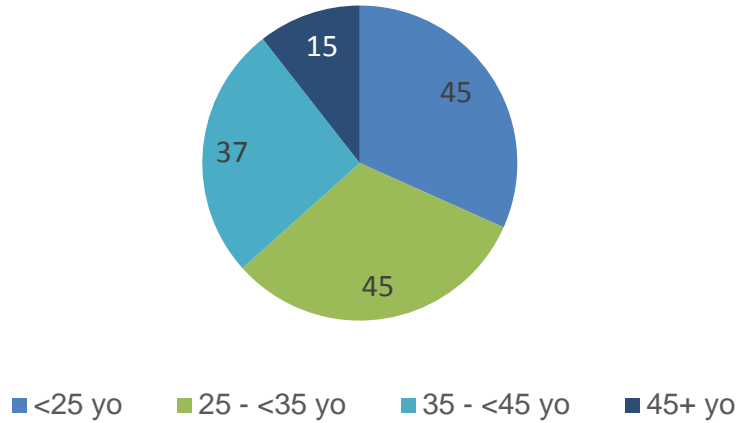


Figure 8: Respondents Demographics 2

Respondents are mainly <35yo, and only more than a third has religion. After collecting basic information, the survey dived into diet behavior by asking whether they are having vegetarian food in their diet. Surprisingly, 83 saying that they have vegetarian in their foods at least occasionally, 22 stated that they are vegan. As I mentioned in the Religion – one the reason of Being Vegan/Vegetarian., that a significant part of Vietnamese still has such belief in folk, so that they go to religious places occasionally, as well as having the researched food occasionally. That is the reason why 75 people having vegetarian food occasionally is not a surprise.

Number of respondents

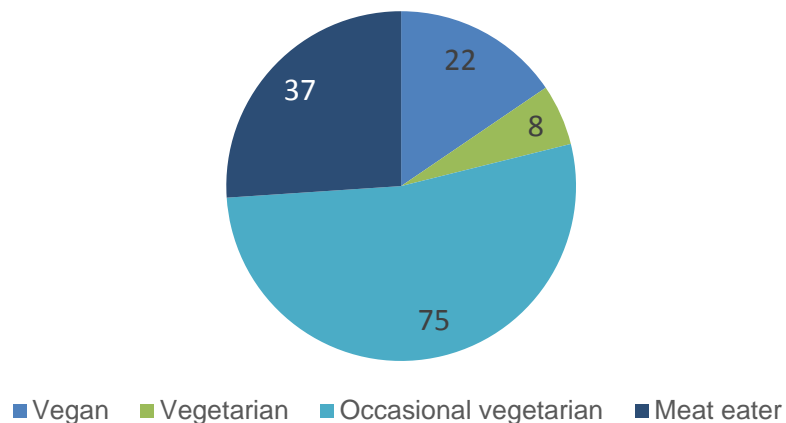


Figure 9: Diet habit

Among people who are vegan, 16 have religions, and only 11 partly/totally agree that religion is the main factor affects their diet. Therefore, there are 11 audiences

who chose to be vegan because of other reasons. Below is the chart of factors that affect their diet habit (Figure 12). There are 7 factors that they can rank: Religion, Morality, Meat importance, Plants benefits, Breeding effects, Nutrition, and Vegan / Vegetarian benefits.

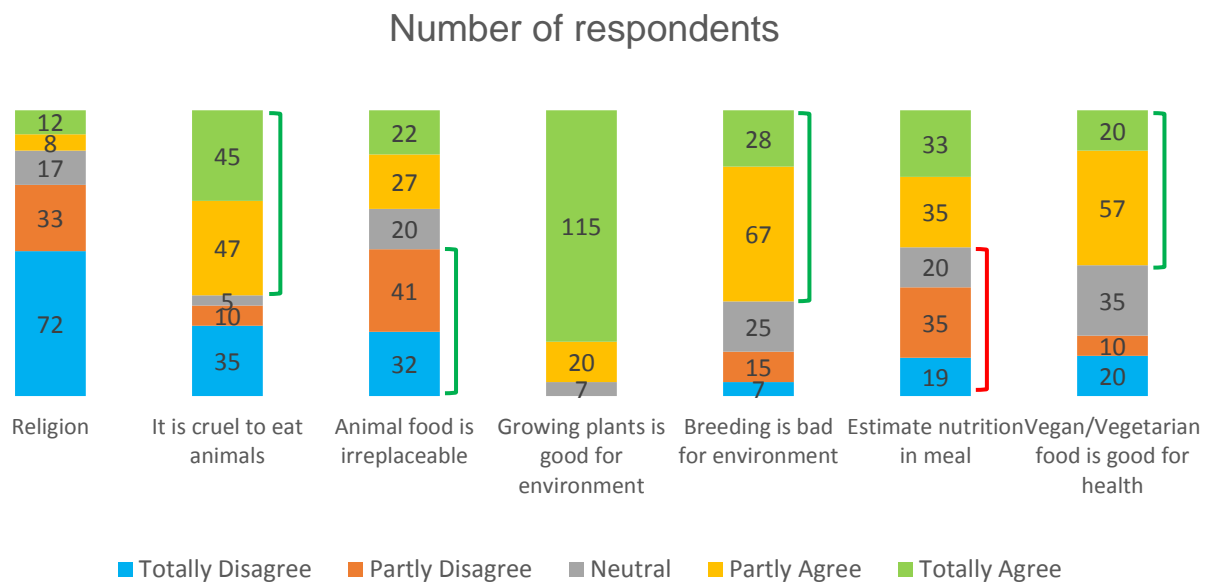


Figure 10: Factors affect diet habit

There are more than half of respondents having knowledge that breeding is not good for both environment and their morality. That number conclude all Vegan and Vegetarian respondents, the rest obviously are Occasional vegetarian, and some of the meat eater. Hence, these meat eaters might want to add vegetarian food in their diet at some points. 74 people also think that meat, including fish and seafood, can be alternative. Besides, almost audiences state that growing plants is good. That is the majority!

On the other hand, the rest is still significant. 49 think that animal food is important, and 65 are not so sure of vegan/vegetarian benefits or deny the benefits of vegan/vegetarian diet to their health. Moreover, it seems that the people are too busy to care about their nourishment, 54 people are not clear about the nutrition in their meal, even 20 people state neutral of the nutrition estimation.

When people are busier and busier nowadays, they need to manage every single angle in their life: work, network, relationship, family, and health, which is mainly affected by their diet. It is hard to cook for themselves every day, therefore, eating out can be a common thing. The next question is to see how often they eat out of

home, and how much they afford for their meal (Figure 13). From my benchmarking around restaurants, I come up with the price range:

- <1,5eur (<40.000vnd): the most affordable meal, usually cooked by family restaurant, small scale, crowded.
- 1,5 – <2,6eur (40.000 - <70.000vnd): the mainstream meal, mainly in a commercial restaurant or café, sometimes they have air conditioners.
- 2,6 - <3,7eur (70.000 - <100.000vnd): this is considered as an expensive lunch, but normal for an occasionally hang out. Normally they are served with nice service, air conditioner,
- >3,7eur (>100.000vnd): there are some higher price range which fine meal and fancy restaurant, however, I only focus to the mass, therefore, over 3,7eur is considered as premium for a meal in any occasion.

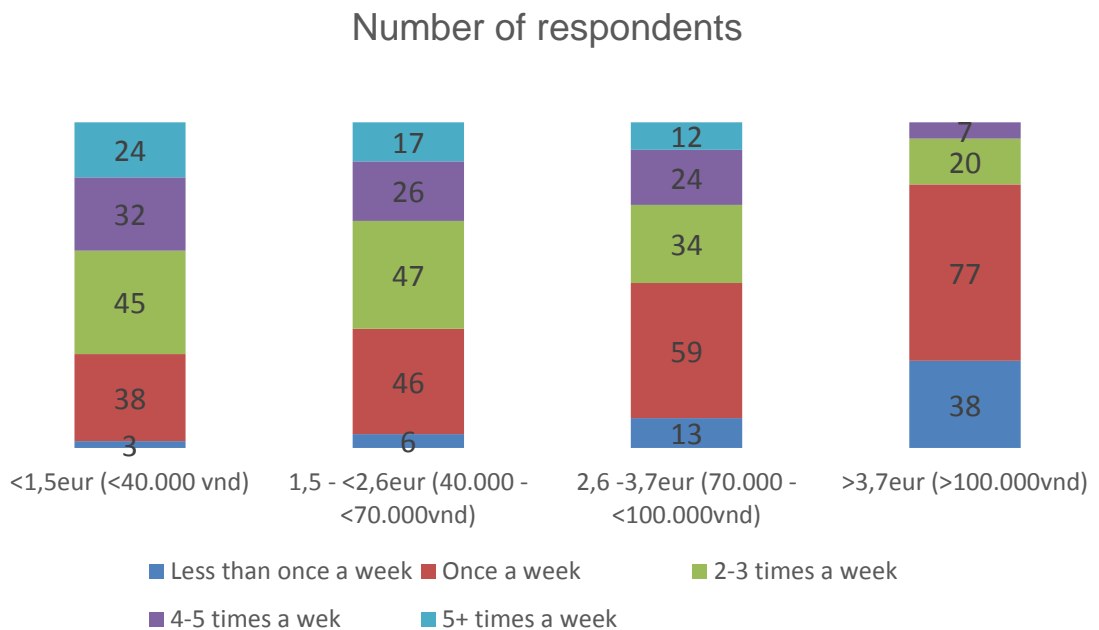


Figure 11: How they afford their meal

It is a positive sign that almost every respondent seeks for foods out of home quite often. Looking at the numbers, we can see that the red box – once a week – takes a significant number in each column, next is 2-3 times. Moreover, as only few people choose “none” for eating out of home, meaning that they are seeking for variety of food choices in different price.

So how about cooking for themselves? When I did some small talks with respondents, they said that they wanted to buy food, either eating at the restaurant or

bringing back to the office, because they could try new places, and maintain their network at the same time. Again, in this modern era, we see that people clearly make use of time to balance life.

Now we know that people go buying food quite often, we want to know how they pick a place to eat. I asked them to rank the importance of 12 elements, which will be showed in the table below (Table 2). This time I will cross the diet habit demographic with the ranked answer, so that we can see the behaviors of each group.

Table 2 How people expect from a restaurant

Vegan + Vegetarian	Occasional Vegetarian	Meat eater
Hygiene	Food variant	Hygiene
Food variant	Hygiene	Food variant
Atmosphere	Atmosphere	Nutrition
Decoration	Staff service	Air conditioner
Staff service	Decoration	Atmosphere
Price	Near Location	Decoration
Near location	Nutrition	Staff service
Easy-to-find location	Price	Price
Nutrition	Promotion	Promotion
Promotion	Air conditioner	Easy-to-find location
Air conditioner	Easy-to-find location	Near Location
Delivery service	Delivery service	Delivery service

There are some noticing points after crossing the demographic with the answers. Unsurprisingly, meal quality is put on top, in specifics, Food variant and Hygiene are top 2 in all groups, and those who have full-time meat diet also consider Nutrition as a top check-list. Vietnamese recently concerned about food hygiene everywhere. There is always some shock news about food toxic. For example, in April, there was a case that farmer used battery chemicals to dye the coffee (Nhan, 2018). The news shocked every people, as coffee is in the top list beverage in Vietnam, and Vietnamese is top 2 raw coffee exporters (Workman, 2018).

Then they care about the restaurant's vibes, including Atmosphere, Decoration, and Staff service. Pricing, Promotion, Location, and Delivery service placed somewhere in the middle. It seems to be that they come to restaurant not only to have good food, but also to enjoy the place, to add the restaurant's vibe into their conversation. Therefore, I would like to see how existing Vegan/Vegetarian restaurants bring the message via their interior.

The question again requires people to rank if they agree or disagree to the statements about how the vegetarian restaurants image in their mind. All the respondent agree that Fresh decoration and Peaceful atmosphere are what they feel when walking into the restaurants. Moreover, 37 people also said that the restaurants use veggie but cook like-meat food along with name, such as Vegan Beef or Chicken Pho, or Vegan Hue beef noodles. It can be a plus or minus depending on the consumers. Those foods can bring familiar meat taste and texture to people, so that they can have more options if they want to consume less meat. At the same time, it might not attract people who don't eat meat because of Morality.

Nevertheless, 49 stated that they think the restaurants overuse religion signatures. When crossing them with Demographic, 10 of them are vegan or vegetarian at the moment, 15 are occasionally, and 24 are meat eater. This can be a barrier to people who want to try vegetarian foods. Another warning is that 21 people agree that the vegetarian restaurants are lack of nutrition, 12 of them are meat eaters. We see that even 9 people who has tried vegetarian food also agree on this point. It expresses somehow the fact of vegetarian restaurant images they have tried as well as how meat eaters think about those restaurants. It is quite big barrier that stop vegetarian or vegan diet from approaching meat eaters, as well as those who have tried might less come to restaurants, they might choose cooking at home or being back to cattle food.

So how do people seek for eating places? The last question will give us some hints (Figure 14).

Number of respondents

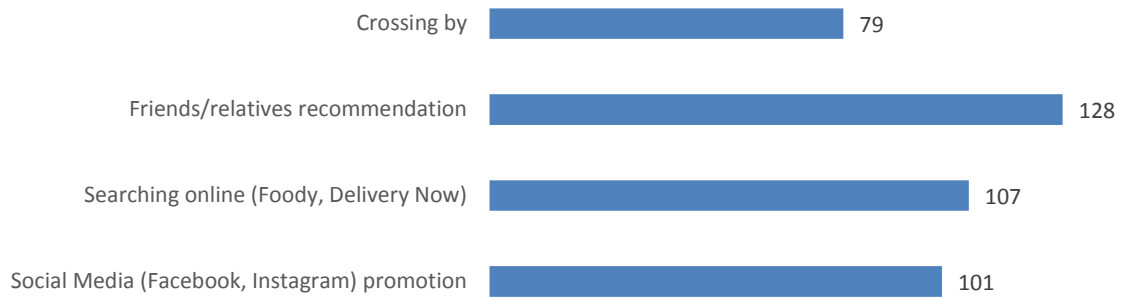


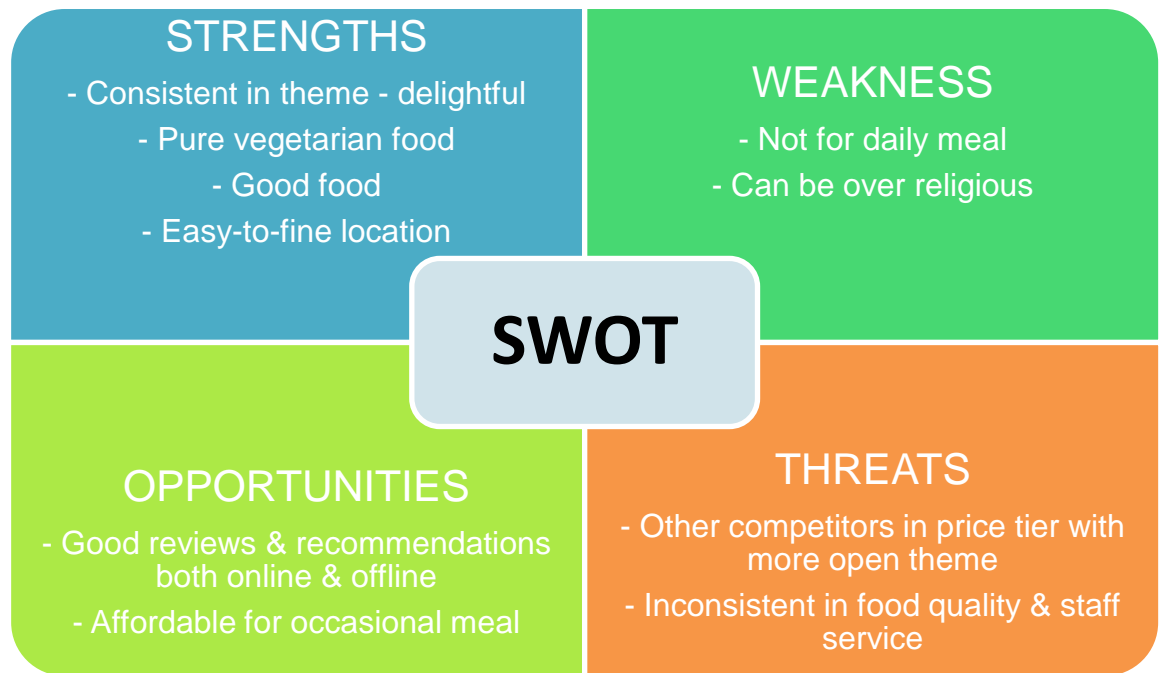
Figure 12: How people search for eating places

Word of mouth seems to be the most reliable, people prefer recommendations from their friends & relatives rather than food reviews online. Searching online and Social Media play fair roles in their decision making. Lastly, respondents less chose the restaurants that they crossed by. It might be that they rarely come by any restaurants, or it is not trustful just by looking at the outside.

5.2 SWOT analysis for Chay Hoan Hy

Flashing back when I did the benchmark, it was true that I was confused to choose which restaurant to go. I felt not much reliability with the food reviews online. When I asked my friend's recommendation because she has tried many vegetarian restaurants, the decision was made quickly. As I have experienced Chay Hoan Hy, a SWOT analysis can be applied fairly.

Table 3: SWOT analysis



It will be redundant to review it again, hence, I will jump to the analysis. Personally, I think Chay Hoan Hy has good foundation. From the name to its theme, it is consistent in design as well as customer service style, and good menu. Location is a plus. Together, its core can keep the customers to come again. Furthermore, it has gained good reviews & recommendations, which helps to attract new customer efficiently.

After my first try, it is true that I want to come again. However, the second and the third experiences were some minuses. If this happens regularly, Chay Hoan Hy can lose customers to other competitors, who also have good food for value, and even have more open theme to attract new traffic.

6 Conclusion and Recommendation

Personally, because now in Vietnam there are people who chose to be vegan/vegetarian because of other reasons but religion. I would recommend using religion signatures as adding values, so that the mass population can feel the veggie spirit.

Word of mouth should be considered as a main marketing strategy to gain new customers, as well as to maintain the customer base. However, to make this work, the restaurants also take care of the food quality and service design, to make all consistently. Balancing nutrition in our meal is needed to take care of. We can

measure it carefully, or get consultancy from expert, then we can publish the nutrition in each meal for preference.

Furthermore, there are some knots that needed to untie between the studied diet and meat eaters. Although using like-meat name in the menu can be a connector, I myself don't prefer that idea because the purpose is to eat less meat, why do we need to feel like we are eating meat? Instead, we need to educate people about importance of nourishment, vegan/vegetarian benefits, so that they will feel more confident coming to our diet. Digital marketing is a huge thing globally, as well as in Vietnam. During the research, Social media and Online searching play an important role in our respondents. Those are effective tools to do the mission. But how to post things that can catch people eyes, that they won't feel bored because it is too academic or extreme, etc. Therefore, a deck research about marketing content is necessary.

I think the objectives are solved, yet I want to dive deeper after this project, to get closer and closer to open a vegan/vegetarian restaurant:

- **A deck research about financial budget to open a restaurant, including renting, suppliers.**
- **Considering another research on: What do they look for from a vegan/vegetarian restaurant? Dividing by Food, Design, and Marketing content.**

From the study, plus the restaurant image in my mind, I have sketched the business model, using the business model canvas (Table 3). The business model canvas was first proposed by Alexander Osterwalder in his book, Business Model Ontology (Osterwalder, 2004)

Table 4: Business Model Canvas, adopted from (Strategyzer, 2018)

Key Partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material supplier • Marketing (out-source) 	Key Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving meal • Online delivery • Lunch meals 	Value Propositions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pure vegetarian meal (food, name) • Fresh, open, natural design and atmosphere • Affordable lunch box (1,5-2,0eur) • Affordable premium price at times other than lunch (2,5-3,0 eur per dish) 	Customer Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table-service 	Customer Segments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office employee • Vegan / vegetarian
	Key Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food materials • Human resources • Infrastructure 		Channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media (facebook, instagram) • Blog • Food delivery platforms (foody, now.vn) 	
Cost Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed cost (Rent, staff, food materials) • Marketing fees 			Revenue Streams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table-serving meal • Online delivery • Lunch box 	

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey Questionnaire

Your daily diet

We are studying vegetarianism culture in Southern area of Ho Chi Minh City. Therefore, we would like to know your daily diet behaviors. The survey will take you about 10 minutes.

If you have any question, don't hesitate to contact me, Quoc Toan, via:

Phone: +84 93 2525265

E-mail: toquoctoan75@gmail.com

Thank you for your time. :)

*: required

Section 1: Basic Information

- Gender *
 - Male
 - Female

- Age *
 - <25 yo
 - 25 - <35 yo
 - 35 - <45 yo
 - 45+ yo

- Do you have any religion? *
 - Yes
 - No

Section 2: How is your diet?

- Have you ever had vegetarian diet? *
 - I am vegan at the moment
 - I am vegetarian at the moment

- I have vegetarian food occasionally
- No, I am not vegetarian
- If you are vegan/vegetarian, how long have you been?
 - My whole life
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1 to 5 years
 - 5 to 10 years
 - 10+ years
- Check any think you don't eat (can chose multiple answers)
 - Meat
 - Poultry
 - Pork
 - Beef
 - Dairy
 - Eggs
 - Honey
 - Fish
 - Sea food
 - Other: ...
- Which factor affects your diet? *

	Totally disagree	Partly disagree	Neutral	Partly agree	Totally agree
Religion is the main reason to my diet	0	0	0	0	0
It is cruel to eat animals.	0	0	0	0	0
Animal food (meat, fish, dairy products, eggs, etc.) is irreplaceable.	0	0	0	0	0
Growing plants is good for environment.	0	0	0	0	0
Breeding is bad for environment.	0	0	0	0	0
I estimate how much nutrition is in my diet	0	0	0	0	0
Vegan/Vegetarian food is good for my health	0	0	0	0	0

- How much do you pay for a meal at a restaurant? *

	Less than once a week	Once a week	2-3 times a week	4-5 times a week	5+ times a week
<1,5eur (<40.000 vnd)	0	0	0	0	0
1,5 - <2,6eur (40.000 - <70.000vnd)	0	0	0	0	0

2,6 -3,7eur (70.000 - <100.000vnd)	0	0	0	0	0
>3,7eur (>100.000vnd)	0	0	0	0	0

- What do you care about when you choose an eating place? (Grade 1 to 5, 5 is the most important) *

	1	2	3	4	5
Food variant	0	0	0	0	0
Nutrition	0	0	0	0	0
Hygiene	0	0	0	0	0
Price (full price)	0	0	0	0	0
Promotion	0	0	0	0	0
Air-conditioner	0	0	0	0	0
Decoration	0	0	0	0	0
Atmosphere	0	0	0	0	0
Staff service	0	0	0	0	0
Near Location	0	0	0	0	0
Easy-to-find Location	0	0	0	0	0
Delivery service	0	0	0	0	0

- How a vegetarian restaurant image in your mind? *

	Totally disagree	Partly disagree	Neutral	Partly agree	Totally agree
Fresh Decor	0	0	0	0	0
Peaceful atmosphere	0	0	0	0	0
Like-meat food made by vegetarian food	0	0	0	0	0
Too many religious things	0	0	0	0	0
Lack of nutrition	0	0	0	0	0

- How do you know to come to a restaurant? *
 - Social Media (Facebook, Instagram) promotion
 - Searching online (Foody, Delivery Now)
 - Friends/relatives recommendation
 - Crossing by