

The Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Finnish Food Delivery Services

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Dat, Nguyen

Abstract

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Title of the thesis The Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Finnish Food Delivery Services		
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Abstract <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the life of everybody in the world and greatly affect several industries, including food delivery industry. The thesis aims to find the change of people opinion regarding the usage of food delivery during the pandemic.</p> <p>This thesis foundation comes from the theoretical framework which is the consumer behavior. The literature review is necessary for the author to have a thorough understand of the subject and also provides the fundamental information for the reader to understand the topic and the research question.</p> <p>The empirical research of the study employs an inductive approach with a quantitative research method. The data for the research is collected through an online survey consist of six questions, the survey process transpired in three weeks and received 187 valid responses out of 203.</p> <p>The study shows that the opinion of customers on food delivery has a remarkable change. Before the pandemic, food delivery service is a convenient option, but now it has become an essential service during the pandemic. Because food delivery help limiting human contact, it has a positive impact on limiting the spread of the virus. Though, the food delivery service platforms have to focus on improving their service to help ensuring the safety of the couriers and the customer satisfaction.</p>		
Keywords Food delivery, food delivery service, pandemic, COVID-19		

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background and Motivation

In 2020, the most significant event, which changes the daily life of people around the world in just a few months, is the emergence of COVID-19. In 2020, the novel coronavirus COVID-19 emerged and spread rapidly. Because the virus transmits through respiratory route, it has drastically altered human interaction approach and affects the daily life of people around the world. COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan, China but it was not recognized as a pandemic until 11 March 2020 (World Health Organization 2020). COVID-19 is not the first pandemic in the world. The world has experienced several ones before it but because of late responses, in just a year, the new pandemic manages to infect more than 125 million peoples, and over 2.5 million has been killed (Worldometers 2021). COVID-19 is believed to be the worst pandemic since the beginning of the 21st century (Ewing 2021).

To control the spread of COVID-19, governments have to restrict human contact which affects both business and employees. According to THL (Teivainen 2020b), the most effective solution is to reduce social interaction by practicing social distancing. To cut down on social interaction, the Finnish government enacted a ban on gatherings of more than 10 peoples. Following the guidelines of the government, companies let employees work remotely from home and only allow essential workers to keep working on site.

Compared to other businesses, restaurants have suffered tremendously from the pandemic. To slow down the spreading of the virus, the Finnish government enacted a new decree that forced all restaurants, cafes, and nightclubs to stop serving non-takeaway customers (Teivainen 2020a). This decree allows businesses to continue operation and serve a limited number of customers, which is believed to be the right solution for restaurants. However, there is definitely a negative effect. Restaurants experienced a sharp drop in sales after the decree was enforced, and since they could not service eat-in customers, most restaurants also decided to lay off their staff to keep the business going. To help restaurants and their employees, the government decided to dedicate 120 million euros to cover loss in sales and encourage businesses to rehire lay off workers. (Yle 2020d.)

Because restaurants could not serve eat-in customers, food delivery became a popular choice with both restaurants and customers. By cutting down serving costs and using food delivery platforms, restaurants can keep serving their customers and avoid unnecessary human interaction. To aid restaurants under challenging circumstances, food delivery platforms such as Wolt have introduced several measures to cut down social interaction and boost sales. Because of the risk of infection when working as couriers for food delivery

platforms, some platforms introduced unique delivery methods and guidelines to help couriers keep working without worrying about their health. (Yle 2020c.)

The restriction of the pandemic has eased up in Finland, but the government still recommends people to practice social distancing. Even though the spreading has slowed down significantly, the pandemic is still a concern to both government and citizens. Restaurants are allowed to open again but food delivery is still a safer option for people. This thesis aims to identify the effect of the pandemic on the customers decision about food delivery during the pandemic and after the situation has eased up.

1.2 Thesis Objectives and Research Questions

This thesis allows the author to explore the impact of the pandemic on the food delivery service. The main objective is to learn about the change in customer decisions regarding food delivery in the pandemic. The response of the food delivery platforms will also be analyzed to get insight into the measures taken by each platform in order to prevent the infection and protect the health of their couriers. The data collected in the research process could benefit the companies in the food delivery industry and other businesses that are involved in the food delivery service.

In order to give an answer to the research problem, the main research question was formed:

Research question:” How does the pandemic affect customer opinion about food delivery?”

Additionally, to get an in-depth understanding of the other factors related to the response of the food delivery platforms’ networks such as the restaurants, the following questions were also brought into discussion:

Sub-question 1: “How should delivery platforms adjust policy to achieve high customer satisfaction and ensure their safety during the pandemic?”

Sub-question 2: “What practical approaches can Food and Beverage businesses take to help themselves survive economic hardship during the pandemic?”

The data collection and research approach of this study are designed solely for food delivery services in Finland. Even though, several data and approaches in this study were provided in the universal context, it is still necessary to take into consideration the differentiation when citing this research.

The research is conducted explicitly in Finland during the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the unique characteristics of Finland and the approach of the Finnish government about the pandemic, it is necessary to understand that Finland has its own unique factors such as

policies, culture, advantages, and disadvantages. The study was conducted with those factors accounted for, which produces the final result only applicable to Finland. Even though it is possible to apply this research to other regions, the differentiation between such regions and Finland must be thoroughly researched to produce an accurate result.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Theories are defined by Abend (2008, 177-181) as a means to clarify, anticipate, and understand the related phenomena and to question and broaden the knowledge within the borders of presumption. The theoretical framework is an abstract model that helps build up the structure and act as a guideline to assist the author conduct the research. The theoretical framework contains the necessary theories which are the foundation of the study and help explain the reason behind the research problem of the study.

This thesis focuses on exploring the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on food delivery service in Finland. To further explain the reason behind the change in customer decision regarding food delivery service during the pandemic, consumer behaviour is studied, presented and explained in the second chapter.

The second chapter of this study is used to explain the consumer behaviour and the factors that will affect the consumer decision making process. In the beginning of this chapter, the definition of consumer behaviour will be pointed out. Followed by the three factors, which have the most impact on the consumer decision making process. Lastly different types of consumer decision behaviour and the decision-making process are introduced.

1.4 Research Methodology

Research method is a framework associated with the key assumption which will be utilized in the process of conducting research. To have an excellent foundation for the study, the methodological design has to satisfy three essential prerequisites, the first prerequisite is correctly addressing the research question, the second one is to stay within the scope and interest of the researcher, and the last one is to be manageable and reasonable. Spending time figuring out the suitable research methodology is crucial for the research because a methodology satisfied by those three conditions will be able to lead the researcher to the final answer, so. (O'Leary 2004, 85.)

The figure below is created to visualize the research methodology and its elements, such as the research approach, the research method, and the data collection.

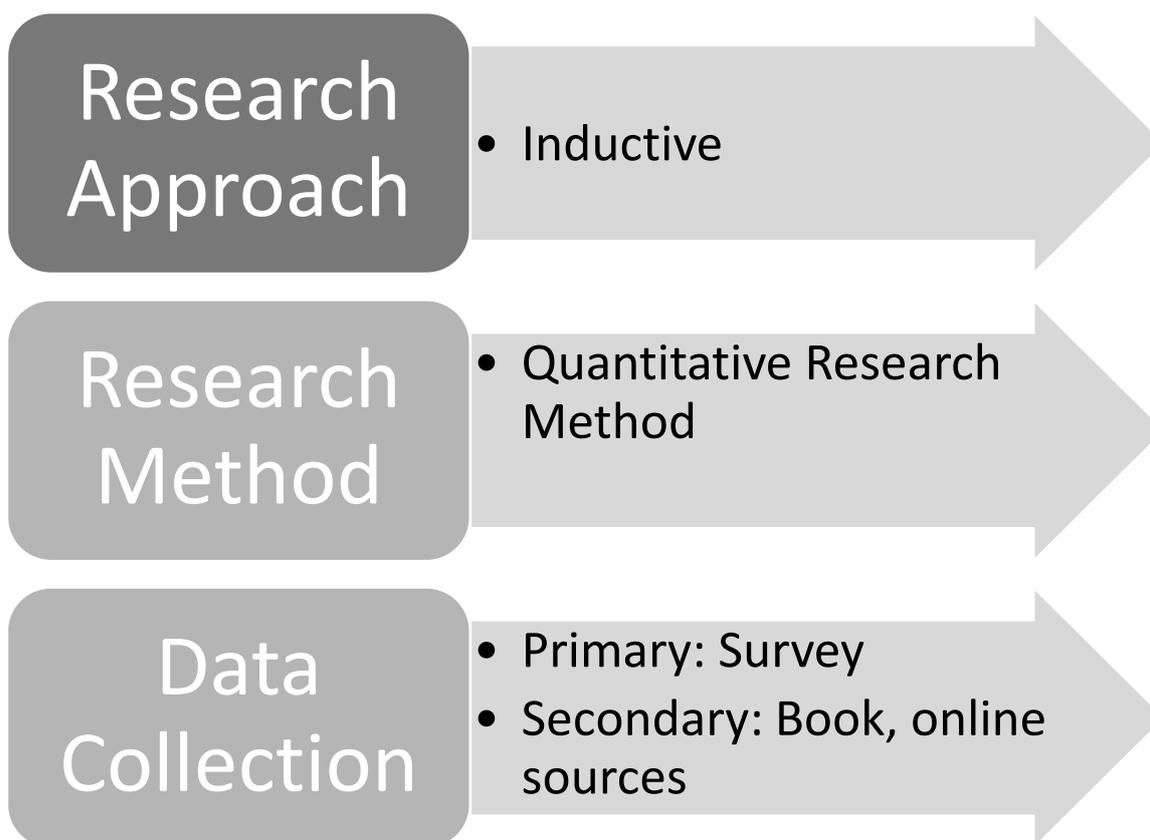


Figure 1 Research Methodology

According to Walliman (2011, 17-19), there are two opposite research approaches which are inductive and deductive. In the inductive approach, the data collecting helps the researcher delve into the phenomenon from which theory will be generated. The deductive approach, on the other hand, starts from developing the theory based on academic literature; after that, the researcher will start conducting research to validate the theory before deciding to confirm or reject the preceded hypothesis. In this study, the author will adopt a deductive approach to gather knowledge and generate the theory from the literature review. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill. 2016, 145.)

It is known that there are two common paradigms of research method: qualitative research method and quantitative research method. Qualitative method, also called exploratory research, is used to identify the hidden perspectives, explanations of a phenomenon, and try bringing it into the open. Qualitative research explores the connection and reason behind the phenomena by utilizing a multitude of data collection methods and applying a series of analytical strategies to establish a theoretical framework. Qualitative research can be used to identify new trends, ideas for quantitative research. (Saunders et al. 2016,166-168.)

Quantitative research evaluates the problem by figuring out the facts through the collected and transformed numerical data. By measuring and assessing the collected data with statistical tools and charts, the researcher can observe the relationship of different variables to determine the pattern of phenomena. Therefore, qualitative research is mostly used to evaluate the validity of theories or hypotheses. (Saunders et al. 2016,166-168.)

Case study is a widely used research method in order to find an explanation based on in-depth understanding of an organization, a company, or an event. By utilizing case study, the researcher can narrow down the existing information into a particular topic. The case study does not entirely answer the question, though it enables the researcher to elaborate and have a hypothesis on the topic. (McLeod, 2014.)

According to McLeod (2018), an online survey is a form of questionnaire. It is a research instrument consisting of a set of questions to gather the participants' information. A questionnaire can be performed through multiple channels such as face-to-face, computer, or phone. It is a cost-effective, efficient, and rapid method to collect a vast amount of data from the respondents.

1.5 Thesis Structures

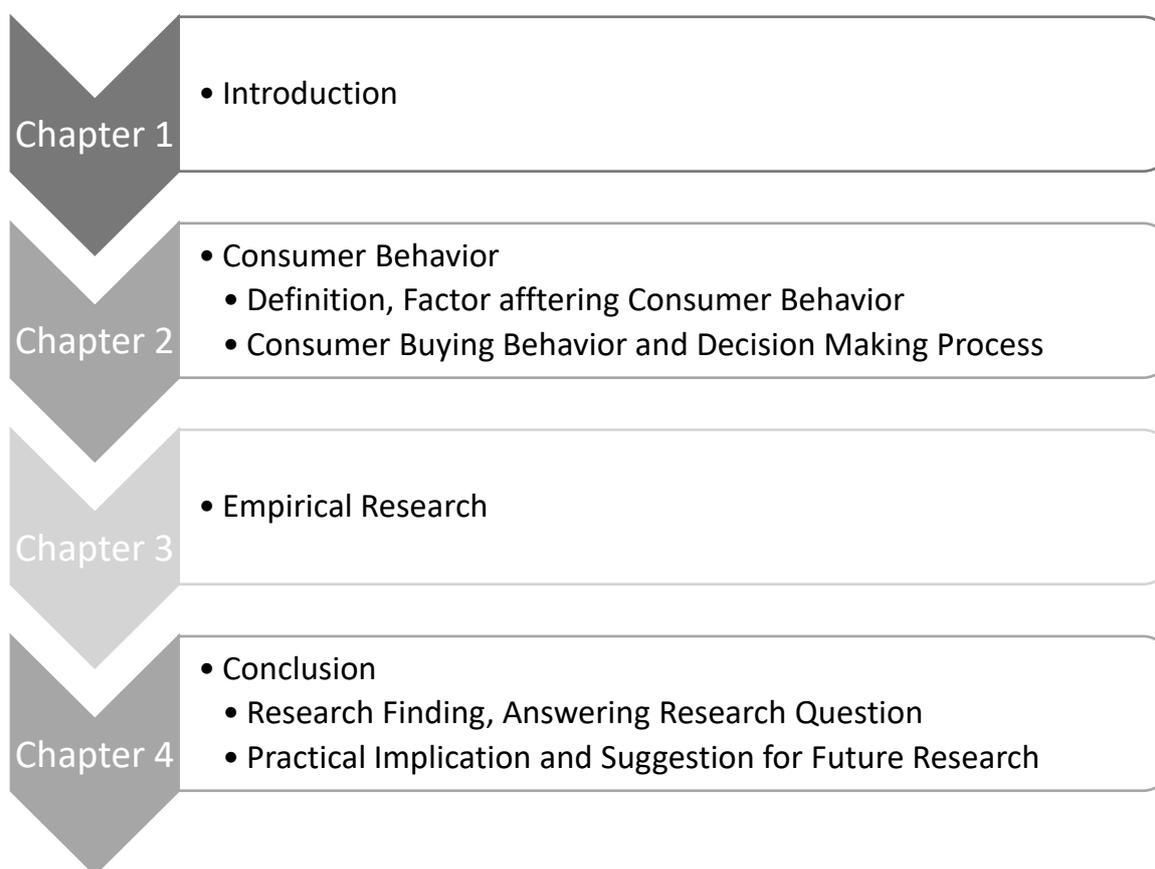


Figure 2 Thesis Structure

2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

2.1 Definition of Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is a common topic in business with several research dedicated to study and explain the driven factors behind it. Because of the numerous studies, the definition of consumer behavior keeps changing. By studying new elements of marketing, other factors and applying it to the previous concept, researchers manage to add more meaning and make the concept of consumer behavior clearer in each development. Solomon (2009, 33) defines consumer behavior as the study of the stages associated with the progress of deciding, purchasing, utilizing, or disposing of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires of individuals or groups. Another definition is consumer behavior reflects entirely the decisions of consumers with respect to the acquisition, consumption and disposition of products, services, activities, experience, people and ideas by decision-making units (Hoyer, MacInnis, & Pieters 2013, 3). Even though there are several definitions regarding consumer behavior, they all share the crucial points. For that reason, in this study, the author decides to follow the definition of Hoyer, MacInnis and Pieters. To further explain the concept of consumer behavior, the figure below was used.

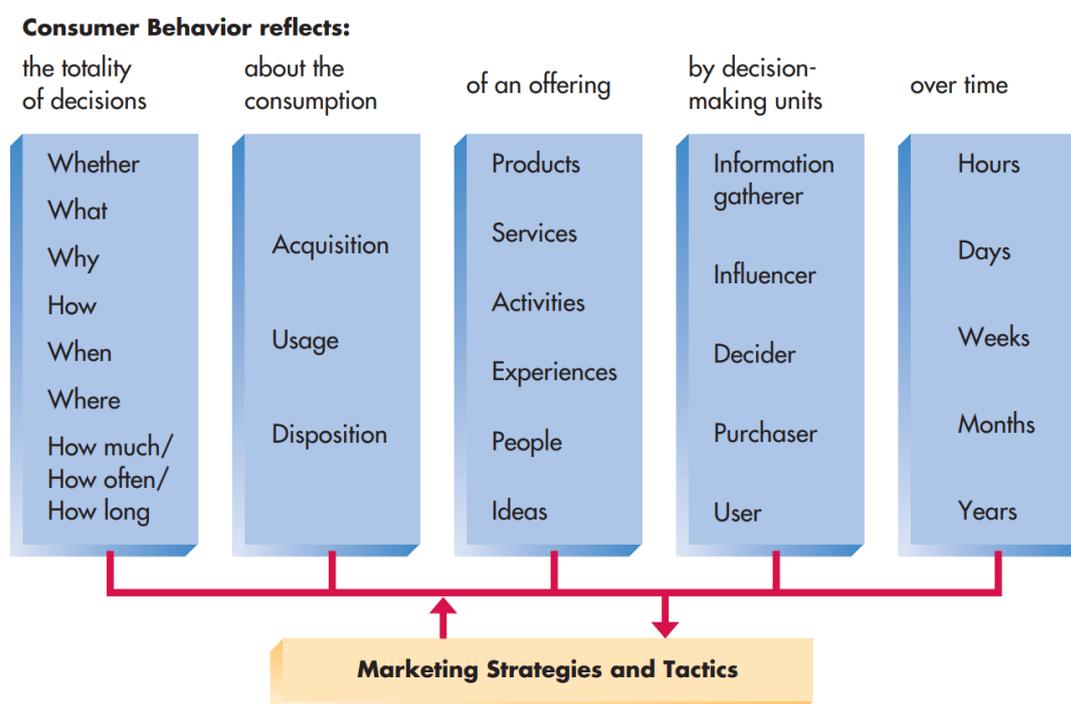


Figure 3 Definition of Consumer Behavior (Hoyer, MacInnis, & Pieters 2013)

Based on the figure, it is possible to point out the five essential points of the definition.

- Consumer behavior is a process. In the early stage of consumer behavior study, many believed that consumer behavior only reflected the exchange between buyers and sellers at the time of transaction. Further studying the concept shows that it is not correct to say that consumer behavior only reflects the exchange at the time of purchase, consumer behavior also includes the course of events happening before, during and after the transaction. To sum it up, the process of consumer behavior is made up of three different stages: pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase.
- Consumer behavior requires the participants to make several decisions during the process.
- From the figure, it is clear that the consumption consists of acquisition, usage and disposition. Acquisition is the process of acquiring an offering, which can be products, services, activities, experiences, people or ideas, by the consumers. Acquisition is not just simply buying the products, since leasing, sharing and trading is also considered as acquisition. Usage is about how the consumers utilize the offering and disposition is the process of clearing out the offering.
- Consumer behaviors involve not just seller and buyer, but also information gatherer, influencer, decider, purchaser and user. The people involved in the process do not have to present at the same time, they could present in any of the three stages of consumer behavior. It is also necessary to know that one person can have more than one role, for example, the buyer could be the decider, purchaser and user at the same time.
- An important characteristic of consumer behavior is that beside the behavior, consumer behavior also includes feeling and thought. A purchase is made based on several factors, sometimes the decision is made with logical thinking and other times, it is made with just feeling. It is simple to notice that most unused assets are made solely with feeling and with little to none logic behind. When a product does not meet the expectation, the owner will feel disappointed and start thinking about how to get rid of the product. Thus, it is noticeable that feeling and thinking are essential factors which affect the decision and behavior of consumers during the whole process.

2.2 Factor affecting consumer behavior

Procuring behavior of consumers is influenced by many different elements, which are divided in four categories, cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Consumer behavior is a part of human behavior, by analyzing the behavior of consumers, researchers can identify the essential components, which affect the decision-making process, and utilize them to predict future purchasing decisions of customers (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 159). Because this study is aimed to identify the effect of pandemic on the decision of Finnish customers, the author decided to exclude cultural factors and only focus on social, personal and psychological factors.

2.2.1 Social Factors

Social factors play an important part in the consumers behavior. Each person in the world has been influenced by someone and also influenced others in the decision-making process, this relation is the main focus of social factors. Social factors consist of three important factors: reference groups and social network, family, and role and status. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 162.)

Reference groups and social network

Even though every consumer is an individual, they are still a member of some groups and their behaviors are influenced by the groups they belong to. The first type of groups which an individual belongs to and receives direct influence is called membership groups. The second one is called reference groups, in which they act as a frame of reference for individuals or groups to make a comparison (Khan 2006, 58). Because reference groups are made up of relatives, friends, they are considered as a source of reliable information for customers regarding the purchasing decision. Because reference groups have strong influence on consumer behavior, marketers always try to identify reference groups of their consumer to develop an effective marketing strategy. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 162-164.)

Family

The impact of family on purchasing decisions is very noticeable. Family is where most people develop their value, personality and knowledge. Each individual can be a member of more than one family, their biological family and maybe their in-law. Each environment will have a different effect on the decision of the consumer because their family role is different. The decision to purchase a certain product can come from a husband, wife or even children and sometimes it is a collaborative decision (Lumenlearning b). Additionally, in normal circumstances, family is the first one to introduce the perception and prejudice about brands,

products and service which set the foundation for the consumer habit of the individual. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 164-166.)

Role and Status

Each person has several different roles, in which they are expected to perform, and status is the position that person holds in a social group (Jaideep). Role and status have great influence on the behavior of the individual, there are certain sets of rules which they are expected to follow to keep their role and status. By following those rules, consumers tend to purchase products or services which are sufficient for their role and status. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 166.)

2.2.2 Personal Factors

Besides external factors, Consumers behavior is also greatly influenced by personal factors such as age and life cycle stage, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, and personality and self-concept.

Age and life stage

Growing or aging is a very typical thing in life, by growing, people could gain more knowledge and experience, so it is obvious that age and life cycle stage will affect the decision of consumers. Consumers at different ages will have different references in their purchasing. Changes in human life cycle also alter their decision making, human life cycle consists of most remarkable events such as graduation, marriage, having children, getting a job, receiving promotion and retirement. It is necessary for marketers to analyze the preference of their customer in different ages and their life cycle to develop a relevant and sufficient marketing strategy. (Kardes, Cronley & Cline 2015, 443; Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 167.)

Occupation

Occupation will shape the preference and using pattern of the consumer (Jaideep). Colleagues or people in related fields tend to have a similar reference in some activity such as fashion, diner and leisure activities. Occupation is also a part of status, so it is necessary for consumers to consider their status before making a purchase in order to meet the standard of their business partner. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 167.)

Economic situation

Purchasing power is arguably one of the most important factors in the purchasing decision of consumers. Wealth and income level have a major impact on what people can afford and

it also affects their level of satisfaction regarding product quality and customer experience. It is simple to see that people with low income would prefer functionality than aesthetic and the higher the level of income, the more likely people would pay attention to customer experience. (Solomon 2009, 12; Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 168.)

Lifestyle

Lifestyle refers to the way of living of the consumers, which could show the living condition, opinion, and interest. It is a combination of experiences, current situation and ingrained characteristics of an individual. The lifestyle of an individual consists of several different lifestyle dimensions. These lifestyle dimensions signify the living pattern of a person and have a direct influence on their buying decision (Khan 2006, 18; Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 168.)

Personality and self-concept

Personality is an array of individual traits that make a person unique. Each person has their own personality traits that will shape the buying decision. It is common for brands to have their own personality, which can be seen from their decorating and design philosophy, and customers are more likely to make a purchase from brands with personalities that can harmonize with them. Brand personality consists of five dimensions, which are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. (Solomon 2009, 244-254; Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 168-169.)

Self-concept, also called self-image, is described by Solomon (2009, 197) as a personality related concept which reflects beliefs of an individual about their characteristics and how they would evaluate themselves according to those aspects. It is believed that the possession could show the personality of their owner. Thus, people would prefer purchasing products which could express their images or concepts, so it is noticeable that this phenomenon would shape the buying behavior of an individual. In order to develop a great marketing strategy to boost the company image and sales, it is necessary for marketers to identify and utilize the connection between their product and the belief of their customers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2012, 169.)

2.2.3 Psychological Factors

Psychological factors are the name of factors which describe the psychology of an individual that will stimulate their actions to be satisfactory. Psychological factor consists of motivation, perception, learning and attitudes and beliefs

Motivation

Each level of motivation will have a different effect on the purchasing behavior of consumers. American Marketing Association (2014) defines consumer motivation as the needs, wants, drives and desires of an individual that lead them toward the decision of purchasing products or ideas. So, motivation is the need of an individual which will lead them to seek satisfaction. The needs of people are being researched continuously and the most famous researcher in this field is Maslow. In his study, Maslow pointed out five major needs are physiological needs, safety needs, love and belongingness needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. To visualize the effect of those needs on humans, Maslow has introduced the Hierarchy of Needs. The basic needs, which comprise physiological and safety needs, are the most important to people and have direct impact on consumer behavior. Though when the basic needs are fulfilled, it will stop being a motivator and an individual will start to focus on the next needs in the hierarchy. (Solomon 2009, 162; Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 169-172.)

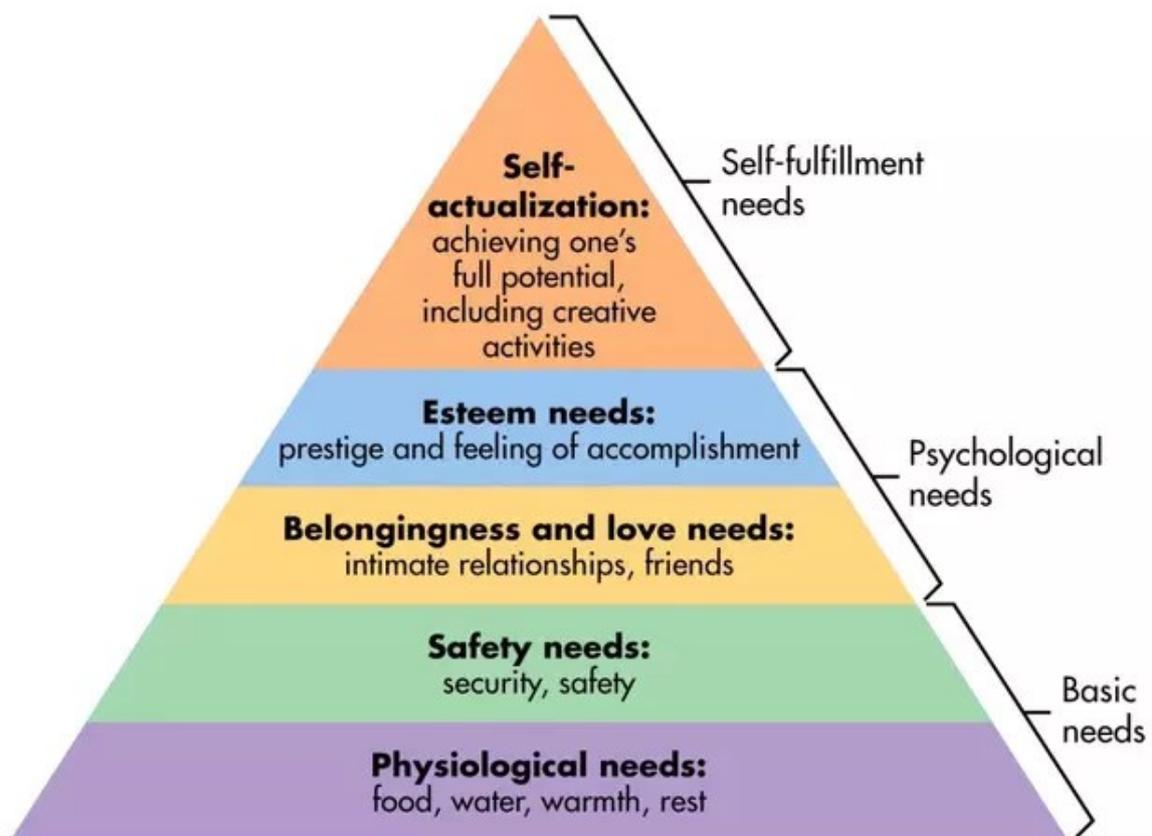


Figure 4 Maslow's hierarchy of needs (McLeod 2020)

Perception

Perception is the process, which people decide, construct and decipher information to visualize a substantial image of the world. Each person receives several information through their five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. After receiving the information, people can interpret them differently due to three perceptual processes: selective attention, selective distortion, selective retention. Selective attention is about the impossibility for a person to pay attention to everything around them, since people tend to overlook most of the information which is considered as unnecessary. Selective distortion is about the distortion in the interpreting information process, it is used to describe the tendency of people to decipher information in a way which will support their belief. Selective retention describes the phenomenon in which people are more likely to remember the positive point of their favorite brands and forget the good point of the competitor brands. Because of selective attention, distortion and retention, marketers have to spend more time and resources just to develop a marketing strategy that could catch the eye of consumers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 172.)

Learning

Learning is a life-long process, which describes the transition in behaviors of an individual soaring from experience. People learn by observing and interacting with drives, stimuli, cues, responses, and reinforcement. The learning process can happen unconsciously, which is also called incidental learning. The knowledge of consumers about their world changes constantly since they are exposed to new experiences and situations continuously. By receiving feedback, an individual can shape their behavior when facing a situation with similarity to their previous experience (Jaideep). By understanding the learning process, marketer can boost the demand for a product by correlating it with strong drives, through motivating cues, and offering positive reinforcement. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 173.)

Attitudes and beliefs

Through learning and experiencing, beliefs and attitudes can be developed. Belief is defined as a descriptive thought that an individual holds about something, it could be tangible or intangible. Beliefs could be developed through real knowledge, opinion, or faith and it may or may not hold an emotional feeling. Though, it is important to remember that beliefs can be established without fact or real-life experience (Jaideep). Attitude specifies the evaluations, feelings and tendencies of people toward an object or idea. Attitudes greatly influence consumer behavior, and shape their mind of liking or disliking things, reaching or avoiding them. When consumers have the wrong beliefs about a product and avoid purchasing, marketer could launch a campaign to correct them. On the other hand, attitudes are not easy

to change since it already fits into a pattern, so most companies would try to fit their product into an already existing pattern. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 173.)

2.3 Consumer Buying Behavior and Decision-making Process

2.3.1 Types of Buyer Decision-making Behavior

Each buying decision is different, and the amount of effort put into the decision-making process differs greatly depending on the product. More sophisticated decisions would require more buying involvement and also more consideration from the buyer. The figure below is used to show the types of consumer buying behavior based on the level of buying participants and the differences between brands. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 174.)

	High involvement	Low involvement
Significant differences between brands	Complex buying behavior	Variety-seeking buying behavior
Few differences between brands	Dissonance-reducing buying behavior	Habitual buying behavior

Figure 5 Four Types of Buying Behavior (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 174)

Complex Buying Behavior

A complex buying behavior happens when the consumers are highly involved in the buying process and comprehend the distinctness of different brands. Typically, the consumers have a high level of involvement in the process when they are planning to purchase a product, which is valuable, risky, self-expressive and only happens occasionally. Since the product is quite special and requires a significant amount of effort, it is obvious that the consumer will spend more time determining the characteristics of each brand before making a decision

(Cloutrack). Marketers of high level of involvement products need to understand the information-gathering and evaluating process of their customers to design a strategy to differentiate their brands with the competitors. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 174.)

Dissonance-Reducing Buying Behavior

Similar to complex buying behavior, Dissonance-Reducing Buying Behavior also requires high level of involvement from the consumers but with low level of distinctiveness between available brands. The product in this case also shares similar characteristics as complex buying behavior which are valuable, risky, self-expressive and only happens occasionally, though because of the minor in differentiation between available brands, the choosing process would be shorter. Most of the time, customers will choose a product with reasonable pricing or convenient in the process without a thorough research (Cloutrack). After acquiring the product, consumers might experience post-purchase dissonance or after-sale discomfort when noticing the discomfort in the purchased product or favourable information about the others. In this case, marketers should provide positive evidence to help customers feel satisfied with their purchase. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 174.)

Habitual Buying Behavior

In contrast to the previous two, habitual buying behavior happens routinely with low to no level of involvement from the consumers. This type of products does not have high value and also limited brand differentiation, which is the reason behind the fact that consumers mostly make a purchase out of habit without going through the common belief-attitude-behavior sequence. Buying these products does not require extensive information gathering and evaluation process even during the post-purchase. Despite the fact that buyers regularly purchase from the same brand, it is not a sign of strong brand loyalty but just a habit. Since the commitment of consumers is relatively low, most companies often use competitive pricing and discount campaigns to attract buyers. Besides that, companies can improve their product with additional features to differentiate their brands from other alternatives and boost involvement. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 175.)

Variety-Seeking Buying Behavior

The last type of buying behavior is variety-seeking, which holds a high level of involvement despite the low pricing. The characteristics of this buying behavior is already shown through its name, consumers tend to switch brands to enjoy the variety of products rather than dissatisfaction (Cloutrack). The buying process may not require pre-evaluation since the consumers would try to evaluate the products during the consumption process. To enjoy the

variety, consumers are more likely to switch to other brands in the next purchase. The market leader in this segment will try to promote habitual buying behavior with product availability and reminder advertising. On the other hand, the challengers could offer competitive pricing, free samples, coupon, discount campaigns and attractive advertising to gain new buyers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 175.)

2.3.2 The Buyer Decision-making Process

After going through the different factors influencing consumer behavior and different types of consumer behavior, it is possible to start analyzing the process of decision making of consumers. The decision-making process consists of five distinctive stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and postpurchase behavior. Since the process starts way before the actual purchase and continues past the purchase, marketers need to focus on the entire process rather than just the purchase decision. When making a normal purchase, customers are likely to go through all five stages, but as we know about previously mentioned buying behavior, consumers may skip information gathering and evaluating when making a habitual purchase. The figure below is used to further visualize the flow of the buyer decision-making process.

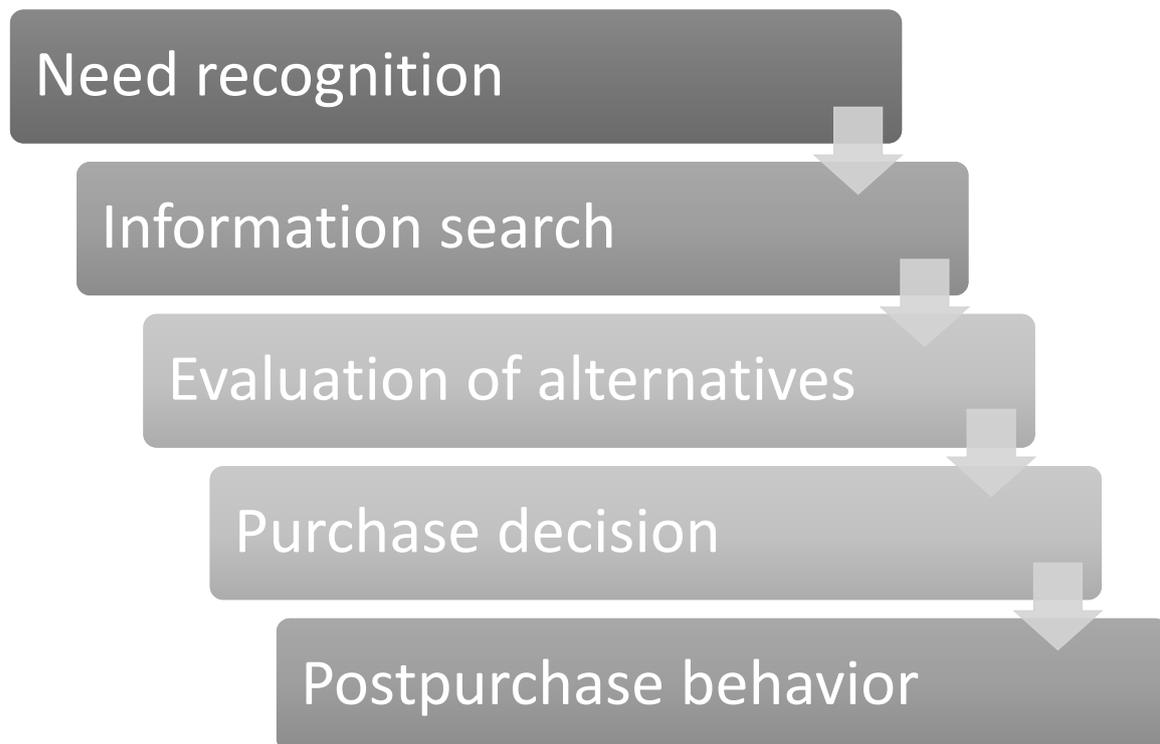


Figure 6 Buyer Decision-making Process (Adapted from Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 175)

Need recognition

The purchasing process starts with need recognition when the buyer recognizes a problem or need. It is considered as the first step and most important step in the process since consumers will not start the purchasing process if they do not recognize the need. The need can be aroused by internal or external stimuli. Internal stimuli are normal need of a person, such as hunger or thirst, rise to a certain level. External stimuli, on the other hand, is suggestive information coming from an outside source such as friends or advertisements (Lumenlearning a). Since the internal stimuli is out of reach of marketers, marketers could attract customers through external stimuli. For example, companies could manage to grab the attention of customers by providing free samples of food and beverages, and if customers like it, they might make a purchase in the future. To have the foundation for strategy development, markets should figure out the needs of the consumers, what could attract customers and how to lead them to make a purchase. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 176.)

Information search

After recognizing the needs, consumers may or may not look for more information related to the product. If a suitable product is available in a nearby source, the consumer will likely buy from there. If it is not the case, consumers may try information search related to their needs. Information search consists of internal and external research. The internal research is the memory or recollection of the consumers which come from personal experience. There are various sources of information that can be considered as external source, those are personal sources (family, relative, friends and acquaintances), commercial sources (advertising, salesperson, dealer and company websites), public sources (mass media, social media, online searches and reviews), and experiential sources (check and try the product). (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 176; Lumenlearning a.)

In the era of the Internet, information search has become easier for consumers. Traditionally, consumers will receive most information from the controlled commercial sources but because of the Internet, customers can seek peer review from users across the world. Commercial sources only inform customers about the product but reviews from legitimate users provide more information and could be more assured. When consumers can obtain information from several sources, their awareness and knowledge about products and brands also increase significantly. In order to design a successful marketing mix, marketers need to identify the sources of information and the reliability of each sources. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 176-177.)

Evaluation of alternatives

After gathering all the necessary information, the consumers will go through an evaluating process to determine which option is the most suitable for them. Consumers do not evaluate a product on a single category, they tend to have several evaluating categories to look for when evaluating a short-listed product. And consumers also do not apply one single evaluation process on every purchase, there are several evaluation processes which consumers will utilize for different purchases. The evaluation process of each individual is different, it is also influenced by the purchasing situation. With high-involvement products, customers tend to spend more time with careful calculation and logical thinking, in this case, the consumers are involved in extended problem solving. On the other hand, consumers could also make a purchase with little or no evaluation, they make a purchase in a rush and only rely on intuition, which is called routine problem solving (Lumenlearning a). By understanding the evaluation process of consumers, the marketer could predict and design a marketing strategy to influence the decision of the buyers. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 177.)

Purchase decision

After going through the evaluation process, the consumers will have enough information to decide which option is most suited for them. Normally, consumers would pick the most preferred brand, there exist two factors that can shift the decision from the first option to the other one. The first factor is attitudes of others, which are the opinion of others regarding the product, for example if a friend said that the second option is more reasonable, the buyer is more likely to reconsider the most preferred option. The second factor is unexpected situational factors, these factors could be the change in the financial situation of the buyer or the promotion campaign of alternative products or even a negative review from a friend regarding the first option. In the end, preferences and purchase intention do not always lead to the actual purchase. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 177.)

Postpurchase behavior

The buyer decision-making process does not end with a purchase decision. After acquiring the product, the consumers will either feel satisfied or dissatisfied and start engaging in postpurchase behavior. The two factors, which affect the satisfaction of the consumers, are the expectation of the consumer and the perceived performance of the product. When a product falls short of expectation, it will lead to disappointment; if it meets the expectation, the consumer will feel satisfied with the purchase and if it surpasses the expectation, the consumer will feel delighted. Despite that, most major purchases end up in cognitive dissonance because of the compromise in the purchasing process. Every thoughtful purchase

will satisfy customers with the positive but the feeling of uneasiness about the drawback of the decision is also presented. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 177.)

A satisfied customer will repurchase and introduce their preferred brands to the others. Customer satisfaction leads to a profitable relationship with the consumers, it keeps the customers, and boosts customer lifetime value. Satisfied customers are more likely to buy products from their preferred brands, introduce to others and pay less attention to the alternatives. On the other hand, dissatisfied consumers will give negative reviews, which will travel farther and quicker than the positive reviews and damage the image of the company. Dissatisfied consumers will not give direct feedback to the company and just walk away. So, the company should actively encourage customers to complain and learn about the weakness of the company. In order to promote post-purchase communication, some companies offer money back guarantees which also reassure customers that right choices were made (Lumenlearning a). By understanding the post purchase behavior of consumers, the marketers can promote the positive in their product to keep the consumer assured with their purchases. (Kotler & Armstrong 2018, 177.)

3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

In this part, we conduct a survey and present as well as interpret the outcomes of that survey in order to figure out if the opinion of users concerning food delivery services have improved before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1 Data Collection

To obtain the necessary data for the research, the author decided to utilize an online questionnaire. With the online questionnaires, the data can be collected quickly from many people and avoid close contact during the pandemic. The questionnaire consists of six questions about the changes of customer opinion regarding food delivery before and during the pandemic. The first two questions of the survey are used to gather the information about the usage of food delivery service before and during the pandemic, with the answers from these questions, the number of first-time users during the pandemic can be determined. The next two questions are about the difference of usage frequency before and during the pandemic. The last two questions focus on the belief about the necessity of food delivery services. Through this survey, the change in usage, rate of occurrence and the fundamentals of food delivery service can be analyzed. The questionnaire was sent to the fellow students at LAB UAS and their friend through the internet. The survey last three weeks and received 203 responses. After cleaning the collected data, the number of responses was cut down from 203 to 187.

3.2 Concerning order ordering activity before and during the pandemic

Q1: Did you use food delivery services before the pandemic? Name 5 reasons

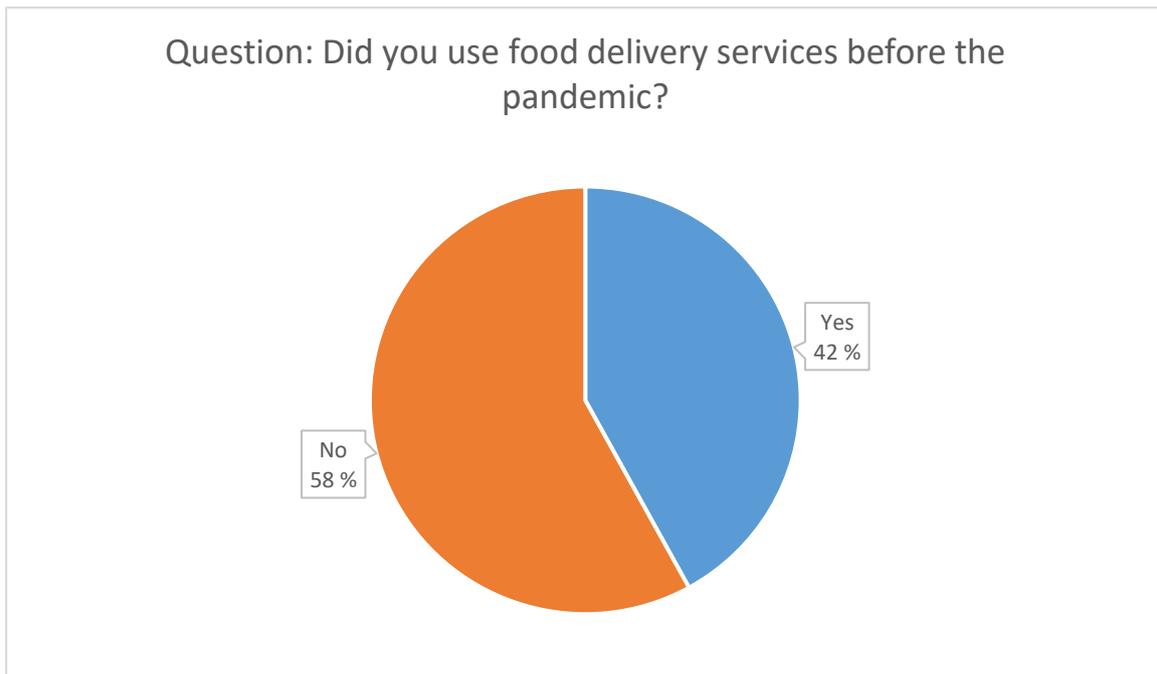


Figure 7 Whether people use food delivery services before the pandemic?

According to the result of the survey shown in figure 7, we found out that many of our respondents, accounting for more than half of the total number of respondents, have never used food delivery services while a lower number of people have answered Yes. This result helps to illustrate the fact that food delivery services are not totally oblivious with the population of Finland before the pandemic, but they are also not very popular, either.

Of the reasons that are named for using food delivery services, the most commonly cited ones are convenience, timesaving and the will of customers to try new things. However, there is little evidence at this point to suggest that many people view food delivery services as essential before the pandemic. In the customers' view before the pandemic, food delivery services are just some new experiences to try on or something to take advantage of for their own convenience.

On the other hand, of the reasons given for not trying food delivery services, ones such as "not interested", "not necessary", "not technically literate" and "living in close proximity to the markets and restaurants" are rather common, showing the fact that many people from the respondent population have never been in need of food delivery services in their lives.

Q2: Do you order now? Name 5 reasons

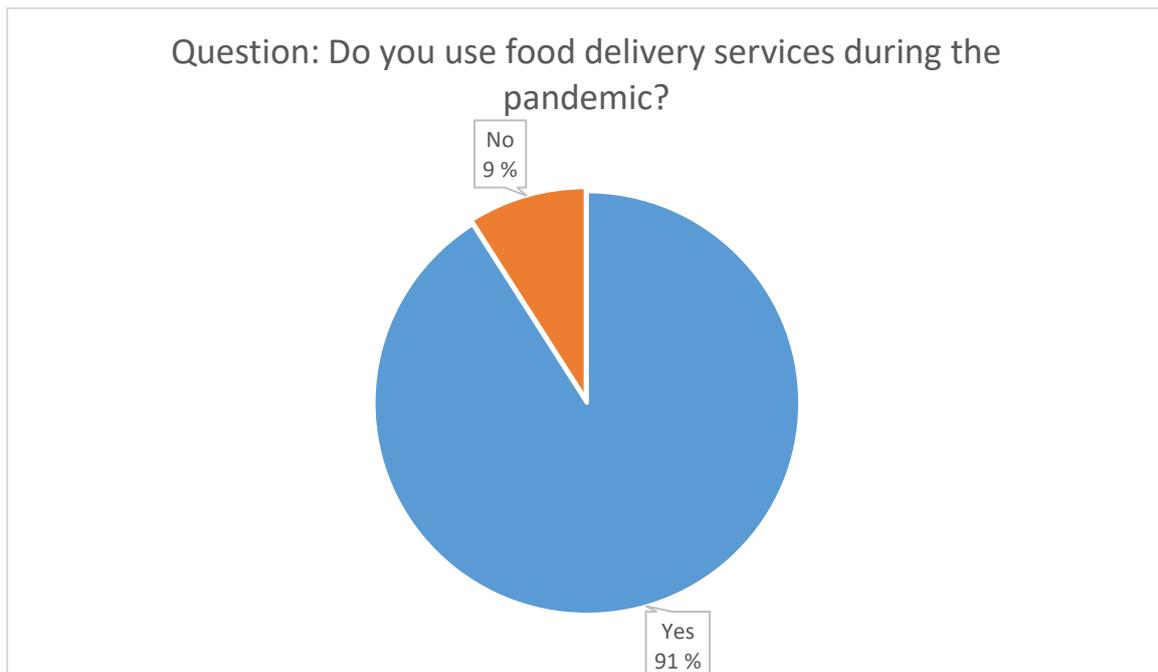


Figure 8 Whether people use food delivery services during the pandemic?

During the pandemic, the percentage of respondents using food delivery services have increased dramatically. Only less than 10% of all respondents from the same population answered No to the question, which can be seen from figure 8. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, food is a basic need of every person, and during the pandemic the process of acquiring food has also involved with the safety needs. The acquiring food process requires people to have human interaction which increases the chance to contact virus. So, acquiring food now involves with both the physiological need and safety need. In order to keep the human interaction to the minimum, food delivery has become an optimal solution which increases the popularity of food delivery.

Of the reasons cited for the surge in use of food delivery services, many involve factors such as “fear of going out”, “ensuring health and safety”, or “no other choice”. Also, considering the reasons cited for answering No, most are now reduced to issues such as “not technically literate” and “living in close proximity to the markets and restaurants”. This means that for whatever reason, acquiring food through a traditional method has become a problem. Since people has started to recognize the need of using food delivery service, they inattentively go through the buyer decision-making process. To prevent the spread of the virus, using food delivery services has become more necessary and obvious choice for people during the pandemic.

3.3 Concerning Order Frequency

Q3: Order frequency before the pandemic? (Only for those who answered Yes to Q1)

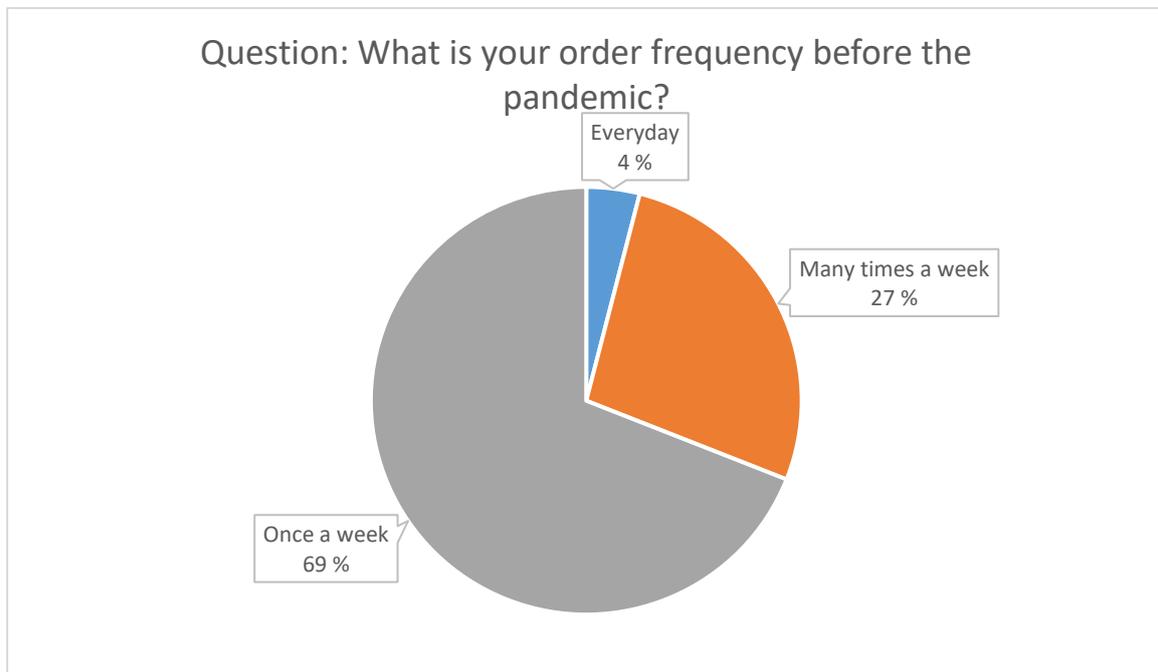


Figure 9 Food delivery services usage frequency before the pandemic

In further breakdown of the respondents who answered Yes to using food delivery services before the pandemic, it can be seen in figure 9, there are only a very minor percentage of them using such services on a daily basis. Also, the majority of this group uses food delivery services only once a week, indicating that they have exposure and some experiences with food delivery services. However, the usage frequency is too thin to consider such services essential. Still, about a quarter of this group uses the services many times a week, indicating a certain degree of reliance on such services for their daily needs. In general, it can be said that before the pandemic, online a small part of the population actually requires food delivery services to serve them on a daily basis and so food delivery services, on a population-wide scale, look nothing like an essential part of life.

Q4: Order frequency after the pandemic? (Only for those who answered Yes to Q2)

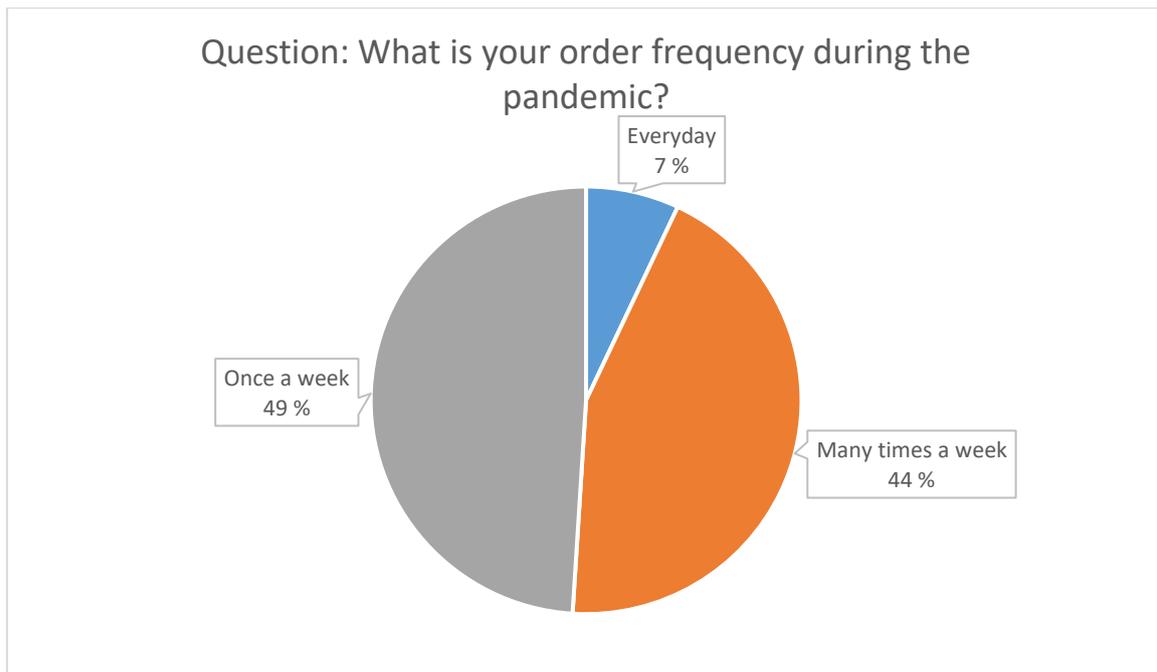


Figure 10 Food delivery services usage frequency during the pandemic

From figure 10, we can see some significant improvements in the higher food delivery service use frequencies that are the “Many times a week” and “Everyday”. It is worth reminding that the survey population of this chart is already higher than that of the previous chart because there are already a higher number of Yes respondents to Q2 than those answering Yes to Q1. In other words, there are higher numbers of people using food delivery services on high frequency during the pandemic. Combined, the two groups, “Many times a week” and “Everyday”, make up more than half all respondents to this Q4, which is a significant increase in percentiles compared to those Q3, in which barely one-third of all respondents belong to high use frequency groups.

It is obvious that food delivery is a great alternative to dining out, but it also increases the cost of each meal. Since the start of the pandemic, thousands of people have been laid off (Yle 2020a). Because of the lower income and the extra cost of delivery, most people cannot afford food delivery service in a regular basis. It explains why the “Once a week” group still contributes to nearly half of the respondents.

3.4 Concerning consumers’ view on delivery before and during the pandemic

Q5: Do you think delivery is essential before the pandemic?

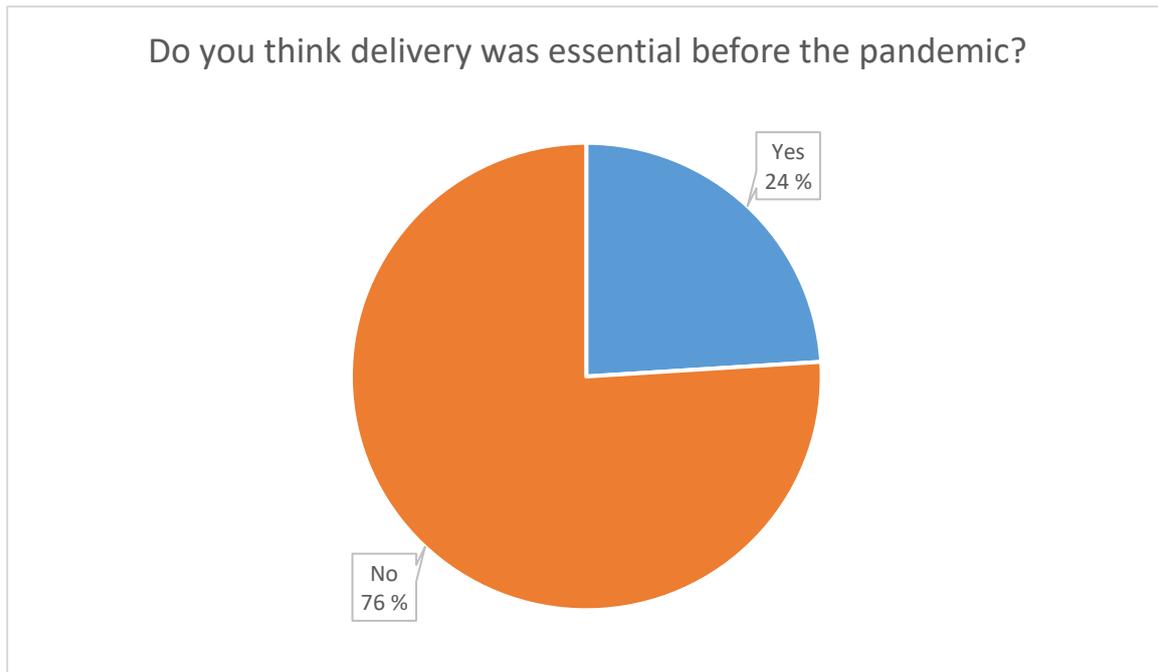


Figure 11 People's opinion of food delivery services before the pandemic

This question asks the survey respondents how they view food delivery services as a whole before the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcome of this question is rather obvious to see from the figure 11 and has been predicted even before the survey took place. Before the pandemic, only less than one-fourth of the whole surveyed population actually thinks that food delivery services are essential for their lives. On the other hand, the remaining 76% of the population does not view food delivery services as an important part of their lives. The responding pattern for this question is rather similar to that of Q1 in that the percentage of Yes respond is lower than the percentage of No respond. However, the difference in this question is more significant and that of Q1. This means that although there are people who use food delivery services even before the pandemic, many of them also do not see food delivery services as essential.

Q6: Do you think delivery is essential during the pandemic?

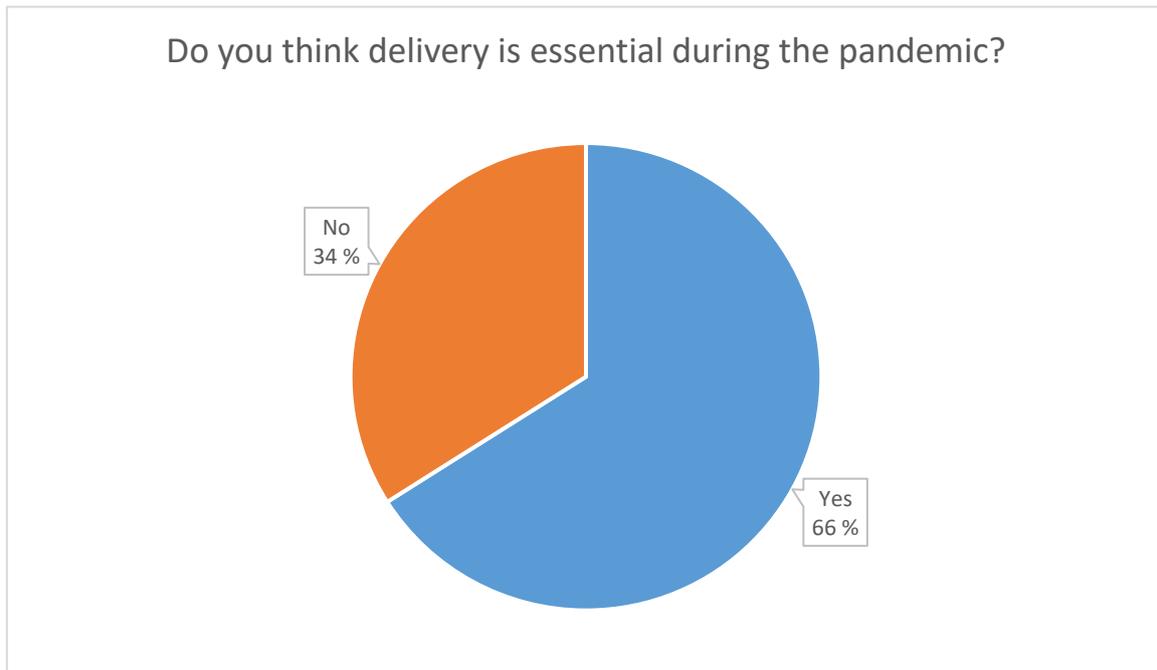


Figure 12 People's opinion of food delivery services during the pandemic

In contrast to the previous Q5, the result of this question does not come as we expect. Before the survey outcome came out, it was expected that the Yes response rate would be overwhelmingly higher than the No response rate. While it is true that the Yes rate (66%) is almost double the No rate (34%), which is a considerable difference, it is still a bit too low compared to expectation. Back to the figure 8 from Q2, it can be concluded that a lot of people are forced to use food delivery services now during the pandemic. However, it is obvious that, with the result of this Q6 and of Q2 combined, we can see that people, despite using food delivery services during the pandemic, do not recognize those services as essential. Since everyone believes that the pandemic will soon end with the start of vaccination, and restaurant will reopen their door to serve customers, it is probably why food delivery services is not considered as essential by one third of the respondent (Yle 2020b). Another important point is that most respondents are students, they have many reasons to dining out, such as they want to meet their friends, have a change of pace, try new food. Though, food delivery offers the convenience of enjoying different types of cuisine at home, without worrying about preparing, cooking, and cleaning, most people still enjoy spending time eating out. It fits with the lifestyle factors and it is an important psychological need in Maslow Hierarchy which are belongingness and love needs. Still, in the end, after comparing the result of Q1 and Q2, the truth remains that the opinion shift does exist, and more people are seeing food delivery services as essential now.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Research Findings

4.1.1 Changes in customer opinions of the food delivery service during the pandemic

Using the information gathered from the survey, it can be concluded that, before the pandemic, food delivery services are not considered essential in the lives of many people. Of course, people do use such services, but rather as an add-on for their own conveniences and experiences rather than a much-needed service that they cannot live without. This is actually rather predictable and easy to see why. Before all the social-distancing and lockdown scenarios happening all over the world now, people had a lot of freedom to move around and do things as they like, including doing their own food shopping and visiting restaurants. Therefore, the people can carry on a lot of their own matters by themselves and thus not needing food delivery services. Thus, food delivery services, while needed for some, were never before the most popular choice for the majority of the population.

However, since the outbreak of the pandemic, things have been changing. Now, a lot of people are forced to stay indoors, partly due to restriction as well as lockdown policies and partly due to the people's own fear of contracting the diseases. Lockdown activities also forced people out of their common routines and that, too, reduces the occasions people can visit markets and food establishments. Thus, people during such periods are keener on using food delivery services. The reasons for this are many. First of all, food delivery services help people who are afraid of contracting the virus stay in and still get the food supply they need. People can still get food without leaving the safety of their own doors. Also, those who contracted the virus and want to stay in to prevent it from spreading to other people can also use food delivery services to ensure their own daily sustenance. Thus, thanks to their use as a means for people to avoid going outside during the pandemic for whatever reason, food delivery services began gaining popularity and essential status during the pandemic.

Not only are food delivery services beneficial for the customers, but they are also useful for restaurants and other food establishments. During the pandemic, customers, again, for various reasons, cannot visit restaurants as frequently as they could during normal times. Therefore, patronage rates and revenue levels drop significantly for restaurants, threatening their very ability to survive the pandemic. However, thanks to the existence of food delivery services, restaurants can still take take-away and home-delivery orders from customers who cannot visit in person to restaurants that do not have their own sufficient delivery force.

The income stream, while meagre and barely enough for the restaurants to stay in business, is better than nothing and will keep the restaurant in shape for the time being.

4.1.2 Measures to Ensure Customer Satisfaction and Safety by the Delivery Platforms

Now that food delivery services such as Wolt are gaining popularity and patronage from both customers and restaurant establishments, they should continue developing themselves so as to better ensure customer satisfaction and safety. Under no circumstances should food delivery services be slacking in such development because their popularity would drop terribly when the COVID-19 pandemic ends, and life gets back to normal. To ensure that customers will keep using them afterward, food delivery services must strive to become better and more desirable to use. But first, when the pandemic still lingers, food delivery services must pay extra care to ensure the safety of all parties involved in their networks.

Ensuring safety

The simplest thing that food delivery platforms can do to ensure overall safety in their networks is to strictly observe distancing measures. The simplest is instructing people to wear a mask during all of their contacts with others. Couriers should wear masks when they come to pick up orders at restaurants and restaurant staff should do so, too. Also, couriers will have to wear masks when delivering the food to the customers and customers should wear masks when receiving the orders. That way, even if one party is infected with the virus, the chance that they will transmit it to other unsuspecting people will be greatly reduced. Platforms can require further non-contact interactions between parties to even better limit the spread of the virus. Since non-cash payment has been in place across Finland even before the pandemic, the cash carriage issue has been out of the picture. However, should any cash transactions happen (such as giving tips), the people should be encouraged to do so via their banking applications and not in physical cash. In addition, parties of the networks can be instructed to place food packages at a spot and leave the spot before someone else comes and picks the packages up. This measure can happen at both the restaurants and the customers' doors so as to further avoid human interaction.

Specifically, for delivery partners, the platforms can require those partners to disinfect their equipment and vehicles regularly to avoid any chance of lingering virus on their items. Delivery partners should always carry disinfecting liquids and wipes to clean their equipment and vehicles whenever possible or after they suspect a transmit possibility, such as when someone coughs onto their items. Also, courier partners who have been infected should be

forced to stay home. While this may be cruel, it is the only way to ensure that they do not spread their sickness further. Punishment, while always the last resort and never the recommended course of action, should be applied in extreme cases.

For restaurant partners, specific safety measures should also take place. For example, restaurants can use water-proof containers instead of normal paper boxes as in the past. In the past, paper boxes were enough and are common in take-away restaurants for fast food such as pizza, hamburgers, kebabs and sushi. While enough to keep the food inside from dirt particles, paper boxes are not always waterproof and thus small liquid particles like those from breathing and sneeze can pass through, carrying viruses with them. With the use of water-proof food containers, restaurants can reduce the chances of virus spreading on the containers, into the food and into the consumers.

Ensuring Satisfaction

Apart from safety, which is the top priority during the pandemic time, food delivery service platforms should also take good care of customer satisfaction. As mentioned above, when the pandemic ends in the future and things become back to normal, food delivery services will lose a significant number of customers who will no longer have to need to stay in and will go back to visit restaurants in person. To avoid such losses, food delivery services should try to do better in terms of customer care so as to ensure loyal customers will return and expand the customer base.

First of all, to retain existing customers, food delivery services should try to keep on regular and timely services. These factors have always been among the key points for maintaining customer satisfaction. Food delivery services must make sure to appear as reliable services in the eyes of customers, services that could always be trusted to deliver and serve when needed at reasonable speed and frequency. Without timeliness and efficiency, food delivery services will soon be casted out of the customers' mind and fade away out of business.

Secondly, restaurant foods are not the only items that can be delivered. Some people prefer home-cooked meals. The reasons for this desire are plenty, ranging from cost consciousness, health concerns or simply taste matters. In any case, these people will still go buy their fresh food ingredients and cook their own meals, with or without the pandemic going on. Yet even these people, too, will have their own reasons for not wanting to go to the market by themselves. During the pandemic, there could be health concerns and lock-down orders. During normal times, the markets may be too far away, or the people may not have a vehicle to bring back all the ingredients they need, or the people may be too busy with other matters such as work and schooling or simply because they are too old and weak to go to the market by themselves. Food delivery services can try to expand their service range

into online grocery shopping. By partnering with supermarkets and vendors, they can create online shopping menus for customers to choose from and a courier partner will go to the market or shop, pick up the items and deliver the items to the customers, just like when they do with restaurant food. By expanding the ranges of services, food delivery services can gain new customers from sectors that they may never have experienced before, opening up new markets and revenue streams.

Also, among the people who need delivery services, those living far from accessible markets and restaurants are lucrative target groups. While it makes sense for food delivery services to focus on heavily populated areas for better access to a large customer base, taking care of isolated communities and individuals may bring back rewards. The primary reason is that the demand for delivery services in isolated communities and for individuals is constant, creating a loyal population of customers that can be relied on to cover some certain degrees of cash flow. Also, while spreading the customer base in this way may be slow and not financially significant, the word-of-mouth effect can help spread the services' popularity to other customer groups, too, which may compensate well in the long run.

4.1.3 Suggestions for Food and Beverage Businesses (Restaurants)

For restaurants, the pandemic has taken a heavy toll. Customer rates and income levels have dropped to a point of disaster and many restaurants face the reality of closing their doors forever. For those that survive, the future is glimpse. However, there are courses of action that restaurants can do to better survive the hardship of the pandemic. While not all of the following methods may help alleviate the situation to the levels of normal time, neither is any of those completely pleasant and not without a cost to pay, the methods will serve as emergency approaches to help the restaurants to at least survive so they can prosper again one day in the future.

The first option for restaurants is to modify their menu and offers. The pandemic is a hard time for everyone so restaurants should consider lowering their menu prices, using cheaper ingredients or serving in smaller amounts to cut down on the costs for themselves and for the customers, thus creating competitive advantages. Restaurants should also offer bundle selling. This way, customers will not have to take too many trips or many orders, which may increase costs and the chances of contracting the virus. Also, bundle selling allows restaurants to clear out stocks quickly, generating fast cash flow and reduces storage costs. For restaurants that are used to serving sit-in customers, they should consider introducing take-away options so make cash flow and maintain customers during a time in which going to the restaurants is risky or restricted.

Restaurants can also survive the pandemic by cutting down on several fixed cost factors. Two of the costliest expenses for restaurants are property rental and staff hiring. For property costs, restaurants can consider dealing with property owners for rental reduction. This is not an ensured strategy, but it could work if the property owners are reasonable and understanding. By sharing the costs with restaurants, property owners can maintain their rental relationships. Otherwise, if the restaurants go bankrupt due to excessive financial burdens, then the property owners will not make any cash flow since it may be hard to find someone else who would rent their places during pandemic times. Dealing with staff members is a little bit trickier. First of all, it is hard enough to have efficient staff so firing them all together does not appear to be a sound option, not counting legal and reputation issues. However, to keep the existing staff force is wasteful and costly at the same time. Therefore, one prime option is staff circulating, cutting down work hours and duties for all yet keeping all of them in the payroll. The staff members' income will surely drop but at the very least they will not go unemployed and bearing the losses with the restaurant owners now will only be temporary but will keep their employment prospects in the future.

One more thing that restaurants could do in these particular times is to apply for financial aids or tax reduction from the Finnish government. Surely the government will want to keep as many business establishments as possible to stay in business for a great closure of too many will definitely cause an unsalvageable recession. Therefore, the Finnish government has drafted a lot of plans and rescue packages to help save the economy, including direct cash deposit to individuals and business owners or tax reduction. However, policies can change very quickly. For the most correct and updated information concerning these matters, restaurant owners should contact the closest government office in charge and inquire about the current policies.

4.2 Answering the Research Questions

To conclude the research work of this thesis, a summary and walkthrough of the research questions will be necessary. The primary research question is as below:

" How does the pandemic affect customer opinion about food delivery?"

According to the information gathered and analyzed as in part 3 as well as further findings from part 4.1 of this paper, it can be seen that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the people of Finland had had certain extent of experiences with food delivery services. There are even some fractions of the population who actually used food delivery services on a rather regular basis, suggesting some degrees of reliance on such services in their daily lives. However, those are not enough to conclude that food delivery services are an essential part of life for

any significant ratio of the Finnish population. Rather, when directly asked if they viewed food delivery services as essential before the pandemic, most of the respondents in the survey answered No. However, later on, as the pandemic raged on, a significant percentage of the population has been shifting their opinions. First of all, a lot more of them now begin to use food delivery services and for those who have used such services before, many of them now use them in greater frequency. Also, the ratio of respondents answering Yes to whether they consider food delivery services essential during the pandemic has actually more than tripled the compared to before the pandemic. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the pandemic has played a great part in changing to customers' opinion and approach toward food delivery services. The services have been becoming more relevant in the life of many people and are slowly gaining essential status.

It is important for delivery service platforms to always push on when it comes to serving the customers and ensuring the well-being of all participant sides within the network as well as to expanding their influence zones in the future; Such matters bring about the necessity of the first sub-question, which is a below:

“How should delivery platforms adjust policy to achieve high customer satisfaction and ensure their safety during the pandemic?”

Safety issues should be the primary concerns now during the pandemic. The first and primary way to ensure public safety is to carefully observe social distancing policies such as (1) ask all involved parties to wear masks, (2) encourage non-cash transactions and (3) avoid personal interactions. Then, the food delivery platforms can go further into details. For delivery partners, some viable suggestions are (1) requiring delivery partners to constantly disinfect their equipment and vehicles and (2) requiring infected partners to stay home even if forces and punishments are to be employed. Lastly, for restaurant partners, safety measures can include using water-proof food containers to prevent viral spreading.

Also, for future prospects, food delivery platforms must foresee that as soon as the pandemic is over, many of their customers will switch back to their normal patterns and stop seeing the platforms as necessary. Therefore, it is important for the existence of the platforms to expand their customer base and to offer new forms of services. The first issue to pay attention to is to ensure constant and efficient service manners, which are the backbone of customer satisfaction. The second approach is to diversify on the range of services, from only delivery cooked meals to grocery delivery and online shopping. The third option is to expand service zones into far-flung areas where demands are present.

Last but not least, the F&B partners of the food delivery service networks must figure out methods to help save themselves, maintaining enough business activities and cash flows

in order to make it through the pandemic periods. These matters require the attention to the second sub-question, which is:

“What practical approaches can F&B businesses take to help themselves survive economic hardship during the pandemic?”

It is a sad fact that F&B businesses are hit rather severely by the pandemic and no one measure could completely help them salvage the situation back to normal status. However, the right approaches will help them ensure their survival so that they can prosper again after the pandemic is over. The first option is to modify the menus. Pandemic times call for delivery-friendly and budget-friendly food options. Therefore, the menus can be adjusted to include low-cost options made from low-cost ingredients. Also, sit-in restaurants should offer deliverable menu items while bundle selling will let restaurants sell more of their stocks and improve cash flow. The second option for F&B businesses involves reducing their operation costs. Two of the costliest parts of running a restaurant are property rental costs and employee salaries. Rental costs can be lowered by negotiating with the landowners who may be willing to share cost burdens with restaurants so as to maintain their long-term relationships. Employee salary can be reduced by cutting work hours and shifts of employees but still maintain them in the payroll. This way, the employer-employee relationship will not be too severely damaged while the goal of cost reduction can still be achieved. Also, the Finnish governments may offer financial or tax aids to affected F&B businesses. While such policies may not be stable and can change in requirement and amount, they are still something to cling on during desperate times. The right government office will be able to provide the right information on such aids.

4.3 Reliability and Validity

Reliability is the stability of assessment over a set of conditions in which will generate an identical result (Nunnally 1978, according to Drost 2011, 106). The reliability of this study is assured by the author. Through the responses of several respondents from different backgrounds, the gathered data is not controlled or influenced, and it is possible for other researchers to produce the same result under this condition.

Validity of the study put emphasis on the credit of the research components (Drost 2011, 114). Thus, the study is conducted to gather and analyze necessary data to answer the research question. Following this guideline, the author went through several academic resources to complete the theoretical part of this study. The sources for this thesis include books, journals, articles and credible articles. Thus, the validity of this study can be ensured.

The author has his best to assure the validity and practicality of the provided information in this thesis, the change of human opinion and customer behavior is impossible to predict accurately. Therefore, the information from this thesis should be used with consideration, it is always a good practice to double-check from more than one sources and follow up-to-date material. Additionally, this study focuses solely on a specific form of service, the food delivery service, and a particular country, Finland. So, utilizing the research result of this study on comparable service and similar countries is possible, though the interested party is required to take into account the difference in service infrastructure, culture and other distinctive elements.

4.4 Suggestion for Further Research

At the time of this study, the pandemic is not over yet and it still has a significant impact on the daily life of people. Since the scope of this study only focuses on Finland and Finnish food delivery market during the pandemic. It is possible to conduct continuous studies on this topic, using this thesis as the foundation and establish an accurate approach to learn even more about the phenomenon.

A future search with this study as the foundation can be conducted on other nations with similar background as Finland, for example the other Nordic countries. Though the other Nordic countries have similar culture and history as Finland, it is important to take into consideration the approach of the government to handle the pandemic.

Another point is that this study focuses solely on the food delivery service, so it is possible for the future research to be conducted with other remote service and activity, such as grocery delivery service, working-from-home and distance education.

5 SUMMARY

Because of the appearance of the novel virus COVID-19, the life of people around the world has changed significantly. To reduce the spread of the disease, the government had to enforce several measures such as bans of gathering, closure of public facilities, and restaurants were asked to stop serving eat-in customers. During these hard times, restaurants have to rely on the help of food delivery service to keep serving their hungry customers. The author aims to identify the effect of the pandemic on the customer behavior regarding food delivery during the pandemic and after the situation has gotten better.

This thesis is written with two main parts: theoretical and empirical. The theory for this thesis was covered in the chapter 2, which introduces and explains about the consumer behavior. This chapter starts with the definition to familiar the reader with consumer behavior, followed by the introduction of three factors that affect the consumer behavior, and concluded with the explanation of the consumer buying behavior and the process of decision making.

Chapter 3 explains the process of collecting data for the empirical research. The questionnaire for this study was designed so that it can be quickly answered but still provide a good resource to help answering the research question. The data of each question was presented and briefly explained in this part as well.

The thesis ends with the research finding and conclusion in chapter 4. In this chapter, the author discloses the finding from the collected data, a suggestion for the restaurant to overcome the challenging time and answering the research question. Then, the practicality and reliability of the study is explained and some suggestions for future research is also included in this chapter.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaire in the survey

Survey about food delivery usage during pandemic

Please take a few minutes to fill out this research survey

1. Did you use food delivery services before the pandemic? Name 5 reasons
Yes
No
2. Do you order now? Name 5 reasons
Yes
No
3. Order frequency before the pandemic? (Only for those who answered Yes to Q1)
Everyday
Many times a week
Once a week
4. Order frequency after the pandemic? (Only for those who answered Yes to Q2)
Everyday
Many times a week
Once a week
5. Do you think delivery is essential before the pandemic?
6. Do you think delivery is essential during the pandemic?