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ENTREPRENEURIAL CASE STUDY: OPERATING A FINNISH SUBSCRIPTION BOX COMPANY

Moro Poro Business Portfolio



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ABSTRACT

The case study provided in this portfolio thesis details practical research work undertaken and consequently implemented to startup and run a confectionary subscription box micro-business named Moro Poro. The primary demographic targeted in Moro Poro's digital and email marketing campaigns were Finnish-Americans. The details of these marketing efforts are the focus of this portfolio thesis, as well as implementing digital technology to connect with potential Finnish-American customers. The micro-business was operated solely by the author for a period of nine months—from 01/05/2019 to 31/01/2020. The micro-Business operations included liaising with various logistics, warehousing/order-fulfillment, confectionary, and packaging supply companies. Business operations took place mostly within the digital sphere—with the physical aspects mainly relating to acquiring products, packaging them, and shipping them.

The author felt enabled to undertake the Moro Poro venture in the digital sphere on account of having studied HTML, HTML5, CSS, Javascript, PHP, and WordPress for the past twelve years. These competencies were combined with theoretical business knowledge gained from the international business degree program in which the author was enrolled. The key elements of business practice put into use for the micro-business venture, as detailed in this portfolio thesis, were; digital marketing, email marketing, web design (business-oriented), logistics, inventory management, customer service, B2B negotiations, B2C sales, entrepreneurial practices, and international business relations/cooperation. As an international business degree student, the author gained valuable insights into the practicalities of running a micro-business. The author learned the value of developing good relations with partners and customers—which was crucial to business success, as well as the practicalities of marketing and sales.

Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, operations ceased before long-term business viability could be ascertained. Business closure mainly resulted from difficulties with logistical and supply chain operations, i.e., liaising with the packaging supply companies in China that provided packaging materials at low costs, and also difficulties liaising with fulfillment centers in the USA that were only able to deliver essential items during the early phases of the pandemic. To protect key trade secrets—confidential aspects of the dynamics of the micro-business venture such as certain business partner names, special business partner offers, business partner contacts, and analytical data have been omitted from the portfolio. The reason for these omissions is the author's plan to restart operations in the near future. Nevertheless, the details presented provide a glimpse of the key research work undertaken, operational fundamentals of the venture, and an overview of the challenges and lessons the author experienced as an entrepreneur.

KEYWORDS:

Subscription box, subscription, e-commerce, confectionary, order-fulfillment, micro-business.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

PPC	(Pay Per Click)
SEO	(Search Engine Optimization)
SMO	(Social Media Optimization)
SSL	(Secure Sockets Layer)
CLV	(Customer Lifetime Value)
AOV	(Average Order Value)
USA	(United States of America)

1. PORTFOLIO THESIS INTRODUCTION

Startup Overview

The author desired to establish a registered micro-business enterprise in the candy subscription box niche. Specifically, the focus was on marketing and selling Finnish confectionaries to Finnish-Americans residing in the United States of America. To achieve this, the author registered a company in Finland by the name of Licorice House and consequently became the sole proprietor of said company. Licorice House was registered as a legally operating business entity with the Finnish Trade Register on 02/07/2018. While reviewing literature related to brand naming, the author took into consideration the spectrum for generating and considering (abstract) brand names (Clifton and Simmons et. al., 2009, 90) and utilized a sub-brand for Licorice House named Moro Poro—to sell and promote the candy subscription boxes. The reason for using the abstract name Moro Poro for the sub-brand was twofold. First, for its memorability through rhyming convention. Secondly, to distinguish the candy subscription box service—with its unique niche and target audiences—from other products offered by the Licorice House brand. According to the American branding company Full Surge, a sub-brand operates within the scope of its unique target audiences, brand strategies, and marketing campaigns (fullsurge.com, 2017). This proved very useful in operating the Moro Poro sub-brand—as it was easier to focus on its unique marketing and branding strategies, apart from other brands under Licorice House. The contents of this portfolio thesis detail the practical work undertaken to run the micro-business, as well as the results thereof.

Moro Poro Overview

The Moro Poro venture was planned at the beginning of 2018 while the author was a member of the BusinessAcademy of Turku University of Applied Sciences. The business venture was operated solely by the author for a period of nine months—from 01/05/2019–31/01/2020. The author registered a domain name (moroporo.fi) and purchased a 1-year web hosting package from the hosting company known as Namecheap, after which the author designed a pre-launch page for Moro Poro. Entrepreneurs embarking upon digital business ventures have many options for marketing, showcasing, and selling their products to their targeted demographics. In modern times, websites and apps are among the most used platforms for these purposes. The author chose to use WordPress to host the Moro Poro pre-launch

website (and full website) wherefrom customers were able to view the product offerings and subscribe using secure payment methods. WordPress was chosen for several reasons. WordPress is a free, open-source CMS (Content Management System) that was introduced in 2003, and powers over 41% of websites online (wordpress.org, n.d.). As it powers over 1/3 of websites online, the author desired to implement the vast features of the software for the business venture. The main demographic targeted in email and digital marketing campaigns—Finnish-Americans—were able to visit the Moro Poro website and order a box of 10 full-sized Finnish confectioneries. In addition, they received a small gift and a ‘thank you’ brochure with fun facts about Finland and Finnish candy. Customers were able to select available confectioneries according to their particular tastes, for example, if they had a preference for sour over sweet candy, or if they had any allergies. Each box was neatly packaged with multi-colored raffia paper to complement the box’s design and color scheme. Finnish-American customers were able to receive the candy boxes swiftly due to the confectioneries being shipped to an order fulfillment center located in the United States of America beforehand—the general time for delivery was around 1 to 7 business days depending on customer location in the USA. The logos for the Licorice House brand and Moro Poro sub-brand, as seen in Picture 1 and 2 respectively, were designed for the author by a graphic design artist on the freelance platform known as Fiverr.



Picture 1. Licorice House company logo (Drakes, 2019)



Picture 2. Moro Poro sub-brand logo (Drakes, 2019)

1.1 Research Objectives & Questions

Research Objectives:

The focus of the research work was to ascertain the desirability for Finnish confectioneries to Finnish-Americans residing in the USA, and how much they would desire a pay—monthly—for such a subscription. If desirability was deemed high, and the correct pricing model was used for the subscription boxes, the venture could be regarded as sustainable in the long term. The ultimate objective from these questions was to enable the author to create a sustainable micro-business venture to sell Finnish candy subscription boxes to Finnish-Americans in the USA.

Research Questions:

1. What factors would encourage Finnish-Americans residing in the USA to subscribe to a monthly box of confectionaries from Finland?
2. How much would Finnish-Americans residing in the USA be willing to pay for a monthly box of confectionaries from Finland?
3. What are the challenges associated with using an international order fulfillment company for shipping?
4. What steps could have been taken in the business launch phase to mitigate the risk of business closure during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.2 Research Design/Data Collection Methods

Primary Research Overview

Prior to launching the micro-business, the author conducted primary and secondary market research. Primary research involved utilizing digital and email marketing strategies to acquire leads and survey responses from Finnish-Americans. The purpose of the pre-launch page was to allow the full Moro Poro site to be designed while Finnish-Americans, who were brought to the site via digital marketing campaigns, could enter their email addresses in a provided form to be informed later of the site's launch. The pre-launch page also noted the possibility of a pre-launch email subscriber winning a free Finnish candy subscription box from Moro Poro—by answering questions in a survey the author intended to send via email to all pre-launch email subscribers. The author used the competition as a method to gain survey responses. The primary research data, in particular, was useful in answering the research questions.

Secondary Research Overview

The main purposes of the secondary research were threefold: to acquire statistical information concerning the general subscription industry (and the subscription food box market in particular), to discover monthly keyword searches and trends for candy subscription boxes in the USA (to gauge online interest), and to discover the number of Finnish-Americans residing in the USA. To acquire information about the general subscription industry and food subscription box market, data from the website of McKinsey & Company—a business management consulting firm based in the United States of America—was sourced, as well as data from the Subscription Trade Association/SUBTA—the first trade association in the subscription industry. Seeking insights from McKinsey & Company and SUBTA was considered worthwhile—as the main targeted demographic of the Moro Poro venture, Finnish-Americans, resided in the United States of America where the boxes were mainly shipped to. In order to acquire information about the monthly keyword searches and trends for candy subscription boxes in the USA, the Google Ads Keyword Planner tool was sourced. Finally, to acquire information about Finnish-American population numbers in the USA, information from the US Population Census of 2018 was sourced. The secondary research was considered useful in allowing the author to gauge the trends and

popularity of the subscription industry and food subscription box market in the USA before investing time and resources into the micro-business venture. If the data showed a decline or great disinterest in the industry as a whole, or the market, in particular, it was considered to be a waste of efforts to consider the venture in the first place.

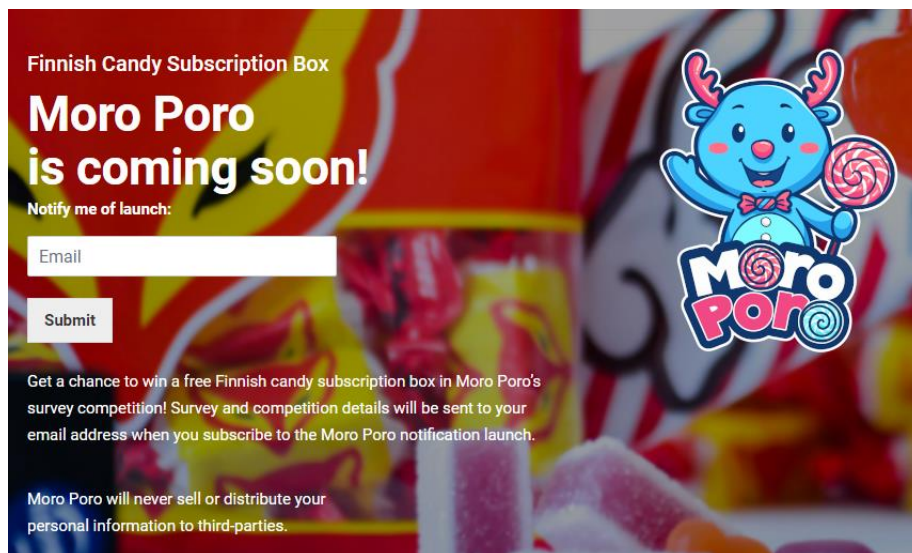
2 PRIMARY & SECONDARY RESEARCH

2.1 Primary Research

2.1.1 Email Marketing

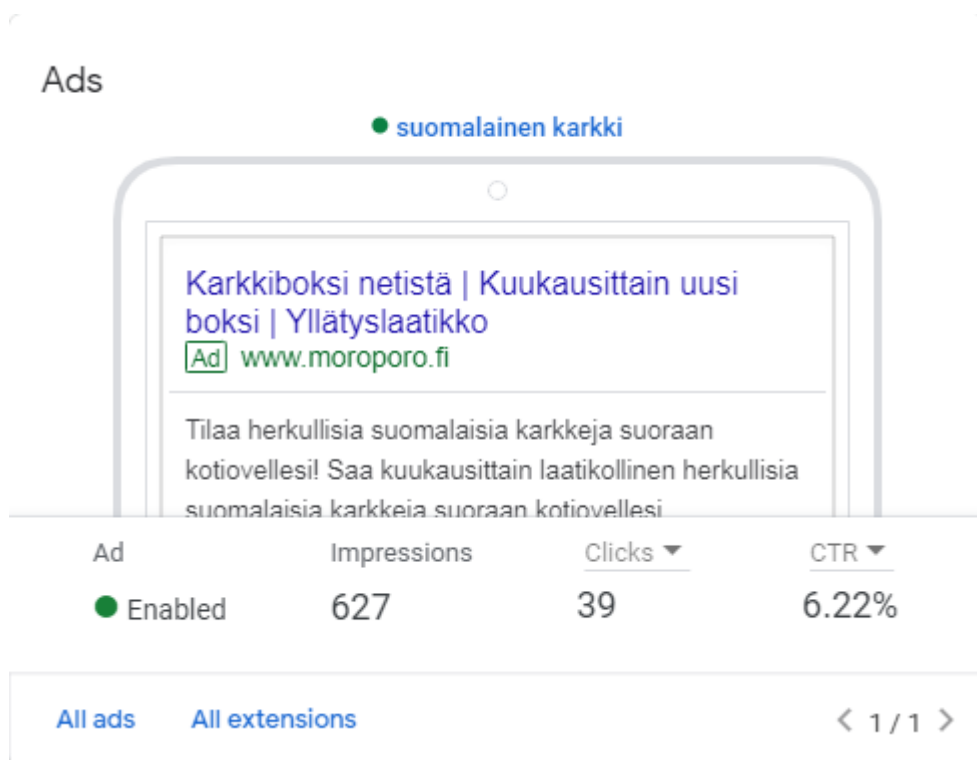
Pre-launch Website Email Marketing

Email marketing (using Mailchimp) was used to collect emails from Finnish-Americans, or people residing in the USA who spoke Finnish, visiting the Moro Poro pre-launch website page. The Finnish-speaking demographic was targeted in the USA using a Google Ads PPC (Pay Per Click) campaign, and this campaign resulted in acquiring twenty-one email subscribers. When a visitor to the pre-launch site entered their email address in the pre-launch form, the information (their email address) was sent to the author's Mailchimp campaign account. By collecting these twenty-one emails, an estimate of potential first-time subscribers to the Moro Poro candy boxes was made. The pre-launch website page illustrating the email form used, as well as competition information, is shown in Picture 3 below.



Picture 3. Moro Poro pre-launch website (Drakes, 2019)

The author created ads using the Google Ads marketing platform to target the aforementioned Finnish-American demographic. For the pre-launch email marketing campaign, the author set the advertising criteria to target people residing in the USA who spoke the Finnish language. The ad was also created in the Finnish language, and keywords in Finnish were used for the CPC campaign. To clarify the methodology: individuals in the USA who spoke Finnish, and who searched for the specified Finnish keywords—i.e., those who typed those words into Google Search—would see the author’s ad (which was also written in Finnish)—if the amount the author bid on the particular keyword(s) was higher than anyone else bidding on such words for their own advertising campaigns. Picture 4 illustrates the ad text used, the number of impressions (i.e. the number of times the ad appeared to people searching for the targeted keywords in Google Search), and the CTR (Click Through Rate) —i.e., the number of impressions that turned into clicks as a ratio. Picture 5 shows a few of the keywords used in the campaign, the number of clicks each keyword received, and the costs of using the keywords.



Picture 4. Google ad created by author to target Finnish speakers in the USA (Drakes, 2019)

Keywords				Searches			
	Cost	Clicks	CTR	Searches		Words	
● karkit netistä	€4.18	14	10.77%	karkit netistä	herkkuja netistä	karkkitukku hollola	
● suklaata netistä	€2.46	7	11.67%	fazer tukkupakkaus	halloween karkit		
● tilaa karkkia	€1.49	4	10.26%	halvat karkit ilman toimitusmaksua	ilmaisia karkkeja		
● karkkeja netistä	€1.32	4	3.45%	joulukonvehdit netistä	joulusuklaat netistä	karkit ale	
● herkut netistä	€1.14	3	9.38%	karkki netistä	karkki tilaa	karkki tukkumyynti	
				karkkia kotiin nonoparelli	karkkiseoitukset netistä		

Picture 5. Campaign keywords and costs of the author's Google ad to target Finnish speakers in the USA (Drakes, 2019)

Alone, the aforementioned pictures have little value in the discussion of the pre-launch email marketing campaign, however, Picture 6 below shows the result of the marketing efforts. The author eventually acquired twenty-one leads after the marketing campaign. These numbers were very encouraging and were a good indication of interest in the venture.

The screenshot shows a dashboard for an email marketing campaign. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a menu icon, a monkey logo, and a 'Help' link with a search icon. Below this, the word 'Lists' is displayed in a large, serif font. A prominent dark grey button labeled 'Create List' is centered below the title. Underneath, a list entry for 'Moro Poro Karkkiboksi' is shown, indicating it has 21 subscribers. Below the subscriber count, the performance metrics are listed: '0.0% Open rate · 0.0% Click rate', followed by a teal link labeled 'More'.

Picture 6. Pre-launch subscribers acquired via email marketing campaign (Drakes, 2019)

2.1.2 Survey Data

Pre-launch Google Survey

As aforementioned, a competition was used to encourage visitors to the Moro Poro pre-launch website to complete a survey created by the author. It was hoped that the survey would provide valuable information needed to answer the research questions, and give an indication of the viability of launching the Moro Poro venture. The survey was sent to the twenty-one email subscribers from the Mailchimp campaign, using the Gmail account of Moro Poro used at the time, and the form link was also sent to Finnish-Americans residing in Ohio with the aid of an acquaintance of the author. In total, the form contained ten questions related to Finnish candy subscription box desirability and the factors affecting the desirability. In total, the survey garnered thirty-three respondents. The first nine questions and answers follow:

The first question of respondents' ages, as shown in Figure 1, yielded a higher number (30+) than what was anticipated by the author. The author surmised that this factor might have had an impact on the overall percentage of respondents who stated that they would be possibly willing to pay more for a Finnish candy subscription box.

What is your age?

33 responses

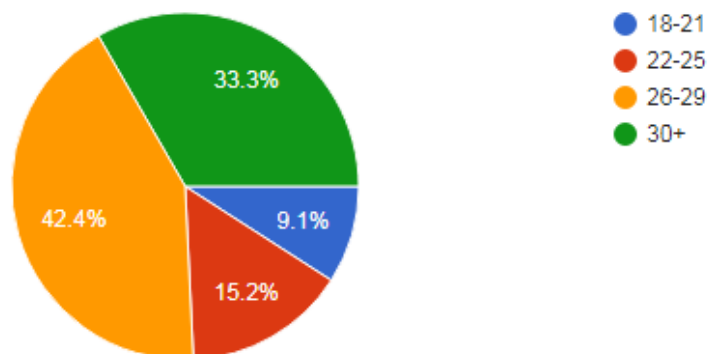


Figure 1. Figure illustrating percentage of email respondents' ages (Drakes, 2019)

Among respondents, the largest percentage was female as shown in Figure 2.

What is your gender?

33 responses

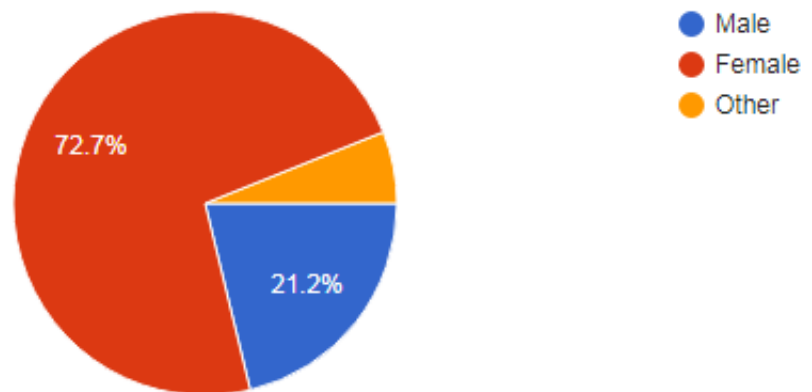


Figure 2. Figure illustrating percentage of email respondents' genders (Drakes, 2019)

The number of respondents who were Finnish-American, as seen in Figure 3 was lower than anticipated, however, according to the information provided in the free-form text areas of the survey, those who were not Finnish-American appeared to be Finns from Finland residing in the USA, but it remained inconclusive how many of the 33.3% of respondents fell into such a category.

Are you Finnish-American?

33 responses

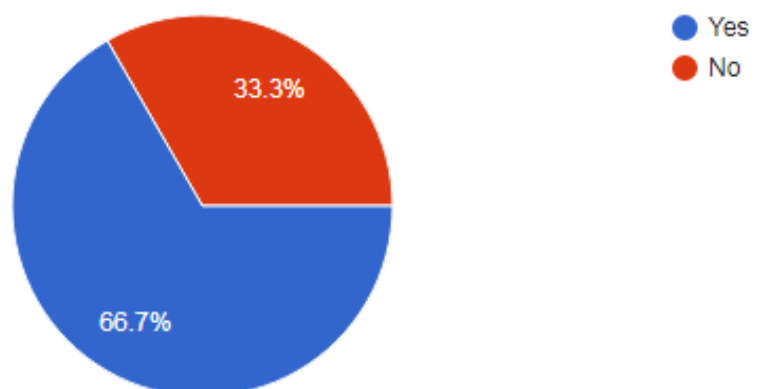


Figure 3. Figure illustrating percentage of email respondents' nationalities (Drakes, 2019)

The next question related to whether or not respondents already subscribed to a subscription box service. As shown in figure 4, a large majority responded that they were already subscribed.

Do you currently receive a subscription box of any type?

33 responses

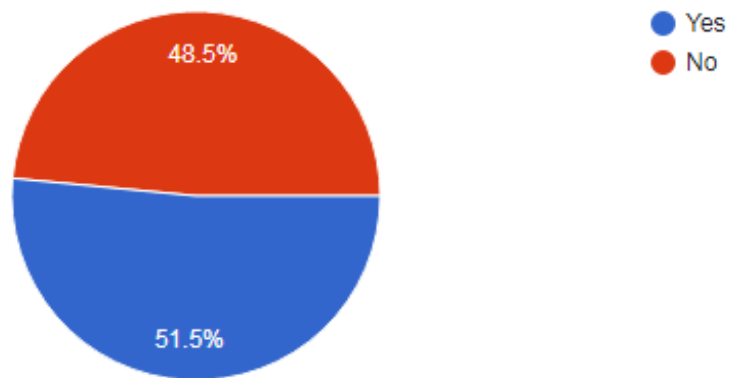


Figure 4. Figure illustrating percentage of email respondents' subscription history (Drakes, 2019)

Figure 5 shows responses for how much respondents were willing to pay for a Finnish candy subscription box. This question was among the most important to the author as it helped answer the second research question. The author found it interesting that most respondents stated they would be willing to pay over 30 USD. This was speculated to be perhaps due to the age of the respondents, as it was presumed that older individuals would have greater monetary freedom to pay more than younger ones. However, it is worth noting that according to the free-form responses, it seemed as though there were conditions for paying more, such as having the option to choose the confectionaries. Likewise, some respondents appeared to wish to gift a box to a loved

one as a one-time purchase, rather than subscribe monthly.

How much would you be willing to pay for a monthly Finnish candy subscription box?

33 responses

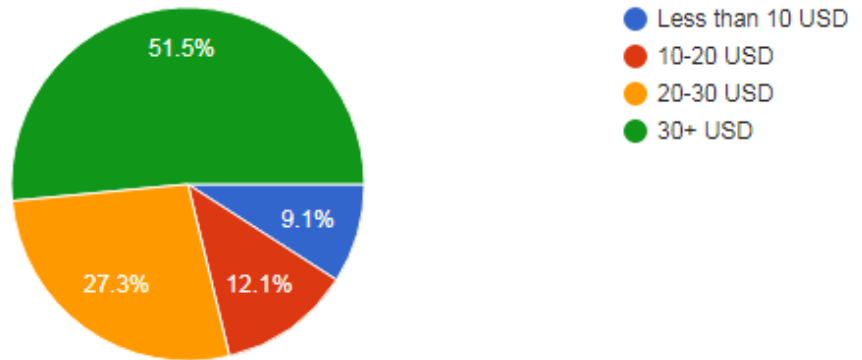


Figure 5. Figure illustrating percentage of email respondents' ideal dollar spend amounts for a subscription box (Drakes, 2019)

The next question, as shown in Figure 6, shows the factors respondents stated would most likely cause them to sign up for a Finnish candy subscription box. Most answered that the type of candies would be the foremost factor, followed by price, then if someone they knew had one, and finally if they could get a month free. The next option was "other" and there were varying responses for this.

What would make you more likely to sign up for a Finnish candy subscription box? (Select all that apply)

33 responses



Figure 6. Figure illustrates what factors would spur respondents to subscribe to a subscription box (Drakes, 2019)

As shown in Figure 7, packaging and design were considered to be important factors for most respondents.

On a scale of 1-5 (1 least important, 5 most important), how important is the packaging and design

33 responses

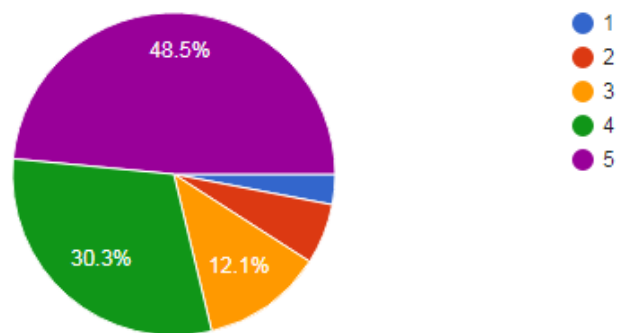


Figure 7. Figure illustrating percentage of respondents for whom packaging is important (Drakes, 2019)

Figure 8, as shown below, shows respondents' preferences for a surprise item each month or the ability to choose from a selection of items/confectionaries.

What would you prefer with a Finnish candy subscription box?

33 responses

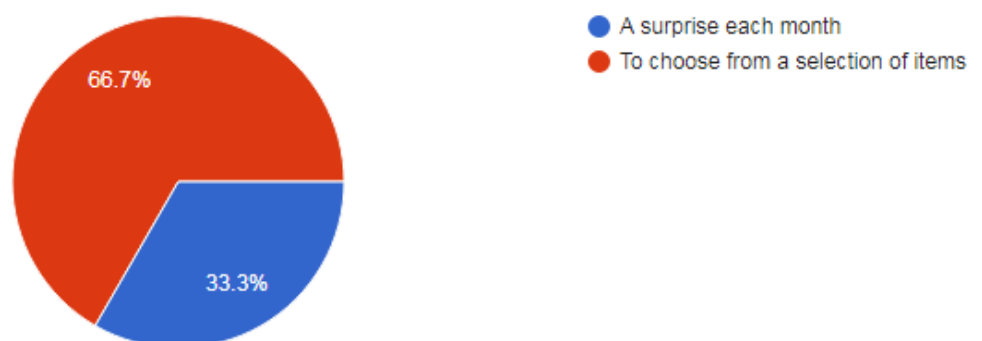


Figure 8. Figure illustrating percentage of respondents for whom choice of candies or gift items was important (Drakes, 2019)

Figure 9 is the final figure shown. The results were that most respondents would expect to see six or more confectionaries in their subscription boxes.

How many items would you expect to see in a monthly Finnish candy subscription box?

33 responses

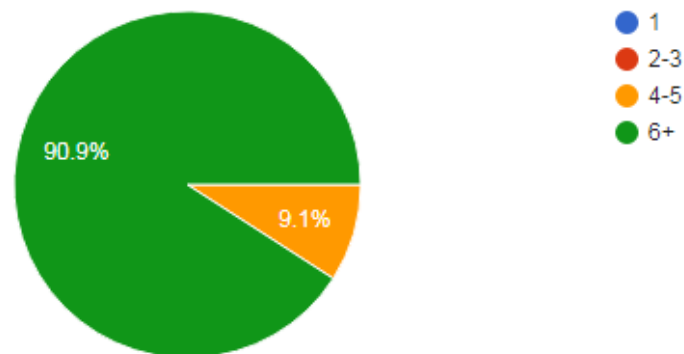


Figure 9. Figure illustrating percentage of respondents for whom the number of candies was important (Drakes, 2019)

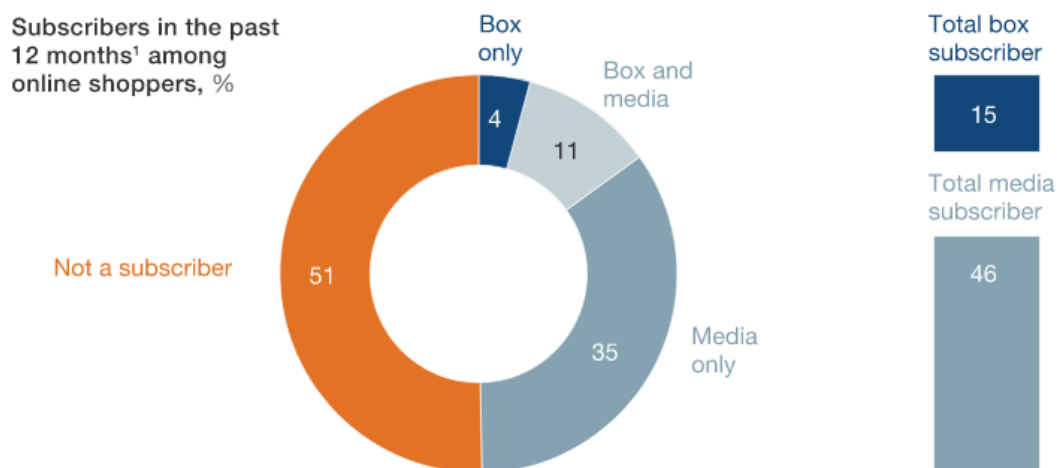
2.2 Secondary Research

2.2.1 Subscription Industry

General Subscription Industry Research

At the time of starting up the micro-business venture in May of 2019, the subscription e-commerce market had been growing quite exponentially. According to information sourced from Mckinsey & Company's website, the most prominent retailers in the subscription e-commerce market had generated approximately \$2.6 billion USD in sales revenue in the year 2016—an increase from the \$57.0 million USD estimated in 2011 (mckinsey.com, 2018). This report obtained from initial investigations into the subscription industry created a quite positive outlook for the launch of Moro Poro. At the time of starting up Moro Poro, there were several subscription box companies all over the world offering various products and services to customers at different intervals—monthly, weekly, bi-weekly, e.t.c. There were also many categories among these offerings, such as; cosmetics, jewelry, food, toys, games, among others.

However, as Moro Poro was registered in Finland, the author desired to discover how many subscription-based companies operated internationally to gain insight into consumer reach. The findings were quite encouraging: according to the Subscription Trade Association, in 2018, there were close to 7,000 subscription box companies operating globally, and around 70% of such companies operated out of the United States of America (subta.com, 2019). In addition, statistics from (subta.com, 2019) revealed that there were 18.5 million subscription box shoppers in the United States between 2018-2019. It was also desirable to discover the extent to which subscription box services were ordered in the USA. Data from Mckinsey & Company was referred to for this purpose. The author referred to an online survey conducted by Mckinsey & Company during the period of 08/11/2017–12/11/2017 among over 5,000 participants residing in the United States of America, to determine subscription e-commerce trends (mckinsey.com, 2018). The options were for subscription box services delivering regularly (such as Dollar Shave Club, Ipsy, and Blue Apron), subscription-based media (such as Netflix, Hulu, and Spotify), both types of services, or neither of the services (mckinsey.com, 2018). As seen in the chart below, subscription box services accounted for 15% of the total responses. The author of this thesis surmised that such a percentage revealed a reasonable enough interest in subscription box offerings to warrant venturing into the market.



Note: Figures may not sum to 100%, because of rounding.

¹Which of the following have you purchased or subscribed to in the past 12 months? % of those selecting online subscription-box service that delivers products regularly (eg, Blue Apron, Dollar Shave Club, Ipsy, Stitch Fix), subscription-based media (eg, ClassPass, Hulu, Netflix, Spotify), both, or neither.

Figure 10. USA subscription data (Mckinsey, 2018)

Food Subscription Market Research

Based on statistics provided by SUBTA, it was found that food-based subscription box services were among the top categories in the subscription box market during 2018–2019 (subta.com, 2019) with respect to an overall Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) of over \$150.00 USD and an Average Order Value (AOV) of over \$40.00 USD. However, it was revealed that there was a quite high churn rate in the food subscription industry (over 35%) compared to other categories such as beauty, home, and fashion which all had churn rates of less than 10%—according to SUBTA's analytics, this indicated that a lower AOV lead to less churn (subta.com, 2019). Thus, these three metrics; CLV, AOV, and Churn Rate were those the author considered mostly to predict the possible success of the Moro Poro venture.

2.2.2 Google Tools

Digital Research & Marketing

The Google Ads Keyword Planner was used to conduct extensive keyword research prior to launch. The author discovered that there was a significant enough number of industry-specific keywords typed into Google Search each month, and these provided a good estimate for the amount of potential interest Finnish-American customers would have in Moro Poro. The following table relates to the keyword searches for industry-related keywords in the USA. These keywords were of interest to the author due to the low competition and CPC (Cost Per Click) prices associated with bidding on them using Google Ads.

KEYWORD	# of Searches Per Month
---------	-------------------------

Subscription Boxes for Kids	14,800
Snack Subscription Box	8,100
Boxes of Candy	5,400
Candy Subscription Box	4,400
Finnish Candy	1,300

Table 1. Google Ads keywords for USA (Drakes, 2019)

2.2.3 Population Census

The main segment, and the one which was targeted in preliminary social media and email marketing campaigns was Finnish-Americans. According to the US Population Census of 2018, there was reported to be approximately 649,761 Finnish-Americans living across the United States of America (data.census.gov, 2018). This represented a huge potential demographic with strong ties to Finnish culture, who would be highly interested in obtaining treats from Finland on a monthly basis.

PEOPLE REPORTING ANCESTRY			
Survey/Program: American Community Survey		Product: 2018: ACS 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables	
TableID: B04006		Universe: Total population	
	United States		
Label	Estimate	Margin of Error	
European	6,403,747	±60,933	
Finnish	649,761	±17,113	
French (except Basque)	7,275,203	±54,662	
French Canadian	2,032,630	±30,561	

Table 2. Finnish-American population numbers in 2018 (data.census.gov, 2018)

2.3 Data Analysis

On the whole, the survey responses showed considerable interest in the desirability of Finnish-Americans for a monthly candy subscription box. Although the number of respondents (33) in relation to the aforementioned sourced population of Finnish-Americans (649,761) was not a significant estimation of overall desirability among the entire population, the responses were promising. Likewise, the author gained a good insight into the amount Finnish-Americans would potentially be willing to pay for the subscription box service from the responses.

3 LOGISTICS AND SUPPLY CHAIN

Inventory

The inventory needed for the venture included; boxes, presentation materials, gift materials, and confectionaries. Two companies in China were chosen to supply packaging inventory due to the low costs of acquiring such compared with local companies. The packaging materials were obtained from China as the costs were much cheaper than locally produced, which was essential to maintaining a desirable profit margin and keeping the costs of the boxes low. Although there was an impact on delivery times of the materials, due to the distance between the packaging suppliers and the author, the cut in costs far outweighed this issue.

The author ensured to place orders for packing materials well ahead of the time inventory was expected to run out to work around the lengthy delivery times. A fulfillment center in the USA was partnered with to store the candies, and deliver them whenever a customer from the North American region made an order. Table 3, as shown below, shows the inventory obtained from China, and the purposes of each inventory item sourced.

Boxes
The main packaging consisted of corrugated cardboard boxes, with the Moro Poro logo and other design elements. It was planned initially to have one box size, large, for the product offerings. It was planned to add small and medium-sized boxes in addition to the large box if the business grew.
Presentation Materials
The presentation was considered a key aspect of the unboxing process. Multi-colored raffia paper was added with the contents of the boxes for this reason. Thank you cards were also added to each package with additional information containing “10 fun Finnish candy facts”.
Gift Items
A single small gift was included in each box. Mini Finnish flags were used initially, and it was planned to add a Christmas character during the Christmas season.

Table 3. Table of packaging inventory sourced from China (Drakes, 2019)

When the author made a purchase order from the two suppliers in China, the inventory was instructed to be sent to the designated fulfillment center in the USA. Once the fulfillment center in the USA received the items, a notification was sent to the author including an inventory quantification (number of items received). The approximate shipping time between the distributors and the USA was 14 days. For this reason, the author took care to order the inventory well before running low on any given month, i.e., every mid-month inventory would be checked and calculated to estimate how much more would be needed, as necessary.

Confectionaries

The confectionaries were obtained from wholesalers in Finland distributing three main Finnish candy brands: Fazer, Halva, and Panda. Ordering the confectionaries was coordinated through a third-party business partner who obtained them for the author, and shipped them to the fulfillment center in the USA. As before, once the fulfillment center in the USA received the items, a notification was sent to the author including an inventory quantification (number of items received). The approximate shipping times between the third-party partner and the USA was 5-7 business days as DHL was used to expedite shipping to the fulfillment centers. As before, the author took care to order the inventory well before running low on any given month, i.e., every mid-month inventory would be checked and calculated to estimate how much more would be needed, as necessary.

Warehousing and Transport

The author made use of a fulfillment center located in the United States of America, that was partnered with UPS, to quickly deliver the candy boxes. A 24-hour period was

designated as the desired time for packaging and shipping such that when an order was placed, the candy boxes could be shipped the same or following day. The author considered this essential, as confectionary was a non-essential product, and it was desired to mitigate the customers' desires to need to go to the store to purchase the candy themselves.

Figure 11 below illustrates the entire supply chain flow for inventory ordering, warehousing, and transport.

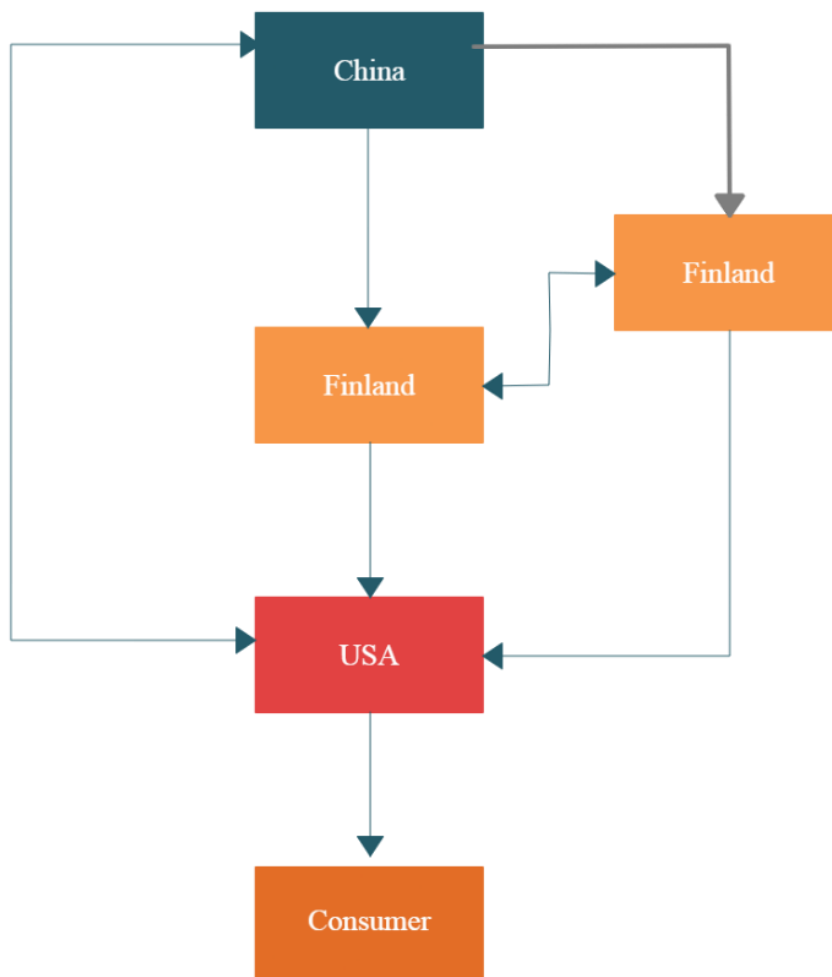


Figure 11. Moro Poro supply chain (Drakes, 2019)

4 BUSINESS LAUNCH & CLOSURE

4.1 Business Launch

The website was fully operational on 01/05/2019 and Finnish-American email subscribers were informed of such via welcome emails. The full site was launched as shown in the Picture below.



Picture 7. Illustration of launched Moro Poro website (Drakes, 2019)

Picture 8 below shows the subscription plugin used to create the subscription box pricing model for WordPress. Using this plugin, subscribers were able to subscribe for up to three months after which they could opt to subscribe once again. They also had the option of canceling their subscription a week before it was scheduled to renew. The PayPal payment options are illustrated in Picture 9.

Product data — Simple product Virtual: Downloadable: Subscription:

General	Regular price (€)	<input type="text" value="34.99"/>
Inventory	Sale price (€)	<input type="text"/> Schedule
Shipping	Subscription Settings	
Linked Products	Price is per	<input type="text" value="30"/> days <input type="text" value=""/>
Attributes	Max length: [?]	<input type="text" value="90"/> days (Max: 90)
Advanced		
Get more options		

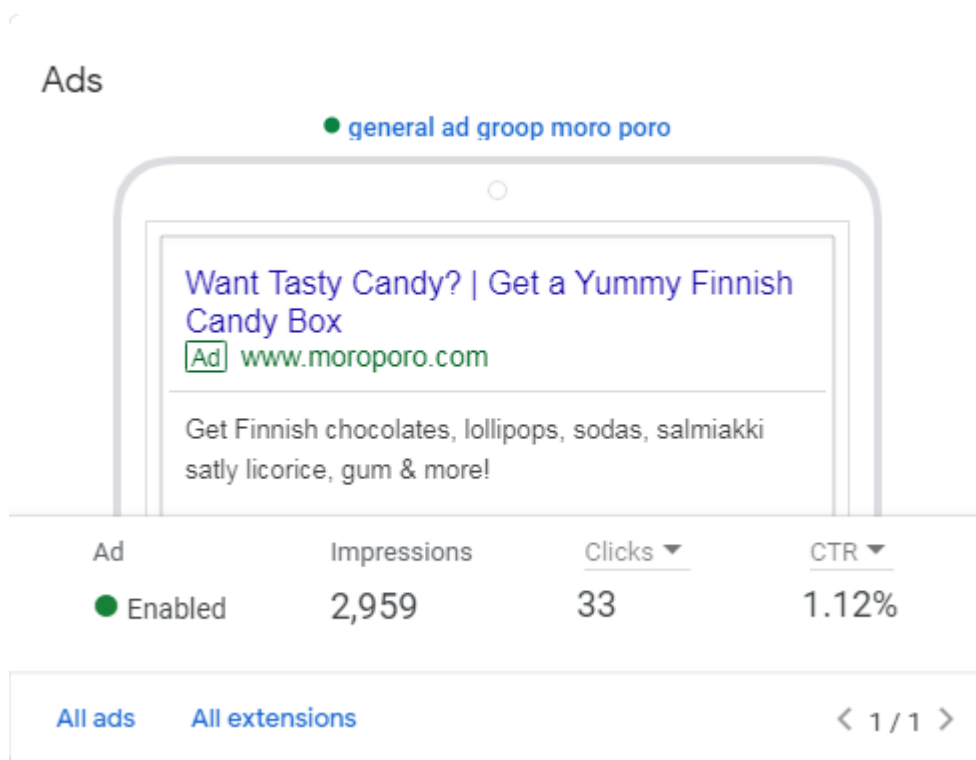
Picture 8. WordPress subscription plugin used to power the subscription process (Drakes, 2019)



Picture 9. PayPal payment option tied in with the WordPress subscription plugin (Drakes, 2019.)

The website was kept as simple as possible in order to scale at a later date. At the time of launch, there were 40 subscribers from the email marketing efforts. The author

decided to run a Google Ads campaign once again to target Finnish-Americans, however, English was used as the language of focus. The campaign yielded 2,959 impressions, 33 clicks, and had a CTR (Click Through Rate of 1.12%) as shown in picture 10. These results were not regarded as impressive. From the campaign, 7 new subscribers were acquired, bringing the total to 47 subscribers. Over the course of the nine months of running the venture, this number decreased to 32, and the author had planned to retry another campaign until problems arose due to the coronavirus pandemic. These problems are described in the following chapter.



Picture 10. Moro Poro launch campaign data (Drakes, 2019)

4.2 Business Closure

Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic business operations had to cease due to difficulties with liaising with the specific partners in China that provided the packaging

materials at low costs, and on account of there being problems with logistics in the USA, i.e., certain states only delivered essential items at the time. Be that as it may, the author hoped to possibly continue operations in the future if the possibility or desire to do so arose. Many persons living abroad were greatly affected economically by the pandemic, and understandably so, which the author suspects also played a role in the noticeable decline in orders regardless of the logistical situation.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Reflections on Business Practices

The author surmised that such a business venture would be only viable to continue given proper economic conditions. Indeed, there seemed to be some degree of interest in Finnish candy subscription boxes, although the author would have desired to run the business longer to gauge long-term interest. The author was unprepared for a global pandemic causing unforeseen issues. However, it was fortunate that not too much time or monetary resources had but put into starting up the operation as a whole. In addition, it is noteworthy to say that cutting out as many points/persons between oneself and the customer appears to be crucial for business sustainability. Too many links in the logistics chain can create issues when it comes to scaling such a business venture, especially in the long term, as customer demand for products may most likely exceed desirable delivery times. This goes both ways, in the receiving of crucial inventory to points of shipping or to sending inventory to points of delivery. This was not a problem in the short term, but in the long term, problems were sure to arise. There are also large risks in sourcing crucial materials/products from abroad since, as a business owner, one cannot control or foresee the social, political, or economic elements that can impact foreign suppliers. In the case of one's region, or the region in which one resides, it can be easier to maintain insights on such conditions. The same can be said for selling mainly to foreign customers as opposed to those residing in one's locale. Although in many ways selling to foreign consumers may be lucrative in the short term, doing so in local markets and then expanding slowly outward may serve as a better strategy when dealing with such product offerings as Moro Poro had. Although implementing the results of the research work did not come to fruition, the author considered the research to have adequately answered the research questions. To conclude, the survey answers, leads generated from campaigns, as well as the orders, are suggestive of a strong enough desire among Finnish-Americans to obtain candy boxes from Finland. Likewise, the willingness of Finnish-Americans to pay between 20 and up to 35 euros for a subscription box. The author surmises that 35 is the absolute upper limit, given the fact that there was a high degree of churn at the end of every three-month period.

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