

Consumer Behaviour towards Different Types of Food Take-out Methods in Finland during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Case: Thai Vegan Kitchen

Abstract

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Abstract <p>The COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing are profoundly disrupting the restaurant industry in Finland and consumer behaviour in buying food. Besides that, food take-out services are the solution to solve the difficulty. The thesis aims to understand how customers respond to different types of food take-out methods at Thai Vegan Kitchen and the reasons behind those responses.</p> <p>The theoretical part of the study provides a basic concept of the available food take-out methods in Finland and particularly at Thai Vegan Kitchen, consumer behaviour and potential factors influence customer, as the foundation for the empirical part.</p> <p>The quantitative research method was employed in the empirical part. Data collection was executed by online survey in English. The survey process took place in one week and obtained 97 valid respondents.</p> <p>The result shows that all the marketing stimuli and personal characteristics have a certain influence on consumer behaviour. The most favourite food take-out service in COVID-19 situation is home delivery. Customers use their favourite food take-out methods more frequently than others. The purchase amount in one order is inversely proportional to the physical effort people put in to get it. Moreover, the main consumer segment in using food take-out services at Thai Vegan Kitchen is identified. Based on the findings of the conflict between consumer behaviour and services' availability at Thai Vegan Kitchen, suggestions for generating new food services are released for the case company.</p>		
Keywords COVID-19 pandemic, consumer behaviour, food take-out methods, Thai Vegan Kitchen		

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1 Introduction

Consumers are the primary source of demand for all goods. Studying consumer buying behaviour is significantly essential for marketers. In terms of the restaurant industry, understanding consumer behaviour to achieve customer satisfaction is vital to restaurant management because it is typically assumed to be a significant determinant of remaining sale cycle, customer loyalty, and affirmative word of mouth. Moreover, a business is able to drive customer choice of services or products that more benefits the business itself when studying consumer behaviour.

Meanwhile, the Corona pandemic has brought numerous difficulties and challenges to the restaurant industry. According to S&P Global Market Intelligence, the restaurant business has remained in the top five most impacted industries by the coronavirus pandemic (Haydon & Kumar 2020). The COVID-19 and the lockdown and social distancing regulations have interrupted restaurant business and consumer behaviour of buying in general, especially in the restaurant industry. The only way for restaurants to survive is by selling take-away food and offering different take-out services. As the same outcome of COVID-19 influences, the changes in consumer behaviour are unsurprising. People are living differently, buying differently and in many ways, thinking differently. According to the BigHospitality newsletter, the way customers interacted with delivery changed completely. Customers ordered more, and they ordered at different times of the day as well as earlier in the week. (BigHospitality 2020.)

There is no exception when it comes to the restaurant industry in Finland. According to Yle (2021), various entrepreneurs report that online orders and home delivery of restaurant meals were doubled in 2020. In the previous survey in 2018, only nine percent of customers took food with them from the restaurant, and ninety-one percent dined in a restaurant. However, in the coronavirus year, sixty-eight percent of customer dined in a restaurant, twenty-five percent took the meals with them, and seven percent used delivery services. This shows the changes in consumer buying behaviour and their attitudes towards dining out and take-away food. By understanding consumer behaviour and their motivation in choosing different take-away services during COVID-19 situation, a restaurant can design marketing strategies that drive the customer attention to the take-away options that more benefit the restaurant. (Vuorela 2021; Yle 2021.)

1.1 Motivation of choosing the topic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the author had the opportunity to work at a Thai vegan food truck in Helsinki, Finland and interact with customers of that kitchen. Unlike a few restaurants that the author has worked in before in Finland, the owner of this food truck has a clear vision and mission for her business. From the author's observation, the relationship between customers and the owner is closer than in other restaurants where the author worked before. In addition, customers seem to be more loyal and interested in the restaurant's profitability. For instance, there was a customer asking about which payment method that was more profitable to business rather than his convenience at that time. In contrast, there were also few customers asking if the kitchen offers food ordering and delivery via third-party applications while they are generally aware of the commitment fee that businesses must pay and higher price for customers themselves. By recognizing those differences between customer's attitudes and the strong development of food take-out services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the question about customer behaviour and the factors effect it is raised.

1.2 Objective and research questions

The ultimate goal of this thesis work is to study consumer behaviour towards different types of food take-out at Thai Vegan Kitchen. Moreover, the possibility to generate a new food service will be discussed after finalizing the research's result. The thesis work emphasizes on answering two main questions:

- How do customers respond to different types of food take-out methods during the COVID-19 pandemic at Thai Vegan Kitchen?
- Why do customers respond like that?

In order to support to find the answer for the main questions, there are three sub-questions are raised:

- What is customer preference in choosing different food take-out methods and why?
- How often do customers use different food take-out method at Thai Vegan Kitchen?
- How many portions do customers buy per portion when using different food take-out methods?

1.3 Delimitation

The thesis work will focus on consumer behaviour in the context of business to customer segment. Moreover, the author believes that consumers in different countries and regions, consumer behaviour, and attitude towards take-out products and services will be different. Therefore, Finland is the geographical boundary of the empirical parts.

Moreover, the thesis work aims to investigate consumer behaviour in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic. The result might not be accurate in a different period, since the industry is continuously developing, and the people are continually adapting to a new environment. This thesis does not compare the differences in consumer behaviour between before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.4 Research methods used in empirical part

The various methods used to study a certain phenomenon are known as research methods (Goundar 2021). To understand consumer behaviour towards different types of food take-out methods at Thai Vegan Kitchen, quantitative research is applied in the empirical research.

The quantitative research method is used under the questionnaire design with close-ended questions. It is because this method is effective at quantifying opinions, attitudes, and behaviours in order to determine how the popular feels about a particular issue in general. By collecting numerical data and using statistics, the phenomenon can be explained logically. The relationship between variables, which are measured numerically and analyzed using a range of statistical and graphical techniques, can be examined by quantitative research. (Sukamolson 2007; Saunders et al. 2019, 178.) There are also qualitative elements in the questionnaire with the “other” option in a few questions, but they do not change the nature of the research method.

1.5 Structure of the report

The thesis report consists of five chapters in total. The overview of the restaurant industry during the COVID-19 pandemic in Finland, motivation for choosing the topic, objectives and research questions, delimitation of the report, research methods, and representing case company are presented in chapter 1. Chapter 2 consists of the basic concept of food take-out methods in Finland in general and particularly in Thai Vegan Kitchen, the definition of take-out, the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on food take-out services in Finland, as well as the model of the food ordering process. Then, the factors which are able to influence

consumer behaviour are studied in chapter 3. Chapter 2 and chapter 3 are the fundamental theory for the author to design the questionnaire for the empirical part. The empirical research work is reported in chapter 4. In this chapter, the methods used to collect data and analysis the obtained data are mentioned. The result of the survey is also presented in chapter 4. The final chapter is to conclude the thesis work and give suggestions for the case company.

2 Food take-out methods that are available in Finland

2.1 Definition of take-out

According to Cambridge dictionary, "take-out" is a meal which is prepared and bought at a shop or restaurant but taken and consumed off the restaurant's premiere (Cambridge University Press 2021). Besides that, the term "takeout" or "take-out" is also known as the act or fact of taking out (Dictionary.com 2021). "takeout" or "take-out" can be used as a noun or an adjective. (Vocabulary.com 2021). Therefore, the term "food take-out method" is used to indicate the combination of food ordering method and food receiving method in this thesis.

2.2 The impacts of Coronavirus pandemic on food take-out services in Finland

Online buying in Finland is slower applied by customers compared to other Western societies. Even though innovative modern food delivery methods and business models, such as Wolt, have extended, it is true that Finns still have a strong preference for purchasing their food from stores. (Kallinen 2020.)

However, the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way people buy food in Finland. Restaurants have begun to spend more effort and attention on selling take-out meals as a result of governmental precautions and restrictions. Large retail chains have established their own home delivery services, with the goal of assisting customers in the COVID-19 high risk group who are obliged to limit their social interaction to public venues. (Kallinen 2020.)

There was a noticeable increase in the usage of food delivery services to home in a study carried out in April 2020. Almost a third of those who ordered meals in response to the study said they ordered food home more frequently during the coronavirus outbreak. Up to two-thirds of respondents had ordered meals for their homes, with 20 percent ordering at least once a week. (Kallinen 2020.)

The rise in ordering and picking-up food from the restaurant as well as home delivery is simply explained as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, which severely curtailed the number of seats, opening hours, and service hours in restaurants. Travel restrictions and recommendations for teleworking and distance learning have also decreased the use of restaurants. According to the trend survey, delivery food services will continue to be in demand in the future. 13 percent of respondents want to use delivery services more in the future than they did before the pandemic (Vuorela 2021.)

The rapid growth of third-party delivery company such as Wolt and Foodora is evident and noticeable in context of coronavirus pandemic. Wolt is a Finnish company with more than 2,000 partner restaurants in 23 cities in Finland. While Foodora has nearly 3,000 restaurants as partners in more than 80 cities of Finland. More and more blue and pink-clothed cyclists and car drivers may be seen in the city. (Vuorela 2021.)

Besides the increase of third-party food delivery services, restaurant's own transport also jumps to this competition. Because the commission of the delivery service company is too high, it is difficult for the restaurant to make profit from the food products. Moreover, some third-party companies even require the restaurant to offer the meal at the same price whether it is consumed on the restaurant's venue, picked up, or delivered through a shuttle service. According to Finnish tax authority, the maximum payment limit for lunch is €10,90 in 2021 (Edenred 2021). It is difficult to make the restaurant business profitable when the third-party company takes between 25 and 30 percent of the product's sale. (Vuorela 2021.)

2.3 Different ordering methods in a restaurant

Walk-in take-away orders executed by customers who come to a restaurant, look at the take-out menu, place an order and pay for it. Customers usually wait inside the restaurant for the order to be prepared or go somewhere and come back in a few minutes, then take the order out with them. However, this take-away method brings higher potential threats when the human contact occurs most of the process. The customer flow also might not be predicted and effectively controlled if a restaurant does not give any limitation notice in advance. Therefore, restaurant must perform the safe distance and limitation for the number of people in the store. It is mandatory to manage queue control and remind customer to keep a safe social distance from other customers for at least two meters. (Krook 2021.)

If customers are afraid of long food-waiting time at a restaurant, **phone orders** can solve that issue. This method requires customer to look up the online menu in advance and call the restaurant to place an order. Customers can come to pick up the order at the restaurant or request for a delivery service. The payment will be made at the same time with taking food if customer want to pick up at the store. In this order method, consumers are able to ask about their special diet or any further information directly and get the reply immediately. However, phone-call tend to be ignored by restaurant staffs in rush hours without advance notice. (Krook 2021.)

The other option of take-out food order is **website orders**. Customers can place an order any time before the pick-up time. When access to restaurant's website, a client approach not only the menu but also restaurant's story and spirit. A person who loves to become a

restaurant's loyal customer. They need more than just buying and eating. They pursue an intimate relationship with their favourite restaurant. This is reflected in whether they like to be recognized or get special offers from the restaurant. Through digital properties, a restaurant can offer loyalty programs that make customer feel valued and keep them interested. (Neiman 2018.)

One of the most well-known take-away methods is **online orders through third-party apps**. Foodora Finland, and Wolt are the most popular food delivery applications in Finland. Customers place orders and make payment through these service providers. Online multi-restaurant business provides numerous discounts on food orders. This certainly encourages customer to order more and enjoy the service. There are various restaurants available in those food delivery platforms. Customers can compare menu, check the other customer reviews, and collect the best option that suits their needs. The pick-up option is also available in third-party apps. (Foodorderingwebsitedevelopment 2019.)

The food truck is a registered motor vehicle or car used for selling food items. Food is prepared, stored, and cooked on the truck. This type of operation does not have an indoor dining area for customers. Customers can come, place an order, wait for food preparation, and pick up their order or eat at the outdoor tables. It is considered as Western Street food style. (Peek 2021.) Because the restaurant concept is different from casual restaurants, customers are allowed to "eat in" at the premiere of a food truck in coronavirus pandemic but under the gathering limit such as not surpassing six people includes staff in the area at the same time. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

2.4 Different food receiving methods

There are three popular food receiving methods: pick-up at the door, curbside pick-up, and contactless delivery.

Pick-up at the restaurant premiere is the most usual method. Customers who usually adopt this way of pick-up are the neighbour inhabitant of a restaurant. Workers and officers in companies nearby are also the regular customers for this take-away method. Some restaurants want to raise the safety barrier by implementing pick-up at the door methods. This means that people have to order food in advance by phone-call, website or third-party apps and get their food at the restaurant's door without entering in restaurant's area. This practice limits gathering and exposure. (Krook 2020.)

Curbside pick-up is a service that allows customers to collect their order from a convenient location rather than having the item shipped to their home. Some restaurants in Finland deliver their take-away food to a specific location, such as a parking area where customers

can come, send notification for their arrival. Then the restaurant staff will carry the order to the customer or give other pick-up instructions. Hence, customers can receive their orders without entering the restaurant. (Grubhub 2020.)

Besides that, **contactless delivery** is the ultimate food receiving method in the coronavirus pandemic. After placing an order and choosing contactless delivery, the order will be delivered to the door of the customer's house in an arrival notice such as doorbell or notification on the mobile application. Once the delivery is complete, a reminder should be sent to remind customers to pick up their order at their convenience. Two more essential components are included in this style of distribution. Payment for contactless delivery is made exclusively through secure digital wallets and OTP-based transactions. Cash and card payments are no longer accepted in this situation. Second, the health condition of delivery executives and shop employees is also presented on order tracking page to increase consumer confidence. As a result, the chances of contracting COVID-19 are significantly reduced. (FarEye 2020.)

2.5 The model of the food ordering process

From those food ordering and receiving methods, the food ordering process can be categorized into two types which are conventional and distance food ordering. Figure 1 describes the process when customers physically visit the restaurant and place their orders, known as walk-in take-away orders. If the chosen restaurant is unavailable, the food ordering process will end. If the restaurant is open, customers will be able to come inside and consider their food. After ordering their desired food, the order confirmation will be sent when the food is available. If the first requested dish is absent from the menu for any reason, customers could select another choice or end their ordering process by leaving the restaurant. Customers can wait in the restaurant's premiere or outside while food preparation occurs. The whole process will be complete when the food is picked up.

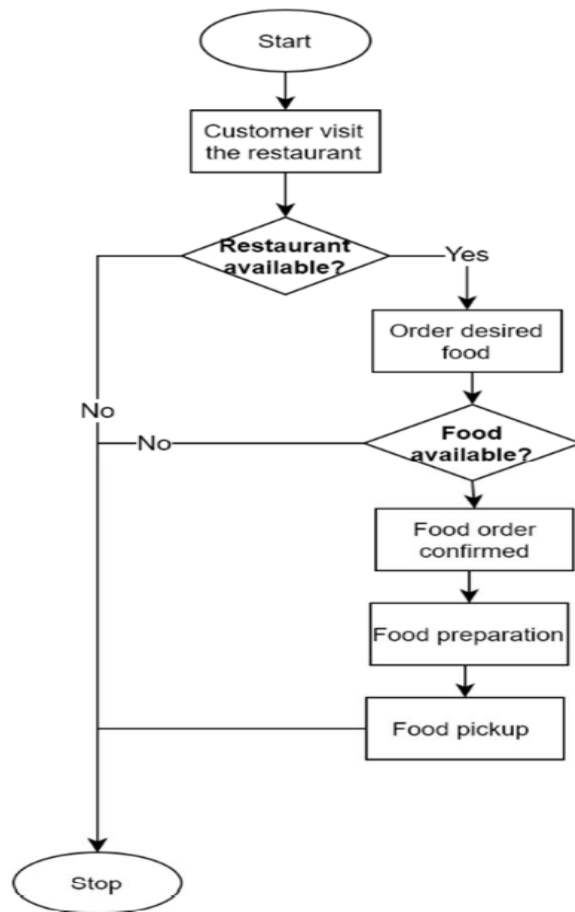


Figure 1 Conventional food ordering process (adapted from Mohamad et al. 2020).

When the Coronavirus pandemic hits the restaurant industry, prepared-meal consumers tend to apply distance food ordering instead of the conventional method. Consumers will ask for a restaurant recommendation from their acquaintances, such as family, friends, or colleagues if they want to try new restaurants with new menus. Moreover, third-party apps users can also look at the restaurant's rating on the online platform to make the comparison when they search for food and restaurant recommendation. If buyers are familiar with their favourite restaurant, they will contact the restaurant via the platforms or channels they usually use to place their order. Those platforms could be the restaurant's phone number, website, or third-party applications such as Foodora, Wolt, etc., which are the partners with the restaurant. After placing the desired food order, the waiting time for food preparation will be estimated, and the notification of it may be sent to customers. Customers can also set the pick-up time or delivery time themselves as they wish regarding to restaurant availability. When the order is ready to go, the customer can come to the restaurant premiere directly. Additionally, packaged food can be delivered to the customer's door by delivery services provided by the restaurant or third-party delivery company or conveyed to another pick-up

point where customers are waiting for the ordered food in their car. Figure 2 illustrates the model of distance food order that is explained above.

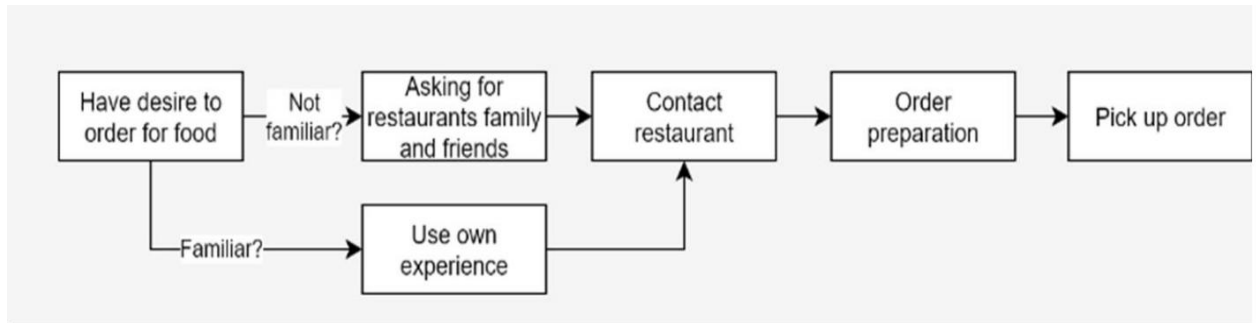


Figure 2 The model of distance food ordering (adapted from Mohamad et al. 2020).

3 Understanding the consumer behaviour

3.1 A model of consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour is a process whereby individuals make decisions on how to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on various consumption-related items (Nair 2008, 5). This definition includes the study of what, why, when, where, and how consumers purchase the product and the frequency of purchasing. The buyer's responses or buyer behaviours are described by product/service choice, brand choice, dealer choice, purchase timing and purchase amount, as demonstrated in figure 3. Those buying behaviours are generated based on how the buyer's "black box" responds to marketing stimuli and other stimuli such as economic, technological, political, and cultural stimuli. (Kotler et al. 2017, 177.)

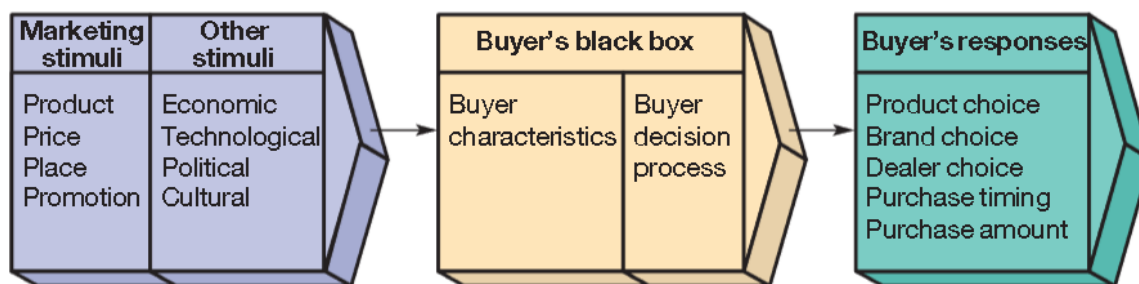


Figure 3 Model of buyer behaviour (Kotler et al. 2017, 177).

3.2 Marketing stimuli: 4C's

As figure 3 presented, the marketing stimuli are 4Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. However, the author desired to have a deeper understanding from customers' perspectives while 4P's concentrate on a seller-oriented marketing strategy. Therefore, the 4C's of marketing is studied instead of 4P's model. The relationship between 4P's and 4C's is indicated in the following: Customer (Price), Cost (Price), Convenience (Place), and Communication (Promotion) (Gilaninia et al. 2013).

Customer

In this marketing mix, the first C indicates the customer's wants and needs. Rather than focusing on the product itself, this first C focuses on how to fulfil the needs of customers. When applying this marketing mix, marketers at first need to spend time to study and understand these customer wants and needs deeply. (Belyh 2018.)

Cost

Cost is the second C in the 4C's marketing strategy. Unlike price of a product or a service, cost consists of many elements in it. Price literally is the money that customers must pay to own or use a product or a service. Cost, on the other hand, includes price of the item, the times it takes to obtain the product, the cost of conscience when using it, the overall cost of ownership, the cost of switching to a new product, and the cost of not choosing an alternative. Customers at first can be attracted by the lower price. However, this turns to be less affective when customers recognize the product does not meet their expectation and it even takes more time and their money to purchase an alternative product. (Belyh 2018.)

Convenience

The next C in this marketing strategy is convenience. When "place" in the 4P's marketing strategy refers to the channel or a physical place where a product is distributed, the term "convenience" refers to all aspects of the buying experience. In the modern are, online marketplaces, credit cards, and cell phones have changed the way products are delivered to customers. Mortar-and-brick store is no longer an ideal buying channel to a few customer segments while there are a lot of choices available online. This implies that marketer must understand how a specific client group like to shop in order to make purchasing easier for them. (Belyh 2018.)

Communication

While companies use promotion as the tool to attract customers to buy a product, communication aims to build a meaningful relationship with the consumer by focusing on the customer's requirements and lifestyle. In this marketing strategy, the concept of two-way communication must be concerned. The voice of customers is more important than ever. When customers know that they are listened by brands, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is strengthened. (Belyh 2018.)

3.3 Buyer characteristics affecting consumer behaviour

There are four different scopes of factors affecting consumer behaviour, from the most general to the most specific: cultural factors, social factors, personal factors, and psychological factors. These factors are unaffected by marketers, but the investigation into them is help marketer to develop an effective marketing strategy. Figure 4 shows personal characteristics that affect consumer behaviour. (Kotler & Armstrong 2011, 135-150.)

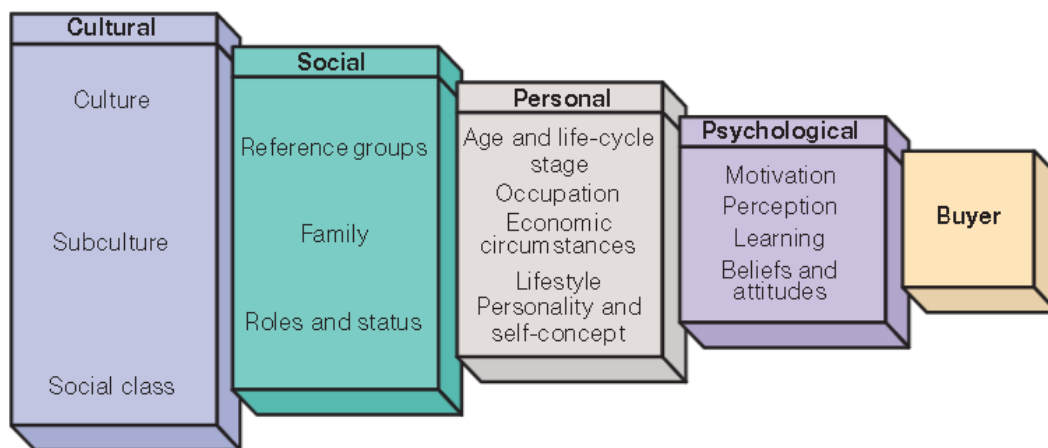


Figure 4 Factors influencing behaviour (Kotler et al. 2017, 178).

3.3.1 Social factors

Groups

Each consumer will belong to different small groups. A group can be formed when two or more individuals share a set of norms and beliefs. Reference groups are groups that consumers compare themselves to or associate with. They consist of friends, clubs, and celebrities who are considered reliable sources of information. A group that a person belongs to as a member and get direct influence is called a membership group. On the other hand, people also are influenced by aspiration groups to which the individual does not belong but would like to. (Kotler et al. 2017, 181.)

Membership groups can be further divided into a primary or secondary group by the intensity of contact between the individual and the reference group. For example, a group with regular contact with the individual, such as family, friends, etc., is a primary group. Conversely, if the group members have less frequent contact, such as shopping groups, they form a secondary group. Groups can also be categorized into informal or formal structures with specific roles. Figure 5 shows the classification of four types of membership groups. Primary informal groups get more attention than secondary groups from marketers because of the frequency of contact and the intimacy between the individual and group members. (Kashyap n.d.)

	INFORMAL	FORMAL
PRIMARY	Family /Peer Groups	School Groups Business Group
SECONDARY	Shopping Groups	Alumni Groups

Figure 5 Primary/Secondary and Informal/Formal Groups (Kashyap n.d).

Anticipatory aspiration group and symbolic aspiration group are groups that an individual wishes to belong to. The difference between the two groups is the contact. While an individual is inspired to join the anticipatory aspiration group at a future time, for example groups with higher power, status, prestige and money, an individual is not likely to belong to a symbolic aspiration group despite acceptance of the group's beliefs and attitudes. Figure 6 indicates these two types of aspirations groups. (Kashyap n.d.)



Figure 6 Types of Aspirations groups (Kashyap n.d.)

Family

The family has a significant impact on buyers' behaviour. This is because all members of a family influence and are influenced by each other. According to Ramya and Mohamed (2016, 78), a person experiences two types of families in his or her life, including the family of orientation and the family of procreation.

Family of orientation is the family in which an individual is born and has his or her upbringing. In this kind of family, an individual is likely to be influenced by his or her parents and the way he or she has been raised by the parents. In this regard, his or her buying habits seem to be influenced accordingly. As an example, an individual whose parents are vegan does not tend to consume animal-based products although he or she is well aware of nutritional values that are brought about by these products. (Ramya & Mohamed 2016, 78.)

The formation of a family of procreation involves an individual, his or her spouse, and their children. Marriage or cohabitation plays a role in shifting buying habits and priority of an individual. In other words, the person is influenced in the first place by his or her spouse and in the second place by his or her children. This is because when the marriage or cohabitation becomes older, all members in a family of procreation often take certain roles.

For instance, an individual as a parent may rely on his or her children when choosing a restaurant to eat out. Consequently, food industry spends billions of euros on advertising to children through television and internet. (Ramya & Mohamed 2016, 78; Kotler et al. 2017, 183.)

Roles and status

An individual is a member in numerous social groups such as family, organizations, clubs. The position of the individual in each group is determined by their role and status. When playing certain roles in those groups, a customer may perform different activities and attitudes according to the persons around him or her. The status of the individual reflects his or her general esteem given by members in a group. Buyers usually choose appropriate products depending on their roles and status. For instance, a college student plays several roles in his life when dining out. In his family, he plays the role of the youngest child and has less price-conscious when ordering food; in his club at school, he plays the role of a leader and be more aware of food's price; in his romantic relationship, he plays the role of a boyfriend, the price consciousness may be the same when dining with his club but purchasing power can be higher. (Kotler & Armstrong 2011, 144; Kotler et al. 2017, 183.)

3.3.2 Personal factors

Age

There are differences in types of goods and services that people buy that are **age-related**. Preferences for food, buying channels and buying methods depend on different age groups. (Kotler 2017, 184.) Age brings changes to people's lifestyles. Young people tend to spend on experience and fun in their lifestyle while older people mostly remain indoor and more conscious of health-related choices. Hence, age becomes one of the fundamental demographic factors influencing consumer behaviour and buying decisions. (Pratap 2017.) Kunst stated that food delivery apps were one of the most popular methods for the age group from 18 to 29. Oppositely, it was the most unfamiliar with respondents aged 60 or over (Kunst 2019.)

Family life-cycle stages

Family life-cycle stages also form the buying behaviour. It can be categorized into five main stages which are the bachelorhood (young and single), honeymooners (young and no children), parenthood (married with children), post-parenthood (older, married, with no children living with them), and dissolution (older, single, retired people). Besides that, divorce can

be considered as a type of family dissolution (Fellerman & Debevec, 1992). People in bachelorhood usually have few financial burdens. They spend a fine part of their discretionary income on entertainment such as concerts, pubs, restaurants. Besides that, young married people who have no child and high discretionary incomes get a higher frequency of dining out than any other group. When shifting from the honeymoon stage to parenthood, the choice for dining out from restaurants can change to more delivery and carryout. (Kotler et al. 2017, 184; Solomon et al. 2019, 25.)

Occupation

Consumer's occupation causes the difference in products and services consumption as well. For example, students and teachers usually eat from restaurants or cafeterias belonging to campus facilities. Office workers tend to have lunch or order food delivery from the nearby regular restaurant that offers lunch menus. At the same time, business executives prefer full-service restaurants to have lunch or dinner with their business partners. (Kotler et al. 2017.)

Economic situation

The economic situation is one of the most powerful effects on product choice and purchasing decisions. When the personal budget is higher, the tendency of consumption increases and vice versa. (Kotler et al. 2017, 185.) Under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers have faced a dramatic drop in their personal income and become more price-sensitive. They tended not to eat out as much as before, and this led to the decline of the sale in the restaurant industry. (Brady 2020.)

Lifestyle

Lifestyle is a clear sketch of a person's portrait in which behaviour is reflected in his or her activities, interests, and point of view. An individual's lifestyle has its own attributes, which are associated with social, cultural, and occupation issues and economic status and family circumstances. Therefore, lifestyle affects consumer behaviour is used for selecting and buying products. Lifestyle can change over time depending on the changes in surroundings. The marketer's mission is to find a connection between customer's lifestyle and their behaviour to form the basis of marketing mix strategies. On the other hand, it is possible to produce different products aimed at different lifestyles to lead the consumption needs. (Kotler et al. 2017, 186.)

Personality and Self-concept

Personality, characterized by psychological aspects, to a large extent affects a person's buying behaviour. It is of great use in consumer behaviour analysis, especially when it comes to a certain product or brand choices. Personality refers to individual differences that make a person or group distinct. Personality traits constitute *self-confidence, dominance, sociability, autonomy, defensiveness, adaptability, and aggressiveness*. (Kotler et al. 2017, 186.) In terms of characteristics of brands, a researcher points out five traits: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. Consumers are attracted to the products or services having the similarity of characteristics. (Kotler et al. 2017, 150).

Self-concept, or self-identity in other words, is an overarching idea that an individual has about himself or herself. It is related to how a consumer wants others to see them. Therefore, it is reasonable to use products to support their image or self-concept. Consequently, to attract the right customer segment of the business, markets need to figure out the relationship between consumer self-concept and their products or services. (Kotler et al. 2017, 186.)

3.3.3 Psychological factors

Psychological factors include motivation, perception, learning, and beliefs and attitude. Those factors are considered as a nuclear of consumer behaviour – the smallest but the most powerful factors.

Motivation

A person can have multiple needs at any point in their life. Some needs are instinctive. They arise from stressful physiological states of the body such as hunger, thirst, fatigue, etc. Others have psychological origins, which arise from states of psychological tension such as the need for recognition, admiration, or respect. Every need becomes motivated only when it is increased to a sufficiently powerful level. A motivation or impulse is a need that is pressuring enough for people to satisfy that need, and the satisfaction of the need is to reduce the tension. (Solomon et al. 2019, 18.)

Psychologists have developed many theories about human motivation, typically the dynamic theory of human motivation. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is the most popular theory of motivation that indicates five human needs levels. Physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization are listed from the lowest to highest level of needs shown in figure 7. The lowest and the most fundamental needs must be satisfied before progressing to meet higher level growth needs. Consumer

motivation is an internal state that motivates people to recognize and buy products or services that fulfil conscious and unconscious needs or desires. The fulfilment of those needs can encourage them to make a repeat purchase or find different services to meet those needs better (Kotler & Armstrong 2011, 148; Solomon et al. 2019, 18.)

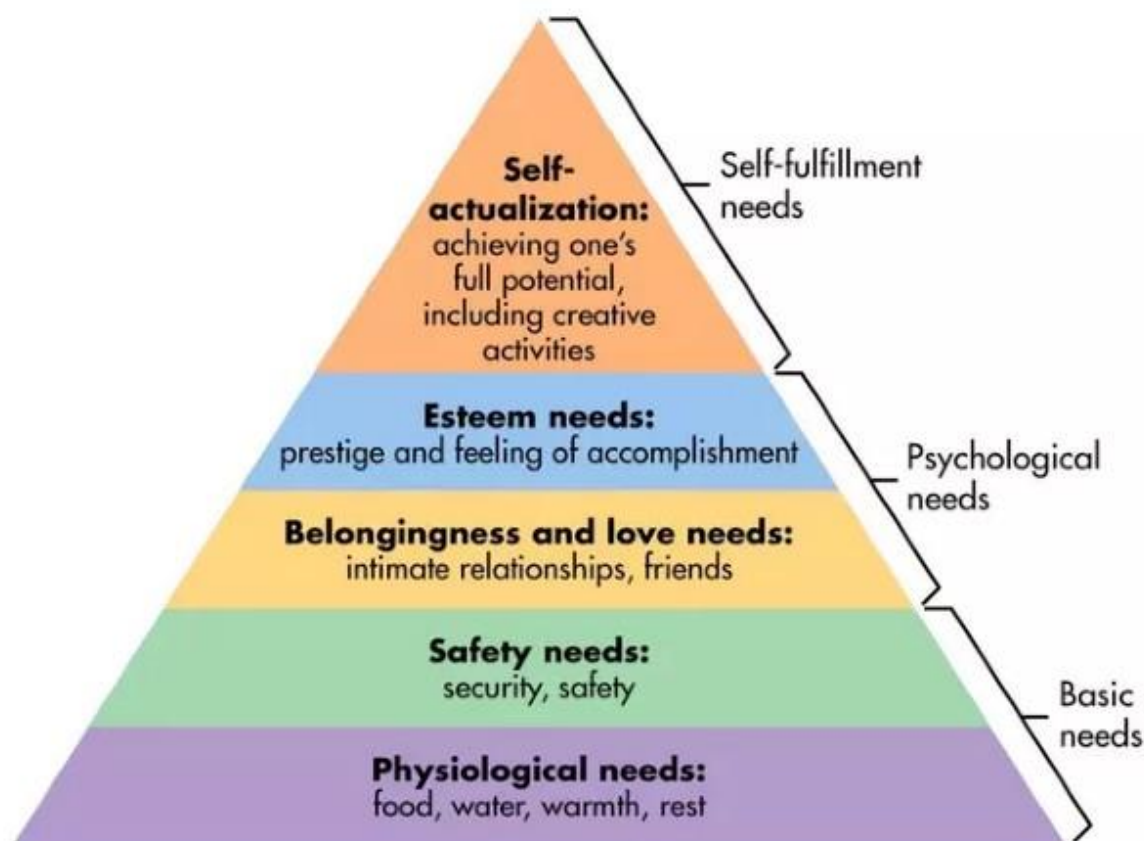


Figure 7 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod 2020).

Perception

The process by which people organize and interpret information through their five senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste forms a meaningful picture of the world, which is known as perception. Two people in the same surrounding environment and receiving similar information can perceive the situation differently. For example, an individual can perceive a fast-talking salesperson as combative and dishonest, but others can consider that seller a confident and intelligent person. The ability to perceive the same object with differing perceptions may result from three perceptual processes: *selective attention*, *selective distortion*, and *selective retention*. Selective attention occurs when an individual is exposed to thousands of stimuli a day then screens out unnecessary or uninteresting information. In this stage, markets have to work especially hard to catch the consumer's attention at first sight. In the selective distortion stage, people interpret information selectively. They often

do so in order to affirm what they already believe. In other words, the information can be twisted to fit their own perception. They tend to forget most things they learn unless information supports their attitudes and perspectives. A good point mentioned about competing productions may be remembered by consumers due to selective retention. (Kotler et al. 2017, 187-188.)

Learning

Learning refers to the relatively permanent change in knowledge or behaviour resulting from experience. Learning happens as an outcome of the interplay of drives, stimuli, cues, responses, and reinforcement. A drive is a strong internal stimulus that often leads to action, then becomes a motive once directed towards a specific stimulus object. A cue subsequently arises, meaning that people start to pay attention to the signals around them related to the wanted object, such as hearing a special sale price or discussing with relatives. Buying or not buying the desired product will be the consumer's response to his or her interest. The reinforcement will appear when the experience is satisfying, and the consumer uses this product more frequently. Marketers can optimize the demand of their products by analyzing the learning process to create a marketing strategy with strong drives, through motivating cues and by providing positive reinforcement. (Kotler & Armstrong 2011, 149.)

Beliefs and Attitudes

Individuals' beliefs and attitudes are formed and developed through learning and experience. According to Kotler et al. (2017), a belief is a descriptive thought that an individual has about something. Individuals create their beliefs based on real knowledge, opinions, or faith, and they may or may not be emotionally charged. The term "attitude" refers to a person's generally constant assessments, sentiments, and tendencies towards a certain item or concept. Attitudes are shown as the frame for liking or disliking things. As a result of those opposite attitudes, consumers will choose to move toward or avoid them. (Kotler et al. 2017, 190-191.)

4 Presenting Thai Vegan Kitchen

4.1 Background, mission, and vision

Thai Vegan Kitchen is one of the most famous vegan restaurants on wheels established by Prim – an animal rights activist, in September 2019. At the beginning, the kitchen was a small food truck travelling around Helsinki to offer delicious vegan Thai food. The location and opening hours were not fixed since the food truck had to move every day. In October 2020, Thai Vegan Kitchen first time had a long-term station at the square between the shopping mall REDI until September 2021. A new journey started after a two-year anniversary when Thai Vegan Kitchen officially became a physical restaurant in October 2021. The truck will be in service in the following summertime. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

The slogan of Thai Vegan Kitchen is *peace begins on your plate*. The business's mission is to provide tasty and cruelty-free food. According to Prim – the creator of this kitchen, her motivation to start this business is that the best way to encourage people to be veganism is to open a vegan café or restaurant. To prove to everyone that people can have great food without killing any creatures. One meal is sold, one innocent animal is saved. Moreover, many people are biased to assume that adopting a vegan diet is not enjoyable and inconvenient. For those reasons, besides casual customer targets, which are vegans or vegetarians, the other customer segmentation that this kitchen highly wants to achieve is meat-eaters. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

The business vision is to become an inspirational operation in animal-right activism. That is why the owner would like to continue the journey on wheels even when she has a stable restaurant. Travelling around in the truck carrying tasty food with a mouth-watering smell could be the best way to normalize vegan food to everyone. Besides maintaining the relationship with regular customers, reaching new customers, especially meat-eaters, and step by step changing their minds and diet is the biggest desire of Prim – the creator of Thai Vegan Kitchen. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

4.2 Food take-out services at Thai Vegan Kitchen

Hence, the food truck's business model, ordering at the parking point and picking up is the most popular method. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the restaurant industry in Finland, a food truck became a competitive kitchen model when food could be prepared and delivered actively by the on-wheels kitchen. Moreover, even the food truck would not move to different places regularly to deliver food. Customers could get in the waiting line at a safe distance (2 meters), place their order, and wait for food in an open area. Thus, safety would

be kept more efficiently than an enclosed space such as a casual restaurant. There was a period that all restaurants were only allowed to provide food take-away service. However, customers of the food truck could "eat-in" in front of the truck with at least two meters distance between each table, and the gathering limit was not exceeded six people included staff. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

Besides that, Thai Vegan Kitchen also has a website that allows people to order food and pay in advance. Manual payment is also allowed while placing the online order. The ordering website is user-friendly, with illustrations and descriptions for every meal on the menu. Customers can also take note of their special diets or specific demands for their food. Furthermore, the desired pick-up time can be set by customers. Besides those conveniences, there are few noticeable shortcomings in this type of service. During the rush day, the availability of placing orders will be limited; for example, only one order is picked up per 30 minutes. It means that if the timeslot already has had one order, customers must choose a later timeslot. Another disadvantage of this ordering method is that if there are technical problems with the computer or other reasons that staff cannot reach the customer's order, the order is considered as a failed order. There is a note on the check-out page informing that the order is accepted only when the confirmation email is sent. However, there is a misunderstanding from customers that their order is successful right away at the moment they submit the order. This leads to the customer's dissatisfaction when customers come to ask for their order, but the food is not ready. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

Customers who use phone-call order methods usually are pleased by the fast confirmation and the approximate food preparing time notice. Moreover, kitchen's staff will always inform about especial ingredients in food and ask customers about their wish for food such as the level of spiciness when taking orders. Customers can adjust the food according to their taste or their special diet quickly and accurately through the process. Nonetheless, phone-call would be the most neglected channel for placing an order in rush hours. There is no systematic approach for this ordering method. It depends on the availability of staff at that time. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

One of the biggest challenges when doing business with a food truck is to deal with a bad weather day, especially the Finnish winter. Customers hesitate at being outside in the food truck's location and wait for their food. Moreover, the risk of coronavirus infection rises in winter when cold and dry conditions occur (Mallapaty 2020). Therefore, food delivery to pick-up points is a win-win solution for both customers and the business. Customer retention is the essential practice for the purpose of maintaining the business. In this method, customers can place the orders before the delivery time, one hour at the latest, via the kitchen's

website. Due to the limited space and staff, the kitchen only offers food delivery to the pick-up point on quiet days. In the food truck, there are maximum three people included two chefs and one cashier can work in at the same time. Moreover, the food will be cooked one by one, not be pre-cooked and warmed up. It means that the workload at the food truck would be intense if the business decided to provide home delivery on busy days. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

Home delivery is the rarest food take-out method that the kitchen provides because of manpower deficit. However, it is costly for the business and customer if there are only a few small orders in different delivery times in a day. Therefore, the kitchen normally offers home delivery service for big orders, such as more than 12 meals in one order or catering service or 4 meals with extra delivery fees. Customers can contact in advance via the business' email. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

Ordering food by phone message or via social media platforms is practised by buyers too. However, staff do not recommend these two food ordering methods because the message from those channels is barely checked in the kitchen's opening hours unless on a quiet day or customers wish to place the order for another day. (Iamsomboon 2021.)

5 Empirical research

5.1 Data collection methods

The author chose to use an online survey on the Webropol website to collect the data needed for the study. With the digital method, respondents could access the survey via the link or QR code. Therefore, it is easier and faster than the traditional paper one. Moreover, hygiene issues and contactless approaches are significantly important in the coronavirus situation. Therefore, an online questionnaire is the ultimate solution. (SmartSurvey 2021.)

The online survey was executed in one week from 2nd November to 9th November 2021. The link to survey was published on Thai Vegan Kitchen's social media platforms which are Facebook and Instagram. Besides that, the restaurant's owner also sent emails and messages to customers who usually use food take-out services at Thai Vegan Kitchen, especially customer segments in using delivery to pick-up point and home delivery services to obtain as much reliable data as possible. Furthermore, the author printed the picture of the QR code of the online survey and placed it on the visible positions such as the restaurant's counter and dining tables. During the work shifts, the researcher and her co-workers tried to ask customers waiting for their take-away food to fill the online survey. As a result, the data collecting process was successful with 97 respondents despite the limited data collection period and difficulty in requesting customers' responses during rush hours.

5.2 The design of the survey

The survey is designed in English because it is the sole language used in every social media platform of Thai Vegan Kitchen. In order to collect data, the questionnaire contains close-ended primarily questions. The questionnaire (Appendix 1) was designed to focus on how personal factors affect choosing their favourite food take-out methods and their consumption behaviour. Customer behaviour in this context was defined by the usage frequency and the purchase amount when using different types of food take-out methods. The questionnaire is categorized into four parts:

- Part 1: Demographic information and respondents' background: 8 questions from questions number one to eight about age group, gender, employment status, net income, family-cycle stage, lifestyle, and reference group.
- Part 2: Customer favourite food take-out methods and the reasons for choosing those methods were asked in the question group from question number 11 to 16. When it comes to the question 11 about "What are your favourite food take-out methods?", respondents were allowed to choose maximum two favourite methods,

because the author believes that customers have different favourite methods according to different situations when deciding the used method. Moreover, obtaining more data about the reasons for choosing customers' favourite food take-out methods also motivate the author to let customers choose more than one option. Besides that, semi-structured questions are applied for those questions asking about reasons for preferring chosen food take-out method. The purpose for that is to optimize the possible answers in case the author missed any critical reason due to the limited interviewees in the previous interview.

- Part 3: Customer behaviour is indicated by the question number 9 and 10. Question number 9 "What kind of food take-out methods that you usually use at Thai Vegan Kitchen?" is to observe customers' usage frequency towards different types of food take-out methods. On the other hand, customers' purchase amount in each order towards those types of methods is explored in question number 10 "How many portions do you usually buy per order?"
- Part 4: Because Thai Vegan Kitchen has not offered food services on any third-party delivery applications, the author desires to understand the customers' willingness to use this method. Moreover, asking why customers choose not to use third-party delivery apps could help the business acknowledge the crucial points when planning business strategies in the future.

The correlation between the theoretical part and the empirical part is explained in the table 1 below

Empirical parts	Theoretical parts	Explanation
Building up the framework about available food take-out methods in the survey	2 Food take-out method that are available in Finland	Because one of the main elements in this survey is food take-out methods, the author has carefully researched and collected from reliable sources and from the interview with the restaurant's representative. This is seen as the backbone of the research.

<p>Question 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8: age group, gender, employment status, occupation, economic situation, family life-cycle stage, reference group, and lifestyle</p>	<p>3.1 Social factors 3.2 Personal factors</p>	<p>In order to answer the question “why” for the customer’s respond, potential factors which influence customer behaviour are studied at the theoretical part and examined in the empirical part.</p>
<p>Question 12, 13, 14, 15, 16: reasons for choosing different food take-out methods</p> <p>Question 18: reasons for not choosing food services from third-party apps</p> <p>Question 20: The concern level of customers about the restaurant business.</p>	<p>3.3 Psychological factors 1.1 Marketing stimuli: 4C’s</p>	<p>The author designed the answered for those questions asking about reasons for choosing favourite food take-out methods based on the psychological factors and 4C’s marketing stimuli. In the theoretical part, it is shown that marketing stimuli: customer’s needs, convenience, cost, and communication directly affect customer behaviour. Besides that, different kinds of needs are indicated by Maslow’s hierarchy. Customers’ perspective and learning are also used to form the answer for those questions.</p>
<p>Question 9: Customer’s usage frequency in different food take-out methods</p> <p>Question 10: Purchase amount in each order</p> <p>Question 11: The choice of favourite food take-out methods</p> <p>Question 17, 19: Customers’ willingness towards</p>	<p>3.1 Model of customer behaviour</p>	<p>Those question are formed as the objectives of the thesis work. Among numerous types of customer behaviour mentioned in the model of customer behaviour, the author chose to study about customer’s purchase amount, usage frequency, customer preference, and customer intention towards food take-out methods.</p>

food services provided by third-party companies.		
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Table 1 The correlation between the theoretical part and the empirical part.

5.3 Data analysis methods

When it comes to the method used to analyse the survey, descriptive statistics analysis is utilized to indicate the frequency distribution of responses for the questions about customers' background information and customer preference in choosing food take-out methods. The descriptive statistics can effectively provide an overview of one or more datasets. Furthermore, analysts can quickly determine the dataset's tendency and degree of dispersion by using classical descriptive statistics. Therefore, these tools are useful to understand and compare data distributions. (Lee 2020.)

The data about customers' backgrounds from question number 1 to question number 8 are interpreted according to their favourite food take-out methods. This analysis method is to figure out the differences and the similarities of customer preference in different demographic categories. After that, the author examines the correlation between customer preferences and usage frequencies in different food take-out methods and between customer preference and purchase amount. Question number 7 is to filter those respondents who belong to the vegan union or other animal rights organizations, with the purpose to examine their attitude towards food services provided by third-party companies. Question 21 "Would you like to tell me more?" is created to collect further information about customer suggestions, customers satisfaction, or other opinions towards those food take-out methods at Thai Vegan Kitchen as the company's demand. The answers of this question will be summarized and reported in another document. This question does not affect the survey result, so it will not be reported in this thesis work.

5.4 Research results

5.4.1 The differences and similarities in food take-out methods preference between groups of customers.

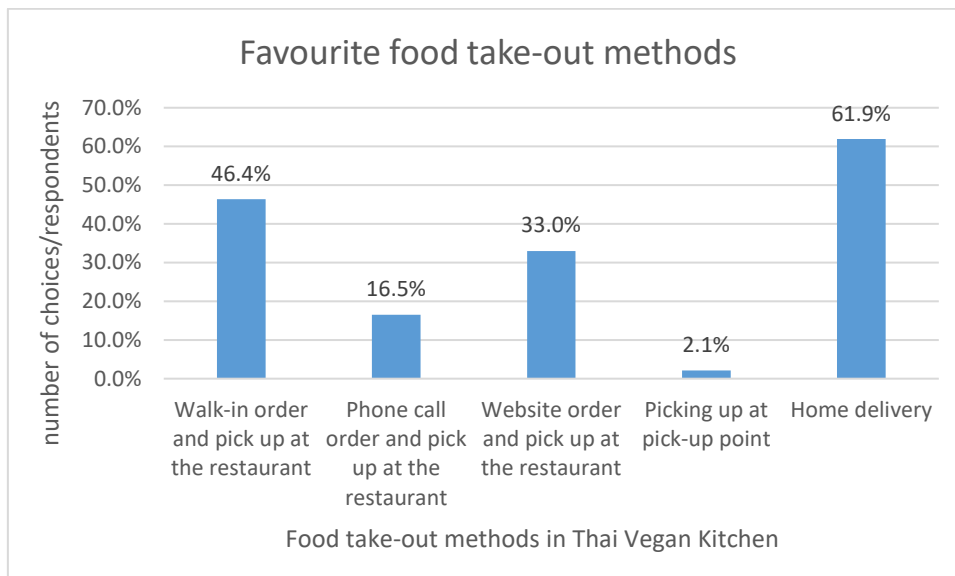


Figure 8 Customer preference in different food take-out methods

According to the result of question 11: “What are your favourite food take-out methods in general?”, the customer preference in different food take-out methods is represented in figure 8 above. Two-thirds of respondents said that their favourite food take-out method is home delivery. The second favourite is walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant, with 46.4% of total respondents. Website ordering and picking up at the restaurant is the following, with 33% of total respondents. Phone-call order and picking up at the restaurant holds the fourth position with 16.5% of total respondents, but less than half the number of votes compared to website orders. Finally, the least preferred food take-out method is picking up at the pick-up point, with only 2.1% of total respondents.

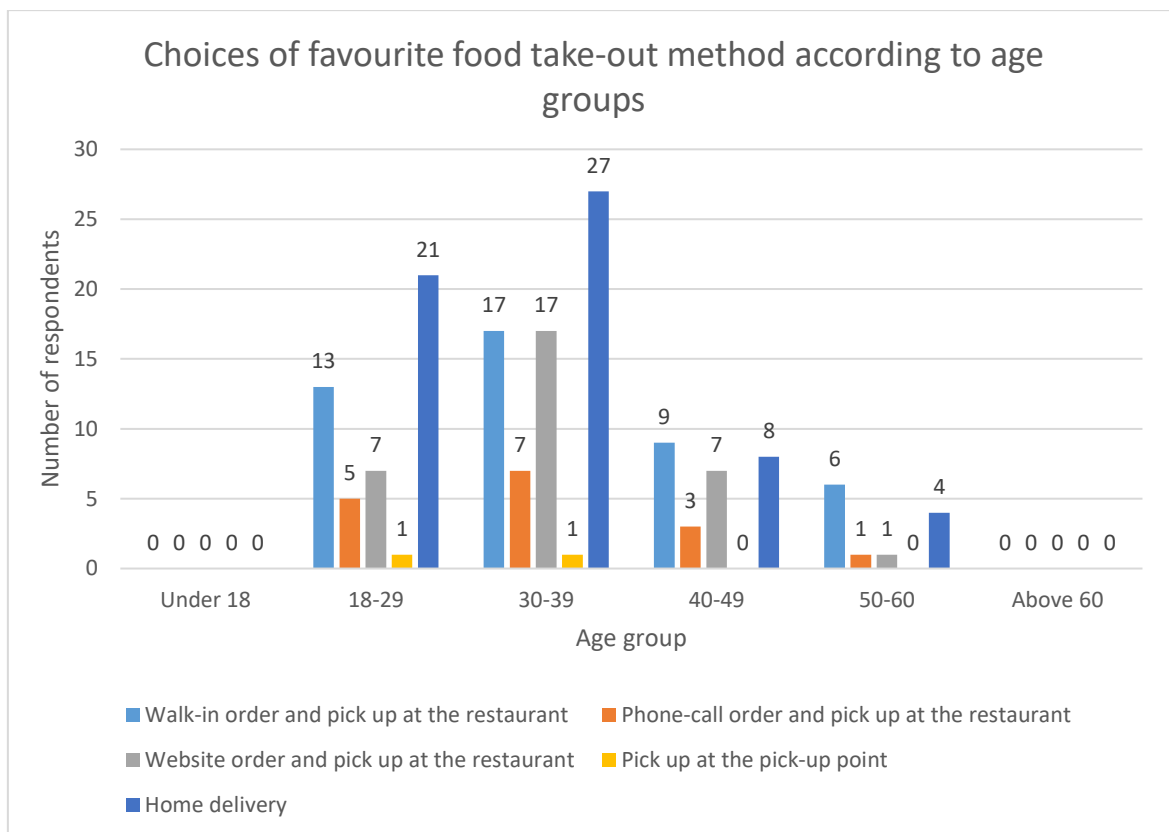


Figure 9 Choices of favourite food take-out method according to age group

Figure 9 illustrates that 29 to 30-year-old and 18 to 29-year-old groups dominate the usage in food take-out services and have the most diverse methods usage. The trend of choices in favourite food take-out methods among the two groups is similar. There is a significant interest in home delivery among those two age groups, with 27 votes in 30-39 years old group and 21 votes in the 18-29 years old age group. Walk-in ordering and picking up at the restaurant is the second popular method in both age groups. Respondents who prefer picking up at the pick-up point belong to two those groups only. On the other hand, walk-in ordering and picking up at the restaurant is the most chosen food take-out method among the 40-60 age group.

Among the respondents, there is no appearance of the age group under 18 and over 60 years old. This shows that most of these age groups will often eat in at the restaurant and rarely use take-away services themselves. Usually, family members in the 18 – 60 age group will be the ones to buy food for the rest of the family directly.

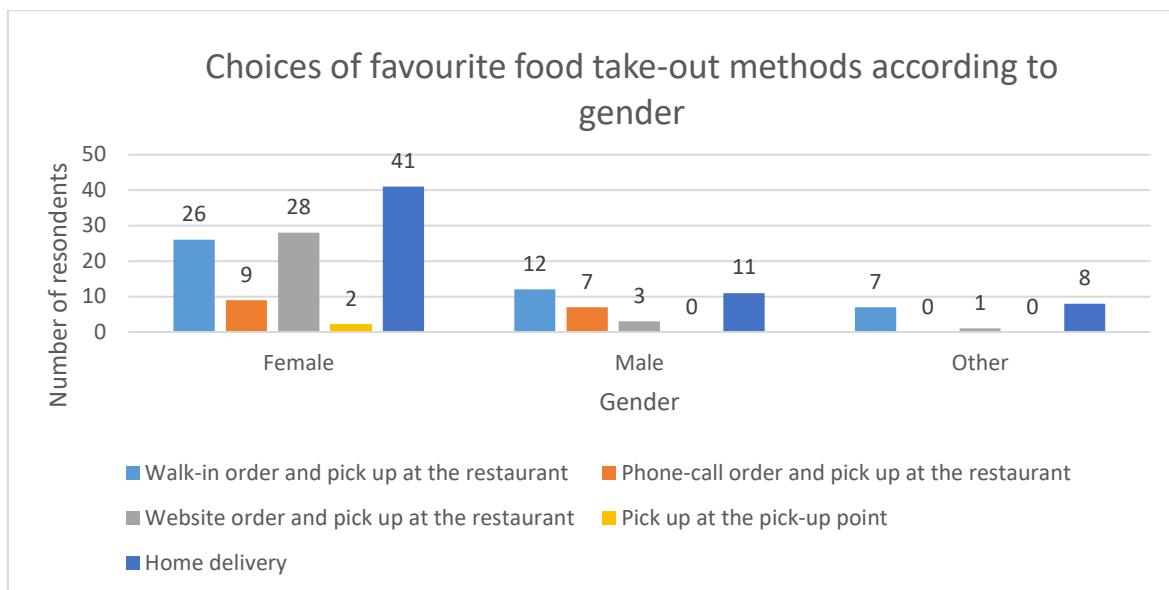


Figure 10 Choices of favourite food take-out methods according to gender

It is seen in figure 10 that the female group predominates over the male and "other" group in using food take-out services. The chart also shows the diversity in adopting different take-away methods available if the female group. Besides the most preferred method - home delivery, the website is the following channel where female respondents love to place their orders.

In contrast, male respondents are more interested in walk-in orders than home delivery. Compared to the female group, customers from the male group prefer phone-call orders to website orders. It clearly shows that male customers are more comfortable speaking and interacting with restaurant's staff on the phone or face-to-face.

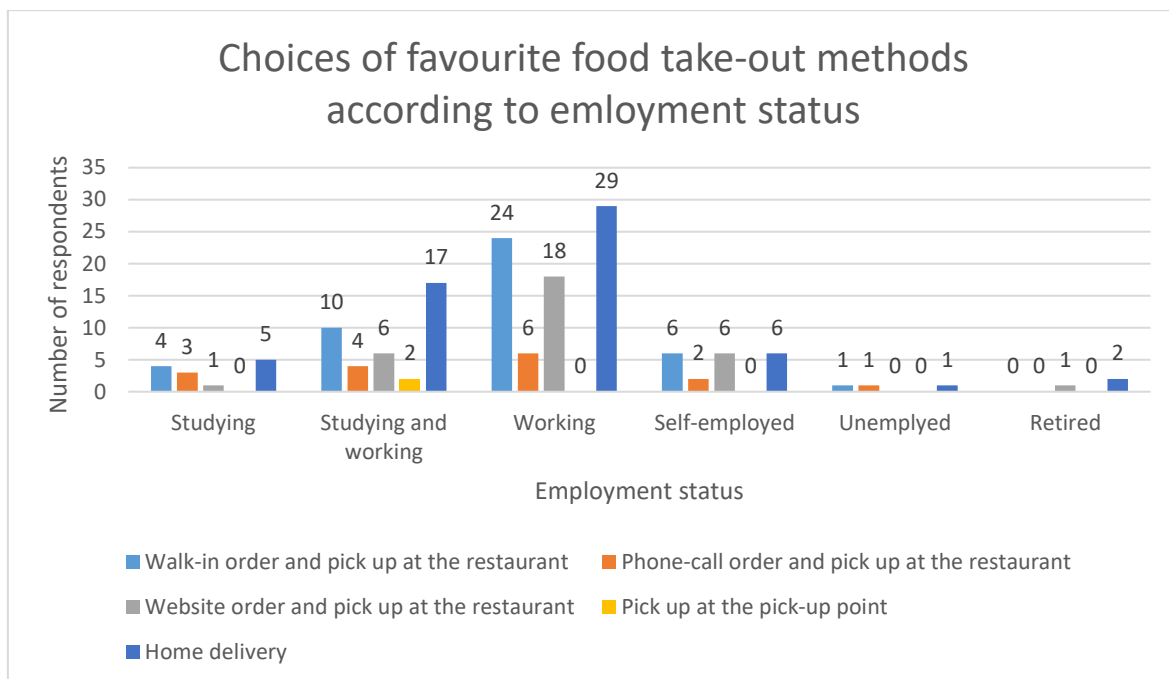


Figure 11 choices of favourites food take-out methods according to employment status

According to figure 11, it is obvious that the group with the highest food take-out consumption belongs to working people. Following in second place is studying and working group with a total number of 39 respondents. On the other hand, retired and unemployed people are the least exciting group with only three responses for each group. Finally, landing in the middle places are students still attending schools and a certain number of self-employed adults.

As seen in the analytic chart, it is a matter of fact that walk-in order and pick up at the restaurant and home delivery are the two most favourite methods. Lastly, picking up at the pick-up point is the least preferable method among different groups. When it comes to employment status, we can see that consumers' behaviour and preferences related deeply to their life conditions and daily routine. Working environment might play as a minor factor that affects their decisions and consumption habits.

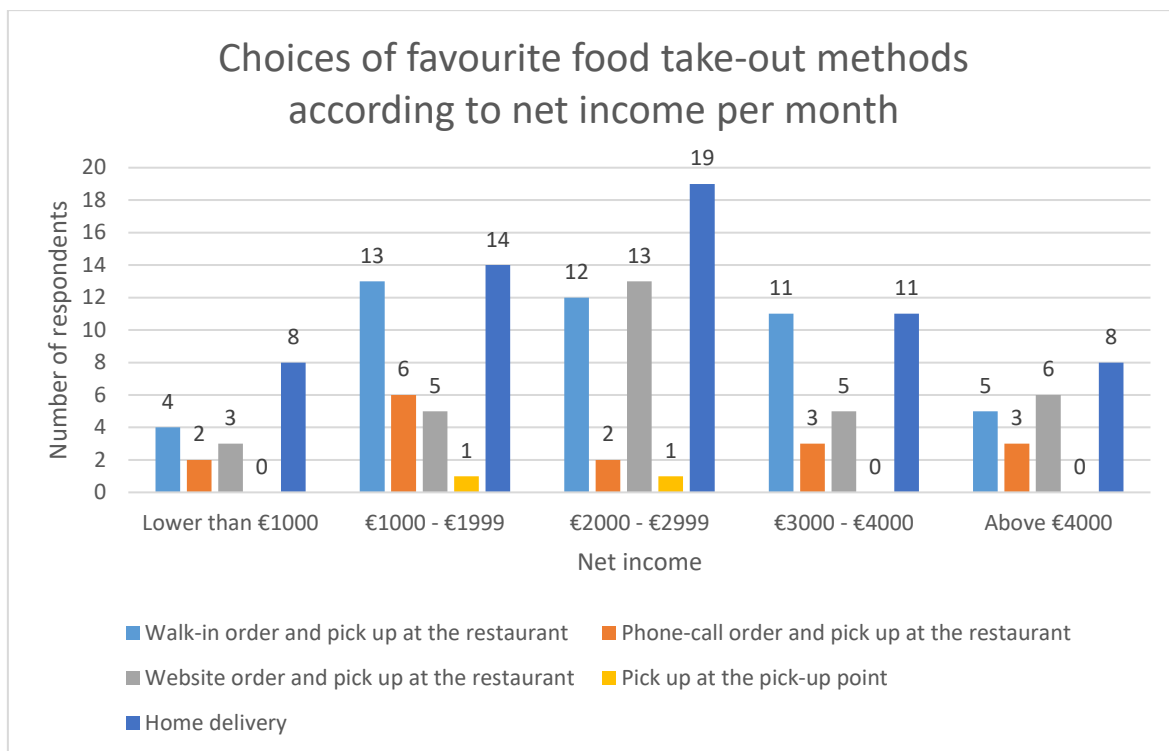


Figure 12 Choices of favourite food take-out methods according to net income per month

As being presented in figure 12, home delivery is the most used food take-out method since most people choose it from all incomes. Going in the second place is walk-in order and pick up at the restaurant method, which is chosen by a total of 45 people from every group of respondents. Also, people who took the survey showed a certain amount of interest with website and phone-call order. Especially with the people whose income fall into the range of €2000 to €2999, the website order method is even popular and more common than walk-in order one. On the contrary, picking up at the pick-up point is the least preferable way of ordering and most likely not to be used by people with a high salary rate.

However, when taking a closer look at each group, it is surprising that people with the highest income do not possess the most exciting consumption habit. It is the 'middle group' with income range from €2000 to €2999 that has the most people using these take away services. They are followed by the groups of people who are able to earn about €1000 to €1999 per month and €3000 to €4000 per month. The former group consumption rate is slightly higher than the latter one, but it is insignificant. Finally, the group with the lowest income has the fewest people who use these forms of food ordering

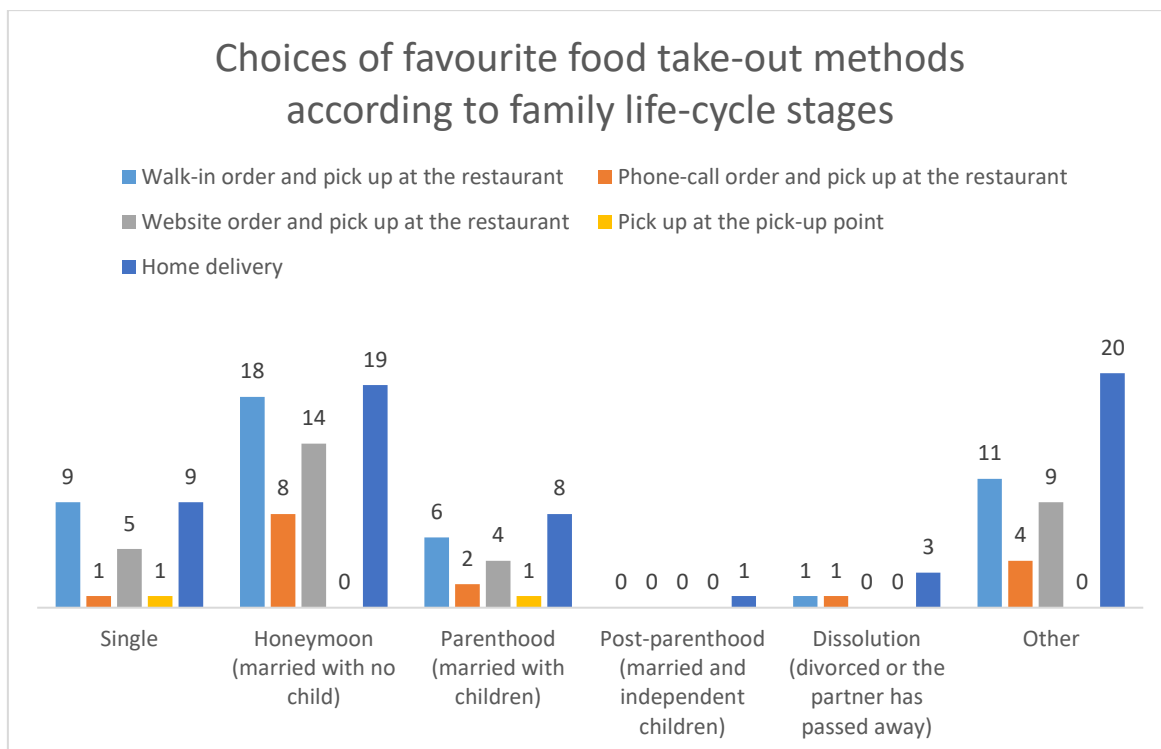


Figure 13 Choices of favourite food take-out methods according to family life-cycle stages

In terms of family life-cycle stages, we can see from figure 13 that there are major differences between each stage. First of all, the group with most people who choose to use take-out food methods is the honeymoon stage, with a total of 59 respondents. This specific group of consumers has overpowered all others for their surprisingly large number of users. However, the situation does not stimulate post-parenthood and dissolution since almost no one in these groups is interested in using food take-out services. And when comparing parenthood and single group, it is apparent that they are most likely have the same number of respondents. However, there is still a huge gap between these groups and the honeymoon group. Furthermore, the “other” group also occupies a certain part of respondents.

As other charts above, walk-in and home delivery are still the favourite ways of ordering food to-go. The website method has a balance amount of supporting from people of each group. On the contrary, picking up at pick-up point is not favoured by most people while the phone-call method is only chosen by a humble number of people from each group.

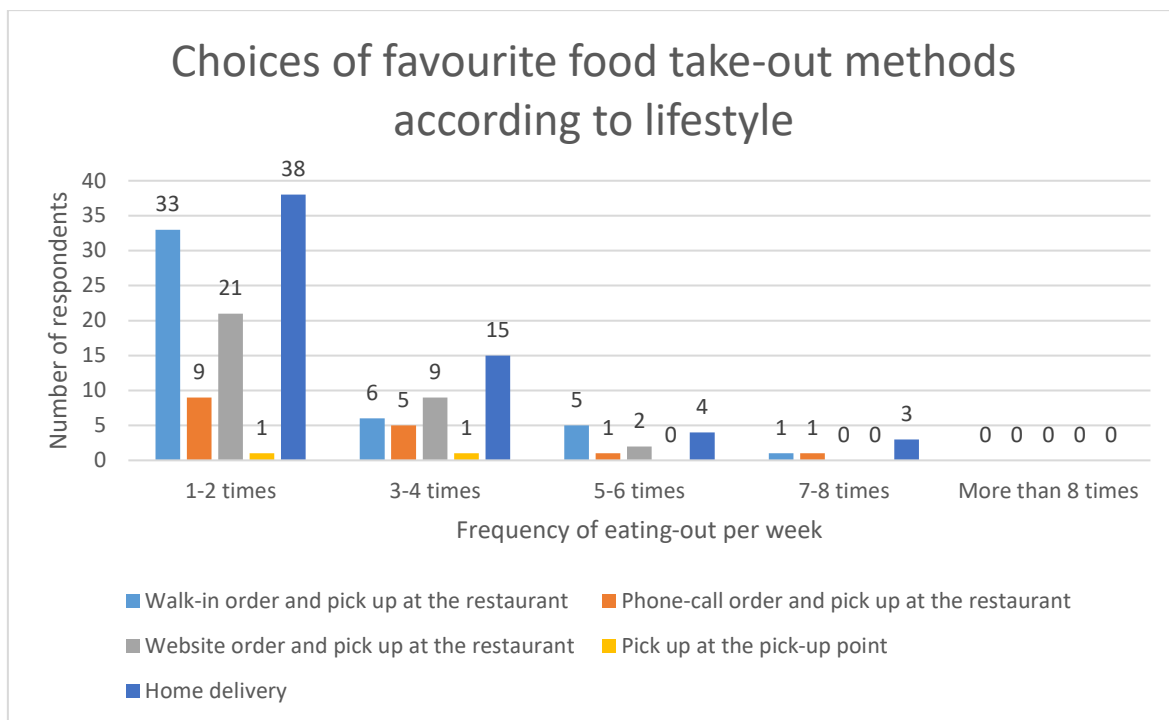


Figure 14 Choices of favourite food take-out methods according to lifestyle

As the presented chart (figure 14), it is noticed that the number of people using food take-out services is inversely proportional to the number of times they eat out in a week. It is shown that customers who eat out 1-2 times a week are the largest group in using take-away food services while the least preferred in food take-out services are respondents who eat out 7-8 times. This survey has not reached any customers who eat out more than eight times per week.

In terms of customer preference in choosing their favourite food take-out methods, it cannot deny that home delivery occupies the highest position among customers who eat out 1-4 times a week. In contrast to 1-2 times eating out / week group, customers who belong to the 3-4 times eating out / week group are more fascinated by ordering via website rather than placing orders directly at the restaurant. That is because walk-in customers mostly do not have a plan in advance, and the take-away consumption is likely unpredictable.

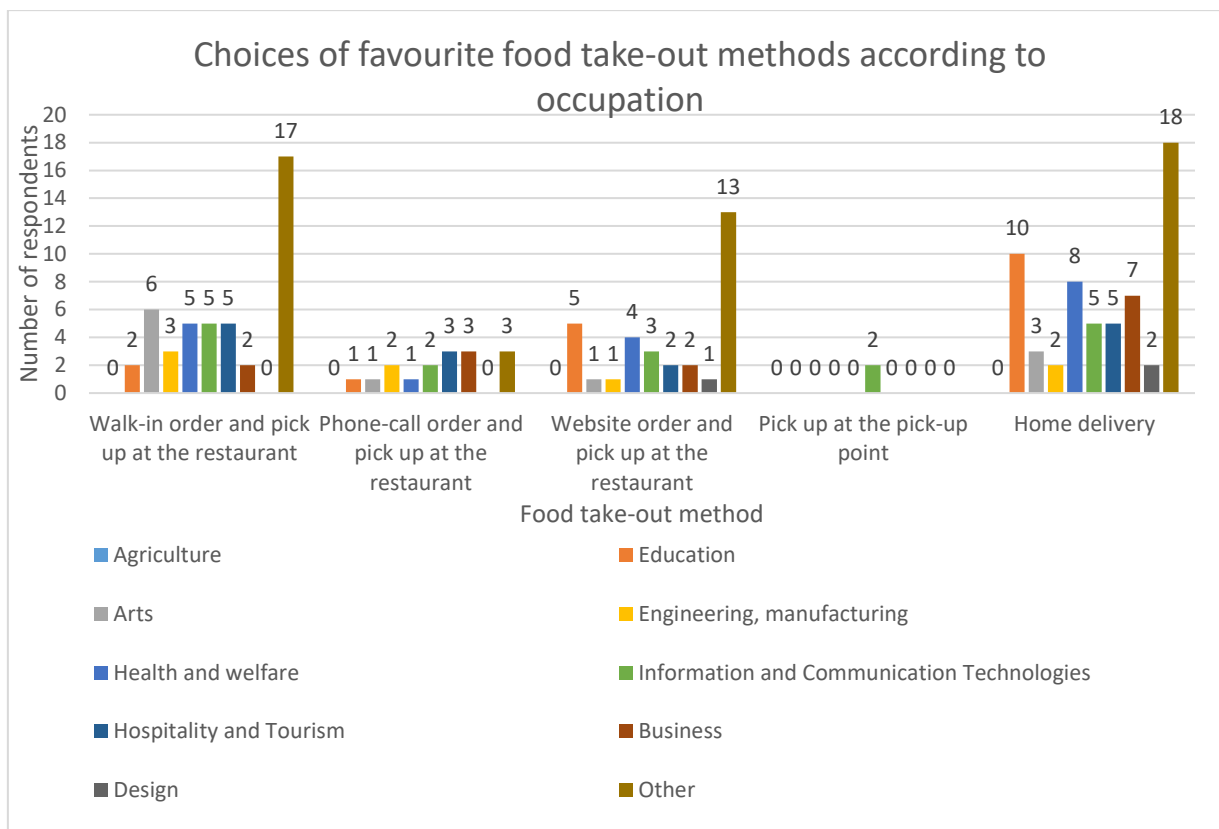


Figure 15 Choices of favourite food take-out methods according to occupation

When it comes to the occupation structure of respondents shown in figure 15, there is no appearance of the respondent from the agriculture faculty. "Other" group takes the majority of total respondents. This group does not show a certain concern on phone-call ordering or picking up at the pick-up point. On the other hand, customers in education and health and welfare areas hold the second-largest proportion in applied food take-out services. The following groups are Information and Communication Technologies and Hospitality and Tourism industry. When it comes to picking up at the pick-up point method, it could be noticed that respondents who prefer this method only come from the Information and Communication Technologies industry.

5.4.2 Customer motivation in choosing favourite food take-out methods

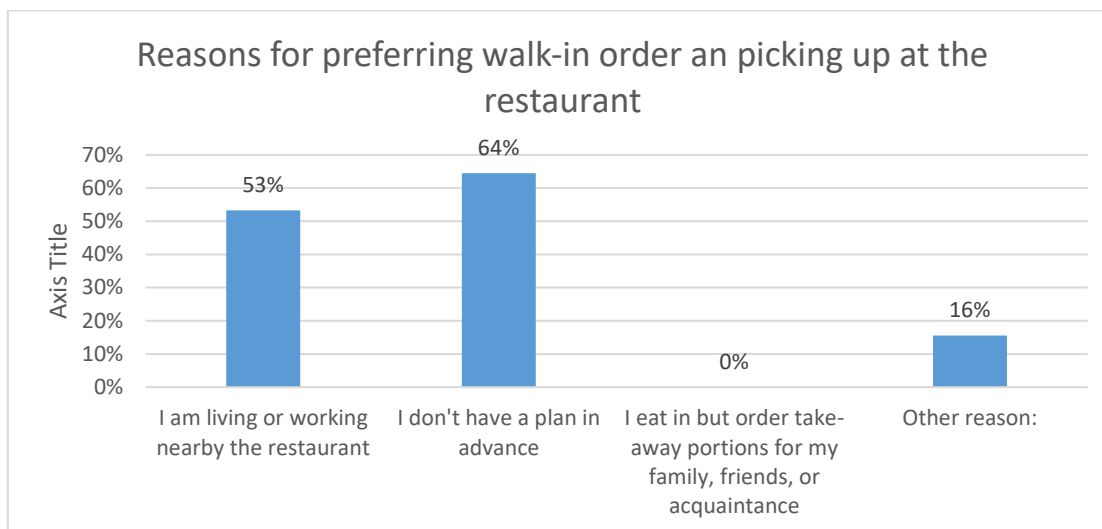


Figure 16 Reasons for preferring walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant

According to the result presented in figure 16, it is clear to recognize that 64% of respondents loving walk-in order said that they do not have a plan in advance. Regarding locational reasons for choosing this method, 53% of people respond that their home or workplace is near the restaurant, so they do not need to call or place their order in advance. They will just come up at the restaurant, check the availability for placing their order, order their desired food, and drink a cup of coffee while waiting for their food. This method is considered as the simplest and least stressed one when customers do not need to show up at the set time.

Customers also express their motivations which are not on the list. That reason is mostly about personal wishes for their food. For instance, customers would like to order food outside the list, and the only way to explain their special diet and get appropriate recommendations from restaurant's staff is placing their order directly at the restaurant. Besides that, one respondent states that he or she loves to meet the people at the restaurant but still want to enjoy food at home. Therefore, walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant is the ultimate method to please all wishes about food adjustment.

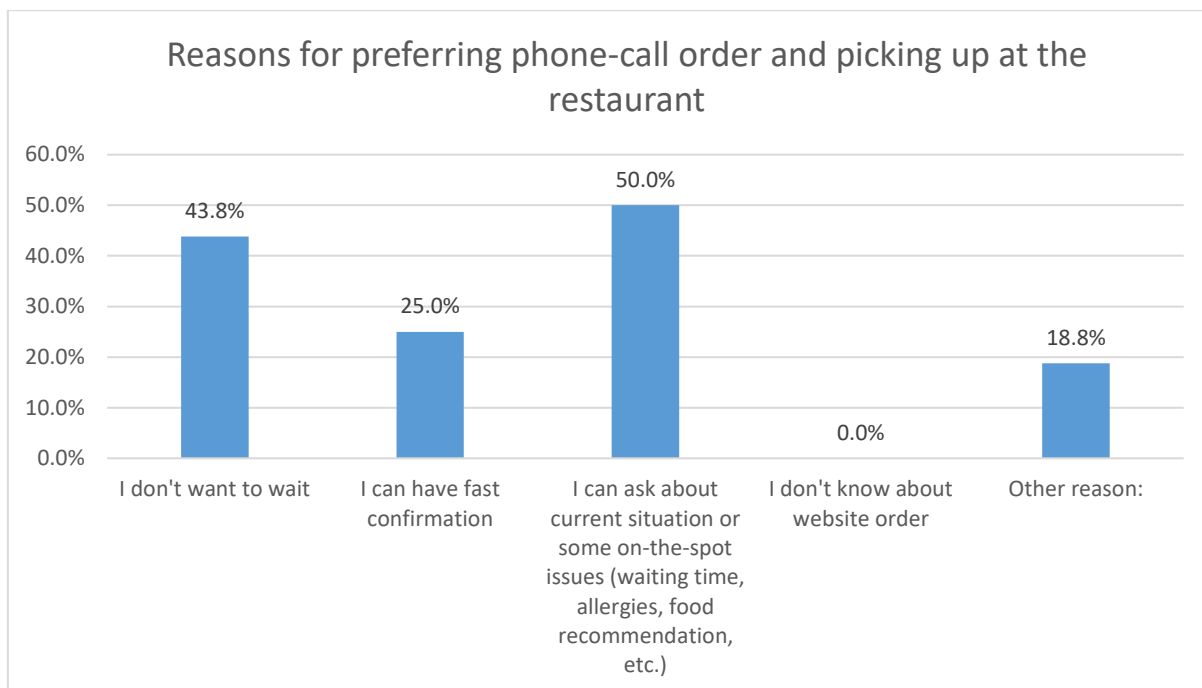


Figure 17 Reasons for preferring phone-call order and picking up at the restaurant

In the presented chart of figure 17, 50% of respondents choose phone-call ordering as their favourite method because of its informative function for checking the restaurant's availability at the present time. Moreover, from the author's experience during a working period at Thai Vegan Kitchen, customers can recognize how busy the restaurant is by calling and considering that should they come and eat in at the restaurant. It is because the phone will be the most neglected channel during rush hours.

One of the most motivating reasons when customers are choosing to order in advance via phone-call or restaurant's website is to save their waiting time in the restaurant. It is clearly shown with 43.8% of respondents for the option "I do not wait to wait". Timesaving is emphasized in the number of votes for "I can have fast confirmation" option. When using this method, customers can just say the desired order and leave other tasks such as order checking or order confirmation for staff. Then, they can come to pay and pick up the food quickly at the restaurant. Thus, the ordering process is even shorter than ordering via the restaurant's website. Supporting the business is another aim with the "other reason" for choosing this method.

There are no respondents choose phone-call order because they do not know about website order. It means that even customers acknowledge the existence of the restaurant's website, they still choose phone-call order as the ideal method. This strengthens the validity of those chosen reasons in this survey.

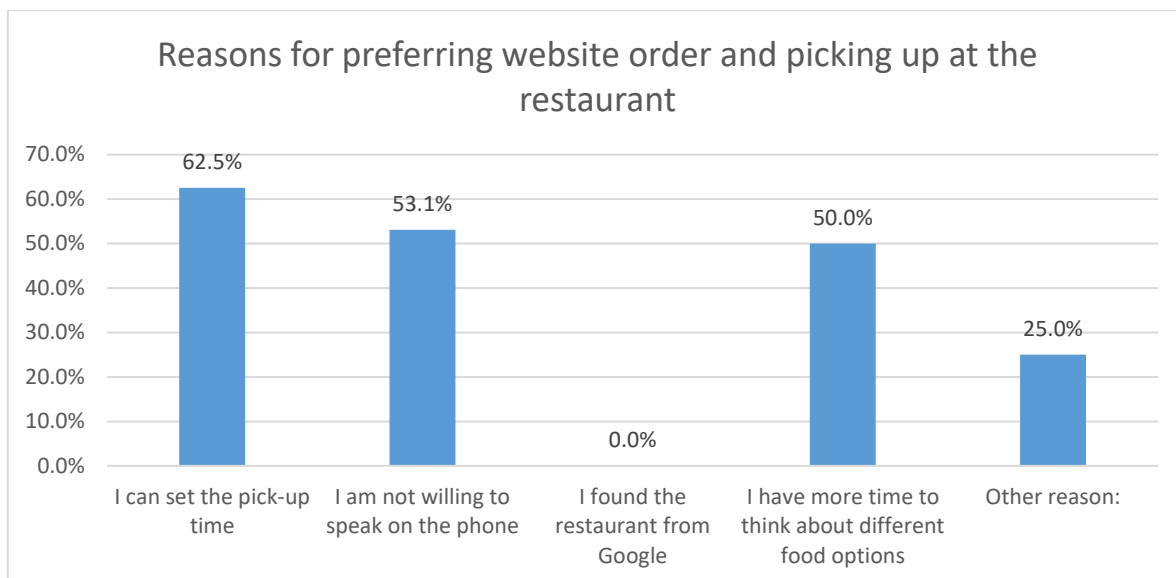


Figure 18 Reasons for preferring website order and picking up at the restaurant

Customer's motivation in choosing website order as the favourite food take-out method is illustrated in figure 18. The most chosen reason for applying this method is the flexible pick-up time on the restaurant's website. Customers can order food and select the available pick-up time that shows on the drop-down list. Compared to phone-call order, this is also seen as an advantage because customers can be aware of the restaurant's situation (in rush hours or not) without spending time calling. It is understandable when the second-highest voted reason with 53,1% of total respondents is the unwillingness to speak on the phone.

Besides that, customers claim that they can have more time to think about different options when ordering via the restaurant's website. They can think again about their choices while overviewing their basket and change it before clicking the confirm button. Furthermore, many customers admit that Thai food's name is hard to pronounce and easy to mistake between different kinds of meals on the menu. This method also helps customers avoid confusion among the unfamiliar name of the food on the menu.

In the "other reason" option, customers find that this food take-out method is quicker, easier, and more secure. In addition, the payment process can be carried out smoothly in advance with the online payment system. Then, customers can limit the interaction and keep social distance. Another reason for choosing this method is that customers feel their phone call might cause inconvenience and discomfort for people at the restaurant if they call in rush hours.

There is no vote for finding a restaurant's website on Google or HappyCow. This means that customers usually visit the restaurant directly to try out the food a few times before deciding to become a regular customer of the restaurant and looking for a faster channel to

place their order. Therefore, this reason is not a popular one to engage people to choose website ordering method.

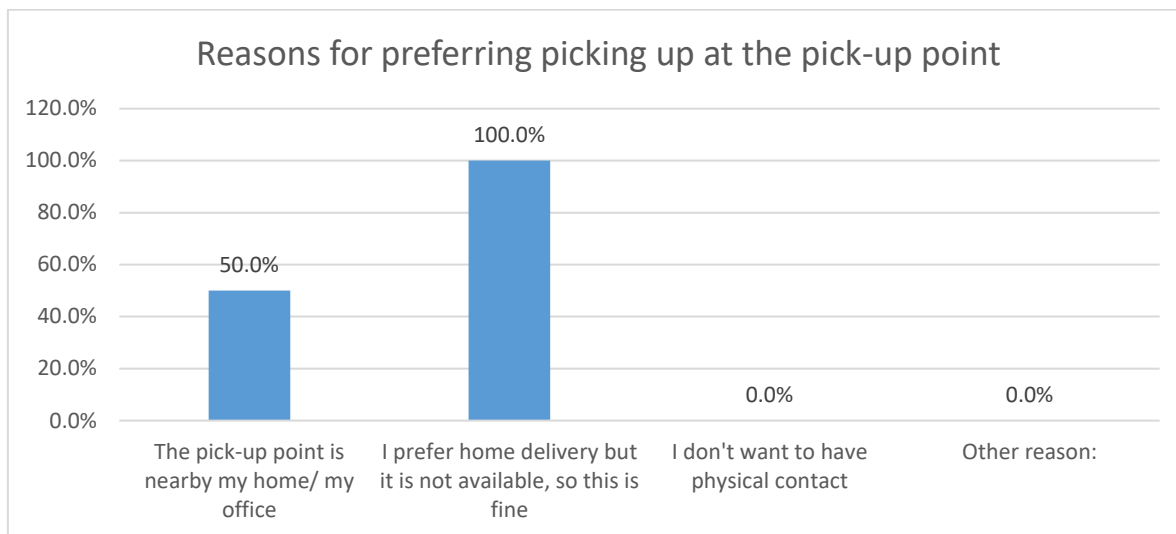


Figure 19 Reasons for preferring picking up at the pick-up point

As in other charts above, the number of respondents who prefer picking up at the pick-up point is only two people. However, figure 19 shows that being afraid of physical contact is not the reason when customers favour this method of taking away food. As the result of the face-to-face interview with the owner of Thai Vegan Kitchen, home delivery is the rarest food service at this restaurant, only big orders, and catering orders whose customers must place at least 24 hours before the desired delivery time will be delivered (Iamsomboon 2020). Therefore, picking up at the pick-up point nearby customers' home or workplace is the alternative and acceptable option. In this food delivery method, customers can place their order by phone or website one hour before the delivery time at the latest. So, it means that customers do not need to have a plan or order in advance.

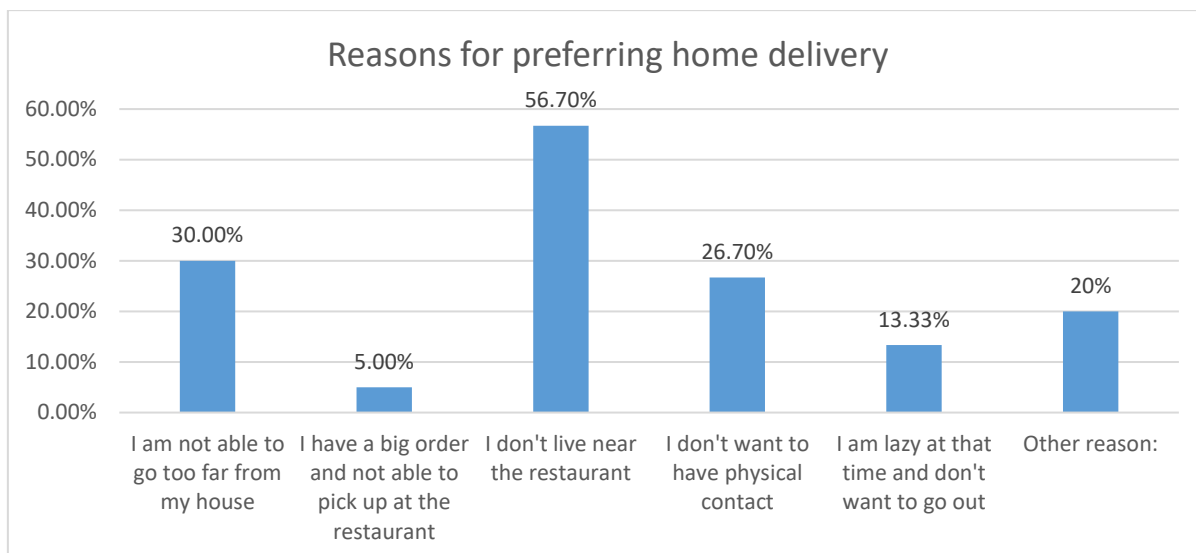


Figure 20 Reasons for preferring home delivery

Other charts above have demonstrated the major position of home delivery in customer preference. In figure 20, 56,7% of respondents who prefer this method claim that they live far away from the restaurant. It is clearly observed that the restaurant's location has a strong effect on customers' motivation to choose different food take-out methods. 30% of respondents in this question cannot go too far from home, so this method is the ultimate choice for them. It is also understandable when people who have a big order will be pleased by home delivery food service. When using home delivery services provided by the business, customers can feel secure due to 100% of the restaurant's responsibility in food preparation and food delivery. If any unexpected situation occurs, it is easy to deal directly with the restaurant.

Besides that, hygiene issue is significantly important in the coronavirus pandemic situation. Consequently, restricting physical contact as much as possible is necessary. This is illustrated by 26,7% of respondents choosing this method due to the contactless home delivery process. Laziness is also one of the popular reasons for using home delivery services, with 13,33% of the total respondents. Customers state that this method is the most convenient and time-saving while working from home as well in the "other reason" option.

5.4.3 Correlation between customers' food take-out methods preference and purchase frequency

	I have not used the service	1-2 times per 3 months	1-2 times per month	1-2 times per week	3-5 times per week	more than 5 times per week	Total	Average
Walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant	13	39	26	15	4	0	97	2.6
Phone-call order and picking up the restaurant	46	34	12	5	0	0	97	1.8
Website order and picking up at the restaurant	33	32	22	9	1	0	97	2.1
Picking up at the pick-up point	63	26	6	2	0	0	97	1.5
Home delivery	76	16	5	0	0	0	97	1.3

Table 2 Frequency of using food take-out methods at Thai Vegan Kitchen

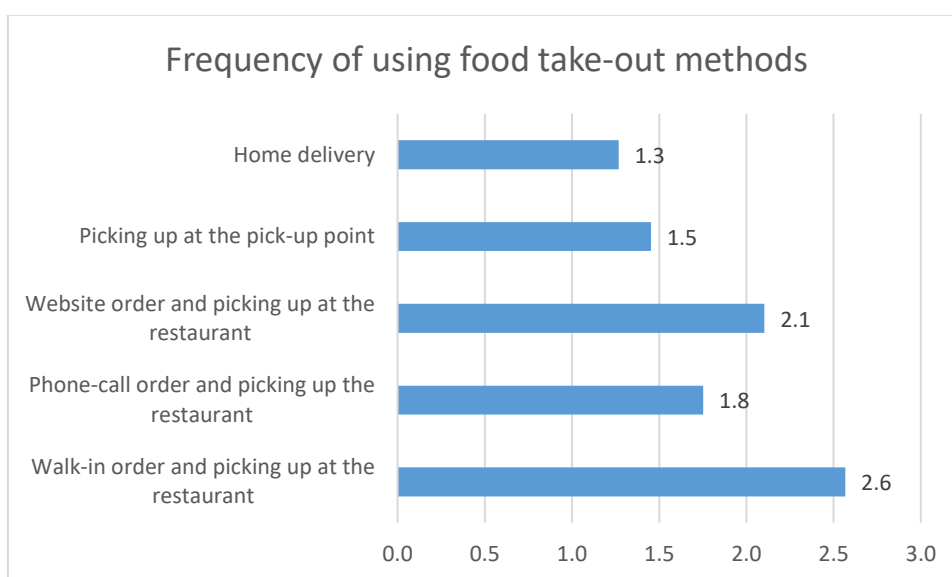


Figure 21 Frequency of using food take-out methods at Thai Vegan Kitchen

In the question number 9, respondents' frequency of using food take-out methods is measured on a scale of 1 to 6. Available options are "I have not used the service", "1-2 times per 3 months", "1-2 times per month", "1-2 times per week", "3-5 times per week", and "more than five times per week". As being shown in figure 21, the most used method among available food take-out services at Thai Vegan Kitchen is ordering and picking up at the restaurant's premiere. The average level of this method is 2.6, which means almost 1-2 times per month on average. Moreover, this method also gains the most extensive number of respondents who buy take-away 1 to 5 times per week, it is shown in table 2. The second highest method in usage frequency is website order and pick up at the restaurant with 2.1 points of average. In general, customers tend to apply the phone-call order method around 1-2 times per 3 months, with the average indicated number being 1.8. Picking up at the pick-up point and home delivery is the least frequent methods used. Most respondents have

not used those services at Thai Vegan Kitchen. People mainly employed those methods 1-3 times per 3 months.

Comparing figure 21 with figure 8: Customer preference in different food take-out methods, it is visible that people tend to use their favourite food take-out methods over others. In contrast to this fact, home delivery is the most favourite but the most rarely used method. The reason for that is the availability of this take-away food service, according to the result of a face-to-face interview with the owner of Thai Vegan Kitchen.

5.4.4 Correlation between customers' food take-out method preference and purchase amount

	1	2	3	4	5	>5	Total of respondents using method	Average
Walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant	23	47	11	1	1	1	84	2.0
Phone-call order and picking up at the restaurant	7	39	6	1	1	0	54	2.1
Website order and picking at the restaurant	10	49	7	2	1	0	69	2.1
Picking up at the pick-up point	3	21	6	3	0	1	34	2.4
Home delivery	0	0	0	0	10	11	21	5.5

Table 3 Purchase amount per order in different food take-out methods.

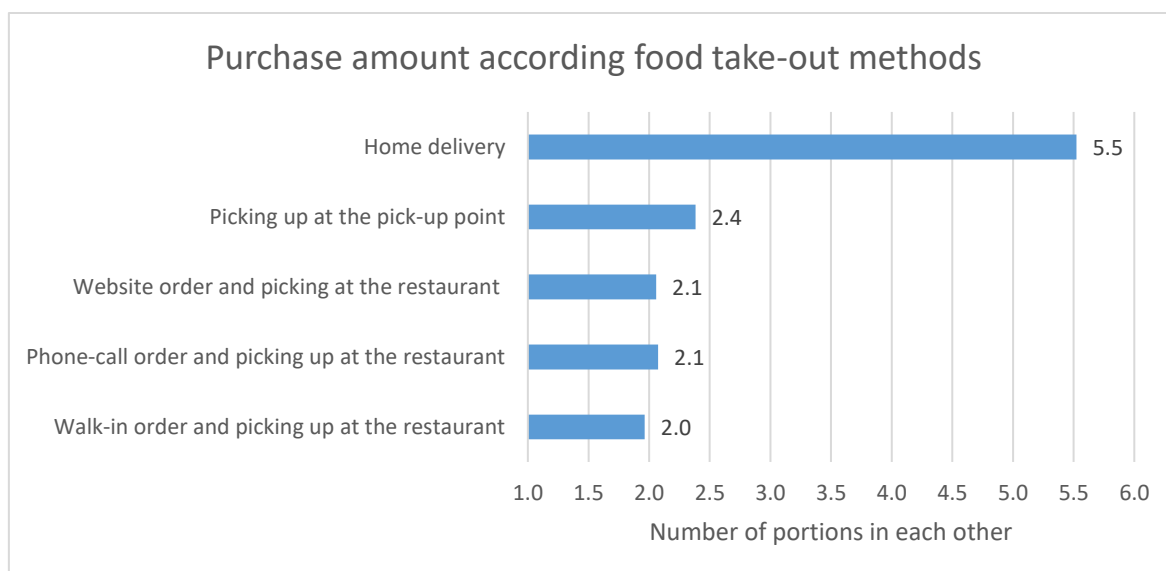


Figure 22 Purchase amount in different food take-out methods

To analyze the question 10 about the purchase amount according to different food take-out methods, the author decided to exclude the customer segment who do not buy any portion in the available methods. The reason for that is to obtain the most accurate result of bought portions in different food take-out methods according to valid respondents. The option ">5

portions" is assumed as six portions per order in order to calculate the average value for the result.

In general, when customers use services that bring their food closer to their homes or offices, they tend to order more. It is shown clearly in figure 22 with the home delivery and picking up at pick-up point method. Table 3 illustrates that despite being the minority, those who make use of home delivery services spend the most on take-away food with more than 5 portions per order. Although picking up take-away food at the pick-up point is the least preferred method, the number of users in this method is higher than in the home delivery service.

Surprisingly, the result shows that customers are likely to buy less in one order when showing up at the restaurant and placing their order there, even though this is one of the most favourite food take-out methods. The reasons to choose this method can explain this phenomenon. Customers claim that their home or office is nearby the restaurant, and they usually buy food to-go without a plan. It is understandable when customers only order one meal for themselves or another one for their partner. Living or working nearby their favourite restaurant releases customers from the pressure of buying food as a speculation for the next meal.

Customers who utilize website order and phone-call order have the same average point for the number of portions per order. They usually buy two portions of food in each order. However, customers tend to buy more portions in website order compared to ordering via phone-call, it is shown in table 3.

5.4.5 Customers' attitude towards food services provided by third-party companies

Question number 18: If the restaurant offers food ordering on third-party apps with a higher price and no discount for the member of Vegan Union or other animal rights organizations, are you willing to use the service?

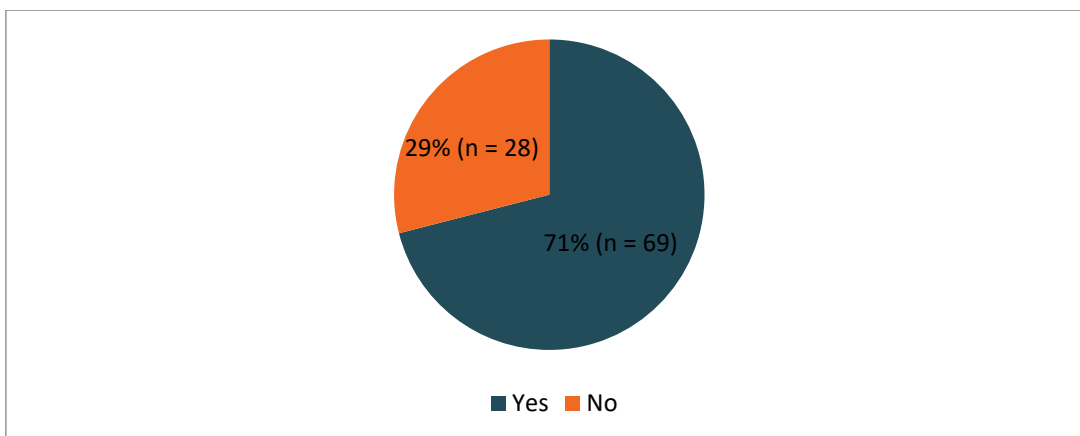


Figure 23 Customers' response in choosing food services via third-party apps

The result of question 18, shown in figure 23 illustrates the high willingness of customers to use food delivery apps. 71% of respondents say yes, and 29% of them say no. Due to the convenience in the ordering process and payment method of food delivery applications, it is not difficult to acknowledge the advantages of this food take-out method. Besides that, the author wants to explore the reasons why customers avoid using this method. Those reasons are demonstrated in figure 24.

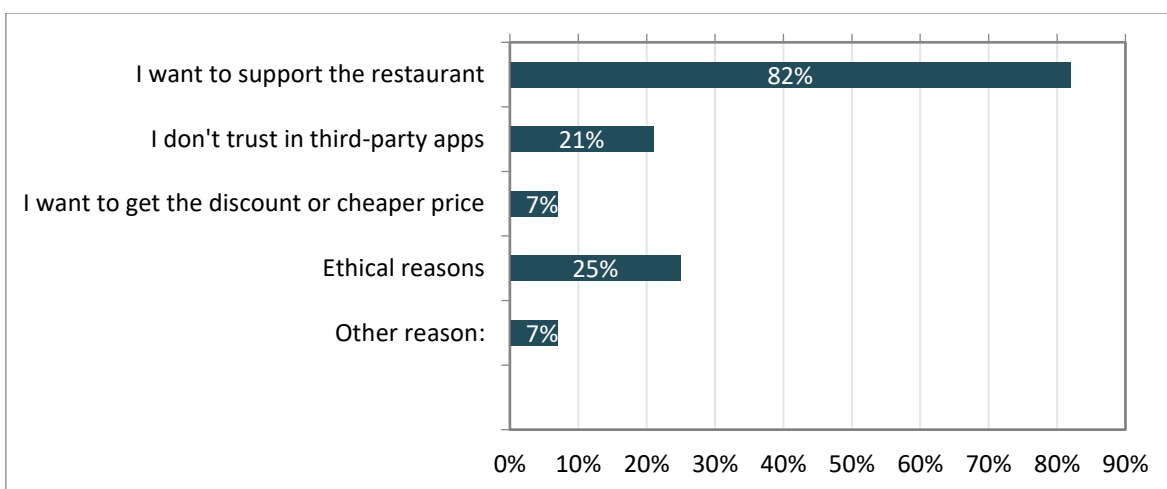


Figure 24 Reasons for not choosing food services provided by third-party companies

According to Priceff website, there was a discussion about the commissions between restaurants and delivery services such as Wolt and Foodora. Restaurants suggested adding the delivery service commission partly to the price paid by the customer. However, this suggestion did not get the agreement from delivery companies. It means that restaurant business must pay their commission fee of up to 30% of the restaurant margins. (Priceff 2021.)

With those customers who acknowledge this issue between restaurants and food delivery companies, they tend to avoid using third-party apps to order food from their favourite restaurant. They are likely to have the same perspective as restaurant businesses. This is presented in 25% of respondents voting for "ethical reasons". This is shown the importance of customers' perspectives when appraising an issue. Moreover, the most motivating reason with 82% of total respondents is to support the restaurant's business. Besides that, personal reason such as trust issue is shown, with 21% of respondents voting not to use third-party applications. While the food delivery drivers do not belong to the restaurant's staff, there could be tampering during the home delivery process (Wasserstrom 2018). Customer privacy and data is also one of considered issues when using third-party apps. The more channels where sensitive data, including phone numbers, credit card numbers is accessed, the higher risks occur (Wasserstrom 2018). Furthermore, a minor group of respondents, who refuse to use food delivery apps due to the higher price, occupies 7% of the total respondents. It proves that when customers choose the option that seems to be less convenient to themselves, they desire to please the higher needs in Maslow's hierarchy (belongingness and love needs).

Because Thai Vegan Kitchen offers a discount for every member of Vegan Union or other animal rights organization, this directly affects this group. Therefore, the author desires to observe their reaction towards the food take-out method that is unideal to them in terms of food price. The result in figure 25 shows that people who belong to those organizations are willing to use a third-party app even though they have to pay a higher price.

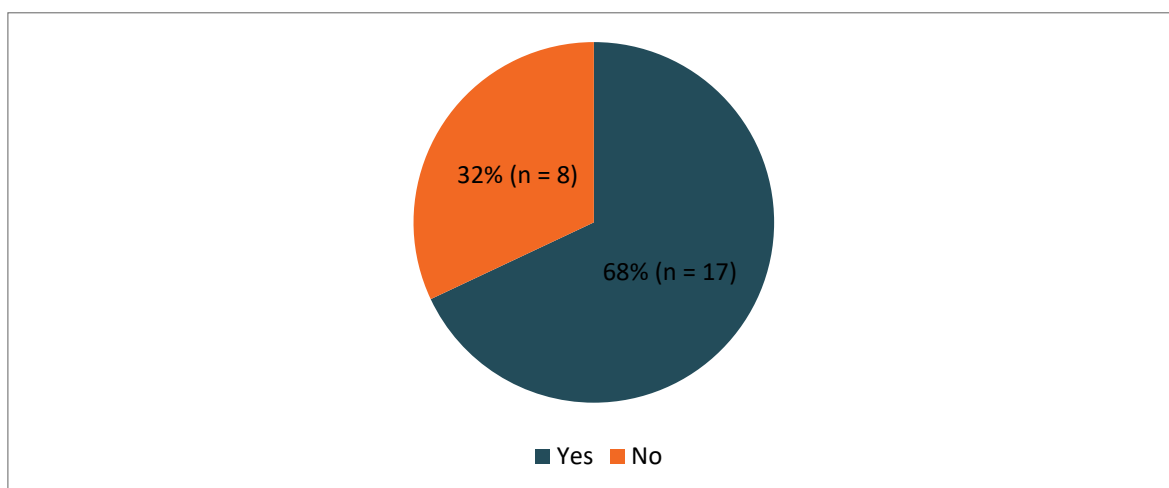


Figure 25 Members of Vegan Union and other animal rights organizations response in choosing food services via third-party apps.

When it comes to the reasons why respondents in this segment do not choose third-party apps, 88% of respondents state that they want to support the restaurant. Surprisingly, nobody in this segment decides not to use delivery apps due to the higher price for themselves. Ethical reasons and trust issues are selected as their reason for this act with the agreement of 25% of respondents. This is shown in figure 26.

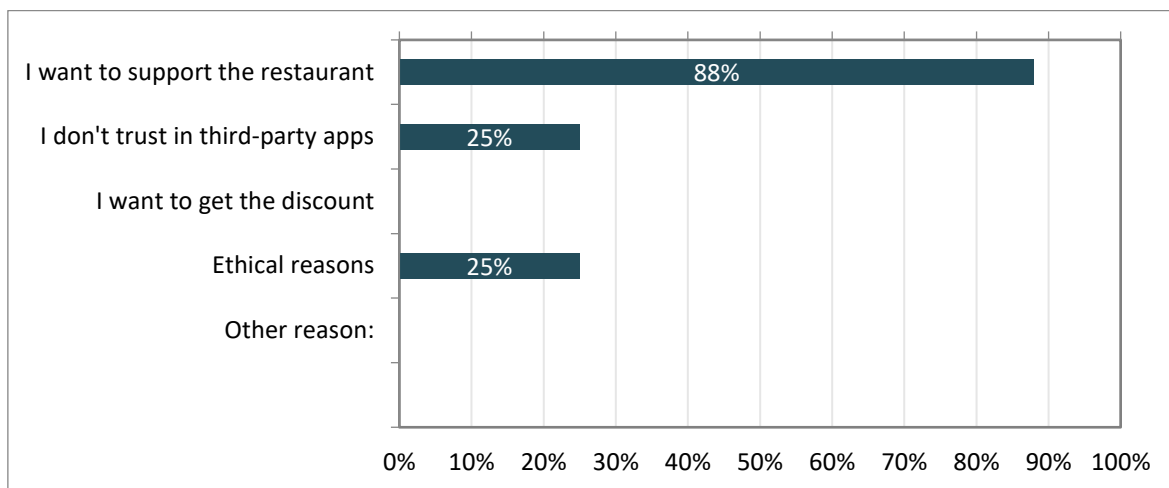


Figure 26 Reasons for not choosing food services provided by third-party companies among members of the vegan union and other animal rights organizations

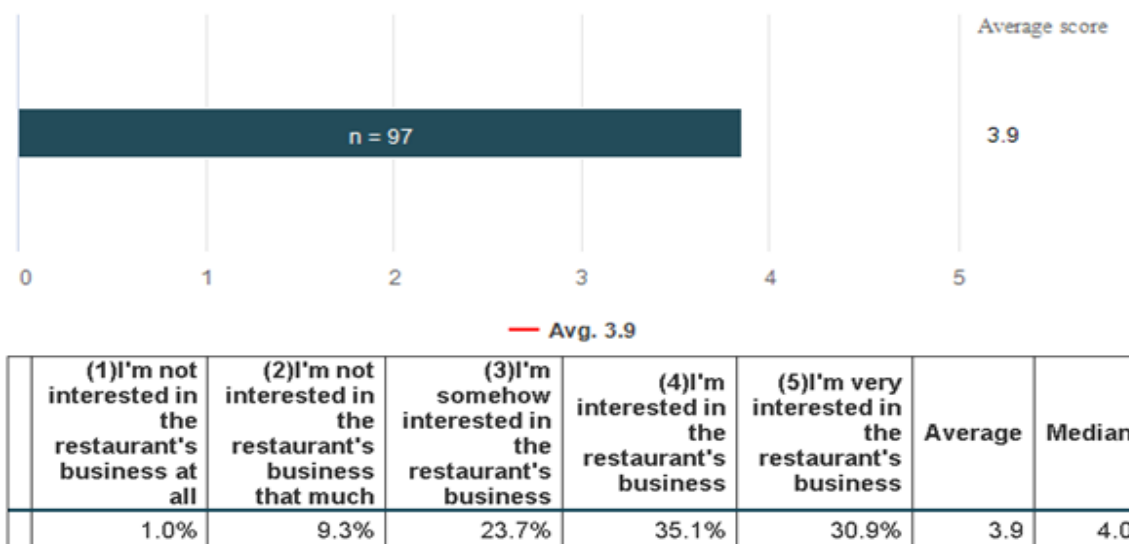


Figure 27 Customers' concern level towards the restaurant business

The level of customers' concern about the restaurant's business which is shown in figure 27 is evaluated by the scale from 1 to 5 (from not interested at all to very interested). The result of this question shows that customers have a significant concern about the restaurant's business at 3.9 in average point. Therefore, it is reasonable when the 81% people

attending this survey is likely to choose place the order directly to the restaurant rather than using third-party apps in the question 19. Figure 28 presents the result of the question 19.

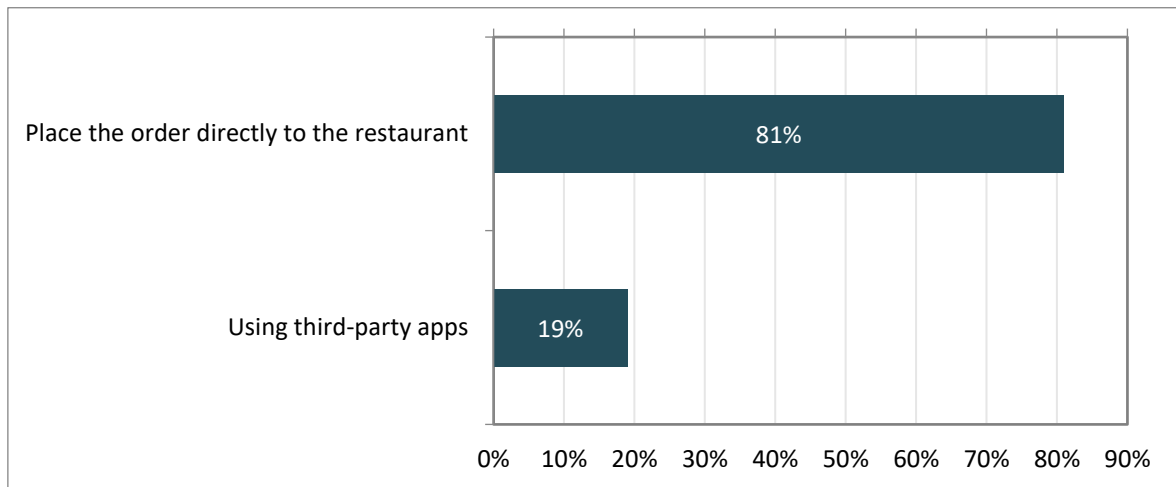


Figure 28 Customers' choice between ordering food directly to the restaurant and using third-party apps

6 Conclusion and discussion

The main objective of this thesis work is to study how customers respond towards different types of food take-out methods. The responses are observed through customer preferences, customer's purchase frequency and purchase amount. Besides the main objective, the author also found out the differences and similarities among different group of customers and their motivation when choosing their favourite methods. The reason for that is to gain the customers' profile for Thai Vegan Kitchen if the restaurant would like to generate new food services in the future.

6.1 Answering the research questions

In order to totalize the research work in this thesis, it is necessary to overview the research's result and answer the research questions which are asked at the beginning of the report:

"How do customers respond to different food take-out methods at Thai Vegan Kitchen?"

In general, the most favourite food take-out method is home delivery. Walk-in ordering and picking up at the restaurant is the second highest voted among available methods at Thai Vegan Kitchen. When it comes to placing the order in advance and picking up at the restaurant, the website order method is referred over the phone-call order method. The least preferred method is picking up at the pick-up point.

The most frequently used food take-out method is walk-in ordering and picking up at the restaurant 1-2 times per month on average. Moreover, this method has the highest number of respondents who buy take-away food 1-5 times per week. Although home delivery is the most favourite method, it is the least frequently used one at Thai Vegan Kitchen, with 76 respondents claiming that they have not used the service. The most frequent level claimed in this method stops at 1-2 times per month. It means that nobody uses home delivery services more than 1-2 times per month at Thai Vegan Kitchen. Ordering food in advance via the restaurant's website is more popular than ordering via phone-call. While 64 respondents claimed they use website ordering at least 1-3 times per three months, only 53 respondents have used the phone-call order method at least 1-3 times per three months. Picking up food at the pick-up point holds the second position in the least used methods at Thai Vegan Kitchen.

The purchase amount which is described by the number of portions bought per order, is not influenced by customer preference. Customers are likely to order more when they put less effort to pick the order themselves, such as home delivery. Furthermore, customer preference affects the frequency of applying food take-out methods directly. Buyers tend to order

more frequently with the methods that make them feel more comfortable and convenient but walk-in order.

There is some conflict that the author found out after the research:

- Home delivery is the most preferred food take-out method but the least used method at Thai Vegan Kitchen. This is because of the limited availability of food delivery services.
- Walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant method is the second favourite method, but customers buy the smallest amount of food at Thai Vegan Kitchen.
- Picking up at the pick-up point method is considered as a win-win solution for both customers and the business. However, it is the least preferred method among all the available methods at Thai Vegan Kitchen.

“Why did customers respond like that?”

Customer motivation when selecting the favourite food take-out methods is not only affected by their needs according to Maslow’s Hierarchy but also by stimuli from 4C’s marketing mix and other stimuli. In this case, another stimulus is considered as the COVID-19 pandemic. The concern about hygiene and social distance issues is emphasized in customer motivation while choosing food take-out methods during the pandemic.

Convenience or place also plays a crucial role in motivating customers to choose different types of food take-out methods. As the result shows, customers who live or work nearby the restaurant will prefer walk-in order. One of the reasons for choosing walk-in order is suddenly need recognition, and it is convenient to walk in and place the order at the restaurant’s premiere. Otherwise, food delivery service will be ideal for customers far away from the restaurant. Furthermore, customers focus on the entire cost rather than the product’s price itself. This is illustrated by the willingness to use food services from third-party apps, even though the meal’s price can be higher, and the delivery fee will be added.

Generally, demographic characteristics do not show a significant effect to the customers preference towards different types of food take-out methods. However, it has a certain influence on the number of food take-out consumers. The main customer segment in using food take-out services at Thai Vegan Kitchen is filtered after analyzing the survey’s result. Generally, customers who usually buy takeaway is in the age group from 18 to 30 years old, studying and working at the same time or full-time working, net income from €2000/month to €2999/month. Female customers mostly occupy the services users. Those customers who belong to the main customer segment of take-away usage are single or

married but without children or “other” stages not mentioned in the survey’s question. Furthermore, people who eat out one to two times a week also dominate the amount of food take-out users. Occupation does not affect customer behaviour in the context of their preference towards food take-out methods.

6.2 Suggestions for Thai Vegan Kitchen

Customer preference not only helps researchers acknowledge what type of service an individual customer like or dislike but also indicates the potential possibility to upgrade or generate a service. By recognizing the conflict between customer preference and customer behaviour in real life, the author can give three suggestions for the case company.

In order to increase the sale in walk-in order, the restaurant can offer the “one person” or “two people” special set. Those sets might include one meal and one dessert, or appetizer and dessert for “two people” set. This can stimulate customers to buy more and experience more meals from the menu.

The massive demand of food delivery in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic or even post-COVID-19 pandemic cannot be neglected. According to Yle (2021), the restaurant restrictions would be continued until at least mid-November 2021. The restrictions apply to most of the largest cities of Finland, such as Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere, Turku, and Pori. It means that the future of the restaurant business cannot be ensured to back to normal. Moreover, the food truck has already become a restaurant, and the flexibility of movement or food delivery by the truck is gone. Therefore, generating a new food delivery service can be the appropriate choice. Though the survey’s result, offering food delivery via third-party apps is more suitable for customers.

However, the possibility of offering food delivery by restaurant’s own transport cannot be denied. However, the restaurant must consider the effectiveness of this service from a comprehensive point of view. In order to minimize the cost for hiring and operating, the restaurant can offer food delivery service from 4 PM to 8 PM in slow hours on weekdays. Depending on the restaurant’s ability, the actual delivery days can even be adjusted every week. Furthermore, communication between customers and the restaurant is super strong and effective. Because the restaurant always uploads two posts/day on Facebook and Instagram every day with interesting contents about vegan life, memes, and daily special dish. This engages interaction between customers and restaurant. Therefore, the author believes that it is not difficult to inform the food delivery service schedule to customers.

When it comes to the picking up at the pick-up point method, the author suggests if the restaurant would like to execute further research, the customer experience and customer

satisfaction in this method is considered to improve the service. Because this food take-out method is effective, time-saving, and cost-saving for the restaurant.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire in the online survey



Survey: Consumer behaviour towards different types of food take-out methods in Finland during COVID-19

 Mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk (*) and must be filled in to complete the form.

Hello,

My name is Anh Nguyen, a third-year student at LAB University of Applied Sciences as well as a worker at Thai Vegan Kitchen. I am currently writing a thesis about the topic "Consumer Behaviour towards different types of food take-out methods in Finland during COVID-19" with Thai Vegan Kitchen as the case company. The purpose of this survey is to find out how customers respond to food-takeaway services at Thai Vegan Kitchen and study how possible factors influence that behaviour.

The survey contains 17 questions asking about your demographic information, the frequency of using food take-out services and the reasons for choosing them. The survey will take 7 minutes to complete. Your name or any personal information that can identify you will not be asked.

Your response would be so much meaningful to me!

1. Which age group do you belong to? *

- Under 18
- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-60
- Above 60

2. What is your gender? *

- Female
- Male
- Other

3. What is your employment status? *

- Studying
- Studying and working
- Working
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Retired

4. What industry are you currently working in? *

- Agriculture
- Education
- Arts
- Engineering, manufacturing
- Health and welfare
- Information and Communication Technologies
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Business
- Design
- Other

5. What is the range of your income monthly? *

- Lower than €1000
- €1000 - €1999
- €2000 - €2999
- €3000 - €4000
- Above €4000

6. What is your family life-cycle stage? *

- Single
- Honeymoon (married with no child)
- Parenthood (married with children)
- Post-parenthood (married and independent children)
- Dissolution (divorced or the partner has passed away)
- Other

7. Are you a member of Vegan Union or Animal-right organizations ? *

- Yes
- No

8. How often do you eat-out in one week in general? *

- 1-2 times
- 3-4 times
- 5-6 times
- 7-8 times
- More than 8 times

9. What kind of food take-out methods that you usually use at Thai Vengan Kitchen? *

	I have not use the service	1-2 times per 3 months	1-2 times per month	1-2 times per week	3-5 times per week	more than 5 times per week
9.1 Phone-call order and picking up at the restaurant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.2 Website order and picking up at the restaurant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.3 Walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.4 Picking up at the pick-up point	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.5 Home delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. How many portions do you usually buy per order? *

	0	1	2	3	4	5	>5
10.1 Phone-call order and picking up at the restaurant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.2 Website order and picking up at the restaurant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.3 Walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.4 Picking up at the pick-up point	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10.5 Home delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. What are your favourite food take-out methods in general? (maximum 2 options)? *

Walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant

- Phone-call order and picking up at the restaurant
- Website order and picking up at the restaurant
- Picking up at the pick-up point
- Home delivery

12. Reasons for preferring phone-call order and picking up at the restaurant (can choose more than 1 option) *

- I don't want to wait
- I can have fast confirmation
- I can ask about current situation or some on-the-spot issues (waiting time, allergies, food recommendation, etc.)
- I don't know about website order
- Other reason:

13. Reasons for preferring walk-in order and picking up at the restaurant (Can choose more than 1 option) *

- I am living or working nearby the restaurant
- I don't have a plan in advance
- I eat in but order take-away portions for my family, friends, or acquaintance
- Other reason:

14. Reasons for preferring website order and picking up at the restaurant (Can choose more than 1 option) *

- I can set the pick-up time
- I am not willing to speak on the phone

- I found the restaurant from Google, Happy Cow
- I have more time to think about different food options
- Other reason:

15. Reasons for picking up at the pick-up point (Can choose more than 1 option)

- The pick-up point is nearby my home/ my office
- I prefer home delivery but it is not available, so this is fine
- I don't want to have physical contact
- Other reason:

16. Reason for preferring home delivery (Can choose more than 1 option)

- I am not able to go too far from my house
- I have a big order and not able to pick up at the restaurant
- I don't live near the restaurant
- I don't want to have physical contact
- I am lazy at that time and don't want to go out
- Other reason:

17. If the restaurant offers food ordering on third-party apps with a higher price and no discount for the member of Vegan Union, are you willing to use the service? *

- Yes
- No

18. If no, can you explain the reason?

- I want to support the restaurant
- I don't trust in third-party apps
- I want to get the discount and cheaper price
- Ethical reasons
- Other reason:

19. If must choose between ordering directly to the restaurant and third-party apps, which one will you prefer? *

- Place the order directly to the restaurant
- Using third-party apps

20. How much do you concern about the restaurant business? (1 to 5 scale) *

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
I'm not interested in the restaurant's business at all	I'm not interested in the restaurant's business that much	I'm somehow interested in the restaurant's business	I'm interested in the restaurant's business	I'm very interested in the restaurant's business
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Would you like to tell me more?
