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THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKE-OUT FOOD PACKAGING

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ABSTRACT

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Food packaging is more than just an excellent package on a store aisle. It is an essential component of a successful new product introduction and acts as the point of contact between the restaurant and the consumer.

The packaging is a restaurant's initial point of contact with its customers. It is seen as an opportunity to transmit its message visually and plays an essential role across sectors. Packaging is seen as a differentiation technique, assisting consumers in distinguishing one product from another and deciding from a large selection of identical items. Customers are enticed by appealing packaging and are more likely to repurchase items from restaurants that employ it.

This thesis employs quantitative research, with 40 responses from a survey approach and a 5-point itemized rating scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The goal is to demonstrate the significance of packaging in food restaurants and enhance packaging to attract more consumers.

Keywords ¹	Packaging, food restaurant, and marketing
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nowadays, more and more individuals prefer convenience and quickness of over-eating on the spot by using a meal delivery service. According to a recent study, meal delivery has become a popular consumer trend across all demographics. (Statista, 2022).

Frost & Sullivan, a US-based business consulting firm, estimated the worldwide meal delivery sector to produce \$82 billion in total sales in 2018 and expected to double by 2025. Consumer purchasing behavior has changed significantly in the approximately two years since the COVID-19 epidemic. Restaurants not providing delivery risk falling behind their competition due to rising demand. Restaurants must adapt to changing consumer trends and expand their delivery services to retain a consistent income stream.

Previously, restaurant diners observed the view, the performance of the food on the dish, or the service attitude of the employees. However, now, customers can only experience and estimate what they receive through the ordering application when most of those components have been gone when purchasing food online. As a result, one of the factors that restaurants must examine to improve their delivery service is food packing. Food packaging now is not just paper bags; it can be a powerful voice of business or a marketing tool.

This study analyzes the importance of packaging for the success of the restaurant industry and how to use packaging effectively to boost sales and customer loyalty.

1.2 Research questions

Packing is a vast field; however, this research is to find out the influences of packaging on the food delivery service of restaurants. Four main questions need to be answered:

1. What is “take-out packaging” in the restaurant?
2. How can take-out packing affect customers’ experiences?
3. What are the trends in packaging?
4. How do restaurants choose suitable packing to market themselves and boost revenue?

2 OVERALL ABOUT FOOD DELIVERY PACKAGING?

2.1 What is food delivery packaging?

“Food packaging is defined as enclosing food to protect it from tampering or contamination from physical, chemical, and biological sources, with active packaging being the most common packaging system used for preserving food products.” (Modified Atmosphere Packaging and Controlled Atmosphere Packaging, 2019). For restaurants, take-out food packaging includes all the items they deliver to customers to store and preserve food. That may include bags, cartons & trays, cups & cup accessories, napkins, plates, bowls & cutlery, wraps, tissues, and dips. During the COVID era, when restaurants have mostly switched to take-out, food packaging is seen as one of the most concerning issues. However, even as dining rooms reopen, many customers still choose to pick up or order delivery. Choosing the proper packaging for each type of food can help prolong and maintain flavor and freshness until they are delivered. Furthermore, excellent food delivery packaging ideas can help improve customer service and affect consumer behavior.

Food packaging has two levels known as primary and secondary packaging. With a thorough understanding of primary and secondary packaging, restaurant owners can lower packaging costs, improve performance and get more value for money from the logistics.

1. Primary packaging

Primary packaging, commonly referred to as consumer or retail packaging, is the box in direct contact with the product. (Netpak, 2019)

The main function of primary packaging is to protect and maintain the goods contained therein — to keep the goods fresh and away from light, moisture, and other things that might influence them.

It is the location of all essential branding, such as logos and slogans, designs for artwork, and information. It also serves as a communication tool by displaying what

the product is, what it performs, why buyers should buy it, and any crucial information such as ingredients and warnings. The primary packaging aims to conform to the brand and represent the restaurant while delivering crucial information that customers need.

The type of primary packaging used depends on the type of product which is selling. For example, primary packaging in the restaurant might be boxes containing food or wrap paper for the burger and sandwiches.

2. Secondary packaging

Secondary packaging refers to the packaging used to group several pre-packaged items. For example, secondary packaging in the restaurant might be a large take-away bag or box containing all of the meal orders, such as meal boxes, dipping, and tissue. The main purposes of secondary packaging are:

- Secondary packaging is crucial in product branding and marketing. Secondary packaging, like primary packaging, might include restaurant information, slogans, or recognized elements. Furthermore, the secondary packaging contains information about the consumer for delivery, such as name, home address, and important requests.
- Secondary packaging packs many items for a more convenient carrier. The fundamental problem of secondary packaging is logistics, so the packaging must now be strong enough to protect the primary packing during transit. Putting all food boxes in one bag allows the delivery person to quickly check the quantity and avoid loss.



Figure 1 Example of two levels of packaging (by Coco Roto)

2.2 Packaging the brand – How to help restaurant be unique

Regarding branding, packaging frequently falls to the bottom of the priority list (Farhana, 2012).

However, it is one of the most specific and cost-effective methods to increase a restaurant's visibility and drive sales. The first opportunity to interact with potential customers is through packaging. Therefore, making it unique will majorly impact customer impression and purchasing experience.

The investment in all-inclusive branding is worthy, regardless of the business's size. Once the order arrives at the door, the restaurant has almost no control over the diners' experience. The packaging design helps the restaurant to have an extra highlight to create its impression.

A branded packaging design has a name, layout, or mark of ownership that aids in the identification of products, services, people, and locations. Branding aids in differentiating the product in the minds of consumers.

Food product companies use colors, forms, symbols, patterns, and messages as package qualities (Nancarrow, 1998). There are many items to brands, such as carry bags (paper or plastic), burger boxes, fries bags/boxes, bags/boxes for side dishes, complement tubs for sauces/dips, tubs for main dishes with branded lids, packs of single-use wipes. Promotions can also be added to the packaging in the form of specially printed stickers or QR codes to encourage consumers to use any of the restaurant's web services - online ordering, menu, discount program, etc.



Figure 2 Ho Kow Hainam Kopitiam Take Away Breakfast Set (by Ng Pei Yee)

Packaging transmits the brand name and produces a picture in the consumer's mind that can develop trust and loyalty (Montague, M., 1999). For example, a study in the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine in August by Stanford and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation asked 63 3 to 5-year-olds to taste identical foods. One side is labeled McDonald's (branded), whereas the other is plain and unlabeled.

Result? Even though the two items are similar, food in unlabeled packaging is regularly rated less tasty than food in McDonald's branded packaging. Around 77% of children believed McDonald's branded fries tasted better than plain-wrapped fries, while 54% preferred McDonald's carrot wraps - more than double the rate of the anonymous sample. Branded packaging demonstrates the importance of packaging in transmitting the brand image to customers and influencing their purchase behavior.

Moreover, branded packaging helps restaurants stay ahead of the competition. Creating a unique design for the store that stands out from the crowd increases the edge over other competitors. In addition, branded merchandise or food packaging acts as a flyer, promoting the store to potential new customers who may not have heard of the brand before.

Nevertheless, branded packaging is only appropriate for some establishments. It takes time for market research, ideas, and design and is more expensive than importing pre-existing blank packaging, which can be a challenge for start-ups and small businesses not to be ready to invest in brand packaging.

3 THE IMPORTANCE OF DELIVERY PACKAGING FOR TAKE-OUT SERVICE

3.1 Basic functions

Restaurants always want their food delivered to customers to be safe and retain the same taste as eating at the restaurant. Therefore, the packaging must ensure the function of protecting food during transportation. These functions may include:

1. Anti-cross-contamination safeguards

Cross-contamination at a restaurant refers to the transmission of germs or other hazardous microorganisms from food, equipment, or humans to food (Davidson, K., 2020, January 21). Cross-contamination can happen at any point in the food preparation, including packing meals for takeaway and delivery. Proper food packaging, such as tamper-proof containers, protects food against cross-contamination during transportation from the restaurant to the customer - something especially critical during COVID.

2. Make food more appealing

No one likes to pay extra for delivery and get cold food or cold food spilled. Therefore, food packaging must be strong enough to withstand transportation from the restaurant to the customer.

Suitable packaging keeps food from being damaged and stands upright to look good in customers' hands, making a good impression on customers and motivating them to buy again and again.

3. Temperature regulation

Nothing is more frustrating than receiving cold soup, pizza, or pasta. In fact, 60% of customers consider the quality, freshness, and temperature of their food to be "the most important aspect of ordering delivery" (Zulkarnain Kedah, Ismail, Y., A K M Ahasanul, & Ahmed, S, 2015). Ideally, the restaurant should pack hot and cold foods individually so that each dish reaches the proper temperature to enjoy.

4. Demonstrate the restaurant's worth.

A restaurant's packaging can represent its value and voice. For example, biodegradable packaging is a simple way to demonstrate to customers that restaurant owners care about the environment. In addition, the packaging is a way for restaurant owners to express their views, development directions, and standards.

3.2 Selling functions

According to The Paperwork's infographic, 52% of consumers believe they will return to a business if they perceive a premium in product packaging. Additionally, after making a purchase, 90% of consumers reuse their product packaging boxes and bags, and 40% will post a photo of the packaging if it is interesting. Therefore, packaging also has a selling function. The selling function is represented by two sub-functions, the marketing function, and the convenience function.

1. Information and marketing functions

Packaging is becoming an essential part of marketing communications because of its ability to convey a message to the consumer at the time of purchase (Schmitt & Simonson, 1997).

Like traditional advertising, packaging also needs to attract and hold consumers' attention by implementing different messages. All the messages the packaging sends to the people who interact with it are responsible for conveying information through signs, words, symbols, colors, and shapes. It can be information about the restaurant, how to properly use the dish to keep the taste like dine-in, a QR code that directs to the website, the restaurant's menu, or simply a memorable slogan. Packaging can be designed specially by:

- Packaging shape or design
- Packaging size
- Packaging color
- Packaging material
- Graphic applications (brand logo, fonts, images, etc.)

Packaging is one of the least expensive marketing methods, but it is easy to impact customers' eyes and make them ready to return after the first experience. That is why packaging is called the "silent marketer." It helps to promote customers' curiosity, impression, and purchasing power, while simultaneously creating a unique feature for the restaurant.

2. Convenience function

Convenience is often considered a property that makes a product easy to hold, simplifies use or consumption, and adds ease or comfort to a product (Random House Dictionary, 2009). In recent studies (e.g., Candel, 2001), convenience is considered one of the variables that influence consumer behavior and contribute to a product's market success, especially in the context of non-durable consumer products. Therefore, convenience is one of the essential packaging functions, alongside marketing and logistics (Prendergast & Pitt, 1996; Smith & Taylor, 2014). Packaging also enables products to be conveniently used to change consumer habits and behaviors (Smith & Taylor, 2014).

In the restaurant industry, packaging convenience displays itself in whether the packaging is easy to open or carry. Customers ordering food from online apps want their food to be well-packaged and easy to open and use. Likewise, shippers want packages that are easy to handle, put in the company's dedicated box, and delivered without worrying about missing or damaged items.

4 FACTORS WILL AFFECT THE CHOICE OF PACKAGING OF RESTAURANT

4.1 Eco-friendly packaging and material selections for that

Sustainability has become an increasingly important element to consider when selecting materials (Matmatch.com, 2019). As a result, a material's environmental effect has become an essential factor, in addition to its characteristics, ease of manufacture, cost, and other aspects necessary to its application areas.

Every material and final product has an environmental footprint defined by its manufacturing, processing, design, durability, and reusability. Sustainability in the context of materials is defined as more brilliant manufacturing processes, recyclability, material lifetime, biodegradability, decreased CO₂ emissions, and a well-established circular economy. Sustainable materials are now more vital than ever, whether via the discovery of new materials less dangerous to the environment or the reuse and remanufacturing of current materials and products to reduce waste.

4.1.1 Environmental considerations

In fact, the packaging is what is thrown away after a consumer opens and consumes the food. So, using eco-friendly packaging that can be easily recycled and composted is one of the things restaurants can consider.

Eco-friendly packaging is any packaging that is easy to recycle, safe for people and the environment, and created from recycled materials. It employs materials and manufacturing techniques that commonly affect energy consumption and natural resources. Eco-friendly packaging solutions, often known as sustainable or green packaging, strive to:

- Reduce the quantity of product packaging.
- Encourage the use of reusable and renewable materials.
- Reduce packaging-related expenditures.
- Eliminate the usage of hazardous materials in package manufacture.

- Provides simple recycling solutions for packaging.

The Sustainable Packaging Coalition explains why this innovative packaging solution is helpful to our whole world

- Throughout its life cycle, it is safe and healthy for individuals and communities.
- It is composed of environmentally friendly materials.
- Renewable energy is used to obtain, manufacture, transport, and recycle it.
- Sustainable packaging meets market cost and performance standards.
- Eco-packaging is physically engineered to save resources and energy.
- It maximizes the usage of recycled or renewable resources.
- Eco-packaging products are made with clean production methods and ethical practices.
- It is recovered and used in closed-loop biological and industrial processes.

4.1.2 Eco-materials

There are several biodegradable and recyclable alternative packaging options. The most frequent types of packaging that disintegrate naturally are listed below.

1. Bagasse

Bagasse packaging is made from recycled bagasse. Bagasse containers are compostable and designed in many shapes and sizes to suit the market. In addition, bagasse production is particularly sustainable compared to paper or foam production, which uses non-renewable resources and causes deforestation.

Bagasse containers are grease-proof, leak-proof, and heat-resistant, allowing restaurants to pack meals without fear of spills and food damage during transit.



Figure 3 Bagasse boxes (by Webstaurant Store)

2. Plant-based plastic cups and containers

Consider using cups made from recyclable or plant-based materials as an eco-friendly alternative to disposable drinking cups for restaurant operators. PLA and PE plastics are the most commonly used eco-friendly polymers for food packaging. PLA plastic is a plant-based bioplastic typically created from starch or corn roots. PET plastic is recyclable, free of harmful chemicals, and BPA-free. PET plastic is ideal for holding colorful cocktails, smoothies, and soft drinks because of its crystal-clear vision and high luster. Disposable cups made from durable and shatter-proof plant-based plastic prevent spills and leaks during transit.



Figure 4 Plant-based plastic (by Baddeley Brothers)

3. Kraft paper containers

The kraft box is ideal for restaurants that like simplicity but are still elegant and sturdy. Kraft paper is created from waste wood pulp so that it can be recycled entirely. Kraft packaging comes in various shapes and sizes to meet the needs of food delivery services.

The kraft container is a lightweight, reliable, eco-friendly packaging solution that can easily hold large volumes of food. Restaurants can use kraft boxes with grease-resistant linings to serve dishes with oil or sauces without worrying about spills. The kraft paper can also be easily printed with food-safe colors to create beautiful takeout boxes. Plus, because most container shapes can be stacked, kraft containers are great for optimizing storage space in the kitchen.



Figure 5 Kraft paper containers (by caryn)

4. Bamboo paper container and utensils

Bamboo paper containers are an excellent solution for business sustainability as they are a rapidly renewable resource. In addition, bamboo paper boxes can be composted and wholly recycled, a perfect environmental protection solution.

The bamboo paper container has the advantage of not leaking, ensuring that the food provided to the consumer is completely clean. Bamboo eating utensils can also be used in restaurants as an alternative to single-use plastic.



Figure 6 Bamboo materials for take-away (by Gifthampers.com.hk)

4.2 Economics

When it comes to budgeting, packaging cost is one of the vital considerations. Companies often spend 10-40% of the product's selling price on the packaging (Mohana Madhurakavi, 2021).

There are many factors can affect packaging costs:

- **Order quantity:** The more quantity, the lower the price; the smaller the quantity, the higher the price. Restaurants should choose reliable suppliers and conduct business with them for a long time.
- **Size:** Restaurants should list the sizes that can be used to avoid the packaging being too big, uncertain, or too small, leading to more packaging per order. Alternatively, the restaurant can design flexible packaging, which can be used for many types of orders.
- **Printing:** The printing cost is determined by the kind, amount of details, and printing color. Of course, if the restaurant wants to print black and white packaging with fewer embellishments, the price will be lower than for color and complex printed packaging.

- Shipping costs: Is the printing factory's address in the nation or abroad? What is the mode of delivery? Traveling by train, truck, or plane? These are some elements to consider in order to reduce delivery expenses.

The packaging cost is one of the biggest challenges for restaurants because it can increase the price of takeaway food. The more quality packaging, the higher cost they need to pay. Therefore, restaurants should wonder how to balance reasonable packaging cost and profit and how to use packaging costs to buy customers' experiences.

5 FOOD PACKAGING TRENDS

5.1 Sustainable packaging

Customers are increasingly interested in the green environment; they pay more attention to whether the things they consume must protect the environment or not (Butler, A. (2022, October 12). Thus, sustainable packaging was born.

Sustainable packaging is more than just recycled packaging; it covers the complete life cycle of a package, from sourcing to disposal. Sustainability is about completing the loop and establishing a circular economy, i.e., where everything is recycled and reused instead of being used once and then thrown away.

The Sustainable Packaging Alliance (SPC) has developed a list of criteria to consider when creating sustainable packaging, including:

- Individuals and communities benefit from the recycling of sustainable packaging
- Meet cost and market performance criteria
- Use renewable energy to produce, transport, and recycle
- Use renewable resources and reuse them until they reach their full potential
- Use clean manufacturing techniques to create products
- Design materials and energy that can be recovered and used in a closed loop (reusable)

Sustainable packaging design aims to create the least possible environmental impact, which can be done by using recycled materials. There are several methods for incorporating sustainable packaging into a restaurant company to reduce its total carbon footprint. Here are a few such examples:

1. Plant-based packaging

Plant-based packaging includes plant materials such as mushrooms, corn, seaweed, or food waste. The plant-based packaging the restaurant uses will be selected depending on the food the restaurant provides. However, the restaurant should prioritize choosing those that are odorless and tasteless to avoid affecting the taste of the dish.

2. Recyclable packaging

Reusing packaging materials is an excellent approach to extending the life of previously used materials. Using recycled kraft boxes is one of the most accessible packaging solutions to recycle.

5.2 Minimalist packaging

In the food packaging sector, minimalism has become a significant trend. (Bekemeier, C. (2019). It entails keeping the package simple by using simple designs with few components, focusing instead on the value provided that will make the packaging look neater and airier.

According to the annual Sustainable Packaging Study done by Packaging Digest and the Sustainable Packaging Coalition, 92% of customers believe that minimalist, eco-friendly, or biodegradable packaging is essential. Moreover, 74% of business owners prioritize utilizing recycled content materials for their packaging (Best, H., & Kneip, T. (2011). Therefore, green and minimalist packaging will be the best choice to address environmental challenges and cut carbon footprints and energy expenses.

So, what are the bonuses of minimalist packaging designs?

1. Fewer distractions

When a restaurant uses minimal packaging, customers can instantly identify the brand. In addition, the restaurant's minimalist packaging may simplify its appearance while still being visually appealing. For example, the package might include a logo, address, or specific patterns.

2. Savings on expenses

Minimalism in product design lowers design and printing expenses while supporting the packaging's aesthetic appeal (Minimalist packaging, 2019)

The primary purpose of minimalist packaging is to save raw resources while also increasing the shelf life of product packaging through reuse and recycling. As a result, businesses must be mindful of the materials they use. Paper materials such as Kraft and SBS (Solid Bleached Sulfate) are becoming increasingly popular in today's minimalist packaging world because they help decrease waste without sacrificing product safety.

5.3 Edible packaging

Edible packaging is a very novel and different kind of packaging. Edible packaging is created with a biodegradable biofilm that limits and protects food from spoilage. In addition, edible films and coatings must be tasteless so they cannot be detected during food consumption.

Many campaigns have used edible packaging for advertising and market survey. For example, in 2015, KFC in the United Kingdom tested edible coffee mugs consisting of cookies, sugar paper, and heat-resistant white chocolate. In 2016, in Bangalore, India, where plastic was banned, KFC used edible tortilla bowls to replace the plastic wrapping used for India signature dishes. As a result, rice Bowlz is one of the chain's best-selling items, accounting for 6% of domestic sales.



Figure 7 KFC Edible Bowls (by Par Faustine Loison)

However, there are several weaknesses to edible packaging. First, specific food packaging will be unsanitary when exposed to various conditions and during transit. Some edible packaging will still require extra outside packaging to keep pollutants out and customers safe. The external packaging will not be biodegradable and will continue to be made of the original packaging materials, making it ecologically unfriendly. Second, some edible packaging choices may not be suitable for customers who suffer from food allergies, most notably milk and lactose intolerance. People with gluten sensitivities should also be cautious of edible packaging since some may include gluten-containing essences.

6 TIPS TO IMPROVE RESTAURANT DELIVERY PACKAGING

6.1 Focusing on safety packaging

1. Temperature safety & tamper-proof options

So, how can a restaurant keep the food hot and bacteria-free?

- Separating objects based on their temperature
Cold and hot food should always be transported together in a different bag. Bacteria thrive in environments with frequent temperature swings. Therefore, restaurants should store items of the same temperature in the same bag.
- Using solid packing materials.
Spills and cross-contamination can put restaurants, delivery drivers, and consumers at risk. The long-life container eliminates the need for the driver to touch or handle the food in any way.
- Tamper-proof seals are another critical component of safe food packaging. Tamper-proof seals and labels reduce risk and build consumer confidence by demonstrating a restaurant's care for its food. The tamper-proof seal also ensures that the food is not opened before reaching the customer.

2. Ensure food safety compliance throughout the delivery process

The driver will be the last person to contact the package after the restaurant has accepted the order and prepared the dish. Therefore, restaurants should ask all drivers:

- Washing hands before receiving meals
- Using hand sanitizer before and after delivery
- Temperature-controlled food storage and transportation

If the restaurant has its driver, regularly evaluate their delivery devices and vehicles to ensure everything is hygienic. These include drink containers, ice packs, insulated boxes, and food bags.

6.2 Gaining customers' trust

1. Increase the effectiveness of branding

Food packaging is critical for online kitchens because customers can only buy food through order applications. Therefore, their food delivery packaging is the only thing they interact with and remember.

Daryaganj, a prominent Delhi restaurant, has developed a unique idea of "5 sensations in one delivery box." As a result, the restaurant has created takeout packaging that appeals to all five senses of customers, specifically:

- **Touch:** High-quality package material will boost the interest in touching and exploring.
- **Smell:** The packaging keeps the food's scent.
- **Taste:** The meal preserves the restaurant's signature taste.
- **Hear:** A carefully crafted playlist of great music designed by scanning the QR code inside the box provides customers with a signature taste of the cuisine.
- **See:** Dishes with the appealing appearance and fresh ingredients excite customers.



*Figure 8 Take-away packaging of Daryaganj, a Delhi restaurant
(Restaurant India)*

2. Food quality preservation

People are increasingly concerned about the quality of the food they eat. (Petrescu, D. C., Vermeir, I., & Petrescu-Mag, R. M. (2019). So when the consumer receives an effectively prepared food box, the first thing that bounces to mind is that the restaurant's food quality is equally as good.

Messy food packing will make customers lose their appetite and leave them with a negative image of the company. Therefore, food packaging plays a vital role in protecting food quality by avoiding leaks and eliminating food waste in the delivery sector.

3. Enhancing convenience

Restaurants are now paying greater attention to customer happiness (Gabrichidze, G. (n.d.). Förnamn Efternamn). Extra cutlery and napkins, for example, must be provided to make it simpler for consumers to enjoy meals, whether bringing them home or dining in the car.

Restaurants have also begun to take additional steps for customer safety following COVID-19. For example, many restaurants include sanitizing kits with food orders

so customers can use them before dining. These little extras show customers that the restaurant is concerned about their requirements.

6.3 Promoting environmental friendliness

Trends and customer demand heavily influence the food, beverage, and restaurant business. For example, as the number of individuals buying meals online grows, so do worries about sustainability and the environmental effect of food delivery. Two out of every three customers are more concerned about sustainable food packaging than five years ago (Sherred, K., 2018). A remarkable 66% of all customers are willing to pay more for items from environmentally conscious businesses, with half preferring to pay a premium for food-sustainable packaging (Accenture., 2019, June 4).

Restaurant owners and employees must develop a more sustainable and environmentally friendly strategy. They must first understand how their activities harm the environment and prioritize the sustainability measures that can truly make a difference. Excepting for creating eco-friendly packaging, as mentioned in the "Eco-friendly packaging and material selections for that" section, the restaurants can consider two more ways to go green.

1. Options for refusing to accept cutlery

Giving consumers a choice to forego plastic utensils when ordering takeout can help to decrease plastic waste.

Because most individuals who use meal-ordering apps will dine at home, where they already have utensils, extras are no longer required to provide them. For example, Wolt, one food ordering app, allows businesses to choose whether they want additional cutlery, preventing the situation when customers do not use it, resulting in waste.



Figure 9 Cutlery options on Wolt of Kaavya Cuisine (by Wolt)

2. Points program

Restaurant operators might explore efforts that encourage consumers to recycle and reuse when brainstorming eco-friendly ideas, including giving customers loyalty points or awards for bringing their containers.

Most individuals desire to lessen their environmental footprint but are still determining how. Restaurants may capitalize on this desire and improve the customer experience by providing recycling options and encouraging their use.

6.4 Using packaging as a marketing tool

According to The Paperwork infographic, 52% of consumers believe they would return to a firm for another transaction if they received products in superior packaging. In addition, after purchase, 90% of consumers reuse their product packaging boxes and bags, and 40% would post a photo of the packaging if it were interesting. Therefore, packaging is one of the most helpful marketing tools. Here are two ways the restaurant can use to maximum packaging opportunities:

1. Creating an event or holiday-themed packaging strategies

Creating variations of branded packaging is an effective way to capture the customers' attention. (Small Business, 2013). Restaurants can note important holidays or memories to design their period and be convenient for later changes.

Restaurants can consider the seasonal packaging (spring, summer, fall, winter) that creates excitement and builds customer expectations with each season change and specific sales offer.

Holiday packaging (Valentine's Day, Halloween, Christmas, and New Year) can build goodwill with your brand and strengthen your position on a particular holiday. For example, McDonald's has released a "Halloween bucket" for the last holiday in 2022.



Figure 10 Halloween buckets (by NBC New York)

2. Boosting the social media presence

With so much competition vying for customers' attention, restaurant owners will want to give them a reason to come and interact with their restaurant. (Appelroth, E., 2015).

Restaurants can list their social media accounts on their packaging, especially the ones where they share the most content, interact the most, and have the most followers. Restaurants can also use hashtags to boost their search; they can be restaurant names, events, or featured dishes. It will make customers curious about social media presence and more likely to use them in their posts and reposts. Finally, try to get customers to share their experiences with the restaurant's packaging online. All comments, shares, and reposts are digital word of mouth for the product and the business. (Shulman, B. 2022, March 7).

7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are two methods used to online survey and secondary data collection.

7.1 The online survey

1. Research design

The primary purpose of the research is to collect data about the effect of food packaging on customers' decisions when using the online delivery service of restaurants. Therefore, the questions mainly get data about customers' views when they receive a food package through an online order application. In addition, questions to confirm the accuracy and practicality of information related to packaging trends and changes in consumer behavior were analyzed in the above article.

The researcher chooses an online survey because the online survey is a popular, low-cost, and flexible option. The researcher can quickly collect many responses with no constraints on time or place. Moreover, the obtained data is easy to process and analyze.

2. Research approach

The survey was voluntary and anonymous. The targeted approach of this research is customers who have used online food ordering delivery services at least once per week. The survey collected 40 respondents from three age-group: under 18 years old, 18-25 years old, and over 25 years old, who are VAMK students, Vietnamese and Finnish. The completed questionnaires were returned by email.

	Age categories	Number of responder
1	< 18 years old	9
2	18-25 years old	24
3	> 25 years old	7

Table 1 Number of responders

3. Survey's data collection

The survey consisted of closed-ended questions that provided the respondent with a preset selection of responses (see Appendix). In detail, there are:

- 2 multiple-choice questions that have a list of options with a single answer possible (age categories and frequency of using food ordering service)
- 6 questions with a Likert scale 5-point itemized rating from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

For quantitative research, closed-ended questions work best because they give numerical data that may be statistically evaluated to identify customer behavior trends.

Google Forms designed the survey, and the data were analyzed using the statistical software of Google Forms too.

4. Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis involves using computational and statistical methods that focus on the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of datasets. (Ofem Eteng, 2022).

This research uses descriptive statistics to describe data received from Google Forms. Thus, the survey's primary purpose is to analyze customer behavior through purchasing decisions, so the data is aggregated to confirm the information; the data is not used to predict business plans or upcoming trends.

The method used is the percentage to explain how a particular value or set of respondents in the data connects to a broader group of respondents.

5. Research limitations

This research, like all others, has the following limitations:

- Interviewees are mainly young people (under 25 years old).
- The question is only related to food packaging and is based on the respondent's point of view to verify the information studied.

7.2 Secondary data collection

Secondary research is also referred to as desk research since it synthesizes existing data from the internet, peer-reviewed publications, textbooks, government archives, and libraries. The secondary researcher examines documented patterns in earlier research and applies this knowledge to the current research setting. Secondary research is suitable because it helps the researcher get enough information on food packaging topics from various sources but does not need to experience in reality, so it can save time to complete the study.

Google Scholar, Thesaurus, and Tritonia Library are the website used the most to collect information from e-books and the written thesis. In addition, textbooks, news articles, and reviews can provide industry insiders' perspectives on food packaging and their experience.

8 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

40 participants are mainly young people (see chart 1). There are 24 responders in groups 18-25 years old, accounting for 60%. Meanwhile, 9 responders in group under 18 years old (22.5%) and 7 responders in group over 25 years old. The reason is that the survey was sent to VAMK and Vietnamese students.

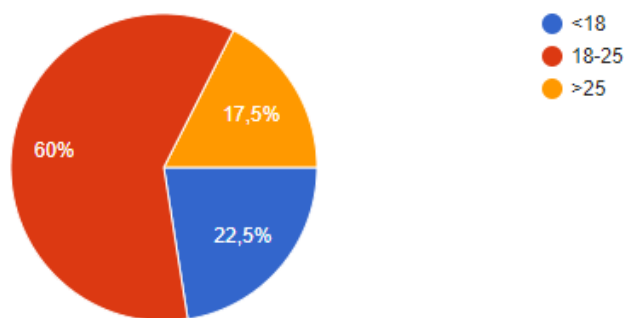


Chart 1 Age categories (by Google Form)

According to chart 2, 30 responders (75%) answered that they order food online more than three times a week. This proves that customers still choose regular online delivery service even after the COVID pandemic has ended.

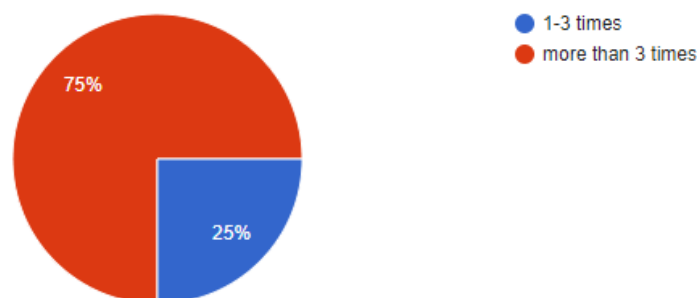


Chart 2 Frequency of respondents using an online food ordering app (by Google Form)

Most of them are young people from 18 to 25 years old (22 answers) and under 18 years old (5 answers). Meanwhile, 4 people in the group of 25+, 4 people in group

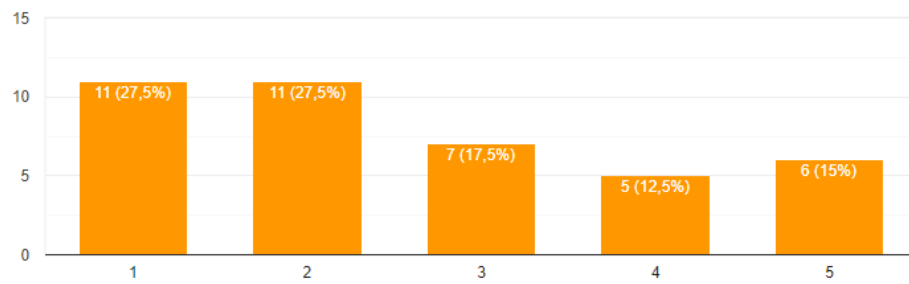
under 18 years old and only 2 people in group 18-25 answered that they only use the food ordering service 1 to 3 times a week (see Table 2).

Young people (18 to 25 years old) use online food ordering services more than other age groups. This may be because these are primarily students, living alone, or working people who do not want to cook in small portions and feel that ordering food online is faster and more convenient.

Age group	1-3 times ordering online food	More than 3 times ordering online food
< 18 years old	4	5
18-25 years old	2	22
> 25 years old	4	0

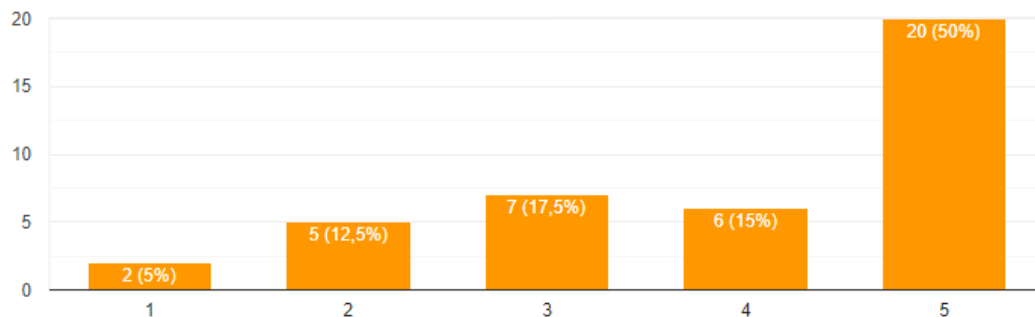
Table 2 Frequency of ordering food online by age group

About packaging, 27.5% participants strong disagree and 27.5% participants disagree when be asked “You will choose restaurants having cheaper price and poor packaging”, meanwhile 15% agree with this opinion. This proves that the quality of packaging is also a factor affecting customers' purchasing decisions. What they care about is not only the price but also the experience of using the food when it is delivered.



*Chart 3 Will you choose restaurants having cheaper price but poor packaging?
(by Google Form)*

Up to 50% of the participants said they would pay more for restaurants with sturdy packaging that clarify more of that information. When compared to two restaurants that sell the same menu with similar food quality, customers may be more likely to be willing to choose the restaurant that costs more but with careful packaging. Food is delivered warm and undamaged.



*Chart 4 You are willing to pay more for the restaurants using firm packaging (by
Google Form)*

Furthermore, according to chart 5, 42.5% of the participants said that the proper, unique, and branded packaging made them feel the restaurant is more premium. Impressions of food that match expectations can prevent a restaurant from being poorly evaluated and losing customers.

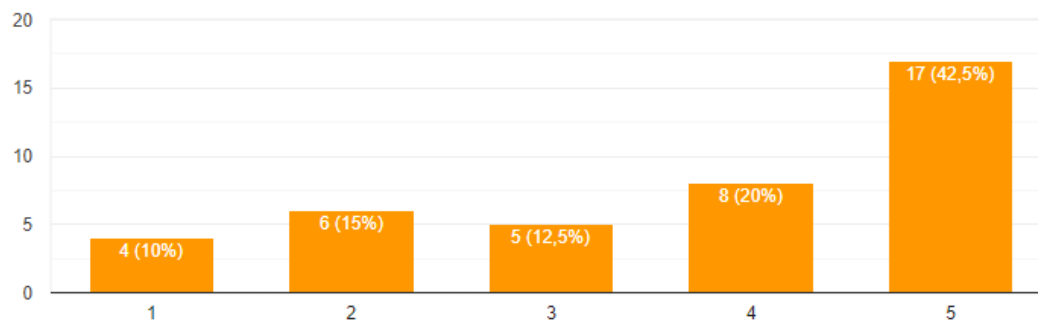


Chart 5 You feel that the restaurants having branded, unique and catchy packaging is more "premium" (by Google Form)

Hence, packaging plays an essential role in influencing the purchasing decision of diners. Especially at a time when food ordering services are becoming more and more popular. Firm, nice-looking packaging can make customers return again and help the restaurant be more competitive than competitors.

However, 46.2% of participants said that the taste of a dish is more important than its packaging.

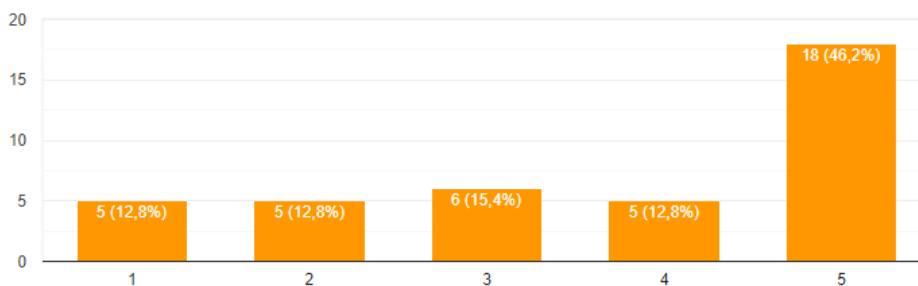


Chart 6 You think the taste of food is more important than packaging (by Google Form)

And 59% think they will feel catfish and disappointed when the packaging is excellent but the food quality is terrible. So it can be said that the food's quality is

what diners put first. The packaging is just a bonus to increase the perfect impression of the restaurant as well as create a more appetizing feeling for the food.

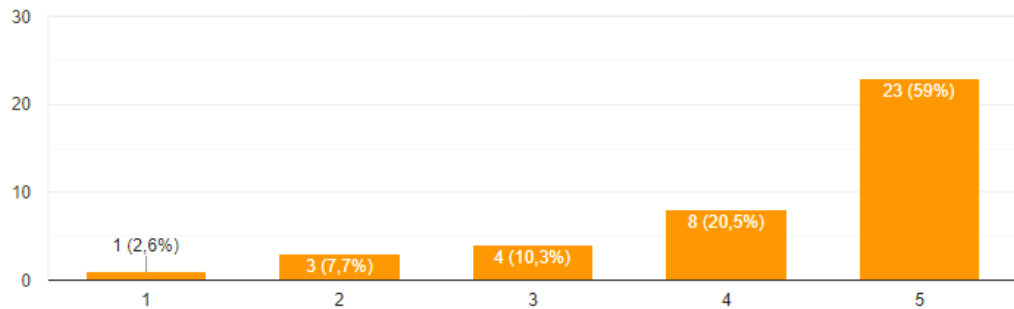


Chart 7 You will feel disappointed and catfish if the restaurants have cool (by Google Form)

And 37.5% of participants are willing to pay extra for eco-friendly packaging.

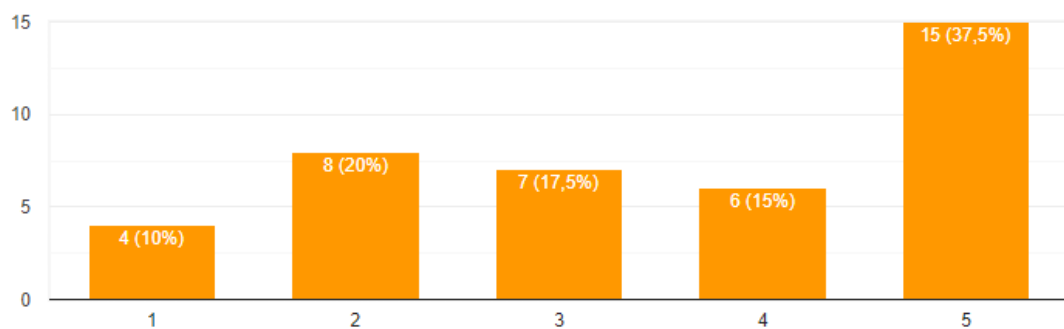


Chart 8 You are willing to pay more for the restaurants using eco-friendly (by Google Form)

Most of them are young people from under 18 to 25 years old. There are 5 participants under 18 years old and 10 people between 18-25 years old strongly agree with this view (level 5). As well as 4 people between 18 and 25 years old agree at level 4. (see Table 3).

Age group	Number of people agreeing (level 4)	Number of people strongly agreeing (level 5)
< 18 years old	0	5

18-25 years old	4	10
> 25 years old	2	0

Table 3 Number of people agreeing and strongly agreeing

This information shows that young customers are increasingly interested in the green environment. They are paying attention to whether the waste from product packaging after consumption is harmful to the environment.

In summary, based on the data collected from 40 participants, the information collected from the secondary research above is practical and can be applied to develop the restaurant's service.

Food packaging is gradually becoming one of the remarkable things for a restaurant that must fulfill at least specific criteria: be suitable for each type of food, and avoid damage when it reaches diners. Besides, eye-catching and unique packaging can also become a plus point in customers' eyes when they order food from the restaurant for the first time.

The quality of the food should also be in line with the packaging. With well-rounded packaging, the food inside must also be of equal quality because it still helps the restaurant retain loyal customers and verify its specific taste.

The environment is also an issue that restaurants should consider. Restaurants should think about recyclable packaging, protect the environment and encourage their customers to do so. Green packaging is not only a trend that can score points in customers' eyes and make them come to the restaurant again and again.

9 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Online food ordering services are becoming increasingly popular and tend to develop in the future. Therefore, restaurants are also gradually paying more attention to the packaging of takeaway food to adapt to the new market. Restaurant food packaging must apply to each type of food, helping to keep customers' food warm, intact, and ready to eat from the kitchen to their doorstep. Takeaway food packaging includes everything the restaurant provides to customers, from paper wrappers, takeout bags, or even eating utensils, to help diners have the best dining experience.

Food packaging today is gradually asserting its importance to customers' purchasing decisions. Good packaging can bring a restaurant new customers, strengthen customer loyalty, and set itself apart from the competition. For customers who have never used restaurant food, takeout packaging can make a good impression in their eyes, making them feel that this is a well-organized and careful restaurant. From there, they can return to order food many times. For regular customers, proper takeout packaging will help them trust and tend to choose restaurants they are used to more than searching and trying other restaurants with the same menu. In other words, take away packaging is a perfect solution to increase customer satisfaction with the service experience. Takeaway packaging can also be used as an inexpensive but effective marketing tool for restaurants. Takeaway packaging, when used properly, can increase restaurant visibility, generating good reviews on online food ordering apps. However, the food packaging is just a plus; the restaurant should also ensure food quality to make customers feel the food is consistent with its packaging.

Customers increasingly pay attention to greener environmental issues, leading to more environmentally friendly and sustainable packaging trends. Instead of plastic, recyclable and biodegradable packaging is widely used, and customers tend to choose restaurants they feel have a sense of environmental protection. Branded packaging is also a new trend, used to enhance its image and create a highlight in the eyes of customers.

The choice of takeout packaging depends on each restaurant, the restaurant's dishes, the amount of money they want to spend on packaging, or the message and image the restaurant wants to bring to diners. Each restaurant will have a different direction and development, so restaurant owners should consider finding the proper take-out packaging, guaranteeing food quality to customers, and ensuring the cost of investment in packaging is suitable for the restaurant.

10 APPENDIX SURVEY QUESTIONS



Packaging with online food delivery service

The goal of survey is to demonstrate the significance of packaging in food restaurants and enhance packaging to attract more consumers

*Bắt buộc

How old are you? *

- ☐ <18
- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ >25

How often do you order food online per week? *

- ☐ 1-3 times
- ☐ more than 3 times

You will choose restaurants having cheaper price and poor packaging *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

You think the taste of food is more important than packaging *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

You will feel disappointed and catfish if the restaurants have cool packaging but the taste of food is bad *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

You are willing to pay more for the restaurants using firm (your food isn't spilled, cold and messy) packaging

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

You feel that the restaurants having branded, unique and catchy packaging is more "premium" *

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

You are willing to pay more for the restaurants using eco-friendly packaging *

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly agree

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