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# **“Exploring Customer Views on Instagram Marketing”**

A CASE STUDY OF EVEREST HIMAL OY

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines how Instagram marketing influences the customers' perception and visit intention of a restaurant, Everest Himal Oy. The study aims at understanding how customers perceive restaurant-related Instagram content, the type of content they are willing to engage with, and how Instagram marketing can support the company's customer engagement and visibility.

The mixed-methods approach was used to acquire both numerical and contextual insights. Quantitative data was collected by conducting a customer survey with 57 respondents. The survey examined the usage of Instagram, awareness about the Instagram account of the company, the type of content they liked, and how it affected the choice of a restaurant. Besides that, the qualitative information was obtained by a semi-structured interview with the restaurant owner to get actual inside information on the existing practices on Instagram and challenges in handling the platform.

The findings indicate that Instagram plays a significant role in the customer impression and interest in restaurants. The respondents were more attracted to creative and experience-related content, which included food pictures, brief videos, and posts of customers. However, the Instagram presence of Everest Himal Oy is relatively limited, which demonstrates that it is not used to its full capacity. Interview results also show the issues faced by small businesses, such as time issues, lack of resources, and insufficient digital marketing skills.

This research suggests that well-planned and regular Instagram posts would make the company more visible and potentially more interacting with customers. Some of the practical suggestions made are a continuous posting, focusing on the quality of visual content, user-generated content, emphasizing cultural identity, and interaction with followers.

Keywords: digital marketing, customer engagement, Instagram marketing, social media marketing, restaurant marketing.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES, AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

## 1.1 Background of the study

Social media has become an extremely effective mode of communication and online marketing for every business (Appel et al., 2020). Companies are now able to advertise their products and services easily online because of the advancement in technology. Among all social media platforms, Instagram is one of the most used channels, particularly by young people in Finland. The reports indicate that over two billion individuals all over the world use Instagram (Statista, 2025, para. 2). Since Instagram is a visual and affordable tool, it is particularly appropriate in the case of small and medium-sized companies as it enables them to communicate directly with customers and market their products efficiently (Appel et al., 2020).

Everest Himal Oy is a Nepalese restaurant, which is situated in Old Rauma, Finland (Everest Himal Oy, n.d.). The restaurant serves authentic Nepalese and Indian food at a reasonable price. It is a small family business consisting of four employees, including chefs, assistants, and a customer representative. In the first observations, the restaurant does not use Instagram as an active marketing platform. This became an opportunity to research the possible effectiveness of Instagram marketing in helping the restaurant to enhance its online presence. Some suggestions were made to improve the Instagram profile of the restaurant to promote its visibility and interaction with online customers. The management has accepted the research but has not allowed the researcher to use the restaurant's Instagram account.

This limitation does not prevent research from being conducted. Instead, it gives directions for understanding customer perceptions about Instagram marketing. The research focuses on the perception of customers towards Instagram posts, such as the nature of posts that they find interesting, and motivates them to interact more with restaurants online. Understanding these preferences might serve as a guide to explore ways of using Instagram marketing

processes effectively that can best benefit Everest Himal Oy in reaching its current and prospective customers.

### 1.2 Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to explore customer views on Everest Himal Oy's Instagram marketing. This research aims to understand customer perceptions and provide some actionable suggestions on how it can be applied effectively. The case company would benefit from this research as it gets analysis from its own customers and practical recommendations on how it can enhance its visibility. This is a critical aspect in the restaurant industry, as currently, people are engaged more in social media, which naturally can gain visitors. Thus, Everest Himal Oy can develop its Instagram account with a strong presence by applying marketing strategies in the future.

### 1.3 Objectives

The main objectives of this research are as follows

- To examine the customer perception of Instagram marketing when selecting a restaurant.
- To determine what kinds of Instagram content (e.g., food photography, behind-the-scenes posts, customer posts) can hold the greatest interest of the customers.
- To understand what customers are motivated to follow, like, or engage with on an Instagram account.
- To develop practical recommendations for future Instagram marketing strategies for the case company.

Expected outcomes:

- ❖ Survey and interview data and observe knowledge of customer perceptions.
- ❖ Comparison of best practices done by other similar restaurants in their Instagram accounts.
- ❖ An action plan of recommendations for the case company.

#### 1.4 Research questions

To guide the present research on the right path, some of the research questions are as follows:

1. How do customers perceive the existing Instagram marketing of Everest Himal Oy?
2. What kind of Instagram content do customers of a restaurant prefer?
3. What motivates the customers to read restaurant-related posts on Instagram?
4. What Instagram marketing recommendations can improve the visibility and online presence of the restaurant?

#### 1.5 Defining boundaries of thesis

The thesis will only focus on customer perception and content preferences that are associated with Instagram marketing in the restaurant setting. It does not include other social media like Facebook, TikTok, etc. Also, it will not entail posting or running content on the account of the company since only the relevant people can access it. The information collected will be based on feedback from customers, secondary research, and benchmarking of publicly available Instagram pages of similar restaurants in Finland. This boundary provides ethical validity and realistic applicability in the present circumstances of the company, and still, it remains highly relevant in practice.

## 1.6 Conceptual Framework

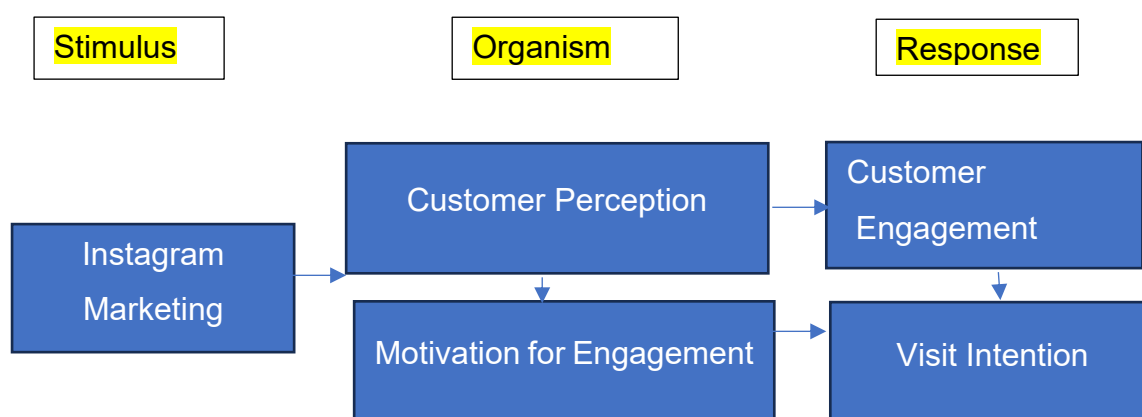


Fig 1. Conceptual Framework of the study (author, 2025)

Fig.1 shows the conceptual model of this study. The framework is based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response Model, which explains how external stimuli influence the internal psychological condition of individuals and frequently results to behavioral reactions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the social media marketing setting, online content serves as a trigger through which customer images and impressions are managed, which cause behavioral intentions.

Instagram marketing content acts as a stimulus in this study. This will include visual posts, captions, hashtags, and user-generated content by the restaurant on Instagram. Such visual communication is significant in the hospitality sector as customers usually use web-based reviews and visuals when creating their expectations regarding the experience in restaurants. (Appel et al., 2020; Kwon et al., 2021).

The organism component refers to the internal psychological and motivational events produced after customers are subjected to Instagram content. These processes include customer perception and motivation for using social media content. Customer perception is a set of estimates that indicate that customers can evaluate the credibility, attractiveness, and utility of Instagram content (Rietveld et al., 2020). Engagement theory is supported by Uses and Gratifications, which explains why people engage with the content of social media to fulfill informational, social, or entertainment requirements (Menon & Dhir, 2022).

The behavioral implications of such internal processes are the response component (Menon & Dhir, 2022). Customer engagement and visit intention are part of the response in this study. The engagement behaviors, including liking, commenting, and sharing the content of restaurants, show that the customer is interested, interacting with it, whereas visit intention represents the probability of customers selecting or visiting the restaurant in the future (Eslami et al., 2022).

Overall, the conceptual model explains how the Instagram marketing content helps to shape customer perceptions and customer motivations, leading to engagement behavior and restaurant visit intention. The framework also guides the empirical aspect of the research through facilitating the development of survey questions and interview themes to be used to examine connections between Instagram marketing and customer behavior.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Social Media Marketing in the Hospitality Sector

Social media marketing is the marketing through the internet, which involves the use of online media to market products, interact with customers, and establish relationships with online audiences. While the traditional method of marketing, social media allows two-way communication between a business and a customer, in which businesses and customers may exchange information and opinions, and share experiences. With the help of these platforms, companies can become more visible, build the brand's power, and build relationships with consumers continuously (Appel et al., 2020).

In the hospitality sector, social media plays significantly big role since the hospitality services are intangible and experience-oriented. In the process of selecting restaurants, online information is frequently used by customers to evaluate the restaurant's information. Using visual platforms, restaurants can show their services by using pictures and videos, which capture the quality of food, ambience, and customer experiences. Such content can influence the formed opinion and expectations of customers of a restaurant. (Rietveld et al., 2020).

As a result, social media is a significant tool for online marketing to advertise their services to gain new customers and retain their loyalty towards the restaurant. These channels allow restaurants to share their products, explain their brand beliefs, and entertain and involve customers with interactive information. Therefore, the utilization of social media marketing is becoming part of the general marketing policies of hospitality industries (Appel et al., 2020).

## 2.2 Instagram as a restaurant marketing tool

Instagram is a social media platform that emphasizes visual communication in the form of images, videos, and short content. Instagram is especially appropriate in the areas of hospitality and restaurant services due to its visuality, since it is more appropriate in industries in which aesthetics and experience play a significant role. Instagram is an opportunity that allows businesses to display products, express brand identity, and engage with customers by commenting, using hashtags, and sending direct messages (Phua et al., 2020).

In the case of restaurants, Instagram provides an opportunity to present food and the restaurant environment, and dining experience in an attractive way. Through visual posts, potential customers can form an impression of a restaurant before visiting. It indicates that using aesthetically pleasing and emotionally engaging content on Instagram can change the attitudes of consumers towards a brand and shape their interest in visiting a restaurant (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

Instagram marketing can be used by any small or medium-sized business. Instagram enables a company to market its services at a relatively cheap cost compared to traditional advertising media. This also gives this platform-specific usefulness to SME restaurants, which seek to gain online presence and customer interaction via creative digital content (Phua et al., 2020; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

## 2.3 Customer Perception, Trust & Engagement on Instagram

Customer perception refers to how consumers view and evaluate things, based on their experiences, expectations, and beliefs. Considering social media marketing, the perceptions of customers are involved in the quality, credibility, and attractive appearance of the content posted by businesses of interest. Such impressions are significant in responding to customer attitude to brands and services. (Kwon et al., 2021). Whenever customers see restaurant related contents in Instagram, it is possible that they will make impressions

concerning the level of food quality, the level of service, and the general dining experience. An image of positivity can give good expectations and trust in a restaurant. Authentic and informative posts in social media can play a positive role in consumer ratings as well as strengthening brand image (Rietveld et al., 2020; Kwon et al., 2021).

Customer engagement is a measure of the degree to which consumers communicate with the brands on social media. On Instagram, people have been socializing as usual, liking, commenting, sharing, or tagging the brand in the posts of their profiles. These kinds of interaction indicate that the customers are interested, and they help in developing stronger relationships between the company and the viewers.

Greater amounts of involvement can also note the activeness of a restaurant, as interactive posts will have greater chances to appeal to broader audiences on that platform. Customer engagement also leads to an increased likelihood of leading the customers to recommend restaurants to others and share their experiences online, which can impact potential visitors (Eslami et al., 2022).

## 2.4 Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic word of mouth refers to the online recommendations of any good service or any products to others. It can be in the form of comments, reviews, shared posts, or even customer references to other people. Through such interactions, the consumers can share their views and experiences that can be helpful in informing the buying behaviour of the other users (Babić Rosario et al., 2020).

The effect of eWOM is significant in the hotel sector, especially since the service in restaurants cannot be experienced before visiting. When people are reviewing restaurants online, they usually depend on the experience of previous consumers. The network of positive feedback online can help establish

brands as credible and help get a new customer, whereas negative comments might affect the perception of visitors (Hajli, 2019; Beyari & Garamoun, 2024). In the case of small and medium restaurants, eWOM may become an efficient and cheap marketing channel. By sharing the experience with their customers on Instagram, the customers add to the presence of the restaurant and contribute to the increased exposure to new audiences. Thus, eWOM is a key factor in forming consumer impressions and restaurant decisions on the Internet. (Babić Rosario et al., 2020.)

## 2.5 Restaurant choice and visit intention

Restaurant choice is a decision that can be made under the influence of different aspects, such as the quality of food, the reputation of the service, the friendly environment, and the recommendation of other clients. During recent years, the role of social media platforms as a source of information has gained relevance and affects the choice of a restaurant (Rietveld et al., 2020).

Visit intention is the desire, or the chances of a consumer, to visit a specific restaurant in the future. Positive impressions of the content posted online can result in customer interest and encourage the customer to visit the restaurant trying it in person. Instagram posts in the form of visuals can arouse the interest and anticipation related to food quality and dining experience, which can affect the behavioural intentions of the customers (Rietveld et al., 2020).

Hence, Instagram marketing activities play a role in the determination of restaurant preference in terms of perception, trust, and interest. All these factors may influence the intention to visit the restaurant among consumers after being exposed to its content on a social medium (Kwon et al., 2021).

## 2.6 The stimulus organism response (S-O-R)

The research is based theoretically on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model originated by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). The model describes

the effect of environmental stimuli on the inner psychological processes, which then indirectly result in a behavioural reaction.

In the S-O-R context, the stimuli are external stimuli that act on people, such as content, messages, event. When marketing through Instagram, the food images, promotional events, or even the experience of customers can create stimulus, and they may appeal to the customers and create specific impressions of a restaurant.

Organism component refers the internal psychological processes that take place after exposure to these stimuli in individuals. These mechanisms can be perceptions, emotional response, trust, and brand appraisals. The consumers might form a perception about the quality of food, its authenticity, and general experience upon eating in the restaurant when they watch relevant material on Instagram.

Lastly, the response component is the action that is a result of these internal assessments. For the context of the hospitality industry, the possible responses will be customer interaction through social media, positive word-of-mouth communication, or the willingness to visit the restaurant. This approach, the S-O-R framework, is therefore useful in offering a theoretical framework for analysing the effects of Instagram marketing activities on customer perceptions and behaviour intentions within the restaurant industry.

## 2.7 SME social media marketing challenges

Small and medium-sized businesses usually find an issue in handling online tools, even though they have the benefits of social media marketing. Small businesses could easily be constrained by limited funds, time, and a lack of digital marketing know-how to ensure a consistent level of activity on the social media platform. In most cases, business owners directly control the social media accounts since they also play their daily operational roles (Appel et al., 2020).

These restrictions may lead to inconsistency in posting, a lack of content or an inadequate utilization of platform features. This means that the potential of social media platforms in marketing might not be maximized by small businesses. However, it has been shown by past research that the enhancement of the online presence and customer feedback in the online presence of SMEs can be significantly enhanced using a simple and consistent social media approach (Eslami et al., 2022).

## 2.8 Research gap

Although social media marketing has gained a lot of popularity in marketing research, existing literature has several gaps. Literature on the large international brands or online consumer behaviour has been studied more than the role of social media marketing in the local small restaurants.

Despite the Stimulus-Organism-Response model having been used in different marketing scenarios, little research has been done on how it can be applied to marketing on Instagram among small hospitality firms. The number of studies dedicated to the perception of the restaurant's Instagram marketing in the Finnish environment is also not very high. Thus, additional studies are necessary in terms of uncovering the impact of Instagram marketing practices on customer perceptions, engagement, and behaviour intentions in small restaurant-level businesses more comprehensively.

## 2.9 A Summary of the Theoretical Framework

In the literature review, we can see the increasing importance of social media marketing in the hospitality sector. Instagram is a potentially powerful platform because of the visual presentation qualities and the possibility of interaction involved with the service, which allows restaurants to communicate with their customers and offer their services online.

According to the previous study, it is possible to positively impact customer perceptions, trust, and involvement with the help of Instagram marketing activities. These aspects could result in electronic word-of-mouth marketing and have a certain impact on consumer intentions to go to restaurants.

The theoretical background of this paper is rooted in the Stimulus-Organism Response model, according to which the marketing stimuli trigger internal psychological reactions and consequent behavioural outcomes. Instagram marketing activities, customer perceptions, engagement, and visit intention are the stimuli, organism processes, and behavioural response, respectively, in the context of this research. These theoretical aspects give the basis of the conceptual framework of the study and the empirical examination of the study.

#### 2.10 Linking the theoretical framework to the case company

The theoretical concepts presented in this paper provide insight into how Instagram marketing can affect customer behavior in the case of the company Everest Himal. The introduction of social media applications has evolved into a significant marketing tool that enables restaurants in the modern hospitality sector to market their products and to establish direct contact with clients. Digital marketing platforms help businesses communicate with consumers, enhance brand awareness, and shape buying behavior by engaging online (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Under the S-O-R model, the Instagram activities in the restaurant can be considered stimuli that shape customers' attitudes. These stimuli can include images of food presentations, advertising posts, data on menu items, and visual images of the restaurant ambience. This kind of content can attract attention and make a good impression on prospective customers who visit the restaurant via social media.

Organism component refers to customers' internal responses to these stimuli. People who consume Instagram content can get an impression of the restaurant in terms of the quality of the food, its authenticity, the level of service, and the overall dining experience. It is also possible that these cognitive and emotional reactions create trust and interest in the restaurant brand. Past literature indicates that social media content can play a crucial role in shaping consumers' attitudes and perceptions toward hospitality companies (Kotler et al., 2017).

Finally, the last part is the response component, which is the behavioral consequences of this internal process. When customers create a favorable impression of the restaurant on Instagram, they would be able to engage with the restaurant's content, share it with other people, or be encouraged to have dinner in the restaurant. These behavioral reactions play an important role in the hospitality industry, where online interactions and word-of-mouth have a strong impact on the attendance of customers.

Using the S-O-R model with the case firm, the study aims to identify how Instagram marketing activities influence customer perceptions and behavioral intentions at Everest Himal. The theoretical framework helps clarify how social media marketing practices and consumer behavior are connected within the restaurant industry.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

Research philosophy is the assumption or beliefs that determine the way in which knowledge is formed. (Saunders et al., 2019). Pragmatism is more focused on practical solutions to issues as it integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a more elaborate view of the research topic.

Pragmatism forms the basis of mixed method designs in the areas of tourism, hospitality, and digital marketing research to find breadth and depth of complex phenomena. The use of pragmatic mixed methods to investigate multiple research problems is demonstrated through a systematic review of mixed-method studies in tourism and hospitality research. (Huang & Zan, 2025.)

Pragmatism is highly used in business and marketing research, mainly in applied studies where the goal is to interpret the real processes in the world and give recommendations (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 145). As the purpose of this study is to investigate the customer perception of Instagram marketing and consider the business approach of a restaurant, pragmatism can be treated as a suitable foundation. This philosophy enables quantitative and qualitative methodologies to have a comprehensive view of the research problem.

### 3.2 Research Design and Strategy

This research was carried out with a case study approach. A case study is defined as an empirical research strategy that explores a modern phenomenon in the context of its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear (Yin, 2018). Case studies are very common in business and hospitality studies due to their ability to deepen the understanding of organizational processes, their behavior, as well as stakeholders' views. (Saunders et al., 2019.) The specified methodology will enable the researcher to examine complex marketing behaviors and the perception of customers in the frame of the restaurant case and, as such, will facilitate systematic and contextualized analysis.

This research takes both descriptive and exploratory research designs. Descriptive research seeks to reflect a situation, event, or population and is often deployed to estimate the rate of attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of a population (Saunders et al., 2019). The quantitative survey of customer perception regarding Instagram marketing was used in this research paper. The

quantitative survey is the descriptive part, as it quantifies customer views of the marketing tool in figures, to offer structured and generalizable results.

In contrast, exploratory research is used when there is a need to learn more about a phenomenon and discover patterns, interpretations, or driving forces that cannot be initially perceived (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The exploratory aspect of the current research is achieved by a qualitative interview with the restaurant owner, enabling a more in-depth explanation of actual strategic intentions, promotion tactics, and the aspects of the current environment affecting the use of Instagram.

The mixed-method design of the study is supported by the combination of descriptive and exploratory methods and allows performing the measurable assessment and interpreting the results in the context, so that a more in-depth picture of the Instagram marketing for the case company.

### 3.3 Mixed Research Methods

Mixed methods research involves the collection, analysis, and combination of quantitative and qualitative data in a study for a complete approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mixed methods help to allow triangulation, which makes the researcher cross-verify findings and produce complementary insights. A mixed-methods approach was chosen as it allows the combination of quantitative customer perceptions with qualitative insights from the restaurant owner, providing a more comprehensive understanding of Instagram marketing practices. An overview of mixed methods research in tourism and hospitality journals review, due to peer-reviewing, identified mixed methods research sequential designs as common and effective in answering complex research. (Huang & Zan, 2025.)

This study applies the quantitative-dominant approach, and a mixed methodology is used in that the primary data is collected in the form of a survey of its

customers, and it is followed by the qualitative interview with the owner that supports the interpretation and practical recommendations. The quantitative survey will give breadth (customer opinion and trends), whereas the qualitative interview will give depth (the strategic perception of the owner) and expand overall insight in this study.

### 3.4 Data Collection Methods

The process of collecting data is essential in the research process since it defines how the research questions should be answered through the process of empirical evidence collection. The literature on research methods identifies quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques, which are used for different research purposes. (Saunders et al., 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2018.) Structured methods of collection of quantitative data include surveys, questionnaires, and experiment which give numerical data that can be statistically analyzed. On the other hand, qualitative data presents interviews, focus groups, and observations, which are supposed to allow acquiring a deep understanding of the attitude and experiences of participants. (Bryman & Harley, 2019.)

The choice of suitable data collection methods is determined by the research objectives, the character of the research questions, and the philosophical position that has been taken in the research. As this study is pragmatic in its philosophy, with the mixed-method design, quantitative as well as qualitative data collection approaches are used to gain a full picture of the customer perceptions of Instagram marketing in the case corporation.

#### 3.4.1 Customer Survey: Quantitative

In line with the mixed-method research design, the quantitative part of the research was implemented by a structured survey questionnaire that addressed the customers of the case company. Since the company is not as active on

Instagram now, the survey targets the awareness of the customers, their perceptions, and expectations regarding Instagram marketing, as many people do not know about its existence.

The survey tool was mainly composed of closed questions that comprised Likert questions that were meant to gauge customer perceptions on the quality of the content on Instagram, motivation to engage with the content, and motivation to visit the restaurant. In the last section, one open-ended question was included to collect customer suggestions, while keeping the questionnaire concise to improve response rate. The questionnaires and Likert scales are structured, making them easier to compare and analyze; this helps in descriptive statistics analysis.

The survey was sent through online mediums that were readily made available to the customers using direct links published on the social media accounts of the restaurant. The process was also voluntary, and the respondents were aware of the aim of the study.

#### 3.4.2 Qualitative: Owner Interview

To complement qualitative findings, qualitative data were collected through a semi-structured interview with the owner of the company in the case. Qualitative research usually employs semi-structured interviews to investigate the views of participants, as well as provide flexibility to uncover interesting answers. The interviews were especially designed to capture those experiences and insights that cannot be effortlessly observed and measured with the help of the surveys.

An interview guide was drawn beforehand on the areas that were to be discussed, including:

- The content practices and the Instagram marketing strategy.
- Online perceived customer engagement and its influence on business.

- Issues and threats in the marketing of Instagram.
- The owner interprets the responses of customers.

The interview process was done in a conversational process, which allowed the owner to elaborate on insights while ensuring coverage of relevant themes.

### 3.5 Sampling and Respondents

Sampling refers to choosing a group of individuals from a population to make conclusions about that population (Saunders et al., 2019). Sampling strategy is mainly determined by the objectives of the research, accessibility of the respondents, and the design of the methodology. In mixed-method research, sampling processes used in a study may differ between quantitative and qualitative parts to ensure appropriate data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In this study, separate sampling approaches were used for the quantitative survey and qualitative interview to align with their respective purposes.

#### 3.5.1 Quantitative Sampling

The sampling used in quantitative research is usually probability or non-probability (Bell et al., 2019). Probability of sampling allows the generalization of a larger population but demands the availability of a full sampling frame and significant resources. In contrast, non-probability sampling is common in applied business research where there is a limitation of the respondents (Saunders et al., 2019).

The involved study was carried out using convenience sampling that is a non-probability sampling that used the availability and willingness of the subjects to participate in the study. The convenience sampling technique is generally used in exploratory and case-based studies where the aim is to gain practical insights rather than produce statistically generalizable results (Hair et al., 2020).

The target respondents included regular customers, first-time visitors, and occasional visitors to the case restaurant. Despite the limitation of this technique due to the convenience sampling, it is regarded as suitable for an exploratory business case study that concentrates on understanding customer perceptions within a specific organizational context.

### 3.5.2 Qualitative Sampling

Most qualitative studies rely on the idea of purposive sampling as people are selected because of their knowledge, experience, or interest in the research topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to acquire more information-rich and detailed data rather than statistically representative data (Saunders et al., 2019).

In this study, the restaurant owner was selected using purposive sampling due to direct involvement in the control and observation of Instagram marketing work in this study. As a decision-maker, the owner was a source of insiders concerning marketing strategies, goals, and challenges. The sampling procedure is also compatible with the qualitative research principles, which emphasize depth and contextual comprehension.

### 3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

Data Analysis Procedure is the process of organization, analysis, and interpretation of collected data in a systematized manner to respond to research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In a mixed-method study, the study analyses the quantitative and qualitative data by applying different but complementary processes of analysis (Saunders et al., 2019).

### 3.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data means statistical operations to summarize and analyze numerical data (Hair et al., 2020). Descriptive statistics are frequently used in business research where they are required to characterize data patterns, frequencies, and central tendencies rather than to find out causes.

Descriptive statistics include measures of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, which help to summarize the perception and behavior of the respondents (Bell et al., 2019). As a research approach, descriptive analysis was adopted to determine possible perceptions about Instagram marketing and preferred content type, and the connection between engagement behavior and the intention to visit.

Since the aim of the study was descriptive and exploratory, rather than hypothesis testing, advanced inferential analysis was not considered necessary. Descriptive statistics were considered adequate to address the research goals and generate practical insights for the case company (Hair et al., 2020).

### 3.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

The thematic analysis was applied to conduct qualitative data analysis. Thematic analysis is a versatile process of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It helps the researcher to organize textual protocols into meaningful categories that view repetitive ideas and conceptual relations.

Analysis was done in a systematic procedure. Initially, the interview note was read repeatedly to become familiar with the data. Second, important statements were highlighted. Third, the ideas were grouped into broader themes that reflected patterns in the owner's views on Instagram marketing. It is a systematic process that improves the quality of transparency and analytical accuracy in qualitative research. (Saunders et al., 2019.)

### 3.7 Reliability and Validity

In quantitative research, reliability involves stability and uniformity of measurement tools among the respondents (Bell et al., 2019). In this research, reliability is improved through structured questionnaires and measurement scales, and, understandably, survey items (Hair et al., 2020). In this research, reliability was supported using a design of survey questions on bases of the developed literature theory and consistent Likert-scale measurements.

Validity is the degree to which a research instrument can measure what it is meant to measure (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Content validity was ensured by matching the items in the survey with theoretical concepts of Instagram marketing, perception of the customers, and engagement found in the literature.

Moreover, quantitative data, when integrated with qualitative data, improves the general research validity as the results of the various data sources offer the possibility of supporting and complementing each other (Saunders et al., 2019).

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play an essential role in business and social research to safeguard the participant and uphold the integrity of research (Bell et al., 2019). The major principles of ethics are informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and responsible data management (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In this research, the survey was voluntary, and ethical information was provided to the respondents regarding the purpose of undertaking the research. None of the personally identifiable information was collected, and anonymity

was guaranteed. The interview participant was informed that the data would be utilized for an academic purpose only and that participation could be withdrawn at any stage. All data obtained was handled confidentially and stored securely.

### 3.9 Limitations of Methodology

There are limitations in all research designs, which should be sufficiently acknowledged (Saunders et al., 2019). The convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the case company. In addition, the single case study design does not allow it to be generalized to other restaurant settings.

However, these limitations are common to exploratory and applied case studies, the stated objective of which follows the contextual revelation, not the statistical generalization (Yin, 2018). These findings should therefore be interpreted within the specific organizational context of the restaurant case.

## 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the research conducted for this study. The study aimed to investigate customers' perceptions of the use of Instagram in marketing and its possible effect on restaurant selection in the Everest Himal Oy case study.

Two data sources are used to reach the findings. One, a quantitative survey was conducted among the customers, and a total of 57 valid responses were received. Although the sample size is relatively small, it provides useful

exploratory insights into customer perceptions of Instagram marketing. The survey has collected data on the respondents' demographics, Instagram usage, knowledge of the restaurant's Instagram presence, expectations of social media content, future content expectations, and the impact of Instagram marketing on their intentions to visit the restaurant. Second, a semi-structured interview with the restaurant owner was conducted to obtain qualitative data on how the restaurant currently uses social media and the problems associated with marketing on Instagram.

The results are stated in a range of subsections which start with demographics of the respondents and the patterns of usage of Instagram, and then the awareness of the customers of the Instagram account of the restaurant, perceptions of the existing Instagram content, expectation toward the Instagram content, possibility of engagement and the effect of the Instagram marketing on the intention to visit the restaurant. Finally, the interview findings are also described to supplement the survey findings and provide a complete picture of the case in terms of the company's current marketing situation.

#### 4.1.1 Respondents Demographic

It is important to understand the demographic profile of respondents to be able to interpret the survey results and locate the specifics regarding the potential restaurant customers who are available on Instagram.

1. Age Group  
57 responses

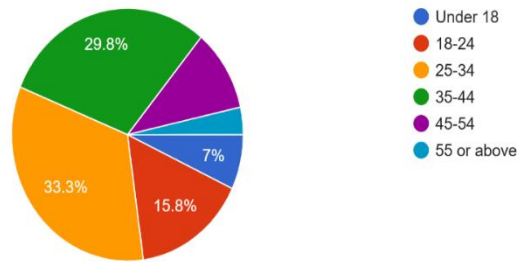


Fig 2. Age Group respondents (Author, 2025)

The results show that the largest proportion of respondents belonged to the 25–34 age group, followed by respondents aged 35–44 years. A smaller proportion of respondents were aged 18–24, while the remaining participants belonged to the 45–54, under 18, and 55 or above age groups.

According to the survey, many of the respondents are both young adults and middle-aged, since they are the most active users of a social media platform. It has been found in the previous literature that younger generations are more inclined to use social media when searching for recommendations and food experiences in restaurants.

#### 4.1.2 Instagram Usage

The frequency with which the respondents use Instagram was also investigated in the survey. The results demonstrate that most of the participants use Instagram regularly.

## 2. How often do you use Instagram?

57 responses

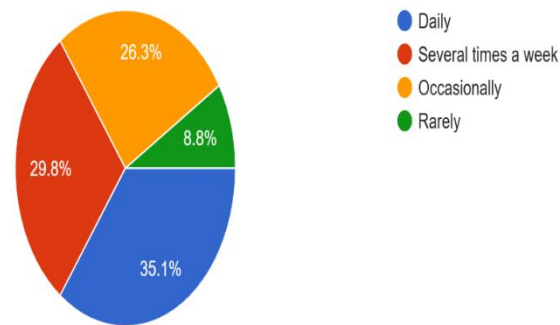


Fig 3. Instagram Usage (Author, 2025)

A significant number of respondents reported using Instagram daily, while another large portion indicated that they use the platform several times per week. A smaller number of respondents reported occasional use, and only a few indicated that they rarely use Instagram. The results prove that Instagram is an appropriate marketing tool in restaurants, especially when one targets customers who use Instagram more frequently when it comes to food and restaurant experiences.

### 4.1.3 Awareness about the Instagram Account

One of the questions in the survey involved the awareness of respondents of the fact that Everest Himal Oy has an Instagram account.

3. Have you found Everest Himal Oy instagram account?

57 responses

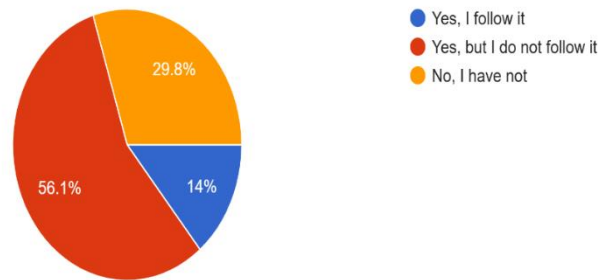


Fig 4. Awareness about the Instagram account (Author, 2025)

As the findings showed, there were three different categories of respondents. Some respondents stated that they knew about the Instagram page and followed it. Another group indicated that they knew the page but never subscribed to it. Lastly, a significant number of the interviewees responded that they did not know the restaurant had an Instagram account.

The findings indicate that there is a certain awareness, and the Instagram account has not been covering a high percentage of potential customers yet. This means that the restaurant could be more visible by posting more consistent content, updating the profile information, and intensifying the promotion of the Instagram account online and in the restaurant setting.

More awareness about the Instagram page would also help to encourage customers to follow the account and engage with the content of the post, which would promote the digital existence of the restaurant.

#### 4.1.4 Customer Visiting Patterns

The survey also examined how frequently the respondents visited the restaurant.

#### 4. How often do you visit Everest Himal Oy?

57 responses

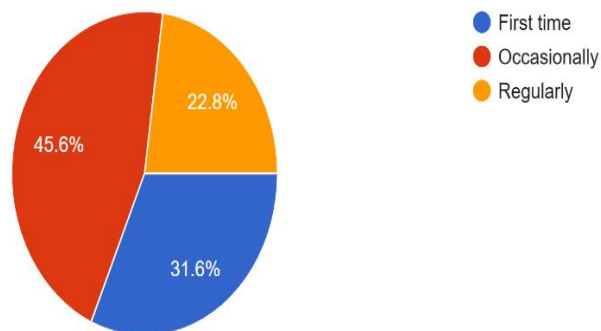


Fig 5. Visit patterns (Author, 2025)

The findings show that the highest proportion of the respondents visited the restaurant on an occasional basis, whereas a smaller percentage of the respondents visited the restaurant regularly. Some of the respondents also mentioned that they were first-time customers at the restaurant.

This observation is an indicator that a high number of the respondents are potential or infrequent customers and not frequent visitors. Thus, the marketing plans are to enhance the level of customer interaction and attract them to come back to the restaurant.

#### 4.1.5 Customer Perceptions of Current Instagram Content

The survey contained several statements that evaluated the perception of the restaurant about its existing Instagram presence. The respondents rated these statements out of five, with strongly disagree and strongly agree.

## Perceived usefulness of Information

5. The restaurant's Instagram page provides useful basic information (e.g. opening hours).

56 responses

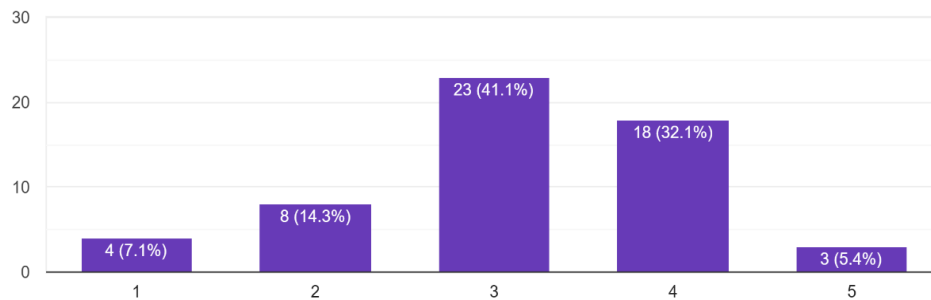


Fig 6. Perceived usefulness of Information (author, 2025)

Those aimed at determining whether the restaurant has provided information about their opening hours or other basic information on the Instagram page. There was a mix of responses obtained. Although a few respondents concurred that the page has useful information, a big percentage had a neutral answer, and a smaller percentage gave a negative answer.

This suggests that though the Instagram page may offer certain information, it may not be seen as a major source of information to the customers. The restaurant can thus consider the option of representing information in a clearer and more consistent form with the help of Instagram posts or story highlights.

## Favorable Attitude to the Restaurant

6. The Instagram page creates a positive impression of the restaurant.

55 responses

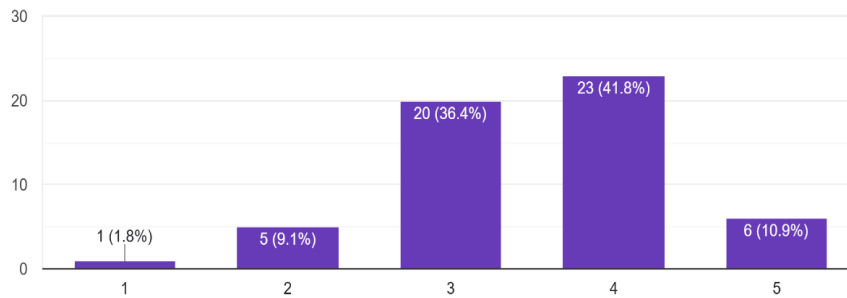


Fig 7. Instagram Page Overview (Author, 2025)

The other survey question asked whether the Instagram page gives a positive impression of the restaurant. Most participants responded with agreement or neutrality, which suggests that the current content makes a positive contribution to the restaurant image. However, a higher percentage of about 20% respondents answered that the current content is sufficient for representing a restaurant in an attractive, positive way.

### Credibility of Instagram Data.

7. I trust the information shared on the restaurant's Instagram page.

56 responses

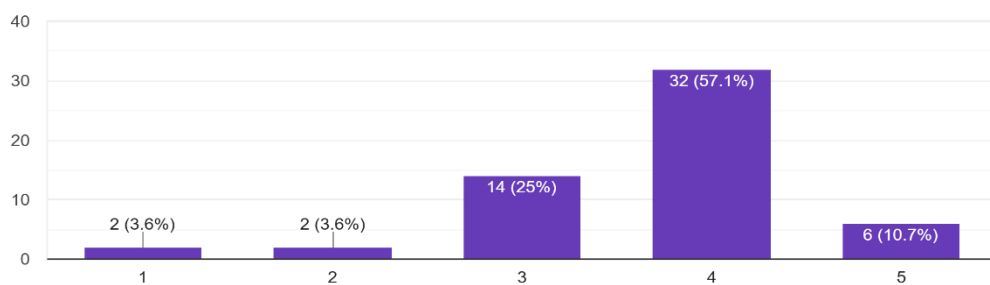


Fig 8. Credibility of Instagram Data (Author, 2025)

One of the important things in online marketing is trust. Customers need to depend on content or a posting to make their decision to visit a restaurant. Most of the participants confirmed that they believed in the information shared by the restaurant in their Instagram page. This is a positive result for the

restaurant because it implies that most customers interpret the information they see as different posts on the account and treat them as true.

### Restaurant representation.

8. The current Instagram presence represents the restaurant well.

56 responses

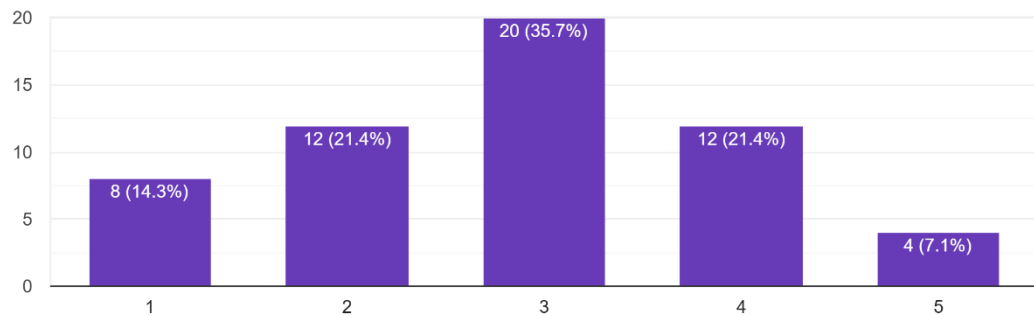


Fig 9. Restaurant Representation (Author, 2025)

The respondents were also asked whether the restaurant's existing Instagram representation was good. The answers were mixed, with agreement, neutrality, and disagreement. This indicates that the existing Instagram account did not represent the brand well because it lacks content, such as visual storytelling and more varied content, which will allow strengthening the restaurant's representation on its page.

#### 4.1.6 Content Preference

The survey further investigated which content on Instagram the customers would like to see from the restaurant. Participants were allowed to tick more than one answer or point.

9. What type of Instagram content would you like to see more from the restaurant? (You may select more than one)

57 responses

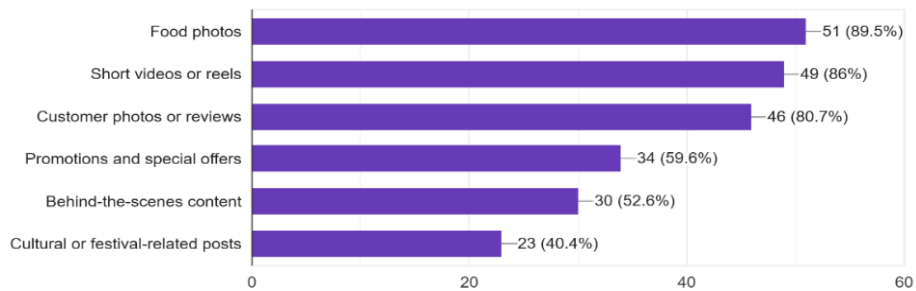


Fig 10. Instagram Content Preference (Author, 2025)

The most common types of content that were selected were:

- food photographs
- short videos or reels
- Discounts and Promotion.
- customer photos or reviews

The results of this study mark the relevance of photos and positive customer experience in Instagram restaurant marketing.

Also, the interviewees noted that the presence of food images or videos would make them more likely to visit the restaurant. This observation confirms the significance of visually appealing content in influencing customers.

#### 4.1.7 Customer Motivation & Engagement

One of the aims of the survey was to learn why customers viewed restaurant-related posts on Instagram.

13. If the restaurant posted more regularly, I would engage with its Instagram content (like, comment, share).

57 responses

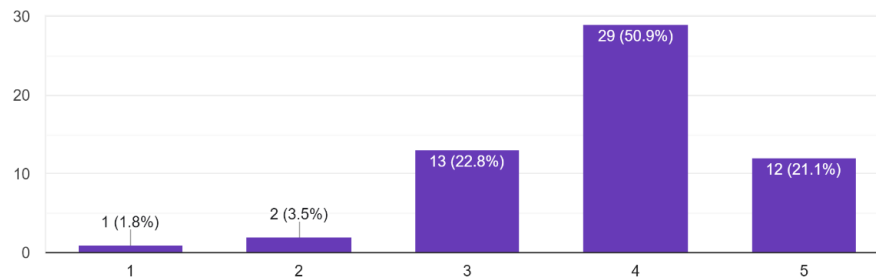


Fig 11. Customer motivation & Engagement (Author, 2025)

The respondents also stated that they had several reasons why they read such content. There were some respondents who stated that they use Instagram to get information regarding restaurants, including menu items or opening hours. Some people use restaurant posts to determine their choice of restaurant. Some also said that they liked being entertained, or they were interested in seeing the experiences of other customers.

Another question that the survey examined was whether customers would engage with the content that the restaurant produces on Instagram if the restaurant posted more frequently. The findings indicated that many of the respondents agreed to the fact that they would be more enthusiastic about interacting with the posts if the restaurant posted more.

Thus, this indicates that the content's regularity might enhance customer engagement on the restaurant's social media platform.

#### 4.1.8 Influence of Instagram Marketing on Visiting Intention

The other goal of the survey was to determine what factors lead customers to see restaurant-related posts on Instagram.

14. Active Instagram marketing would increase my likelihood of visiting the restaurant.

57 responses

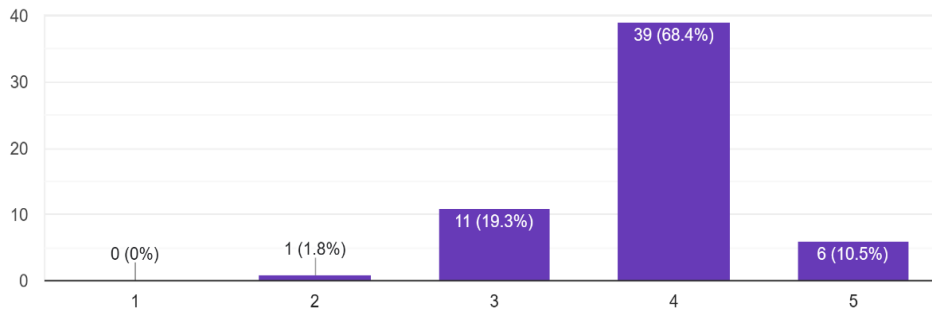


Fig 12. Influence of marketing on visit intention (Author, 2025)

The participants give different reasons for viewing such material. Other respondents stated that they use Instagram to get information about restaurants, including menu items and opening hours. Several respondents report using restaurant posts as inspiration when deciding where to dine. The entertainment/ interest in seeing other customers' experiences was also not left out by some respondents.

The question of whether customers would engage with the restaurant's Instagram content was also investigated in the context of more frequent posting. The findings indicated that a significant proportion of respondents affirmed that they would be more likely to interact with the post if the restaurant posts consistently. This implies that communication between customers and the restaurant online, via social media platforms, might be enhanced by more frequent content.

## 4.2 Interview Findings

To enhance the findings, an interview was conducted with the owner of the case company. The interview aimed to understand how Instagram is handled and the advantages and challenges of using Instagram.

### **Background and Recent Application of Instagram.**

The owner stated that the restaurant had been using Instagram since March 2018, and the purpose of using it was to connect with customers and inform them about the necessary information about the restaurant. As the owner answered:

“We started using Instagram in March 2018 because we wanted to reach our customers and inform them about us, including opening hours, offers, location.”

The owner also added that the content was initially based on practical information like opening hours, special deals, takeaway offers, gift cards, and student offers.

#### **Anticipated Potentials and Problems.**

The owner was sure that Instagram could help them to reach more customers in general. As he mentioned:

“This will help us in reaching more people, thus increasing sales and customers.”

However, the restaurant is facing challenges in managing Instagram more actively. The owner has mentioned that they need to hire a marketing manager for the Instagram account, as the role requires time and creativity, which are not always present.

#### **Interaction and Feedback with customers.**

The owner reported that some of their customers interact with the restaurant via Instagram, especially by posting pictures of their food and requesting that the restaurant's Instagram page tag them.

#### **Future Expectations**

The owner expressed interest in adding more visual content in the future, such as food photos, video recordings, and photos of the restaurant setting. The

owner also added that customer-generated content may be helpful if consent is obtained before it is shared.

#### 4.3 Benchmarking Similar Nepalese Restaurants' Instagram Marketing

In this study, benchmarking was done to obtain practical insights into how similar Nepalese restaurants in Finland use Instagram as a marketing tool. Benchmarking enables organizations to compare the way things are done in similar organizations so that relevant strategies and how things could be done are determined. In the restaurant industry, social media is one of the most popular social media outlets that has been used to communicate, promote, and engage customers in the restaurant industry. (Tuten & Solomon, 2018).

The benchmarking was mainly focused on small and medium-sized Nepalese restaurants that are already in Finland and have a social media presence equivalent to that of the case company, which is the Everest Himal Oy. This approach has been selected because Everest Himal Oy is a small restaurant business, and its marketing operations are mainly managed by the owner. Hence, the comparison of the restaurant to the businesses that have been operating under comparable conditions offers more realistic and feasible insights than the benchmarking of large restaurants with large marketing resources.

For the analysis, the Instagram activity of a few Nepalese restaurants has been checked, such as Ravintola Gurkha, Kantipur Nepalese Restaurant, and Sauraha Nepalese Restaurant. These restaurants represent similar types of independent Nepalese dining restaurant businesses that operate within the Finnish restaurant market.

#### **Types of Instagram Content**

From the benchmarking analysis, it shows that food photo is an important form of content for every restaurant for online marketing. The posts usually include photos of the most popular dishes, traditional meals, and presentable food. Visual marketing is especially significant in the restaurant business since a customer primarily bases the initial impression of a restaurant on photographs posted on various social media platforms (Kotler et al., 2017).

Besides the photos of the food, a variety of restaurants are active in publishing short videos or reels on Instagram that show dishes, restaurant interiors, or how food is prepared. Such posts allow potential customers to get a feel of the ambience of the restaurant online prior to going into the restaurant.

Promotional posts include lunch offers, seasonal promotions, and holiday greetings, as well as information regarding menus. Such posts are used to keep in touch with followers as well as to motivate customers with the new services.

### **Posting Frequency**

A second significant recommendation that is found in the benchmarking analysis is posting frequency. Most of the analyzed restaurants post about two to six posts every month on the Instagram platform. This activity seems to be normal in small independent restaurants that manage their social media accounts on their own.

This finding is especially relevant to the company case. During the interview conducted for this study, he explained that Instagram management is handled personally and that time-conservation is the reason why it is impossible to post regularly. Thus, the moderate number of posting frequency observed among

comparable restaurants suggests that consistent posting practice could still make it visible without the need for any resources.

### Practice in Customer Engagement

In the benchmarking analysis, customer engagement practices were also noticed. Some of the restaurants are very active in engaging their followers with their comments, hashtags, and location tags. Such methods assist in enhancing the visibility of postings as well as stimulate interactions among the users of social media.

Moreover, other restaurants repost pictures that are taken by customers who have visited the restaurants. This is a popular practice also known as customer-generated content, which allows restaurants to provide a real customer experience while reducing the necessity to design all promotional resources on their own. It has been found that user-generated content could play a crucial role in determining consumer trust and interest in the online marketing context. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Also, customer-generated content is particularly useful for small businesses because it helps create natural communication between the restaurant and its customers with minimal marketing expenditure.

#### 4.3.1 Benchmarking Comparison of Instagram Practices

This table presents a simplified comparison of Instagram marketing practices observed among selected Nepalese restaurants in Finland and the case company Everest Himal Oy.

Restaurant	Main type of content	Approximate Posting Frequency	Customer Engagement Practices

Ravintola Gurkha	Food photos, short videos, promotional posts	3-5 posts/ month	Use of hashtags, food visuals, and promotional offers
Kantipur Nepalese restaurant	Food photos, menu, highlights, promotions	2-4 posts/ month	Promotional captions, location tagging
Sauraha Nepalese restaurant	Food images, restaurant ambience, special dishes	3-6 posts/ month	Customer interaction through comments and tags
Everest Himal Oy (Case Company)	Basic information, offers, occasional food posts	Irregular posting 2-4 posts during active periods.	Limited engagement, mainly informational posts

Table 1. Benchmarking comparison of Instagram marketing practices among Nepalese restaurants in Finland (Author, 2025).

Benchmarking comparison indicates that Everest Himal Oy has some similarities and differences with other Nepalese restaurants that are in operation in Finland. The difference is mainly in the regularity of posting. As the benchmarked restaurants usually have a regular posting schedule, i.e., two or six posts a month, but the Instagram activity of the Everest Himal Oy seems less.

The kind of content that is shared is also another difference that can be noted. The restaurants under benchmarking pay much attention to the aesthetic pictures of food and short videos presenting dishes and the restaurant environment. This visual content can also be used effectively in the restaurant business as it enables customers to develop expectations concerning the food process in the restaurant.

The restaurants are also different in their customer engagement practices. Some of the engagement strategies of the benchmarked restaurants include hashtags, location tagging, and responding to comments by the followers.

While the Instagram usage of the Everest Himal Oy is based on posting simple information, including opening hours and promotions, it does not include much interactivity.

Despite these variations, the benchmarking findings indicate that the Instagram approaches used by similar restaurants are still easy to handle. It means that similar practices have the prospect of being implemented by Everest Himal Oy, including providing more visual material that relates to food, posting at regular times, and improving interaction with customers by using basic engagement methods.

## 5 DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter, the main findings of the empirical research are shown and discussed with reference to the theoretical framework of Chapter 2. The discussion explains how the survey data and the interview with the owner would help to understand customers' perspectives on Instagram marketing for the case company, Everest Himal Oy. These findings are analyzed using the Stimulus-Organism Response (S-O-R) model, which allows investigating the relationship between marketing stimuli and customer perceptions, their interactions, and intentions.

### 5.1 Overview of findings regarding research objectives

This thesis was intended to explore how customers perceive Instagram marketing as well as explore how Instagram content impacts customer engagement and the intention to visit the restaurant in the case of Everest Himal Oy. The research aimed at learning the level of customer awareness about the Instagram presence of the restaurant, to determine the type of content that the customers prefer, and to determine whether the social media marketing would influence the intentions of the customers to eat at the restaurant.

Both the survey findings and the interview show that Instagram has the potential of improving customer engagement and increasing the visibility of the restaurant, even though the current usage of Instagram by the case company is relatively low. According to the survey results, most respondents are frequent users of Instagram, and they find the information provided on social media to be helpful when making impressions of restaurants. Furthermore, the respondents were interested in content that could be viewed as appealing to the sight, namely food photos, short videos, and customer experience. These results can be supported by previous studies that reveal the significance of the visual social media platforms in influencing consumer perception in the hospitality industry.

The fact that Instagram has served as an information platform instead of a direct marketing tool was further supported by the fact that the restaurant owner mentioned in the interview. According to the owner, the original purpose of creating the account was to spread usable information, including opening and closing times, offers, and restaurant news. However, the development of a more strategic presence on Instagram has been hampered by limited time, financial resources, as well as lack of marketing knowledge.

Overall, the results assume that Instagram marketing can be a powerful tool to impact the perceptions and engagement of customers, yet the success of the marketing strategy depends on the consistency and the quality of the content that a person shares.

## 5.2 Customer Awareness & Perceptions

The level of customer awareness about the Instagram presence of the restaurant and the overall attitude to online marketing in the restaurant environment were among the research objectives. The data provided in the survey indicates that many respondents were familiar with the Instagram page utilized by the restaurant, but not all of them were engaged in following the page.

This observation implies that although Instagram will be able to increase brand visibility, the presence of a personal account is not necessarily enough to facilitate a strong customer communication process. Instagram marketing is greatly reliant on how regularly and well the content is posted. The previous studies reveal that social media marketing supports brand awareness and consumer perception by enabling better visual narration and engagement of consumers.

The findings also show that the respondents found the Instagram content to be valuable in acquiring information about restaurants on Instagram. Instagram is often used by customers to review menus, check how the food is served, and evaluate the atmosphere in the restaurants before making a choice to visit them. This behavior is consistent with the information search in consumer behavior, which involves searching online data, whereby customers depend on online information as a tool for reducing uncertainty before the purchase of services.

The owner interview also brought to attention that sometimes the customers can ask the restaurant owner about their Instagram page or take photos with the food to share them on social media. This action suggests that social media can serve as a promotional medium due to customer-generated content.

### 5.3 Content Preferences and Customer Engagement

The research aimed to establish the kind of Instagram content customers of the restaurant prefer. The results of the surveys confirm that the visual content has a very strong impact. Content types that were picked the most by respondents were food imagery, brief videos, and promotional posts.

The observation is also consistent with the literature that suggests that the content with a strong visual interest attracts greater attention on the image-oriented platform like Instagram. In the hospitality industry, food appearance

and the atmosphere of a restaurant are the main determinants of consumer choice. Therefore, with the help of photography and videography it is a good means to convey a general dining experience.

The respondents also mentioned that they liked genuine and raw content more than the advertisements that have been heavily edited and edited. The same preference is an indicator of a value placed on authenticity and openness in brand-consumer relationships in the social media environment, whereby authentic content promotes trust and relatability between companies and customers.

It is also interesting to note that most respondents would be more willing to interact with the Instagram productions of a restaurant when the number of postings is more frequent. The behavior of engagement, likes, comments, or sharing the content are the major component indicator of consumer interest and emotional attachment to the brand. The studies have indicated that this type of social media communication improves the relationship between customers and the brands, as well as strengthens brand loyalty.

These findings are strengthened by the interviewee of the restaurant owner; the owner admitted that the posts are currently frequent as there are currently time issues. Handling the Instagram page requires creative thinking and long-term work, which may be especially difficult with the limited resources of small companies.

#### 5.4 Motivation & Influence On Visit Intention

The survey questions also investigated motivational reasons that cause customers to interact with restaurant-related Instagram posts. According to surveying statistics, the greatest number of individuals subscribe to such content as they are interested in receiving information, gaining new ideas to eat, and following the experiences of other customers.

These desires agree with the Uses and Gratifications Theory that postulates that people seek media consumption to fulfill certain informational, social, or entertainment needs. Instagram utilizes a ready-to-use tool and, in that regard, allows customers to visually and socially judge the restaurants prior to making a dining choice.

Other results indicate that the aggressive Instagram marketing might have a positive influence on the visit intention. A large percentage of the interviewed claim that exposure to attractive food images or engaging content would enhance their desire to visit the restaurant. This is in line with the previous research evidence, which records the ability of social media marketing to simultaneously affect consumer behavior in forming perceptions and expectations.

Instagram content is based on the theoretical framework of Stimulus-Organism-response (S-O-R), where external stimuli trigger inside cognitive affective responses, such as perception, trust, and engagement, which trigger responses such as visiting and recommending a restaurant. Based on the findings, Instagram marketing can therefore influence the behavior of consumers indirectly through the psychological mechanisms of interest, curiosity, and trust.

### 5.5 SME Marketing Challenges

The results of the interview highlight one important thing in the form of the practical issues that small businesses face in developing marketing strategies. The owner of Everest Himal Oy found time constraints and budget constraints to be the most significant obstacles to the increased active use of Instagram.

These limitations are common with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which usually use a limited number of employees and small marketing funds. In many cases, entrepreneurs have no other choice but to administer

marketing projects on their own and conduct regular business responsibilities at the same time.

Despite these limitations, the owner took into consideration the future benefits of Instagram marketing in improving exposure and recruiting new customers. Also, the owner suggested the desire to spread food pictures, videos, and restaurant-related materials under the condition of getting proper support and counseling. This finding shows that a small-scale improvement in the management of social media would have a significant impact on raising the digital presence of the restaurant.

#### 5.6 Benchmarking Insights related to the case company

The benchmarking study of other similar restaurants in Finland run by the Nepalese offers insightful information. This is because restaurants with more dynamic Instagram profiles can post regularly, provide content of attractive food shots and engage with their clients by commenting and reposting their reactions.

Comparing it with these competitors, it can be stated that the current posting frequency is fairly low at Everest Himal Oy. Increasing the content volume and the variety of types of presented online content would also contribute to the increased visibility of the restaurant and its interaction with customers online.

However, benchmarking further uncovers that effective social media plans do not necessarily have to be based on complex marketing advertisements. There are numerous small restaurants, which attain a high level of engagement with the help of showing pure photos, presentations of dishes, and communicating with clients. This results in the fact that a slight increase in publishing activity and content diversity may substantially enhance the performance of the restaurant on Instagram.

## 5.7 Summary of Discussions

Combining the discussion highlights the great possibility of Instagram marketing to support restaurant awareness, customer interest, and the desire to visit the restaurant. The results support the fact that customers are keen on using Instagram to research restaurants and prefer attractive and genuine pieces.

At the same time, the research also suggests that small businesses struggle and face many challenges in maintaining a regular social media presence. It is currently the case that the company in question relies on Instagram as a source of information only, whereas the results indicate that a more proactive and organized strategy would have strengthened the ties between the company and its customers. Finally, all findings of the study, the existing literature and theories, and the discussion confirm the idea that Instagram marketing can impact customer behavior based on the perception, engagement, and trust-building processes.

## 6 CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is the summary of the primary findings of the research and includes practical suggestions about the case company, Everest Himal Oy. The conclusions are made on the results of the survey, the owner interview, and the theoretical background as described in the previous chapters of the thesis. This study was carried out with the purpose of investigating the opinions of customers regarding Instagram marketing and defining how Instagram could support customer engagement and restaurant visit intentions.

### 6.1 Conclusion

This thesis explored the perception of consumers concerning Instagram marketing and how they can influence the intention to engage and visit in relation

to the case of Everest Himal Oy. The research aimed to understand how the customers value the Instagram popularity of the restaurant, the kinds of content that are preferred by the customers, and how marketing leads to the visibility of the restaurant as well as interaction with the customers.

The findings reveal that Instagram is becoming dominant in determining how customers explore and view restaurants. The survey demonstrated that a significant percentage of respondents frequently visited Instagram and view restaurant related posts. The strongest forms of content turned out to be visual media: food photography, short videos, and real-life stories by customers. Such results corroborate the fact that visual media, like Instagram, can be used successfully to influence customers to visit the place.

Moreover, the participants appreciated genuine, informative messages as opposed to advertisements that are well edited. They also pointed out that more frequent posts may encourage the desire to interact with the restaurant through Instagram, and this may even increase the chances of a physical visit. This finding is consistent with the previous studies, which suggest that engagement on social media has a positive impact on consumer perceptions and behavioral intentions in the hospitality industry.

Additional insight concerning the challenges of small businesses in social-media marketing was provided by an interview with the restaurant owner about the operational barriers small businesses are currently facing. Though the owner admits that Instagram is useful in terms of raising awareness and attracting the customer base, the lack of time, funding, and marketing capabilities restricts the effective use of the marketing strategy. Thus, the existing Instagram activity of the restaurant focuses on sharing basic information, including the openings, promotions, and updates.

Altogether, the facts indicate that Instagram marketing will support the number of interactions with customers and the restaurant's image if it is done systematically and regularly. The restaurant may strengthen its online presence by making gradual changes in the frequency of postings, the variety of content,

and communicating with customers. Combining the opinions of customers and the owner, this study provides practical suggestions that can help small restaurants use Instagram as a powerful tool of communication and marketing.

Overall, this study demonstrates the fact that Instagram has significant potential in marketing in the restaurant industry. In the case of a company such as Everest Himal Oy, a simple, realistic, and regular posting on Instagram can enhance customer publicity, strengthen interaction, and eventually get new customers.

## 6.2 Practical Recommendations for Everest Himal Oy

According to the results of the survey, the interview with the owner, and the benchmarking analysis, several specific practical recommendations may be offered to Everest Himal Oy to improve the efficiency of Instagram. Such recommendations will be realistic and feasible for a small restaurant enterprise specially case company with limited marketing capabilities.

### 6.2.1 Consistent but Manageable Posting Schedule

One of the key improvements identified in the findings is needed for more consistency in Instagram activity. The benchmarking analysis showed that most of the similar Nepalese restaurants usually post content two to six times a month. The active posting schedule will keep a restaurant visible on social media platforms and attract a higher potential of customers reading the content shared by the restaurant.

However, the owner stated in the interview that it is a difficult task to manage social media because of limited resources and time. The realist approach to defining the strategy of Everest Himal Oy would therefore be a manageable posting frequency of three to five postings per month. Such activity would help

the restaurant to remain visible to its followers without creating a workload for the owner.

Research suggests that regular social media usage also enhances brand awareness and engagement because the business remains an active part of the digital world of customers (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). Thus, the regular but moderate posting schedule will help to enhance the presence of the restaurant in the online environment.

### 6.2.2 Focus on Visual Food Content

Based on the survey findings, it was shown that the customers are especially interested in viewing the content related to food on Instagram. Many respondents reported that seeing photos or videos on an online platform increases their interest in visiting a restaurant. This result aligns with previous studies that indicate the importance of visual content in restaurant marketing since customers tend to experience restaurants based on their visual observation before visiting a restaurant (Kotler et al., 2017).

Based on these findings, Everest Himal Oy needs to prioritize visually appealing food-related posts. Some possible content would be pictures of popular dishes, typical Nepalese meals, and seasonal menu items. Instagram users can also be interested in short video clips or reels showing food preparation or presenting dishes.

Importantly, to create effective social media, one does not need high-quality professional equipment. Even simple smartphone photography, along with the natural light and clear display of meals are sufficient to generate pleasant content that appeals to customers.

### 6.2.3 Utilize Customer-Generated Content.

Customer-generated content represents another practical opportunity to enhance the Instagram presence of the restaurant is customer-generated content. During the interview, the owner stated that there are customers who capture images of their food and ask about the restaurant's Instagram page. This practice also shows that customers are already interacting with the restaurant on social media.

Everest Himal Oy may repost such images with the consent of the customer on its own page on Instagram. This not only saves the necessity of producing new information regularly, but it also strengthens the authenticity and trust among followers.

Previous studies show that user-generated content often has a greater effect on consumer trust than conventional advertising because it reflects the actual experience of customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Thus, the exchange of customer experiences could help in build credibility and additional interaction.

### 6.2.4 Highlight Cultural Identity and Restaurant Atmosphere

Everest Himal Oy provides the services of Nepalese cuisine, which represent unique cultural dining experience in the Finnish restaurant market. Instagram not only allows promoting the food offered by a restaurant but also helps to convey the sense of culture of a restaurant.

It might involve posts about traditional Nepalese foods, Nepalese festivals, the decoration of the restaurant, as well as the story behind some of the foods or ingredients. The content of such storytelling can be used to establish a better emotional bond between the restaurant and the customers.

Studies of hospitality marketing have shown that storytelling and authentic brand stories have the potential to increase customer interaction of customers

and build memorable brand experience (Kotler et al., 2017). By focusing on its cultural uniqueness, Everest Himal Oy will be able to stand out among the other restaurants in the local market.

#### 6.2.5 Encourage Simple Customer Interaction.

Instagram posts may also be made more visible by engaging the followers. Social media networks often prioritize posts that can draw attention, such as likes, comments, and shares.

Simple interaction techniques may include asking questions in the post captions, encouraging the clients to mention the restaurant in their photos, or simply responding to comments posted by the followers. These little things will allow a more interactive relationship between the restaurant and customers.

The concept of engagement is relevant in social media marketing as it enhances the relationship between businesses and consumers and elevates the chances of consumers still being associated with that brand (Tuten & Solomon, 2018).

#### 6.2.6 Monitor Customer Feedback Using Instagram

Instagram has the potential to be a useful tool to keep track of customer feedback. Whereas Everest Himal Oy is presently using Google reviews and direct communications, the comments and messages on social networks may also help to know customer preferences.

By paying attention to customer feedback and responses to the posts, will help the restaurant can see which types of content customers are interested in and which aspects of the experience people like the most. These lessons may guide the marketing plans in the future and enable the restaurant to ensure

that the communication activity is matched with the expectations of the customers.

### 6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Even though the current study offers important information on customer perception in relation to Instagram marketing in the scenario of Everest Himal Oy, it has several limitations that should be considered. First, the sample size of 57 participants used in the survey was quite small. However, although the responses do provide valuable information about customers' perceptions, the findings could not be entirely valid for the perceptions of the general customers related to the restaurant. It would be possible to get more credible information about customer behavior and preferences by increasing the sample size.

Secondly, the research is focused on a particular case company. The case of Everest Himal Oy is a small, independently owned Nepalese company that has been operating in Finland; it can be concluded from this business environment only. Although some of the findings can be generalized to other small restaurants, the findings cannot be blindly generalized to every restaurant or hospitality industry.

Another thing is related to the methodology of data collection. The analysis involved only one interview with the owner of the restaurant, providing an appropriate source of knowledge on the working issues in Instagram marketing. However, more interviews with other restaurant owners or marketing experts would provide a larger scope of understanding of the use of social media marketing in the hospitality industry.

Research in the future may extend the area to study various restaurants and compare the social media marketing in different types of restaurants and cuisines. Additionally, the data on customer interaction directly obtained through social networks can be analyzed to estimate the impact of specific types of

Instagram content on customer engagement and their desire to visit the restaurant.

## 7 FINAL WORDS

This thesis explored customer perceptions of the use of Instagram marketing on Everest Himal Oy and studied how social media might be used to facilitate customer engagement and the intention to visit the restaurant. The research combined survey responses, interviews with the restaurant owner, and benchmarking of similar Nepalese restaurants that were operating in Finland. The research offers both theoretical and practical information by combining empirical and theoretical understandings of online marketing and consumer behavior.

The conclusions show that Instagram can be a significant tool to influence customer attitude towards restaurants and influence them to be interested in visiting these restaurants. Food content, real communication, and regular postings were also found to be suitable factors for the engagement of the customer. The findings further show that even small restaurants with little marketing capabilities can make their presence on social media platforms that are active. Instagram helps to increase visibility of the brand, reinforce the relations with clients, and influence potential guests to visit the restaurant when used strategically.

At the same time, studies highlight the practical challenges for small restaurant enterprises in managing Instagram activities. Small business owners might have time issues, inadequate marketing expertise, and financial challenges that will limit their ability to adopt the best marketing approaches. The recommendations presented in this study focus on realistic and achievable practices, such as maintaining a moderate posting schedule, sharing visually attractive food material, and using customer-generated material.

In a more general view, this study also contributes to the understanding of the role of marketing in small hospitality businesses. Since Instagram has become more influential in restaurants to interact, market, and improve services through an Instagram page. Even simple media strategies present significant chances to increase customer communication and position the small restaurateurs better in the competition.

Overall, the empirical results of this thesis provide practical advice to Everest Hi-mal Oy to organize its Instagram marketing efforts in a way that aligns with the reality of operations in the small restaurant business. By adopting the recommended plans one step at a time, the establishment can optimize its online presence, build stronger relationships with its customers, and possibly grow its customers with time.

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## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### Theme 1: History of Instagram and Its Use

1. How and when did the restaurant begin using Instagram?
2. What has been done on Instagram so far, and what was the primary reason behind posting basic information?

### Theme 2: Expected benefits & Challenges

3. What do you think are the advantages of Instagram for the restaurant?
4. What makes you less active on Instagram not possible (e.g., time, skills, resources)?

### Theme 3: Customer Interaction & Feedback

5. Have customers ever asked about the Instagram page when coming to the restaurant?
6. How do you collect feedback from customers now?

### Theme 4: Future Expectations & Development

7. What kind of Instagram posts would you consider posting in the future?
8. What is your opinion of using customer-generated materials or re-posting of customer photos?

### Theme 5: Practical Needs & Support

9. What type of support or mentoring would assist you in becoming more active on Instagram?
10. How could Instagram practically support the daily operation and visibility?

## APPENDIX 2: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

### Section A: Background Information

#### Q1. Age group

- Under 18
- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55 or above

#### Q2. How often do you use Instagram?

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Occasionally
- Rarely

#### Q3. Do you know that there is an Instagram page of Everest Himal Oy?

- Yes, I follow it
- Yes, but I do not follow it
- No, I was not aware

#### Q4. How often do you visit Everest Himal Oy?

- First time
- Occasionally
- Regularly

### Section B: Customer Awareness & Current Views

For the following statement questions, please indicate your level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale, where:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree

- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

Q5. The Instagram page of the restaurant offers some basic information (e.g. opening hours), which is useful.

Q6. The Instagram page creates a positive impression of the restaurant.

Q7. I trust the information shared on the restaurant's Instagram page.

Q8. The current Instagram presence represents the restaurant well.

### Section C: Content Expectations & Preferences

*(Research Question 2)*

Q9. What type of Instagram content would you like to see more from the restaurant?

*(You may select more than one)*

- Food photos
- Short videos or reels
- Customer photos or reviews
- Promotions and special offers
- Behind-the-scenes content
- Cultural or festival-related posts

Q10. Seeing food photos or videos on Instagram would increase my interest in the restaurant. (1–5 scale)

For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale, where:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

Q11. I prefer more real content rather than professionally edited advertisements. (1–5 scale)

For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale, where:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

#### Section D: Motivation & Engagement Potential

*(Research Question 3)*

Q12. Why do you usually view restaurant-related posts on Instagram?

- To get information (menu, opening hours)
- For inspiration
- For entertainment
- To see other customers' experiences

Q13. If the restaurant posted more regularly, I would engage with its Instagram content (like, comment, share). (1–5 scale)

For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale, where:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

#### Section E: Influence & Recommendations

Q14. Active marketing on Instagram would make me more likely to visit the restaurant. (1–5 scale)

For the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale, where:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

Q15. What would you recommend improving the restaurant's Instagram presence?

(text response box)