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Digital Marketing Strategies Adopted by Nepalese Restaurant After COVID-19

The White Himal Restaurant

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This thesis delves into the digital marketing strategies used by White Himal, a Nepalese restaurant in Finland, with a focus on the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a qualitative research method, the study investigates the marketing approaches employed before, during, and after the pandemic. The introduction highlights the importance of digital marketing in the restaurant industry, particularly in the face of global disruptions like the pandemic.

The literature review summarizes current research on digital marketing trends and the challenges encountered by ethnic restaurants. Data collection and analysis involved conducting in-depth interviews with the owner of White Himal, which provided insights into their adaptive strategies. During the pandemic, White Himal transitioned from traditional marketing to digital platforms such as social media, e-commerce, and delivery aggregators. This shift proved to be a crucial tool for customer engagement and retention.

The discussion explores the implications of these findings, emphasizing the role of mobile apps in improving customer experience, streamlining operations, and fostering loyalty. The conclusion highlights the necessity for continual innovation and adaptation in digital marketing strategies to maintain growth and competitiveness in the post-pandemic era. This study enhances the understanding of digital transformation in the hospitality sector and provides practical recommendations for the White Himal restaurant.

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Terms

PPE   Personal Protective Equipment

SEO   Search Engine Optimization

AI   Artificial Intelligence

1   INTRODUCTION

The global restaurant industry has faced unparalleled challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating rapid adaptation and strategic adjustments to navigate the ever-changing landscape (Vargas et al., 2021). In this context, Nepalese restaurants have emerged as shining examples of resilience, innovation, and cultural richness in the cooking department. This study delves into the transformative journey of one such restaurant, White Himal, exploring its navigation of the digital landscape following the pandemic-induced shifts in consumer behavior and market demands. This thesis endeavors to thoroughly examine the marketing strategies adopted by Nepalese restaurants in Finland in response to COVID-19, with a particular emphasis on White Himal Restaurant as a case study.

According to Sangroula (2024), Nepalese cuisine holds a distinctive place in the culinary landscape of Finland, offering a rich tapestry of flavors and traditions to the multicultural Finnish society. However, the onset of the COVID-19 crisis catalyzed a paradigm shift in the restaurant industry, prompting a rapid transition towards digitalization to mitigate the impact of lockdowns, social distancing measures, and fluctuating consumer sentiments. Against this backdrop, the adoption of digital marketing strategies by Nepalese restaurants, exemplified by White Himal, becomes a focal point of inquiry, offering insights into the resilience and adaptability of small-scale enterprises in the face of unprecedented challenges.

The study of the adoption of digital marketing in Nepalese restaurants after COVID-19 is significant beyond the immediate context. It has broader implications for the restaurant industry and small businesses. Firstly, it highlights the essential role of digital technologies in transforming traditional business models and promoting resilience during crises. By examining the strategies used by White Himal, this study demonstrates the potential of digital marketing to drive innovation and sustainability in the post-pandemic era.

Moreover, the study of digital marketing adoption by Nepalese restaurants in Finland sheds light on the intersection of cultural heritage and contemporary business practices. As conduits of culinary traditions from the Himalayan region, these restaurants occupy a unique niche in the Finnish gastronomic landscape, catering to diverse palates while preserving cultural authenticity. Understanding how these establishments leverage digital platforms to enhance visibility, engage with customers, and adapt their offerings is crucial not only for their individual success but also for the promotion of cultural diversity and inclusivity within the Finnish culinary scene.

Furthermore, the exploration of White Himal's digital marketing strategies provides valuable insights for restaurant owners, marketers, and policymakers seeking to navigate the evolving digital landscape and harness its potential for business growth and community engagement. By elucidating the factors that contribute to the effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives, this study offers actionable recommendations for optimizing resource allocation, enhancing customer experiences, and fostering sustainable growth in the restaurant sector.

The study of digital marketing adoption by Nepalese restaurants in Finland, with a focus on White Himal, holds intrinsic value in its examination of resilience, innovation, and cultural preservation in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. By illuminating the transformative impact of digital technologies on small-scale enterprises and cultural institutions, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities facing the contemporary restaurant industry in a digital age.

1.1   Background

White Himal Restaurant is a Nepalese restaurant located in the heart of Finland's bustling culinary scene. It has gained a reputation for its authentic flavors, warm atmosphere, and immersive dining experiences since it was established in 2020. White Himal is a contemporary Nepalese fine dining restaurant situated in the heart of Tikkurila, Vantaa. The restaurant's main goal is to provide customers with authentic and delicious food, as well as customer-focused service and a welcoming atmosphere, all aimed at achieving excellent customer satisfaction. The White Himal team is dedicated to delivering the best possible experience to their patrons through delicious cuisine, attentive service, and a cozy environment.

White Himal offers a wide range of traditional Nepalese dishes with a modern twist. Their goal is to create a cozy, home-like atmosphere and showcase the best of Nepalese cuisine with a contemporary touch. The staff is professionally trained in traditional methods and provides excellent service. The restaurant has an inviting interior, and the food is of exceptional quality. Their popular naan breads and curries are particularly outstanding. They offer familiar flavors and convenient lunch hours on weekdays. Despite being located in a bustling area, White Himal provides a relaxing dining experience with delightful flavors in Vantaa. However, like many other restaurants, White Himal has faced challenges due to the COVID-19 crisis, testing their flexibility and adaptability. Picture 1 displays the logo of White Himal Restaurant, as referenced below.

Picture 1. White Himal Restaurant's logo.

1.2   Research Question and Objectives

This thesis addresses the following main research question:

How has White Himal Restaurant adapted its digital marketing strategies in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Finland, and which digital marketing platform is best for Nepalese restaurant?

The White Himal Restaurant has been chosen as a case study for this thesis due to several compelling reasons. Firstly, the restaurant is an excellent example of Nepalese hospitality and culinary expertise, which provides a unique perspective for examining the impact of COVID-19 on the Nepalese restaurant industry in Finland. Secondly, as a frontline participant in the post-pandemic marketplace, White Himal's marketing strategies, innovations, and consumer engagement initiatives serve as invaluable case material for scholarly inquiry and practical insights. This study aims to uncover nuanced insights, emergent trends, and strategic imperatives shaping the broader landscape of restaurant marketing in a post-COVID-19 world by analyzing White Himal's transformation and adaptation journey.

The overarching objective of this thesis is to conduct a systematic investigation into the digital marketing strategies adopted by White Himal Restaurant after the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Examine the impact of COVID-19 on White Himal's business operations, consumer dynamics, and digital marketing initiatives.

2. Examine the pre-COVID-19 marketing strategies utilized by White Himal, focusing on digital marketing channels.

3. Provide actionable recommendations, best practices, and strategic insights for White Himal and other Nepalese restaurants in Finland seeking to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the post-pandemic era effectively.

1.3   Structure and Methodology of the Thesis

This thesis is focused on analyzing the digital marketing strategies adopted by White Himal Restaurant in Finland after the COVID-19 pandemic. The approach used in this thesis is structured, with an introduction, a literature review on restaurant marketing and crisis management, and a methodology section outlining the qualitative research approach used. The core of the thesis is a detailed case study analysis of White Himal's digital marketing strategies and consumer responses pre- and post-pandemic. The discussion and findings section contextualizes key discoveries within the broader industry landscape. In conclusion, actionable recommendations will be presented for White Himal and industry stakeholders.

The qualitative research method is selected because it enables a comprehensive understanding of the restaurant's marketing strategies and consumer perceptions, offering detailed and rich insights. This method involves conducting interviews with the owners of White Himal Restaurant, namely Mani Acharya and Dinesh Sapkota, as well as potential customers.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses on exploring relevant literature related to digital marketing strategies adopted by White Himal restaurant in Finland after the COVID-19 pandemic. The literature is segmented into various sections, each addressing specific factors or strategies that play a crucial role in both the post-pandemic and pre-pandemic marketing approaches of restaurants.

2.1 Impact of COVID-19 in Restaurant Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on various sectors worldwide, and the restaurant industry is no exception. With lockdowns, social distancing measures, and economic uncertainties, restaurants have faced unprecedented challenges. This thesis examines the multifaceted effects of the pandemic on the restaurant industry, from economic implications to shifts in consumer behavior and emerging trends.

2.1.1 Economic Implications

The economic implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the restaurant industry have been severe. During the initial stages of the pandemic, many restaurants faced closures, causing significant revenue loss and unemployment. Even as restrictions eased, the road to recovery remained challenging. According to the National Restaurant Association, the restaurant industry lost approximately $240 billion in sales during the first three months of the pandemic. Additionally, an estimated 110,000 eating and drinking establishments were closed either temporarily or permanently (Karniouchina et al., 2022 p. 130).

The impact of the pandemic has been particularly harsh on small, independently-owned restaurants. According to the Finnish Hospitality Association, the turnover of the restaurant industry decreased by approximately 30% in 2020 (Paguirigan, 2022). These businesses often lack the financial resources to weather prolonged closures or reduced capacity mandates. Many have struggled to pay rent, utilities, and other fixed costs. The need for increased safety measures, such as personal protective equipment (**PPE**) for staff and sanitation supplies, has further strained already tight budgets (Gupta et al., 2020 p. 83).

2.1.2 Shifts in Consumer Behavior

The pandemic has also prompted significant shifts in consumer behavior within the restaurant industry. According to Statistics Finland, the number of people working in the restaurant industry decreased in 2020, with restrictions on indoor dining and concerns about virus transmission, many consumers have turned to alternative dining options (Tiirinki et al., 2020 p. 652). One notable trend has been the surge in demand for food delivery and takeout services. Platforms like Foodora and Wolt offer food delivery services connecting users with restaurants and couriers through its mobile app and website. These platforms have experienced a considerable increase in orders in Finland (Gauli, 2021). Many adults are more likely to order takeout or delivery from a restaurant than before the pandemic.

Moreover, there has been a growing preference for contactless payment and ordering systems to minimize physical contact. Restaurants have implemented QR code menus and mobile payment options to provide customers with a safer dining experience (Grant, 2020). This shift towards contactless technology is likely to persist even after the pandemic subsides, as it offers convenience and peace of mind for consumers.

Another significant change in consumer behavior is the increased focus on health and sustainability. The increased emphasis on hygiene and safety measures is likely to persist even after the pandemic is over. Many restaurants in Finland implemented new protocols, such as contactless payment, online reservations, and enhanced cleaning procedures, to ensure the safety of their customers and staff (Pillai et al., 2021, p. 94).

2.1.3 Emerging Trends

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated several trends within the restaurant industry, some of which are likely to have a lasting impact. One such trend is the rise of ghost kitchens, also known as virtual kitchens or dark kitchens (Da Cunha et al. 2024). These are professional food preparation and cooking facilities set up for the preparation of delivery-only meals. Ghost kitchens allow restaurants to reduce overhead costs associated with traditional dining spaces while meeting the increased demand for delivery and takeout.

Furthermore, there has been a renewed emphasis on outdoor dining spaces. Many restaurants have expanded or invested in outdoor seating areas to comply with social distancing

guidelines and accommodate customers who feel more comfortable dining al fresco (Bereitschaft & Scheller, 2020). Even as restrictions ease, outdoor dining is likely to remain popular, offering a safer and more enjoyable dining experience.

Additionally, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of technology in the restaurant industry in Finland. Restaurants have increasingly adopted technology solutions such as online ordering platforms, reservation systems, and digital marketing tools to adapt to the changing landscape. The integration of technology not only enhances operational efficiency but also improves the overall customer experience (Martin, 2021).

2.2   Digital Marketing Strategies for Restaurants Post COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the restaurant industry, resulting in businesses needing to adapt to new norms and challenges. As the world moves towards recovery, restaurants must reevaluate and reconstruct their digital marketing strategies. In the post-pandemic era, it will be imperative for restaurants to prioritize digitalization. The pandemic has expedited the transition to digital platforms; therefore, restaurants must create a robust online presence to remain relevant and accessible. Digitalization encompasses more than just online ordering systems; it also entails enhancing the entire customer experience, from discovery to delivery. So, the restaurant industry must embrace digitalization to remain competitive in the post-pandemic era (Ben-Zvi, & Luftman, 2022).

Revamped Online Presence

In today's digital world, a robust online presence is indispensable for restaurants. This can be achieved by overhauling the website to ensure it is user-friendly and accessible on mobile devices. Furthermore, optimizing the website for search engines (**SEO**) will guarantee that the restaurant appears prominently in online searches (Amerland, 2013). Online reviews and reputation management also play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and influencing purchase decisions. Restaurants should actively solicit and respond to customer reviews on platforms like Google (Niu & Fan, 2018, p. 91). To meet the growing demand for convenience, offering seamless online ordering through the website and mobile apps is essential. Moreover, implementing contactless payment and curbside pickup options provides a safe and efficient way for customers to receive their food. Finally, keeping the website updated with engaging content such as blog posts, chef's recommendations, and behind-the-

scenes videos will capture customers' attention and keep them informed about the restaurant's offerings. By implementing these strategies, restaurants can leverage the power of the Internet to attract new customers and retain existing ones.

2.3   Nepalese Cuisine and its Popularity in Finland

Nepalese cuisine, with its rich flavors, diverse ingredients, and cultural significance, has garnered increasing popularity in Finland in recent years (Adhikari & Himal, 2016). This section delves into the unique characteristics of Nepalese cuisine and examines the factors contributing to its growing popularity among Finnish consumers.

Diversity of Flavors and Ingredients:

According to Seddon, (2010 p. 65). Nepalese cuisine is renowned for its diverse array of flavors and ingredients, influenced by the country's geographical and cultural diversity. Nepalese dishes offer a symphony of tastes and aromas from aromatic spices like cumin, coriander, and turmeric to fresh herbs such as cilantro and mint. Staple ingredients like lentils, rice, and vegetables form the foundation of many Nepalese meals, reflecting the country's agrarian heritage. Furthermore, the incorporation of dairy products like yogurt and ghee adds richness to Nepalese dishes, distinguishing them from other South Asian cuisines (Harmayani et al., 2019, p. 13).

Cultural Significance and Traditions:

Nepalese cuisine is deeply intertwined with the country's cultural heritage and traditions. Many dishes have roots in ancient culinary practices passed down through generations, embodying the essence of Nepalese identity. For example, dal bhat, a traditional Nepalese meal consisting of lentil soup (dal) and rice (bhat), holds symbolic importance as a staple dish consumed by Nepalese households daily. Similarly, Momos are a type of dumplings that can be filled with meat or vegetables (Gallani, 2015). They are a popular street food in Nepal. The picture 2 below mentions traditional thakali cuisine.

Picture 2. Thakali cuisine of White Himal.

Health-Consciousness and Dietary Preferences:

Nepalese cuisine has found a receptive audience in Finland, where health-consciousness and dietary preferences play a significant role in consumer choices. The emphasis on fresh, locally sourced ingredients and the minimal use of oil and fats align with the Nordic culinary ethos of simplicity and wholesomeness (Mazac, 2019). Moreover, the abundance of vegetarian and vegan options in Nepalese cuisine caters to the growing demand for plant-based alternatives, appealing to a broader spectrum of diners with varying dietary restrictions and preferences.

Fusion of Flavors and Culinary Innovation:

The popularity of Nepalese cuisine in Finland is further fueled by its ability to adapt and innovate, incorporating elements from other culinary traditions to create fusion dishes that appeal to contemporary tastes. Restaurants serving Nepalese cuisine in Finland often offer a diverse menu that combines traditional Nepalese recipes with modern twists and influences from global cuisines (Thapa, 2011). This fusion of flavors and culinary innovation not only attracts

adventurous food enthusiasts but also showcases the versatility and creativity of Nepalese chefs and restaurateurs.

Community and Cultural Exchanges:

Nepalese cuisine has gained significant popularity in Finland due to its unique and flavorful taste. The cuisine is also renowned for its ability to bring people together, regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Nepalese restaurants have become community focal points where Nepalese expatriates and Finnish locals can come together and enjoy the warmth of Nepalese hospitality (Karki, 2016). These establishments offer a welcoming and friendly atmosphere for social gatherings and celebrations and have become an integral part of Finnish food culture.

According to Yadav, (2023), Nepalese communities in Finland also organize cultural events and festivals that promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. These events range from traditional Nepalese dance performances to food festivals that highlight the diversity and richness of Nepalese cuisine. They provide a unique opportunity for Nepalese immigrants to share their culture with Finnish locals, and for Finnish locals to learn and appreciate the Nepalese way of life (Pathak, 2019).

The Nepalese community's efforts to share their culture have enriched Finnish society. The festivals and events have become an important part of Finnish cultural life, adding to the nation's diverse cultural tapestry (Maunumäki, 2023). The Nepalese community in Finland has thus become a vital and respected part of the country's cultural landscape.

2.4   E-commerce Business Model as Applied in Restaurant

The restaurant industry has undergone significant changes in recent years due to the emergence of e-commerce platforms (Mohomad et al., 2020). These platforms have revolutionized the way food businesses operate and interact with their customers. E-commerce in the restaurant industry includes a wide range of online activities, such as online ordering, delivery services, digital marketing, and customer engagement (El-Ebiary, 2021). By using e-commerce platforms and technologies, restaurants can streamline their operations, improve customer experience, and extend their reach beyond physical boundaries. From fast-food chains to fine-dining establishments, e-commerce has become an essential part of the modern restaurant landscape. It has reshaped traditional business models and consumer behavior.

Components of the E-commerce Business Model:

The e-commerce business model in the restaurant industry usually involves several essential elements.:

Online Ordering System: Restaurants utilize websites, mobile apps, and third-party platforms to enable customers to place orders online conveniently. Integrated ordering systems allow for customization, real-time updates, and secure payment processing, enhancing the efficiency of order fulfillment (Chavan et al., 2015, p. 723)

Delivery and Logistics: According to Pasirayi et al., (2023), third-party delivery services and in-house delivery fleets are both becoming increasingly important for restaurants in the e-commerce age. These services allow restaurants to reach customers who are located outside of their immediate area. This can help restaurants to increase their sales and grow their customer base.

Digital Marketing and Customer Engagement: To succeed online, businesses need a strong presence, achieved through a combination of digital marketing and customer engagement. Digital marketing captures attention using **SEO**, social media, and targeted ads (Gani & Faroque, 2021, p. 176). Customer engagement converts connections to loyal relationships with personalized communication, loyalty programs, and exceptional service. This synergy expands brand awareness, drives sales, and gathers valuable customer data for improvement. By prioritizing value, authenticity, and personalization, businesses can stay ahead and cultivate a thriving online community.

Data Analytics and Insights: E-commerce platforms generate a wealth of data and analytics that restaurants can leverage to gain insights into customer preferences, purchasing behavior, and market trends (Nguyen & Ha, 2021). Data-driven decision-making empowers restaurants to optimize menu offerings, pricing strategies, and promotional activities, thereby maximizing profitability and competitiveness.

Benefits of E-commerce in Restaurants:

E-commerce platforms have revolutionized the restaurant industry by allowing customers to browse menus, place orders, and make payments from the comfort of their homes or while

on the go, eliminating the need for physical visits to restaurants. These platforms also contribute to efficiency through automated ordering and delivery systems, reducing manual errors, and expediting order processing, resulting in faster service and improved customer satisfaction. Additionally, e-commerce extends the geographical reach of restaurants, enabling them to serve customers in distant locations and tap into new markets without significant infrastructure investments. Interactive features such as reviews, ratings, and recommendations facilitate two-way communication between restaurants and customers, fostering trust, loyalty, and brand advocacy. E-commerce channels also provide additional revenue streams for restaurants through online sales, delivery fees, and upselling opportunities, contributing to overall business growth and sustainability (Lalitha & Paul, 2015).

Challenges and Considerations:

The adoption of e-commerce in the restaurant industry, while offering numerous benefits, also presents significant challenges. One major hurdle is the technological integration required to implement e-commerce platforms seamlessly with existing restaurant systems and workflows. This often necessitates technical expertise and substantial investment in infrastructure and training. Moreover, the proliferation of e-commerce platforms and delivery services has led to intensified competition and market saturation, making it increasingly difficult for restaurants to differentiate themselves and attract customers in a crowded marketplace (Weaver, 2023).

Additionally, the operational complexity of managing online orders, coordinating deliveries, and maintaining food quality and freshness poses significant challenges, particularly during peak hours and periods of high demand(Xue et al., 2021 p. 7).

Furthermore, concerns about data privacy and security loom large, as collecting and storing customer data on e-commerce platforms raise legitimate worries about privacy breaches and compliance with data protection regulations. Addressing these concerns requires the implementation of robust safeguards and protocols to protect sensitive information and ensure regulatory compliance.

Future Prospects and Innovations:

As the restaurant industry continues to evolve in the digital age, the e-commerce landscape is poised for sustained growth and innovation, driven by emerging trends and technological advancements (Aldoseri et al., 2024). One notable development on the horizon is the emergence of virtual restaurants, also known as ghost kitchens or cloud kitchens.

According to Jones et al. (2024), these virtual establishments capitalize on the e-commerce model to operate delivery-only kitchens, offering niche cuisines and menu concepts tailored to online audiences. By leveraging e-commerce platforms, virtual restaurants can reach a broader customer base and experiment with innovative culinary offerings, thereby reshaping the traditional restaurant landscape.

Moreover, the integration of artificial intelligence (**AI**) and automation technologies holds promise for enhancing e-commerce experiences in restaurants. Blöcher & Alt (2021) highlight the potential applications of AI and automation, ranging from predictive analytics and chatbots to autonomous delivery drones and robotic kitchen assistants. These technologies can streamline operations, improve efficiency, and personalize customer interactions, thereby enhancing the overall e-commerce experience and driving customer satisfaction.

In addition to technological innovations, sustainability and green initiatives are gaining prominence in the e-commerce landscape of the restaurant industry. E-commerce platforms have the potential to support sustainability efforts by promoting eco-friendly practices such as reusable packaging, carbon-neutral delivery options, and food waste reduction initiatives (Köster, 2021). By prioritizing sustainability, restaurants can align with evolving consumer preferences and contribute to environmental conservation efforts, thereby enhancing their brand image and fostering long-term customer loyalty.

The future prospects of e-commerce in the restaurant industry are characterized by continued growth and innovation, driven by emerging trends and technological advancements. The rise of virtual restaurants, integration of AI and automation, and emphasis on sustainability initiatives represent key areas of opportunity for restaurants to thrive in the digital marketplace. By embracing these innovations, restaurants can adapt to evolving consumer preferences, enhance operational efficiency, and contribute to a more sustainable future for the industry.

2.5   Social Media Marketing Model to Promote Restaurant

Social media has become important for restaurants to promote their business and sustain growth. This section presents a comprehensive social media marketing model for restaurants, including strategies, platform selection criteria, content types, engagement methodologies, influencer partnerships, local **SEO** optimization, and performance metrics (Bennett, 2017). The model helps restaurants effectively utilize social media platforms and achieve long-term growth.

Selection of Social Media Platform:

It is crucial to choose the right social media platforms to reach the target audience effectively. Restaurants usually prefer visually appealing platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and emerging platforms such as TikTok (Sievälä, 2023). Each platform has unique characteristics and user demographics, which allow restaurants to create content and engagement strategies that resonate with their target audience's preferences and behaviors. Some of the social media platforms are shown in picture 3 below.

Picture 3. Socia Media Platforms (Memberpress, 2019).

Content Strategy:

An effective social media marketing is centered around a captivating content strategy (Collin & Mäntymäki, 2017). The content of the strategy should be visually stimulating, informative, and immersive. It should showcase the restaurant's ambiance, culinary offerings, and unique value proposition. Core content types may include visually appealing images and videos that showcase signature dishes, behind-the-scenes glimpses of kitchen operations, user-generated content that reflects authentic dining experiences, promotions, and interactive content such as polls and quizzes that foster audience engagement.

Engagement and Community Building:

Harnessing the power of social media platforms presents a prime chance to cultivate a vibrant and engaged community centered around a restaurant brand. By promptly interacting with followers through timely replies to comments, messages, and reviews, the restaurant can nurture valuable connections and a strong sense of loyalty among its patrons (Goodman, 2012). Moreover, interactive endeavors like polls, contests, and challenges serve to encourage user engagement and foster a sense of belonging within the community.

Influencer Partnerships:

According to Fiorentino, (2019), strategic collaborations with influencers and food bloggers hold immense potential in amplifying the restaurant's visibility and credibility within the digital landscape. Identifying influencers whose ethos and audience resonate with the restaurant's target demographic facilitates seamless integration of sponsored content, reviews, or events, thereby extending the reach and impact of promotional endeavors.

Local SEO Optimization:

Elevating the local search engine optimization (**SEO**) strategy through the optimization of social media profiles and content represents a pivotal step in enhancing the discoverability and relevance of a restaurant within its local market (Ryan, 2020). By meticulously incorporating various elements such as location tags, geo-targeted hashtags, and strategically relevant keywords into its posts and profiles, the restaurant can significantly augment its visibility among potential customers seeking dining options nearby. This heightened visibility

increases the likelihood of attracting foot traffic and facilitates greater online engagement, as users are more likely to discover and interact with the restaurant's content when it aligns closely with their geographical preferences and search intents. Thus, by effectively leveraging these **SEO** tactics within its social media presence, the restaurant can solidify its position as a prominent choice within the local culinary landscape, fostering stronger connections with its target audience and driving sustained business growth (Mondal, 2023).

Performance Measurement Metrics:

The systematic evaluation of performance measurement metrics stands as an indispensable practice in the realm of social media marketing, serving as a cornerstone for assessing the effectiveness of various promotional endeavors and iteratively refining strategies (Murphy, 2009 p. 2). By delving into essential metrics such as engagement rate, reach, impressions, conversion rate, and the invaluable insights gleaned from customer feedback across diverse social media platforms and review sites, businesses can embark on a journey of data-driven decision-making. This meticulous analysis not only offers a comprehensive understanding of campaign performance but also provides a roadmap for continual optimization and enhancement of promotional initiatives. Through this iterative process, organizations can adapt their strategies in real-time, ensuring they remain responsive to evolving market dynamics and consumer preferences. By embracing a holistic approach to performance evaluation, businesses can unlock the full potential of their social media efforts, driving sustainable growth and fostering deeper connections with their target audience.

3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive explanation of the research methodology implemented to collect and analyze data on the digital marketing strategies adopted by White Himal, a Nepalese restaurant located in Vantaa, Finland, after the outbreak of COVID-19. The study design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques will be elaborated upon in-depth to ensure the transparency and replicability of the research process.

3.1 Research Design: A Qualitative Exploration.

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to gain a deeper understanding of White Himal's digital marketing journey post-COVID. While valuable in their own right, qualitative research methods often focus on measuring variables and testing hypotheses (Black, 1999). In this case, I am interested in exploring the "why" behind White Himal's digital marketing choices. To paint a holistic picture of their digital transformation, I aim to understand the owner's experiences, motivations, and decision-making processes. A qualitative approach allows for in-depth interviews, a valuable tool for gathering rich and nuanced data (Mack et al., 2005).

Quantitative methods might reveal trends in digital marketing adoption, but they cannot adequately explain White Himal's owner's motivations, experiences, and decision-making processes. A qualitative approach allows for a nuanced exploration of these aspects.

In-depth interviews play a crucial role in qualitative research as they offer a flexible and interactive way to gather detailed data. By using open-ended questions, interviewers can encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences, providing rich and nuanced insights (Tracy, 2019). Qualitative research is effective at capturing the context within which decisions are made. For White Himal, it is important to understand the cultural considerations and specific challenges faced during their digital transformation. This context-specific in-sight is often overlooked in quantitative studies.

The flexible nature of qualitative research allows the interviewer to probe deeper into emerging areas of interest during the conversation (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This adaptability is essential for uncovering unexpected insights and gaining a comprehensive under-standing of the subject matter.

The aim of this qualitative exploration is to uncover the narrative behind White Himal's digital marketing journey, rather than simply gathering data. While quantitative methods yield valuable generalizable data, they lack the ability to capture the rich, detailed context that qualitative methods provide. By emphasizing in-depth interviews and a holistic approach, this study seeks to make a significant contribution to the understanding of digital marketing adoption in a post-pandemic landscape, particularly among ethnic restaurants (Williams et al., 1988).

3.2 Designing the Interview

The interview design process involved several steps to ensure comprehensive and relevant data collection:

The primary objective was to understand the motivations, experiences, and decision-making processes of the owner of White Himal regarding their digital marketing journey post-COVID. A thorough review of existing literature on digital marketing, particularly in ethnic restaurants and post-pandemic contexts, was conducted. This review helped in devel-oping a framework for the interview. The interview was designed to be semi-structured. This format allowed flexibility while ensuring that all key topics were covered, enabling the own-er of White Himal to explore emerging areas of interest during the conversation.

The questions were carefully chosen to ensure they would elicit detailed and meaningful responses. An initial set of questions was drafted, focusing on the main themes from the literature review: digital transformation, impact of COVID-19, marketing strategies, and cultural considerations. The questions were reviewed and refined for clarity, relevance, and to ensure they were open-ended.

The interview was scheduled at a convenient time for the owner to ensure they could participate without disruptions. It took place on 5th May 2024, allowing adequate time for preparation and follow-up. The interview was conducted in White Himal Restaurant, where the owner felt more comfortable. With the owner's consent, the interview was not recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. The questions covered various topics related to the impact of covid-19, during the pandemic and the adaptation of digital marketing after the pandemic.

The marketing methods used for your restaurant before covid 19.

In the beginning, the question was about the marketing strategies used by White Himal restaurant before the COVID-19 pandemic.

We used traditional marketing like regularly placed ads in local newspaper, distributing flyers and brochures in a nearby residential area, and also participated in local events offering our food which was very liked by people.

Any successful marketing campaigns?

Yes, In the first year of the restaurant we organized a campaign where we provided every new customer with a restaurant gift card.

Any change in marketing approach since the pandemic? If so how?

In this question, the owner was asked about the changes they made in marketing during the pandemic.

During the pandemic, we continued to advertise through flyers and the local newspaper. However, due to the increasing costs of labor and running the restaurant, we were forced to temporarily close the restaurant for nearly 6 months. Overall, there were not many changes during the pandemic.

Which online platforms did you used first after the pandemic to promote your restaurant and why?

At first, we started using Facebook and third-party aggregators like Wolt and Foodora after the pandemic to promote our restaurant because people were still very scared to dine out. So, food delivery was popular then.

Do you ask customers to leave reviews online? If yes, how do you encourage them to do so?

Yes, we do ask customers to leave reviews online. To encourage them, we often engage with them directly during their dining experience, expressing how much we value their feedback.

We also include a friendly reminder on the bottom of their receipts, and some-times we offer a small incentive, such as a 10% discount on their next visit, for those who take the time to leave a review. Additionally, we ask their reviews on popular platforms like Google and TripAdvisor. This approach has helped us gather valuable customer insights and improve our online presence.

Which social media/ ecommerce platforms do you find most effective for reaching your audience and why?

We find mobile application more effective these days after launching digital stamp card, providing incentive while dining in and ordering online.

How do you keep in touch with you customer digitally?

We keep in touch with our customer digitally thought several channels. Firstly, we regularly post on Facebook and Instagram about our menu, events, and special offers. We also use TikTok to share behind the scenes with customers. Additionally, our website features a blog where we share stories about our cuisine and culture. We respond promptly to messages and comments on social media and review sites, ensuring our customers feel heard and valued. Lastly, we utilize messaging apps like Facebook and Instagram for direct communication with customers, offering them an easy way to make reservations and inquiries.

Are there any new digital marketing trends you're planning to try in the future?

In this section, the owner was asked about any new plan he wanted to try in the future.

Currently, we plan to maintain consistency across our channels. In the future, we also aim to explore influencer marketing and engage with local bloggers.

The interview lasted approximately 2 hours we had a break in between because he had some work. The interview provided a wealth of rich, qualitative data for analysis which will be mentioned in the section below.

3.3   Summary of Interviewing the Owner of White Himal

This section offers valuable insights into the digital marketing strategies of White Himal Restaurant before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic, as revealed through an interview with the restaurant owner. The interview aimed to gather information on the restaurant's use of online platforms, successful marketing campaigns, preferred social media channels, practices for handling customer reviews, digital customer engagement, and future digital marketing trends.

Pre-COVID-19 Digital Marketing Strategies:

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were not many Nepalese restaurants around, which meant that the competition was low. White Himal Restaurant relied mainly on traditional marketing methods to establish its presence and attract customers. Being a newly opened establishment, the restaurant initially focused on leveraging word-of-mouth referrals, local partnerships, and traditional advertising channels to generate awareness and drive foot traffic to its location.

As a newly opened restaurant, White Himal gave priority to traditional marketing methods initially, to establish a strong foothold in the local market. The restaurant made use of the power of word-of-mouth referrals and encouraged satisfied customers to spread positive reviews and recommendations to their friends, family, and colleagues. This grassroots approach to marketing helped to create buzz and generate initial interest in the restaurant's unique cuisine and dining experience.

In addition to word-of-mouth marketing, White Himal Restaurant pursued strategic partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and events to expand its reach and visibility within the community. They collaborated with Nepalese Football teams, tourist attractions since it is located near the station, and Nepalese cultural programs which allowed the restaurant to tap into existing networks and attract patrons who were seeking authentic dining experiences in the area.

Furthermore, the restaurant invested in traditional advertising channels such as newspapers and outdoor signage to increase its visibility and attract passersby traffic as shown in Picture

4 below. Eye-catching posters and banners strategically placed in high-traffic areas helped to pique curiosity and drive potential customers to the restaurant's doorstep.

Picture 4. Marketing flyer of White Himal.

Digital Marketing During the Pandemic:

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for White Himal Restaurant in Finland, leading to a notable downturn in business and foot traffic. As a newly opened establishment that built a loyal following over the years, relying heavily on traditional marketing methods like print flyers and local newspaper ads. White Himal had a warm, inviting ambiance, delicious food, and friendly service – all the ingredients for success, or so they thought. Then came the pandemic.

During the initial phases of the pandemic, White Himal Restaurant faced a stark reality: its reliance on traditional marketing channels such as word-of-mouth referrals, local partnerships, and print advertising was no longer sufficient to sustain operations in the face of widespread lockdowns, social distancing measures, and economic uncertainty. With restrictions on in-person dining and heightened safety concerns among consumers, the restaurant found itself grappling with the challenge of maintaining visibility and generating revenue amidst the rapidly evolving landscape.

When the pandemic hit, the White Himal restaurant was forced to shut down abruptly, which led to a complete cessation of its revenue streams. However, despite the closure, the restaurant's operational costs continued to accrue, which put a significant financial strain on the business. With limited financial reserves, the restaurant struggled to sustain its business without any incoming revenue for an extended period of six months. During this time, the restaurant had to pay its rent, utility bills, salaries to its staff, and other operational costs and expenses, which further exacerbated the financial situation.

Moreover, the disruption caused by the pandemic extended beyond the restaurant's operations to its supply chain. The procurement of essential ingredients and supplies became a significant challenge as many suppliers were struggling to keep up with demand due to pandemic-related restrictions. This resulted in substantial delays in the delivery of essential supplies and ingredients, which not only affected the restaurant's operations but also increased

its costs. The increased costs of essential supplies and ingredients, coupled with the restaurant's inability to generate revenue, further strained its finances and operational capabilities.

After reopening following the pandemic lockdown, White Himal restaurant experienced a significant decrease in customer visits. People were apprehensive about contracting the virus, and their preference for dining out changed. The restaurant's traditional marketing channels also failed to attract patrons during such uncertain times. The prolonged closure resulted in layoffs and furloughs, leading to a loss of experienced staff. When the restaurant reopened, they struggled to rehire and train new personnel, which affected the quality of service and further worsened their struggles to regain their market share.

However, White Himal proactively responded to the challenges posed by the pandemic by implementing innovative digital marketing strategies. In the upcoming chapters, we will discuss the specific strategies that the restaurant adopted to rebuild its brand, attract customers, and adapt to the new normal in the post-COVID-19 era.

Post-COVID-19 Digital Marketing Adaptations:

After the COVID-19, White Himal Restaurant leveraged its social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), a mobile app, a website, and delivery partnerships (Wolt and Foodora), they have witnessed significant customer growth. This study analyzes how each platform contributes to brand awareness, customer engagement, and ultimately, increased sales. It highlights key strategies and best practices for restaurants seeking to replicate White Himal's success in the evolving digital marketing landscape.

Digital Marketing Platforms

Facebook:

Utilizing Facebook as their primary digital marketing platform offered several advantages. Firstly, it provided them with a broad reach, allowing them to target both existing patrons and potential new customers within their local community and beyond. Through targeted advertising campaigns, they tailor their messages to specific demographics, ensuring maximum engagement and conversion.

Furthermore, they could fine-tune their marketing strategies for optimal results. This data-driven approach not only helped them to better understand their audience but also allowed them to make informed decisions about future marketing initiatives. Picture 5 shows how White Himal advertise through Facebook.
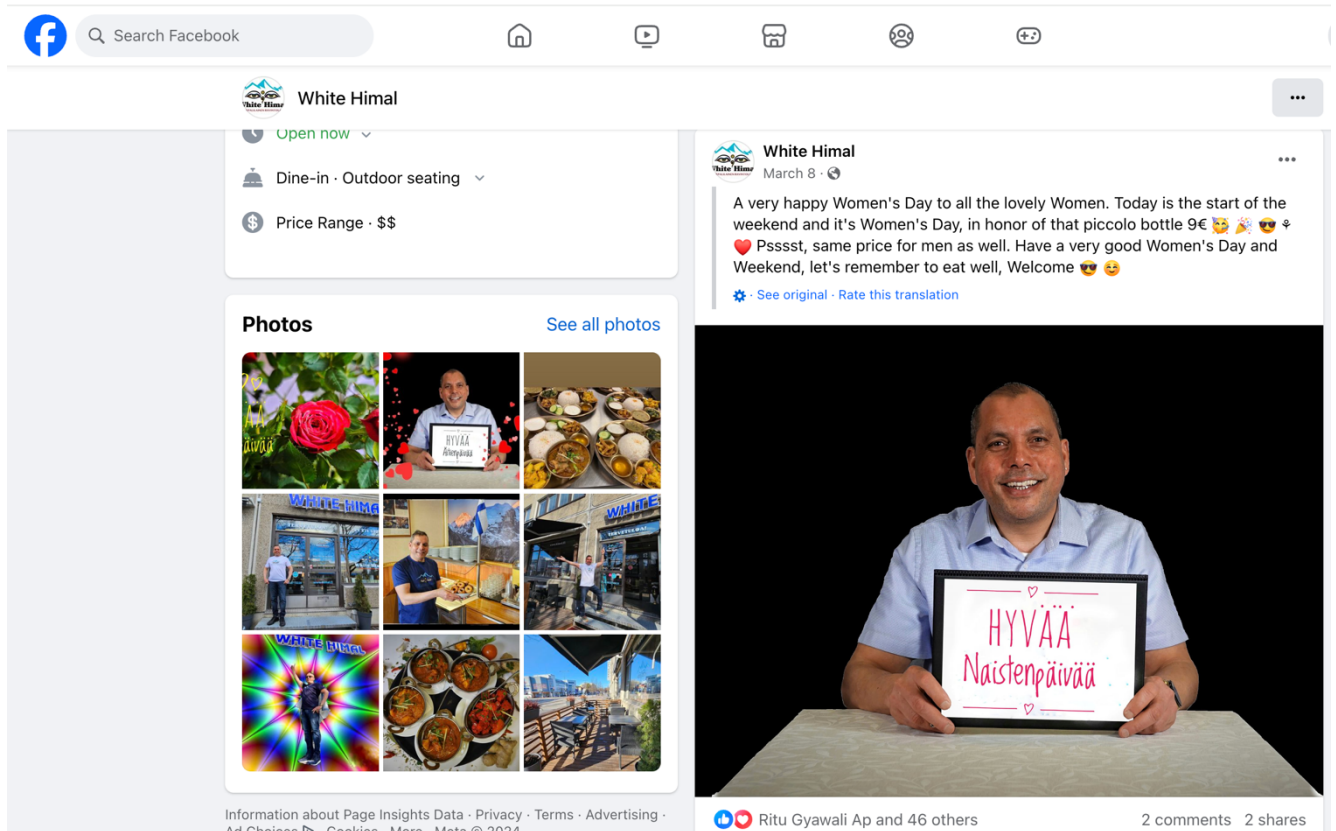
Picture 5. White Himal's Facebook page.

White Himal have leveraged various features offered by Facebook, including sponsored posts, event promotions, and interactive content such as polls and contests. These initiatives not only increased brand visibility but also fostered greater engagement and interaction with their audience, thereby strengthening customer relationships and loyalty.

The White Himal Restaurant made use of Facebook not only for promotional activities but also to engage with customers and gather feedback. They encouraged their customers to share their dining experiences, leave reviews and give suggestions for improvement. This approach facilitated a two-way communication channel between the restaurant and the customers, promoting transparency and trust. Additionally, it allowed the restaurant to promptly and effectively address any concerns that may arise, resulting in heightened customer satisfaction.

Instagram:

Following their successful venture into digital marketing through Facebook, the White Himal Restaurant decided to expand their online presence further by embracing Instagram. This decision opened new avenues for reaching and engaging with their target audience, ultimately leading to exciting opportunities for growth and revitalization. Picture 6 shows a moment that was captured while they were making a deal with a local football team.

Picture 6. White Himal partnering with Mirmire Sport Club.

The restaurant employed sponsorship as one of its key strategies on Instagram, particularly within the local community. They recognized the passion for sports in their area and decided to sponsor a local football team, Mirmire Sporting Club. By partnering with the team, the restaurant not only demonstrated its support for the community but also gained valuable exposure to a wider audience of sports enthusiasts. They were able to effectively promote their brand and attract new customers to the restaurant through sponsored posts featuring the team and collaborations during game events.

Another significant moment for the White Himal Restaurant came when Käärijä, a popular cha-cha-cha singer (Picture 7), visited their establishment. This celebrity endorsement

provided a major boost to their reputation and visibility, especially among fans of Käärijä and music enthusiasts. The restaurant capitalized on this opportunity by sharing photos and stories of the singer's visit on their Instagram account, generating buzz and excitement among their followers. The endorsement from a well-known personality not only validated the restaurant's quality and appeal but also helped to attract a diverse range of customers eager to experience the same dining experience as their favorite artist. The picture 7 shows the marketing done through Instagram.


Picture 7. Käärijä's Visit.

Tiktok:

After achieving success on Facebook and Instagram, the White Himal Restaurant realized the potential of TikTok as a powerful platform to engage with their audience and showcase their unique offerings. With TikTok's explosive popularity and ability to reach diverse demographics, the restaurant saw an opportunity to captivate a younger, tech-savvy audience while also rekindling the interest of its existing customer base. They began creating

compelling and visually appealing content that highlighted not only their delicious cuisine but also the ambiance and charm of their restaurant interiors.

The restaurant's TikTok strategy revolved around creating engaging short videos that showcased their signature dishes being prepared, tantalizing food presentations, and behind-the-scenes glimpses into the kitchen. By leveraging TikTok's creative features such as filters, effects, and music, they added a touch of entertainment and virality to their content, making it highly shareable and engaging. Picture 8 below shows the marketing of Nepalese cuisine through TikTok.
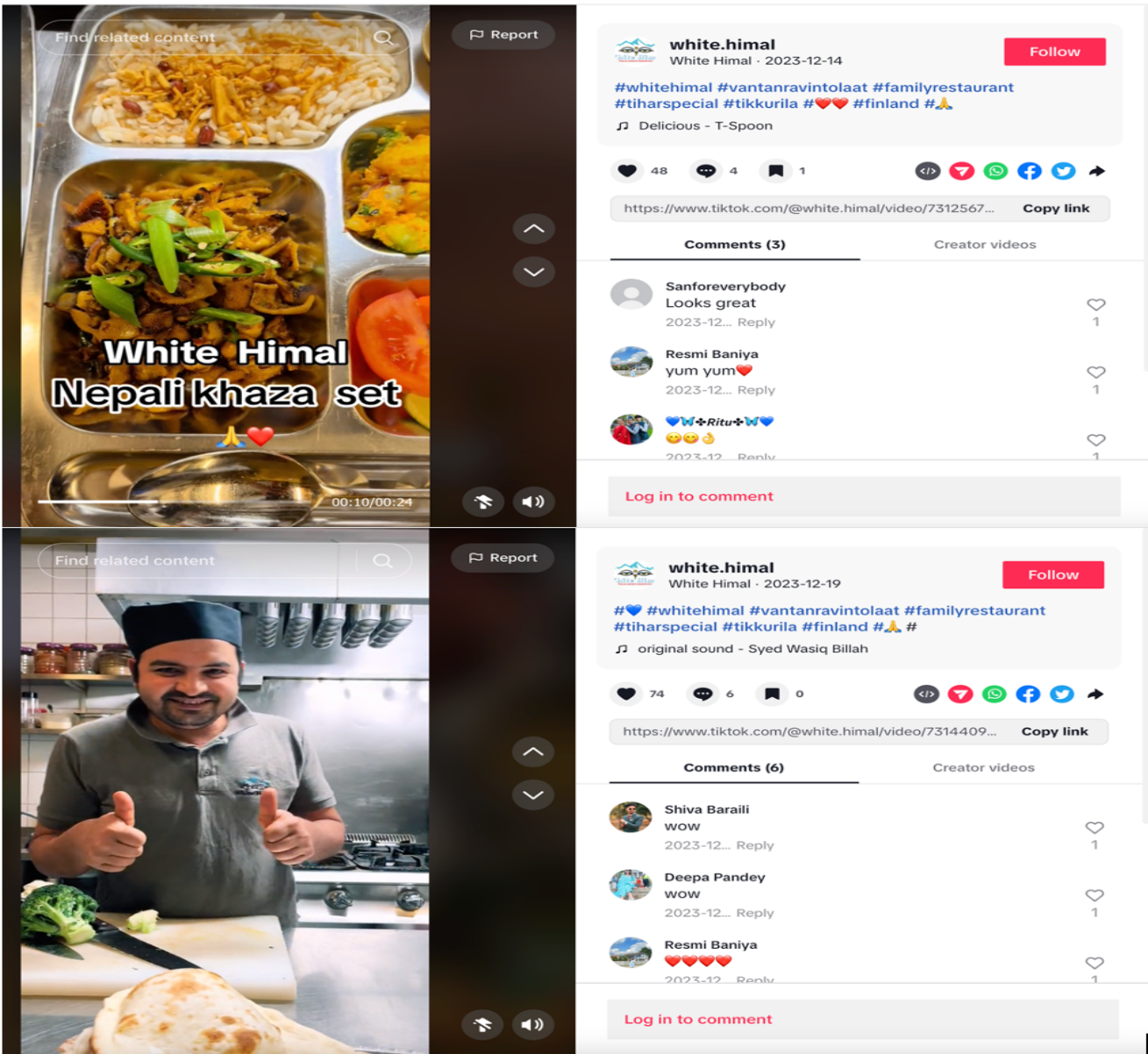

Picture 8. TikTok Marketing.

Moreover, the White Himal Restaurant utilized TikTok to give viewers a virtual tour of their restaurant, showcasing the cozy ambiance, elegant decor, and welcoming atmosphere.

Website and Mobile App

Website:

The restaurant's website served as a centralized hub where customers could explore their menu offerings, learn about their stories and values, and conveniently place orders online. With intuitive navigation and visually appealing design, the website provided a seamless and engaging user experience, making it easy for visitors to find the information they needed and place orders with just a few clicks. The website for White Himal is provided in Picture 9 below.
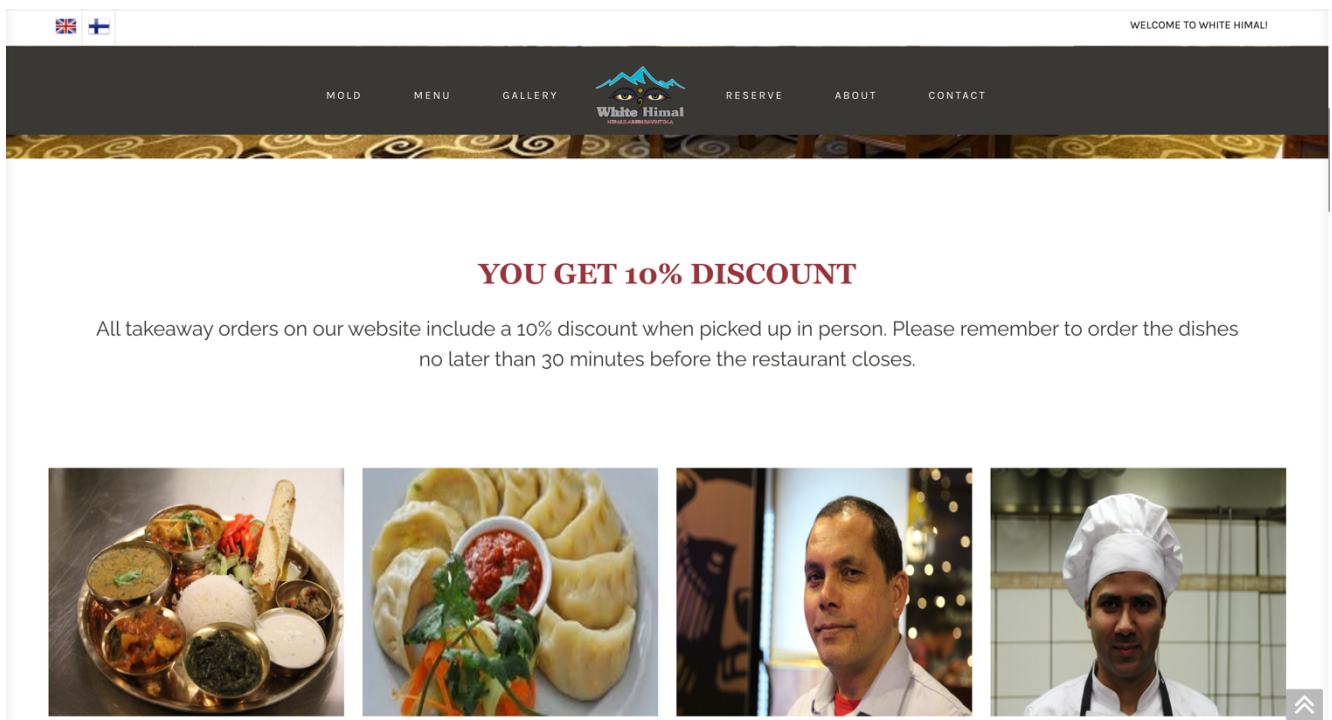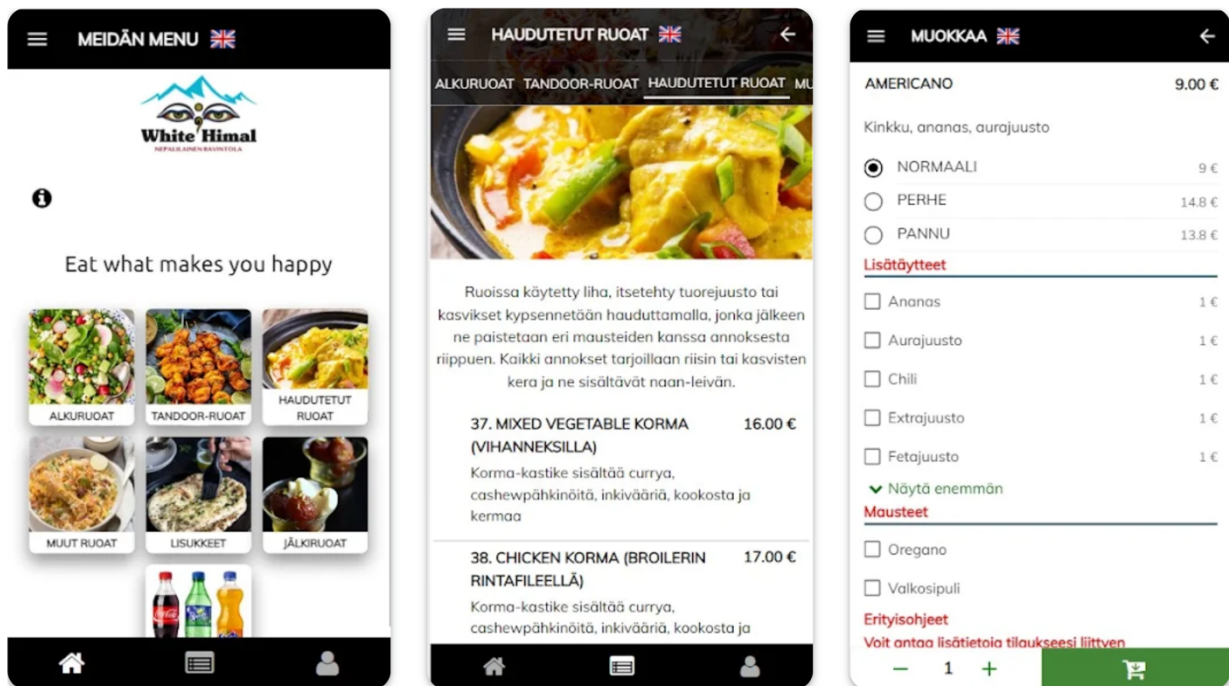

Picture 9. White Himal Restaurant's Website.

One of the key strategies implemented by the White Himal Restaurant on its website was the introduction of a special incentive to incentivize online orders. They offered a generous 10% discount to customers who chose to order directly through their website, rather than through third-party delivery platforms. This not only encouraged customers to engage directly with the restaurant but also helped to drive traffic to their website and increase online sales.

Furthermore, the website served as a valuable tool for customer communication and engagement. Visitors could sign up for newsletters and updates, allowing the restaurant to stay connected with its audience and share news, promotions, and special offers directly to their inbox. This proactive approach to communication helped to nurture customer relationships and foster loyalty over time.

Mobile App:

White Himal Restaurant embarked on a forward-thinking digital strategy aimed at reinvigorating their customer base and enhancing customer loyalty. They have launched a mobile app that streamlines the ordering process and incentivizes repeat business and rewards loyal patrons. One of the standout features of the White Himal Restaurant's mobile app (Picture 10) was its loyalty program, which centered around a digital stamp card. Every time a customer placed an order through the app, they earned a virtual stamp. Once they accumulated ten stamps, they were rewarded with a free meal of their choice. This innovative approach to loyalty incentivized customers to return to the restaurant regularly, as they worked towards unlocking their free meal reward.

Picture 10. White Himal's mobile application.

In addition to the loyalty program, the White Himal Restaurant offered a special discount to customers who placed orders through the mobile app. By leveraging the app's (Picture 10) functionality, customers could enjoy a convenient and seamless ordering experience while also benefiting from a 10% discount on their purchase. This exclusive incentive encouraged customers to download and use the app, driving adoption and increasing customer engagement.

Furthermore, the mobile app served as a valuable tool for personalized marketing and communication. Through push notifications and targeted promotions, the restaurant could reach out to customers with tailored offers and promotions based on their ordering history and preferences. This approach helped to keep the restaurant top-of-mind and encourage repeat business from both existing and potential customers.

Moreover, the mobile app provided a platform for the White Himal Restaurant to showcase their menu offerings, restaurant locations, and contact information, making it easy for customers to access relevant information and place orders on the go. With a user-friendly interface and intuitive navigation, the app offered a seamless and convenient ordering experience, further enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Delivery Aggregators

Wolt:

When the White Himal Restaurant partnered with Wolt (picture 11), it turned out to be a profitable decision. Being an early adopter of the platform, they experienced a surge in orders. This was due to customers seeking safe and convenient dining options during the pandemic. Wolt's novelty in the market, combined with the restaurant's reputation for quality cuisine, made it the preferred choice among consumers who wanted to enjoy restaurant-quality meals from the comfort of their own homes.

The emergence of Wolt provided a lifeline for the White Himal Restaurant during the height of the pandemic. With people hesitant to venture out for dining, the convenience of ordering through Wolt offered a sense of security and reassurance (Bahadur, 2021). Moreover, the novelty of the platform attracted curious customers eager to explore new dining options from the comfort of their homes.
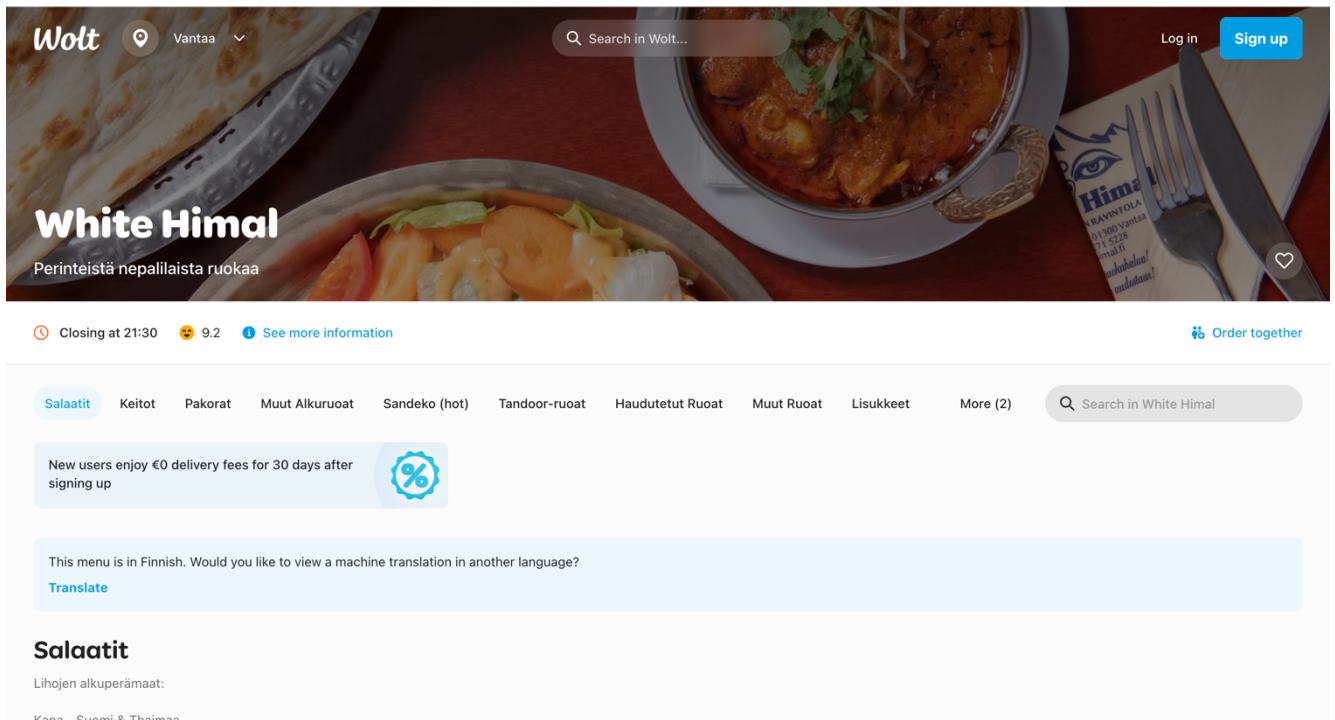
Picture 11. Wolt Website.

The restaurant witnessed a surge in orders through Wolt, with customers appreciating the ease of browsing the menu, placing orders, and tracking deliveries in real-time. This new-found revenue stream helped offset the losses incurred from decreased foot traffic and dine-in sales, providing a much-needed financial cushion during challenging times.

However, the initial success with Wolt was not without its challenges. As the platform gained popularity and became more established, Wolt is increasing the commission fees charged on each order, up to 30% (Nguyen, 2020). This significant increase in commission rates began to eat into the restaurant's profit margins, diminishing the overall profitability of using Wolt as a delivery channel.

Despite the convenience and reach offered by Wolt, the escalating commission fees became a point of concern for the White Himal Restaurant. While they initially gained customers through the platform's accessibility and convenience, some customers began to reconsider their loyalty as they became aware of the impact of these fees on their favorite restaurant's bottom line.

As a result, the restaurant experienced a decline in customer retention through Wolt, as some patrons sought alternative ways to support the business directly without incurring the

additional costs associated with third-party delivery platforms. This shift highlighted the importance of striking a balance between convenience and cost-effectiveness in navigating the evolving landscape of food delivery services.

Foodora:

The restaurant capitalized on Foodora's reach and visibility in the market, leveraging the platform to attract new customers and retain existing ones. The pandemic led many people to choose Foodora as their preferred platform for browsing menus, placing orders, and tracking deliveries due to its ease of use and convenience (Picture 12).
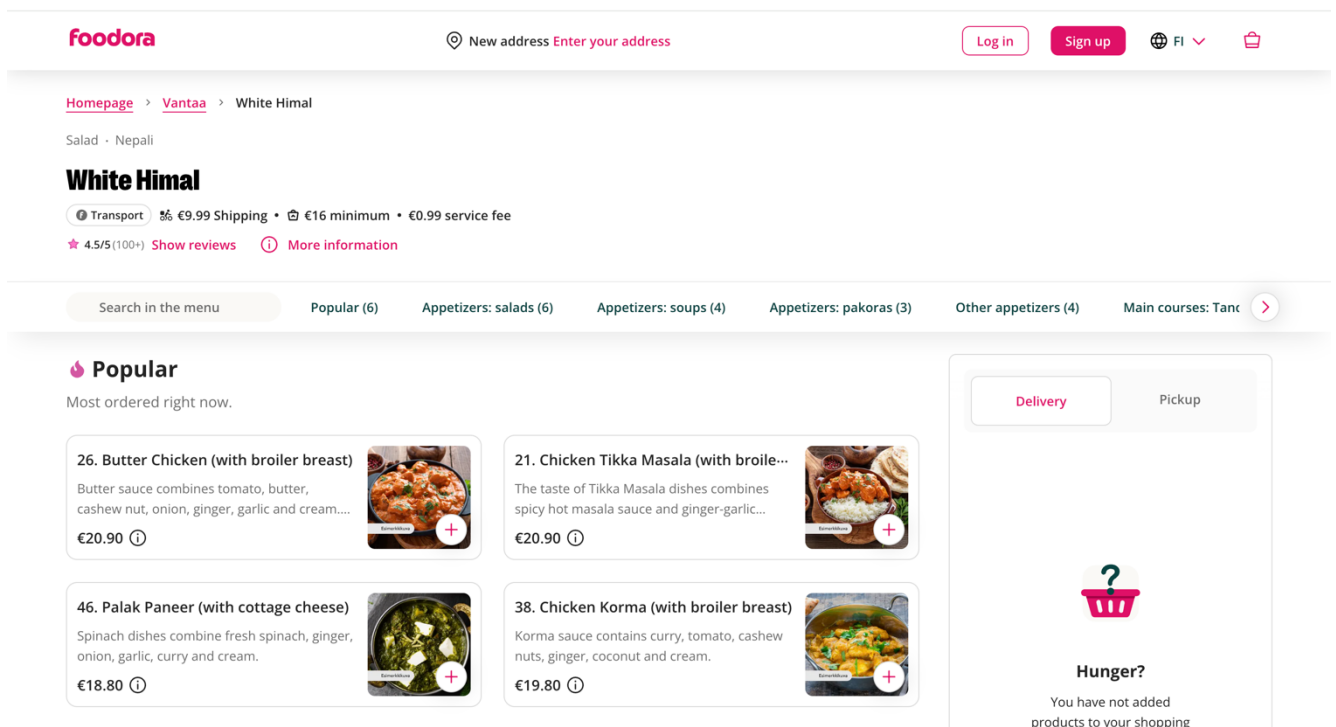
Picture 12. Foodora Website.

However, the initial success with Foodora was not without its challenges. As the platform gained traction and established itself in the market, it began implementing higher commission fees on each order, sometimes reaching exorbitant rates of up to 30% (Nguyen, 2020). This steep increase in commission fees significantly impacted the restaurant's profit margins, posing a threat to its financial sustainability.

Furthermore, compared to other delivery platforms like Wolt, Foodora's user base in the White Himal Restaurant's area remained relatively small. This limited reach meant that the

restaurant's exposure and potential for customer acquisition through Foodora were con-
strained compared to other platforms, diminishing its overall effectiveness as a delivery chan-
nel.

As a result, the White Himal Restaurant faced a dilemma with Foodora. While the platform
initially helped them gain customers by catering to the demand for food delivery during the
pandemic, the escalating commission fees and limited user base ultimately led to a decline in
its viability as a delivery channel.

4   DISCUSSION

The adoption of mobile app marketing by the White Himal Restaurant in Finland highlights a pivotal shift in digital marketing strategies within the hospitality sector, particularly post-COVID-19. This case exemplifies how a well-designed mobile app can significantly enhance customer engagement and loyalty compared to traditional mobile marketing and third-party delivery aggregators such as Wolt and Foodora.

Effectiveness of the Loyalty Program

A key element contributing to the app's success is the innovative loyalty program. By implementing a digital stamp card system, the White Himal Restaurant effectively incentivized repeat business. The psychological appeal of working towards a tangible reward, in this case, a free meal after ten orders, taps into the intrinsic motivation of customers. This strategy not only fosters a sense of accomplishment but also promotes regular interaction with the app, thereby reinforcing customer loyalty. The loyalty program's effectiveness can be attributed to its simplicity and the clear value proposition it offers to customers.

Exclusive Discounts and Seamless User Experience

In addition to the loyalty program, the 10% discount for app users provides a strong incentive for customers to shift their ordering habits to the mobile app. This discount not only attracts new app users but also encourages existing customers to continue using the app. The convenience of a streamlined ordering process, combined with financial incentives, enhances the overall customer experience. This dual approach of convenience and cost-saving is particularly appealing in the post-pandemic era, where customers are more mindful of their spending and seek effortless solutions for their dining needs.

Personalized Marketing and Communication

The ability to send push notifications and targeted promotions through the app allows the White Himal Restaurant to maintain a direct line of communication with its customers. Personalized marketing, based on ordering history and preferences, ensures that promotions are relevant and engaging. This targeted approach increases the likelihood of repeat business as customers feel that the restaurant understands and caters to their specific needs. Moreover,

it helps keep the restaurant top-of-mind, which is crucial in a competitive market with numerous dining options.

Comprehensive Information Accessibility

The app also serves as a comprehensive platform for customers to access information about the restaurant's menu, locations, and contact details. This accessibility is important in enhancing the customer journey, as it provides all necessary information in one place. The user-friendly interface and intuitive navigation further contribute to a positive user experience, making it easy for customers to place orders and interact with the restaurant.

Comparative Advantage Over Delivery Aggregators

Compared to delivery aggregators like Wolt and Foodora, the White Himal Restaurant's mobile app offers a more controlled and personalized customer experience. While delivery aggregators provide convenience and exposure to a broader audience, they often lack the ability to offer personalized incentives and direct engagement with customers. The mobile app allows White Himal Restaurant to build a more direct relationship with its customers, fostering loyalty and repeat business through tailored rewards and exclusive discounts.

Moreover, the financial aspect of using delivery aggregators presents a significant disadvantage. These platforms typically take a substantial commission, often around 30%, from each order. This high commission fee can erode the profit margins of restaurants, making it less sustainable in the long term. Recognizing this challenge, the White Himal Restaurant has decided to phase out the use of these delivery aggregators.

To minimize the impact of this change and uphold their delivery service, the White Himal Restaurant plans to hire a dedicated delivery person. This strategic decision is aimed at reducing dependence on third-party services and retaining greater control over the delivery process. By establishing an in-house delivery team, the restaurant can ensure a consistent customer experience from order placement to delivery, maintaining the quality and reliability that customers expect. Additionally, this approach allows the restaurant to more effectively manage delivery costs, potentially enabling them to offer more competitive prices or better incentives to their customers.

Implications for Future Digital Marketing Strategies

The success of the White Himal Restaurant's mobile app strategy offers valuable lessons for other Nepalese restaurants in Finland and the wider hospitality industry. It highlights the critical importance of adopting digital tools that streamline operations while significantly boosting customer engagement and loyalty. Future digital marketing strategies should prioritize the integration of personalized loyalty programs, exclusive incentives, and comprehensive information accessibility. By doing so, restaurants can create a compelling and seamless customer experience that encourages repeat business and fosters long-term loyalty.

5 CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated the digital marketing strategies employed by Nepalese restaurants in Finland following the COVID-19 pandemic, utilizing qualitative research methods. Among the various platforms and techniques explored, the emergence of mobile applications, exemplified by "White Himal," has stood out as a transformative force in reshaping the marketing landscape for these establishments.

The results of this study highlight the considerable effectiveness of the White Himal mobile app in post-pandemic business operations. Its user-friendly interface and feature-rich capabilities, such as exclusive discounts, digital stamp cards, and seamless online ordering and booking, have established it as the preferred platform for both restaurant owners and customers.

Several key factors contribute to the success of the White Himal app. Its seamless integration with smartphones capitalizes on the widespread adoption of mobile technology, providing a convenient and accessible channel for customer engagement. Furthermore, the app's comprehensive offerings streamline the dining experience, fostering loyalty and enhancing convenience for patrons.

The growing popularity of the White Himal app serves as a testament to its remarkable effectiveness and offers valuable insights into the constantly evolving digital marketing landscape within the restaurant industry. This trend signifies a significant shift in consumer behavior towards digital platforms, highlighting the increasing importance for restaurants to prioritize investments in user-friendly and feature-rich mobile applications. By doing so, restaurants can strategically position themselves to remain competitive and effectively meet the changing demands of their customer base.

However, it's important to acknowledge that digital marketing success is contingent upon nuanced understanding and tailored approaches. While mobile apps may prove effective for some establishments like White Himal, others may find success through alternative channels such as social media or search engine optimization.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to our understanding of the transformative role of digital marketing, particularly through mobile applications, in the post-COVID era for Nepalese

restaurants in Finland. By embracing innovative strategies like the White Himal app, these restaurants have not only adapted to the challenges posed by the pandemic but have also positioned themselves for sustained growth and resilience in an increasingly digitalized marketplace. Moving forward, continued exploration and refinement of digital marketing strategies will be essential for restaurants to thrive amidst evolving consumer preferences and market dynamics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview Question

Appendix 2. Mobile Application

Appendix 1. Interview Question

Can you tell me about the digital marketing methods you've used for your restaurant since covid 19

Have you changed marketing approach since the pandemic? If so how?

Which online platforms do you use to promote your restaurant and why?

Could you share any successful marketing campaigns?

Which social media platforms do you find most effective for reaching your audience and why?

Do you ask customers to leave reviews online? If yes, how do you encourage them to do so?

How do you keep in touch with you customer digitally?

Are there any new digital marketing trends you're planning to try in the future?

Appendix 2. Mobile Application