Department of Business and Management

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Chair of Digital Marketing Transformation & Customer Experience

DIGITAL MARKETING AS AN ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR RESTAURANTS' SURVIVAL IN AN EVER-CHANGING FUTURE

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Introduction:

In recent years, Digital Marketing is revolutionizing every business sector worldwide. This change process has been even more powerful nowadays with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic that forced firms even in traditional sectors to adapt to changes and adopt digital tools and services for their activities.

The present thesis aims to analyze the restaurant sector, given its importance over the last few years and the current crisis that hit it due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The intent is to understand how to bring more customers to the restaurant through Digital Marketing tools, thus increasing its clientele and consequently improving its performance. In an increasingly digitalized and constantly online world, a restaurant cannot afford to ignore services such as social networks or websites.

In the first part of the work, there is a focus on the various types of restaurants. Starting with family-run restaurants, the most popular in Italy, continuing with franchising and restaurant chains, and ending with street food and food delivery services. In addition to providing a detailed description of the various types, it is explained in a generic way how they use Digital Marketing.

In the second chapter, attention was paid to the current situation in which the sector finds itself, due to the health emergency. It was analyzed how restaurants have evolved following the pandemic, starting from classic restaurants to more particular types such as food trucks.

In the third chapter, some of the most famous and useful Digital Marketing tools applicable to restaurants were examined in detail, providing ideas for using them to the fullest. The use of social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram, will be investigated, showing the various functions and advantages they provide to the restaurant, like sharing stories, posts, and sponsoring them at a low price. The influencers and food bloggers' figure will be explained and how these are essential to increase the clientele. Again, we will see how essential it is for the restaurant to create a mobile app through which the customer can book and consult the menu and the importance of a review. Consequently, the importance of using TripAdvisor and The Fork platforms, consulted every day by thousands of users searching for the perfect restaurant. Finally, loyalty cards, useful not to attract the customer but to make him come back.

Digital marketing is an essential tool for a restaurant that must be used, now more than ever.

Chapter one: Different types of restaurants

1.1 - Family restaurants

In the Italian legal system, family-run businesses are defined as all the activities managed by a family unit up to the third degree of kinship, as regulated by art. 230 bis of the civil code.

Medium, small and micro enterprises make up a large part of the global economy. 60% of these are family businesses. In Italy, 1 out of 2 businesses is family-run. It is therefore clear that the beating heart of the Italian economy is the small business. It will therefore be easy to find a restaurant business run by a family in Italy, and it is effortless to identify them: most of the time, the place is old, with hints of the restaurant's history, the opening date, family photos hanging on the walls, maybe even with some famous people. These particularities do not apply to all restaurants; it is not impossible to find modern family-run restaurants with brunch and happy hour. What unites them all is the warmth of their welcome and the friendliness of the service.

Therefore, a family-run business's main characteristics are the values, the sense of dedication, sacrifice, and responsibility shared by the employees. The goal is a long-term vision, in the hope of passing on the business to future generations of the same family.

A family-run restaurant's main challenges are the generational transition from "father to son" and the possible unpleasant dynamics within a family. Children do not always want to continue their parents' business. It often occurs that they have other plans for their future, so the restaurant is sold, and the business closed. Families do not always get along, often working in this type of restaurant can lead to embarrassing situations; there is the risk of working with unskilled people and in an unprofessional atmosphere.

What kind of tools do family-run restaurants use to increase their clientele? In most cases, restaurants will hardly use digital marketing but will rely more on word of mouth and customer loyalty. After eating great food and receiving good service, the customer will gladly come back and recommend the experience to friends and relatives, who will talk about it with other people. Word of mouth has always been one of the best marketing tools. Between advertising a product and the advice of a person we know, we always tend to trust more of the latter's judgment. The reason is that we know the person, while whoever wrote the review

online, for us, is a stranger. The clientele of family-run restaurants is usually regular. Between the customer and the owner, a friendship often develops; consequently, the customer will not return only to eat excellent food again, or for the excellent value for money but also because he felt comfortable, felt welcomed, and at ease.

Some of these restaurants use Facebook as the only form of digital marketing, creating a public page with the restaurant's name, in which they publish all the news related to their business, the menu, and photos of the dishes they usually serve. A Facebook page can be handy for advertising events, unique dishes, and special offers. Followers of the page, scrolling through their feed, will see the post and decide whether to like it or not and participate in the event. It can be advantageous not only to attract customers but also to measure the various promotions' performance to understand what is useful and what is not.

What distinguishes an average company from a family one is the entrepreneurial mentality. Companies generally have an expert leader in the industry who holds all power in his hands. In the case of family-run businesses, however, this figure is not present, and power is shared between the company's different members and, consequently, the family.

In Porto Santo Stefano, a small seaside town in Tuscany, there are only two traditional family-run bakeries: the "Dalmazzi" and "Fratelli Sordini" bakeries; other local food-related businesses are mainly bars and restaurants. The Dalmazzi bakery is fashionable among tourists; it is located in front of the sea and in the city center and is present on Facebook and on Google. Simultaneously, however, the locals frequent the Fratelli Sordini bakery, but it is hidden in one of the many alleys between the town's buildings and it is not present on the internet; it is not possible to find an address or a telephone number to contact them. Asking the villagers turned out that the most hidden bakery is rated much higher than the other, with low prices and friendly service. However, why is the other bakery always full of customers? If only tourists knew that there is a beloved bakery within walking distance, they would quickly become new customers because of the better food and lower prices.

This comparison, between the two bakeries in Tuscany, denotes how digital marketing and brand awareness can affect a business's performance and relative success. Digital marketing goes hand in hand with the goodness of the food offered; success will never be achieved if there is no balance between these two factors. A restaurant that serves low-quality food with a strong and effective marketing promotion will reach many customers, but they will not return a second time; simultaneously, a restaurant that serves excellent food but has no marketing strategy will never reach its maximum potential.

Both bakeries are in an unfavourable situation as the Dalmazzi bakery will have a good income during the summer season, when the beaches are crowded with tourists, but not during the winter period, and the Fratelli Sordini bakery the other way around.

The search for a restaurant is often done through search engines such as Google, and consequently, any internet visitor can be a potential customer. Although very slowly, family-run restaurants, ice cream shops, and bakeries have become aware of this phenomenon, and some have created a website or a Facebook page, unfortunately, they are rarely updated in most cases. In fact, for a restaurant, it is essential to be found, not only thanks to word of mouth, effective for people who live close to the restaurant, but by all the people who, finding themselves hungry nearby, decide to try it. Not having a website would make it difficult, if not impossible, to be found by people who are not local, and the restaurant would risk losing a lot of potential customers.

Take the family-run ice cream shop "Il Vecchio Gelatiere," which has been producing artisan ice cream in Treviso since 1983. They decided to open their website "ilvecchiogelatiere.it" to tell their story and their origins. Clicking on the website opens the homepage that illustrates the various images of their ice cream and their location, with a summary explaining what they do. The menu is divided into several sections: history, what they say about us, allergies and intolerances, laboratory, advice for consumption, and contacts. Inserting the story into a family-run restaurant website is essential, as it is one of the characteristics most appreciated by customers, mostly tourists; Most Italian restaurants have a long family tradition behind them. The website of the "Il Vecchio Gelatiere" ice cream shop tells the origins of the place very well; it uses a slideshow of photographs in which the happy and smiling family is portrayed to excite the reader, associating it with a timeline to highlight the most important of their unique history. Furthermore, this section offers the opportunity to introduce the team and the people who work to make the place unique, demonstrating passion and commitment to the reader.

Figure 1 Ilvecchiogelatiere.it homepage

Fonte: (ilvecchiogelatiere.it)

The contact page is one of the most valuable for any website; after reading the restaurant's history, if a potential customer decides to try it, he will click on this page to see the address and telephone number and eventually book a table. The contact page is essential not only to guarantee the customer a clear idea of the restaurant's location and availability but also to give the potential client the possibility to call or send an email, clarifying any doubts about the location menu. "Il Vecchio Gelataio" ice cream shop has an efficient and easy-to-use contact page, guaranteeing the customer complete availability and assistance.

During this research, I wondered why this type of restaurant did not make the most of its potential and did not use all the possibilities that the web makes available to everyone. After all, it is well known that family-run restaurants, especially in Italy, are probably the best in quality and service, as the restaurant itself is part of the family and its pride. Why not create an Instagram profile? Why not take advantage of influencers to promote the business, food delivery, websites, TripAdvisor, online guides, and many others?

1.2 - Food chains, fast-foods and franchising

Franchising is a commercial affiliation contract that is stipulated between entrepreneurs: the owner of a registered and known trademark on the one hand, and on the other, an affiliate who intends to start a business and intends to rely on a brand known in his business sector, to exploit marketing and potential customers, which starting from scratch could not get, at least in the short term. In return, however, the affiliate will give up part of his entrepreneurial freedom, which will be decided by the company that owns the brand. [1]

The restaurant sector has always been one of the Italian economy's driving forces and one of the most profitable. Many aspiring entrepreneurs, mostly Italians, choose this sector to set up their own business and convey the desire to do business to the culture of "eating well" that makes Italy an international reference point.

The restaurant franchise is one of the pioneering sectors in franchising: it occupies a leading position, both from overall turnover (we are around 2 billion euros) and from that of the number of brands that operate there. Some have made the history of the affiliation world and have become real giants worldwide: McDonald's, Burger King, La Piadineria, and many others.

Restaurants that adopt the franchising formula are based on a simple concept, easy to explain, and easily replicable to be copied and pasted in other places. For this reason, the franchises in the restaurant field are often fast-foods, which, in most cases, have a value proposal complete with convenient and easily accessible location, a wide choice of menu, speed of service, comfortable seats, and low prices. One of the most famous examples is the Subway restaurant chain, a fast-food franchise that mainly sells sandwiches, called subs, and salads. The idea behind Subway is that when the customer enters the restaurant, he can choose the type of bread to use for the sandwich and choose from a wide range of ingredients to put inside. Founded in 1965, it broke the record in 2018 by becoming the number one fast-food chain globally, with 44834 restaurants open in 112 countries.

The restaurants that are part of the same chain are all identical to each other: the menu is the same, the decor and the service too, this helps the customer to recognize them, and despite, for example, being abroad, he

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[1] Entrepreneur. n.d. *Franchising Definition - Entrepreneur Small Business Encyclopedia*. [online] Available at: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/encyclopedia/franchising> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

will find the same restaurant which is close by, making him feel comfortable and eliminating the insecurity that one might have in eating in a foreign place.

Innovation is the basis of this category of restaurants, as they have a long-term vision. The question they ask themselves is: what will the world be like in 5 years? How will people's eating habits change in 10 years? It is likely that in the not too distant future, people will go more and more in a hurry, perhaps they will not have the time to sit at the table, wait for the waiter with the menu, and wait for the dishes and then the bill, they will reserve this type of restaurant more for an important evening, now and then. On the other hand, they will tend to eat out during the working days, they will have little time, and therefore they will turn to fast-food restaurants that must be of quality.

Opening a franchise restaurant is more straightforward and advantageous for aspiring entrepreneurs who are not experts in the sector, as it allows them to take advantage of the mechanisms and economies for cost reduction, both in the start-up phase and in the management phase, compared to opening it autonomously.

Opening a franchise restaurant offers many advantages as thanks to this formula, it is possible to buy equipment and machinery at a much more advantageous price, often benefiting from deferred payment and sometimes the franchisor's free loan. Besides, the place will have a nice inviting appearance; it will entice customers to enter, as, behind the furniture of the place, there is a studio; often, the large restaurant chains hire expert interior designers to furnish the restaurant in the best possible way. Further advantages are constant assistance and training, a real help in managing a restaurant, the kitchen, and suppliers.

Brands that are already well known and are already widespread will require more money to become part of the chain, while those under development will be much less expensive and accessible to more people. However, we must not evaluate the quality of a product based on its price; if the product is valid, there is a good chance that it will have success, even though the brand has recently been on the market. GROM, now a well-known chain of ice cream shops founded in Turin in 2003, found great success right from the start, even before the communication and advertising campaigns imposed the brand on the general public. On the contrary, the central aspect that GROM immediately focused on was to open the first stores in very central locations. The first GROM restaurant opened right in Piazza Paleocapa in Turin. Subsequently, the chain managed to open other stores worldwide, from Rome, a few steps from the Pantheon, to Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles, California. Even more so for chains based on the concept of fast-food, the sales point's centrality is crucial, as it is the "best of the food." It is necessary to open in places with high pedestrian traffic, capture the occasional passer-by who at mealtimes will be intrigued by the restaurant, decide to try it, and maybe even come back. Unfortunately, if we are not in a bustling area, everything will be more difficult as there will be much less chance that the potential customer will pass in front of the restaurant, and then trigger word of mouth.

It is also necessary to consider how far the customer is ready to go; for a real restaurant, with menus and seats, the customer will be more willing to face a long distance; for example, the restaurant has a good view and great traditional food. The same does not apply if we are talking about fast-food, which instead serves sandwiches, pizza, and hamburgers because the meal must be fast and therefore, the distance must also be short.
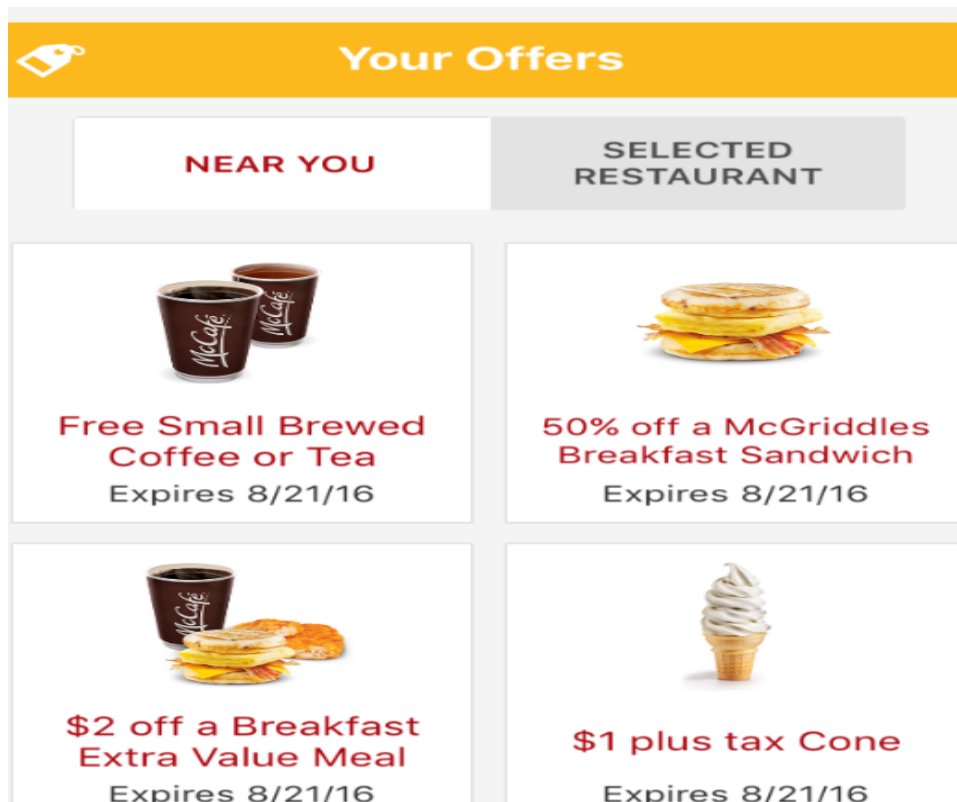

Figure 2 Offers in the McDonald's app

Fonte: (https://i.imgur.com/sObAGJx.png)

Most restaurants that adopt the franchise formula use digital marketing as an essential tool for success. Many of these restaurants, especially those in the fast-food category, use websites, TV, and social campaigns and have their app. For example, Mcdonald's, which is aimed mainly at children and teenagers, developed an app, ranked first among the Food & Drink category, in which, during Christmas time, by completing a small game daily, it is possible to win prizes, such as a free hamburger or a portion of fries. The app helped stimulating customers to access the app daily to collect the prize, which is often associated with other products, thus increasing profit.

During the rest of the year, their app illustrates a catalogue of offers from which the customer can choose, such as a free small brewed coffee or an ice cream cone for just one dollar. Very often, these offers, especially the more convenient ones, have a limited time, some last only a day or a few hours; in such way,

the customer, in order to grab the offer and thus save money, will rush into the restaurant to receive his free coffee and will probably buy more.

1.3 - Delivery and street food

Since 2000, Italians who eat meals away from home have progressively increased: 12 million people have lunch in bars and restaurants every day, or who bring their own meal directly from home, to then consume it at work or at the university.

Within this study, we will analyse two emerging markets: food delivery and street food. We will break down the two themes to define an overview from origins to development on various channels.

So, what is meant by the term "street food"?

Let's go back in time, more precisely to India, around 1980, when the term "dabbawala" was born, which translated means "he who carries a box," in this case, the future lunch box.

This phenomenon soon took hold worldwide, from Great Britain, the USA, Italy, and many other countries. Cheapness and punctuality are just some adjectives that can best describe this increasingly organized and technological phenomenon.

According to a study carried out at Harvard University, there is only one error for every 6,000,000 shipments. So, since 1980, but more precisely, we can define the beginning of this phenomenon in the first half of the 1900s, after the Second World War, years in which food delivery "invaded" our daily life. Only in 2015, this market grew by 50%, with 7 million users and 19% of Italians who opted for food online.

Comfort and luxury are needs that most people often require, and having a hot meal brought home in a cheap way are one of those conveniences that everyone can afford. Moreover, if the order is placed through an app or a site, paying directly by credit card or PayPal, the convenience is sky-high. All that remains is to sit comfortably on the sofa, waiting for the bell to ring.

The speed and professionalism of those involved in food transport have done the rest: this is why in recent years, especially in large cities, home delivery has become a must.

Customer loyalty is critical. Therefore, the various food delivery services try to specialize and spread widely, while maintaining some characteristics, such as the choice of particularly notable and quality restaurants, the

possibility of using restaurants close to the place where the customer lives, to reduce waiting times, rapid delivery and with ad hoc tools to ensure the maintenance of the quality of food and heat during transport.

Thus, year after year, the leading pioneers of food delivery and other "less dated" ones have conquered an increasingly large share of success and market.

In our country, according to data collected by Bocconi University, food delivery is an increasingly emerging market that only in 2018 had a turnover of 350 million euros, with ample prospects for growth in the following years.

Let's now take a look at Street Food, take-away food, prepared directly on the street. Here too, we are talking about a powerful emerging phenomenon, which dates back to three thousand years ago; in Greece, fried fish was prepared on the street, for the "poor" slice of the population and in Ancient Rome, the ancestors of today's food trucks were the "tabernae", found in the excavations in Pompeii, which overlooked the street and offered hot and cheap food, to be eaten directly on the counter.

The keyword of street food is "tradition," so much so that in every city, this phenomenon will take the form of the local tradition, from the classic Neapolitan "cuoppo," obviously in Naples, to the Sicilian "arancina."

Street food, which lives mainly thanks to events, becomes an essential element of tradition and territorial identity. The foods are becoming more and more refined and avant-garde, so much so that they have even created "gourmet" trucks or those recommended by the most famous and starred chefs.

Figure 3 An example of a food truck

Fonte: (https://www.qsrmagazine.com/sites/default/files/styles/story_page/public/franchising/Flickr-Todd-Lappin-Curry-Up-Now-food-truck-r.jpg?itok=vUbFtPyU)

Especially during the summer, food trucks and "apecars", set up with itinerant kitchens, iconic models of vans and minivans with a retro taste, typical of street food festivals, multiply around the cities. All this effortlessly and economically.

Any truck needs particular characteristics to attract customers: the originality of the truck and the idea, the quality of the raw materials, and an adequate marketing and communication strategy.

In this regard, we can say that food delivery and street food are two sectors that mostly live thanks to the steady development of technology, becoming more and more refined day by day with increasingly advanced equipment.

Just by looking around us, it is easy to understand that today anyone is continuously connected, there are more connected devices than inhabitants on the planet: this is just one reason why a digital strategy must be included in the development of a marketing plan in catering. From meetings, to events, to purchases, the online presence is no longer a trend, but a necessity, and, with an increasingly connected user, the food delivery and street food sectors must give the possibility to book meals online and to consult the menu on the net, is to say, adapt as much as possible to technology.

A useful Facebook page, an Instagram page, photographs of the dishes that invite the potential customer to try them, excellent reviews, an exact price list are essential to get to the heart of digital marketing, in this case in the food field, and to attract as many customers as possible.

Digital marketing fully exploits social sharing power to get to the ultimate goal of being known and billed as much as possible.

We are in the restaurants' field, and one of the most effective methodologies in the development of a marketing strategy is undoubtedly the SWOT analysis (advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, and threats), [2]essential to understand the trends of the reference market and to fine-tune strategic choices regarding your platform or business.

Speaking only of marketing, however, in this case, is not enough. Digital is essential today; not only does it allow the restaurant to relaunch its business and keep up with the times, but it also allows attracting new customers and increasing the restaurant's turnover.

How can platforms such as Just Eat, Deliveroo, or only "trucks" survive and make themselves known?

Being present online is the basis of wanting to use digital marketing. Besides, among the various strategies, we find above all the aforementioned Digital Online Advertising. Digital advertising in Italy is continually evolving. Every day, companies improve their visibility and turnover thanks to the different kinds of Digital Advertising, including social media, allowing the user to create sponsored ads based on the targeting of their potential customer.

Let's continue with SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, an activity useful for improving the positioning of a website within search engines (first of all Google), i.e., positioning itself among the first search results (ex. Food delivery, truck). Finally, Email Marketing, sending direct emails can positively promote customer loyalty. Advertising promotions, discounts, new dishes, and events can attract customers.

These are fundamental features to keep activities, such as food delivery and street food, on their feet.

Customers today access information much more quickly, thanks to the spread of social networks, and tend to affect the strategies, access channels, and preferred formulas for purchasing or consulting products.

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[2] Della Bella, F., 2020. *Analisi SWOT: Cos'è, Come Farla, Vantaggi Ed Esempi Per Aziende - Digital4*. [online] Digital4. Available at: <https://www.digital4.biz/marketing/analisi-swot-cos-e-come-farla/> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

Therefore, those involved in marketing must be continuously updated, taking into account the synergy among the various devices and the experiences they guarantee.

Thanks to digital marketing, these realities will survive, if used well, even during and after the world pandemic we are currently facing.

Chapter 2: Pre and post-COVID-19

2.1- The before and after of restaurant in general

The restaurant sector's survival depends mainly on contact with people; Coronavirus, during the lockdown period, made it impossible for people to enjoy a restaurant dinner with friends or family. Consequently, it is fair to say that the restaurant sector was one of the hardest hit by the health emergency.

It is still early to understand how much the Coronavirus crisis has cost the restaurant world. What is certain is that no one can better explain its effects like those who experienced it personally: for this reason, Fine Dining Lovers has launched the "Coronavirus and Catering" survey, an international survey that reveals the opinion of professionals and consumers on eating at restaurants after the pandemic.[3]

The survey is based on a sample of more than 10,500 people interviewed worldwide; to understand how the behavior related to food and the pleasure of going to restaurants has changed.

The anonymous survey was answered by 7,917 people worldwide, mainly women (73%), with 38% of inhabitants in large cities. The Italians who participated in the survey were 1,535 and told, by answering the questionnaire, how they experienced the lockdown between personal travel limitations and the closure of restaurants to the public.

Of the 2,708 professionals who participated in the survey, 88% work in restaurants or hotels, and 80% have more than six years of experience. The Italian percentage is 11% or 304 professionals, of which 67% with the role of Executive or Head Chef.

As for future scenarios, 86% of professionals who joined the survey suppose that many restaurants will not reopen after the crisis, and 77% agree that the recovery of the sector will be slow and that the restaurant's experience will never be the same again.

According to them, chefs will have a fundamental role in reinventing the catering sector after the COVID emergency and raising consumer awareness of food's role.

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[3] Finedininglovers.it. 2020. *Una Persona Su Due È Pronta A Tornare Al Ristorante: Ecco I Risultati Del Nostro Sondaggio.* [online] Available at: <https://www.finedininglovers.it/articolo/futuro-ristoranti-risultati-sondaggio-foodies> [Accessed 23 September 2020].

57% of the survey respondents believe that people will be more careful to reduce food waste; 53% think that food delivery will play a fundamental role.

Overall, the participants believe that informal dining and ghost kitchens (restaurants that only cook and do home deliveries without having tables to do any service) cannot be considered as essential elements for possible future scenarios, as is fine dining, the concept of which includes all those expensive restaurants that offer a refined menu in a fancy location.

The picture that emerges is very gloomy: the difficulties and concerns relating to the catering industry's future involve 51% of professionals (66% in Italy alone), convinced that the negative economic situation could worsen within the next six months.

Only 27% of respondents believe that adequate measures have been taken to support catering by their respective governments.

Among those who did not boast continuous employment relationships before the pandemic, 65% (56% in Italy only) lost their jobs. 72% of the regularly employed participants fear losing their jobs (80% in Italy) due to a crisis that could worsen in the coming months.

Participants were also asked what they miss most about eating out: 40% replied stating that they miss moments of conviviality at the table; 28% go out and try something new; 16% the fact that someone cooks for them, and a minority replied declaring they miss eating in their favorite restaurant, saving time.

In an interview made by the Italian newspaper "La Repubblica," Piero Pompili, manager of the "Al Cambio" restaurant in Bologna, is asked how the restaurants' menus will change after this health emergency. His response was: "At the moment there is a trend where everyone says that when this emergency is over there will be a desire for concreteness in the kitchen too and there will be more desire for traditional cuisine than haute cuisine dishes, but do not think that be so. Both kitchens will continue to exist, as long as they have something interesting to tell. However, I think that the approach of the customer will change instead, who in these months of quarantine has rediscovered the pleasure of sharing the table at home, of cooking, of being far away but close and, they will want to breathe this sense of warmth even when they return to the restaurant so it will be necessary to meet this need also by forcing the rules of etiquette at the table. More humanity and less professional rigor will be a winning card. The restaurateur who will be able to better adapt to the new needs of customers will survive".

Italians rediscovered the pleasure of staying at home during the pandemic, preparing food alone and calmly, putting aside the hectic life and stress. Not surprisingly, 71.8% of respondents to the survey experienced the lockdown as an opportunity to learn new techniques, experiment with recipes, and test themselves in the kitchen. Above all, the bread-making (52.8%) and traditional recipes (43.8%) kept cooking lovers busy, while 33% tried new cooking techniques and recipes never tried before.

"What is the priority now?" - asked the journalist Eleonora Cozzella to Piero Pompili - "At the moment the priority is the national health of everyone." - replied the manager of the restaurant "Cambio" - "After this emergency, we will find ourselves fighting unemployment. Place settings will initially continue to be halved to guarantee the security distance, and unfortunately, fewer place settings mean less staff. I foresee many layoffs, and I believe that the winning card is investing in people because they are the ones who will decide the success of your business. Personnel should no longer be considered as a cost for a company but as a resource. It is from people that everything can start again, even before food".

"It is not the strongest or the most intelligent specie that survives, but the one that adapts best to change". Charles Darwin's words seem very timely during this period of health emergency.

Following the pandemic, many restaurants have had to adapt and change to meet this particular historical period's needs. In particular, from Northern to Southern Italy, restaurants have evolved, giving life to new projects; there are many examples that we can take into consideration to describe this phenomenon.

In Florence, Il Palagio, the starred restaurant of the Four Seasons Hotel, moves almost all of its business to the hotel's Atrium Bar, creating an app for chatting in a hundred different languages with the staff. For those who do not want to give up the elegant and unique Palagio experience, a single and exclusive table will be available every evening with a special menu signed by renowned Chef Vito Mollica. Furthermore, the historic "Roscioli" delicatessen with kitchen in "via dei Giubbonari" has devised a seasonal outdoor solution, far from the historic center: Rosciolino is the trattoria, with a poolside kiosk, in the Pisana area; a project created to make the customer feel more at ease, away from the chaos of the city and in the open air, with more expansive spaces in order to guarantee the safety distance more quickly.

Before the coronavirus, digital marketing strategies for many restaurants were fragile. The family-run restaurants confined themselves to promoting some event on their Facebook pages, often abandoned to themselves or through the restaurant's website, which explained in detail the history of the restaurant, illustrated the menu, and gave the customer the opportunity, through the contact page, to call the restaurant to ask for more information or to book. The restaurants belonging to chains or franchises used digital marketing to bring more customers; through apps with offers and prizes and advertising on TV.

This pandemic will radically change the way we eat in restaurants. It will give rise to new needs and preferences in the consumer that the restaurateur will be forced to respect if he wants to be successful.

In Italy, most restaurants, unlike the USA, are family-run and, therefore, not part of large chains. It will be difficult for these small restaurants to take the digital marketing path, having never used it before, but necessary. Therefore, they will have to expand their variety of services, making it possible for the customer to order food and eat it at home through external food delivery services or by creating their independent delivery service, without paying commissions. It will be beneficial for restaurants to have their interactive app in which the client can consult the restaurant menu in a few seconds, book, or order food. Furthermore, social campaigns will be fundamental to exploit the influencers' potential to review the restaurant and share their experience with their followers. The reviews on the various platforms will be critical such as TripAdvisor, The Fork, and Google, as more customers consult and search online before choosing the restaurants to eat.

Covid-19 has brought out the gaps of those restaurants that had scarcely considered the possibility of promoting their business through the web and the digital world.

Many chameleon restaurants have adapted quickly to this health emergency, adding services to meet customers' new needs while respecting the law.

A very original initiative was conceived in Turin, the chef Alessandro Mecca of the Michelin-starred restaurant Spazio 7, who is ready to go and prepare his dishes in the Turinese homes personally. It is possible to develop the menu in four hands with the chef and give him concrete help in the kitchen. It will be exciting for customers passionate about food to cook with a chef of this caliber in their kitchen!

In Rome, the new Carnal restaurant, Roy Caceres' new pop project, offers South American flavors through dishes made with Italian raw materials. The restaurant was supposed to open on the days when the lockdown was proclaimed. The chef had the immediate reaction of creating a delivery service, but which did not involve the delivery of ready-made food at home, but boxes containing the ingredients to be assembled easily at home and the recipe. In this way, the restaurant has managed to combine people's urge to eat at the restaurant and the desire to cook at home without haste.

There is only one recipe for survival: adapt to change and do it as quickly and effectively as possible.

2.2 - Food delivery

The food delivery market is a market with enormous growth potential, which goes hand in hand with increasingly refined technologies, as we have already said previously.

Having initially encountered a problematic development on the Italian territory compared to other European countries, the estimates updated to 2019 speak for themselves: it is a market worth over 590 million euros (400 million in 2016). About 35% of the population claims to use the service habitually.

Especially in this period of a health emergency, we see this market making its way: home delivery has been one of the keys for many companies in the sector to continue working even during the long period of the lockdown.

Figure 4 A rider bringing food to a customer's home

Fonte: (https://www.dissapore.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Rider-Justeat.jpg)

Foodora, Deliveroo, Just Eat are just some of the online meal ordering and delivery platforms. While presenting different operating ways, these services' strengths remain the same: speed (both ordering and delivery), ease of payment, and control of the order status. On the one hand, these factors represent the best of technology and, on the other, guarantee the full involvement of the consumer in the purchase, that is, a determinant of primary importance.

So far, we have underlined the estimates updated to 2019 to highlight how food delivery has suffered a strong impact during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the catering field, there is a before and after Covid-19. A watershed that has led sector operators to reflect on the sector's future - explains Vittoria Veronesi, director of the Master in Food & Beverage of the Bocconi University of Milan - adapting the business according to the needs and consumption patterns that emerged following the emergency. In this sense, home delivery will continue to be a fundamental development driver for catering, which will not decrease with the reopening but will still support the premises' activity. The market will be even more competitive: it will be necessary for restaurateurs to enrich the delivery with unique experiential aspects and differentiate themself, especially for the "top of the range." Type of offer, pre and post-sales service, packaging, and payment methods are all signs of continuity concerning the brand's positioning. Details that "pamper" the customer and make him feel like he was in a restaurant, but comfortably from home.

It is no longer an additional service, but a strong point for restaurants, pizzerias, and bistros - the last businesses that have reopened in the restart phase, which allows both to support themselves and maintain constant contact with its customers. Because of strictly regulated takeaway methods, distancing rules that are in the finalization phase, and the increase of offers that do not forget the experiential value, this solution is destined to grow. All this to continue bringing gastronomic excellence and the Made in Italy's charm to the Italians' tables.

The percentage of use of the services mentioned above went from 35% to 20%, suffering a significant slowdown of about 40%, thanks to smart-working (equivalent to saying no lunch break away from home), the increased time available for cooking, and the intense fear of contagion.

Despite this, we have witnessed the promotion (especially during the lockdown) of autonomous home delivery services by the managers of bars and restaurants, independently, exploiting the enormous advertising power of social media, without relying on food delivery services.

The TrustDelivery service offered by Chef Cracco in Milan

Fonte: (https://www.horecanews.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Horeca-news-posti-carlo-cracco-trustdelivery.png)

An example of a restaurant that has decided to rely on food delivery following the new needs dictated by the health emergency is the restaurant of the famous chef Carlo Cracco, who, in addition to focusing on technology, has decided to ensure compliance with the new laws on the matter of coronavirus via the Trustdelivery service. By ordering on the chef's online shop, upon delivery, the customer will find a QR code on the box containing the food that guarantees the package's integrity and that the entire production process has been carried out in compliance with the safety procedures.

The keyword? Reinvent the restaurant business.

Compliance with the most accurate hygiene rules, masks, disposable gloves for each delivery, payment with contactless or even payment directly online with the promise to leave the order in front of the house without having a contact of any kind in order to ensure maximum protection, these are the new rules to be applied during the pandemic. Furthermore, the food must be closed in special packages with adhesives or staples to make it airtight. Alternatively, in the transport containers, which must always be clean and sanitized; also, the delivery must consider the expected distance without direct contact with the customer. Once prepared, it must then be placed in thermal backpacks and delivered. These measures assist each restaurateur in equipping the production process to standards that provide for a specific Hccp plan, possibly online documentation of the customer's order, transport of food in total safety, and payment traceability.

Only 50% of the population that previously used the delivery services assiduously declares that they want to continue to use them even in the post-COVID-19.

During the health emergency, it is appropriate to specify that food delivery is divided into ready-to-eat meals and foodstuffs. This last figure allows us to state that if the percentage of delivery of ready meals during the lockdown has decreased significantly, the deserted streets were still populated by riders, who delivered their groceries home. In this regard, here too, we see the commitment of small businesses, bars, owners of small groceries, and small shops to undertake an independent home delivery service for food, fruit and vegetables, and breakfasts. Instead, the platform that has had a particular actual response from users is Amazon Prime Now, a platform linked to Amazon that ensures shopping at home within a few hours. Estimates tell us that the service experienced a 50% increase in sales during Covid-19. The strength of this platform, thanks to the continuous expansion of digital marketing, has been and still is the ease of selecting the products in the cart (like being in the supermarket but comfortably from your smartphone), the ease of payment, the speed delivery, and saving time in not having to queue to enter the supermarket.

Probably the factor that most prompted the delivery of groceries directly to one's home was the fear of leaving the house, of contagion, and of queuing too long.

The convenience of "delegating" your shopping, with a few simple clicks directly from the security of your own home, has been a luxury that many have decided to indulge in, to make Amazon Prime Now grow more and more, which promises advantageous prices and free home delivery within a few hours, at most, within the next day, for the entire lockdown period.

It will be fascinating to observe the estimates of food delivery in the post-COVID-19 to realize how this pandemic has changed the Italian population's habits, whether permanently or temporarily. Moreover, finally, determine if restaurateurs will continue their delivery service independently or rely on online platforms.

It is clear how digital marketing has marked the beginning of an era that will undoubtedly help the restaurant sector survive.

All this will be possible only by taking care of digital marketing tools such as apps and sites. Especially about apps, we saw, precisely in the lockdown period, a substantial increase in this tool's use, which has strong potential for increasing orders.

2.3 - Street food

We can face another emerging market differently, a market with 2.5 billion customers a day: Street food.

Thanks to the US phenomenon of trucks, small mobile vehicles, Italy has also witnessed a real "boom" in this market in the last five years, which has a growth rate of approximately 1.5% per year. Thanks to the Milan Expo in 2015, which was perhaps the most significant opportunity for the relaunch of Street food, thanks to the numerous food trucks that offered typical Italian and international dishes. We can say that Street food marries marketing to renew typicality.

The breadth of the food phenomenon, highlighted by FAO statistics, is linked to other anthropological aspects, such as the relevant role in the social economy and bringing significant cultural, identity, and ethnic values.

Italy thus involves 570,000 users who, driven by the economic crisis, have reinvented themselves by offering a cheap, quick, and comfortable meal for those who work and have a short lunch break, for young people (according to whom street food is very trendy), and for anyone who wants to take a break in the open air.

According to data released by Coldiretti, more than 69% of Italians prefer local food. Only 17% choose international specialties, while 14% prefer ethnic foods.

Despite the continuous expansion of the sector, we can, unfortunately, define it as a forgotten sector during the Covid-19 pandemic, since it is a category that lives a lot thanks to the events, obviously canceled, for a loss of about 800 million euros.

From the canceled events to the lockdown, to the fear of contagion, these "trucks," so fashionable until March 2020, were forgotten very soon. Because of the new rules of access control, the maximum number of people in a given space, and the fact that Street food is par excellence a symbol of sociality and conviviality, two terms unfortunately ignored by the world due to the severe health emergency.

Despite this period of severe crisis, here too, we are witnessing a new project: the "Street food takeaway," a new way of being able to experience street food, with some limitations, but without forgetting how pleasant it is to enjoy a takeaway meal in the open-air, whether it is a sandwich, a bag of fried food or a hot dish.

We can rejoin the theme of food delivery, with the only difference that we will go and get our takeaway meal, and it will not be delivered to our home.

A new project that was implemented at the beginning of May with new rules implemented to ensure maximum safety, hygiene, and social distancing. Each truck will have a minimum distance of 3 meters, sanitizing dispensers will be ensured at the entrances, booking through the app (even here we can observe an increasingly refined and comfortable use of technology) to avoid gatherings and any other measure that can guarantee the safety of all. Within this new delimited space, 7 to 10 operators could stay (one for each type of cuisine) and serve customers' specialties for takeaway.

The withdrawal of food by customers must always occur, in compliance with social distancing, with the absence of direct contacts.

Seasonality is also due to the severe crisis: the lockdown was implemented during the month dedicated to the Street food (increased temperatures, longer days, pleasure in being outdoors). There are about 25 thousand realities of this type in Italy, managed mainly by young people who have not worked for months and who have suffered economic damage of about 200 million euros, calculating the lost revenues, unsold goods, and fixed costs.

We can therefore define Street Food as stopped from October 2019. The 2020 calendar included about 100 street food events in the largest Italian squares.

Finally, however, we witness the first post-COVID-19 Street food event in Calolzio in September, with more limitations, no longer a festive and crowded event as a typical street food event.

In compliance with the rules, there are about twenty trucks widely spaced from each other, with typical dishes from different regions of Italy and Europe: from paella to Dutch desserts, from Genoese focaccias to grilled meat, passing through Salento taralli, mixed fried food, Sicilian aranicini, and much more, the first post-COVID-19 Street Food event met with great success and a large number of visitors and satisfied people.

Admission to the event will be limited, and the temperature will be measured for participants. The safety distance must be kept at the tables and in the queue, and the mask will be mandatory.

Here too, only time can give us the answers we seek. Once back to normal, will street food continue to be the "turning point" of the "food" sector's economy, or will we return to more traditional ways of eating?

Could it continue to be the turning point for restaurateurs, given the more affordable prices than those of a restaurant and the need to stay in an open space to avoid contagion? We will indeed not find indifference in the fact that Street food has many advantages in this period of severe economic crisis.

Therefore, it will be up to the truck owners to first enforce and respect the new rules themselves, re-loyal customers, reassure them of compliance with the guidelines, and promise them a tasty, innovative but above all, safe meal.

Customers will have to blindly trust that every rule is respected by those who prepare the dishes themselves, using disposable gloves and masks.

Only in this way, even with a little more habit and adaptation, this sector will survive, waiting for a return to normalcy and more festive events full of people that so characterize this "new" type of catering.

In summary, we can summarize the rebirth of street food through keywords such as safety, trust, careful choice of raw materials, respect for hygiene, careful use of safety devices, quick and convenient use of technology, secure payments, huge spaces, great advertising or discounts to attract new customers.

Also, in this case, a critical tool is digital marketing. Only with outstanding commitment in this sense will it be possible to overcome the crisis: apps, Facebook, Instagram will have to be mainly used, cared for, and efficient. Above all, the apps, which must be adequately advertised, will allow them to participate and to book by also describing the events.

We must never forget that in such a particular period that has marked so much our history, people have more desire to return to everyday life, go out, frequent clubs, restaurants, eat out, and have a picnic.

The primary intent of those in charge of this type of business will have to be to encourage customers who are afraid of what is happening, but who have a great desire to return to "normal life."

CHAPTER 3: Digital marketing for restaurants

3.1- Why is digital marketing essential?

Food is an increasingly social sector. Before embarking on a new culinary adventure, many people take the time to consult the various reviews and look at the various profiles of the places around them.

It is no longer the front of the restaurant or the refinement and quality present in the menu outside to attract new customers, but instead the photos published on Instagram, which if they find some success, are shared by the followers of the page to give more and more visibility at the restaurant.

Those who do not make the most of the online world's opportunities risk seeing their clientele diminish day by day. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a digital marketing strategy to attract more customers. It is crucial to understand whom we are addressing and, therefore, understand our target. Passing tourists or local families? Does the restaurant appeal more to young people and university students, or more to people over fifty? Based on this, the restaurant can determine the message it wants to give; that is what to highlight. What is its strong point? What goal does the restaurant want to achieve thanks to this campaign? For example, if a restaurant aspires to increase its customers at lunchtime, it will be beneficial to post the day's menu early in the morning.

Being active and present on the web, available to provide information to customers quickly, easily reachable, and visible in Google searches, having and intense creativity mixed with good quality contents are fundamental ingredients for expanding clientele. In the next paragraphs, we will see some examples of digital marketing tools helpful to achieve this goal.

3.2 – Social Networks

Social media is a powerful way for restaurants of any size to connect with habitual or potential customers/users.

Facebook is the most used social network in the world, with over a billion subscribers. It is a platform that allows people to connect and establish new relationships. It is possible to share videos, photos, news, and statuses quickly and easily, but also chat with friends, follow pages of a business in which you feel a particular interest, and take part in discussion groups.

Facebook also allows its users to use various ads to replace the traditional flyer posted in the mailbox. The most useful type of advertising for a restaurant is the one that allows you to send your digital flyer to people in a specific geographic area, city, and even a specific neighbourhood.

Thanks to localized advertisements, restaurants can promote offers by focusing on their proximity to users, and add other criteria, such as gender, age, and interests. In this way, an ice cream shop in Prati, a well-known district of Rome, will reach customers in the area who are interested in desserts and ice cream. A gourmet restaurant will reach potential customers over the age of 40 with a strong passion for gastronomy.

 With pay per click campaigns, restaurants will be able to target advertising precisely to those who might pass in front of your restaurant and peek at the menu.

In this way, the restaurant will expand its notoriety in the surrounding area: it will attract new customers and boost the number of seats served every day.

Instagram is one of the essential social platforms to increase the visibility of the restaurant; it was launched on October 6, 2010, by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, as a purely photographic social network. Within a few years, subscribers have grown to the point of becoming attractive to the eyes of Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's creator, who, in 2012, decided to buy Instagram for one billion dollars.

Instagram gives users the ability to post photos and videos by adding a short caption, tagging people, and geolocazing the post. It is also possible to post stories, which are temporary statuses only available for 24 hours.

Stories are a perfect tool for restaurants to showcase different offers and promotions of the day. Therefore, it is possible to publish the day's dish, visible only for a few hours, on the profile, adding stickers, tags, and a position to reach as many people as possible. The main goal of social networks is to connect people based on shared interests. What better way to interact with customers than showing in the stories what happens in the kitchen, how products and ingredients used to make the dishes are chosen, and introducing the staff. In short, present the restaurant and the people who work there naturally and in a less formal way in order to create an expectation of conviviality and simplicity in the customer and entice him to try it.

In this way, the restaurateur will communicate authentically and demonstrate the passion and commitment that he serves every day together with his dishes.

The customer will try the restaurant not only for the proposal of the menu or for the location but also for the connection created with the place. The restaurant thus becomes part of the customer's daily life.

The restaurateur must encourage the customer to talk about the place. When people share photos of the dishes on their social media profiles, they advertise for free. Organizing a small contest for "the best photo" or giving digital discount coupons to those who share photos from the restaurant on Instagram will allow a mutual exchange, which will make both parties happy.

Digital marketing, through social media, allows to increase customer loyalty, improving customer satisfaction. The user, who sees the restaurant's social profile, will have the opportunity to look at: behind the kitchen scenes, be updated immediately on possible offers or events, ask questions, and sometimes even book through chats. One of the many problems of a restaurant is precisely the difficulty of managing the requests, questions, and complaints of customers. Social networks are the fastest and most immediate way to meet customer requests, thus improving customer service.

In short, the advantages of using social media are many: starting from low costs, since creating a social profile is free, and the high ROI (Return On Investment) generated by social media advertising, the highest among the various forms of paid advertising. Furthermore, social ads are a type of advertising that allows high target profiling and personalization: the "ads" will only be shown to really interested users. A considerable advantage is the conversion rate, i.e., the development of relationships with customers, who will like and comment on the posts, allowing the restaurant to reach as many people as possible. Finally, the insight data on the customer that the restaurant acquires through the statistics of social profiles. The restaurant will be able to better define its target by analyzing its followers' demographic and geographical data, therefore of its potential customers.

3.3 - Food bloggers and influencers

The food blogger is an increasingly widespread figure in the world of social networks. This person loves cooking and gastronomy, often he is a chef or gastronomist who has made his passion an increasingly fashionable profession. He shares culinary experiences with his followers through social platforms, products that he considers quality, and recipes invented by him. The most famous food blogger in Italy is Benedetta Rossi. Her blog "Fatto in casa da Benedetta," which in Italian means Homemade by Benedetta, boasts more than three million followers. Therefore, it is easy to understand how much influence, hence the name influencer, such an activity can generate. Benedetta's blog exclusively shares recipes and ideas for the house.

However, other blogs instead review restaurants and share their experiences with their followers, so it is handy for a restaurant to collaborate with one of these[4].

"Chef in Camicia," meaning a chef who wears a shirt, is an Instagram profile and blog of three guys who have decided to make their passion a job. With almost a million followers, they publish recipes and cooking tricks every day, but they also have a column where they share reviews of the restaurants they go to (mainly in Milan), assigning votes. A restaurant could take advantage of their visibility by contacting them and asking them to review the restaurant in exchange for an economic return and a free dinner. A person who follows their account after seeing the photos and the restaurant's positive review will decide to go and try it trusting the chefs in shirts.[5]

After many years of food blogging through social media, Egidio Cerrone decided to open a sandwich shop in Naples "Puok Burger" four years ago, with great success. To keep the clientele and the customer's curiosity high and for problems related to the too narrow kitchen, the shop places a limit on the number of sandwiches that can be made: 400. So every day, dozens of people line up, hoping to make it in time to taste one of these famous sandwiches. Puok Burger has differentiated itself from the competition, mainly thanks to the massive visibility obtained even before opening the shop, due to the owner's food blogging activity.[6]

The digital world creates unique opportunities thanks to the connection it makes with people and the great visibility in a much more efficient way than more traditional marketing strategies.

It is crucial to analyse how social networks can positively influence people to take a specific action, but also how blogs and websites can do the same. The website "Puntarella Rossa" reviews restaurants and gives them points for cuisine, ambiance, and service. It covers Italy's most significant and largest cities: Rome, Milan, Bologna, Turin, and others. Born in 2011, this website boasts an excellent reputation and is often consulted by people looking for a good restaurant. Appearing on this blog is essential to give more visibility to the restaurant at a low price: the price of a dinner. The philosophy of "Puntarella Rossa" is to give a genuine and not corrupt judgment. the clientele trusts them, so when the restaurant asks for their help, they must be sure

[4] Menon, R., 2020. *What Is Food Blogging And How To Become A Food Blogger*. [online] Medium. Available at: <https://medium.com/cucumbertown-magazine/what-is-food-blogging-and-how-to-become-a-food-blogger-2b8a6f96a07d> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

[5] Carrà, M., 2020. *Chef In Camicia: La Media Company Food Che Punta A 3 Milioni Di Fatturato*. [online] Forbes Italia. Available at: <https://forbes.it/2020/01/18/chef-in-camicia-video-ricette-come-nasce-media-company-food-e-quali-sono-i-prossimi-obiettivi/> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

[6] Tiso, E., 2019. *Puok Burger Store: L'Hamburger Parla Napoletano*. [online] Panino Italiano Magazine. Available at: <https://www.ilpaninoitaliano.org/articolo/puok-burger-store-l-hamburger-parla-napoletano.html> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

of the quality of their food and their service, otherwise they will find a negative review which will cause the opposite effect. [7]

Digital marketing is essential to increase the restaurant's clientele and, consequently, its performance, but it must be balanced with the taste of food, a good location, and service kindness. Digital marketing attracts customers, but the food and the excellent experience make them coming back.

3.4 – Apps

So far, the present dissertation focused on an analysis of technology, digital marketing, innovation, and performance. But it is also important to define in detail what means allow us to talk about the topics discussed above. Let us start from the base: the apps. Apps have been part of our lives for less than ten years, and it seems impossible to imagine the world without them. The phone app is a fast and streamlined program that allows the device to perform functions that, otherwise, it would not be able to perform. We use an app instead of the browser because it is more direct, faster and a simple touch is enough to find ourselves exactly on the page where we would like to be. Therefore, it will not be necessary to open the internet, look for what we need, and wait for the page to load.[8]

It is, therefore, a fast system through which any type of action is possible: a payment, leafing through a magazine, booking a restaurant, checking the traffic before arriving at work, but also much more.

The primary purpose of an app must be to offer customers a unique and fast service to promote better a company or service that takes place either online or even physically.[9]

An app must be run with user needs in mind and must comply with certain specific characteristics: a simple icon that catches the eye, a short name easy to remember, and a constant and fast update.

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[7] Puntarella Rossa. 2020. *Chi Siamo - Puntarella Rossa*. [online] Available at: <https://www.puntarellarossa.it/chi-siamo/> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

[8] Hamilton, E., 2020. *Why Mobile Apps Are Important For Your Business?*. [online] Tech Times. Available at: <https://www.techtimes.com/brandspin/242588/20190504/why-mobile-apps-are-important-for-your-business.htm> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

[9] Medium. 2020. *Why Mobile Apps Are Essential For Business Growth?*. [online] Available at: <https://medium.com/@sigzen/why-mobile-apps-are-essential-for-business-growth-10ce60595f02> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

It is essential to follow a pricing strategy to be successful with an app by choosing the one that best suits the developed application's features. Pricing should reflect the overall marketing strategy. It should be competitive and a reflection of quality, cost, and profit margins.

In the application market, it is essential to develop a marketing strategy that ensures a consistent approach to the offer of apps by nullifying the competition and limiting the costs to create, develop and keep it updated.

However, in addition to defining a marketing strategy, a well-defined methodology must be developed for communicating the marketing message to the public.

Applications also need to be advertised with the dissemination of ads displayed directly on smartphones with simple and straightforward images, which give a first description of the service that the app offers.

It will be necessary to focus on marketing objectives (sale, profit, price, and product), a market analysis (including competitor analysis and SWOT analysis), and a pricing strategy to create an app.

As an introduction to the marketing plan, it will be necessary to briefly describe the purpose, which must be clear and easy to understand for everyone.

It is necessary to identify the market in which the business wants to enter (in our case, food), the existing competition, and the chances of success. In an emerging and continually growing market such as that of food, the essential objective is to differentiate from new competitors by any means that may be more innovative or tempting to download and use it.

The marketing plan must also consider a section dedicated to the more "personal" aspect of the market: it is necessary to distinguish the target market, describing how it can satisfy buyers' needs, and try to get to know the tastes and preferences of the customers present.

The S.W.O.T. analysis, as mentioned above, will be very important in the app technology sector. It is a strategic planning tool through which companies can plan and take into account the strengths (Strengths), the Weaknesses, the opportunities (Opportunities), and the threats (Threats) or competition in a given project. Thanks to this analysis, a company's intrinsic and extrinsic variables take into account before starting a project are identified. The four variables analysed are represented through a matrix and refer to the

organization's internal and external elements, comparing them with what can be useful for achieving the goal and with what can be harmful. [10]

The apps are divided into native and web apps: the former will already be present on our smartphone directly from the factory, the latter we will have to download them depending on what we need. Finally, some will be paid, others free.

Native app	Web app
Created and designed for mobile devices	Not a real application, but a website in a mobile version
Can work also with no internet connection	Needs internet connections
Installed through application store	Installed by creating a bookmark

After this brief introduction, useful for getting into the heart of the app theme, and therefore wanting to analyse its use and practicality, I will investigate how an App is useful in digital marketing, this report's main subject.

Marketing is about finding customers, selling to customers, and establishing a lasting relationship. Digital because it will be possible to do it remotely, in the online and technological world.[11]

Digital marketing, thanks to high-level app development companies, manages to work correctly on many different, heterogeneous levels that are not based solely and exclusively on traditional marketing.

An app is a symbol of customer loyalty, and we can define it almost as a data collection, a convenient and automatic payment method, and a setting based precisely on the tastes of the customer who uses it.

Take, for example, Just Eat's application, as mentioned above, a platform relating to food delivery.

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[10] Della Bella, F., 2020. *Analisi SWOT: Cos'è, Come Farla, Vantaggi Ed Esempi Per Aziende - Digital4*. [online] Digital4. Available at: <https://www.digital4.biz/marketing/analisi-swot-cos-e-come-farla/> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

[11] Alexander, L., 2020. *The Who, What, Why, & How Of Digital Marketing*. [online] Blog.hubspot.com. Available at: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/what-is-digital-marketing> [Accessed 24 September 2020].

The application presents a wide range of pubs and restaurants from which the client can order a meal. During the registration phase, the customer data and the payment method will be saved, and the app will also be able to recommend the restaurant according to the customer's preferences thanks to the use of management programs to archive and segment the tastes and requests of the individual.The result will be a faster choice and a payment method so simple that just one click will be enough to make it (given the data saved in the initial phase).

The growth of applications helps the entire marketing process refine to adapt to the business and apply the technology necessary to remain at the forefront of the market. In an increasingly advanced world, apps are an essential communication tool, and the food world is proof of this. It is thanks to an app that we can order food at home and use food delivery services. The work will refer to these platforms as "food apps."

The faster way to order dinner from home is by using an app. The ease of access of the apps for home delivery of food, even compared to the web, makes them intuitive and practical: with just a few steps, they allow the customer to reach the goal, which often takes the form of a purchase.

For the restaurant world, we will have a wide choice of review apps for restaurants and clubs or the app version of the central gastronomic guides that allow a reasoned restaurant choice and quick localization.

In this regard, we can refer to the "The Fork" application, conceived and created a few years ago, to encourage people to go to restaurants.

It will no longer be necessary to call the restaurant to book a table. The application with the elementary image of a fork with a green background is practical and fast.After registration, the customer chooses the specialty he wants, whether fish, meat, pizza, or anything else.Furthermore, here comes a large selection of restaurants available for booking. Each restaurant will have a detailed menu, from appetizers to desserts, complete with a price list, photographs, and reviews by other users.

Nevertheless: every restaurant can, if it wishes, apply a discount to entice the customer to book, sometimes even 50%, with the promise of a collection of points that will be used to obtain further discounts subsequently.

The merger of the application with restaurants has brought millions of users who every day, comfortably from their smartphone, book a table for dinner at any time of day or night, having a clear idea of what the place will be like thanks to the photos of the other users who have posted a review, of how much they will spend knowing they will receive a discount on the final bill.

The fork is a handy example of digital marketing: simple, fast, incentive.

The platform has a viral Instagram page, a frequently updated Facebook page but also: a weekly newsletter with the proposals of the week, the most voted and best-reviewed restaurants, discount codes to save, and much more.

On the other hand, if we have talked about the advantages for customers so far, here is how, on the other hand, it is a precious aid for restaurateurs: with a straightforward app from which they will be able to see in real-time how many tables will be occupied in the evening, not to mention the enormous potential for visibility that the application itself will give them.

They will be able to read their reviews, respond by thanking customers, send a reminder message of the reservation.

We see how digital marketing has a particular and real need for simple and clear applications within everyone's reach.

An application can be a vital relaunch resource in any sector, in a world that is increasingly in a hurry and increasingly needs cheap and fast alternatives to achieve the pre-established goal, whether it is booking a table for dinner meals directly at home, shopping at home and all the rest.

3.5 – TripAdvisor and The Fork

With over 4 million restaurants, one of the largest restaurant sites globally, TripAdvisor is a travel and restaurant platform that allows users to publish reviews of hotels and restaurants. The review consists of a free comment from the user and the assignment of a maximum of five stars.

Based on the average of reviews and stars, the platform will show the restaurant before or after the others on the search page.

Keeping a restaurant's TripAdvisor profile up to date, being on the platform, and responding to reviews is essential for several reasons, including the fact that a large number of people use the platform to discover new restaurants, if users do not find the restaurant profile, they will opt for the competitors. Also, 70% of the people who use the platform look for restaurants nearby, so they are immediate potential customers to whom the restaurant only has to offer itself. Tourists rely on this tool to decide where to eat when they visit a new city, as they have no point of reference or loved one who can recommend them. Furthermore, customers

often use the platform when they are undecided about where to eat; if there are excellent reviews and beautiful photos, they will come to try the restaurant; finally, brand awareness increases and, consequently, the perceived value of products and services.
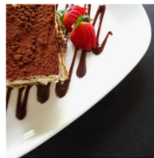
Top three reasons on TripAdvisor

Fonte: (https://mk0tarestaurant7omoy.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Screen-Shot-2018-11-01-at-9.16.16-AM.png)

Another excellent opportunity that the TripAdvisor service gives to the restaurant that wants to devote more time to digital marketing is the: "three excellent reasons to eat here." It consists of inserting the three reasons that differentiate the restaurant from the competition and why potential customers should try it. It is a good idea to choose three very different aspects of the structure, an excellent reason related to the cuisine in general or to a specific dish of which the restaurant is very proud; a reason related to the experience the restaurant offers, such as an elegant service or stunning views and a great reason related to something special, such as outdoor seating, seasonal menu or live music.

Another useful service that TripAdvisor offers is the Storyboard, which consists of inserting a dynamic and visible presentation within the restaurant profile, replacing the usual static image that everyone has. This way, the restaurant can highlight the ten most beautiful photos and show the most captivating and convincing reviews first.

The fork is an application owned by TripAdvisor that allows the user to book restaurants intuitively, often taking advantage of the many discounts available, up to 50%. By clicking on any restaurant, it is possible to see the various images of the dishes and the place, the menu with the chef's advice and the different prices, and the various customers' evaluations and reviews. A substantial positive aspect of the platform is that only after eating in the restaurant and receiving a confirmation email from the restaurant the user can review it. Therefore, users have the certainty of finding only genuine and uncorrupted reviews. Unlike TripAdvisor, which only shows the various restaurants in order of popularity on the user's search page, a powerful weapon for restaurateurs of The Fork is that it also offers the customer the opportunity to receive a discount and book immediately from the app itself.

3.6 – Fidelity cards

A loyalty card is a powerful tool for the realization of relationship marketing projects. It is a card that is given to regular customers of a business. Points are collected on this card every time the customer makes a purchase; these points can then be used to gain rewards or discounts on other products' purchase.

The loyalty card technique does not aim to attract new customers or expand the restaurant's clientele, but it aims to keep that loyal customer and make him come back, transforming him from a potential customer to a regular customer.

Finding new customers is not enough. It is necessary to make those who are already customers happy, establishing a lasting relationship with them; the mission is to make sure that if the customer has to organize an important business dinner or an event, he will immediately think about that restaurant.

To be able to do this, a digital loyalty program is essential. There are no more plastic cards; thus, the restaurant will cut costs for printing, and customers will not risk losing or forgetting the card at home. The digital fidelity card will be on the customer's smartphone, and the restaurateur can assign points from the computer.

First, it is essential to establish how many euros spent is worth a point to create a loyalty card. Then decide after how many points the client gets the reward or discount. For example, every € 25.00 spent, he earns a point, and every 10 points, he gets a discount of € 30.00. In this way, the customer will be more enticed to choose the restaurant that uses this strategy, as in addition to a pleasant dinner, he also gains an economic advantage.

Conclusion

At this point in the paper, we can begin to draw our conclusions on the issues addressed.

We analysed the food market, an increasingly emerging and developed market, which occupies a massive slice of the population, and how it is increasingly changing and adapting to new technologies and new needs dictated by a health emergency that is changing our habits completely.

Although we have often repeated that the food sector is one of the few sectors to have survived in an authentic way during the already present economic crisis, it is equally a sector that, like many others, has needed to reinvent itself, rediscover itself, and redevelop itself in a way completely different than before.

How? Thanks to digital marketing, the main topic of the thesis.

We have retraced the steps that led this sector to adopt digital marketing through the increasingly pressing development of new technologies and their way of being used (apps, social media, influencers, guides).

We compared the sector both from a more traditional perspective and from a more digital and developed point of view to highlight the significant differences that the current situation is forcing us to accept.

In conclusion, we can say that despite the severe difficulties that have involved any sector, the food sector is managing to survive, encouraging people to relive the everyday life that took place before, only in a different way.

Thanks to offers, advertising, the convenience of delivery, and much more, the sector is re-emerging faster and faster, waiting for a return to life, with the habits we were used to.

Although we do not have the same needs as before, we can say that what we have described, in the course of the paper, is the "new normal" of the sector. It remains for us to find out if it is a situation that will remain over time once the emergency is over, or if it will tend to be our future.

In the era of digital marketing, we can say that "food passes through social media," and that is what interests us most.

Large companies exploit the Web and all possible Social Networks to carry out adequate "Social Media Marketing" and develop effective marketing campaigns.

We pass from the "food" phase to the "food experience" phase. An essential, tricky step that took place when food is no longer seen only as a necessary object of sustenance, linked only to the function of nourishing us, but acquires unparalleled importance, culture, and identity, through the "Experience Food" market; as we have been able to observe when addressing the theme of street food, where ethnicity and typicality are two key concepts.

The consumer will always be put first to make him feel completely involved in his choices and encouraged to test a particular type of service such as food delivery, i.e., delivering a meal directly to his home.

Because of the pandemic, the economic crisis, and the need for convenience, digital marketing is right for both the consumer and the company.

Speed, transparency, privacy, experience, and economy will always be terms surrounding this sector.

It is clear that, in a continually evolving world, technology is now the backbone of any sector, and it fits perfectly with the need to be known, advertising for new services and consumer protection.

Once the Covid-19 pandemic has ceased, will we return to more traditional eating habits, or will we remain in our comfort always at hand?

One thing is sure: our way of eating has changed forever. We have discovered new comforts and the new "luxury" that we can all allow ourselves to eat quickly and economically without sacrificing taste.

On the other hand, the second factor that has changed forever is the approach of this sector towards its customers: digital marketing has enormous potential, which, if used well, exploiting all types of resources, can become the symbol of the economic turning point, and the re-emergence of the many sectors that were significantly affected, in our case, the food sector.

For the direct sales sector, the characterizing element mainly concerns the customer's relationship, which must be maintained over time, using frequent marketing campaigns, thanks to the available means we know.

In conclusion, what emerged from these chapters shows how the food world is gradually changing in Italy, despite the economic crisis.

Services such as those of delivery are destined to develop: the low percentage of Italians connected to the internet, compared to the European average, allows for higher growth margins.

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