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TITLE:

The gastronomy city of Bergen, Norway in the face of Covid- 19 pandemic

**The gastronomy city of Bergen, Norway in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.**

**How has the Covid- 19 pandemic affected the restaurant establishments of the city, and what remedies have been made from a managerial perspective.**



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### **Acknowledgement**

What inspired me to research on this problem statement for my bachelor's degrees at the University of Stavanger, specifically at the Norwegian school of hotel management, is my desire to own a restaurant. With this study, I will prepare myself to face future crisis when I meet my goal.

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### **Abstract**

COVID-19 has affected all aspects of our human life, and businesses and restaurants are no exception. Accordingly, the study aimed to understand and explain how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the restaurant establishments in Bergen and the operational and business strategies used to address it. The study is qualitative and involves semi-structured interviews of five restaurant managers. The findings show three patterns of interesting, surprising, and sensational aspects based on a thematic analysis.

The findings are interesting because they show that some of the COVID-19 pandemic impacts, operational and business strategies were similar and different impacts across restaurants. The findings are also surprising and contrary to expectations. For example, one restaurant did not get government support, and some employees remained less motivated despite retaining their jobs. Also, some of the findings are sensational because the COVID-19 pandemic also positively impacted some restaurants. Thus, apart from relying on their previous reputation before a crisis, the crisis presented opportunities for transforming businesses through innovation and creativity.

These findings suggest that managers and other stakeholders, such as government need to consider strategies that work in general and specific to different conditions or nature of the business in question. There is a need for government support to be adequately communicated and not taken for granted. Businesses should use challenges or crises as opportunities for innovation and creativity. The limitation of the study is that it was qualitative exploratory research limited to only five restaurants and their owners or managers. Therefore, future studies should consider looking at a large sample of restaurants so that the findings can be generalisable and including other stakeholder.

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## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

The advent of Covid-19 in February 2020 affected and changed the way of doing things in the hospitality and tourism industries. The immediate effect was the loss of jobs in the hospitality industry like in other domains. Professionals are uncertain about their projections in the short or long run. Optimist believe that the vaccine will do away with the virus soon while pessimists see the virus persist and resist the vaccine. That other viruses will happen is another projection among the speculations regarding this global pandemic. The perception of the business managers regarding the uncertainties and risks for their businesses is equally important. While this anxiety and uncertainty apply broadly, the same concerns apply in the specific context of the hospitality industry and restaurant business. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to find out how the pandemic has affected the restaurant establishments of Bergen city which was awarded the status of Gastronomy on 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2015 by UNESCO (BergenKommune, 2020b), and what remedies have been made from a managerial perspective, to sustain the industry in the present circumstances and help teach future aspiring entrepreneurs and managers like myself on how to face challenges of pandemics within gastronomy.

Before introducing vaccines against Covid- 19 and limited solutions to combat it, countries responded using the best available approaches. These approaches included voluntary/required quarantine, social distancing, closures of schools and unnecessary businesses/workplaces, cancelling or prolonging events (Gössling et al., 2020). Arguably, both the pandemic and the existing solutions have an impact on businesses including restaurant, particularly its gastronomic offerings.

Broadly, gastronomy is the art and science of cooking, eating, and drinking as a pleasure found in different parts of the world, countries, and cities (Carpio, Napod, & Do,

2021). Therefore, in this context, there is a need to look closely at the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the restaurant establishment, and the managerial strategies implemented by restaurant owners to address the problem.

Bergen, the capital of the Vestland province, is Norway's closest city to the sea. It is host to the highest number of related businesses in Norway and an appealing destination for tourist, with a population of 283.929 (BergenKommune, 2020a). According to (VisitBergen, 2021), it has at least 250 restaurants.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2015, the city of Bergen was awarded the status of Gastronomy by UNESCO (BergenKommune, 2020b). It was a joint effort by the County Council, Hordaland's Farmers' Association, the County Governor, Innovation Norway, the University of Bergen, Visit Bergen, the Bergen Master Chefs' Guide, Directorate of Fisheries and NCE Seafood Innovation Cluster that the City of Bergen took the initiative to apply for membership (BergenKommune, 2020b). The status makes Bergen a food city and an attractive place for those living in Norway. However, the Covid- 19 pandemic has not spared the expectations of this status or the ability of restaurants to contribute to several aspects of gastronomy indicated in the UNESCO criteria. Therefore, against this background, there is a need to explore the impact of Covid- 19 pandemic and the managerial strategies put in place by the restaurants to address it.

Accordingly, managerial strategies refer to what is a manager and a strategy. Thus, a manager is a person who controls a firm or group of people (Okumus, Altinay, Chathoth, & Koseoglu, 2019, p. 212). A strategy is visioning and creating tactics to meet goals and objectives (Okumus et al., 2019, p. 5). Therefore, managerial strategies refer to strategies implemented by managers in a firm, to meet its goals and objectives.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

In the wake of the global Covid-19 pandemic and its visible effects on the economy and society, empirical studies (Dube, Nhamo, & Chikodzi, 2020) have emerged to research its impact on the restaurant and hospitality industry. Other studies came up with coping strategies to sustain the industry (Omar, Ishak, & Jusoh, 2020) and safety plan studies (Nguyen, 2020) to guide employees in keeping the workplace safe. While these studies have found that restaurants are either struggling or have shut down, they have not paid attention to get an in-depth understanding of what aspects of the restaurant business in relation to gastronomy have been affected. As a result, specifically in the city of Bergen given its UNESCO gastronomy status, we do not know how the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic affected restaurants. Therefore, there is a need to address the following main research question and subsequent questions:

### *Main research question*

*How has the pandemic affected the restaurant establishments of the city of Bergen, and what managerial remedies have been put in place?*

### *Sub-research questions*

- 1. How has the Covid- 19 pandemic affected the gastronomic offering by restaurants?*
- 2. What operation strategies have been put to address the impact of the pandemic?*
- 3. What business strategies have been put to address the impact of the pandemic?*

## 1.3 Relevance

The theoretical relevance of the thesis is to enrich the existing understanding of how crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic can affect restaurant businesses. It also provides information to future researchers on what to study and expand the existing knowledge. The practical relevance of the study is to advise both present and future aspiring

entrepreneurs and managers on how to tackle pandemic crisis. At last, it will enlighten policy makers (authorities) on their assistance towards small, medium- size enterprises.

#### 1.4 Structure

This chapter has introduced the study's purpose, background, problem statement, and relevance. In the second chapter, I explain the theoretical background of the thesis based on existing literature. In the third chapter, I present my research methodology and explain why I choose qualitative methods instead of the other methods. I will present my results and analyse them, providing quotations from the research in the fourth chapter. In the fifth chapter, I will discuss my findings, beginning by answering my problem statement, relating it with earlier studies and in the sixth chapter, I conclude then provide recommendations and limitation.

**2. Literature Review**

2.1 Elaboration of key concepts: Gastronomy, Covid-19, Strategic Management

Gastronomy is studying of food and culture, focusing on the culinary arts of fine food and drink (BerkeleyLibrary, 2021). It encourages the publicity of a perceived food, mixed with traditions and international ways and trends, nutritional and health advantages of food and the thought of eating for fun (Neill, Poulston, Hemmington, Hall, & Bliss, 2017). It includes cooking methods, nutritional facts, food science, savoury and applications of taste and smell as human intake of foodstuffs goes (BerkeleyLibrary, 2021).

According to Hjalager and Richards (2003, p. 64), it was described that gastronomy was a medium of cultural tourism, whereby the cultural dimension of the meal is a unit of gastronomy, detailing that the meal is in the unity of the production, treatment, storage, transport, processing, preparation, and cooking of food. Regarding the gastronomy industry in the world, gastronomy is seen as a factor of tourist’s experience. For instance, a study performed in the city of Jeonju, South Korea showed that apart from spending holiday and leisure, food was one of the motivations of tourists visiting the city, and gastronomy was a necessity of sustainable tourism on how to attract the potential customers (Carpio, Napod, & Do, 2021). To become a City of Gastronomy, it must fulfil a set of criteria set by UNESCO as shown in Table 1. The UNESCO criteria made of at least nine indicators or components.

Table 1: The modified UNESCO criteria for City Gastronomic setters

1. Internal ingredients used in traditional cooking.
2. Local expertise and traditional cooking methods that have survived modern times.
3. Modern gastronomy as a characteristic of the urban centre or region.

4. Active gastronomic community with a lot of traditional restaurants and chefs.
5. Traditional food markets and industry.
6. Trends of organising gastronomic festivals, competitions, and awards.
7. Show care for the environment and popularize sustainable local products.
8. Nurturing of public appreciation, promotion of nutrition in educational institutions
9. Inclusions of biodiversity conservation programmes in cooking schools' curricula.

Author's construction based on (Everett, 2016, p. 205)

The Coronavirus disease is an easily spread disease that when gotten by a person, might have difficulties in breathing and can recover without any treatment (WHO, 2021). The disease was discovered in Wuhan, China in December 2019 (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020). The elderly and people with complicated medical situations such as heart disease, chronic respiratory disease and cancer are highly susceptible to infection. However, the disease can be prevented by knowing about it, the disease caused by it and how to be infected by it. The virus spreads mainly through droplets from the mouth or release from an infected person's nose when sneezing or coughing (WHO, 2021). Covid-19 affects an individual's health, social and economic life, including places where they live, whether cities or the countries. Globally, the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the restaurant business and, invariably, gastronomy (Dube, Nhamo, & Chikodzi, 2020).

Strategic management is about the procedure by which firms develop and implement their missions, visions, goals, and objectives through the firm's leadership to create and maintain a competitive advantage (Okumus et al., 2019, p. 4). There are three levels of strategies, which are; corporate, business, and operational strategies (Scholes, Regner, Johnson, Whittington, & Angwin, 2014, p. 7). The study's focus will be on business strategies and operational strategies. Business strategies are strategies in a general context, no matter what products or services a firm supply in a market, and there is a demand for it (Okumus et al., 2019, p. 123), for example, competitive strategy. Operational strategies include day to day activities and are part of a firm's efficient handlings of corporate and

business strategies (Scholes et al., 2014, p. 7). Since the Covid-19 pandemic affects restaurants and their offerings, operational and business strategies become necessary to address its impact.

## 2.2 The Covid-19 pandemic and the Restaurant industry

Globally, restaurants contribute greatly to the economy but are weak to external challenges such as Covid- 19 pandemic (Dube et al., 2020). The lockdown and preventive restrictions have worsened the impact of the Covid- 19 pandemic on restaurants. For example, some restaurants have reduced operating hours in China, and others shut down completely (Jaewook, Jewoo, & Yiqi, 2021). The same applies to the USA, where government restrictions made restaurants shut down for sit-in meals, affecting fine dining, family restaurants, bars, and fast-food restaurants functioning below 20% capacity, leading to the loss of jobs by millions of workers(Nhamo, Dube, & Chikodzi, 2020). Another study, still in the USA, found out that increase in daily Covid- 19 cases and quarantining led to a decrease in demand for restaurant services, apart from fast-food restaurants which had lesser physical contact, self -service, drive-through and takeout services which were affordable and posed low threats to customers compared to full-service restaurant (Yang, Liu, & Chen, 2020). Furthermore, a study carried out by the Portuguese Restaurant association found out that 75% of restaurants ceased to function for two months and 25% relying on take-away and food deliveries, which impacted job-availability, wages and sales transaction(Madeira, Palrão, & Mendes, 2021). A study conducted in Bangladesh, within the food and beverage industry, it was made known that some of the products were getting expired, shortage in operating expenses, suppliers and trading partners limited activities or terminations, decrease in profits, job and trading relationships cuts were some of the short, medium-long term impacts (Chowdhury, Sarkar, Paul, &



Moktadir, 2020). Another way in which the Covid- 19 pandemic impacted restaurants, according to a study in Turkey was through the food supply chain, by movement restrictions of workers, changes in demand of consumers (panic buying), termination of food production industries, restricted food trade policies (less export, more import) and financial issues (Aday & Aday, 2020). Also, a study in Malaysia found out that higher operational cost in delivery packages, hygiene products and protective equipment for workers impacted smaller restaurants when customers went out less and used other ways of buying food, resulted in closing their restaurant (Lai, Abidin, Hasni, Ab Karim, & Ishak, 2020). Government is expected to support businesses in time of crises (Dube et al., 2020)

Locally, in Norway, nationwide isolation was applied on March 12, 2020, whereby the isolation included the closure of all schools and restaurants and the people were assigned to work from home, limit the use of public transportation, avoid unnecessary travelling and borders were closed from travellers out of Norway(Kristoffersen et al., 2021). The closing of restaurants to limit the spread of Covid- 19 led to an increase in sales of grocery and alcoholic products(Claussen & Oyier, 2020), which led to a higher demand in the food supply industry of Norway. Some of the challenges of the pandemic in Norway led to the postponing of food competition finals such as the one organized by the Norwegian Chefs National Association (NKL) and Tine (milk industry) in Stavanger from the time it was planned (Are & Jacobsen, 2021, p. 26). In Oslo, they have been constant outbreaks of the Corona cases, which led to a constant shutdown of restaurants, whereby workers are laid off and financial hardship for the restaurants happening repeatedly (NHOReiseliv, 2021). In Trondheim, The withholding of sales of alcoholic beverages to customers not ordering food led to very few guests in some restaurants, and the owners were pleading with the government to uplift the duty to eat,

(spiseplikten) to boost their customers (Langørgeren & Holstad, 2021). All the above impacts both at the global level and the local Norwegian level affected the restaurant business.

### 2.3 Operational strategies in the Covid- 19 pandemic

In response to the Covid- 19 pandemic and its impact restaurant developed and implemented several operational strategies. In different parts of the world restaurant came with similar and different strategies. For example, in the USA, the restaurants had to plead or apply for government aid or funding to compensate restaurants for ordered closures, reopening capital for restaurant changes, restore inventory, acquire safety equipment, rehiring and training the employees (Nhamo et al., 2020). In Malaysia, menu simplification was applied whereby food that easily fitted in take-away boxes was adjusted in the menu and serve in restaurants (Lai et al., 2020). In Finland, safety plans were implemented in a restaurant to show customers that they are trying their best to curb the risk of spreading Covid- 19 while eating out (Nguyen, 2020). Reducing the cost of advertisement was the case of a the food supply industry in Bangladesh, thereby reducing the cost in running expenses was a strategy implemented to save money in the pandemic period (Chowdhury et al., 2020).

In the Norwegian context, both chefs and waiters were not only on their respective responsibilities, but were used as delivery agent, this was the case of the restaurant Déjà vu in Stavanger, who decided to start deliveries and take-aways in their restaurant to survive the lock-down and both chefs and waiters had turns in delivering food to their customers (Stensland, 2021). In Norway, some of the actions taken by restaurants, bars and cafes to combat the spread of Covid, was by using cashless ways of paying, in this case applications such as Vipps and QR-code were used (Kaifi, Kvitrud, Eritsland, &

Lassen). The restaurants in Norway adopted the Covid- 19 guidelines for restaurants by the health authorities as shown in Table 3.

Table 2: Some guidelines from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health for restaurants

Restaurants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure one metre distancing for guest when seated or lined-up, and for employees, also using floor markings.</li> <li>• Supervised good hygiene and thorough cleaning routines.</li> <li>• Easy accessibility to hand hygiene equipment.</li> <li>• Prohibit congestion at entrance, jacket room, toilets, table, and the bar.</li> <li>• Alcohol beverages should be served to only those ordering foods and before 10pm.</li> <li>• In cases of buffet, guest should be divided and served at different times, change serving utensils, regular cleaning and disinfecting of contact points.</li> <li>• Collection of contact details from customers for infection tracing which will be deleted after 14 days.</li> <li>• Those cooking should be in good health and constant handwashing.</li> </ul>

Author's compilation from (NIPH, 2021)

#### 2.4 Business strategies and the Covid pandemic

Business strategies adopted by restaurants included creativity (Oskarsen, 2021) and innovation (Aday & Aday, 2020) in the way they do business. Creativity in bartending was one of the business strategies. For example, following the banning of alcoholic drinks, the Pjolter & Punsj bar in Stavanger came up with an idea to serve non-alcoholic cocktails which was a success that led to some of its workers returning (Oskarsen, 2021). The year 2020 was not a bad year for some restaurant, this was the case of Pasha restaurant in Stavanger who used free-delivery to serve customers and were able to boost their revenue better than the previous year (Birkemo, 2021). According to Madeira et al. (2021), take-aways and deliveries were the only strategies that worked for restaurants in Portugal, if not they were forced to close. Overall, it seems take-aways and free deliveries are both operational and business

strategies. Also, the restaurants used communication and safety message framing as a strategy to sustain customer buying and increase revenue (Kim, Bonn, & Cho, 2021). Conferring to Chowdhury et al. (2020) relying on online sales to deal with the challenges are rewarding. Within the food supply chain, it was recommended that companies use robots and digitalization to reduce human contact in order to curb the spread of Covid- 19 whilst continuing their (Aday & Aday, 2020). Menu simplification by cutting down the food served was a strategy used to address the un-availability of some foods supplies and cutting waste (Lai et al., 2020). In Malaysia, restaurants that provided quality food and timely service in an enjoyable atmosphere maintained devoted customers (Lai et al., 2020). Business strategies also involve innovation to produce new products, services, business methods such as marketing and overall changes to the business model, where the business changes completely for the better (Tidd & Bessant, 2020). Conferring from (Brizek, Frash, McLeod, & Patience, 2021), it was recommended that restaurants could enhance their social image through charity in the community to Covid related matters.

### 2.5 Summary

The Covid- 19 pandemic impacted the restaurant businesses of the world. As such, some restaurant had to close because of either the government lockdown or voluntarily. Also, the were force to operate for a limited number of hours and as a result served a few customers as well as laying off workers. or operate for a limited number of hours and open to a few customers. Food supplies were also affected. To address these challenges, restaurant owners and managers come up with appropriate operational and business strategies. Operational strategies include, following WHO and government guidelines on hygiene, social distancing and prebooking arrangements, cashless payment and take-aways, applying for government support, reducing advertisement cost. Business strategies included creativity in bartending, free deliveries and take-aways, communication and safety message framing, and use of advance technology such as E-commerce.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the author will elaborate on the methods that will be used to research on its problem statement:

*How has the Covid- 19 pandemic affected the restaurant establishments of the city of Bergen, and what managerial remedies have been put in place?*

A qualitative research approach will be applied to address the question. The research design is a cross-sectional design where participants are interviewed once. The data collection will be semi-structured interviews followed by a thematic analysis. The limitations, research ethics and a summary will also be presented.

#### **3.2 Qualitative Research Approach**

The qualitative research method is a method used by a researcher to grasp personal opinions of the world (Bell, 2014, p. 5). From this definition, the opinions of the managers in the problem statement counts. Additionally, qualitative research explores answers to questions by studying various social environments and the persons who occupy these settings (Berg, 2004, p. 7). In this case, the social environments are restaurants, and the persons are managers who provided answers to questions from interviews conducted by the author of the thesis.

#### **3.3 Research Design**

A research design is a plan of action for getting the information required to address the research question (Berg, 2004, p. 31). The research design is a cross-sectional study involving semi-structured interviews of five restaurant owners or managers. By cross sectional, it means the participants are only interviewed once (Gray,

2009, p. 146). The participants were purposively and conveniently chosen. The purposive selection of participants refers to selecting participants based on a define criteria (Muringani, 2015). In this case, the researcher is interested in interviewing people who own or manage a restaurant in Bergen. Since Bergen was awarded the gastronomy city status, these participants have knowledge about it and how their business are important for meeting these expectations and they have been affected by the Covid- 19 pandemic. The selection is also involving convenience sampling where only accessible participants are selected due to time limitations of a bachelor thesis. Accordingly, five restaurant owners or managers who live and work in Bergen were chosen.

### 3.4 Research Method

#### 3.4.1 Data Collection

The data collection was through semi-structured interviews. It is a type of interview where the researcher has a list of topics and questions to be examined, with changes in order of questions, respondents allowed to elaborate on their answers, un-anticipated questions could be asked so as to meet the research objectives (Gray, 2009, p. 373). The researcher travelled to the city of Bergen to conduct Face-to-face interviews or Telephone interviews for the case of managers quarantining, which was transcribed, and notes were taken.

#### 3.4.2 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used, whereby themes from the literature gave the presentation and interpretation of the patterns from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). From Berg's perspective, the process involves three simultaneous instances: data reduction, data display, and conclusions and verification (Berg, 2004, p. 39). In the case of the research, data reduction was applied. Qualitative data was reduced, converted and made readily accessible, understandable where

themes and patterns was drawn from it (Berg, 2004). Data from the notes-written and transcribing equipment from the interviews was summarised, transformed, and made readily for accessibility and understandable. The overall data reduction and analysis is shown in Appendix 2. Firstly, the data from the transcribing equipment and notes written down were put in a word document and presented in table form with each participant against the three key themes: impacts, operational and business strategies. Secondly, the researcher went on each of the notes highlighting critical phrases in bold, showing some emerging patterns based on the literature review. Thirdly, the researcher summarised the codes into main themes using bold and capital letters. These emerging themes on a table, followed by detailed discussion that explains these findings and includes some quotations from the actual interviews

### 3.5 Limitations

According to Alshenqeeti (2014), interviews have their limitations. First, by their nature, interviews can be time consuming as the participants might not be easy to identify to get them to answer question. Second, interviews suffer from what has been termed the “Hawthorne” effect whereby the participants might tell the researcher what they want to hear (Berg, 2004, p. 162). Third, the presence of the researcher if it is face to face might make the participant reluctant to share all information or they might feel pressured.

### 3.6 Research Ethics

Research ethics is about knowing what is right or wrong within research circumstances (Wiles, 2012). It reflects on various matters of harm, consent, privacy and confidentiality of data (Berg, 2004). Therefore, due to the voice recordings and extraction of demographic information from the interviews that was conducted, the researcher obtained approval from the National Centre of

Research Data (NSD). It is required by law to inform and get consent from future interviewees before doing the interviews (NSD, 2021). When the research data was gotten, it was kept securely and when it serves its purpose, it was destroyed. By so doing, privacy and confidentiality of data is protected.

### 3.7 Summary

This chapter is about the methodology which examines a qualitative research approach. A cross-sectional research design using semi-structured interviews of five restaurant managers or owners in the city of Bergen. The data collection was face-to-face and telephone interviews, where notes were taken, and audiotaped with transcribing equipment. The data analysis was a thematic analysis that used themes from the literature review. The data were summarised, transformed, and made ready for accessibility and understandable.



## **4. Findings and Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 3 described the method use in acquiring and analysing data in responding the main research questions: How has the pandemic affected the restaurant establishments of the city of Bergen, and what managerial remedies have been put in place? This chapter presents the results from the interviews of 5 restaurant managers/owners. Its starts with the demographic profile of managers, then the presentation of the results of the impacts of Covid- 19 in the restaurant business of Bergen, operational and business strategies to address the impacts. Then the results will be analysed below each table with some quotations from the interview.

### **4.2 Demographic profile**

Data collection involved five interviews including three face to face and two telephone interviews. Table 3 provides an overview of the participants' demographic profile and the number of employees before and during the pandemic. Two of the managers have higher education from the university while three have high school diplomas. Furthermore, managers with the longer years at the restaurant are either co-owners or founders of the restaurant. Moreover, the years of restaurant operation of all managers varies from 3 – 20 years. Additionally, the food types are both national and international. Most of the restaurants are in the centre of Bergen, and one is on the outskirts.

Table 3: Demographic profile of managers

<b>Mgr</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Yrs of service</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Rest, yrs of op</b>	<b>Food type</b>	<b>location</b>	<b>No of staff</b>
M1	Chef certificate	10	Founder	10	Italian	Centre	Before – 11 Now - 5
M2	Master’s degree	12	Founder / manager	12	Organic local food	Centre	Before – 50 Now - 25
M3	Bachelor’s degree	1	manager	3	Local food	Centre	Before – 37 Now – Not specified
M4	Chef certificate	1	Head chef	20	All inclusive	Outskirt of the centre	Before – 30 Now – Not specified
M5	Other Certificate	7	Founder/Main leader	7	Ethiopian/Eritrean	Centre	Before – 3 Now - 1

#### 4.3 Presentation of results

The following section will present findings from the five interviews of restaurant managers and owners in Bergen. Three main themes guide it: impacts of Covid- 19 in the restaurant business, Operational and Business strategies to address the impacts of Covid- 19. The findings are presented according to three categories, interesting, surprising, and sensational, in a table format. Interesting findings refer to emerging patterns that show similarities and differences across restaurants. Surprising findings refer to something that is not expected to happen but happen, instead. Sensational findings category refers to things that are so different

across the restaurants and change the nature of the business altogether. The table is followed by a further explanation of the findings, including some quotations from the interviews.

#### 4.3.1 Impacts of Covid- 19 on restaurant business

Table 4 shows the impacts of Covid- 19 on restaurant businesses in Bergen. It has three columns with findings that are considered interesting in the first column. The second column has findings that are considered surprising. The third column has findings that are considered sensational.

Table 4: Identified themes from impacts of Covid- 19 by restaurant managers/owners' perception.

<b>Mgr.</b>	<b>Interesting</b> (Bold letters refer to differences and normal font to similarities)	<b>Surprising</b>	<b>Sensational</b>
M1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Long customer durations.</b></li> <li>• <b>Stressful employees.</b></li> <li>• <b>Frustration and fear.</b></li> <li>• Costly – delayed supplies.</li> <li>• Food waste.</li> <li>• Government lockdown.</li> <li>• Less income.</li> <li>• Employee laid offs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No government supports.</li> </ul>	
M2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay in specific supply.</li> <li>• <b>Voluntarily closures.</b></li> <li>• Government lockdown.</li> <li>• Few customers.</li> <li>• Employee laid offs.</li> <li>• Booking cancelations.</li> </ul>		
M3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Long customer durations.</b></li> <li>• Limited supplies.</li> <li>• Food waste.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low employee motivation after opening.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive impact – more sales and better income.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee laid offs.</li> </ul>		
M4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of ecologic supplies.</li> <li>• <b>Voluntarily closures.</b></li> <li>• Booking cancellations.</li> <li>• Food waste.</li> <li>• Employee laid offs.</li> <li>• Less income.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer nostalgia.</li> </ul>
M5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few customers.</li> <li>• <b>Costly sanitizers.</b></li> <li>• Employee laid offs.</li> <li>• Food waste.</li> <li>• Less income.</li> <li>• <b>Few opening days/hours.</b></li> <li>• <b>No sales in alcoholic drinks.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer reaction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in deliveries tactics.</li> </ul>

The findings are interesting because there are similarities and differences in the impact of the Covid- 19 pandemic on the restaurant businesses. The similarities of the Covid- 19 pandemic impacts include government lockdowns where restaurants were obliged by the government to close to stop the spread of Covid- 19. According to the participants, the constant lockdowns led to food waste. The same applies to food supplies that were also severely affected by lockdowns locally and outside Bergen and Norway, leading to costs, limited, delay and lack of ecologic supplies. Another common impact was that the restaurants had less income than the pre-Covid- 19 period due to fewer customers and cancellation of bookings. These impacts were such that all the restaurants laid-off employees to cut down running cost. Some specific comments given by the managers include the following statements.:

*M3: “Constant lockdowns led to waste in lots of food and drinks”*

*M1: “Most of the food supplies come from Italy, but because of the pandemic and quarantine rules, it was slow and more expensive”.*

*M4: “At one point we expected to get 5 million NOK in revenue, then Norway had lockdown and we were left with 300 000 NOK”.*

It seems that these impacts that are similar across the restaurants are results of external factors beyond the restaurant or manager’s control. Some of these external factors include government lockdowns and the need to take health and safety precautions. Government lockdowns were one of the impacts that resulted in other impacts, such as booking/reservation cancellations.

The differences in impacts across restaurants as shown by the bold letters in table 5 included long customer durations, stress among employees, voluntary closure, frustration and fear.

Accordingly, the managers gave some comments

*M1: “I want to stop group eating because they take too much time to eat and space for other customers who want to come in”.*

*M5: “I don’t have that much income to pay salaries, so I had to permit my employees and work alone”.*

*M2: “It’s been difficult lately because we almost never close down, we have had less guest, less opening hours and now we just came back from another closures of 3 weeks”.*

*M4: “The closer the month of march approached, the more cancellations happening”.*

*M1: “The fear was to go bankrupt, lose all the investments I made, sell the house and the embarrassment of telling the kids that I am unemployed”.*

The long customer duration was such that customers took a longer time to eat, making it difficult to serve others. Stress among employed employees was due to much work because of staff reduction. Some restaurants had voluntary closures to cut operation costs. The similarities apply to general safety precautions and government compliance rules as sanitation, social distancing, and lockdowns, as well as psychological effects on the owners and employees. The differences apply to food supplies and sales, which are more specific to the individual restaurant. The reason could be due to the choices and the decisions that differ across restaurants or managers.

Also, the findings are surprising in that contrary to expectations, one restaurant did not get government support. This was the case with M1, who reported that he did not get any government support even though the government planned to support restaurants financially in the crisis period. Furthermore, the other surprising finding was low employees' motivation after openings which was the case with M3, who reported that employees who came back to work after being permitted had less motivation to work, and constant lockdowns were factors. Lastly, another surprising finding was customer reactions: the case with M5, who reported that some of her customers were disappointed and complained that she had fewer days of openings in a week while other customers were sympathetic with her due to the crisis period. They made the following comment:

*M1: "The government said they were going to help and support every company, but I did not get a penny from the government, only words. I asked the Bergen council, I wrote many letters to them, but they found excuses, that I did not fit in that group".*

*M3: "Constant lockdowns affected employee motivation when they came back to work and we had to retrain some of them".*

*M5: "Most of the customer understand why I don't open every day, and they try to come on the days I open, but if they came from Stavanger or from Oslo where they have been in Bergen for two days and I am close, they get mad. But those living in Bergen understand and come when I am open".*

The findings are sensational in that the Covid- 19 pandemics had a positive impact in one restaurant. For example, M3 that experienced an increase in sales and better income during the pandemic. Moreover, the findings were sensational in that customer nostalgia was experienced by M4, who reported that their customers missed their services. Lastly, the findings were sensational in that one of the managers changed their delivery tactics. M5 used to received supplies from her suppliers, but she was buying and collecting her supplies herself due to the fewer customers and opening days. Some comments made

*M3: “The revenue per guest has been higher than before, which is something positive that came from the Corona situation”.*

*M4: “Our customers miss us, every time Norway opens up, we get a lot of bookings and reservations”.*

#### 4.3.2 Operational strategies to address the impacts of Covid- 19

The operational strategies practised by the restaurant managers/owners are presented in table 5 below with many interesting operational strategies and less surprising and sensational operational strategies, following the same pattern that was elaborated in Table 5.

Table 5: Identified themes from operational strategies.

<b>Managers</b>	<b>Interesting</b> ( <b>Bold letters</b> refer to differences and normal font to similarities)	<b>Surprising</b>	<b>Sensational</b>
M1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive utensils cleansing.</li> <li>• Facemask.</li> <li>• Social distancing.</li> <li>• <b>Limit group sittings.</b></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modification of menu.</li> </ul>
M2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infection traceability.</li> <li>• Quarantine of employees.</li> <li>• Social distancing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No facemask.</li> </ul>	
M3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Align workforce to booking.</b></li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communication updates.</b></li> <li>• Facemask.</li> <li>• Infection traceability.</li> <li>• Social distancing.</li> <li>• <b>Open hours reduction.</b></li> </ul>		
M4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reduction of buffet concepts.</b></li> <li>• Extensive infection control.</li> <li>• Social distancing.</li> <li>• Face mask.</li> <li>• <b>Open hours reduction.</b></li> </ul>		
M5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Group sharing options.</b></li> <li>• <b>Restricted opening days.</b></li> <li>• Social distancing.</li> <li>• Extensive infection control.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time change of food prepping.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer hospitality.</li> </ul>

From the above table, in the interesting column, there are many operational strategies that are similar and few differences. These strategies are similar because they have a common objective to stop the spread of Covid-19. Example of these similarities include social distancing, use of facemask, Infection traceability, extensive infection control, intensive utensils cleansing, quarantine of employees. The following comments were made:

*M1: “We wore facemask and washed the utensils many times”.*

*M2: “We still have strict control with all our staff and if someone has travelled or been exposed to Covid- 19, they need to go and take a test before they can come back to work, but luckily no one has had Covid- 19”.*

*M4: “Facemask is required for both staff and customers”.*



*M2: “For the restaurant downstairs, everyone was registered with an app, while in this restaurant is more fine dining, more formal, we only took names and number of everyone that was here”.*

*M4: “We have increased the use of anti-bac and disposable hand gloves, we use approximately 6000 hand gloves in a week”.*

According to the above comments, the restaurant practised social distancing by reducing tables and sitting capacities among customers and through the same household sitting. Through observation, chefs and waiters had a special-made transparent plastic facemask at another restaurant, showing smiles towards customers, and another restaurant manager reported that both employees and customers used facemask. Infection traceability, whereby they registered their customers through an app or on a piece of paper, observed that M3 registered its customers at the restaurant entrance. Extensive infection control involved using sanitisers and disposable gloves, intensive utensil cleansing and quarantine of employees. The findings also show that differences in the operational strategies across restaurants are unique to four restaurants. These includes limit group sitting, align workforce to booking, communication updates, reduction of buffet concepts, group sharing options and restricted opening days. It is supported by the following comments

*M1: “I had a group of six ladies who wanted 1m distancing, shared four pizzas and they ate for four hours, do you know how much I lost? We are changing the policy now, if you are not same household, there are no more table for groups”.*

*M3: “We plan week by week, adjusting the schedule of staff regarding last week’s revenue and future revenue”.*

*M3: “We have been on social media many times announcing that it is safe to come and eat at our restaurant”.*

*M4: “Instead of organising gigantic buffets concepts and 12 buffet concepts, we had to cut it out and start with 2, 3, 4 main course meals”.*

Operational strategies included realising social distancing by limiting group sittings which also helped free space for other customers to come in. The same applied to group sharing options in one restaurant serving ethnic food where instead of eating in one tray, customers had to use individual plates. Other social distancing techniques included the reduction of buffets which also helped reduce food waste. The workforce was aligned to bookings to contain costs. Also, the managers opened on days with a lot of bookings and reservations. The managers also send communication updates using social media and newsletters to communicate any changes.

Furthermore, the two identified surprising operational strategies were no facemask by M2 and time change of food prepping by M5. These strategies were surprising because the Coronavirus is mutating, and one would have to take extra precaution these days, and M5 must have had it very tough. M2 reported that using a face mask was not obligatory for both employees and customers, although employees were thoroughly inspected through temperature checks and presentation of Covid- 19 test results in cases where they travelled.

While M5 reported that food ingredients were prepared, cooked, and served after the food was ordered by customers to reduce food waste. Unlike before, when food ingredients were prepped and preserved, then cooked after when food was ordered. The following comments were made.:

*M2: “For the moment, we don’t wear facemask including the customers, everything is pretty much normal according to service and opening”.*

*M5: “When I opened the restaurant before, we had to prepare the food because we did not know how many people are going to come and it takes time to prepare it, but now I had to throw a lot of food because I did not get a lot of customers”.*

Lastly, two strategies are classified as sensational because they have advantages that safeguard the restaurant economically and through reduction of food waste and expenses. These were modification of menu by M1 and customer hospitality by M5. The following comments were made:

*M1: “We are on an insecure time, so I decided to reduce the menu to buy less food and avoid food waste”.*

*M5: “The food is eaten with the hands and it is typically cold in Bergen and I want to give my customers a warm welcome”.*

M1 reported that he had to reduce the menu to reduce food waste and expenses, but the most liked foods by customers were available on the new menu. It was observed by the researcher that soaked; lukewarm towels were given to customers to clean their hands at M5’s restaurant.

4.3.3 Business strategies to address the impacts of Covid- 19  
Table 6 presents the business strategies developed and implemented by the restaurant managers to address the Covid- 19 impacts. It follows the same approach in table 4 and 5 by using interesting, surprising, and sensational columns. Likewise, comments and their explanation come after the table.

Table 6: Identified themes from business strategies.

Managers	<b>Interesting</b> (Bold letters refer to differences and normal font to similarities)	Surprising	Sensational
M1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maintain customer loyalty.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reputation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintained customer preferences.</li> </ul>
M2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food preservation methods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reputation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety measure framing as marketing strategy.</li> <li>• Rapid openings.</li> </ul>
M3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price negotiation of supply.</li> <li>• Reconfiguring of servicing time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovative solution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety measures framing.</li> <li>• Intensive marketing strategies.</li> </ul>
M4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Price negotiation of supplies.</li> <li>• <b>Dinner campaigns.</b></li> </ul>		
M5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maintained customer loyalty.</b></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take-away implementation.</li> </ul>

The findings are interesting because the strategies that are implemented are similar and different. Similar strategies include food preservation methods, reconfiguring of servicing time, price negotiation. The strategies are supported by the following comments:

*M2: “During lockdown, some chefs came to work and fermented vegetables and dried some fruits to reduce waste, so we didn’t lose much, it was safe for later”.*

*M3: “If it is not allowed to serve alcohol during diners, we will lose economical, so we choose to only serve lunch to save running cost”.*

*M3: “They are many suppliers wanting to supply to us, therefor we intend to re-negotiate the prices of their supplies”.*

*M4: “The prices of supplies have always been higher lately, but I have good personal dialogue with the CEO of BAMA and Sales Manager of Gilde, we negotiate the price all the time”.*

These mentioned strategic similarities above aim to reduce expenses that included price negotiations with suppliers, food preservation methods whereby vegetables are pickled, and fruits are dried up and preserved to be used in new dishes and to reduce food waste. Also, some restaurants reconfigured their serving time and combined lunch and dinner (a la carte) to reduce running cost.

They are also interesting differences in business strategies across the restaurant. These few differences include maintaining customer loyalty by M1 and M5 and dinner campaigns by M4. The managers made the following comments:

*M1: “We tried to do our best despite the situation, we persevere. I have a lot of loyal customers who support me, and we are doing something right, the restaurant is full every day”.*

*M4: “We have started doing online dinner campaigns where customers can book 3 – course fine dining for economic reasons”*

The restaurants maintained customer loyalty. For example, M5 had a mutual understanding with her customers, who understood opening a few days a week due to the health crisis and showed up whenever the restaurant was open. M4 implemented dinner campaigns whereby online sales of meals are made available for customers at cheaper rates. These differences sustained the restaurant business

There are also surprising findings, and these include positive reputation by M1 and M2, and innovative solution by M3. It is supported by the following comments:

*M1: "Am a quite known restaurant in the city, everybody in the city knows who I am, I have probably one of the best reputation, it's one of the reason why I survive, I have customers who come and support me, buy things all the time because they don't want me to disappear".*

*M2: "This is a restaurant that a lot of people want to come because we received a Michelin Star a year ago, just a month before Covid and a lot of people planned to come, that's why I couldn't see any reason why I shouldn't open as fast as possible after lockdown.".*

*M3: "We sold gift cards for 50 000 NOK one day during the Christmas season, which boosted our revenue and the gift cards were also sold for summer parties".*

Based on the comments above, M1's restaurant is popular and liked by the community of Bergen, while M2's restaurant has a Michelin Star, which are factors that attract customers to their restaurant. M3 used gift cards as an innovative solution bought by companies and distributed to their workers to come individually instead of groups to the restaurant for Christmas parties (Julebord) or summer parties to maintain social distancing.

Over and above, some of the findings are sensational in that they show that restaurants were able to come up with specific business strategies for marketing, the opening of the restaurant and the food-serving approach. These strategies were maintained customer preferences, safety measures as marketing strategy, intensive marketing strategies, and take-away implementation. The managers made the following comments.

*M1: "If you make something amazing, your customer come back to you next time they want to go out, because they had a good time, so they think twice when they go out. Most of my customers come back to the restaurant".*

*M2: "When lockdowns are over, we try to open as fast as possible to get the customers that want to come to our restaurant".*

*M3: "We have been sending newsletters to our customers email once every two weeks, where we talk about the Corona situation, enlighten them that it is safe to come and eat here, we have safe distance between tables and we challenged our customer to come and eat at our restaurant".*

*M5: "I was not satisfied with their services because they got paid from us and from the customer, and I was the one who did most of the work, it was better that the customers come and take it themselves".*

Maintaining customer preferences was a strategy applied by M1 whereby the food prescribed in the new menu was the most liked food by his customers. Safety measure framing by M2 and M3 were measures taken at the restaurants to stop the spread of Covid- 19 such as customer registration, social distancing, and hand sanitising made customers feel safe to come again to their restaurant. Hence, a marketing strategy. Moreover, rapid openings were a business strategy done by M2, whereby he opens his restaurant as fast as possible to welcome customers longing to come to his restaurant, to make good use of his reputation of having a Michelin star. Intensive marketing strategies by M3 who reported that whenever they sent newsletters about changes, safety measures and happenings of the restaurant to customers email, it boosted their customer entering. M5 resulted in a takeaway strategy after realising that food deliveries increased cost due to commissions and extra charges paid by the restaurant and customers.

## **5. Discussions**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the main findings that address the research question: How has the pandemic affected the restaurant establishments of the city of Bergen, and what managerial remedies have been put in place? Three main themes guide it: impacts of Covid- 19 in the restaurant business, operational and business strategies to address the impacts of Covid- 19. The discussion compared the finding to previous studies by showing what corresponds to or is different from them.

### **5.2 Impacts of Covid- 19 pandemic in the restaurant businesses of Bergen**

Consistent with the literature (Jaewook, Jewoo, & Yiqi, 2021), (Nhamo, Dube, & Chikodzi, 2020), (Yang, Liu, & Chen, 2020), the findings show that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the restaurant establishments in the city of Bergen and to address this the managers had to devise operational. The findings are interesting in that there are similarities and differences in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, examples of similarities included government lockdowns and health and safety concerns. According to Nhamo et al. (2020), government restrictions made restaurant shut down for sit-in meals in the USA as a control measure and concern for health and safety. Also, they suggest, as confirmed by the findings, that these impacts result in other impacts such as fewer customers, less or reduced incomes, food wastes and employee being laid off.

However, the findings also show that there are differences across the restaurants, including stress among employees, fear of bankruptcy, limited or lack of specific food supplies. These findings are consistent with the literature that the COVID-19 pandemic has a psychological impact on both employees and business owners



(Yang et al., 2020) and the supply chain (Chowdhury et al., 2020). Overall, the findings suggest that the similarities were caused by external forces beyond the control of the restaurant managers, such as government and health compliance rules, whereas the differences can be explained by factors unique to specific restaurants. According to Yang et al. (2020), businesses are likely to differ from one to another. These differences also influence the extent to which COVID-19 impacts differ across the business.

Also, the findings show surprising findings in that while the literature (Dube et al., 2020) suggested that it was expected that all restaurants would get government support, one did not. As a result, this restaurant was impacted more, resulting in the owner's fear and anxiety of bankruptcy. Another surprising finding was that some employees remained less motivated despite their restaurant opening. Despite these interesting and surprising findings, some findings are sensational in that they show that not all restaurants were impacted the same way, one had positive impacts where instead of getting fewer customers, they increased, and their business performed better than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, in another restaurant, the customers had a sense of nostalgia, and whenever it opened, it was full. These two findings contradict the literature, such as Nhamo et al. (2020), which only argues that COVID negatively impacts business such as restaurants.

### 5.3 Operational strategies to address the impacts

Operational strategies also showed similarities and differences. Similar operational strategies included social distancing, implementing hygiene and sanitation measures to stop the spread of Covid- 19, which is supported by (Nguyen 2020) with the use safety plan to curb the spread of Covid- 19 in Finland and (NIPH, 2021) in previous studies. . Differences among them included reduction of buffet

concepts and group sharing options for restaurants that specifically provided these services. For surprising operational strategies, change in food prepping time, and one restaurant did not use a mask, but employees were thoroughly checked and ensured traceability for customers. These strategies followed guidelines by the health authorities (NIPH, 2021). The sensational strategic findings also show that simple innovations such as modification of menu and gesture of warm towels have a significant impact on the business, which agrees with previous studies with menu simplification (Lai et al., 2020). These findings suggest that the similarities are because of common factors such as compliance. Similarly, the differences are due to the characteristics of the individual managers and the restaurant. The literature argues that strategy, creativity, and innovation differ across businesses and individuals (Tidd & Bessant, 2020).

#### 5.4 Business strategies to address the impacts

The interesting business strategies also had similarities and differences. Similar business strategies included food preservation methods, reconfiguring of servicing time, price negotiation, aiming to reduce expenses. Differences included maintaining customer loyalty and dinner campaign methods to sustain the restaurants. Previous studies support dinner campaigns through online sales (Chowdhury et al., 2020). In terms of surprising business strategies, some restaurants could get more customers based on their popularity and awards before the COVID-19 pandemic. Another restaurant introduced an innovative solution that made them make more sales against expectations suggesting that challenging times can also inspire new ideas. On sensational business strategies, the findings show that businesses can creatively use safety message framing for the COVID-19 pandemic to achieve another business objective, such as customer retention and

loyalty. Previous studies (Kim et al., 2021) also show that safety message framing helps sustain customers' spending and increase income.

Furthermore, the findings show that businesses should not just use a potential solution but should see if it works and adjust, as shown by one restaurant that realised that food delivery was increasing cost and changed to take-aways that proved to dramatically reduce them while enabling the business to deliver the same or more value to the customers. However, this finding contradicts previous studies in that free delivery boosted revenue for a restaurant in Stavanger (Birkemo, 2021). Also, like the findings on impacts and operational strategies, these findings suggest that while these similarities are because of common factors, the difference are due to individual managers or restaurant characteristics. The explanation could be that differences are a result of creativity and innovation by restaurant managers and owners. The findings are supported by (Oskarsen, 2021) who observed that some bars were using creativity to improve existing products. Innovation refers to new products and new marketing ideas, organisational method, and changes in the business model (Tidd & Bessant, 2020).

## **6. Conclusion**

The study aims to understand and explain how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the restaurant establishments in Bergen and the operational and business strategies used to address it. The findings are interesting because they show that the COVID-19 pandemic has similar and different impacts across restaurants, such as government lockdowns and lack or limitation of specific food supplies. The same applies to operational and business strategies. Similar operational strategies included health and safety measures, whereas the differences applied to aspects such as buffets and group eating. Similar business strategies focused on food preservation methods and price negotiation with suppliers, whereas the differences applied to maintain customer loyalty and dinner campaign methods. Overall, these findings on impact and strategies suggest that common factors influence similar aspects, and differences are due to the unique characteristics of the manager and restaurants.

Some of the findings are surprising and contrary to expectations. For instance, while all restaurants were supposed to get government support, one did not get it and had adverse effects on the owner. Also, some employees remain less motivated despite retaining their jobs. These findings suggest that the pandemic had different psychological effects on employees and business owners. The findings also show that some of the health measures compensated for others when implemented correctly and lead to customer assurance that resulted in increased sales. Also, the previous reputation before the COVID-19 pandemic proved to be helpful. Lastly, some of the findings are sensational because the COVID-19 pandemic also positively impacted some restaurants. Thus, apart from relying on their previous reputation before a crisis, the crisis presented opportunities for transforming businesses through innovation and creativity.

## 6.1 Recommendations

These findings suggest that manager and other stakeholders, such as government need to consider strategies that work in general and specific to different conditions or nature of the business in question. For example, in times of crisis, restaurant managers need to weigh the cost and benefits of using one method compared to another, as shown using food delivery versus take-aways. Also, government support is taken for granted and might not apply equally to affected businesses, requiring that there is a need for such support to be communicated appropriately. Lastly, business owners and manager of restaurants should use challenges as opportunities for innovation (gift cards), creativity (food preservation), and intensive marketing (newsletter).

## 6.2 Limitations

However, the limitation of the study is that it was qualitative exploratory research limited to only five restaurants and their owners or managers. Therefore, its findings do not apply to all restaurants. Therefore, future studies should consider many restaurants to see if the same findings apply in general and consider including other stakeholders such as customers and government agencies. Also, what criteria are required to get government support?

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## **Appendix 1: Interview questions for the thesis**

Manager .....

Section 1 – Demographic questions.

What level of managerial position do you belong to in the restaurant?

What type of food do you sell?

How long have you been serving under the restaurant?

Where is the restaurant situated?

How long has the restaurant been operating?

What is your level of education?

How many employees does the restaurant have?

Section 2 – impacts of Covid- 19 on restaurant gastronomic offering.

Would you share your experience about covid in your restaurant?

- What happen during the pandemic?
- When did it happen?
- How did you deal with the challenges of covid- 19?
- What happened to your employees?

What happened to your customers?

What happened to your suppliers?

Section 3 – Operational strategies to address the impact of Covid- 19

What measures did you put in place?



- How did you come up with this measure (where and who)?

What did you do for your customers?

What about your suppliers?

#### Section 4 – Business strategies to address the impact of Covid- 19

What did you do to keep the restaurant running?

- Why did you take this approach?

- How did you implement it?

What are you going to do in the long-term to address how covid is affecting your business?

Is there something you would like to share that I have not asked?

Thank you for your participation in this interview.

**Appendix 2: Interview responses**

Managers	Impacts	Operational	Business
<p><b>M1</b></p>	<p>Obligatory lockdown. <b>Frustration and fear</b> of going bankrupt. More than half of the <b>workers were laid off</b>, leading to <b>longer hours of work for those who remained</b>, thereby affecting their personal life. The head chef/owner took <b>other responsibilities</b> of the restaurant such as not only cooking but serving, dish washing and floor cleaning. Due to the fewer customers, mostly adult customers, <b>they got lower income, 40% of income gotten from companies was lost due to home-office.</b> Did <b>not get any government support</b> during the pandemic. <b>Food supplies were delayed and more expensive.</b> Obligatory <b>closures</b> decided by the government. <b>Food waste</b> due to the constant closures.</p> <p>GOVERNMENT LOCK DOWN NO GOVERNMENT SUPPORT</p>	<p><b>Reduction of tables</b> to maintain social distancing. Only <b>same household could eat</b>, group eating intended to stop because they took a lot of time and space for other customers to come into the restaurant. They wore <b>facemask</b>. Utensils were washed many times. <b>Reduction of menu to reduce waste</b> and expenses</p> <p><b>SOCIAL DISTANCING LIMIT GROUP SITTINGS. FACEMASK INTENSIVE UTENSILS CLENSING MODIFICATION OF MENU</b></p> <p>5 strategies</p>	<p>One of the best restaurant reputations of the city of Bergen. <b>The most liked food by customers was what was served in the reduced menu</b>, to retain customers. Try to do their best and never give-up in facing the challenges thereby <b>maintaining the loyal customers.</b></p> <p><b>POSITIVE REPUTATION MAINTAINED CUSTOMER PREFERENCES AND LOYALTY</b></p> <p>3 Strategies</p>

	<p><b>FUSTRATION AND FEAR</b>  <b>EMPLOYEE LAID OFFs</b>  <b>STRESSFULL EMPLOYEES</b>  <b>LONG CUSTOMER DURATIONS</b>  <b>LOW INCOME COSTFULL - DELAYED SUPPLIES</b>  <b>FOODWASTE</b></p> <p>9 Impacts</p>		
<b>M2</b>	<p><b>Government lockdown</b> from March 2020.  <b>Booking cancelations</b> at last minute, some customers cancelled their reservations because of symptoms and fears which led to <b>fewer guest</b>.  <b>Closed</b> for 3 weeks during easter.  50% of employees were <b>laid-off</b>, while some were <b>permitted</b>.  Supplies were normal apart of some specific foodstuff which was <b>delayed</b>.</p> <p><b>GOVERNMENT LOCKDOWN</b>  <b>BOOKING CANCELATIONS</b>  <b>FEW CUSTOMERS</b>  <b>VOLUNTARILY CLOSURES</b></p>	<p><i>New set of rules.</i>  Change in opening hours.  Workers with any symptoms of the virus <b>stayed at home</b>.  Employees temperature were inspected, and those who travelled had <b>to present test results</b> before coming back to work.  Bought <b>more hand sanitizers</b>.  <b>Fewer tables</b> to have less guest, to maintain <b>social distancing</b>.  <b>Facemask</b> was not obligatory for both employees and customers.  <i>Got inspection from health authorities to see that the infection control measures were respected.</i></p>	<p>They were <b>open as fast</b> as possible after lockdowns.  By name and telephone registering, social distancing and hand sanitizing customers made <b>customers feel safe</b> to come again to their restaurant.  Prior to Covid- 19, the restaurant got a <b>Michelin star</b>, which led to a high demand for the restaurant services.  Chefs fermented vegetable and dried fruits for preservation purposes to reduce waste and expenses, which through <b>creativity</b> was later used to cook new types of food.</p> <p><b>SAFETY MEASURE FRAMING</b>  <b>RAPIDE OPENINGS</b></p>

	<p><b>EMPLOYEE LAID OFFS</b> <b>DELAY IN SUPPLY</b></p> <p>6 Impacts</p>	<p><b>Customer registration</b> through an app or written names and telephone numbers on a paper for infection tracing.</p> <p><b>LESS OPENING HOURS</b> <b>QUARANTINE OF EMPLOYEES</b> <b>SOCIAL DISTANCING</b> <b>NO FACEMASK</b> <b>INFECTION TRACEABILITY</b></p> <p><b>4 strategies</b></p>	<p><b>POSITIVE REPUTATION</b> <b>FOOD PRESERVATION METHODS</b></p> <p><b>4 Strategies</b></p>
<p><b>M3</b></p>	<p><b>Sitting spots</b> were reduced from 120 – 70 sits. Lots of <b>food waste</b> and drinks. Everyone was laid off at the beginning of the crisis. Constant lockdowns affected <b>employee motivation</b>. <b>Limited food</b> and alcoholic beverages. Even though it is crisis moments, they had <b>better income</b> than expected, which is a positive impact. During openings, customers spent <b>longer hours</b> at the restaurant.</p> <p><b>REDUCE SITTING CAPACITY</b> <b>FOOD WASTE</b></p>	<p>Special made transparent plastic <b>facemask</b> were used by both waiters and chefs. <b>Customers were registered</b> at the entrance for infection traceability. <b>Social distancing</b> among customers. <b>Plans</b> were made week for week. Employee reduction from observing future bookings. Announcement were given on <b>social media</b> in case of changes of program. Companies or groups that arranged Christmas parties (Julebord) or summer parties were given gift cards to come</p>	<p>The gift cards solution. Newsletter about happenings, changes and <b>safety measures</b> of the restaurant send to customers email, led to increase of customers in the restaurant. They intend to <b>re-negotiate</b> the prices of supplies. Only <b>lunch service</b> was applied to reduce running cost. They <b>communicated through media</b> about non-alcoholic beverages when it was forbidden to serve alcoholic drinks. When <b>customer booked tables with their email address</b>, their consent was asked and it was saved and later used for sending of newsletter,</p>

	<p><b>EMPLOYEE LAID OFFS</b>  <b>LOW EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION</b>  <b>LIMITED FOOD SUPPLIES</b>  <b>BETTER INCOME</b>  <b>LONG CUSTUMER DURATIONS)</b></p> <p>7 Impacts</p>	<p>individually than in a group.  <b>Opening hours</b> was pushed from 11am – 12pm which was when most customers usually come to the restaurant.</p> <p><b>USE OF FACEMASK</b>  <b>INFECTION</b>  <b>TRACEABILITY</b>  <b>SOCIAL</b>  <b>DISTANCING</b>  <b>COMMUNCATION</b>  <b>UPDATES</b>  <b>OPEN HOURS</b>  <b>REDUCTION</b>  <b>ALIGN</b>  <b>WORKFORCE TO</b>  <b>BOOKINGS</b></p> <p>6 strategies</p>	<p>surveys which resulted in increasing booking rates.</p> <p><b>INNOVATIVE</b>  <b>SOLUTION</b>  <b>SAFETY MEASURES</b>  <b>FRAMING</b>  <b>PRICE</b>  <b>NEGOTIATION OF</b>  <b>SUPPLIES</b>  <b>RECONFIGURING OF</b>  <b>SERVICING TIME</b>  <b>INTENSIVE</b>  <b>MARKETING</b>  <b>STRATEGIES</b></p> <p>5 Strategies</p>
<p><b>M4</b></p>	<p>Bookings and reservation were <b>cancelled</b>.  A lot of <b>food waste</b>.  Had to <b>close</b> for a long period, then reopened for baptism and confirmation ceremonies between August and September. They had a <b>loss</b> of 60 million kroner in revenue during lock down.  All employees were <b>permitted</b>, and some were called back on special occasions.  Their customers <b>missed their services</b>.</p>	<p>They implemented extensive <b>infection control</b> when they reopened such as more acquisitions and use of sanitizers and disposable gloves. Before the pandemic, they had 12 buffet concepts, now it is only 2 – 3 <b>main courses</b>. Both employees and customers used <b>facemask</b>. <b>Social distancing</b> of customers.  <b>Opening hours</b> were reduced.</p>	<p>They have good <b>personal dialogs</b> with their suppliers.  <b>Online dinner campaigns</b> at cheaper prices were established to keep the restaurant running.</p> <p><b>PRICE</b>  <b>NEGOTIATION OF</b>  <b>SUPPLIES</b>  <b>ONLINE SALES</b></p> <p>2 Strategies</p>

	<p>Lack of <b>ecological food</b> products.</p> <p><b>BOOKING</b> <b>CANCELLATIONS</b> <b>FOODWASTE</b> <b>VOLUNTARILY</b> <b>CLOSE</b> <b>LOW INCOME</b> <b>EMPLOYEES LAID OFF</b> <b>CUSTOMER</b> <b>NOSTALGIA</b> <b>LACK OF SPECIFIC</b> <b>SUPPLIES</b></p> <p><b>7 Impacts</b></p>	<p><b>EXTENSIVE</b> <b>INFECTION</b> <b>CONTROL</b> <b>REDUCTION OF</b> <b>BUFFET CONCEPTS</b> <b>FACE MASK</b> <b>SOCIAL</b> <b>DISTANCING</b> <b>OPEN HOURS</b> <b>REDUCTION</b></p> <p><b>5 Strategies</b></p>	
<b>M5</b>	<p>Got <b>fewer customers</b>. <b>Open 3 – 4 days</b> in a week. No sales in <b>alcoholic drinks</b>. Supplies were delivered before but now it is bought <b>by herself</b> at local shops. <b>Financial burden</b> for extra sanitizers. 2 employees were laid off due to low income and the owner took upon herself all the responsibilities. <b>Some customers</b> are understanding while some are complaining about opening days. <b>Food waste</b> due to low customers. Income that was gotten during the pandemic <b>covered mostly fixed</b></p>	<p><b>Food prepping</b> was made after when food was ordered. <b>Hand sanitizers</b> were placed on every table and constant disinfecting of doorknobs and tables to stop the spread of Covid- 19. <b>Opened</b> mostly on days that is booked by many customers. <b>Same household</b> sitting together and <b>few tables</b> are used to enable <b>social distancing</b>. <b>Groups</b> had the option to share a tray of food or eat differently from plates. <b>Lukewarm</b> soaked towels are given to customers to clean their hands, since the food is</p>	<p><b>Food delivery services were dropped</b> due to its commissions that made food looked expensive for customers, <b>which led to the implementation of take-away by customers</b>. <b>Mutual understanding</b> with customers who understood the situation at hand and showed up whenever the restaurant was open.</p> <p><b>IMPLEMENTATION OF TAKE-AWAY</b> <b>MANTAINED</b> <b>CUSTOMER</b> <b>LOYALTY</b></p> <p><b>2 Strategies</b></p>

	<p>cost such as rent, electricity.</p> <p><b>FEW CUSTOMERS</b>  <b>FEW OPENING DAYS/HOURS</b>  <b>CHANGE IN DELIVERIES</b>  <b>TACTICS</b>  <b>NO SALES IN ALCOHOLIC DRINKS</b>  <b>COSTLY SANITIZERS</b>  <b>LAI D OFF EMPLOYEES</b>  <b>CUSTOMER REACTION</b>  <b>FOOD WASTE</b>  <b>LOW INCOME</b></p> <p><b>9 Impacts</b></p>	<p>eaten with hands, the provision of <b>warm towels</b> made customers warm welcomed and well taken care of, since the weather is typically cold.</p> <p><b>TIME CHANGE OF FOOD PREPPING</b>  <b>EXTENSIVE INFECTION CONTROL</b>  <b>RESTRICTED OPENING DAYS</b>  <b>SOCIAL DISTANCING</b>  <b>CUSTOMER HOSPITALITY</b>  <b>GROUP SHARING</b>  <b>OPTIONS</b></p> <p><b>6 strategies</b></p>	
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