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**Dissecting the Normal: The Effects of Covid-19
Pandemic in the Gastronomy Sector of Kosovo**

An Honors Society Project

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August, 2021

Abstract

This project analyzes the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the gastronomy sector in Pristine, Kosovo. The scope of this research is to perceive the challenges faced by the gastronomy sector, as well as to understand how consumer behaviors have changed due to the pandemic and the social distancing measures. Since this is a new topic and there were no comprehensive studies in this topic, primary data were collected through interviews, and an online survey. The research results show that the pandemic has caused a change in consumer behaviors. Consumers are now more reluctant to go out in restaurants, and they have started to have food delivered more often than they did before the pandemic. The interview results suggested the measures that have been put in place by Kosovo's government were sufficient to some extent, in helping businesses overcome the pandemic. The results also show that the interviewed businesses experienced loss in revenues and have less clients than they used to. Based on the data found from literature review, the survey, and interviews, recommendations have been given for the gastronomy businesses and the government of Kosovo which could help to ease the burden of the Covid-19 pandemic, and also help the gastronomy businesses be more prepared for similar situations that might happen in the future.

Key words: Covid-19 Pandemic, Gastronomy Sector in Kosovo, Social Distancing Measures, Consumer Behavior, Restrictions.

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List of Abbreviations

Covid-19 Virus, initially known as Corona Virus

Gastronomy, economic sector concerned with consumption and distribution of food and beverages

Lock Down, government measure imposed with the goal to reduce movement of citizens in order to stop spread of Covid-19 virus.

Social Distancing, government measure imposed to keep people 2 meters away from each other as a way to stop the spread of Covid-19

SPSS- Statistical Package for Social Sciences

Problem Statement

The year 2020 has been one of the toughest years for human society (Wood et al., 2020). What started as a serious virus in China spread out to become a world pandemic, which caused the economy to shut down, schools to close, and people to quarantine (Wood et al., 2020). Different social distancing measures were taken all around the world to protect people from the COVID-19 virus. In Kosovo, some of the social distancing measures taken include curfew restrictions; temporary closing of bars, restaurants, and cafes; limiting the number of people on public transport; and the requirements to wear the mask when one is in public (“Vendimi i Ri i Qeverisë”, 2020). These social distancing measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 had a serious impact in/on the economy, where data/.Data shows that in Kosovo such measures led to a slowdown of economic growth (“Ndikimi i Pandemisë COVID-19 Në Tregun e Punës”, 2020, p. 3). Unemployment rate in Kosovo that was already high at 25.6%, increased during this period since many people lost their jobs (“Ndikimi i Pandemisë COVID-19 Në Tregun e Punës”, 2020, p. 3). These effects were greatly noticed in the gastronomy sector (Staff, 2020, par.2). A study conducted by *Institute for Free Market Economy* and *Kosovo’s Chamber of Commerce* showed that out of all gastronomy businesses that were surveyed, only 2.3% were able to function properly during the pandemic lockdown (Zogaj, B., and Brahuhi, V., 2020). To respond to the crisis, Kosovo’s government designed and released “The Fiscal Package”, which helped the gastronomy businesses pay wages to their workers, and prevented bankruptcy (“Ndikimi i Pandemisë COVID-19 Në Tregun e Punës”, 2020, 4). Despite the negative effects, the lockdown and the social distancing measures that came because of the pandemic have transformed many sectors such as education, banking, and gastronomy by proving that some jobs can be done online (Shehu, 2020). Against this background, this research project seeks to analyze how the social distancing measures affected the gastronomy sector in Kosovo with a specific focus on the questions as to how and to what extent innovation is triggered within gastronomy sector and how businesses and customers are adopting to a new trend that was not present before.

Introduction

Due to Covid-19 Pandemic and lockdown, which was imposed by governments all around the world, (Wood et al., 2020), employees within the public sector and education system have switched their operations from in-person environment to online, and as a result nutrition habits have changed. Besides affecting human health, Covid-19 affected the economy globally. Small enterprises and family businesses were the first businesses that had difficulties to cover their costs and to maintain their operations. Among the first sectors that was influenced by Covid-19 and lockdown is gastronomy sector, which started in China and spread globally around the world. (Guszkowski, 2020). While the focus of governments was to motivate and incentivize medical staff by increasing their salaries, investing in hospitals, others sectors of economy, such as tourism and gastronomy, suffered a lot (Vuković, and Terzić, 2020). Governments imposed lockdown and social distancing measures (Brammer, Branicki, and Linnenluecke, 2020; Vendimi i Ri i Qeverisë”, 2020), and they created stimulus packages for business and individuals, however many businesses were affected negatively (Gordon, Dadayan, and Rueben, 2020). While some businesses used lockdown as an opportunity to promote their online services, gastronomy sector shifted from table serving into online delivery of food and beverages. Therefore, the goal of this study is to find how the pandemic affected Kosovo’s gastronomy sector to the extent in which the businesses of this sector changed and innovated to adapt with the new situation.

Literature Review

There were a total of 20 academic journals reviewed, that have been published within the last three years, while two additional journals date from 2008. Thus, in order to understand The Effects of Covid-19 pandemic in the Gastronomy Sector of Kosovo, literature review was focused on the following topics: Covid-19 around the world, gastronomy sector in and Covid-19 and the gastronomy sector in Kosovo. Since the pandemic is a new topic, there is limited literature and less studies were available. As such, literature review starts from a global perspective, explaining initially Covid-19 pandemic and its overall effect. Moreover, the research continues with the Covid-19 effect on gastronomy around the world, and then it is narrowed down to Kosovo.

Covid-19 around the World

Covid-19 is a new virus that was firstly noticed in Wuhan, China in early January (Brammer, Branicki, and Linnenluecke, 2020). This virus worked in tricky ways, causing loss of smell and taste buds, ache of different body parts, diarrhea, and attacking respiratory organs (World Health Organization, 2020). With little research about the virus and no cure for it, panic spread worldwide, which lead/led to many socio-economic harms (Chakrobarty, Rasheduzzaman, and Basunia, 2020). Several countries around the world took measures to prevent the spread of the virus, coupled with macro-economic policies to help the economy remain stable. For instance, in United Kingdom, Covid-19 has been listed at the same level of threat with terrorist attacks and financial crisis, and as such a lockdown was imposed on 28th of March (Mitha, 2020). Other countries, such as EU members imposed similar lockdowns to ensure the safety of their citizens (Mitha, 2020). In Korea, the government implemented “an intensive disease prevention scheme indefinitely until the number of patients in Seoul and the metropolitan region dropped to a single digit” (Jaehyun, Hwanoong, and Kyung., 2020). Such measures created panic among the public, leading to intense buying of food and hygiene products, which created certain shortages. United States, for instance, suffered from shortage of toilet paper for certain months (Gordon, T., Dadayan, L., and Rueben, K., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic also affected GDP and unemployment rates worldwide. In New York, 26,000 restaurants and their 350,000 workers had trouble to pay rent, and the predicted losses in gastronomy

sector for the year 2020 were \$240 billion (Bort, 2020). Table 1 shows data from United States in regards to changes in GDP and unemployment rate during 2020. These data show that unemployment in United States increased from 3.5% in February to 14.7% in April, while education and health services provided by the government decreased by 0.7% (Gordon, Dadayan, and Rueben, 2020). To overcome the crisis, governments adapted new strategies to help their citizens and businesses. United States approved the stimulus checks, from “the roughly \$2 trillion economic rescue package”, while China’s government prevented businesses to fire their workers to stop unemployment from rising (Boesler, and Singh, 2020).

Changes in Employment and GDP										
Percentage Change in Real GDP, 2020 Q1 versus 2019 Q4 (Seasonally Adjusted)										
State	Unemployment Rate		Leisure and Hospitality		Financial Activities		Education and Health Services			Government
	February 2020 (%)	April 2020 (%)	Accommodation and Food Services (%)	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation (%)	Financial Insurance (%)	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (%)	Education Services (%)	Health Care and Social Assistance (%)	Retail Trade (%)	
United States	3.5	14.7	-7.5	-10.1	-2.3	-0.3	-1.2	-2.0	-1.8	-0.7
Alabama	2.7	13.8	-6.9	-9.3	-2.4	-0.6	-1.8	-2.1	-1.4	-0.6
Alaska	5.8	13.5	-6.6	-6.6	-1.8	-0.5	-1.8	-2.4	-1.3	-0.9
Arizona	4.5	13.4	-6.3	-9.8	-2.1	-0.1	-0.1	-1.2	-1.3	0.0
Arkansas	3.5	10.8	-6.6	-5.1	-3.3	-0.6	-0.7	-1.5	-1.7	-0.6
California	3.9	16.4	-7.6	-10.0	-1.8	0.0	-1.0	-1.9	-2.3	-0.6
Colorado	2.5	12.2	-7.5	-10.8	-2.5	0.0	0.5	-2.9	-2.1	-0.4
Connecticut	3.8	8.3	-7.5	-10.7	-1.4	-0.8	-1.0	-2.4	-2.2	-1.0
Delaware	3.9	14.9	-7.6	-9.4	-2.0	-0.5	-1.1	-2.1	-1.7	-0.7
District of Columbia	5.1	11.7	-9.3	-9.2	-1.6	-0.6	-0.6	-2.4	-0.8	-0.9
Florida	2.8	13.8	-7.3	-8.3	-2.5	0.0	-1.0	-1.7	-1.6	-0.6
Georgia	3.1	12.6	-7.6	-9.6	-2.2	-0.2	-1.8	-1.5	-1.1	-0.8
Hawaii	2.7	23.8	-8.6	-9.7	-3.3	-0.1	-1.3	-2.4	-1.9	-1.2
Idaho	2.7	11.8	-6.7	-7.4	-1.9	-0.1	-2.0	-2.7	-1.2	-0.6
Illinois	3.4	17.2	-7.7	-10.5	-2.8	-0.5	-1.6	-1.9	-1.7	-0.8
Indiana	3.1	17.5	-7.2	-9.4	-2.0	-0.4	-0.8	-2.2	-1.4	-0.5
Iowa	2.8	11.0	-6.8	-9.5	-2.4	-0.4	-0.9	-2.3	-1.7	-1.0
Kansas	3.1	11.9	-6.9	-10.1	-2.2	-0.7	-1.1	-2.1	-1.5	-0.6
Kentucky	4.2	16.6	-7.2	-8.5	-2.9	-0.5	-1.0	-2.0	-1.8	-0.9
Louisiana	5.2	15.1	-6.7	-10.0	-2.2	-0.5	0.1	-2.5	-1.8	-0.7
Maine	3.2	10.4	-6.9	-11.2	-2.5	-0.5	-1.7	-2.5	-1.6	-0.5
Maryland	3.3	10.1	-6.8	-9.7	-2.2	-0.6	-0.9	-2.0	-1.6	-1.0
Massachusetts	2.8	16.2	-8.0	-10.9	-2.0	-0.2	-1.5	-2.0	-1.9	-0.7
Michigan	3.6	24.0	-8.4	-11.1	-2.6	-0.2	-2.1	-2.8	-2.4	-0.8
Minnesota	3.1	8.7	-7.8	-9.7	-2.6	-0.4	-1.6	-2.4	-1.8	-0.8
Mississippi	5.4	16.3	-6.9	-11.1	-2.6	-0.6	-1.8	-2.0	-1.2	-0.8
Missouri	3.5	10.2	-7.7	-10.0	-1.8	-0.4	-1.5	-1.9	-1.6	-0.6

Table 1. Changes in Employment and GDP in United States of America (Gordon, T., Dadayan, L., and Rueben, K, 2020).

Gastronomy Sector around the World and Covid-19

Gastronomy is defined, as “a practice that is concerned with the enjoyment of food and beverages” (Ivanović, Galičić, and Pretula, 2008, p.571). This practice includes restaurants, cafes, bars, and hotels, and for many countries, it is one of the main drivers of their economy, being so, it is highly related with tourism. Data from United States show that in 2020 alone, “the restaurant industry was projected to employ 15.6 million, with a contribution of more than 2 Trillion to the GDP” (Lange, 2020, par.4). Due to its interactive nature, however, the gastronomy sector is very sensitive to economic changes that cause shifts in consumer behavior. In a period from January 2020 to March 2020, Covid-19 triggered changes in how gastronomy operated around the world (Guszkowski, 2020). Initially, it started in China, and then it spread to other parts of the world. While many restaurants were closed, the online distribution of food and beverages started to thrive, which triggered a change in the mindset of costumers (Guszkowski, 2020). As such, gastronomy sector was highly affected by Covid-19, with small businesses having suffered the most (Korže and Škabar,2020). Figure 1 shows an outline of how the gastronomy sector was affected in the United States by Covid-19 and the measures taken to prevent it (Guszkowski, 2020).

Despite this hit, restaurants around the world have adopted ways of overcoming the crisis brought by the pandemic. In Belgium, for instance, costumers started to eat in “camper vans”, which creates/d an intimate experience between the consumers, who are served fancy foods while feeling the comfort of being at home (Herman, 2020). In Geneva, as mentioned by PR Newswire (2020), implementation of social app for restaurant reviews and recommendations served as a path for gastronomy sector to increase their revenues.

The economy in the Balkan region is fragile and was affected negatively from Covid-19 pandemic too. Governments in Western Balkan region took measures that included increasing salaries for medical staff and investing in the health care sector (OECD, 2020), while other economic sectors were neglected in the first phase of the pandemic. The latter triggered bankruptcy of many small businesses and main sector that was affected was the gastronomy sector. In Kosovo, gastronomy businesses received support from the government, and tried their best to adapt to the new situation brought by the pandemic. Nonetheless, government measures did not seem to be sufficient to help businesses cover their costs.

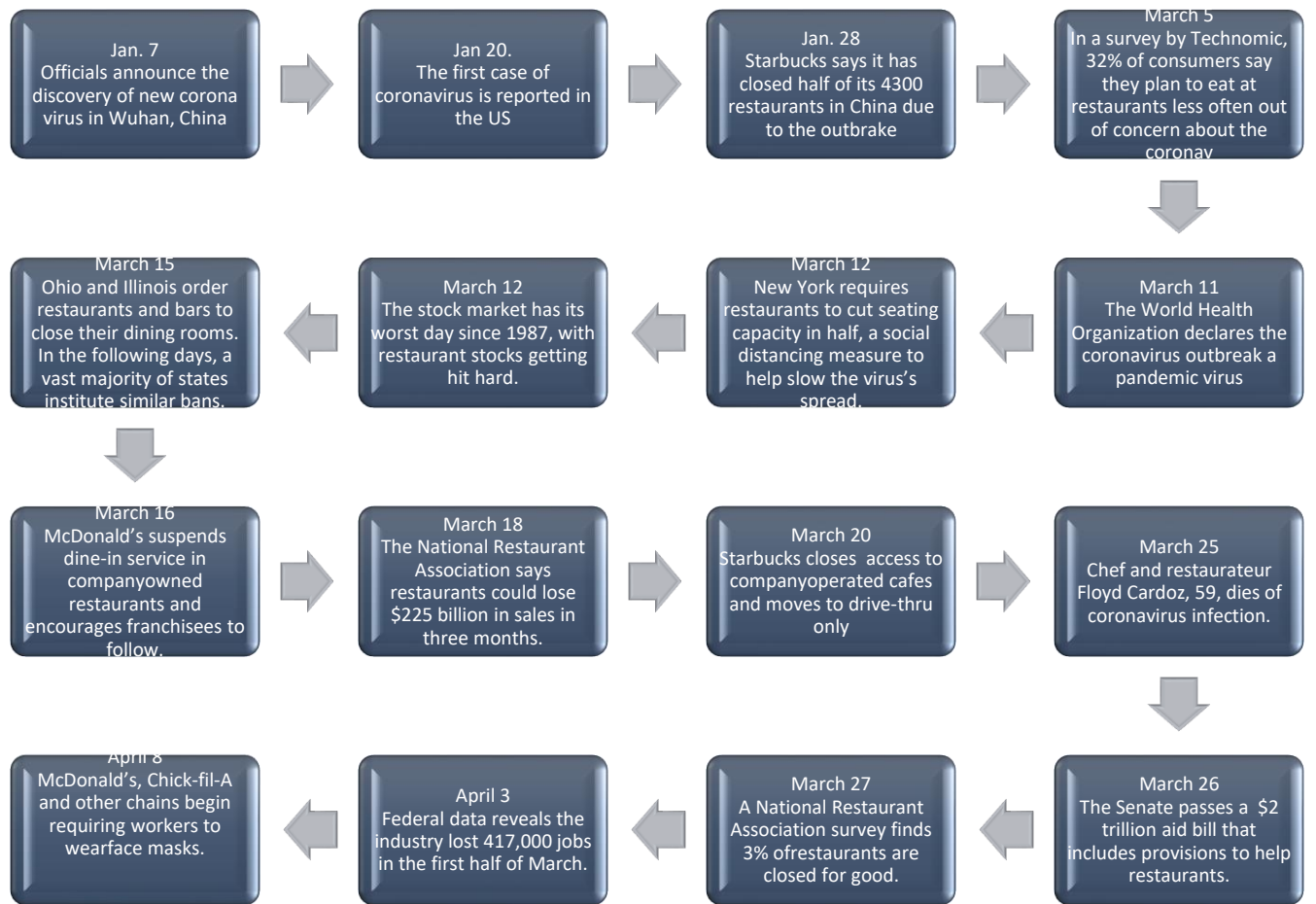


Figure 1, COVID-19 Timeline (Guszkowski, J. 2020)

Covid-19 and the Gastronomy Sector in Kosovo

Covid-19 pandemic, negatively influenced small businesses in Kosovo, and among the most affected sectors was gastronomy. History shows that during crisis, gastronomy sector is highly affected. Research data from 2007 crisis note that “hospitality, restaurant, and tourism industry” suffer higher damages and need longer time-periods to recover (Batat, 2020).

The current situation differs very little compared to the year 2020, considering that Covid-19 pandemic is still present. Moreover, consumer behavior has changed, which poses further financial challenges for the food industry (Batat, 2020). These businesses need financial assistance in order to survive and face such challenges. Aznar, Anguera, Perez, (2020) state that, “recovery relies on the capacity to control the pandemic and to the macroeconomic efficiency of the policies undertaken by public institutions to enhance general economic recovery” (p.1). In other words, it is the government’s responsibility to provide efficient measures to prevent Covid-19 without putting at risk the macroeconomic stability of the country. The government measures taken by the government of Kosovo that most supported the gastronomy sector include deferrals for corporate income and personal income taxes, VAT, and deferral of public utilities payments until the end of April; suspending payments of loan installments for businesses and individuals for three months (International Monetary Fund, 2020).

Even though there is data regarding government decisions and challenges that the gastronomy sector faces, there is no research regarding how helpful government measures were to the cafes and restaurants. In addition, there is limited data that show how consumer behavior has changed in Kosovo. There is no comprehensive study that looks at how consumer behavior has changed and how the gastronomy sector was affected, nonetheless data from previous research shows that people in Kosovo are willing to pay more for better quality food products (Sopi and Skreli, 2016). In order to gather sufficient evidence regarding these issues, interviews were conducted with ten businesses in Kosovo, Pristina, to see how the gastronomy sector views the pandemic and the effectiveness of government measures; a survey to view how consumer behavior has changed, and how well consumer believe the gastronomy sector has fitted their new needs.

Methodology

In order to get a better understanding of how the Covid-19 pandemic affected the gastronomy sector of Kosovo, the mixed methodology approach was used, combining findings from the existing literature, interviews and the survey.

Primary Data Collection

Primary data were collected through interviews and a survey conducted with costumers. Interviews were conducted face to face with ten businesses in Pristina, Kosovo. Each of the interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes, and participants were given the informed consent form, which is attached in [Appendix 3](#), while the interview questions are attached in [Appendix 1](#). The sample included three fancy restaurants, five cafes, one delivery-only family business, and one restaurant that opened during the pandemic. The interviews were conducted with the owners and/or managers of the businesses.

Besides the interviews, primary data were also gathered through an online survey targeting the costumers. The survey process collected responses from 208 respondents, and the survey questions are listed in [Appendix 2](#). Data gathered from the survey were analyzed with SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) through frequency and cross tabulation analysis.

Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data was collected through the existing literature, which were gathered mainly through *EBSCO* database. Besides *EBSCO*, reports from *GAP Institute*, data from *International Monetary Fund* were used, and news articles, which were relevant and up to date with the topic.

Analysis of Results

This section presents the results that were gathered by the data deriving from the interviews conducted with gastronomy businesses, and the online survey conducted with costumers.

Part 1: Interviews

The first part includes interview questions, which have been categorized and presented in Table 2 for better visualization purposes, while question number eight is presented graphically since it is a multiple response question.

The interviewed restaurants / Interview questions	How long has the business been operating?	How many costumers did you have one average per day before the pandemic?	How many costumers do you have per day now with the pandemic and social	Which areas were mostly affected in terms of increased costs?	Did you have to make any changes in order to fit the new requirements for	If yes, did you have the facilities or did you have to invest?	How helpful was the fiscal package for your business? Can you please elaborate?	Was there a decrease in your revenues	If yes, how much (in approximate percentages?)	Will you continue to use the new processes/changes you implemented during
1	10	450	200	Hygiene products were very expensive	No	No	Some what effective	Yes	50%	No
2	20	600	150	Hygiene products were very expensive	No	No	Not effective	Yes	60%	No
3	21	200	60	Hygiene products were very expensive	Yes	No	Some what effective	Yes	50%	Yes
4	6	750	750	Hygiene products were very	No	No	Some what effective	Yes	40%	No

The interviewed restaurants / Interview questions	How long has the business been operating?	How many costumers did you have one average per day before the pandemic?	How many costumers do you have per day now with the pandemic and social	Which areas were mostly affected in terms of increased costs?	Did you have to make any changes in order to fit the new requirements for	If yes, did you have the facilities or did you have to invest?	How helpful was the fiscal package for your business? Can you please elaborate?	Was there a decrease in your revenues	If yes, how much (in approximate percentages?)	Will you continue to use the new processes/changes you implemented during
				expensive						
5	10	300	150	Hygiene products were very expensive	No	No	Not effective	Yes	60%	No
6	1	200	200	Hygiene products were very expensive	No	No	Not effective	Yes	50%	No
7	3	600	180	Hygiene products were very expensive	No	No	Some what effective	Yes	70%	No
8	3	50	25	Wages and loans	No	No	Some what effective	Yes	50%	No

The interviewed restaurants / Interview questions	How long has the business been operating?	How many costumers did you have one average per day before the pandemic?	How many costumers do you have per day now with the pandemic and social	Which areas were mostly affected in terms of increased costs?	Did you have to make any changes in order to fit the new requirements for	If yes, did you have the facilities or did you have to invest?	How helpful was the fiscal package for your business? Can you please elaborate?	Was there a decrease in your revenues	If yes, how much (in approximate percentages?)	Will you continue to use the new processes/changes you implemented during
9	12	700	490	No impact at all	Yes	Yes	Very effective	Yes	50%	Yes
10	2	16	2	No impact at all	No	No	Not effective	Yes	90%	No

Table 2, Interview questions from 1 to 10

When it comes to how long the business was operating, data shows that the majority of businesses interviewed have been operating for up to 12 years, while two businesses have been operating for more than 20 years, and only one has been operating for a year. There has been a major decrease in the per-day number of customers. Results show that, before the pandemic, 20% of the participants had up to 50 costumers, while the rest had between 200 to 750 costumers per day. After the lockdown, and with the social distancing measures still present, 9 out of 10 businesses interviewed experienced a decrease in the number of costumers on a range from 40% to 70%. Business number 4 is the only one that did not suffer from a decrease in the number of customers. They mentioned that they have their own “loyal costumer”, who regularly visited the cafe ever since they started working, hence they did not have a problem attracting clients back. Businesses number 1, 2, 7, and 9, however, said the majority of their customers are people on their lunch breaks. Since most of activities have moved online, they no longer have costumers who go to their restaurants for lunch, as people eat at home. They also added that those who are at the workplace are overloaded with work; hence, it is easier for these workers to have food delivered at the office rather than go out and eat.

The Covid-19 pandemic also increased the monthly expenses of businesses. The majority of businesses interviewed stated that hygiene products made up the majority the increased costs. Business number 2 stated that in addition to hand sanitizers, gloves and masks for the staff, they also had to sanitize the whole restaurant every week, which adds another 400 euros to their monthly fixed costs. Business number 8 stated that wage and loan expenses increased as well and that had a negative impact on their monthly costs. However, Businesses number 9 and 10 stated that the social distancing measures had no impact on their monthly costs. Business number 10 works through online deliveries only; hence, they did not need to take any social distancing measures. Business number 9 said that the social distancing measures only affected their ability to generate revenues, while their costs remained unchanged.

Despite all the above-mentioned difficulties, out of 10 businesses interviewed, only two of them stated to have adopted new methods in order to fit better to the social distancing measures and the situation created by Covid-19. Business number 3 stated that they added delivery to their services, and they had to invest by signing an agreement with a local delivery company, which was responsible for

sending out the deliveries. Business number 9 stated that their delivery services were updated with equipment and mechanism, which ensured that their employees and clients mitigate the risk of contracting Covid-19. They also had to fit the new market needs by introducing different offers for lower prices. To do so, they needed to make investments as they did not have the facilities to adapt to these mentioned changes.

In addition, these gastronomy businesses explained how beneficial was the Emergency Fiscal Package released by the government. Out of 10 businesses that were interviewed, half of them stated that the package was helpful to some extent, while only one of them stated that it was very helpful for their business. Business number 9 stated that the financial package introduced by the government was actually quite helpful. This financial injection allowed them, at least for a certain period, to reduce the financial drainage of their company, meaning that the package eased the pressure, allowing them to pay their suppliers and employees. They also stated that such a package in the future would also represent a great boost to their business, and would ease the impact that the pandemics has had on their finances. Businesses number 1, 3, 4, and 10 stated that the fiscal package was helpful to some extent. They stated that the package helped them cover wage expenses; they were released from paying rent, and were released from certain taxation. However, they stated that the government should have continued to help them cover wages. In addition, Business number 10 stated that as a small online business, they were constantly under the shade of large businesses, meaning that the fiscal package was designed to mainly help big, successful gastronomy businesses. The remaining businesses stated that the package was not helpful for their business. Businesses number 2 and 6 stated that the emergency package was not helpful since it was approved too late. They mentioned that they struggled to pay their workers, and by the time the package was approved they were “out of that crisis”. Business number 5 said that besides taking too long to be approved, their businesses did not need what the fiscal package offered. They mentioned they did not need the government to cover their rent since they did not have anything rented. Moreover, Business number 8 stated that they did not benefit at all from the package, despite having applied for it.

In regards to their ability to generate revenues, half of the business interviewed stated that their revenues decreased by 50%; one business had a decrease in revenues of 40%, and the remaining had a decrease in revenues, between 60% and 90%. The majority of businesses stated that the curfew put by

the government, that forces gastronomy businesses to close at 8:00 p.m. is the main reason for their drops in revenues. Businesses number 1 and 4 explained that their main source of revenues is from alcoholic drinks. With a curfew from 8:00 p.m., they sell less alcohol than they normally would when they were open until 12:00 a.m. Businesses number 2, 5, 6, and 7 explained that the main source of their revenues are late night diners, which cannot be served if they are only allowed to work until 8:00 p.m. Businesses number 3, 8, 9, and 10 stated that their revenues decreased due to lower sales, they did not mention any specific source as their main revenue-generating source.

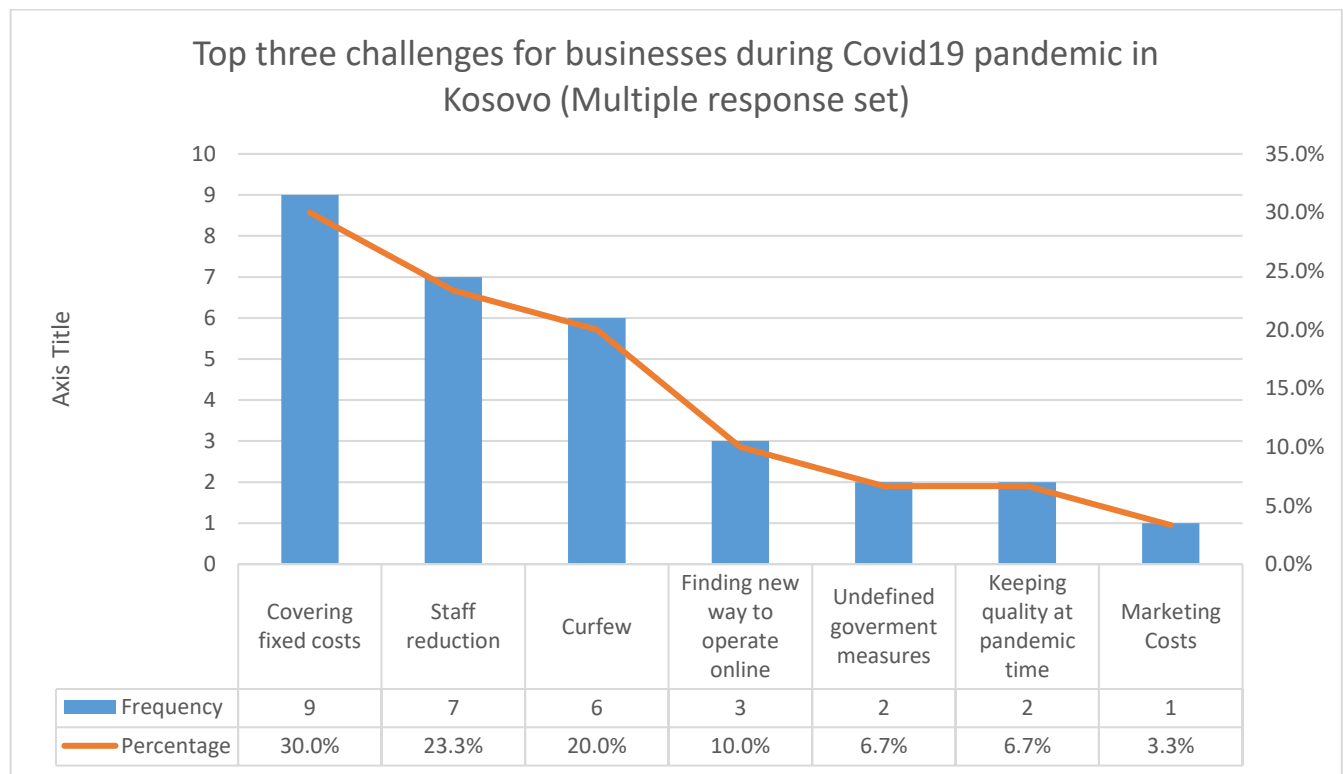


Figure 2, Top Three Challenges for Gastronomy Businesses during Covid-19, multiple response

The eighth question aims to understand the main three challenges that Kosovo’s gastronomy businesses faced, from the beginning of Covid-19 until now. The three main challenges, as listed by interviewees include covering fixed costs, reducing staff members, and the 8:00 p.m. curfew put by the government. Business number 2 stated that while their revenues have decreased, fixed costs increased. As such, they found it difficult to cover this difference, while also managing to pay wages, taxes, and loans. They stated that as a family business, they did not reduce the staff, but it had been very difficult

to pay them. The business stated that had to pay workers with money from their owners' savings, since no profit had been generated. Moreover, Businesses 2 and 7 also added that they suffered from the "not clearly defined" government measures. According to them, their place has enough space to work with 50% of their capacity. If the government allowed them to work full time with 50% capacity, they would be able to generate enough profit to operate successfully.

The other challenges Kosovo's gastronomy business faced include finding efficient ways to operate online, keeping the same quality of their services, and covering marketing costs. Business number 9 stated that they had to invest in order to keep up the quality that they offer to clients, while Business number 10 stated that their marketing costs increased drastically as it was more difficult to reach and convince clients to order food online.

Part 2- Customer Survey

This section discusses findings from the survey starting with demographic data. Figures 13-16 in Appendix 4, display the answers to demographic questions regarding participant's age, gender, level of education and employment status, respectively.

The majority of survey respondents belongs to 18-24 age group, and only a small portion of them are older than 55 and 65. In terms of gender, 61% of respondents are female while the remaining 39% are male. The majority of survey respondents have a Bachelor's Degree, with a small number of them having a PhD. Lastly, out of 208 respondents, more than 60% reported to be employed.

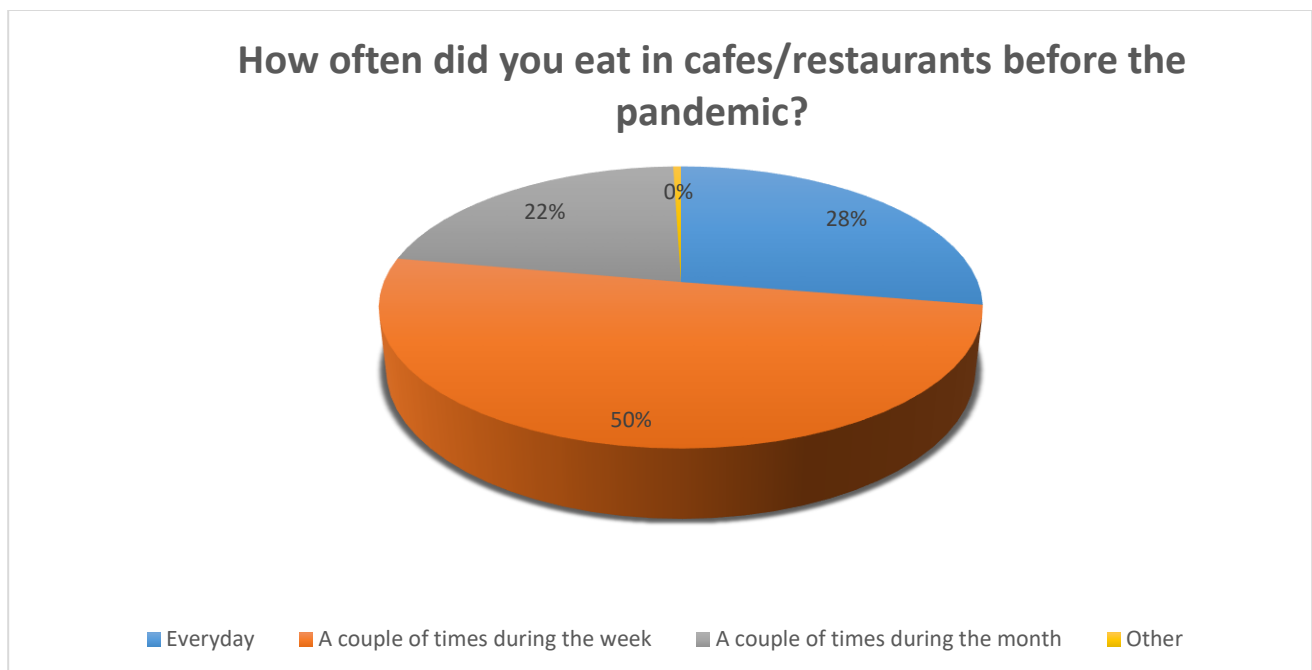


Figure 3 , Frequency of Restaurant Visits before Covid-19

When asked how often they ate out before the pandemic, the majority of respondents answered “a couple of times during the week”. More than 25% answered “everyday”, while 22% answered “a couple of times during the month”.

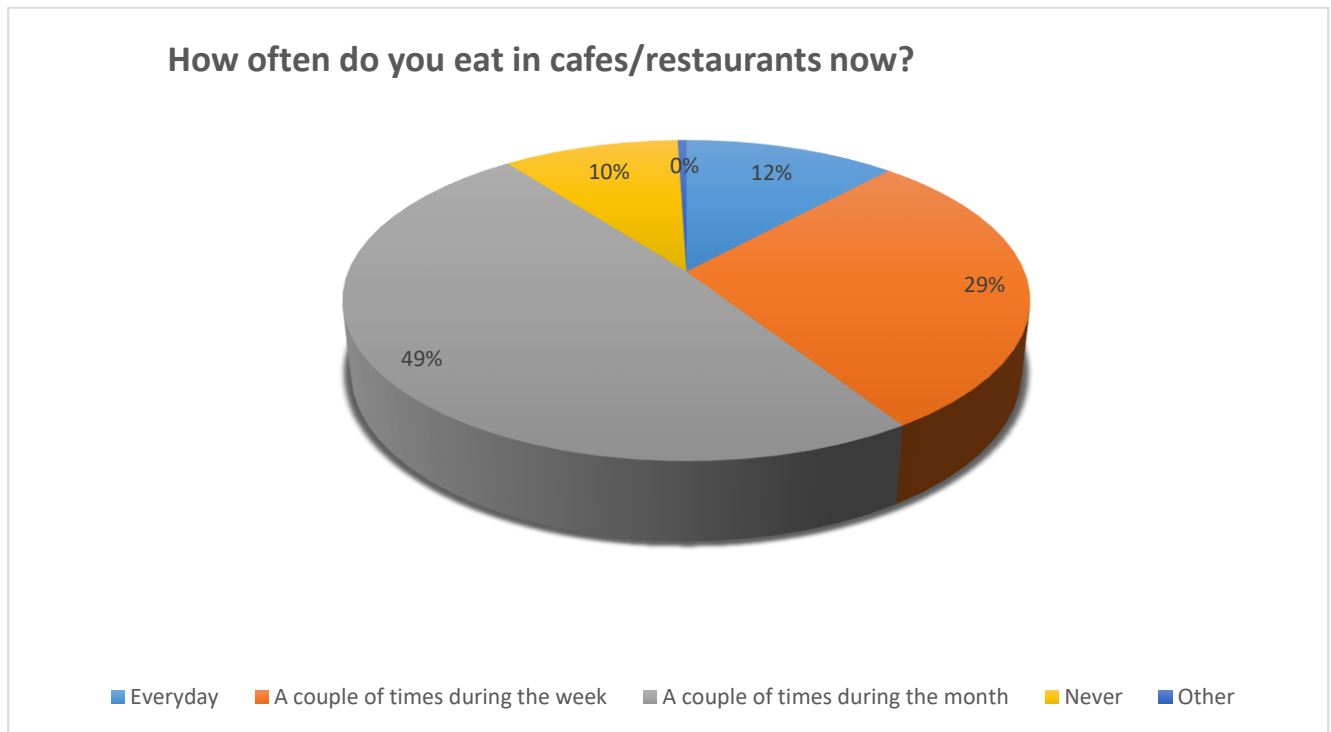


Figure 4, Frequency of Restaurant Visits after Covid-19

However, when asked how often they eat out now, about half of survey respondents answered “a couple of times during the month”. Less than 30% of participants answered “a couple of times during the week” and the response rates for “everyday” and “never” were nearly the same. When compared to Figure 3, it can be noticed that there has been a shift in customer behavior, whereby now they eat less in restaurants/cafes as compared to the period before Covid-19 pandemic.

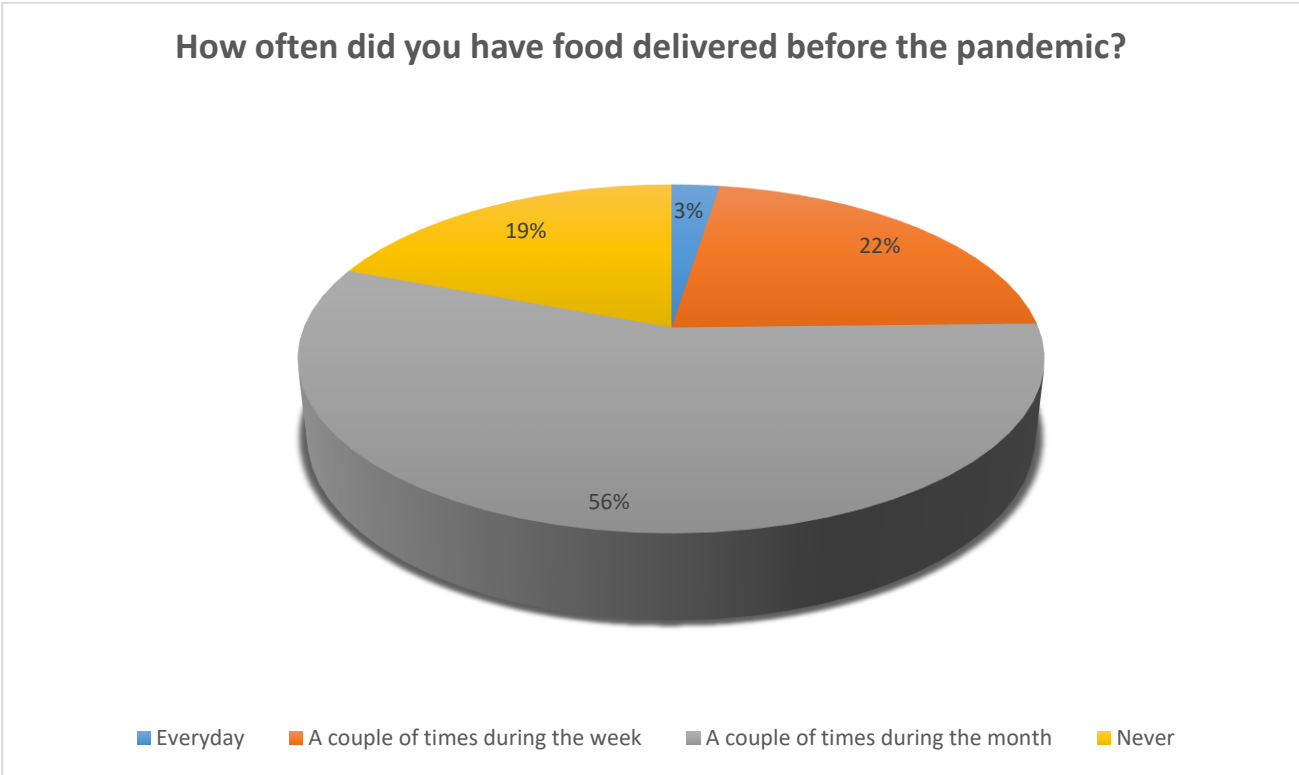


Figure 5, Frequency of Having Food Delivered before Covid-19

When asked how often they had food delivered before the pandemic, the majority of survey respondents answered “a couple of times during the month”, while some answered “never”, “a couple of times during the week”, and only few answered “everyday”.

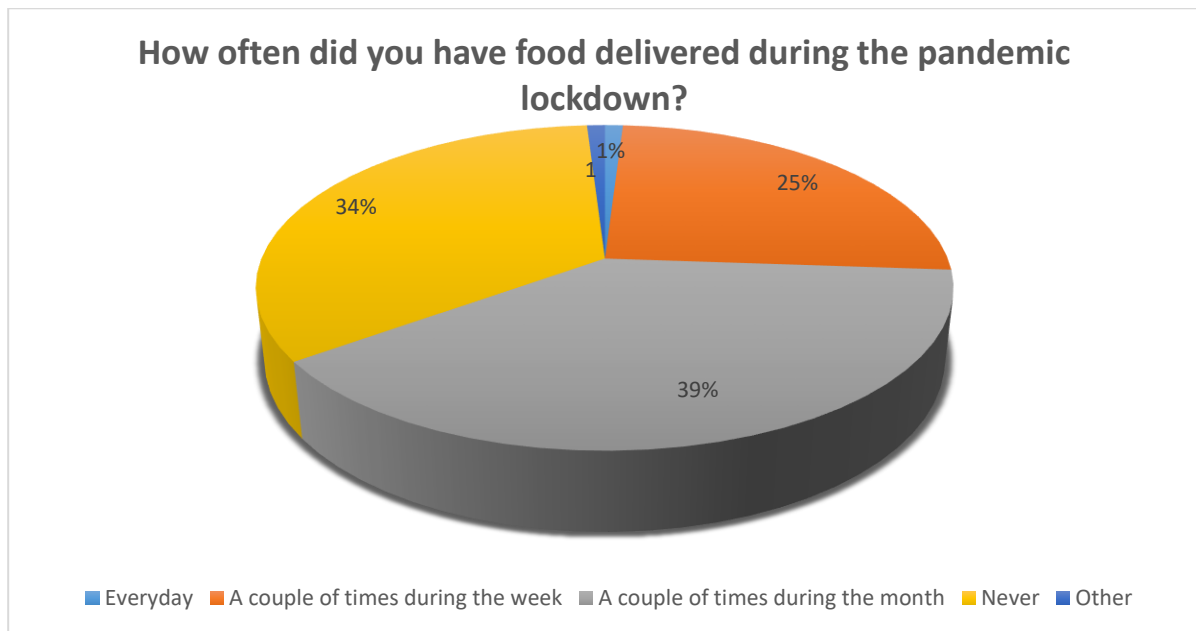


Figure 6, Frequency of Having Food Delivered during Covid-19 complete lockdown

Once again, if we compare Figure 5 with Figure 6 we notice that there has been a shift in customer behavior when it comes to food delivery. When asked how often they had food delivered during the complete lockdown (March 2020- June 2020), the majority still answered “a couple of times during the month”. However, more people stated that they “never” ordered food (34%), compared with those who stated that they ordered food “a couple of times during the week”. This shows that besides the drop of people who ordered “a couple of times during the month” from 56% to 39%, there is also a shift where more people consumed less take-out food, as compared with the graph from Figure 5 that shows more people ordered food during the week. A small percentage of participants stated to have ordered food “everyday” and in “other” frequencies. Those who chose “other” usually ordered food once a month.

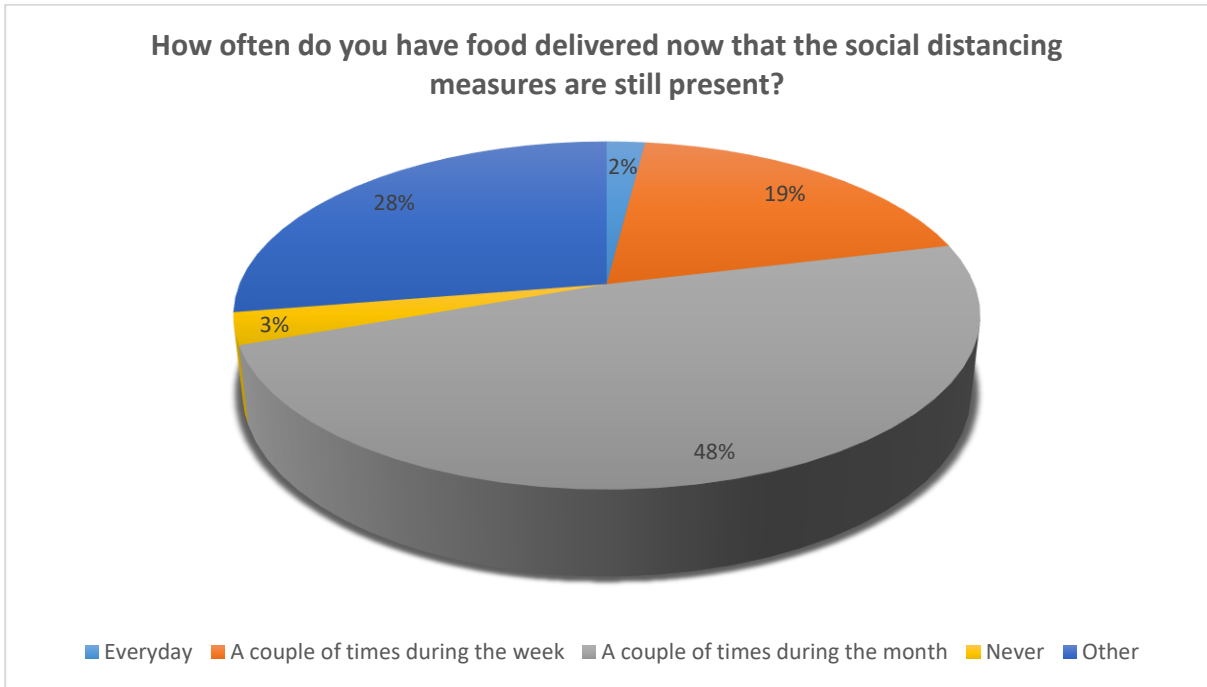


Figure 7, Frequency of Having Food Delivered with Covid-19 and Social Distancing Measures still Present

When asked how often they have food delivered at the current situation, with the virus and the social distancing measures still present, the majority of participants chose the option “a couple of times during the month”, 28% chose “other”, 19% chose “a couple of times time the week”, and few participants chose “everyday” and “never”. When comparing, Figure 7 with Figure 6, it can be noticed that from 39%, now 48% of survey responders have food delivered a couple of times during the month. Hence, there has been an increase in take-out food. Another increase is that 28% of people chose “other” when it comes to the frequency at which they have food delivered with the current social distancing measure. In figure 6 the number or participants who chose “other” is only 1%. Those who chose “other” mostly wrote down that they visit restaurants “once or twice a month”.

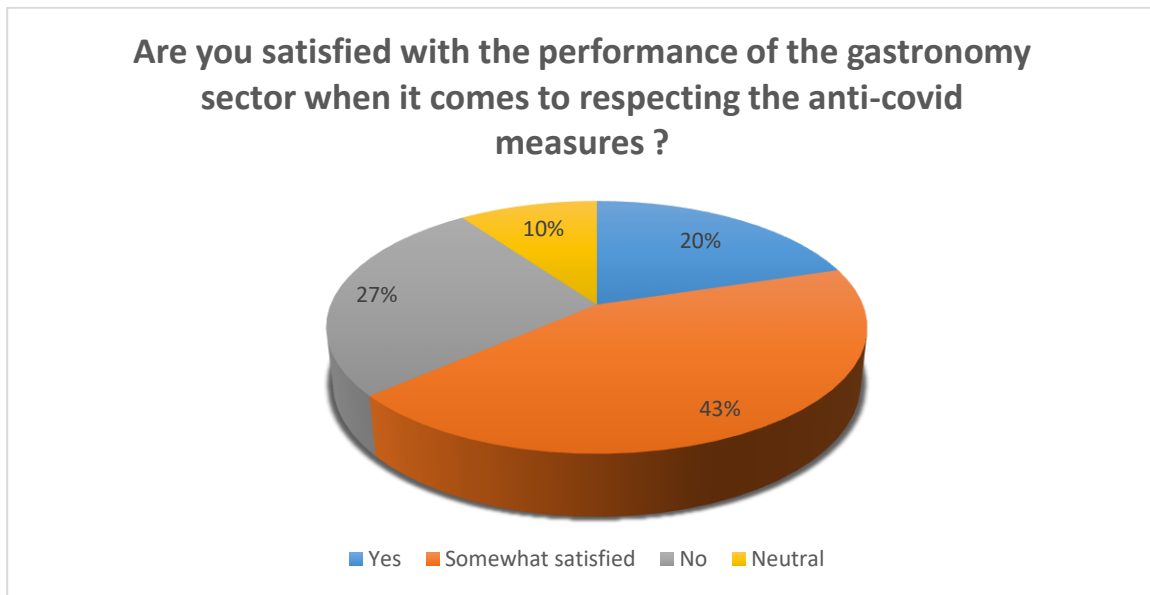


Figure 8, Customer Satisfaction with Gastronomy Businesses Performance

When asked if they are satisfied with the Kosovo’s gastronomy businesses performance during Covid-19, 43% of the participants stated that they were “somewhat satisfied”; 20% were completely satisfied, 27% said they were not satisfied; and 10% were neutral.

Those participants who chose “somewhat satisfied” stated that while the gastronomy businesses were trying to respect the measures set by the government, there was still a lot of room for improvement. One participant stated that the businesses have put hand sanitizer on every table, but they have failed to keep the two meters distance between the tables.

Those participants who chose “not satisfied” stated that the gastronomy businesses were hardly trying to respect the measures put by the government and protect their clients. Some participants claimed that the businesses have put hand sanitizer on the table “just for show” , the tables are too close to one another, the waiters/ waitresses do not wear their masks like they are required to, and the places are always overcrowded.

Those participants who chose “completely satisfied” stated that the gastronomy businesses were doing a great job in respecting the anti-covid-19 measures set by the government. According to these participants, cafes and restaurants were keeping their places clean, they disinfect them once a week,

they clean the tables after every guest, and the staff is equipped with masks and has them on all the time.

The participants who chose “neutral” stated that they do not think the gastronomy businesses are doing a bad job, but they are not doing a good job either. They did not give any specific comments.

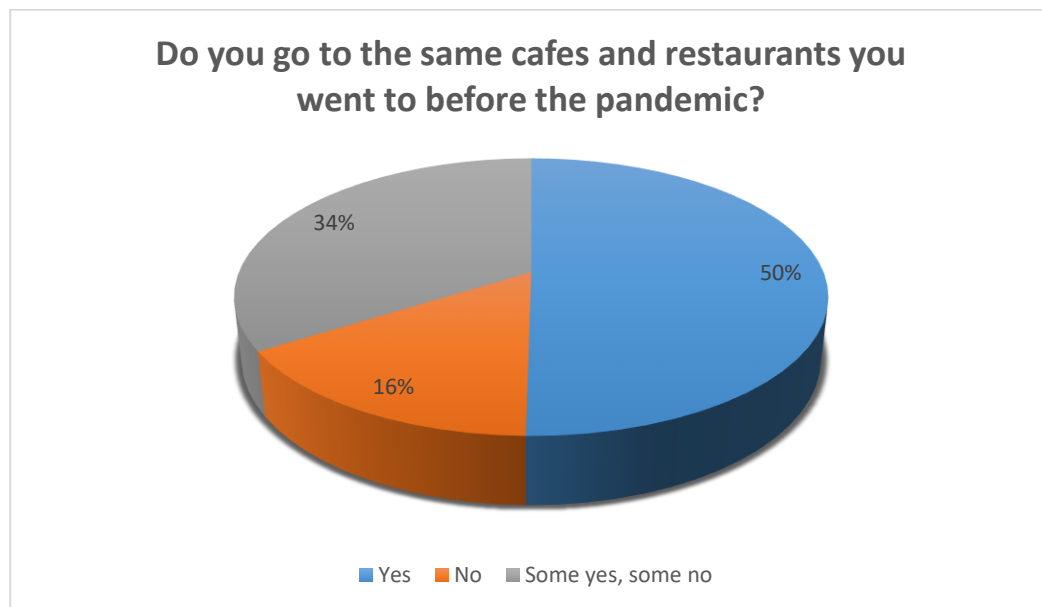


Figure 9, Changes in Restaurant/Café Preferences

Consumer preferences have remained more or less the same when it comes to what restaurants/cafes they visited before and after the pandemic.

Those respondents who go to the same restaurants and cafes as before the pandemic stated that these gastronomy businesses were doing a great job when it comes to respecting the anti-covid-19 measures; hence, they feel safe enough to go there. In addition, some participants stated that they go to these cafes/restaurants simply to support the business during such difficult times, since they have been a client for a long period and do not want to see their favorite places close down.

Those respondents who answered “some yes, some no” stated that the businesses they still go to are safe and respect the anti-covid-19 measures. As for those who no longer visit these places, some participants said that those cafes/ restaurants did not respect the social distancing measures and did not

keep up with the hygiene requirements; hence, they did not feel safe to go back there. Moreover, some participants stated that some of the businesses they used to visit before Covid-19 went bankrupt; hence, they can no longer go there.

Those respondents who answered that they do not go to the same gastronomy businesses they attended before Covid-19, state that these businesses simply could not keep up with the anti-covid-19 measures and hygiene requirements set by the government. Some participants also reported that they do not feel safe to go out in cafes, bars, and restaurants since they are afraid, they will get infected with the virus, and do not wish to put their lives and the lives of their loved ones to such stakes.

Part 3: Customer Survey-Cross Section Results

The following section presents a more in-depth analysis of the survey, which aims to see how consumer behavior has changed during covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions that came with it, in terms of different age groups of respondents.

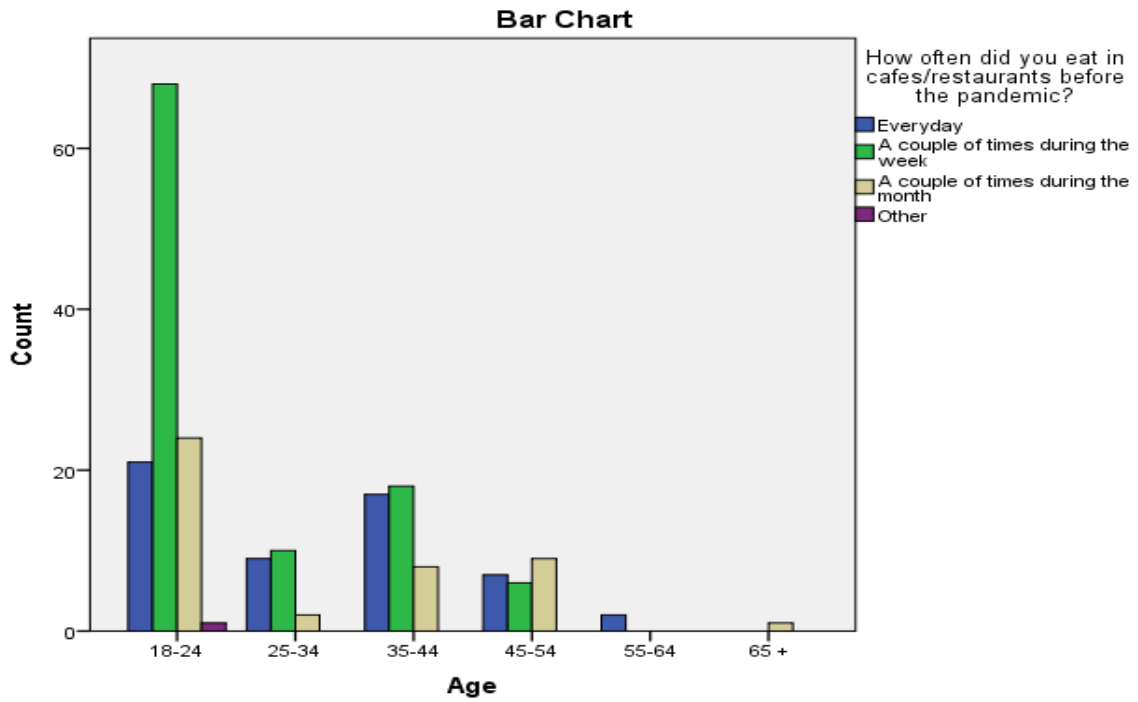


Figure 10, Frequency of Restaurant Visits before Covid-19 in terms of Age

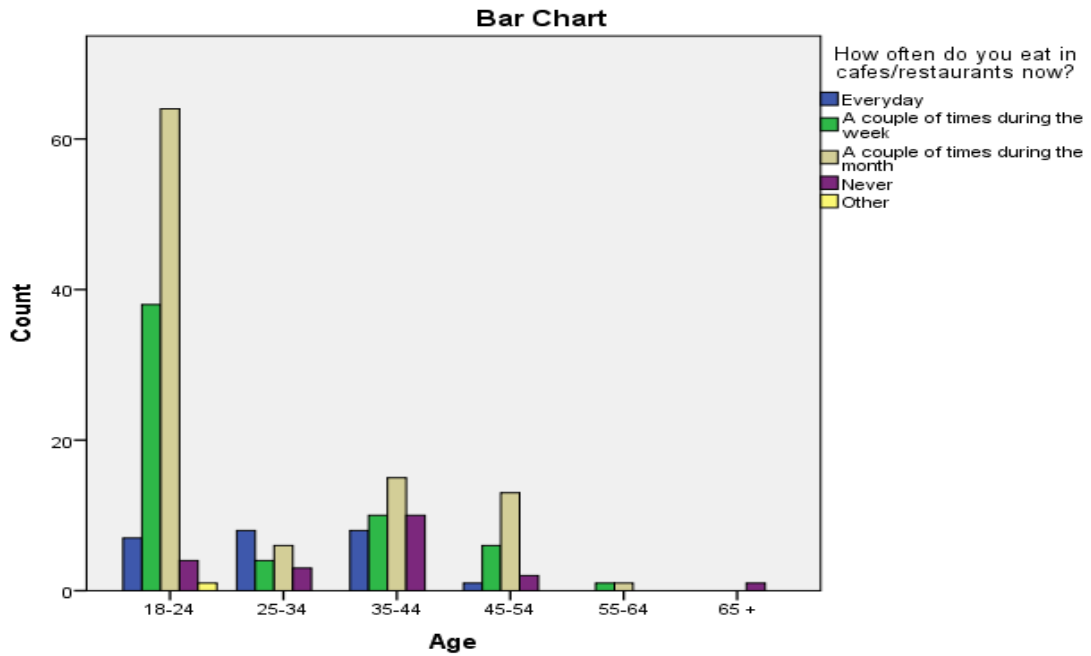


Figure 11, Frequency of Restaurant Visits after Covid-19 in terms of Age

Figures 10-11 show how consumption behavior in the capital city of Kosovo has changed as per different age groups. The results show that all participants are eating out less than they used to before Covid-19. The most drastic change is in age groups of 18-24, who used to eat in restaurants a couple of times during the week, whereas now, with Covid-19 and social distancing measures still present, they dine out only a couple of times during the month. In addition, age groups of 65+ shifted their consumption from eating out a couple of times during the month, to never eating in restaurants.

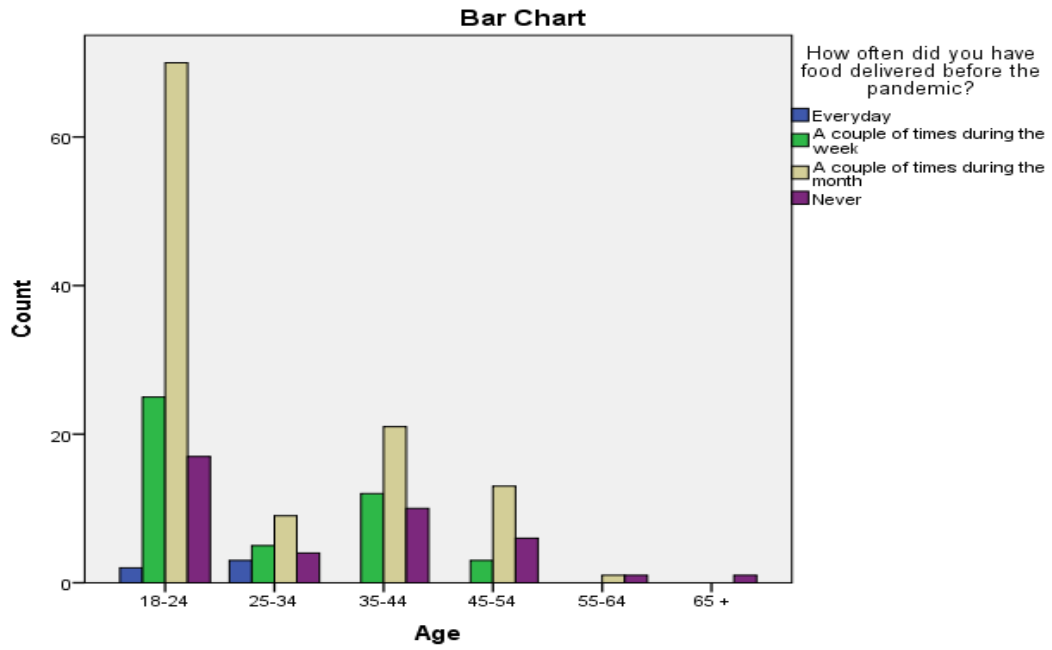


Figure 12, Frequency of Having Food Delivered before Covid-19 in terms of age

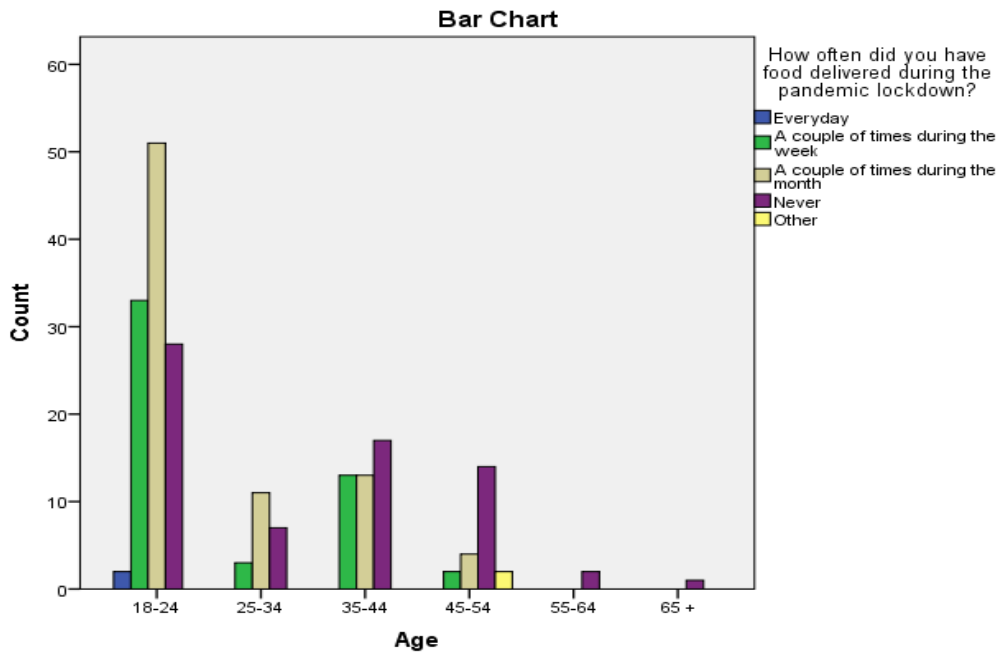


Figure 13, Frequency of Having Food Delivered during Covid-19 Lockdown in terms of Age

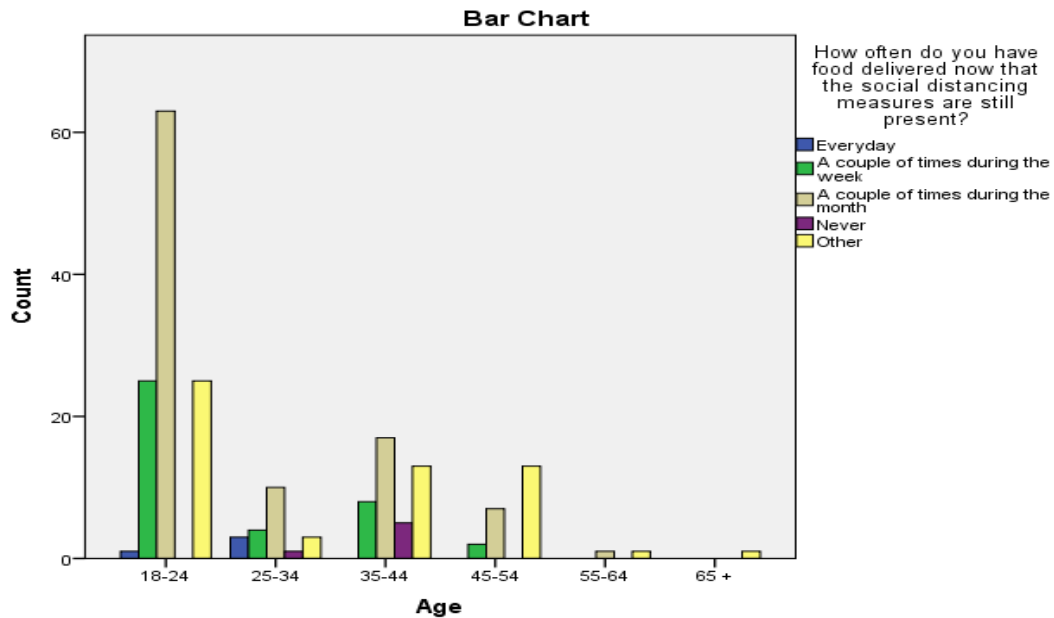


Figure 14, Frequency of Having Food Delivered with Covid-19 and Social Distancing Measures still present in terms of Age

Consumer behavior amongst different age groups when it comes to ordering food has also changed. Before the pandemic started, people of ages 18-24 ordered food a couple of times during the month. This pattern of behavior was the same for all age groups, before the Covid-19 pandemic. During the total lockdown however, the majority of age groups responded that they never ordered food. The only age group that did not change their behavior throughout the three periods is age group of 18-24. Other respondents noted that they have food delivered once a month or less.

Discussion

The primary data confirms the existing evidence that the gastronomy businesses in Kosovo were severely damaged by the Covid-19 pandemic: 9 out of 10 businesses interviewed stated that their biggest challenges were increased hygiene costs and the curfew put by the government. These businesses had to buy hand sanitizers for every table, masks for the staff, and disinfect their cafes/restaurants more often than they used to. In addition, 9 out of 10 businesses interviewed stated that the curfew set by the government hurt their businesses. According to them, the curfew was the

main reason for their drops in revenues. Most of the businesses interviewed earn the majority of their profit from alcoholic beverages or from fancy dinners. With the curfew in place, they could no longer sell these products at the same amount they used to, which caused many losses.

While some of the interviewed businesses declared that the government's Emergency Fiscal Package was helpful, for some other businesses the Package was approved a little too late and it was unfit for their business needs. The overall result showed the Fiscal Package was helpful to some extent, and that businesses were still better off with the Package than without it. The businesses also mentioned that the government's regulations were unfair, since large gastronomy businesses were treated the same as small gastronomy businesses. Two businesses claimed that if the government would allow them to work with half of their capacity, without a curfew, their business would operate in profit.

When it comes to costumers and their attitude towards the new changes brought by Covid-19, it is noted that there has been a change in consumer behavior, too. From all 208-survey participants, only 30% continue to eat in restaurants as often as they used to before Covid-19. The rest stated that they eat once or twice a month, and some have stopped altogether eating outside of their home. During the complete lockdown, there was also a decrease when it comes to having food delivered, where from 59%, only 39% of participants stated to order food a couple of times during the month. Once the total lockdown was lifted however, the number of customers who order food a couple of times during the month increased to 48%. Overall, there has been a decrease in having food delivered from 59% before Covid-19, to 48% with Covid-19 still present.

Next, research participants were asked how satisfied they were with the gastronomy businesses performance when it came to respecting the social distancing measures, to which 43% of them stated they were "somewhat satisfied". These respondents said that some cafes/restaurants have equipped their staff with masks, the tables with hand sanitizers, and tried to keep the distance within their place. Some of the participants stated that they still do not feel very safe to visit cafes/restaurants, since there is a lot of room for improvement. Other costumers stated that the businesses fail to keep the required two meters distance between the tables, and chances of being infected there are very high. Research respondents who were not satisfied with the gastronomy businesses performance said that the businesses are failing to keep up with the social distancing measures, and hand sanitizers they put are just for show. Nonetheless, 50% of research participants still visit the same cafes/restaurants they

visited before Covid-19. They said that these businesses are doing a good job on respecting the social distancing measures, while some stated that they want to ease the burden of Covid-19 for their favorite places, hence they contribute by ordering food and drinks. Some of research participants (16%) said that they no longer visit the same cafes/restaurants, since they do not feel safe there and they do not want to put to risk the lives of their family members.

When it comes to age groups, the findings show that participants of age 18-24 used to dine in restaurant/cafes many times during the week, whereas now they go out once or twice a month, while participants of age 65 and older no longer dine out. In addition, data shows that participants of age 18-24 have not changed their consumption behavior when it comes to having food delivered. The rest of participants, on the other hand, started having food delivered less frequently than they used to, ordering food only once a month or less. Moreover, survey respondents of age 18-44 claimed to be somewhat satisfied with how well gastronomy businesses were doing in terms of respecting the social distancing measures, while participants of age 65 were not satisfied. The majority of participants of age 18-34 stated that they still visit the same restaurants they used to visit before Covid-19, while participants of age 45-55 stated that they visit only some of them, while those of age 65 said that they no longer visit them.

Limitations on Data Collection

There were certain limitations on data collection. Since this is a new topic, there was a low number of existing studies regarding the pandemic effects in the gastronomy sector. There was also no comprehensive analysis when it comes to how Covid-19 affected gastronomy sector in Kosovo, which is why that part is covered through primary data.

There were more limitations when it came to primary data collection. Firstly, it was challenging to conduct interviews with the businesses since they did not want to interact with people for their own safety. In addition, some businesses refused to answer some of the interview questions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Covid-19 Pandemic posed difficult challenges for all people around the world. Many sectors had to adapt to new ways of operating, and finding other methods to keep up with their previous quality. In Kosovo, one of the most affected sectors from Covid-19 was the gastronomy sector. Not only did the restaurants find it difficult to manage their business during the lockdown period, many of them struggle to manage it even now, with only the social distancing measures in place. While the government of Kosovo tried to help the gastronomy sector by approving the emergency fiscal package, by imposing movement restrictions on the citizens, the government made it more challenging for these businesses to properly function. Results gathered from the research showed that gastronomy businesses in Kosovo tried their best to avoid bankruptcy while respecting the social distancing measures, but they were put at a disadvantage since the restrictions were the same for the entire gastronomy sector. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic caused changes in consumer behavior. Customers now were more reluctant to dine out and order food, due to the high risk of being infected. Nonetheless, research data suggests that the Covid-19 situation in Kosovo can be managed, but the right methods are not implemented yet. Hence, the following recommendations are given:

1. The government of Kosovo should clearly define the social distancing measures when it comes to the type of gastronomy business, their size, and capacity.
2. The government of Kosovo should allow 24/7 food delivery for restaurants in Kosovo
3. The gastronomy businesses should invest in online marketing and customer segmentation in order to keep their market share, and this situation should serve as a trigger for businesses to move their business operations within online platforms.
4. The government of Kosovo should continue to give stimulus packages to the gastronomy sector, which specifically cover wage expenses and rent obligations.
5. The gastronomy businesses should invest in risk management and be more prepared for similar pandemics such as Covid-19, and use this as a learning opportunity.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research project can serve as a basis for future research on similar topics. More precisely, data from this project can be used for comparison purposes between the gastronomy sector in Pristina and gastronomy sector in other cities in Kosovo. Moreover, it would be interesting to analyze the marketing strategies that were used in the gastronomy sector, and how efficient were they in helping these businesses cope with Covid-19 pandemic.

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Appendix 1, Interview Questions

1. How long has the business been operating?
2. How many costumers did you have one average per day before the pandemic?
3. How many costumers do you have per day now with the pandemic and social distancing measures still present?
4. How did social distancing measures affect your monthly costs? Which areas were mostly affected in terms of increased costs?
5. Did you have to make any changes in order to fit the new requirements for social distancing in terms of delivery and innovation? If yes, did you have the facilities or did you have to invest?
6. How helpful was the fiscal package for your business? Can you please elaborate?
7. Was there a decrease in your revenues, if yes, how much (in approximate percentages)?
8. What were top three challenges your business faced due to social distancing restrictions? Please elaborate.
9. Will you continue to use the new processes/changes you implemented during the pandemic, or will they be discontinued after the social distancing measures are gone?

Appendix 2, Survey

1. What is your age?

- a) 18-24
- b) 25-34
- c) 35-44
- d) 45-54
- e) 55-64
- f) 65 +

2. What is your gender?

- a) Female
- b) Male
- c) Other

3. What is your level of education?

- a) High School
- b) Bachelor
- c) Master
- d) PhD
- e) Prefer to not answer

4. Are you currently employed?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Prefer to not answer

5. How often did you eat in cafes/restaurants before the pandemic?

- a) Everyday
- b) A couple of times during the week
- c) A couple of times during the month
- d) Other

6. How often do you eat in cafes/restaurants now?

- a) Everyday
- b) A couple of times during the week
- c) A couple of times during the month
- d) Never
- e) Other

7. How often did you have food delivered before the pandemic?

- a) Everyday
- b) A couple of times during the week
- c) A couple of times during the month
- d) Never
- e) Other

8. How often did you have food delivered during the pandemic lockdown?

- a) Everyday
- b) A couple of times during the week
- c) A couple of times during the month
- d) Never
- e) Other

9. How often do you have food delivered now that the social distancing measures are still present?

- a) Everyday
- b) A couple of times during the week
- c) A couple of times during the month
- d) Never
- e) Other

10. Are satisfied you with the performance of the gastronomy sector when it comes to respecting the anti-covid measures?

- a) Yes

- b) Somewhat satisfied
- c) No
- d) Neutral

11. Please explain your answer choice for question 10!

12. Do you go to the same cafes and restaurants you went to before the pandemic?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Some yes, some no

13. Please explain your answer choice for question 12!

Appendix 3, Informed Consent

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

RIT Kosovo

Title of Project: *The Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic in the Gastronomy Sector of Kosovo*

Principal Investigator: Rrona Skenderi, RIT-K Student
Germia Campus Nazim Gafurri, 21
Dr. Shpëtim Robaj, Prishtinë 10000
044 666 755; rronas@auk.org

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research study is to explore *how Covid-19 pandemic affected the gastronomy sector in Kosovo*
2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to answer *10* questions during this interview.
3. **Duration:** It will take about *40* minutes to complete the interview.
4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be used only for collecting primary data regarding the impact of Covid-19 on gastronomy sector in Kosovo. The data will be used only for the Senior Capstone project, and the participants will remain anonyms.
5. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Participant Signature

Date

Rrona Skenderi _____
Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix 4, Demographic Data from Survey

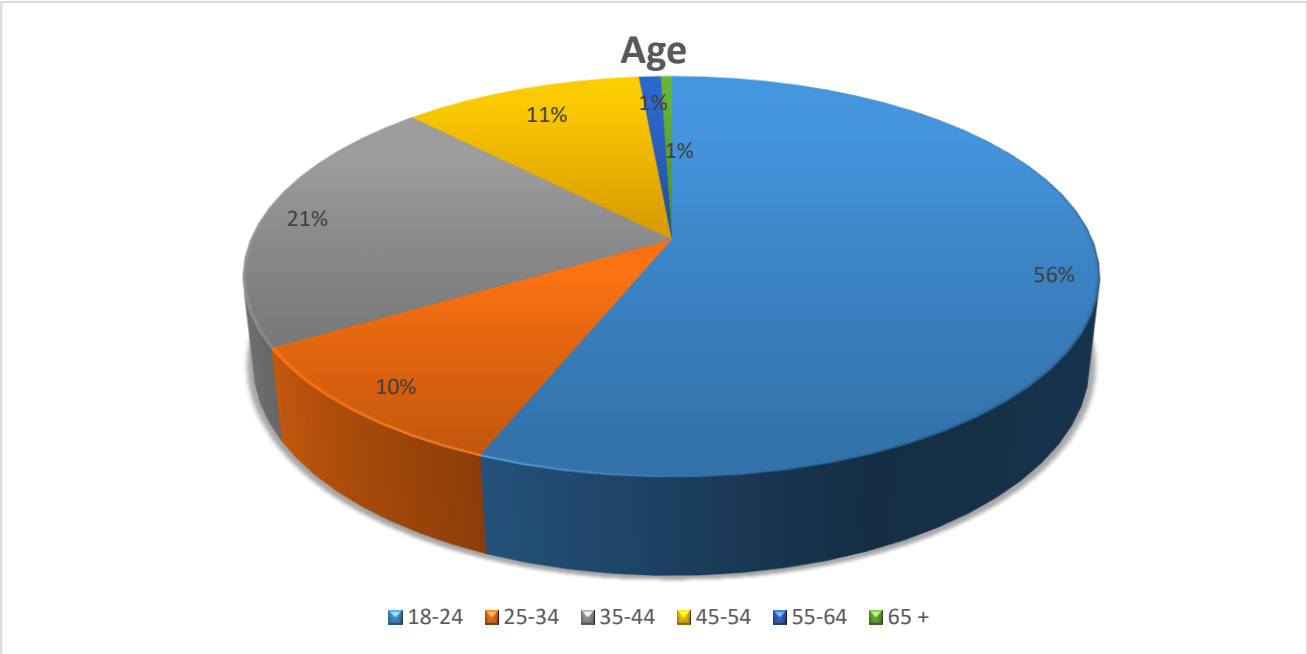


Figure 15, Age of Research Participants

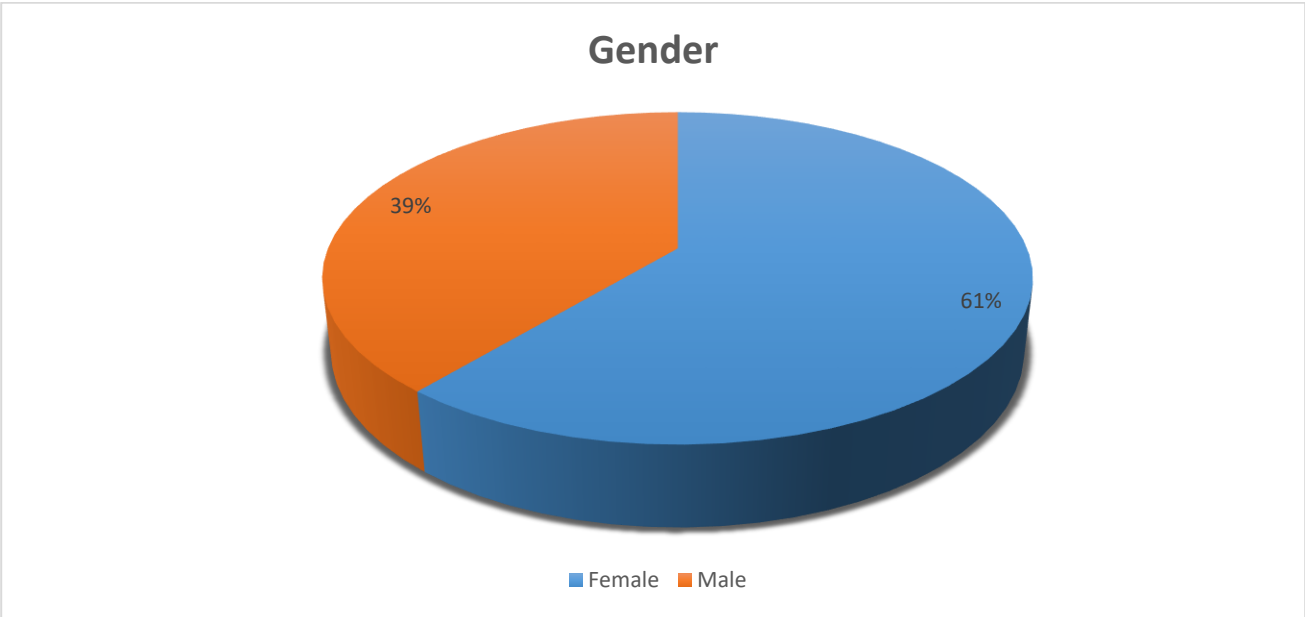


Figure 16, Gender of Research Participants

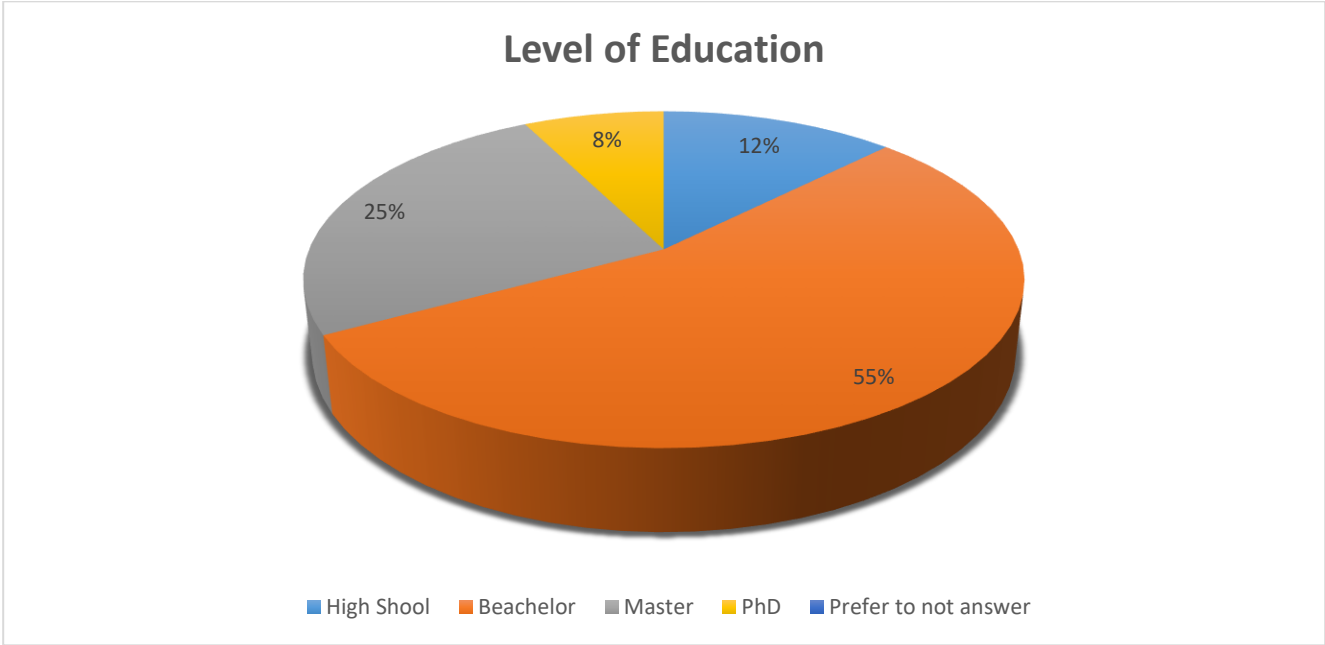


Figure 17, Level of Education of Research Participants

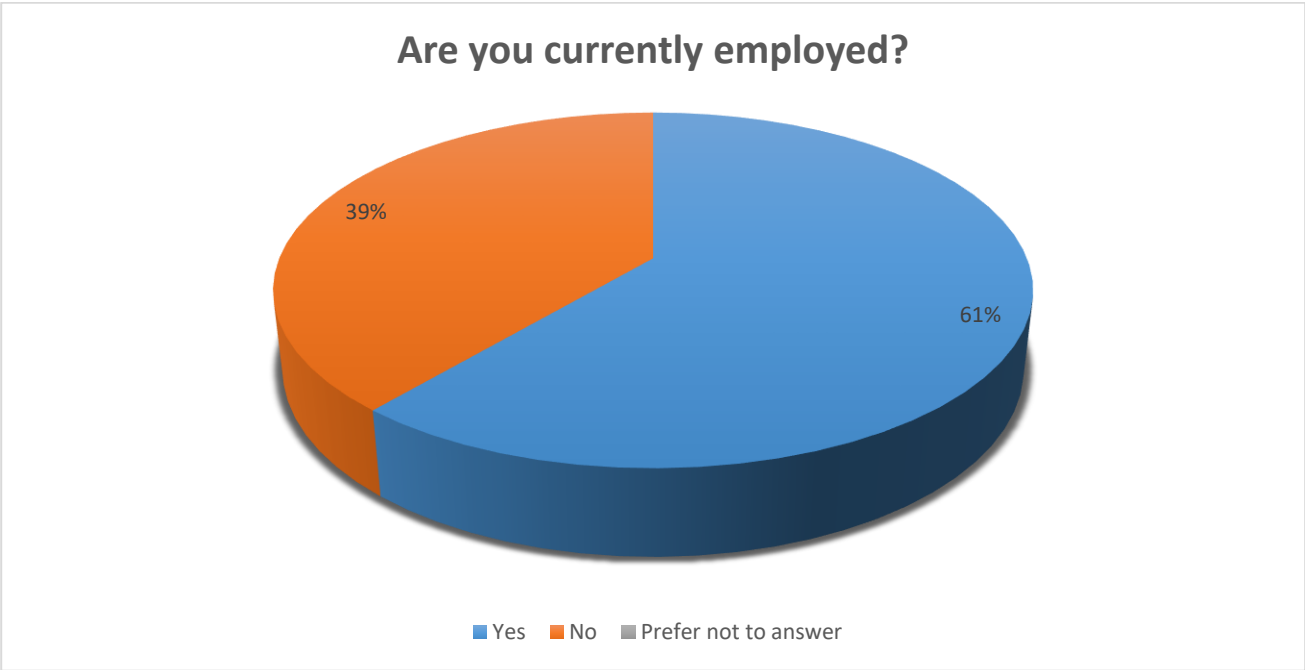


Figure 18, Employment Status of Survey Participants