



## HAFL Master's Thesis Abstract

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*English Title:* **Sustainable foodservice providers in Thailand: Motivation, challenges, strategies, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**

*English Summary:* Thailand has a strong food culture oriented around eating out. The consumers' choice of restaurant to purchase from has the potential to positively impact the environment and better the livelihood of the community. This paper explores the motivation, challenges, strategies, and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sustainable foodservice providers in Thailand, specifically restaurants, cafes, and food delivery services. To answer the research questions, 10 in-depth interviews, which lasted 30-75 minutes, were conducted online with owners of sustainable foodservice providers in Thailand about their perception of the foodservice industry. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed according to Phillip Mayring. The results suggest that a sustainable foodservice provider's main challenges are high operational costs, local sourcing, and the extra effort needed to run the business sustainably. It also includes the lack of available eco-friendly packaging in Thailand and the issue of consumer entitlement, which is when consumers feel that they deserve certain items such as plastic straws or bags after paying for the product. Common strategies used to run a sustainable foodservice provider are recycling and reusing, minimizing energy consumption, waste management methods such as production planning, and adhering to a zero-plastic policy. Other strategies include organic, local, and seasonal sourcing, following a plant-based concept, and educating staff and consumers on the benefits of supporting sustainable businesses. The primary customer demographic were high-income earners, expatriates, and tourists. Due to the halt of international tourism in Thailand to control the spread of COVID-19, sustainable foodservice providers are now targeting the local Thai community. The lack of Thai customers is due to education inequality and income disparities in Thailand. It is also because of the westernized menus and flavors the sustainable foodservice provider

offers, which is unfamiliar to the average Thai person. Using the multi-level perspective approach founded by Geels, various outcomes can be predicted, such as businesses going back to pre-COVID-19 situations or a change towards a more sustainable foodservice industry. The span of the COVID-19 pandemic and its direct influence on the Thai population plays a significant role in influencing the development of the foodservice industry.

*Keywords:* Sustainable foodservice provider; sustainable food industry; COVID-19; Thailand; Multi-level perspective

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