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Factors That Influence the Consumer Purchase Decision to Subscribe to a Meal-kit Delivery Service

By

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Abstract

Consumers have limited resources made up of time, money, energy and cognitive capacity, and act to conserve these resources in an effort to decrease perceived costs. Consumers perceived scarcity of resources, and the way in which goals compete for these scarce resources, often leads to more unhealthy mealtime choices. As a result, consumers suffer from increased levels of stress, anxiety, and guilt and are searching for convenient options to help them manage goal conflict. Consumers form an overall perception of value based on perceived costs and benefits that drive their purchase decision when choosing between various options available.

Meal-kit delivery services are a relatively new concept and limited academic literature exists on the topic specifically. It is important to understand how the consumer evaluates perceived value and the resulting impact on business. Innovative start-ups are providing solutions to these problems through subscription-based meal-kit delivery services and are disrupting traditional retail. But meal-kits can be viewed as less convenient in that they require increased consumer participation through cooking from scratch and the aim of this research was to better understand the evaluation of perceived costs and benefits by the consumer, outside of just convenience, and in light of significant goal-conflict.

This research adopted an exploratory, inductive approach and 14 in-depth, semi-structured, qualitative interviews of consumers who subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service was conducted in an attempt to develop a framework of factors consumers consider when deciding to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service.

This research revealed that consumers considered additional goals beyond health, taste, and convenience. The result is a framework of factors that consumers consider when specifically deciding to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service. This study found that the overall perceived benefits associated with meal-kits outweighed the perceived costs associated with cooking a meal from scratch. Of particular interest was how consumers considered the increased participation required while cooking as an additional perceived benefit in this context.

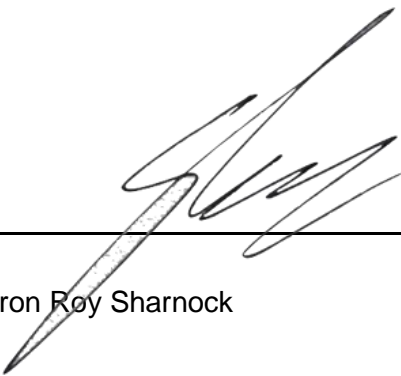
This research contributes to the body of knowledge of consumer decision-making and provides industry stakeholders insight as to why meal-kit delivery services are adopted by consumers. This research provides a foundation for further research on the topic and makes recommendations to management of retailers and meal-kit providers.

Keywords

Convenience food; Convenience meals; Dinner related activities; Goal conflict; Home meals; Meal box; Meal-kit; Time-scarcity

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.



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7 November 2018

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
KEYWORDS	III
DECLARATION	IV
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH	4
1.3 CONCLUSION	5
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 INTRODUCTION	6
2.2 FACTORS CONSIDERED BY CONSUMERS	7
2.2.1 <i>Time Poor Consumers</i>	7
2.2.2 <i>Time is Money</i>	8
2.2.3 <i>The Trend of Health and Wellness</i>	10
2.2.4 <i>Consumer Goal Conflict</i>	10
2.2.5 <i>Consumers' Constant Quest for Convenience</i>	12
2.2.6 <i>Convenient Food</i>	15
2.2.7 <i>Subscription Services</i>	17
2.2.8 <i>Additional Possible Factors Found in Literature</i>	18
2.2.8.1 <i>Managing Mood</i>	18
2.2.8.2 <i>Outsourcing and Planning</i>	19
2.2.8.3 <i>Customer Experience and Trust</i>	20
2.2.8.4 <i>Nudging</i>	21
2.2.8.5 <i>Managing Consumer Guilt</i>	22
2.2.8.6 <i>Shopper Safety</i>	25
2.3 PERCEIVED CUSTOMER VALUE AS A THEORY BASE	28
2.4 CONCLUSION	29
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	31
1. WHAT ARE ALL THE FACTORS THAT CONSUMERS CONSIDER WHEN INITIALLY DECIDING TO SUBSCRIBE TO A MEAL-KIT DELIVERY SERVICE?	31
2. WHAT FACTORS SUBSEQUENTLY AFFECT CUSTOMER LOYALTY TO REMAIN SUBSCRIBED TO A MEAL-KIT DELIVERY SERVICE?	32
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	33
4.1 INTRODUCTION	33

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN	33
4.2.1 Rationale.....	33
4.2.2 Population	35
4.2.3 Unit of Analysis.....	36
4.2.4 Sampling Method and Size	36
4.2.5 Measurement Instrument.....	37
4.2.6 Data Collection	39
4.2.7 Data Analysis.....	41
4.2.8 Further Validity and Reliability Measures	44
4.3 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	44
CHAPTER 5 RESULTS	46
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	46
5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DATA.....	46
5.2.1 Interviews	46
5.2.2 Description of the sample.....	48
5.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS / RESULTS	53
5.3.1 Presentation of Results.....	53
5.3.2 Convenience as a Factor.....	53
5.3.3 Time Scarcity as a Factor.....	65
5.3.4 The Goal to Eat Healthy as a Factor	68
5.3.5 Managing Goal Conflict as a Factor	74
5.3.6 Economic Considerations as a Factor.....	81
5.3.7 The Customer Journey / Experience as a Factor.....	90
5.3.8 Wastage as a Factor.....	97
5.3.9 Living up to Family Values as a Factor	102
5.3.10 Consumer Guilt: Ethical Consciousness as a Factor.....	108
5.3.11 Mistrust and the Trend to Support Local Business as a Factor	116
5.3.12 Skills and Knowledge as a Factor	117
5.3.13 Social Referral as a Factor	122
5.3.14 Safety Concerns as a Factor.....	123
5.3.15 Additional Post-Purchase Benefits Discussed.....	125
5.3.16 Unmet Needs	127
5.4 CONCLUSIVE FINDINGS.....	131
5.4.1 Conclusive Findings Related to Research Question 1:	132
5.4.2 Conclusive Findings Related to Research Question 2:	132
5.5 CONCLUSION.....	133
CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS	135

6.1 INTRODUCTION	135
6.2 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTION 1:	135
6.2.1 Convenience as a Factor	136
6.2.2 Time Scarcity as a Factor	139
6.2.3 The Goal to Eat Healthy as a Factor	140
6.2.4 Managing Goal Conflict as a Factor	141
6.2.5 Economic Considerations as a Factor	144
6.2.6 The Customer Journey / Experience as a Factor	145
6.2.7 Wastage as a Factor	146
6.2.8 Living up to Family Values as a Factor	147
6.2.9 Consumer Guilt: Ethical Consciousness as a Factor	149
6.2.10 Skills and Knowledge as a Factor	150
6.2.11 Social Referral as a Factor	150
6.2.12 Safety Concerns as a Factor	151
6.3 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTION 2:	151
6.3.1 Convenience as a Factor	152
6.3.2 Time Scarcity as a Factor	154
6.3.3 The Goal to Eat Healthy as a Factor	155
6.3.4 Managing Goal Conflict as a Factor	155
6.3.5 Economic Considerations as a Factor	156
6.3.6 The Customer Journey / Experience as a Factor	158
6.3.7 Wastage as a Factor	160
6.3.8 Living up to Family Values as a Factor	161
6.3.9 Consumer Guilt: Ethical Consciousness as a Factor	163
6.3.10 Skills and Knowledge as a Factor	164
6.3.11 Social Referral as a Factor	165
6.4 CONCLUSION	165
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION	167
7.1 INTRODUCTION	167
7.2 THE RESULTING FRAMEWORK	167
7.2.1 Developing the Framework	167
7.3 PRINCIPLE FINDINGS	169
7.3.1 Major Findings	170
7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS TO MANAGEMENT	171
7.4.1 Recommendations to Meal-kit Delivery Service Providers' Management	171
7.4.2 Recommendations to Retailers' Management	173
7.4.3 Conclusion of Recommendations to Managers	174

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	174
7.6 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	175
7.7 CONCLUSION.....	176
8. REFERENCE LIST.....	178
9. APPENDICES	191
APPENDIX 1: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH.....	191
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM	193
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.....	194
APPENDIX 4: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER OF APPROVAL.....	196
APPENDIX 5: COPYRIGHT DECLARATION FORM.....	197
APPENDIX 6: UCOOK LETTER GRANTING ACCESS TO CUSTOMER DATABASE.....	198
APPENDIX 7: THEMES, CATEGORIES AND CODES.....	199
APPENDIX 8: CODEBOOK (EXPORTED FROM ATLAS.TI)	212
APPENDIX 9: ADDITIONAL DETAIL OF REFERENCES USED	226
APPENDIX 10: EXAMPLES OF MEAL-KIT DELIVERY BOX IMAGES.....	231

List of Figures

FIGURE 1: THE STRUCTURE OF CONVENIENCE (BROWN & McENALLY, MARTHA, 1993, p.52).....	13
FIGURE 2: A CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FACTORS CONSIDERED BY CONSUMERS WHEN SUBSCRIBING TO MEAL-KIT DELIVERY SERVICES	31
FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF NEW CODES CREATED DURING DATA ANALYSIS.....	48
FIGURE 4: CONSUMERS CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS RELEVANT TO HOME DINNERS	131
FIGURE 5: A CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FACTORS CONSIDERED BY CONSUMERS WHEN SUBSCRIBING TO MEAL-KIT DELIVERY SERVICE	168

List of Tables

TABLE 1: PERCEIVED VALUE FRAMEWORK (PERVAL) (SWEENEY & SOUTAR, 2001, p.211)	29
TABLE 2: A FOUR-STEP ITERATIVE GUIDE FOR INTERVIEW DESIGN (ARSEL, 2017)	38
TABLE 3: PHASES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS (BRAUN & CLARKE, 2006, p. 87)	42
TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF SAMPLE	50
TABLE 5: FURTHER INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS	51
TABLE 6: RANKING OF THEMES	199
TABLE 7: CODEBOOK KEY.....	199
TABLE 8: THEMES, CATEGORIES AND CODES (EXPORTED FROM ATLAS.TI)	200
TABLE 9: ADDITIONAL DETAIL OF JOURNALS REFERENCED.....	226
TABLE 10: ADDITIONAL DETAIL OF JOURNALS REFERENCED PER CHAPTER.....	230

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Research Problem

1.1 Introduction and Background

Consider the following:

Kirsty is a busy mother of two girls (6 and 4 years old), has a full-time job as an advertising executive, and is happily married to Warren, who also works full time. Both have numerous weekly commitments relating to work, family, school, and social events that place strain on their time and attention. Kirsty understands the requirement to lead a healthy lifestyle, particularly when it comes to what her family eats, and is responsible for dinner-related activities such as planning, shopping and preparing family meals. Guilt has her feeling like she's not adequately taking care of her family's health regarding weekday dinner and states simply that she "just does not have enough time." Given her scarcity of resources, Kirsty has decided to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service in an attempt to achieve her goals of eating healthy and adequately providing for her family.

Consumers have limited real and perceived resources made up of time, money, energy and cognitive capacity, and so act to conserve these resources in an effort to decrease perceived costs (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). Consumers perceived scarcity of resources, and the way in which goals compete for these scarce resources, often leads to more unhealthy mealtime choices (Etkin, Evangelidis, & Aaker, 2015).

One manner by which consumers are trying to decrease perceived costs associated with mealtime decisions is the quest for convenience (Jiang, Yang, & Jun, 2013). Convenience has long been a trend in the food industry, dating back to the advent of frozen meals in the 1950's and the inventions of home appliances, like the microwave, to help consumers save time and effort in meal preparation (Jabs & Devine, 2006). Consumers' demand for convenience is still growing rapidly (Brunner, van der Horst, & Siegrist, 2010), primarily driven by consumers' evaluation of what they are required to give up (costs), in return for what they receive (benefits), for the objectives they are seeking to achieve (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016).

Kumar and Reinartz (2016) found that consumers form an overall perception of value based on both objective and perceived benefits and costs. These perceived costs and benefits are realised as a result of searching for, buying, using and disposing of products (or services), and such costs and benefits may be either immediate or delayed. This

suggests a level of complexity in the consumers' decision-making process and convenience is only a single factor in their effort to realise a greater net perceived benefit.

Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 has shown that additional factors relating to home meal decisions are considered by consumers. Not only are consumers attempting to decrease perceived costs, driven by resource scarcity, but consumers are considering nutrition, taste, health goals, food wastage, environmental impact, new experiences, mood management and even social status factors in their meal decisions (Hertz & Halkier, 2017). Combined with a barrage of complex and conflicting information, and well-crafted marketing messages, it is clear that consumers are constantly facing rising non-monetary perceived costs associated with meal choices. Ironically though, resource-scarce individuals were found to be less likely to buy fast food, sometimes choosing instead to skip meals completely, suggesting that these individuals may be purchasing prepared meals as a healthier alternative (Kalenkoski & Hamrick, 2013). Kalenkoski and Hamrick (2013) propose further research to investigate the source and purchase of convenience meals is necessary.

The growing popularity of convenient meal-kit delivery services internationally is evident by the entry, growth of, and investment attracted by meal-kit delivery services, such as Blue Apron, Plated and Hello Fresh (J. Miller, 2018). A 2017 report by Packaged Facts indicated that one in four US adult consumers have tried a meal-kit delivery service (N. Miller, 2017) and they value the US meal-kit delivery industry at over \$1.5billion (Packaged Facts, 2018). These firms are disrupting traditional retail in the food industry by blurring industry lines of and have very quickly captured market share (Atkins, 2017; Daneshkhu, 2018).

The local South African market has seen companies like uCook, the largest local player, show signs of success by attracting substantial investment and, according to a SAVCA case study, uCook delivers over 40,000 meals a week (Lynn, Rothschild, & Town, 2017; Ndweni, 2017). This has not gone unnoticed by traditional retailers with Checkers introducing their own "Ready-to-Chef" meal-kit offering in early 2018 (Checkers, 2018).

Meal-kit delivery services aim to eliminate meal planning and shopping by automatically charging customers for a set number of meal-kits delivered each week, with the only remaining onus for the customers in the purchase decision is to select the meals they want. Fresh, raw, pre-measured ingredients for the number of meals chosen, together with a step-by-step recipe guide is delivered to the customer's door each week. Customers then follow the recipe guides and cook a meal from scratch in what they deem

to be an acceptable time-frame. Many meal-kit delivery services communicate their commitment to ethical sourcing by supporting local, sustainable suppliers and actively market benefits associated with cooking from scratch (Blue Apron, 2018; uCook, 2018).

Convenience as a construct has been well researched with regards to food and retail but recent literature proposes that convenience is based on context and not only changes per consumer but also changes based on the same consumers' ever changing individual context, evident at any specific point in time (Jiang et al., 2013). Consumers' quest for convenience is apparent in their adoption of convenience products and services, but meal-kit delivery services often increase the perceived costs of the consumer through required consumer participation of having to cook from scratch. Based on the definition of convenience, this can be viewed as in fact less convenient (Hertz & Halkier, 2017) and thus supports the aim of this research to better understand the evaluation of perceived costs and benefits by the consumer, outside of just convenience factors.

Meal-kit delivery services are a relatively new concept and the lack of academic literature on the specific topic suggests that the concept of meal-kit delivery services, the impact on business, and how the consumer evaluates perceived value, is both important and under-researched. So impactful has the disruption been that Hertz and Halkier (2017) felt the need to redefine meal-kit delivery services as "convenient food," and show that meal-kit delivery services can be used as strategies for consumers to avoid conventional convenience food that may be thought of in a negative light.

Subscription-based business models have traditionally been offered by companies whose product or service is relatively simple to distribute, like music or software, and Torma, Aschemann-Witzel, and Thøgersen (2018) believe that the decision to subscribe to a food-related subscription service is far more complex. Subscription-based business models provide clear benefits to the firms because they often translate into greater repurchase rates by the consumer and can be viewed as improving customer loyalty (McCarthy, Fader, & Hardie, 2017) but little is known as to how subscription services benefit the consumer. A subscription by definition implies a longer commitment than the traditional once-off choice to purchase but decreases the cost to the consumer of having to search, decide, and transact for the same purchase over and over.

The complexity evident by the consideration of multiple objectives and perceived factors by the consumer encourages exploratory research about what is not known, and the topic must be approached broadly to incorporate ideas and theories from multiple

disciplines such as Economics, Psychology, Consumer Research, and Sociology (Jabs & Devine, 2006).

1.2 Purpose of This Research

The retail and food industries are being disrupted by start-ups who are blurring industry lines in an attempt to fulfil the needs of the consumer holistically. Retailers have long had fresh and frozen convenience meals, online shopping, convenient locations, and even meal-kits such as Woolworths “*Eat in for under R150*” (Woolworths, 2018), but retailers may be losing market share to start-ups who are combining multiple elements of convenience and additional benefits when it comes to adequately taking care of home meals.

Much research and literature has been dedicated to understanding factors of convenience in various contexts and settings, particularly in retail, but this research aims to explore additional factors that consumers consider when choosing to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services and ultimately aims to develop a conceptual framework of factors considered in the consumer decision-making process.

The resulting framework can help retailers and food industry players to better understand the consumer decision-making process and correlated evaluation of perceived costs and benefits regarding meal-kit delivery services to support future business model innovation.

This research aims to fully understand

1. What are all the factors that consumers consider when initially deciding to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service?
2. What factors subsequently affect customer loyalty to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service?

Carlson, Meloy, and Miller (2013) suggest that marketers can benefit from understanding how consumers make decisions when managing goal conflict as this is when consumers will be most undecided, least likely to be brand loyal and most susceptible to marketing messages. Further understanding of how consumers evaluate perceived net value and their willingness to decrease perceived costs has implications on product and service. Understanding consumers’ subjective perceptions and their associated relative value will affect product or service design and overall understanding of the factors driving

consumers to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services is critical for retailers to understand when developing customer retention strategies in a competitive market.

1.3 Conclusion

This qualitative, exploratory, study will provide additional insight into the consumers' evaluation of costs and benefits in the specific context of meal-kit delivery services. The business rationale is clear in that meal-kit delivery services, in a relatively short period of time, have seen high rates of adoption and impact traditional food-related industries such as retailers and restaurants. This research aims to contribute academically by providing insight into consumer decision-making directly related to meal-kit delivery services, a relatively new industry, and aims to formulate a conceptual model of factors considered by consumers in their cost vs. benefit analyses that can be empirically tested.

The field of study of this research falls within consumer behaviour and consumer decision-making.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

It is clear that consumers have less real and perceived time due to work and personal commitments, labour participation, and the general pace of life (Strazdins, Welsh, Korda, Broom, & Paolucci, 2016; Venn & Strazdins, 2017). These factors create a conflict when one is committed to the goal of generally eating more healthily, and in an attempt to save time and effort, consumers are looking for more convenience relating to meal activities that include planning, shopping, storing, preparing, eating, and cleaning (Etkin et al., 2015). The abundance of inconsistent, contradictory and biased information on what is healthy, complex family demands, constantly changing contexts, and humans being emotional beings result in greater psychological (Spiteri Cornish & Moraes, 2015).

Innovative business models seeking to take advantage of consumer trends of health, wellness, and convenience are providing solutions to these problems through product and business model innovation which has seen consumers adopting subscription-based meal-kit delivery services (Hertz & Halkier, 2017).

The decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service is complex and the consumers decision-making process is extensive with consumers making the decision as part of an active choice to change their shopping and eating habits (Torma et al., 2018).

Consumers form an overall perception of value based on both objective and perceived benefits and costs that are a result of buying and using products, which may be immediate or delayed. Perceived value is defined as “*the customer’s net evaluation of the perceived benefits accrued from an offering that is based on the costs they are willing to give up for the needs they are seeking to satisfy*” (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016, p.37).

This chapter is written per major factor considered by consumers in their decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service found in academic literature (2.2) and ends with additional possible factors that appear to carry less weight in the consumer decision-making process (2.2.8). Although exploratory and inductive in nature, the ‘Perceived Value Framework (PERVAL)’ (presented later on in Table 1) developed by Sweeney and Soutar (2001), and built on substantially by Kumar and Reinartz (2016), is the main theoretical lens used in this research and is discussed in more detail in 2.3.

2.2 Factors Considered by Consumers

2.2.1 Time Poor Consumers

Consumers often cite lack of time as an excuse for not making healthy mealtime decisions. A study by Venn and Strazdins (2017) on the effect that time scarcity has on healthy meal choices showed that this is not just a common excuse, but that time scarcity indeed directly influences healthy choices. Building on previous research, most notably by Jabs and Devine (2006), which has been cited almost 500 times often in highly rated peer-reviewed academic journals, Venn and Strazdins' (2017) propose that time was indeed a necessary resource for healthy eating due to the need to plan, shop, prepare and eat meals, and that people who feel rushed are less likely to avoid unhealthy foods.

Kalenkoski and Hamrick (2013) define time poverty as not having enough discretionary time. Although discretionary time is based on individual choice, much of the committed daily discretionary time is as a result of previous decisions and are, in effect, no longer discretionary but essentially fixed. People, therefore, have different levels of discretionary time, based on time already committed due to past choices.

Time scarcity results from an inadequate amount of time (hours available), but time is objectively finite in that everyone has 24 hours in a day, and each person has a choice as to how to spend their time daily. Thus, time scarcity is driven more by the perceived availability of time by the consumer than by physical time available (Strazdins et al., 2016).

Time and money are often considered interchangeably, a concept discussed in detail later, but interestingly Macdonnell and White (2015) found that because time was viewed more abstractly than money the consumer viewed money more finitely. They suggested that even by increasing the amount of discretionary time available, the perceived time scarcity of the consumer will not be relieved.

Time scarcity is thus a result of constraints on one's time available which is a result of either excessive or competing demands on one's time, or from ones' individual attitude and priorities. However, Strazdins et al. (2016) propose that when people refer to 'lack of time' they may be referring to another aspect of time, based on their own individual perception of time intensity. Increased time intensity has been brought on by the ever-accelerating pace of life due to technology, allowing people to be 'always-on,' the increased expectations of efficiency, and the need to do more in a day. Despite advances

in technology, consumers experience a sense of having less time and insufficient time to accommodate personal needs (Etkin et al., 2015).

People who are more time-poor are less likely to adhere to healthy dietary practices, and the associated time pressures have an adverse effect on one's diet (Kalenkoski & Hamrick, 2013). A study by Kalenkoski and Hamrick's (2013) indicates that time-poor individuals eat less frequently and often skip meals due to lack of time. The authors continue to report that time-poor individuals showed remarkably different eating habits to non-time-poor individuals. Surprisingly though, it was found that time-poor individuals made fewer fast food purchases, possibly due to the goal to eat healthily, a concept discussed later.

Both time available in hours and time intensity may be barriers to healthy behaviour such as physical activity and meal preparation. Time intensity also leads to physical and cognitive fatigue which enhances the barrier to exhibit healthy behaviour (Strazdins et al., 2016).

Issues of time and food choices are complex, hence little empirical research incorporates both dynamics. How issues of time contribute to food choices needs to be researched in broad terms and incorporate ideas from a variety of disciplines such as Economics, Sociology, Psychology, and Consumer Research (Jabs & Devine, 2006).

2.2.2 Time is Money

Consumers often consider money and time inter-changeably when making purchase decisions. There is agreement that time and money as essential resources have differing effects on consumers decisions and behaviour (Lee, Lee, Bertini, Zauberman, & Ariely, 2015).

Benjamin Franklin famously quoted that "*Time is Money*" and thus related time to money, both being viewed as scarce resources. Money and time are arguably the resources consumers consider most often in their daily lives (Macdonnell & White, 2015).

The Market economy traditionally dictates that time is traded for wages, and power in this time-wage exchange and is determined by negotiation of money paid per hour. These market demands are no longer static with time now being traded for intensity. Due to technology and premium placed on efficiency, people are working fewer hours but are producing ever-increasing output. This intensity has led to an 'always-on' mentality and has created an expectation that spills over from work life into personal life, increasing

time scarcity even further. Also, some activities do not form part of the wage-time exchange, such as childcare at home or domestic chores, but are demanding on both time required (hours) and time intensity. This also means that perceived time intensity will be different by demography, for example: women, single-parent households, caregivers, stay-at-home parents etc. As a result, time poverty and time intensity are strongly associated with employment and having children, and intensifies with higher income earners. Men are more likely to be time poor but women are more likely to feel rushed (Strazdins et al., 2016).

Etkin et al. (2015) argue that since time is measured by consumers in monetary terms it is often considered as interchangeable, and the perceived scarcity of time may carry over to the perceived scarcity of money. The contribution of academic literature is growing with regard to time-money relationships and the implications for consumer behaviour. Since money is a common medium of exchange consumer decisions around money trigger a value maximising goal and consumers tend to weigh up the economic benefits against the money required (Lee et al., 2015).

There is an inherent difficulty in measuring time intensity as it is based on self-assessment, and the measures available assess individual subjective perceptions (Strazdins et al., 2016). This viewpoint is supported in literature by Lee et al. (2015) and, Macdonnell and White (2015) who suggest that time and money are not mentally accounted for in the same manner by consumers, and that individuals do not account for time as effectively as they do for money, often the discount time.

Social science theory offers some explanation in that it proposes that increased affluence, speed and productivity comes at a cost to time, but not merely in hours and minutes but also in intensity. Time pressure is going to increase as technology and the pace of life increases further and society must find a better way to measure its effect on health-related purchasing decisions (Strazdins et al., 2016).

Lee et al. (2015) proposed that prompting consumers for money rather than time tends to elicit less of an emotional response or attachment to the product, whereas time considerations lead consumers to question emotional meaning, happiness, personal connection, how they will experience the product, and how it will affect their wellbeing.

2.2.3 The Trend of Health and Wellness

Health consciousness has been an increasing trend with customers looking at paid programmes for advice and motivation relating to exercise and diet plans (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). There is also a push from policy makers to move consumers toward a more healthy diet (Talukdar & Lindsey, 2013; VanEpps, Downs, & Loewenstein, 2016), evident by tax increases on unhealthy food, like sugar tax, as well the trend of incentivising a healthier diet through programmes like Vitality by Discovery and their healthy food benefits (Discovery Vitality, 2018). Other health organisations are advocating for healthier versions of traditionally unhealthy foods and snacks so to appeal to consumers who are increasingly wanting to live a healthier lifestyle but are demanding that it also tastes good (Belei, Geyskens, Goukens, Ramanathan, & Lemmink, 2012).

A common theme found in literature is the use of heuristics by consumers to promptly evaluate costs and benefits of food choices, which usually leads to incorrect assumptions that healthy food is more expensive regarding price and effort. This presumption is increased as consumers are bombarded with a high volume of marketing messages from cheap, unhealthy alternatives such as fast food combos. Additionally, the perceived increased effort in terms of planning and preparing healthy food makes the overall perception of costs to the consumer greater (Haws, Reczek, & Sample, 2017).

Research has shown that effective meal planning decreases convenient food consumption, increases family meals and fruit and vegetable consumption, which is critical to maintain healthy eating behaviour (Ducrot et al., 2017; VanEpps et al., 2016; Venn & Strazdins, 2017). But, meal planning is viewed as complicated with those responsible for meal planning in the household needing to balance preferences, nutritional requirements, and schedules of increasingly busy family members (Ducrot et al., 2015). This further contributes to the complexity of home meals thereby increasing the perceived costs to the consumer and creating goal conflict.

2.2.4 Consumer Goal Conflict

Desire, conflict and resistance are commonplace and constant, but humans have evolved the ability to override motivations in an attempt to self-regulate; the result is constant goal-conflict (Hofmann, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2012).

Consumers are caught up between the competing imperative to make healthy choices at mealtime and the need for convenience. This is believed to be driven by scarcity of

resources, particularly time. Much research has been conducted with regards to scarcity of time (hours available). However, limited research has been done with regards to time intensity as a measure of time scarcity, and purchasing decisions regarding healthy meal choices (Etkin et al., 2015; Strazdins et al., 2016; Venn & Strazdins, 2017).

A study by Etkin et al. (2015) on the consumer's perception of time scarcity proposes that goal conflict, regardless of whether the goals compete for time or other, results in greater stress and anxiety resulting in a feeling of being pressed for time. The authors found that increased perceived goal conflict, regardless of the resource each goal was competing for (time, money or even no resource), resulted in the feeling of having less time and higher stress and anxiety. They were unable to answer the question as to why goal conflict exists between eating healthy and eating tasty food, neither of which evidence suggests increases demands on time or money, and they believe that the resulting perception of less time in this particular goal conflict can be explained by higher levels of stress and anxiety.

Etkin et al. (2015) found that increased perceived goal conflict led to increased levels of stress and anxiety. Ultimately the feeling of less time, and the consequences thereof, have a tremendous impact on how people spend both their time and money. However, surprisingly, the authors found that while there was an increased perception of goal conflict and the resulting perception of diminished time available, the same was not true for money. This supports their notion of consumer's willingness to pay more to wait less for consumer products and save time.

There is a large body of research that demonstrates that meal planning, such as ordering meals in advance before one is hungry and pre-ordering groceries online by a few days, leads to healthier meal choices and can help consumers achieve their goal of eating healthy (VanEpps et al., 2016).

In a study by Ducrot et al. (2015), consumers showed that the healthy diet factor was consistently the main factor considered throughout the week. Constraints and organisation were found to be strong factors during weekdays, with pleasure superseded these as a factor during weekends. The authors suggest that the results may be due to weekday time-scarcity leading to a greater reliance on planning, whereas consumers consider weekend cooking as a social event.

Since time is not a commodity and cannot be banked for the future, time scarcity has an immediate effect on healthy choices and eating behaviour and further amplify other

factors that are likely to affect healthy eating behaviour, such as income variables and levels of physical activity (Venn & Strazdins, 2017).

It is evident that the resulting stress and anxiety the consumer experiences as a result of goal conflict increases the perceived costs of making healthy meal-time decisions and consumers will naturally aim to decrease these perceived costs through the constant quest for convenience.

A study by Jackson and Viehoff (2016) focusing on convenience food indicated that consumers often regard convenience meals as unhealthy, unsustainable in terms of packaging and environmental impact due to high quantities of imported ingredients, and is least likely to meet nutritional and dietary requirements. It was also found that convenience meals in the form of ready-made or prepared meals were one of the most frequently wasted foods resulting in increased consumer guilt due to environment and social consciousness.

This additionally highlights the conflict that consumers face between making healthy eating choices, searching for convenience through time and effort savings, budget, managing guilt, and social or environmental consciousness.

2.2.5 Consumers' Constant Quest for Convenience

Shopping convenience has been a driving factor for the adoption of online shopping as consumers look to spend less time shopping and more time dedicated to other activities (Jiang et al., 2013) and the internet has significantly improved convenience in the purchase of goods and services online (Wang, Ye, Zhang, & Nguyen, 2005). Initially the growth and consumer take up was with goods and services that were easily distributed online, such as music and information (Wang et al., 2005), but as companies find more efficient ways to distribute physical goods, so consumers have increasingly adopted online shopping.

Convenience is based on context and consumers' perception of convenience changes according to their individual and current context, at any specific point in time (Jiang et al., 2013). Convenience refers to factors that help a consumer decrease time or effort and may be a result of the characteristics of a product or service itself, and can be perceived during all phases of the purchase process. Consumers' quest for convenience is known as consumer "convenience consciousness," defined as "*the degree to which a consumer focuses exclusively on saving time and effort*" (Wieseke, Kolberg, & Schons,

2016, p.476). Literature reviewed around convenience, particularly with regard to saving effort, often refers to levels of psychological distress.

The convenience framework proposed by Brown and McEnally (1993) refers to a consumer's quest for convenience across acquisition, consumption and disposal of a product or service (see Figure 1). This framework, although critically reviewed in literature by many peer-reviewed journal articles, has yet to be empirically tested. Building on the work by Brown and McEnally (1993), the authors Olsen and Huynh (2013) conducted research specifically regarding the convenience orientation of consumers and their consumer participation rates relating to preparing meals at home. They defined convenience orientation in this context as *"the degree to which the consumer is inclined to save time and effort with regard to planning, buying and preparing a meal"* (Olsen & Huynh, 2013, p.3).

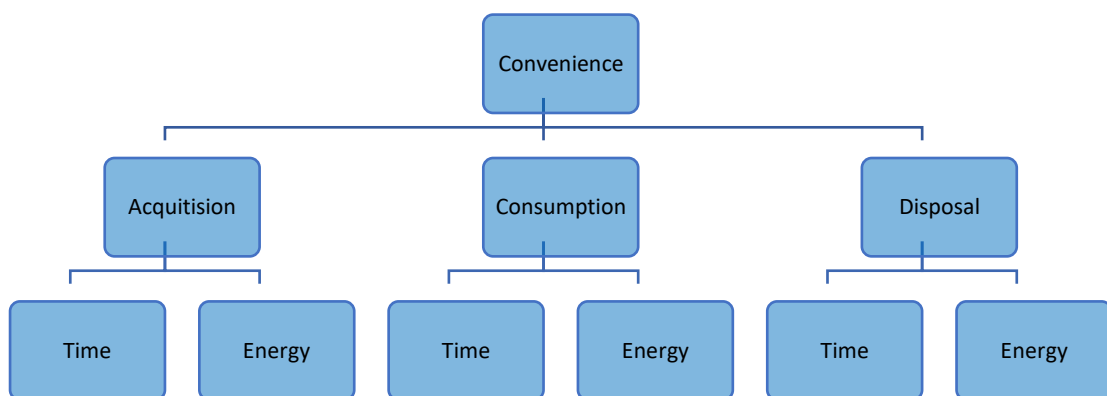


Figure 1: The Structure of Convenience (Brown & McEnally, Martha, 1993, p.52)

Olsen and Huynh (2013) found specifically that convenience-oriented consumers were less likely to spend time preparing meals at home which begs the question: why are consumers subscribing to meal-kit services that require increased consumer participation through cooking from scratch? Research suggests two possible reasons: 1) that consumers are different in themselves, and act differently according to the context they find themselves in at the time (mood, goals, perceived time scarcity, weekdays vs. weekends, cooking ability, guilt, and pleasure derived from cooking) (Hertz & Halkier, 2017), and 2) that consumer participation in some instances is viewed as a perceived value benefit to consumers (Olsen & Mai, 2013). Meal-kit delivery services may

drastically decrease consumer participation and non-monetary perceived costs relating to planning, shopping, and wastage, that outweigh the increased cost implication of participation in use through actual cooking. The additional benefits of eating healthy, feeling good about cooking from scratch, and knowing the source of the ingredients that make up one's meal may further increase the perceived benefit and value considered by the consumer. Consumer participation and associated costs or benefits are dependent on the recipes and ingredients offered by each meal-kit delivery service with some recipes being viewed as simple while others more complex (Hertz & Halkier, 2017).

Research has indicated that consumers who are more time-poor, overloaded due to multiple roles such as working and being a family carer, as well the pursuit of more leisure time, have driven greater convenience consciousness (Strazdins et al., 2016; Venn & Strazdins, 2017; Wieseke et al., 2016). These consumers, who are more convenience conscious, place higher importance on convenience attributes of products as well as convenience elements in the purchase process, and are willing to pay more for convenience (Wieseke et al., 2016).

An example that highlights the strength of the quest for convenience, that is to save both time (perceived and real), and effort (physical and cognitive), was found in the work by Wieseke et al. (2016) who indicated that round pricing, as opposed to pricing just below round (for example R40 rather than R 39.90), was perceived to be more convenient to consumers due to the improved cognitive accessibility and additional perceived saving of time and effort.

Consumers have limited real and perceived time, money, energy and cognitive resources and therefore act to conserve these resources through the quest for convenience. Both traditional retail and e-commerce development has been in response to the consumers desire for increased perceived convenience (Jiang et al., 2013). Wang, Ye, Zhang, and Nguyen (2005) found that convenience was a major driver of the decision to subscribe to (purchase) an online offering.

In this research study, all meal-kit delivery services are subscribed to via an online store. Jiang et al. (2013) found five factors of online shopping convenience to be access, search, evaluation, transaction, and possession / post-purchase convenience. Search convenience accounted for 30% of the total variance in the study. Evaluation, access and transaction convenience collectively accounted for 20% of the variance, with possession/post-purchase accounting for just 13%. Logically, once a consumer has subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service only possession / post-purchase convenience

remains a factor. The majority of convenience benefits to a subscription service are therefore realised upfront by the consumer which indicates the need to understand additional factors that keep the consumer subscribed to the service.

2.2.6 Convenient Food

How consumers choose their food directly effects how they purchase, acquire, prepare, and eat it. Choosing food not only incorporates conscious decision-making process but also employs more automated, habitual, and subconscious reflections that help form strategies to shortcut decisions; these are known as heuristics (Furst, Connors, Bisogni, Sobal, & Falk, 1996).

Jackson and Viehoff (2016) in their article named "*Reframing Convenience Food*" offers an extensive review of the literature on convenience food and highlighted the significant impact convenience food has had on consumers looking to save time and effort in home meal preparation, as well as how the use of convenience foods and ingredients are moralised by consumers in an effort to alleviate consumer guilt caused by using them in cooking.

Jackson and Viehoff (2016) further discuss the complexity of defining what convenience food is, but agree that "*convenience foods encompass a wide variety of processed and semi-processed food, frequently contrasted with 'fresh' foods using raw ingredients, cooked from scratch*" (Jackson & Viehoff, 2016, p.1).

Consumer response has been to eat out more which is considered to be a less healthy option than eating at home, and is a known characteristic of restaurant and fast food (Hagen, Krishna, & McFerran, 2017). When consumers do choose to eat at home, their response to lack of time has been to consume more convenient, usually less healthy, home meals (Ducrot et al., 2015).

The trend of convenience food consumption has been primarily driven by increased labour force participation and a preference for leisure time that has impacted care-givers' readiness to cook meals at home. Another trend has been the personalisation of diet driven by recently recognised dietary sensitivities, often leading to members of the same family eating different meals, even at different times. Such factors have moved consumers to place more value on service-oriented offerings that provide solutions to the complex task of satisfying the demands of all family members (Casini, Contini, Romano, & Scozzafava, 2015).

The food industry has responded to consumer needs over decades, with the advent of the TV dinner in 1954, and widespread development of convenience foods ever since: Frozen meals, fast food, fast casual dining, pre-packaged ingredients and prepared meals at grocery stores. This has been exacerbated further by technology improvements to reduce time spent doing meal prep in the home such as the microwave, bread makers, rice cookers and blenders (Jabs & Devine, 2006).

Fast food proliferation over the decades is another industry response to take advantage of the consumer trend to save effort and time, and fast food has been positively linked to unhealthy behaviour and disease. Fast food refers not only to what one eats but also to how one eats. It epitomises a culture of time-saving and allows the consumer to fulfil the need to eat as quickly as possible and move onto the next task (Zhong & DeVoe, 2010). Zhong and DeVoe (2010) found that mere exposure to fast food messaging created the increased perception of time scarcity and led consumers to make less healthy food choices in favour of saving time.

The term convenience food has been subject to critique of late due to the advent of innovative meal-kit delivery services. Traditionally convenience food has had negative associations and illicit thoughts of unhealthy frozen meals, tinned food or take-away meals. Meal-kit delivery services have forced the academic community to question just how far convenience goes in meal preparation; does the use of a pre-cooked ingredient used in a home cooked meal constitute it being 'cooked from scratch?' (Hertz & Halkier, 2017). Only one peer-reviewed academic article in the literature reviewed related to meal-kit delivery services and suggested a new definition of convenience food that captures the increased number of innovative food solutions, such as meal-kits, called 'convenient food.' The authors propose that this term relates more to the process relating to planning, shopping, preparing and wasting of food (Hertz & Halkier, 2017) and clarifies the confusion with convenience food such as tinned and frozen meals.

Hagen et al. (2017) showed that the less physically involved in preparing meals, whether at home or even eating out, the more likely an unhealthy choice will be made due to the cognitive ability to relinquish responsibility for an unhealthy choice of food. This leads the author to propose that by purchasing pre-planned meals that require preparation at home, the consumer knows that she will cook that meal and be committed to the goal of eating healthy. This is supported by the work of VanEpps et al. (2016) indicating that advanced meal planning leads to healthier choices.

Hertz and Halkier (2017) found that meal-kit delivery services, involving the subscription to weekly meal recipes and deliver of fresh, raw ingredients, were convenient in that they relieved the pressure of planning meals, saved shopping time, provided a positive feeling to the person cooking for her family associated with cooking from scratch (resulting in decreased feeling of guilt), provided the family variety in their diet, decreased food waste, and was generally considered as healthy.

Again, it is evident that different consumers, at different times will evaluate the perceived costs and benefits associated with home meal options. Start-ups and ambitious firms have spotted this gap and deliver a variety of meal-kit service offerings that cater for multiple types of consumers in a variety of settings. This, however is not going unnoticed by the larger corporations with Nestle, Unilever, Amazon, and locally Checkers, investing in the meal-kit delivery service industry (Atkins, 2017; Checkers, 2018; Daneshkhu, 2018; Manning, 2017; Whole Foods, 2018). The industry has seen such high growth that it has attracted competitors from outside of the traditional grocery industry such as Chick-fil-A (Chick-fil-A, 2018), a large fast food outlet in the USA as part of their strategy to leverage their outlets as distribution or collection centres.

2.2.7 Subscription Services

Consumers are constantly looking for higher levels of convenience, so much so that they have even explored outsourcing elements of decision-making through the use of subscription services (Rudolph, Bischof, Böttger, & Weiler, 2017). Research of subscription business models has traditionally focused on intangible services such as cell phone contracts, and the authors note the research gap for retailers, especially given the popularity of the model across multiple industries and categories (McCarthy et al., 2017; Rudolph et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2005).

Subscription-based services, whereby a consumer pays a recurring fee for a service or product, was previously relevant to newspapers, software, gym and cellular contracts, but has recently been adopted as a business model by health and beauty, consumable retailers, and food retailers in the form of a subscription boxes (McCarthy et al., 2017). The Dollar Shave Club disrupted the traditional razor blade business model by offering consumers a subscription to a set number, chosen by the consumer, of high quality razor blades each month. Kumar and Reinartz (2016) point out clear benefits of the subscription-based business model to firms as it allows for a long term financial forecast and a commitment of repurchase from the customer, even though customer attrition is

inevitable and easy. Subsequently, the Dollar Shave Club was bought by Unilever at a valuation of over \$1bn (Livsey, 2017; Pahwa, 2017).

Wang, Ye, Zhang, and Nguyen (2005) state that it is critical to understand consumers perceptions and attitudes toward subscription-based business models so as to predict consumer behaviour and leverage innovation in the business model. It is here, back in 2005, that the authors sparked a thought of the subscription-based business model being applicable to business who offer tangible products, should they ever overcome the challenge of physical distribution.

The increased popularity of the subscription business model has been adopted by companies and subsequently adopted by consumers across multiple industries, even in perishable goods like food (McCarthy et al., 2017). Internationally meal-kit providers Blue Apron, Freshly and Daily Harvest have attracted significant investments for future growth (Blue Apron, 2018; Daily Harvest, 2018; Packaged Facts, 2017, 2018). Success has also seen large retail disruptors like Amazon enter the subscription meal-kit delivery services category (Manning, 2017).

So vast is the subscription-based business model that an online community marketplace called CrateJoy lists more than 1,300 subscriptions offering books, food and even adult toys, to list just a few (Rudolph et al., 2017).

Subscription services are all about convenience and keep time-constrained consumers replenished with everyday consumables in order to fulfil their basic needs (Rudolph et al., 2017) and ultimately indicate the determination of consumers to decrease perceived costs associated with routine purchases.

2.2.8 Additional Possible Factors Found in Literature

The literature review indicates the breadth of the consumer decision-making process and the complexity a consumer faces in evaluating costs and benefits in a complex, uncertain reality. The literature also suggests multiple additional factors that may be considered in the decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service and are outlined below.

2.2.8.1 Managing Mood

Kidwell, Hasford, and Hardesty (2015) found that food and eating can be very affective and emotional for individual consumers. They found that consumers who are more in

control of their emotions, have an increased emotional ability and thus make better food choice decisions when presented with a goal such as eating healthy. Perhaps consumers who lack such emotional ability, and who are aware of their emotional association with food, consciously acknowledge how emotion negatively affects their food choice. By subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service that ensures a healthy meal choice is already made, the consumer effectively increases control by being already committed to their original goal of eating healthy.

Food is more than just sustenance and nutrition. Many people have an emotional relationship with food and eat in an immediate effort to improve one's mental state or mood. Research has found that consumers are more likely to choose relatively healthy foods when in a more positive mood state, indicating they are acting in their own long-term interests (Gardner, Wansink, Kim, & Park, 2014). Consumers may be aware that they make unhealthy food decisions based on their specific context, and by subscribing to a healthy meal-kit delivery service they will mitigate the risk of choosing unhealthy foods that conflict with their long-term goals of eating healthy.

2.2.8.2 Outsourcing and Planning

In an effort to be healthy, consumers gain additional knowledge about what is healthy from a variety of sources that influence their perception of what is healthy to eat. Sources include policy makers, marketing campaigns, packaging, and even word of mouth. Often there is a barrage of complex, ambiguous and contradictory information, which leads consumers to rely on the messages that are easiest to understand and often support their existing biases, subsequently leading to unhealthy choices (Spiteri Cornish & Moraes, 2015). This confusion creates anxiety for the consumer (Spiteri Cornish & Moraes, 2015) which is in contravention of the quest for convenience due to increased psychological cost. This research considers that consumers are readily subscribing to meal-kit delivery services in an attempt to declutter and avoid confusion about what is healthy. They may make the choice of a meal-kit delivery service based on the marketing message of the service itself, supporting the findings by Spiteri Cornish and Moraes (2015). There is no doubt that the marketing messages delivered by innovative start-ups, often delivered to a consumer via trusted peers on social media, are impressive and believable.

2.2.8.3 Customer Experience and Trust

It is commonly known that an overall positive customer experience throughout the entire customer journey is important to both the consumer and the brand itself in order to build trust between the two parties for both initial purchases (or trial) and to increase loyalty, over time (Izogo & Jayawardhena, 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The literature reviewed consistently cites customer satisfaction as a key factor of loyalty and repurchase intention (Seiders, Voss, Grewal, & Godfrey, 2005). Woo and Ramkumar (2018) found trust of online retailers to be a significant factor in driving customer loyalty and the intention to purchase, and repurchase. The authors came to the conclusion that trust of online retailers was a prerequisite for repurchase of subscription-based services. This viewpoint was supported by Yeo, Goh, and Rezaei (2017) who also found that a positive online experience led directly to improved trust and subsequent customer loyalty.

Seiders et al. (2005) found a positive correlation between trust and repurchase intention, which is supported by Cao and Li (2015) who found that cross-channel integration improved trust in the retailer and subsequently reinforced perceived safety associated with a brand and ultimately sales growth, the outcome of which was customer purchase and repurchase through improved loyalty and conversion.

Recently, and discussed in detail in 2.2.8.5, advertisers and marketers have placed emphasis on using emotion and guilt in marketing campaigns in order to drive purchase behaviour. This has been a dominant tactic in marketing more ethical products, such as organic and free range. Using emotion in this manner was used to charge price premiums for ethically positioned organic products, rather than communication functional benefits of organic products. Hauser, Nussbeck, and Jonas (2013) found that this tactic may backfire when sceptical consumers begin to question the validity of the price premium based on guilt and may in fact revoke their trust. This was supported by Wilson (2015) who found that marketing spin about sustainability of a retailer not backed up by facts only increases customer scepticism and mistrust. Izogo and Jayawardhena (2018) recommend that brands should always under promise and over deliver as the safest approach to build trust and loyalty, as broken promises will simply deter customer loyalty and decrease trust. It can therefore be inferred based on literature in 2.2.8.5, that when a brand positions itself as being ethical it must ensure that promises are kept at all costs.

2.2.8.4 Nudging

Torma et al. (2018) found that subscription to a food delivery service was a commitment that helped consumers to behave in a manner consistent with their intentions. They call this 'self-nudging;' a strategy employed by consumers who are aware of issues of self-control and so make longer term commitments to force intended behaviour. Their research indicated that consumers subscribed to food delivery services in an attempt to eat more organic food, eat more healthy, waste less, and be more environmentally considerate. These can be considered as additional perceived benefits in the consumer decision-making process. This strategy employed by consumers themselves is supported by VanEpps et al. (2016) who found that making meal-time decisions in advance corresponded to healthier meal choices by consumers and can be used as a strategy to promote healthier mealtime behaviour.

The same tactic of nudging can be used to influence one's own shopping behaviour. The more people shop, the more likely they are being subjected to retail, marketing and packaging messages, and therefore likely to make an impulse purchase of unhealthy or indulgent foods. Most often the more indulgent items are strategically placed in retail spaces to entice impulse purchases. These findings are supported by literature which found the less planned people are while shopping, by using shopping lists as an example, the more likely they will make impulse, often unhealthy, purchases. An additional challenge is that healthy foods are often more perishable, like fruit and vegetables, which inherently require more frequent shopping trips (Rudi & Çakır, 2017).

Using nudging successfully, however, is also dependent on the type of consumer as Townsend and Liu (2012) found that pre-planning does not necessarily benefit all. The authors in fact found that with consumers who are not entirely "in good standing" with their long-term goals are less likely to exert self-control after the planning (nudging) and in fact suffer from increased stress as a result of the planning itself.

Consumers may subscribe to healthy meal-kit delivery services so as to avoid the impulse, unhealthy food purchases that are a result of more frequent, unplanned shopping trips, and subsequently eat more healthy and save money due to unnecessary impulse purchases at point of sale.

2.2.8.5 Managing Consumer Guilt

Consumer guilt was originally defined by Burnett and Lunsford in 1994 who stated that “*guilt implies the existence of ...two states: 1) a violation of one’s internal standards; and subsequently 2) a lowering of self-esteem.*” Generally, guilt is a result of one comparing one’s actual behaviour with that of one’s ideal behaviour according to socially defined standards, rules, or morals (Labarge & Godek, 2006). A key point made by Burnett and Lunsford was that guilt was more likely to occur when a consumer has general control of an outcome, such as eating healthy or providing healthy meals for one’s family, and guilt positively correlates to control.

Despite guilt being a negative emotion, it is also considered functional as it functions as a mechanism to remind consumers that they are in violation of personal or social standards set; guilt also motivates consumers to change their behaviour and act according to such standards. Guilt has also been linked to purchase behaviour with regards to compulsive consumption, impulsive purchasing and at times overspending (Dahl, Honea, & Manchanda, 2005; Kayal, Simintiras, & Rana, 2017). Dahl et al. (2005) go on to describe how consumers experience guilt related to interpersonal relationships, for example in the context of this study providing food for oneself and / or one’s family, particularly when the consumer does (or doesn’t) do things that may have negative consequences for themselves or loved ones, then they will feel guilty and will be motivated to consider the impact of their actions.

Guilt in the context of this research is multi-dimensional and could be financial guilt, health guilt, moral guilt, and social responsibility guilt (Burnett & Lunsford, 1994), each driven by wastage, environmental impact of packaging, wasted food, wasted time and effort, providing or eating unhealthy food, and even using convenience food or ingredients in meals that the consumer views as ‘cheating’ and does not consider as cooking a ‘proper meal.’

Literature reviewed suggests that guilt can have significant impact on consumer behaviour, and subsequent purchase decisions, and is a persuasion tactic widely used by marketers as a tactic to drive an intended outcome (Antonetti & Baines, 2015; Burnett & Lunsford, 1994; Han, Duhachek, & Agrawal, 2014; Labarge & Godek, 2006; Pelozo, White, & Shang, 2013).

Interestingly, although the use of guilt as a persuasion tactic may influence consumer behaviour, it has also been known to backfire on marketers and induce unintended

reactions from consumers, such as anger (Labarge & Godek, 2006). As a result, marketers have started successfully using a counter-tactic; marketing products as ‘*Guilt-Free*’ (Haynes & Podobsky, 2016; Pelozo et al., 2013). Consumers have shown increased ethical, social, and environmental consciousness and have shown preference to support companies and products who have marketed themselves through ethical appeals so that the consumer can alleviate one’s own consumer guilt (Haynes & Podobsky, 2016; Pelozo et al., 2013). This has led to a trend to support smaller, local, independently owned, ethical companies and products (Avery, 2016).

This desire of consumers to live up to higher internally set standards has subtly increased consumer guilt and anxiety associated with considering less ethical options during purchase decisions. This has been shown to lead to consumers overstating the value of a product being ‘guilt-free’ in an attempt to decrease perceived psychological cost associated with their own guilt when considering the less ethical option, and even pay a premium for the alleviated guilt (Haynes & Podobsky, 2016; Pelozo et al., 2013). This is supported by Kayal, Simintiras, and Rana (2017) who proposed that consumers who experience guilt remain in a “*state of distress.*”

As consumers become more aware of social and environmental impact of their purchase behaviour, so does their drive to alleviate associated feelings of guilt. Perceived costs associated with purchasing, using, and disposing of a product are increased when consumers consider health, the environment, ethical sourcing, food security, concentration of supply, impact on local economy, and wastage (Haynes & Podobsky, 2016). In line with the perceived value consumers are looking for, discussed in 2.3, consumers are looking to either decrease these perceived costs by preferring to choose products with guilt-free narrative or attributes, or are looking to increase perceived value of products, achieved by paying a premium for ethically positioned products in the hope to ‘make a difference’ (Haynes & Podobsky, 2016).

Haynes and Podobsky (2016) summed it up best by saying “*The cost of saving the planet, giving fair wages to farmers, becoming healthy without effort and a host of other problems can be quantified and added to the package of features in the food we buy*” (Haynes & Podobsky, 2016, p.210).

While gender roles are changing with respect to providing healthy meals for family and loved ones, overwhelmingly the duty of feeding the family remains, largely, a woman’s role (Jackson, 2018; Meah & Jackson, 2013). Literature reviewed also suggests that men and women differ in their experience of consumer guilt, where women experience

significantly more guilt when it comes to meal time; both with regard to consumption and providing for others (Kayal et al., 2017). Women have also been shown to be more critical of their perceived sense of duty and are more judgmental of their own skills and bad habits with regard to shopping and cooking which can lead to increased wastage and anxiety, and further increases in their own feelings of guilt (Meah & Jackson, 2013).

However, Kayal et al. (2017) did find differences in how different genders experience guilt. Consumer guilt was predominantly present in individualist countries and notably absent in collectivist countries; the white population of South Africa is considered individualist (Hofstede Insights, 2018).

De Almeida Costa (2013) found that many consumers were forgoing convenient meal replacement options available for fear of the resulting guilt. This behaviour was driven by a perceived sense of duty to provide for oneself and one's family by cooking from scratch and using fresh ingredients. Consumers hold strong, positive beliefs about cooking a meal from scratch and thus hold equally strong negative beliefs about using convenient meal replacements. This further increased the consumer goal conflict and supports the trend for meal-kit delivery services where consumers are able to gain convenience with regard to planning, shopping and preparing meals, but alleviate consumer guilt by moralising factors such as still needing to do the cooking from scratch and using fresh, local and ethically sourced ingredients.

De Almeida Costa (2013) further suggested the trend of consumers actually cooking less frequently but in higher quantities in order to serve home-cooked meals more regularly during the week, in an attempt to alleviate consumer guilt driven by such perceived sense of duty.

Convenience food is complex and consumers often combine fresh and convenient foods without consideration of the distinction (Jackson, 2018), for example using canned ingredients in preparing a meal from scratch. Despite this, convenience foods are generally considered unhealthy and unsustainable (Jackson & Viehoff, 2016), which increases consumer guilt during meal planning, shopping, preparation and eating (Jackson, 2018). There is a significant contrast for consumers between cooking from scratch using fresh ingredients, considered a demonstration of love and care, and the opposite where providing convenient meals demonstrates lack of care, according to certain social norms and standards (Jackson, 2018). Jackson (2018), however, argues in the same article that convenience food can in fact be used as an expression of care

but he had not considered the work of Kayal et al. (2017) or a South African specific context.

2.2.8.6 Shopper Safety

A consumer's retail experience is made up of a number of factors including atmosphere, tenant variety, functionality, convenience, social environment, proximity to home, service levels, product, pricing, and personal safety (Calvo-Porrá & Lévy-Mangín, 2018; Cao & Li, 2015; El Hedhli, Chebat, & Sirgy, 2013; Wahlberg, 2016). Security, and ultimately customers perceived safety of a shopping centre, is a key factor influencing customer well-being and their subsequent intention to visit a specific shopping centre (Kajalo & Lindblom, 2015).

In general, and globally, shopping centres are perceived by customers as places of relative safety. However, many shopping centres, particularly in low-income areas, have safety and security issues as they can often be seen as areas of refuge or shelter for vagrants and the homeless. Even safe shopping centres may feel unsafe to customers at different times, such as night time, when there may be less sufficient lighting and an increased likelihood of vagrants seeking shelter at the shopping centre (El Hedhli et al., 2013).

Research has shown a correlation between perceived shopper safety and shopping intention and research found that customers will intentionally not shop at a retail outlet or shopping centre where they feel unsafe (El Hedhli et al., 2013), whether physical or other, and one USA study suggested that up to ten percent of customers in Maryland, USA, avoided shopping centres due to perceived safety concerns.

There is, however, a very limited body of research discussing customer safety in a retail environment with research rather looking at safety from the retailers' perspective (Koistinen & Järvinen, 2016) and almost no highly ranked international journals publishing emerging market shopper safety and the effect on retailers or shopping centres.

Of course, research conducted from the retailers point of view is understandable as the perception of the safety of a retail store or the shopping centre will impact on people visiting it and will have direct economic implication for the retailer and property owners (Mohammad Shafiee & Es-Haghi, 2017).

Physical safety in the academic literature is most often not related to violent crime, particularly in the USA and European contexts, but does include threats to health, accidents, and violence due to unsafe products, volatile co-customers, facilities, poor maintenance, cleaning activities, and the design of the shopping centre itself (Clayton, Boron, & Mattila, 2014; Koistinen & Järvinen, 2016).

Interestingly, a study conducted by Burns, Manolis, and Keep (2010) found that of all the factors that drive the fear of crime, only the presence of vagrants, the level of cleanliness, and insufficient lighting were significantly related to shopping intentions. Vagrancies, specifically, increased the customer perception of crime, regardless of actual crime levels. Burns et al. (2010) further suggest that actual crime reduction may not have as much of an impact on improving shopping intention as much as perceived disorderly stimuli (such as the presence of vagrants). The authors found no significant difference between genders related to their findings either which would allow us to generalise shopping intentions across genders. This viewpoint is supported by Lutchminarain (2015) who found that customers' perception of safety is as significant as safety itself and that the presence of beggars and loiterers influence a customer's perception of safety.

Cross-channel integration (where retailers have presence across multiple channels such as physical stores and an online store) positively correlates to retailers' sales growth. This growth is made up of multiple factors, one of which is improved trust between the retailer and the consumer. This improved trust is driven by a more appealing and safer shopping experience for the consumer (Cao & Li, 2015). This view is supported by Zhang et al. (2010) who found that retailers who make use of online channels not only offers more convenience to the customer but also offer a "*physically safe shopping experience at their own homes or other locations of choice*" (Zhang et al., 2010, p.170). However, the context of these studies imply more general shopper safety rather than physical safety due to the threat of violent crime, and it must be noted that in the USA and European contexts in which it these studies have been conducted, the authors are not expressly considering violent crime in their definition of safety. It does, however, begin the discussion that consumers may be driven to shop online as an alternative to visiting a shopping centre in order to eliminate some risks associated with visiting shopping centres, one of which may be perceived physical safety due to the of violent crime.

Online shopping, whilst not having a significant effect on overall customer shopping activity, certainly does effect physical shopping activity (as in customer trips to the shops) and a key finding in literature was that online shopping was used as a substitute for

physical shopping trips (Suel, Daina, & Polak, 2018). This was supported by Rosenbaum, Otalora, and Ramírez (2016) who found that some consumers may question the safety of shopping malls and the resulting functional value relative to alternative options, such as shopping online. This may be particularly true in the South African context where customers are considering physical safety due to crime during shopping trips as a result of either actual or simple perceived increases in violent criminal activity at or around shopping centres.

Predmore, Rovenpor, Manduley, and Radin (2007) studied differences between female shoppers in the USA and in Israel and found that the threat of terrorism in the USA was driving female shoppers to shop more online due to fear of physical safety, whereas in Israel, where the threat of physical harm is more widespread in the country on the whole, women continued visiting shopping centres due to their desire for social interaction. It is stated that women in both countries were concerned for physical safety but only women in the USA were more likely to shop online as an alternative. This finding, however, may also be the result of a number of other factors such as access, delivery, credit card ownership, international shipping and a number of other factors.

The most relevant literature found on the effect crime has on customer visits to shopping centres was a doctoral dissertation done by Lutchminarain in 2015. Although not peer-reviewed or published in peer-reviewed academic journals the author's efforts and extensive review of crime statistics and the effect of crime in the local retail context makes for interesting reading and provides some insight for this research particularly since crime and its effect on the local economy has been a topic of discussion in South Africa since at least 2005. The author herself indicates the lack of literature on the topic and has relied heavily on journalists, media reports, and statistics:

"The researcher conducted a literature search on the phenomenon of armed robberies at shopping centres in South Africa. It was found that, apart from newspaper articles reporting on an incident that had occurred and the August 2008 Trend Report on Violent Crime at Shopping Centres, limited information was available on this specific topic" (Lutchminarain, 2015, p.30)

Lutchminarain's (2015) review of retail crime statistics shows a significant annual increase in business related crime and specifically violent crimes conducted in and around shopping centres in Gauteng. The customers Lutchminarain interviewed described safety while shopping as including the travel to and from the shops as well as during the shopping trip itself. She states that shopping centres in Gauteng have in fact

become “dangerous places,” contrary to academic literature stating that even in emerging markets shopping centres are perceived as relatively safe, and that armed gunmen have been terrorising shopping centres on average once every three days. The old adage of customers seeking safety in numbers, inherent in shopping malls, is now being questioned by customers and these armed robberies have customers more nervous about visiting shopping centres (Lutchminarain, 2015).

Lutchminarain's (2015) observed that although most shoppers did indeed feel safe at their preferred shopping centres, almost all of them deliberately and proactively took precautionary measures to increase personal safety and avoid becoming a victim of crime. The majority of shoppers in the study indicated that they would not return to the same shopping centre if they were personally a target of violent crime at that centre.

2.3 Perceived Customer Value as a Theory Base

Kumar and Reinartz (2016) found that consumers form an overall perception of value based on both objective and perceived benefits and costs. They point out that there are a wide variety of non-monetary costs and benefits that different types of consumers constantly review, at different times, based on individual contexts. It is clear that the subjectivity of time, and the interchangeability of time and money, creates complexity for the consumer in evaluation during the decision-making processes and thus may increase perceived cognitive and emotional costs.

The fundamental concept of utility maximisation is often used to study products meant for final consumption, as meal-kit delivery services are for the subscriber to the service, and proposes that consumers make decisions based on the evaluation of objective and perceived costs and benefits, where a positive net valuation of benefit resulting in a purchase (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016).

Given the importance of the concept of value in marketing and consumer behaviour, it is no surprise that it has been dealt with in length. Notable work by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) identified four dimensions of consumer value that drive the purchase decision in a retail scenario (Table 1): (1) emotional value, enjoyment or pleasure derived from use of the product or service, (2) social value, the ability for the product or service to enhance social status, (3) functional value based on value for money, and (4) functional value based on perceived quality and expected performance.

Table 1: Perceived Value Framework (PERVAL) (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001, p.211)

Dimension	Description
Emotional value	the utility derived from the feelings or affective states that a product generates
Social value (enhancement of social self-concept)	the utility derived from the product's ability to enhance social self-concept
Functional value (price/value for money)	the utility derived from the product due to the reduction of its perceived short term and longer term costs
Functional value (performance/ quality)	the utility derived from the perceived quality and expected performance of the product

The use of utility maximisation theory as a base for this study is supported by Eberhart and Naderer (2017) who found that consumers primarily act in their own self-interest and use heuristics as a tactic to make decisions quickly and with minimal cognitive effort. This is in an effort for the consumer to decrease perceived costs in order to increase the perceived net value, as defined by Kumar and Reinartz (2016).

Kumar & Reinartz (2016) reviewed the importance and clear benefits of perceived value creation to the firm, and briefly analysed the benefits to the firm of driving a subscription-based business model. They suggest that further research should investigate the source of customer perceived value, precisely what this research is aiming to do in the context of subscription meal-kit delivery services.

2.4 Conclusion

Literature reviewed in this chapter has been extensive and has revealed that the consumer decision making process regarding meals is complex and dynamic. Consumers have multiple conflicting goals, driven by increased work-life pressure, and are consistently looking for more convenient solutions that help them save time and effort, as well as help achieve other, often conflicting, goals.

Limited academic, peer-reviewed, literature discusses meal-kit delivery services directly but the researcher has developed and reviewed a wide variety of major factors that may be considered by consumers in their decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service.

Chapter 3 will present a framework of the factors considered, developed from literature, and describe in detail the research questions that this research aims to answer.

The rationale for this research study is directly related to how successful the new and innovative business model, developed by meal-kit delivery services, is and aims to identify factors that consumers consider when subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service directly.

Chapter 3 Research Questions

Figure 2, shows a conceptual framework of the factors found in the literature (Chapter 2) that may be considered by consumers in their decision-making process when deciding to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services. This research seeks to confirm these factors, to explore what additional factors a consumer may consider when making the decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service, to understand what factors are considered most important in the decision, and to understand how these factors interact with each other to drive the decision to subscribe.

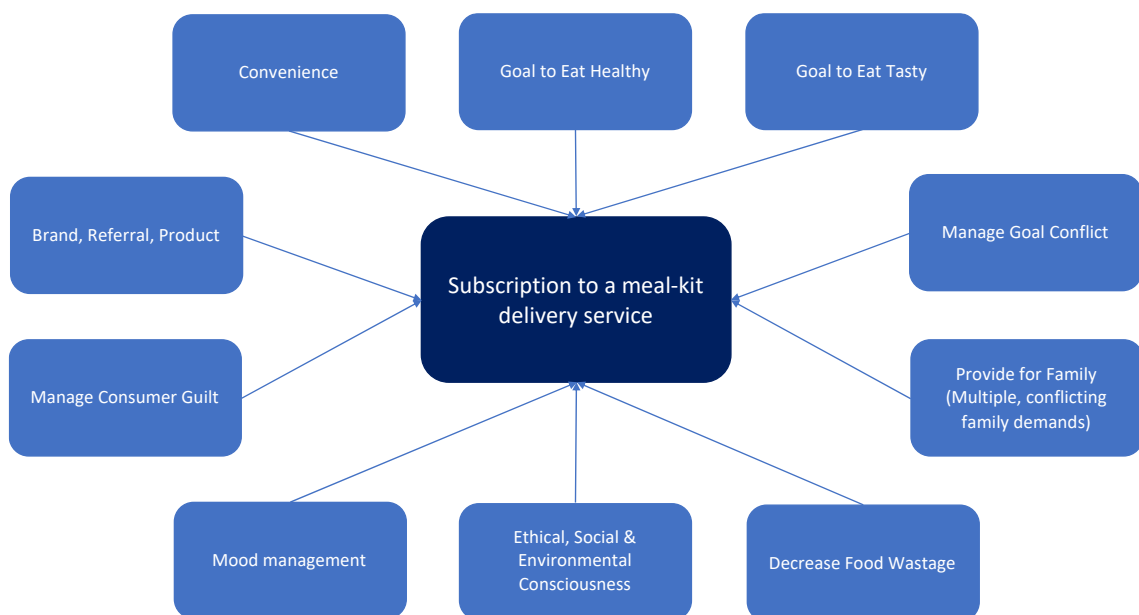


Figure 2: A Contextual Framework of the Factors Considered by Consumers When Subscribing to Meal-kit Delivery Services

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 has directed the researcher to develop the following research questions:

1. What are all the factors that consumers consider when initially deciding to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service?

Research question one aims to identify and explore an exhaustive list of factors that are considered by consumers when making the initial decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service, specifically. Questions asked required the consumer to reflect on

experiences and personal context, and to explore one's own reasons for the purchase decision.

A multitude of factors were found in literature that may be applicable to meal-kit delivery services but there is certainly a gap in the literature for factors specific to meal-kit delivery services as well as within an emerging market and, more specifically, a South African context.

From research question one, the conceptual framework of factors considered when initially subscribing to meal-kit delivery services will be developed.

2. What factors subsequently affect customer loyalty to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service?

Research question two aims to understand if any additional, or different, factors are considered by the consumer when deciding to remain subscribed to, meal-kit delivery services. Answering research question two will provide insight into the differences between purchase and repurchase factors and will allow the author to establish recommendations to business, meal-kit delivery service providers, marketers, retailers and academics.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 details the methodology chosen for this research based on knowledge gathered during the formulation of Chapter 1, The Research Problem, and Chapter 2, Literature Review.

This qualitative study thus adopted an exploratory, inductive approach with the choice of the research method, research design, data collection and data analysis, outlined in this chapter, supportive of the objective to create a conceptual framework borne out of the data itself and are aligned to answering the research questions developed in Chapter 3 (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research choice was mono-method (qualitative) and data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews where all participants were interviewed once, at a single point in time (cross-sectional time horizon).

4.2 Research Methodology and Design

In line with recommendations by Zikmund, Babin, Carr, and Griffin (2013) the research methods chosen support the research objectives given the data sources available to the researcher, his limited time frame and budget at the time of conducting the research.

4.2.1 Rationale

The purpose of this study was to understand the factors that influence consumers to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service, and make a theoretical and practical contribution by developing a conceptual framework from the concepts emergent in the data itself, that can then be empirically tested (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Mills & Birks, 2014). The complexities of the subject matter, as described by Jabs and Devine (2006), suggest that a broad approach to the topic be used in order to fully understand the complexity of multiple types of consumers and their individual contexts that motivate them to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services.

Limited academic literature exists on meal-kit delivery services specifically, and the little research that has been conducted is outside of South African context. In a relatively new, and under researched topic, a qualitative approach may help identify additional, relevant

consumer considerations in the purchase decision of meal-kit delivery services, particularly in an emerging economy (Aschemann-Witzel, Giménez, & Ares, 2018).

Qualitative research focuses on discovering new insights that the researcher has interpreted from the data collected and is particularly appropriate when the research objective is to gain a deeper understanding of what motivates consumers to act, as well as when the research is aimed at identifying new concepts (Zikmund et al., 2013).

Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy (1988) proposed that any hope for scientific study of consumer behaviour must be based on an ability to make meaningful interpretations of human behaviour. This study was aimed at exploring consumer decision behaviour, and decision-making, with the understanding that the participants in the study are complex individuals, who live in a complex world, and will reflect inconsistency and contradictions in their willingness to explain their subjectivity (Arsel, 2017). Thus, the choice to employ an interpretivist philosophy, in line with the definition by Saunders and Lewis (2017), whereby an interpretivist research approach advocates the need to understand people and their behaviour. Saunders and Lewis (2017) go on to suggest the benefit and relevance of an interpretivist approach in business research, particularly in the fields of marketing, due to the complexity and ever changing context. This approach was supported by Birks (2014) who stated that interpretivism recognises that human action is the product of thoughtful intentions, judgements and actions, and takes into consideration the complexity associated with being human.

According to Kennedy (2018) an inductive approach used in qualitative research determines the relationship between theory and data, where induction stays close to the data and attempts to draw themes and concepts from the data itself to reveal new understandings. Therefore, through an inductive approach this qualitative research attempted to generate contributions to theory (Birks, 2014) by developing a conceptual framework borne from the data itself.

According to Arsel (2017), interviews (survey) are a key primary data source for consumer research as they allow consumers to express their individual subjectivity with regards to their lives, experiences and perceptions. Focused, yet interactive and flexible interviews allowed the researcher to best understand the way consumers view their world and remain one of the most trustworthy and effective ways to collect data on consumer behaviour.

The inductive and exploratory nature of this research suggested that in-depth interviews would be the most appropriate data collection method. Open ended, semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to describe their individual contexts, views and experiences in an attempt to explain their behaviour and decisions. This method allowed participants to provide detailed, personal descriptions of how they perceive their own lives and resulting behaviour (Bone, Christensen, & Williams, 2014; Spiteri Cornish & Moraes, 2015). This also provided the rich data necessary for the researcher to interpret and reflect on the purchase decision of the consumer, with the idea that an objective reality would be developed that may not be perceived by the consumers (Birks, 2014).

Arsel (2017) suggests the use of structure in interviews, even in an exploratory research approach, and urges the researcher to always enter the interview looking to answer a research question, even if only loosely developed. The researcher should carry a set of themes they are looking to explore and simultaneously be guided by new directions presented by the interviewees. Arsel (2017) further supports the requirement for at least some structure in interviews to eliminate a shotgun approach in the hope of stumbling across a “theoretical needle in a haystack.”

A single (mono) qualitative method was used in both data collection and data analysis (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) so as to keep the study uncomplicated, and to support the experience of the researcher. Due to time constraints presented by research project deadlines, each person was interviewed once, at a particular point in time and the research did not seek to measure changing attitudes or responses to any interventions. This represents a cross-sectional research design (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.2.2 Population

As the aim of this research was to explore the factors that consumers considered when making the decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service, it was logical that the population of this research was made up of consumers who had indeed subscribed to such meal-kit delivery services.

That said, existing literature did not consider local context, particularly in an emerging economy, but did recognise the important of context in consumer behaviour (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2018) and so the population of this research was South African consumers who subscribed to the meal-kit delivery service (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016).

4.2.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this research was the perceptions, feelings, experiences, and reasons given by the individual participants in the interview process (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

4.2.4 Sampling Method and Size

According to Arsel (2017) qualitative research seldom employs random sampling and as a researcher one should purposefully seek out specific people based on the research questions and objectives. Probability sampling methods also require a sampling frame, in the case of subscribers to meal-kit delivery services, no complete sampling frame existed which necessitated the use of a non-probability sampling method (Arsel, 2017). Using the framework developed by Saunders et al. (2016) for selecting a non-probability sampling technique, purposive sampling was deemed to be most appropriate, which was in line with consumer behaviour research conducted by Spiteri Cornish and Moraes (2015). Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select samples that help satisfy the research purposes even if the sample was not fully representative of the population (Zikmund et al., 2013).

South Africa has a relatively small number of meal-kit delivery services, made up of start-ups and hyper local small businesses, with each reporting booming growth in popular media reports (Mamacos, 2018). The three most notable providers were uCook (uCook, 2018), Daily Dish (Daily Dish, 2018), and The Pantry Box (The Pantry Box, 2018).

uCook was South Africa's largest meal-kit delivery service and written consent was granted to the researcher by uCook to utilise its customer database (Appendix 6: uCook Letter Granting Access to Customer Database).

Qualitative, in-depth interviews are time consuming and can be costly to the researcher (Zikmund et al., 2013), so the database was filtered to include only Gauteng based subscribers, a large enough geography for varied population demographic variables and within the researcher's capability for travel. In line with purposive sampling techniques and with the objective to understand why consumers subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service, the database was sorted by customer loyalty, based on total number of orders made.

The uCook customer database originally contained 6,101 Gauteng based subscribers. The researcher used excel to search for duplicate entry using email address as the

unique identifier per customer and after cleaning the database for duplicates a total of 3,080 unique customers remained.

Starting from the top of the list (those customers deemed most loyal), the researcher made contact to request an interview first via email and then telephonically. Due to time constraints, respondents were chosen based on when they responded to the initial contact and whether they were willing, able, and available for an in-depth interview. Prior to confirming the interview date and time, the researcher asked screening questions to ensure that the customer had indeed subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service within the last six months, not necessarily only uCook (Roper, Caruana, Medway, & Murphy, 2013).

Saturation of themes in qualitative data collection was the guiding principle for sample size (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017) and failure to reach saturation would have negatively impacted the quality and validity of the research (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Validity, understanding and insights were gained more from data collection than from sample size and the recommendation was to continue conducting interviews until saturation was met (Saunders et al., 2016): that is until no new themes emerged from continued interviews (Epp & Velagaleti, 2014). Literature examined provided a guideline of the number of interviews that should be conducted before meeting theoretical data saturation, being between 6 and 20 interviews (Arsel & Bean, 2013; Dion & Borraz, 2017; Epp & Velagaleti, 2014; Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). It was the decision of the researcher to then conduct two additional interviews to ensure reliability (Rapley, 2014).

4.2.5 Measurement Instrument

Personal, semi-structured, in-depth interviews that contained open-ended questions allowed the best opportunity for the participant to fully share his or her feelings, perceptions and context. Open-ended questions support an exploratory qualitative research study when the range of responses is unknown and the semi-structured nature of the interviews provided opportunity for live feedback to ensure clarity and offer the best chance for the participant to interpret the questions most accurately (Zikmund et al., 2013).

Zikmund et al. (2013) believes that this method of data collection provides opportunity for the researcher to ask probing questions and gain a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of the participants responses, especially when collecting unstructured data.

Arsel (2017) provides a four-step iterative guide for designing interviews (Table 2) which, if followed correctly, will provide validity and reliability measures in and of itself. A prepared interview protocol will help the researcher keep focused, cover all relevant topics and themes uncovered during the process, decrease anxiety for both researcher and participant, and improve the overall quality of the interview process and therefore data collected (Arsel, 2017).

Table 2: A Four-Step Iterative Guide For Interview Design (Arsel, 2017)

Step Number	Action
Step 1: Settle with an Epistemological Tradition	“have a clear understanding about what you expect interviews to reveal and what kind of theoretical stories you can tell with interviews” (Arsel, 2017, p. 3)
Step 2: Prepare an Interview Protocol	“An interview protocol is an outline of your interview, listing key points of exploration, provisional questions, and planned probes and transitions.” (Arsel, 2017, p. 3)
Step 3: Conduct the Interview	Build rapport. Ask probing questions. Let the respondent end the interview by asking if there is anything else she would like to share that you may not have covered.
Step 4: Iterate	Reflect on data collected after each interview to decide whether to revise interpretations.

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed containing themes that the researcher wished to cover, as well as series of open-ended questions about the consumer’s background, context, role as a consumer, and decision-making process to be used to refocus or reignite conversation. The balance of the interview was largely set by the consumer and further probing questions were used to expand, clarify and understand the participants responses (Arsel & Bean, 2013).

Zikmund et al. (2013), Rowley (2012), and Saunders and Lewis (2017) provide additional guidelines for structuring interview questions to be included in the interview schedule. Questions should be specific, simple and use conversational language. Questions should not be leading the participant to an answer and should not burden the participant mentally so as not to tax the participants memory. Finally, questions should not make

any assumptions about the participant, her context or her responses, neither should any judgement on the participant, her context or responses be implied.

All participants were initially invited to participate in research and sent a formal invitation (Appendix 1: Invitation to Participate in Research) and were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 2: Interview Consent Form). The researcher carried an interview schedule (Appendix 3: Interview Schedule) that acted as a guide to asking questions and contained possible themes / concepts to look for whilst conducting the interview. The researcher also had additional possible probing questions for each question asked that asked the participant to reflect on decisions made and responses given in order to gain additional clarity and avoid misunderstanding.

4.2.6 Data Collection

Face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted in the participants preferred setting and recorded. Interviewing a participant face-to-face gave the interview richness and depth by allowing the researcher to note non-verbal observations or responses (Rowley, 2012). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher both flexibility in structure and focus to explore theories and themes based on literature, prior knowledge, research questions, and objectives (Arsel, 2017).

The nature of personal interviews, although more costly, and perhaps more difficult to initially set up, significantly decreased non-response bias as the participant (Zikmund et al., 2013).

Rapport and trust were crucial for participants to open up and be honest with their thoughts and feelings as the process can make one anxious and caged. So in order to alleviate some of the potential anxiety the interview was conducted in the comfort of the participants own environment of choice, preferably home (Arsel, 2017). Finally, the ability to conduct a face-to-face interviews allowed qualitative analysis of not only what was said but also the context and manner in which it was said by the participant. Further qualitative support was in the form of notes taken during the interview process by the researcher.

Recording of the interviews was critical in order to conduct rigorous data analysis and each participant was asked prior to confirming the interview if they were comfortable being recorded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Participants were comforted by the

confidentiality offered by the researcher in the interview consent form (Appendix 2: Interview Consent Form).

The length of the interviews ranged between 25 and 52 minutes, with each participant given the opportunity to end the interview themselves. No interview felt rushed and the researcher felt that sufficient time was given for each participant to reflect on personal experience and perceptions, and for the researcher to visit, revisit and exhaust the topic by being able to circle back to previous questions and answers that offered additional insights and knowledge in order to fill gaps and increase depth (Arsel, 2017; Roper et al., 2013).

Each interview began with a brief outline of the research study in order to gain rapport and give the participant context in which to answer the open-ended questions asked by the researcher. It was important that the questions asked generated information relevant to answering the research questions (Rowley, 2012). Probing techniques were utilised by the researcher in order to understand possible complexities and inconsistencies inherent in subjective and qualitative interviews regarding consumer behaviour (Arsel, 2017)

Participants were asked to answer all questions openly and honestly under the assumption of confidentiality, no names or personal details are reported in the data, and to support the exploratory nature of the study. Participants were expected to draw on their personal preferences, perceptions, and recent purchase decisions (Arsel, 2017). Finally, as suggested by Arsel (2017) every interview was ended at the option of the participant by the researcher asking if there is anything that may not have been covered but the participant would like to raise that may contribute to the research and may not have been considered by the researcher.

As the interview protocol supported the exploratory and inductive nature of the research, the researcher was able to iteratively build a framework and uncover concepts throughout the process which allowed for refinement as the research progressed (Arsel, 2017).

Due to the subjective nature inherent in qualitative methodology, method biases exist, particularly with regard to the subjective nature of the data and the resulting interpretation requirement by the researcher (Arsel, 2017; Rowley, 2012). Best practice outlined by Arsel (2017), Rowley (2012), and Saunders and Lewis (2017) was to conduct pilot interviews with a small number of identified participants who still fit the broader sample.

Any problems identified during the pilot interviews with regards to the questions asked, interviewer approach, manner in which questions were asked, setting the interview was conducted in, recording of data collected, and general cultural and power differences was acknowledged and improved after the pilot testing (Saunders et al., 2016).

The researcher conducted four pilot interviews so as to gain confidence in the interview process, ensure respondents understood the questions accurately, and for the researcher to understand how the questions would be interpreted and what possible responses to expect. The pilot interviews were conducted with respondents in the researchers personal network but were indeed representative of the larger sample group discussed in 4.2.4 (Huynh & Olsen, 2015; Scott & Vigar-Ellis, 2014; Torma et al., 2018). Only very minor changes to the questions were made and so it was decided to include the pilot interviews in the data set to be analysed. Conducting pilot interviews was a method used to reduce error in data collected and to improve validity and reliability of the research (Scott & Vigar-Ellis, 2014).

Finally, a reflexive interviewing technique as used by Bone et al. (2014) and strongly advocated by Arsel (2017) allowed the researcher to remain mindful of the subjective nature of the responses by participants, inherent biases of the researcher, and to improve understanding and interpretation. Reflexive techniques, such as summarising and restating participants comments, helped with accurate interpretation and allowed the participant to clarify their position (Bone et al., 2014).

4.2.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is widely-used and accepted as a flexible and accessible approach to analysing qualitative data (Terry et al., 2017), particularly for business research conducted by novice students, as it is relatively straightforward and requires less technical and theoretical knowledge than other methods of qualitative data analysis. This is evident as Braun and Clarke's 2006 article has been cited over 40,000 times, by established authors, in text books, case studies, theses, and peer-reviewed academic articles.

Thematic analysis involves searching for meaningful themes that are repeated across all the data collected through interviews and is a method of analysis supportive of an exploratory, inductive research approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Inductive thematic analysis is data-driven, meaning that the themes are observed from the data itself (Scott & Vigar-Ellis, 2014), as opposed to analysing the data with a strong sense of existing themes that may emerge from the data based on the researcher's knowledge of existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Themes identified in inductive thematic analysis may be less related to the overall research question or the interview questions themselves. Further, latent thematic analysis looks beyond semantics and explicit meanings, but rather involves more interpretation to examine underlying ideas, concepts and assumptions of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the flexibility thematic analysis, as a stand-alone method in itself, and provide clarity as to how thematic analysis should be conducted so as to ensure the data analysis is both theoretically and methodologically sound.

Braun and Clarke (2006) provide clear guidelines on how to conduct a rigorous thematic analysis of the data using six phases, as described in Table 3.

Table 3: Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with the data	Transcribing data, reading and re- reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specific of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme

6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis
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Each interview was transcribed verbatim and, together with the researchers notes taken during the interview, was read and then re-read to ensure the researcher was familiar and comfortable with the depth and breadth of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Sweeney, Plewa, & Zurbruegg, 2018).

The transcription of the data was outsourced to a professional transcriber, so as a necessary precaution to decrease errors and ensure accuracy, validity and reliability, the researcher first read the transcripts while also listening to the audio recording of each interview and simultaneously edited the transcripts as and where required.

The second and third reading of the transcripts were done using a qualitative analysis software called Atlas.ti (Atlas.ti, 2018) to analyse each transcript line by line with the objective of generating initial codes for as many themes and high level concepts from the data as possible (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lindberg, Salomonson, Sundström, & Wendin, 2018; Spiteri Cornish & Moraes, 2015). Thematic analyses was well suited to using Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) as the researcher faced large amounts of qualitative material from which he intended developing themes and concepts. CAQDAS served as a way for the researcher to manage and interpret qualitative data (Gibbs, 2014).

These initial codes were then combined, according to similarity, into broader themes (Lindberg et al., 2018) based on the identification and emergence of concepts that appeared repeatedly and were in deed relevant to answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The themes were then reviewed and refined in relation to the data and research objectives resulting in a visual thematic framework shown in Figure 5.

4.2.8 Further Validity and Reliability Measures

Qualitative research is subjective by nature and has been criticised for lacking academic rigour (Gioia et al., 2013) but with thorough and specific chosen research methodology and methods, both validity and reliability can be increased to academic levels.

Other than validity and reliability measures already discussed in Chapter 4, additional considerations were given to ensure the research and its findings are indeed valid, reliable and with as little error as possible.

Validity refers to the credibility of the research results and subsequent conclusions. Validity was ensured in this research through rigorous data collection and analyses methods that aligned with achieving the research objectives. Reliability was increased by ensuring data collection and analyses methods were consistent throughout the research. Many biases exist that influence validity and reliability such as interviewer bias, interpreter bias, and subject bias. In order to limit the influence of such biases, the interview protocol provided a consistent guide to asking questions and it remained identical for each participant (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

Verbatim transcripts, as opposed to edited transcripts offered an opportunity for more detailed scrutiny as they contain every bit of detail and is the most accurate reflection of what was said (Barbour, 2018).

Diversity and variation of consumers behaviour (number, size and frequency of purchases), demographic variables (size of household, specific dietary requirements, children, number of working adults), and responses were sought to further improve validity and reliability of data and so as to be able to infer accurately to the population in general (Dion & Borraz, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016).

Finally, the choice of thematic analysis as the method used provided a novice researcher an accessible, simple, and flexible method of analysing the data thereby decreasing potential error and improving the chance of valid and reliable findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.3 Research Limitations

The nature of the research is fraught with inherent method limitations and biases which can greatly affect the validity and reliability the data and therefore overall findings (Arsel,

2017). Method bias, particularly in behavioural research, represents the most common source of measurement error (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

In this research the following possible method biases or limitations have been identified:

- Social desirability – due to the subjective nature of the research and face-to-face interviews, participants may have been tempted to respond in a socially desirable manner (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012).
- Item complexity and/or ambiguity – although the researcher aimed to be clear and simple, consumer behaviour is subjective in nature and responses may be complex and contradictory (Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2012).
- Context-induced mood (Context effect) – a respondent's mood at the time of the interview may play a vital role in responses especially with regard to health, family, time, hunger and setting (Podsakoff et al., 2003).
- Time and location of measurement (Measurement context) – different people will be interviewed at different times, in different settings and potentially in different context around the variable and factors related to the study. This may affect consumer attitudes and responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2012).
- Because the sample was geographically limited to Gauteng, South Africa, there may naturally follow a location bias which could impact the ability to generalise the findings to other locations, markets, or geographies (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Chapter 5 Results

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 presents the results and findings of the 14 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with customers of meal-kit delivery services, all of whom live in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. This chapter begins with a description of the sample and the steps that were followed to analyse and interpret the data, followed by results and key findings.

The format of Chapter 5 is written per theme, or factor, identified during the data analysis and as the nature of this research was inductive and exploratory, factors were identified inductively through process of coding and analysing the interview transcriptions. Consumer behaviour is a complex topic and so multiple factors are considered by consumers which are often inter-related, at times inter-dependent, and even considered together. This means that the factors are not mutually exclusive as considerations, and so this chapter is written in a manner that covers major factors considered by consumers and from multiple perspectives. For example, consumers consider the factor of 'wastage' from both a food wastage and as wasted time and effort, and further to that consider food wastage from both an economic point of view as well from an ethical consciousness point of view.

Furthermore, participants were often not clear about reasons for initially subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service and reasons for remaining subscribed (drivers of loyalty) and so the researcher was required to exercise his own judgement in coding for themes in order to answer the two research questions; hence the researcher combined the results from both research questions and will separately discuss each research question in Chapter 6.

5.2 Characteristics of the data

5.2.1 Interviews

A Total of 14 in-depth, semi structured interviews were conducted with participants who were either subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service or had been subscribed to one within the six months prior to the interview; all interviews were completed during June and July 2018. Participants were selected based on their response to an emailed invitation to participate (Appendix 1: Invitation to Participate in Research) and the availability of both

the researcher and potential participant, in line with methodology described in Chapter 4. The researcher ensured that each participant was listed on the uCook database and preference was given to more loyal customers as outlined in the sampling method described in 4.2.4. Each interview lasted on average 39 minutes, with the shortest being 26 minutes and the longest being 52 minutes, sufficient time for the participant to reflect and answer in a manner that provided richness to the data.

All interviews were conducted at a venue and at a time chosen by the participant so as to ensure the participant was comfortable while reflecting and answering questions of a personal nature; almost all interviews being conducted at the participants home or place of work and only one interview was conducted at a neutral venue, the GIBS Campus, which was preferred by the participant herself.

The first four interviews were initially conducted as pilot interviews, in line with methodology outlined in 4.2, and only minor, insignificant changes to the interview schedule was made for subsequent interviews. Since only minor changes were made to the interview approach the data collected from the pilot interviews was included as part of the data set and analysed.

A total of 20 positive responses from potential participants were received with two being disqualified due to lack of availability between the participant and the researcher within the timeframe of the research. Ultimately, 14 interviews were conducted and it was noted that no new themes or categories emerged after the ninth interview, with no substantial new granular codes or data emerging after the 13th interview; only five new granular codes emerged in the last five interviews (see Figure 3), and hence the data was considered to have reached saturation after 14 interviews.

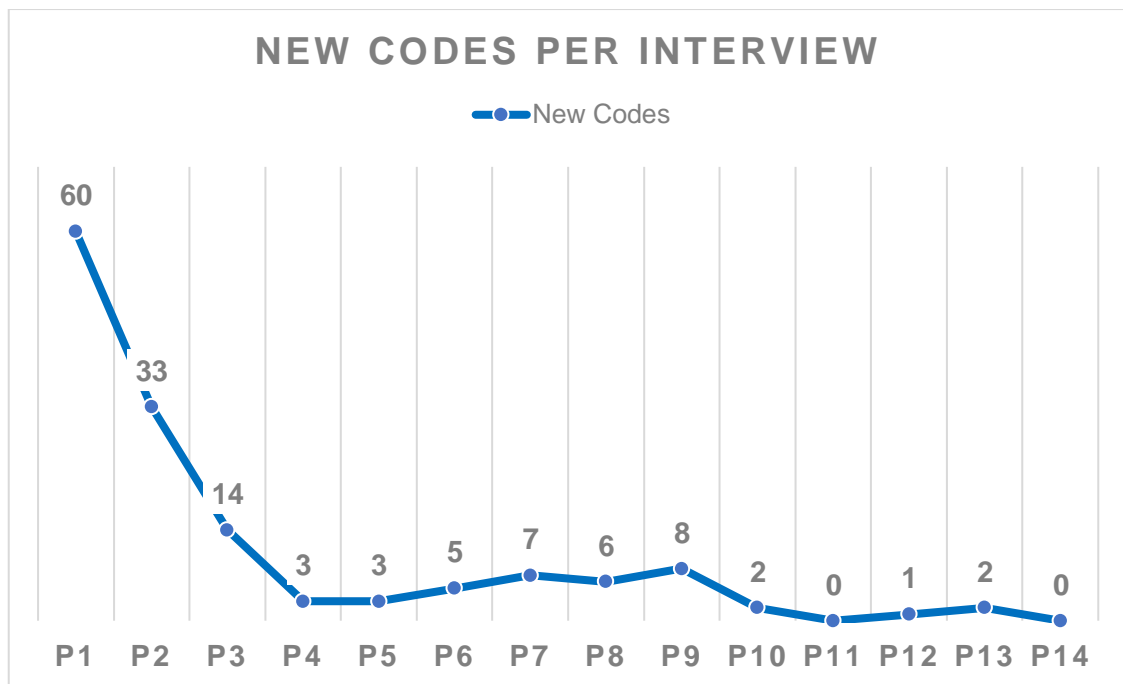


Figure 3: Number of New Codes Created During Data Analysis

5.2.2 Description of the sample

An attempt was made to get as diverse a group of participants as possible in terms of race, age, gender, education level, employment, and personal context but respondents were representative of the uCook database and are described in Table 4 and Table 5. The sample was primarily made up of female participants, supportive of literature reviewed stating that despite increased participation in domestic responsibilities by men, women are still primarily responsible for feeding the family (Jackson, 2018; Meah & Jackson, 2013). Disappointingly, all participants were of Caucasian decent and resided in the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg.

Participants were mostly aged between 30 and 50 years old, supported by literature stating that consumers of this age are most likely candidates to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services as a result of time scarcity, goal conflict and the quest for convenience.

Although nine participants had children, again supporting the literature reviewed, as participants who are most likely candidates to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services, only one participant used the meal-kit delivery service to feed the entire family of four, where all other participants stated that the meals cooked from the meal-kit being were not suited to their children, a possible unmet need. However very interesting insights,

particularly regarding wastage and convenience, were gathered from the three participants who lived alone and used the meal-kits to shop and cook for one.

As expected, due to the sampling process, all participants had subscribed to uCook within the past six months with all participants confirming that they are still relatively active in their subscription (there is an ability to pause one's subscription) but one participant was currently subscribed to an alternate service called Daily Dish and cited her reason as having a better perception of the brand and overall experience, not a significant finding in the context of this research.

Despite obvious demographic heterogeneity of the sample it does seem to be reflective of the customer base of South African Meal-kit delivery services. However the researcher feels that there is sufficient diversity in the sample in terms of each individual participants' context, goals and objectives, tastes, and preferences. Further information on each participant observed by the researcher during each interview is provided in Table 5.

All participants confirmed that they were the primary decision maker in their household regarding dinner meals.

Table 4: Summary of Sample

Variable	Breakdown	Count
Gender	Male	2
	Female	12
Age	20-29	1
	30-39	9
	40-49	3
	50-59	1
	60-69	0
Cooking for	1	3
	2	10
	4	1
Current Service	uCook	13
	Daily Dish	1
Have Children	Yes	9
Children Eat Meal-Kit Meals?	Yes	1
Interview Length (minutes)	20-30	2
	30-40	5
	40-50	5
	50-60	2
Interview venue	Home	8
	Work	5
	Other	1

Table 5: Further Information of Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Context Notes
1	Female	40	Owns her own business, as does her husband, and describes her work hours as flexible and varied. Both her and her husband work primarily from home. They have a full time, live-in nanny. They have two children aged 10 and 5.
2	Female	35	A senior sales consultant at a large corporate and her husband is also a senior executive in corporate. She does describe her work hours as relatively flexible as she is primarily visiting clients and can work remotely. She has a very young baby of only 5 months. She has a full time, live-in nanny.
3	Female	31	I a senior manager at a corporate restaurant holding company and is married to a senior manager also in corporate. She describes her work hours as flexible and often works remotely. She has no dependents and has a nanny only a few days a week.
4	Female	35	Is a stay at home mom and married to an entrepreneur who works long hours. She has two live-in nannies and two children aged 5 and 6. Her children specifically do not eat meal-kit meals due to taste preferences.
5	Male	39	Is a senior consultant in corporate and works in an office with rigid and long work hours. He lives alone and has a nanny to clean house only once per week.
6	Female	36	Is an entrepreneur who owns a retail franchise and is a business consultant. At the time of the interview she lived alone and was pregnant. She has a nanny that comes every week day. Currently has her subscription on pause due only being able to eat certain foods while being pregnant. Although very busy she describes her work hours as flexible and time scarcity varies week by week.
7	Female	55	The oldest of our participants is recently widowed and lives alone. She is a senior consultant and works primarily from home. She describes her work day as very flexible. She has a nanny who comes to clean the house a few days a week and sometime her daughter visits from overseas and stays with her.

8	Female	32	A c-suite executive of a large corporate division and married to an entrepreneur. They have one child aged 7 months. She works primarily in the office and slightly longer than expected work hours. She has a full-time, live-in nanny.
9	Female	42	A senior executive at a large corporate, as is her husband. Both travel extensively for business and attend many corporate functions during the week. She has a full-time, live-in nanny and two children aged 5 and 4.
10	Female	44	A senior executive at a large corporate, as is her husband. Works primarily from the office and works longer than expected hours. Has a full-time, live-in nanny and twin boys aged 10. She is the only participant who's children eat the meal-kit meals.
11	Male	32	A senior property consultant whose wife is a stay at home mom. One child aged 5 months. He is the only male in the sample responsible for dinner meals and he sees it as his duty to provide nutrition to his wife and daughter while she focuses on looking after baby. He has a full-time nanny who comes to clean every day.
12	Female	35	A stay at home mom married to an entrepreneur who works long hours. A single child aged 5 months. A full time-nanny who comes in every day.
13	Female	37	An owner of her own business married to a senior manager in corporate. She works long hours from the office or seeing clients. She has a full-time, live-in nanny and one child aged three months.
14	Female	28	An advocate who works for herself and although not married, living with her partner who is a senior manager in corporate and currently studying his MBA. She works very long hours primarily driven by deadlines and seldom keeps office hours. Time pressures vary week to week.

5.3 Research Findings / Results

5.3.1 Presentation of Results

The objective of research question one was to identify specific factors that consumers considered as reasons for initially subscribing to meal-kit delivery services. Similarly, the objective of questions two was to identify if consumers consider any additional factors, identified through the use of the meal-kit delivery service, that influence their loyalty and repurchase intention to remain subscribed, or to re-subscribe, to a meal-kit delivery service.

Consumer behaviour and decision-making is complex and consumers are not rational in their decision-making process. Interview questions were asked in a manner that enabled the participants to reflect on their reasons, overall, for subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service, with no distinction between initial purchase and repurchase (loyalty). The researcher was responsible for analysing the participants responses and to distinguish between factors attributable to initially subscribing and those attributable to remaining subscribed.

Major factors found in this research are outlined as sub-headings and this section will ultimately result in two frameworks to summarise the results per research question.

5.3.2 Convenience as a Factor

Convenience was, without a doubt, the most cited reason by participants as to why they initially subscribed to their preferred meal-kit delivery service. All 14 participants were consistent in their understanding of convenience as attempting to save time and effort, but convenience was intertwined throughout almost all factors that will be discussed in this section, hence the reason for placing it as the first results item.

Results have shown that convenience, in the context of this study, was related to 'dinner related activities' being: planning, shopping, storing of ingredients, preparation and cooking of meals, overall added convenience in coping with day to day dinner related activities, and achieving goals. Interestingly, the ability to share the responsibility of dinner related activities with either a spouse or domestic helper was a key finding that the researcher proposed is unique to this research, based primarily on the availability of domestic help in South Africa.

Convenience as a general factor regarding dinner time activities was sought by every participant and when asked why they subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service was expressed as follows:

- ⇒ *Well... convenience will determine anything I do. So if it requires me to do more than I'm already doing, then I won't sign up...*
- ⇒ *Delivery, decisions, planning the meals, convenience, convenience, convenience.*
- ⇒ *I think the convenience will remain paramount, I think that's a major, major factor for us.*

Meal Planning

All participants indicated that meal planning required high levels of cognitive effort and participants cited this effort as being very time consuming. Perceived effort and time spent on meal planning increased perceived cost associated with meal time decisions and meal planning was significant.

When participants discussed planning it was usually expressed in the context of thinking:

- ⇒ *I think the thinking about it actually is the most time-consuming.*
- ⇒ *I don't have to think about it, I don't have to plan it... I don't have to do anything other than push a button... You just have to pop on and see if you like the menu once a week.... So half the job is done for me and then I get to select the best meals, so that's great!*

Many participants expressed emotion when discussing meal planning, particularly frustration:

- ⇒ *The frustration of me having to decide what to eat. You don't have to conceptualize and plan... it's the time to plan it, the time of researching a recipe.*
- ⇒ *So frustrated I feel - it's like a ball and chain, it's like the one thing that I need to get done, it's my priority but it's just the thing that always feels like last minute.*

Some participants perceived planning and shopping to be one and the same thing as activities that were done simultaneously while at the grocery store:

- ⇒ *I hate going around Woolworths and deciding what to eat. ...well, of deciding what to eat, and shopping. The two go hand in hand. For me to walk through*

Woolworths and go okay, well what shall we eat this week, other than salad and a meat, salad and a meat, salad and a meat.

⇒ *As far as choosing meals, I can't stand having to go shopping and say, this week we're going to plan out our meal, and then I need to have this set there, and it gets round to cooking that night and I forget that I haven't bought this, or I still need to buy that, so I still need to get to the shops.*

Whereas other participants treated planning as a completely separate exercise that took time and effort on its own:

⇒ *I don't need to sit on a Sunday or Monday thinking of five meals, looking for the recipes, breaking down the ingredients, writing a shopping list.*

It was clear that the burden of decision-making was high, even when using alternatives to meal-kit delivery services:

⇒ *There is still a decision element and so I might not be going to a supermarket and having to think about what to cook, but I still have to figure out what I feel like, choose a restaurant or take-away, order something; there's still a decision-making process that I actually just don't want to participate in.*

One participant summed her feeling towards searching for convenience in meal planning perfectly as:

⇒ *The first is that I spend less time on uCook having to decide what I am going to make, go to a supermarket, buy the ingredients, get home and spend an hour cooking something. So it drastically reduces the time that I am spending in a week on effort, food effort... it drastically reduces that - but it doesn't only reduce it I find it very convenient because I can slot it into a schedule... If I happen to have free 10 minutes late in the evening or early in the morning before I start my work day, whenever I have got that time I can sit down and decide what it's going to be. And then I know it's going to arrive and it drastically reduces food thinking time.*

It was clear that meal-kit delivery services aided participants in finding convenience:

⇒ *uCook is convenient because I don't have to do all the thinking about the recipe... they tell you what it is and so the ideas are there, I don't have to think it up.*

And even when participants knew that they had enough food stored at home to make a meal, they still felt the mental cost of planning and combining the meal was too high:

⇒ *I look at my freezer and I've got millions of things in there that we never touch. And as I said, the moment that you come round to 'now we need to make dinner,' it's a case of okay, so, there's probably at least ten meals in there, but you feel like you've got absolutely nothing, because it's too much effort, it's too much this, it's too much that...too much of the next thing.*

Every participant felt that their quest for convenience in meal planning was largely in search of adequate choice and variety of meals:

⇒ *'Cause the reason I do it is not to get bored.*

⇒ *I want to eat something different every day.*

⇒ *I signed up for the variety.*

⇒ *The variation and...to force me out of my boring habitual cooking, like, the norm. Because I was [eating] so much of the same type of food.....it forces you out of your habit.*

⇒ *to try something new, try something different, instead of me cooking my same meals which I do night in, day in and day out, and to avoid going to Woolworth's again to buy the usual pre-cooked meals.*

⇒ *Again because you just don't want to eat the same thing over and over again eat for fuel, that's why they eat because you need to keep going - but then you get people who are more sensory, and we're very much sensory home and a sensory family so it's a sense thing.*

Even functional eaters were aware of the requirement for variety, possibly if only to meet the needs of the rest of the family:

⇒ *Not getting bored. I can eat the same thing, every night of the week, but not very many people can.*

⇒ *Well we have a meat and a salad if I make it myself, whereas with uCook or with one of those others, there's a little bit of spice and...interesting things.*

But participants are aware that there can be too much choice which would further increase the cognitive cost of planning:

⇒ *But, further to that, it means I don't have an overabundance of choice, which I can find frustrating.*

⇒ *It gives me options, but also not too many options.*

When combined with one, or multiple, goals it appears that cognitive cost can increase for some participants:

⇒ *And I just like the variety, I must say. It is really...if you want to eat healthy on a budget, it can get extremely boring. And they have just found a way with introducing themes and they get different chefs as well.*

Emotions were also strong when participants reflected on meal variety in their daily lives:

⇒ *Then, while at the grocery store, it's literally just confusion; you get home, you pack the fridge, you wake up the next day, you go about your business, and you come home to the same meal, you know it...it's....I guess it's just a bit disheartening.*

⇒ *It's boring, I don't want to think about how am I going to cook the chicken differently tonight it drives me mad.*

⇒ *I end up, by default, going back to the same four meals, just 'cause they're easy.*

Additional benefits of meal-planning convenience was recognised by participants post-purchase in that they kept the meal-kit recipes which provided exact ingredient quantities so they could easily use it as a tool to recreate the same recipe again. And so participants felt that they had a base of recipes to draw on that they were already familiar with as they had cooked them before.

Shopping & Storing

Shopping for ingredients or whole meals, whether cooking from scratch, buying prepared meals, or ordering takeaways appeared to be a burden for all participants and again an activity where participants were looking for convenience wherever possible.

Physical trips to the shops for groceries was not an activity enjoyed by any participants:

⇒ *Not having to shop. I hate shopping.*

⇒ *The best part about it is not having to go shopping.*

⇒ *Oh, it was a no-brainer. I know what it's like to have to go on a Saturday morning to some shopping centre or whatever, which I hate!*

⇒ *I don't have to go shopping and figure out where everything is. So for me, anything that saves me time, that I don't have to go to the shops— I don't have*

to leave work, try and go past the shops, try and figure out everything, rattle around in high heel shoes and get to my car. This way it gets to my house, done!

Even though most participants still mention that they need to go to the shops for other household items, meal-kit delivery services have offered convenience in decreasing the time spent at the shops:

- ⇒ *And then when I do shop, I still shop in a manner for my children and for other stuff, but I just know that it's half the time.*
- ⇒ *It's less time for me to go shopping and look for things...if I do go shopping, it's also stuff I can just do online. So my shopping has now really been limited to cleaning products and whatever which I can order long in advance online. It's not fresh produce that I need to go...you have a two to three-day window, then you have to go again. So I could never actually just leave things for the weekend.*
- ⇒ *It would save me the time and effort of having to shop for ingredients.*
- ⇒ *It's completely convenient because it cuts my grocery shop by an hour.*
- ⇒ *It's less time for me to go shopping and look for things.*

Some participants avoided shopping as a way to decrease stress and anxiety:

- ⇒ *I literally would get anxious leaving the office thinking ugh, I hope John's gotten home before me and he can have bought dinner before me.*
- ⇒ *It causes a lot of stress, especially at 7 o'clock at night to try and find the shop that's still open. Otherwise I must try and get out during the day, but then you know, between meetings and things like that, I don't have the time or capacity.*

A key finding in this research was based on single households. Participants who did not have to provide for anyone but themselves felt that retailers did not provide sufficient options for people who live on their own:

- ⇒ *It's hard to shop for one.*
- ⇒ *When you live on your own and you're having to buy a lot of food, you end up cooking and you're having to have it like three times a week to finish the food.*
- ⇒ *When you are living by yourself you end up using so little that it becomes a bit of a mission to go to a supermarket for one.*

And people on their own are also concerned about balancing budget (buying in bulk), wastage and variety despite their individual context:

- ⇒ *Particularly because you end up going kind of every day because you are shopping on a per meal basis and it's not particularly convenient.*
- ⇒ *It's easy to go to Woolworth's and buy your chicken schnitzels to stick in the oven or whatever. But you can't buy two, you buy ten. So you know, you either end up with everything in the freezer or you're eating chicken schnitzel three times a week, which is not that interesting.*
- ⇒ *If I buy a container of cream or creme fraiche, something like that, you've inevitably got half the container left. And especially cooking for one, where I found that the portions that I was making were so big that I got a few meals out of it. And by the time I needed to cook again I wasn't using those ingredients, so they'd gone off.*
- ⇒ *I've got to buy a whole bag of herbs for one meal. I'm probably not going to use that dill again. I only will probably eat fish once a week, so I'm not going to use it.*

Shopping for groceries or meal ingredients was also inter-related with delivery options, in line with motivating factors for ecommerce in general:

- ⇒ *It would save me the time and effort of having to shop for ingredients, it'd be delivered straight to my office desk.*
- ⇒ *Convenience. So they deliver to my house.*
- ⇒ *So yes the delivery is a huge convenience and it's fabulous... it helps me.*
- ⇒ *The fact that you order it online, it gets delivered, there's no extra efforts from you.*
- ⇒ *I loved the idea that it was delivered.*
- ⇒ *I shop online, so I run the household remotely, so I'm doing everything online and if...there's... a convenience factor's important for me you know, 'cause I hardly get out in the day, so if I have to...that's a big, big thing for me—is convenience.*

A factor of convenience discovered in this research was the risk, and possible lost time and effort, associated with sourcing ingredients while shopping. Even if all the planning was done, the risk that some ingredients were not in stock at a retailer and may force an additional shopping trip was considered:

- ⇒ *It helped me in terms of sourcing ingredients.*

⇒ *I find it quite frustrating when I do need to go into the grocery store... 'cause to find stuff, you know.*

⇒ *I mean I didn't even know you cooked with rice wine, I didn't even know what it was! I don't know where to find that at Woolworths. So I could potentially walk the aisle for an fifteen minutes looking for rice wine vinegar and eventually give up, 'cause I've no bloody idea where it is.*

Interestingly, some participants considered the additional perceived cost of storing ingredients too:

⇒ *You know the purchasing of ingredients that potentially then sit in our pantry or in our fridge for months, because they don't get re-used in a different menu or a different recipe.*

⇒ *My fridge only has a limited capacity, my freezer has a limited capacity.*

⇒ *So we have a limited capacity, especially with our freezer.*

⇒ *There is only so much that I can put in my fridge.*

Preparation and Cooking

Convenience related to the actual preparation and cooking of the meals was the strongest factor of convenience in the results.

Almost every participant expressed the benefit of cooking from scratch but was very clear that there was a time limit they were willing to spend in the kitchen:

⇒ *I don't want to spend more time in the kitchen than I need to.*

⇒ *Loads of effort. And I mean I do... I say that I've got time to cook, and yes I do, but I don't have time to put a lot of effort into it.*

Participants were clear that between 30 minutes and one hour was the preferred time to put a healthy, well balanced meal together for themselves and/or their family:

⇒ *I need to be able to get a meal together in less than forty-five minutes.*

⇒ *I don't want to take more than forty minutes.*

⇒ *The recipes don't take you more than sort of forty-five minutes... So even if I'm home late from work, that's a reasonable timeframe to prepare a meal.*

⇒ *The meals are quick. So it's on average, you're looking at half an hour to forty minutes meal.*

One participant, who used the preparation time to spend quality time with her family, even had a limit to time she was willing to spend preparing meals:

⇒ *So kind of half an hour is great bonding time, it's fantastic to spend time together, have a glass of wine, have a chat. The moment you start getting to half an hour plus, it's a hack.*

Even participants who enjoy cooking felt they had better things to do:

⇒ *If I can come home and the boxes are already there it takes me half an hour or 40 minutes or whatever it is, I've then got a little more time just to sit and relax before I have to get back into it.*

⇒ *It was because I just didn't find I had enough time and inclination to prepare my own meals in the evening, so I wanted a quick solution... being able to prepare it in a healthy way.*

⇒ *Preparing food, cooking is the easy bit... that's the 5% of it. It's the chopping and the measuring out the quantity and all of that rubbish I hate it.*

The participants cooking for one, found the convenience in preparation and cooking particularly helpful:

⇒ *When you're in the position that you have to cook for one, it's very easy to get lazy, which I did.*

⇒ *When I started ordering uCook early last year, one of the big motivating factors was that I was cooking for one and it's impossible to cook for one.*

A major factor of convenience in the preparation and cooking of meals was the fact that ingredients are pre-portioned and in exact quantities:

⇒ *That's literally all done for me, the five hundred grams is washed, cut, and in packaging, I literally open and empty... Everything's portioned, it's generally chopped, some of it, and just throw it into a pan and it's pretty much done.*

⇒ *It was easier to cook for one with the portioned ingredients than it was to have to go and buy each of the ingredients separately, that was one of the factors.*

⇒ *So that's what I like when I said about the little perfect amounts - it's just I must then peel a garlic and then how many cloves, no it's there I can just do it.*

Convenience was further increased due to the instructive nature of recipes:

- ⇒ *Everything's there, it's kind of a dummies guide, there's...you can't mess it up. It's humanly impossible to mess it up. If I can't mess it up, nobody can mess it up. So you know, it's easy for them.*
- ⇒ *UCook supports me in the fact that they kind of tell me exactly...it's a dummies guide, you can't get it wrong. So as far as things like cooking meat—I have no clue how to cook meat, and they literally dummies guide put it there, do this, do that, fantastic.*
- ⇒ *I follow the ingredients...it's like a paint-by-numbers, you know? And we can all paint a Mona Lisa. It's easy. It's easy.*

The simplicity of the recipes was also valued and appreciated by participants:

- ⇒ *I think uCook make it as simple as possible... and nothing, as I say, is too onerous... and often complicated meals that they've simplified.*
- ⇒ *The recipes are very simple and easy to follow and they're quick... it's not complicated. They don't try and turn you in to a chef. If you've got a chopping board and a reasonable knife, you can do this.*

Overall Added Convenience

All participants has a strong feeling of an overall, not necessarily related to a single factor in the customer journey, sense of increased convenience through the purchase and use of meal-kit delivery services:

- ⇒ *I think uCook is convenient because I don't have to...I don't have to do all the thinking about the recipe. I don't have to do all the measuring of the food, the purchasing of it, the storing of it, the weighing of it... I follow the ingredients...it's like a paint-by-numbers.*
- ⇒ *It's literally, the ease of use.*
- ⇒ *You know, it's very little effort required on your behalf..... it just makes it so much easier, it takes pressure off.*
- ⇒ *Honestly it just makes life more pleasurable.*
- ⇒ *It's honestly everything that I need to make my life a whole lot easier, seriously, like there is no more words.*

And some participants felt that a meal-kit delivery service was great additional help in getting through the week:

- ⇒ *Here, you...you're still cooking, you still feel like you're doing your chore, I still feel like I'm not...I'm not taking the easy route, I'm just taking an easier route.*
- ⇒ *Yes, it's my backup plan. And it's a great backup plan it's like having you know the maid or Night Nurse, it's like oh uCook yes! - when they arrive on Monday it makes my day.*
- ⇒ *I won't rely on uCook to substitute me, it just helps me.*

Shared Responsibility

A rather unique, and interesting finding in the results of this research was how meal-kit delivery services were used to either outsource all or part of the meal planning and preparation, as well as a tactic to share responsibility with either a spouse or domestic helper:

- ⇒ *I think it's a female stereotype though to think that I should always have a meal going in the house and I should always be baking. John cooks, and he loves it. So someone in the house is putting in effort into meals.*
- ⇒ *I didn't have Jonno [Husband] as involved before uCook. With uCook, it's a lot easier. So, beforehand, it was always my responsibility. Dinner was my responsibility, he'd be out doing whatever it was. Now at least it's kind of a shared thing*
- ⇒ *So what she'll do is it gets delivered on a Monday afternoon, she'll cook Tuesday and Wednesday and then she'll leave one bag for the weekend, and I'll cook it on the weekend.*
- ⇒ *Everything's there, it's kind of a dummies guide, there's...you can't mess it up. It's humanly impossible to mess it up. If I can't mess it up, nobody can mess it up. So you know, it's easy for them.*
- ⇒ *I don't do the cooking, obviously with having a seven month old baby, my husband does the cooking.*

Managing Psychological Costs

A very strong finding in this research related to convenience is how the meal-kit-delivery services have helped the participants alleviate stress and anxiety associated with dinner related activities, through the increased convenience:

- ⇒ *It's reduced my stress a bit...my husband and I are both quite senior, highly-driven...this is actually something nice but all I have to do is follow instructions. So I switch off a little bit when I do it, but there's still great output, which is wonderful, which is not what my work life is like.*
- ⇒ *You know, effort for me is that you got to remember to do stuff. And you've got to...you've got to plan and be organized ahead of time. That for me is effort, 'cause I've got a hundred different things up in the air, so...the less I need to juggle, the better.*
- ⇒ *My job requires a lot of decision-making, and I suppose that after a particularly long, stressful, decision filled, strategic day, I don't want to have to think about anything else.*
- ⇒ *By doing UCook, it removes three meals that I have to think about a week. Three meals!*
- ⇒ *Reduces stress because it's not something that's sitting in the back of my mind thinking I have to now make a plan or order something from somewhere else. So it reduces stress.*
- ⇒ *Something I can take off my list. Like, I drive past Woolworths now and I'm like, nope, don't need anything. There's just always going to be food. I suppose it's removing, one of the million things that I have to do in a day off the list, 'cause sometimes you just want to come home and not go to the shops.*
- ⇒ *The stress of trying to decide what to cook for dinner that night. It used to make me anxious; I'd stand in Woolworths and be like, ah God, I'm here again, it's like groundhog day, now what am I going to cook today?*

Conclusion: Convenience as a factor

Convenience was considered a major benefit of using meal-kit delivery services with regards to all dinner related activities. It was evident that dinner weighed heavily on participants minds and created unnecessary stress and anxiety, something all participants were aware of and looking to alleviate.

5.3.3 Time Scarcity as a Factor

Every participant referenced time-scarcity as a function of their lifestyles and a major reason for them searching for daily convenience relating to dinner related activities. It was clear that specific reasons for being time-poor themselves was indeed based on individual context but across the board participants were aware of how valued their time was and how much time was spent on dinner related activities.

- ⇒ *I actually think the highest cost is time.*
- ⇒ *Time is a big thing.*
- ⇒ *I think that's the convenience, it provides me with more time elsewhere, which is really necessary.*
- ⇒ *I get time back. I say this now, because I've been doing this for six months—but I actually don't know how I would do it, if I didn't get these meals now.*
- ⇒ *When you're a time-poor person, which we all are, we work... Provides me...convenience provides me with time elsewhere.*

Limited Time Available

Participants referenced committed time, primarily due to work and/or family commitments, such as the requirement to travel for work, working long days, time spent in traffic due to daily commutes, and bath or feeding time for new parents that is time sensitive:

- ⇒ *At times I'll literally get home at half past seven, eight, and I don't have time to prepare a meal.*
- ⇒ *After work, going to gym, you get home...it's half past seven or whatever it is...to start cooking...organized life is just a bit much.*
- ⇒ *So getting home, if I leave work at six, suddenly I'm getting home at seven, and still got to cook dinner, so, timing-wise.*

Fatigue, due to long work days or stress was discussed by participants in the context of time-scarcity, since energy they felt that had was at a minimum after a 'long' day:

- ⇒ *After particularly a stressful day, all I want to do is kind of go home and relax.*

- ⇒ *Generally because of work, because I leave here at 6 and then I have still got to think about what to cook and then I have got to think about where I am going to buy from, and I'm very tired by the time I get home and then I also got to cook it.*
- ⇒ *But when you get home at seven o'clock from work it's like, I couldn't actually be bothered.*
- ⇒ *At that point it's so late in the evening after an incredibly stressful day the last thing I want to do is have to physically drive somewhere and interact with people in order to kind of buy groceries.*

Participants also referenced their feeling of being rushed as contributing to their time-scarcity, as opposed to just physical committed or available time:

- ⇒ *Everything's just time! I just feel like I get home and I've only got a half hour before I need to go to bed.*
- ⇒ *I think it's if I am talking to you now it's the volume that I have got to do. And I have only got a husband who it's just him at the moment, I've have got kids who are now coming - I think it's the volume that is the... it goes quickly it's never enough.*
- ⇒ *You've got screaming children, bathing children, it's...too much.*

And individual context played an important role in the feeling of being time-scarce, even in the case of those with more available time (less time committed), such as stay-at-home moms:

- ⇒ *I obviously work full time at a very busy job and my wife is dealing with our five-month-old constantly, which obviously doesn't free her up to cook.*
- ⇒ *Often that's a time the girls are getting ready for bed and...so I'm quite distracted, you're going to check on them, you're making them brush their teeth or you...so it's a distracting time.*

Opportunity Cost of Time

Participants were very aware of the opportunity cost of time often referring to alternate activities they would prefer to be doing. The quest for convenience was a conscious effort to save time in order to be able to do other activities that perhaps are higher up in a list of priorities:

- ⇒ *I want to be doing other things.*

- ⇒ *The benefit of additional time is just being able to relax a little bit more, to process the day a little bit more, to not be so go on the go. And finish up... actually finish up the evening a lot earlier.*
- ⇒ *I guess what I am saying is that depending on what my schedule looks like; certain things becomes more important than others.*
- ⇒ *Time for me, time for my marriage, time for my friend's, time for things that I consider more important.*

Across the board, participants felt that dinner related activities was not an efficient part of one's day and was eating into time that they would prefer to be spending as leisure time:

- ⇒ *So then I don't have to go to the shops at all, 'cause it's quicker for me to just sit here, 'cause I'm sitting here, I can at least spend time with her.*
- ⇒ *I could be doing productive work, or seeing friends socializing or completing other things on my to-list, rather than cooking up food...some food.*

And a very large factor of leisure time was the ability to spend quality time with family:

- ⇒ *More time with family, so...especially now that I'm working sort of full days again, as opposed to today. From leaving the office at five I can come straight home. I get home at quarter past five as opposed to six, so it's an extra forty-five minutes, and when you're not seeing your daughter all day, it's quite cool.*
- ⇒ *I only get an hour and a half to spend with her, I'd like to take her for a walk...if I'm going to the shops then, I'll come home and bath her and put her to bed, that's it. So yeah, buys me time.*
- ⇒ *I just want to go home, want to go home, see my son, spend time, get my little hour, and I start our routine and John can start cooking.*

Conclusion: Time Scarcity as a Factor

Participants discussed time scarcity across dinner related activities and not specifically related to a single activity, such as shopping or cooking. Interestingly time was not referenced relating to money, as per the market-economy, but was more referenced in relation to leisure time, additional work time, and family time.

5.3.4 The Goal to Eat Healthy as a Factor

The goal to eat healthy is considered a major contributor to goal conflict, particularly when faced with time-scarcity. Participants regularly referred to alternative convenience options in their consideration set such as convenient ingredients, prepared meals, frozen meals, take-aways and even restaurant meals. The goal to eat healthy supports the need for this research because despite the overwhelming necessity for convenience, it did not seem to be as important if it was at the cost of health. Most participants referred to these options as being unhealthy either due to high in sugar and fat, not knowing exactly what ingredients were in the meals, questioned cooking techniques used, and additives used for flavour and preservation.

⇒ *The first one is a healthy kind of aspect, takeaways tend to not be so healthy I think UberEats has made that slightly easier in that you can order all sorts of things now and you are not limited to a drive-through, or you know something that used to be convenient, you can order from restaurants now as so that has changed slightly. But health is one thing.*

Goal to be Healthy (Wellness Trend)

All participants expressed their goals to be as healthy as possible:

⇒ *I'm trying to be healthy.*

⇒ *Actually we're trying to eat healthy.*

⇒ *I want to eat healthy I don't want to have cancer... you know what I mean.*

⇒ *A frustration in that, sometimes I wouldn't eat healthily; and I want to eat healthily, and have an adequate, substantial meal for dinner.*

One participant even recognised the trend of health and wellness as being topical:

⇒ *I mean that's what people talk about already, you know? Health and how you're looking after yourself, and exercise and all of that, so...and maybe it's our age as well, like you're in that band of...so yeah, it's a big topic of discussion.*

Frozen food still seemed to have a bad reputation:

⇒ *Healthiness is the most important, I'm becoming a little obsessed with gut health. It's...yeah the healthy, fresh...that sort of thing works for me. As I said to you, I don't do frozen...it just doesn't work for me.*

⇒ *It feels healthier if I'm cooking a meal, as opposed to my frozen meal.*

Often the health related goals were specific to individuals dietary needs or preferences, which meal-kit delivery services catered for:

⇒ *Carbs, as little carbs as possible. So we were on the banting box, before we moved on to the vegetarian box. That's really important.*

⇒ *Well based on the different packages that they have, I mean there's lots of packages, but the banting package which is what we were on before this, but exactly that.*

⇒ *Yeah, we try and keep it as unprocessed as possible....not low fat, but low fat-ish, healthy carbs, and stuff.*

⇒ *No sugar.*

Variety was again a factor considered but was discussed in terms of the health-related importance of eating a variety of different kinds of foods:

⇒ *Well, trying new things, getting different health benefit from those specific things.*

⇒ *I think just from a nutrition point of view, I think it's fantastic to be able to eat pork, fish, beef, chicken during the weeks, so provide your body different kinds of proteins, different kinds of nutrients...eat different kinds of veg all the time, there's new carbs all the time, so I think from a nutrient point of view, it's fantastic for our body.*

⇒ *It comes back to that nutritional thing. I think your body takes different amino acids, different enzymes, different proteins from different foods.*

Those participants who considered themselves as health conscious but not following a specific diet were looking for an overall balanced meal in the traditional sense and they felt their meal-kit provided that:

⇒ *I think that the meals I'm getting from uCook are probably much more balanced, in terms of carbs, fat and protein.*

⇒ *I grew up in a family where you have to have one green, one yellow, one orange every night on your plate with your protein. So you needed to have the different food groups. I feel like I'm getting all those food groups with uCook.*

⇒ *Most important for me is something that's balanced. I need to be providing something for my husband and my son that's...they need to be getting their*

vegetables, not too many carbs, those sorts of things, so that's obviously important.

Participants providing for others (spouse and children) felt that the meal-kits provided them with the necessary help in providing healthy dinners for their families:

- ⇒ *From a wife perspective, at least I know that Jonno [Husband]. is eating properly, at least one meal a day, he's eating properly. I'm married to a man who eats chocolates and sweets.*
- ⇒ *Cause they [family] need to be nourished by the food we eat. I'm more about the food we eat rather than supplementing their diet... So it's got to nourish them, I've got to feel good.*
- ⇒ *I've convinced myself that at least when I'm doing this for him [husband], he's getting good food. It doesn't have all the salts and all the other stuff that's in the pre-prepared stuff.*
- ⇒ *So at least I know...as you say, kind of a wifely duty, you get...that he's eating well at least one meal a day, that it's a well-prepared, well kind of like, you know, balanced meal that he's getting his vegetables, that...I'm not just feeding him crap all the time as well.*

A very interesting finding related to the 'nudging' tactic used by consumers, discussed in 2.2.8.4 Nudging, was that participants used the meal-kits as opportunities to enforce the nudging tactic in terms of portion control for both themselves and their families:

- ⇒ *Portion size is a massive thing for us.*
- ⇒ *The other advantage with uCook specifically is there's portion control. So it's for four people there's nothing left...I mean, you can you imagine ten-year-old boys that can eat.*
- ⇒ *Portions, exactly, that as well, you...if there's a size, if you're cooking enough for one meal you don't overeat as well, you eat what's there.*
- ⇒ *That said, given that I'm rapidly heading towards my forties, it's maybe not a bad thing that I'm eating a smaller portion at night. So there is a certain degree of forced portion control there.*

The nudging was extended into helping participants eat a more balanced meal, particularly increasing vegetable intake:

⇒ *So it provides variety, not only with the dishes but in eating more...we're eating more vegetables by default than we have ever before. And, just variety. So red meat, fish, chicken.*

Quality & Knowledge of Ingredients

A key differentiator of meal-kits and generally cooking from scratch, was the knowledge of the ingredients in a meal, the ability to identify ingredients in meals, controlling potentially unhealthy cooking processes, and ensuring freshness, all in pursuit of health.

In general participants felt that meals cooked from scratch were healthier and this notion was driven largely by knowing exactly what ingredients are in the meal:

⇒ *I want to know what I am eating I want to know what goes in my food. Kids need to understand also you know where food comes from it's an important it's a very sort of grounding time of day.*

⇒ *Any sort of takeaway, any readily prepared meal...you know that you're not eating healthily. This way you know that you're eating healthy. So that is probably the most important thing that I'd consider.*

⇒ *I want to know what I am eating I want to know what goes in my food.*

⇒ *Whereas here, I know I'm cooking, I know at least it's good stuff. They're getting their vegetables, I can see in its raw, you know, raw form; I know that they're eating decent, you know, stuff off the farm type of idea.*

⇒ *I know what's in it. I know that that...you know, there's my beet root.*

⇒ *So, you know exactly what goes into that sauce.*

⇒ *If you don't know where it comes from, what it's actually supposed to be, you don't know that it's actually natural, you don't know that you're actually not eating, as I say, millions of other things blended in there.*

Participants referred to freshness as being healthy and perceived large benefit from using fresh ingredients in meals:

⇒ *Fresh and healthy are kind of interchangeable.*

⇒ *Well I think it's important for your health, the part of the fresh, natural.*

- ⇒ *I definitely find that it's healthy, 'cause everything is natural. There's nothing that comes...every now and again I suppose, the tomato puree thing, I don't know if it's out of a tin or not, but everything else is pretty much fresh.*

Freshness, related to health, was also discussed in the context of avoiding chemicals, GMO foods and hormones, eating organic, free range, and avoiding preservatives:

- ⇒ *It seems like they provide you with organic ingredients which, being in the food space, is becoming...I'm becoming increasingly aware of that.*
- ⇒ *It seems like they provide you with organic ingredients which, being in the food space, is becoming...I'm becoming increasingly aware of that. There's a lot of genetics and stuff in food processing, so you know, I appreciate it... I won't necessarily, deliberately shop organic, but if it's there, then it's a choice I'll make.*
- ⇒ *It's not full of preservatives. 'Cause I think your health is linked to disease and longevity.*
- ⇒ *At least here I know you're kind of eating mostly organic.*

Knowing where food was sourced from, and trust placed in smaller, local food providers important to most participants:

- ⇒ *I just like to know where my food's coming from. I don't want genetically modified fruit and veg and meat, and all of that stuff.*
- ⇒ *I know the meat's good for uCook and I actually assume the meat is better with uCook than it is from Woolworth's...which is very important to me, it freaks me out.*
- ⇒ *like the uCook chicken that's in the fridge has where it comes from, like the Elgin Farm, and I can see it's free-range and all that jazz. Yeah, non-free-range meat, chicken, eggs...is a very big thing for me, massive.*
- ⇒ *So you know that you're eating the stuff that's nice and fresh, like it doesn't all look exactly the same. It looks like real food, but it doesn't go off as quickly as Food Lover's Market and it doesn't kind of sit in your fridge as long as Woolworth's. So that for me is quite nice, at least I know...somewhere along the line I've kind of convinced myself that we're not eating as many chemicals as probably we would be if we do Woolworth's.*

And some participants are aware that their perceptions may not be fact. They acknowledge this but still gave the meal-kit service the benefit of doubt:

- ⇒ *Just from a health perspective, even if it's just in your head you know, you kind of feel like that...you know you should, based on all the hype about it, you should be eating organic and you should be...it's just better for you and doesn't have all the preservatives and doesn't have all the bad stuff in it.... So you know you should be doing it.*
- ⇒ *So at least this is, as I say, in my head...whether or not it's true, but I've convinced myself, that it's...it's better for us.*

Many participants cited the ability to control the cooking process and the flexibility in cooking from scratch as beneficial for health purposes:

- ⇒ *You can control a little bit more, you can say like no, let's leave the rice out.*
- ⇒ *When you are cooking something, you control how much salt goes into it, how much butter.*
- ⇒ *So it still gave me the freedom to be in the kitchen and do and be in control of what I am eating and what I am cooking, without the worry of not knowing what's going in my body.*

And what about those dirty potatoes? It was very interesting at how often participants referred to dirt on potatoes and related it back to ethical sourcing, freshness and organic:

- ⇒ *Take the potatoes out and they've got dirt on them. And it makes me feel like, you know, this is fresh food coming to my table, and I've got to chop it up... You know I'm not defrosting it in the microwave, and I'm cooking it myself*
- ⇒ *So potatoes are like dirty, from the ground, and the sweet potato will be dirty. So it's very rustic, it's not...you know it's not these pristine little packets that you buy in Woolworth's.*

Conclusion: Goal to Eat Healthy as a Factor

It was evident from all the responses that there is indeed a goal to eat healthy, even if it is relative to each individual in terms of what eating healthy is. Healthy eating spanned freshness of ingredients, cooking process, quality of ingredients, and hidden attributes such as preservatives, hormones, sugar, salt and organic attributes. All participants felt that cooking from scratch, using fresh ingredients was better for them and their families and that meal-kit delivery services helped them attain the goal of eating healthier, in a convenient manner.

5.3.5 Managing Goal Conflict as a Factor

Managing goal conflict was a factor considered by all participants. However, reasons for goal conflict was different based on each participants individual context and need. Goal conflict was a result of managing competing and conflicting demands, which was exacerbated when managing these demands for oneself and others (family and spouse). The largest contributing factor to goal conflict in this context was as a result of healthy vs. tasty and satisfying both needs, again exacerbated across more than providing for just oneself. The presence and need to manage consumer guilt was prevalent and significant, as was time-scarcity as a contributor to goal conflict (in line with literature reviewed and 5.3.3). Managing one's conflict of cooking enjoyment was also prevalent and to a lesser extent managing the nudging process. Surprisingly goal conflict caused by managing a budget was not cited by participants, most likely due to the relative wealth of the participants sampled.

Complex and Competing Demands (Family & Other)

All participants' responses indicated goal conflict as a result of complex and competing demands. The demands were not only related to the person but also related to changing family contexts and catering for the needs of one's spouse and family.

The participants sampled showed high indication of ever changing personal contexts with multiple participants being first time parents and having very young children (under a year old), others with slightly older children whose taste preferences are now needing to be catered for, and one lady recently widowed.

- ⇒ *My husband suffered from colon cancer for two years, and passed away the end of last year. It was...hard to cook a meal, when somebody can't eat.*
- ⇒ *I think we're in a different life cycle with our children [referring to her children getting older and exploring different foods].*
- ⇒ *It's has taken a lot of stress out of my life which if we are going to sort of go down the ladder... Having a baby especially it puts a lot of stress on to a couple, I was taking a lot on with my little boy so I had everything delivered to me.*

Participants who cooked for more than just themselves, indicated a certain amount of compromise between the members of the family in order to cater for all dietary preferences:

- ⇒ *So, if I don't feed Brendan carbs, he'd ask me what's cooking here, what's happening? Brendan's not a very heavy meat person where meat's the hero of the dish, he doesn't mind meat, but don't make it solely the hero.*
- ⇒ *If it was just me on my own, I'd probably eat slightly different meals to John. I don't mind like a starchy kind of a meal, so like, curries, I don't mind those, but John finds that kind of food quite rich. So we've found a bit of a balance with the banting box; the vegetarian box is all me and he's just had to go with it.*
- ⇒ *Digging deeper, I've got a pretty sensitive stomach, John's is not great either, so, you put a lot of rich food at 8 P.M. at night, sometimes 8:30, I don't sleep that well... I'm going to change that now, so if I'm going to have a big meal late at night, it's got to be a less carb-heavy meal, that's always been my thing.*

In addition to managing dietary preferences and sensitivities, participants were also aware of taste preferences within the family unit and used the flexibility of cooking from scratch as a way to manage these:

- ⇒ *'Cause there's going to be some dishes that he doesn't like, and there's going to be some that I don't like, so I'll say oh, I don't feel like that one tonight, so he'll go okay, what if I add this and this?*
- ⇒ *I know my wife doesn't like coriander, so I don't put the coriander in.*

Looking for variety in weekly dinners was a driving factor for all participants, whether for themselves or for the ones they were providing for. The need to overcome boredom while still maintain health and not expending too much effort in providing variety was a main factor:

- ⇒ *It's a human thing where every week I ended getting the same thing from Woolworths, I ended up getting fish cakes, I found the same things, I never explored recipes and thought okay, well let me do a pork knuckle — which I've never done — or a...I just went down the same route, all the time. So I think there was a boredom, certainly, and a lack of variation in our meals.*
- ⇒ *So it was looking for variety firstly, because I was getting that "nothing new in the fridge," and we...we're foodies, we like food.*
- ⇒ *For us it's just really is around as I said, I get bored. That honestly is it. So it's nice that we've got new things all the time.*

⇒ *I felt that I was...my food was boring. And...what my husband had to eat—not so much my kids, my kids are still young enough where they eat separately to us. My kids...my husband was bored, and I was bored.*

⇒ *That...that pattern got very, very repetitive and we found ourselves eating the same things over and over, and it just...it just started to drive us nuts.*

Healthy vs. Tasty

The most cited reason for goal conflict was providing both a healthy and tasty meal. Many participants perceived healthy food as being less tasty, boring, and more expensive than unhealthy food and were conflicted between them.

Most participants cited healthy as very important and considered themselves health conscious:

⇒ *You'll find a lot of 'health' comes through in what I say.*

⇒ *I don't like to eat unhealthy food.*

⇒ *Because it's healthy, and we like to be healthy. And I think we eat too much red meat in general as South Africans.*

⇒ *So for us we like to eat healthy, so it's healthy food.*

⇒ *I would always prefer to have something that is healthy.*

But a large proportion of participants emphasised taste as just as important, either personally or collectively:

⇒ *I mean I wouldn't eat something just 'cause it was healthy, if I didn't like it. So yeah, I'd have to go that way.*

⇒ *I mean if it wasn't good, I wouldn't keep subscribing, so tasty probably is up there... but then healthy as well.*

⇒ *I think pretty much the same—the tastiness, the flavours, the...if you're gonna eat, make sure it's good.*

⇒ *Like flavour, I mean, if it wasn't good, I wouldn't stick with it.*

⇒ *Taste I think is the most important thing, taste and variation probably. We both enjoy good food and you know if you think of something like a Woolworths microwave meal - nothing against Woolworths but they tend to be quite bland and I think life is too short to eat food that is not nice.*

Despite their response on health, either they personally contradicted what they had said but mentioning how important taste is too, or they were conflicted in providing their spouse with a tasty meal as important to them, as evidenced by one participant:

⇒ *Health is more important than taste, absolutely.*

⇒ *If it doesn't taste good, nobody's eating it. Especially Nicholas [Husband].*

In general, participants found that a meal-kit was a beneficial way of managing tasty vs. healthy:

⇒ *You know I've got healthy, tasty.*

⇒ *So...at least uCook it's tasty, the meals are good.*

⇒ *I anticipated that it would be tasty, and found out that they were, so I was happy with that.*

⇒ *I found the meals to be fantastic, I really enjoyed the taste of the meals and recipes, and the ingredients.*

Participants inferred that a reason why a meal-kit is able to satisfy healthy vs. tasty goal conflict was largely due to the reason that home meals are perceived to be healthier and tastier. One reason may be due to the reasons discussed in 5.3.4. Participants felt that meal-kits delivered on both fronts as home meals are healthier and tastier:

⇒ *Yes, they must be cooked they must be home cooked, it must be home meal. I mean you can go to restaurants and that but after a while you get sick of it... it's rich you don't you know it's the comfort of being at home.*

⇒ *You know what, I think the fact that it's freshly prepared. So the flavours, everything's locked in, your whole house smells of it, you can smell the garlic you're chopping or whatever...a frozen meal just feels like I'm travelling and I'm in a hotel room somewhere.*

⇒ *So I looked at options for ready-made meals that they don't have to cook, 'cause that's the one thing they don't have. So I found two or three companies, but again, it's very, very basic. It will be a lasagne or whatever, and I just felt it's not really creative. That's to tie you over, but I don't think that's particularly tasty, it's for me, just...if that's my next option apart from UCook, then I'd rather go back to planning my meals myself.*

- ⇒ *Generally we eat incredibly healthy, hence, you know, things like ready-made meals with all the stuff, it's just not going to work for me.*
- ⇒ *I generally find with Daily Dish that there isn't sugar and that kind of overload. It's very healthy ingredients.*
- ⇒ *I know it's healthier. I feel...healthy.*

Managing Consumer Guilt

Managing consumer guilt in this context was primarily driven by providing for one's family. Providing for family in this context was in the form of providing food, nutrition and health related to meals, catering for taste preferences, and managing the feeling of inadequacy or guilt.

It was evident in the responses from participants who are looking to provide for others that they feel obligated to and experience consumer guilt:

- ⇒ *I mean they look to me for nourishment. I mean, they don't care how I do it, but they look to me for nourishment.*
- ⇒ *I think there's also a little bit of...you know, emotional providing for my family thing, and you know like, looking after my wife, making sure she's eating properly, that kind of thing.*
- ⇒ *Primarily this is my sort of responsibility.*
- ⇒ *It's my job right, so I am going to do it well. I have had disastrous meals and it really upsets me, because I feel - my husband works really hard, we are a team so I have got to do this well.*

And that feeling of guilt was ever more present before using a meal-kit delivery service:

- ⇒ *Like a bad wife. (Laughter) Yeah, you do. Like...because my love language is service, so I enjoy making food and like taking care of my husband....so if I don't...if I get home at half past seven, eight, and there isn't food, I feel bad, for me and for him.*
- ⇒ *That I'm a failure as a wife! (Laughter). And I don't think it's...I'm a failure for me as well, I don't think it's healthy...I feel like it's a cop-out for me to go and buy food.*
- ⇒ *But, for my kids, I can't...I can't feed them that crap. It's scary.*

⇒ *I was probably letting him down on that because he'd get chicken, and chicken and chicken.*

And it was evident that meal-kits were used to alleviate associated guilt:

⇒ *I suppose it's kind of alleviating my guilt of being the useless, non-1920's wife, you know the one who doesn't cook and...you know we have a lot of help in South Africa, I guess I also don't clean, so it's like, what do I actually do as a wife?*

⇒ *Like a decent being, a responsible wife; I'm looking after my husband and my son and he's not getting crap.*

⇒ *At least I know my family's eating properly, with my son, I'm not going to be giving him takeaways, I'd rather be giving him something on the UCook menu.*

⇒ *At least I feel as well, it's decent stuff, and for that, at least I'm also doing my bit and doing the cooking or you know, or Jonno in this situation at the moment.*

Meal-kits delivered certain elements of convenience that made managing such goal conflict easier for the person responsible:

⇒ *I think it is relief, I think that's part of it. It's a task that is checked on the number of tasks that I have to do in a week, that I now have ticked off, and I can move on. And by doing that ticking off, I tick all the boxes that I need for dinner.*

⇒ *I am a wife and I can cook for my husband...so I wouldn't just want to feed him a ready-made meal every night.*

⇒ *My life, my family, that I can stand, that I am dependent I am not standing behind my husband you know I am standing next to him, and I know that sounds so weird.*

Enjoyment and Fulfilment

Some participants used meal-kits to manage the conflict of cooking, an activity they in fact enjoyed, and the other less enjoyable dinner related activities such as planning and shopping.

Some participants used meal-kits as a way to enjoy the cooking part, some even considered cooking as a leisure activity, and meal-kits eliminated all the other less enjoyable parts:

- ⇒ *I still get to enjoy cooking, which relaxes me.*
- ⇒ *I enjoy cooking, so, for me, that's also my switching off time a little bit.*
- ⇒ *I like preparing meals for myself, because it's relaxing for me and it's one hour where I don't have to think about my to-do list.*
- ⇒ *I like cooking, especially when you're cooking with nice ingredients, so I thought I'd try uCook 'cause I do like the idea of cooking.*
- ⇒ *So that was one of the differentiators, the fact that you have to cook it; it doesn't come prepared and you just warm it up for example. So the fact that you have to cook it was one of the key differentiators for me.*
- ⇒ *It gives me time to do what I love, and that's to cook.*

One participant, although not necessarily that passionate about cooking, used the meal-kits as a way to express her love for her new husband:

- ⇒ *Well I feel like there are other convenient options. I could go to Sloane meat market, I could go to Woolworths and buy pre-prepared meals...but obviously it takes away from the cooking time, so then I just feel like it's too easy, like I haven't done the work.*

And another participant summed up her experience in managing goal conflict overall as:

- ⇒ *If you are really into... healthy and you like cooking, but just not the stuff around it, then this is absolutely perfect!*

Nudging

The concept of nudging was again present in the context of managing goal conflict.

One participant felt that the commitment to a meal-kit delivery service made her more likely to eat at home more regularly rather than just eating at her local restaurant, thereby saving money and eating healthier:

- ⇒ *What is interesting, is it's forced me to often eat at home.*

Others felt that the commitment to a meal-kit reduced their choice and susceptibility to unhealthy cravings:

- ⇒ *Because it forces you to eat the veggies, and it forces you to have the things that you probably wouldn't if you were going to just make a meal on your own. It's*

like, you'd throw a cup of baby tomatoes and a few slices of cucumber and say okay, there's my veg for the day, which is...you can do better than that.

⇒ *And when you have that option of not...okay, well I've got this in the fridge, and I need to do it, versus I don't have it in the fridge, and a pizza sounds really good.*

⇒ *And then you eat all this crap that you shouldn't be eating!*

And at least two participants used meal-kits as a way to force compromise and eliminate debate over what people in the family feel like eating:

⇒ *That just means you don't debate it. So there's no argument with it...it kind of cuts out that argument, it's okay, this is what we're having for dinner, there you go, there's all the ingredients, off you go.*

⇒ *So before we moved onto the vegetarian box, we like looked at the meals for weeks going, not so keen, not so keen, so eventually I just made the call 'cause it wasn't an option anymore.*

Conclusion: Managing Goal Conflict as a factor

It was evident during data collection that participants felt strongly and emotionally about conflicting goals. It was also clear how they used meal-kits as deliberate tactics in managing goal conflict, often 'outsourcing' the planning of meals to the meal-kit provider and placing large amounts of trust in the provider, based on marketing, on health and quality, often knowingly without evidence. This seems to be a further way by which consumers are alleviating psychological costs associated with meals time decisions.

One participant summed it up nicely when she said:

⇒ *uCook allows me to have best the best of both worlds, it's the takeaway, that I don't have to think about, it sounds tasty but it's still healthy because I am still in control of it, I am still doing it and I am still cooking I am not just cleaning up a pack and put it in the microwave you know.*

5.3.6 Economic Considerations as a Factor

Home economics was a major factor considered by all participants, perhaps a reflection on recent increases in food prices in South Africa and the tough economic climate at the time of the interviews, but nonetheless all participants emphasised the importance of

cost and managing food related costs within the household. Despite the relative wealth of the sample, cost as a factor was almost always considered as an order qualifier:

- ⇒ *I think cost is the most important probably.*
- ⇒ *Times are tough, money is tight.*
- ⇒ *I think number one would be cost when two nice dishes pop up, I do look at them and go maybe I should do it. But then I look at price and that's the main criteria.*
- ⇒ *My first and foremost would be cost.*
- ⇒ *I am not willing to spend more money than I should for something.*

Decision Analysis

The sample of participants were split in their cost / benefit analysis of using meal-kits. Some participants were very analytical, analysing cost and benefit per line item, also evident by the length of their responses to the question:

- ⇒ *I am a chartered accountment and my husband's an engineer, so I think we are actually analysing in the interim.*
- ⇒ *I'll download my shopping list from Woolworth's, 'cause I shop for groceries from Woolworth's on a monthly basis, and I'll monitor that on a month-to-month to see... Firstly I think Woolworth's is becoming very expensive, 'cause I do check you know, how much prices are going up month on month, and then because I've initiated this additional cost, I wanted to see what the offset is, relative to the grocery bill.*
- ⇒ *It cost me the same to have uCook, to have those meals and pay for them is the same having them delivered, or me going to the supermarket is same, so if - the reason why I never went on the uCook before is because I thought they were ridiculously expensive. And then I did the maths and then I realized that it actually didn't take out any more from my monthly budget for food, having a delivery... you know food delivery.*
- ⇒ *I am evaluating it on a comparison of if I was to do uCook versus if I was buying my own groceries, just the monetary cost of that is what I am really evaluating - because at the moment as uCook box for two is 630 Rand a week, multiply by 4 give you know 4 weeks in a month so it gives you a number. And I am looking at whether that is greater than the cost of me going to a supermarket and having to*

buy the ingredients myself, or if I don't have time ordering things on UberEats or getting takeaways or that sort of thing.

Some participants analysed costs in a more general and emotive manner rather basing their analysis on perceptions and gut feeling:

- ⇒ *I've not done a cost analysis (laughter) I believe that it is more cost-effective, but I have not done a cost analysis.*
- ⇒ *It's the total benefit. And I think...you know, it's not such a conscious decision.*
- ⇒ *I don't itemize each thing that I think about them, I think about...you know, everything as whole and...uCook as a whole.*
- ⇒ *There is no thought process.... it's just very easy and time-effective and cost-effective.*
- ⇒ *Definitely on a whole and more emotionally, personally.*
- ⇒ *The decision would be more emotional, like, it's a cost/benefit because yes, I'm spending this money but actually I'm saving on a lot of other things... But even if I look at the numbers, for me it would be a savings.*
- ⇒ *I think as a whole. The delivery, you just order online, they deliver it, you eat it, healthy, you send the box back in the future, they bring another one in...I think the whole...as a whole.*
- ⇒ *No, it's like a general...a general cost. So I'm going to buy the groceries anyway. Is it cheaper to go this way in terms of uCook and Woolworth's? 'Cause I still need to buy a few things, like fruit and lunchbox stuff, and things like that. So it'll be a general cost of food that I'll consider when I weigh up the costs.*

And rather interestingly, and in line with the literature that states that consumers are not always rational, some consumers in fact contradicted themselves when asked about their analysis and decision-making process. One participant in particular expressed her decision-making process as such:

- ⇒ *I actually did a spreadsheet for a few months, and I was like alright what do I actually spend on food down to the very plastic packet. And I spend ex a month, and I then starting using uCook and I looked at what my monthly spend was and it wasn't really any different which surprised me.*

⇒ *I'm Italian, we don't finickity with finickities, we just sort of we will do it for a while, and then once you are sort of okay with it then it must fit into my overall feeling of this is a benefit to me or it's not.*

Cost Effectiveness and Savings

Thirteen out of fourteen participants expressed an appreciation of the overall economic cost effectiveness of using a meal-kit delivery service. Although the researcher was aware of ensuring the questions related to economics were as tied to money as far as possible, it was evident that other factors, discussed throughout this research, were expressly considered as additional benefits and played a role in the cost vs benefit, perceived value analysis.

One participant was very critical of the costs associated with meal-kit delivery services and had subsequently unsubscribed to uCook. He was by far the most analytical participant and he showed the researcher his detailed excel spreadsheet of monthly household costs. Interestingly though, he did expressly mention that as and when he was offered a discount code for a meal-kit delivery service, and at the same time it coincided with dishes that were made up of expensive ingredients, specifically salmon, he would indeed be enticed to order for that week:

⇒ *I know salmon is an expensive one, but I've managed to get a discount on a salmon meal. It's healthy and I enjoy salmon, so, you know, that one dish would potentially make me decide to buy uCook for that week, because I've got a discount on uCook, and I've got salmon. So it depends on the meals, and depends on what's happening in my week, and as I mentioned if I can get a discount of sorts, I'd consider going back.*

That same participant did however highlight how discounts coupons can effectively be used as ways to get potential customers to trial or to entice lost customers to reactivate their subscription to a meal-kit delivery service, especially when combined with more expensive, premium ingredients:

⇒ *I think generally cost is my first reference point; if it's a full-priced uCook meal or if I don't have a discount on uCook, these days I don't consider it. Especially after all the fuel price increase, I haven't even had a look in the last three weeks to see what uCook costs, 'cause I don't have any discount coupons and I haven't been given any discount to use uCook, so I haven't even been online to see what they cost these days. Knowing that there's been fuel increases and vat*

increases, I expect that the uCook meals are around one hundred and seventy rand per meal, which to me, I'm not going to do that. So price is...I haven't considered price thereafter, I consider do I have the time to cook this week or not? Do I have the inclination to spend time in the kitchen, is it a free week? Yeah, I only consider those things after I've had a look at price.

All other consumers considered cost effectiveness as part of an overall cost vs benefit analysis and cited a few factors and reasons as to why.

Many participants indicated the 'value for money' they felt they were getting using a meal-kit due to quality of ingredients, compared to the cost of buying and using the same ingredients:

- ⇒ I'm not going to pay Woolworth's prices for organic stuff.*
- ⇒ I actually did a spreadsheet for a few months, and I was like alright what do I actually spend on food down to the very plastic packet. And I spend "ex" a month, and I then starting using UCook and I looked at what my monthly spend was and it wasn't really any different which surprised me.*

Almost all of the participants recognised economic benefit attributed to food wastage. Participants, even those not 'shopping for one,' recognised the monetary cost associated to wasting ingredients and or food because of the way retailer package ingredients and upsell customers using bulk pricing:

- ⇒ On the cost front as well you end up spending less because they give you exactly what you need and I don't have to add anything to it.*
- ⇒ If I go into Woolworth's I could blow a grand without even blinking an eye, and this costs me six hundred bucks or so for three meals, because it's portioned. If I had to get veg and fruit and portion my own meals, I probably could do it, but probably not, because it's not bulk.*
- ⇒ So definitely from the cost perspective as well... but we were spending thousands a week on going shopping, and I was throwing away like tomatoes and cheese, constantly, over and over and over and over and over and over again, I was throwing away all of the excess produce.*
- ⇒ If I'd bought the whole sweet potato maybe uCook's not cheaper, but, because of my previous shopping habits, it definitely is cheaper.*

⇒ *I think it's cost-effective, more cost-effective... because I'm not throwing out and I'm not buying bulk when I only need a cup of...or a spoon of...*

This was emphasised for the participants who were shopping and cooking for only themselves:

⇒ *I ended up saving a lot of money on groceries because, like I said, you can't buy portions that suit you when you're cooking for yourself, whereas they bring you literally enough for yourself.*

⇒ *If you say, you decide you want roast chicken and vegetables, you can't buy one quarter of a chicken to cook, and if you do, it's probably going to end up being quite dry and not so delicious.*

⇒ *Because I'm on my own, cost-wise it works out much cheaper for me.*

Some participants actively seek out ways to decrease their monthly grocery bill and attribute meal-kit delivery services as an effective tactic to achieve the goal:

⇒ *To see if we could reduce our grocery bill. Because I would spend on average about twenty thousand rand a month on groceries. Yeah. Okay, it could be the way I was shopping and from where I was shopping and what we eat, but, in a family of four...you know my husband, growing boys...*

That same participant also recognised an actual cost saving:

⇒ *It's reduced my grocery bill, overall significantly, I would say about a fifteen percent reduction, month on month.*

Cost saving was recognised through the use of the meal-kit delivery service with almost every participant:

⇒ *I get satisfaction like my Woolworths bill is two grand instead of four grand and that's quite nice.*

⇒ *I mean our cost...our costs, monetary costs, definitely go down on the weeks we use uCook, one hundred percent.*

⇒ *As much as people say it's expensive, it's not. I mean we pay eight hundred rand a week for two people, like I said we're doing that in two nights of Woolworths.*

⇒ *So it cuts down my Woolworths cost a lot, 'cause I'm not buying fresh stuff from Woolworths so much. So...for me, I end up saving money.*

- ⇒ *So that's when we tried UCook for the first time and suddenly... our expenses came down massively in a month.*
- ⇒ *The fact that it's reducing our grocery bill.*
- ⇒ *It's reduced my grocery bill, overall significantly, I would say about a fifteen percent reduction, month on month.*
- ⇒ *Oh it's also saved us a lot of money... I must tell you it's saved us a lot of money.*
- ⇒ *I mean we kind of ballpark, cut about two-thirds of our grocery bill out.*
- ⇒ *'Cause it saves me money!*

Nudging as a concept again came into consideration when considering saving money with some participants very specifically subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service in order to save money on their monthly groceries as they felt they were shopping less and less enticed into buying additional items that they potentially did not need, or could buy cheaper by shopping around. This was evident in the sheer number of responses from different participants:

- ⇒ *I think I used to buy a lot of what I didn't need.*
- ⇒ *So my monthly grocery shop starts to get broken down into a daily grocery shop. So I'm shopping for a dinner time meal, then, I'm hungry when I go there so I'll buy some Baby bell Cheese's which are a casual forty-five rand every time, and then I need milk, and then I need nappies, and then suddenly it's six hundred, seven hundred, eight hundred, every night.*
- ⇒ *It's 'cause I buy crap in the shops, and if I don't go, I don't buy it.*
- ⇒ *Because I walk up and down the aisles, depending on your mood, you end buying stuff you don't actually need.*
- ⇒ *You don't go to the shop, you don't spend money... 'cause you go in and you buy, like compulsively... things you don't need.*
- ⇒ *When I do go in, I generally buy two or three things that I probably don't need, because it looks really good, And also, you tend to buy too much. So you go shopping and you buy... I mean, I look at my freezer and I've got millions of things in there that we never touch.*
- ⇒ *you end buying for the sake of buying a lot of the time, whereas here, you get what you need.*

⇒ *I also find, when you're in the store you buy a lot of stuff you don't even need.*

In general participants considered the economic benefit or savings as part of the overall perceived benefits against actual monetary costs, and considered in relation to other goals, such as saving time, effort and money, eating high quality meals, or eating healthy:

⇒ *I don't think it's expensive, for the way you eat.*

⇒ *I think I'm saving money, and I think that for the quality of the meal that I'm eating.*

⇒ *So I must say for me, my time that I've saved, my petrol to go by, and that I don't waste the food...for me that it is definitely more economical.*

⇒ *It's a cost/benefit because yes, I'm spending this money but actually I'm saving on a lot of other things.*

⇒ *Well, for me, uCook works out to like just over a hundred rand a meal, which I think is a very decent price for like a full vegetable and protein meal. And...so now I spend like three hundred rand a week, and those are my three meals, and often I'll leftovers that I'll eat the next day.*

⇒ *You know, there's a convenience factor here....if I look at the cost vs the cost...so...you're pretty much on par, if not better... And there's obviously the added convenience, so there we go, it makes sense. So for me it was very much a systematic weigh up the pros and cons. Now it's...it's probably...the benefits have really entrenched themselves.*

Willing to Pay a Premium

In discussing the participants cost vs. benefit analysis and perceived value of the meal-kits, most consumers placed premium on functional benefits of the product itself. Convenience appeared to attract the highest premium participants were happy to pay for:

⇒ *I think a hundred and five rand is steep, but I think for three meals out of a week, the convenience and the ingredients and the meals that it provides...you know, I think that's where it is.*

⇒ *Yeah, I mean as I said, the cost is different for me, it's an extra benefit.*

⇒ *I'll take the cost for the convenience.*

⇒ *Price for me is secondary.*

- ⇒ *I suppose I mean cost is important to everyone. And I am, I suppose I am in a position luckily where I am able to spend money for convenience, but for me the balance between cost and convenience is quite important.*
- ⇒ *Cost is fairly constant I think but all of the other benefits become more or less important to depending on how busy I am.*
- ⇒ *So I feel like, all of those benefits I get with uCook but I still get recipes...I've got a whole recipe book now of uCook meals... I still get to enjoy cooking, which relaxes me...I still get the variety... So that's why I would pick uCook over...over any other convenience meal options that are out there.*

Participants were also adamant that they were aware of alternatives and there was a limit to what they were willing to pay:

- ⇒ *On a meal-kit service, I don't want to be spending more money than I am getting benefit out of the meal-kit service. So it's value for money really I think is the most important thing, I don't want to be wasting money unnecessarily.*
- ⇒ *Unless I start getting to the point where, for the price, portion sizes go down, or more and more quality issues, then I might consider...reconsider.*
- ⇒ *I think if they had another price increase, potentially Jo and I would drop off, just because it crosses that line between convenience and cost. I think it's a good balance now but I don't think we'd pay more.*
- ⇒ *I can understand the increase based on the VAT increase, but I think any more than what they are charging now wouldn't be...wouldn't be worth what we are paying.*

Conclusion: Economics as a factor

It was evident that economic factors were considered by all participants but that participants analysed economic benefit either through detailed analysis or a more, emotive, wholistic, analysis based on overall perception of costs and benefits.

Most participants expressed satisfaction with the cost effectiveness of being subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service based on the convenience, quality of ingredients, decreased food wastage, and overall perceived benefit. It was evident that most participants recognised a significant savings through use of the meal-kit delivery service, primarily driven by decreased food wastage and fewer impulse purchases made while

shopping. It was evident that most participants were willing to pay for convenience and quality offered by the meal-kit service provider.

5.3.7 The Customer Journey / Experience as a Factor

Participants placed significant emphasis on the overall customer journey as part of their decision-making process to either stay signed up (through positive customer experience) or used the positive experiences and the positive recommendations from social circles to trial (initially subscribe). During coding, the researcher here used categories such as the meal-kits brand story, trust developed through a positive overall customer experience, customer service received, the brand image, website functionality, packaging and overall quality of the meal-kit delivery service (including the products). An additional theme that was developed separately but for the purposes of this chapter will be written and discussed together was the subscription service of the meal-kit delivery service as part of innovative business practices to better serve its customer base. This was of course viewed entirely from the participants point of view.

Brand Story

A strong factor that formed part of the brand story was how participants valued the way the meal-kit delivery service delivered their brand story, particularly with regard to ethical sourcing and sustainability:

- ⇒ *And they've got a sticker on which says this comes from so-and-so farm, this is where the fish is from, etc. So it's nice and it's sustainable, especially the fish.*
- ⇒ *They give you a little bit of a story around, the sourcing of like the meat, and things like that.*
- ⇒ *Like the uCook chicken that's in the fridge has where it comes from, like the Elgin Farm, and I can see it's free-range.*
- ⇒ *The fact that it's sourced from farms around Joburg it's a huge thing for me.*
- ⇒ *It's nice to know that you're supporting the local farmers.*
- ⇒ *Well first of all, it's sustainable, who they're sourcing from.*

A very contextual finding was how much participants felt that they wanted to support businesses who create sustainable employment:

⇒ *Every week there's a different lady who's packed it for you and they tell you about the person who's packed the bag for you. It's like, hi, my name is...Kanya, ...I packed your bag this week....and then I don't even know if she really did pack my bag, but I believe it. Makes me feel like me ordering that every week keeps this lady in a job.*

Brand Trust

Exactly what factors contributed to the establishment of trust between participant and meal-kit provider is outside of the scope of this research but it very apparent that there was trust formed between the two, primarily through a positive customer experience, and that participants valued the trust established which has increased loyalty:

- ⇒ *I think it's just the experience I've had with them. I think if it was a bad experience upfront I would have stopped it.*
- ⇒ *So the pictures that you see actually resemble very closely the food that you end up making, so I find that they are truthful in that respect.*
- ⇒ *I must say, I was actually blown away, I was very impressed.*
- ⇒ *we've been very, very happy with everything.*
- ⇒ *I've never felt the need to actually switch or even do research on the other options out there.*
- ⇒ *But I must say it's been amazing!*
- ⇒ *Well I think that comes from experience. I mean, I think potentially the first four weeks of UCook you wonder, this week, am I going to like this food, this week am I going to like this food? And then you come to trust that the meals that I've read on UCook and the things that I've picked is going to be what Jo and I like.*
- ⇒ *I love this service, I do. It's made a big difference to us.*

One participant, who was at the time questioning the economics of the meal-kit offering, felt that it would be a difficult relationship to break off:

- ⇒ *But the other softer, maybe more emotional factors have now played into it. So I think cancelling uCook, for me...I would have to cross that emotional bridge you know? Because I would miss it, I would miss the ability to do what I do three times a week with my uCook. So yeah, I definitely think, having used the product,*

it's become...it'll become more of an emotional decision to stop it than when I started.

Customer Service

Customer service and communication was cited regularly as a positive by participants, when reflecting on their experience of using the meal-kit delivery service. Communication, often perceived to be personalised, helped form the relationship with participants, and communicate not only benefits but also the brand story discussed above:

- ⇒ *The communication is phenomenal, they're like, we're going to be late today, we're not arriving at eight, we're arriving at ten.*
- ⇒ *They tell you the story, like how they picked the meals this week and what's the theme.*
- ⇒ *And they communicate, you know they'll send like little surveys every now and again and ask you...you know what you value. And it seems like this organic thing is top of mind for them, you know.*
- ⇒ *Service, services and reliability, and that's one thing and it's that UCook's has got an amazing, their service is very good.*
- ⇒ *I like that you know, it's almost a personalized service, it's fantastic.*
- ⇒ *I just appreciate the personalized service and the fact that you feel like you - you almost feel like you are a part of their journey which is quite nice.*
- ⇒ *You don't feel like just a number.*

Although proactive customer communication and service was always valued, at least four of the participants were most proud of the way their meal-kit provider handled their complaints, which was valued by those specific participants:

- ⇒ *Their customer service was great; I had one or two issues with delivery and they're very quick to respond, and they offered me discounts on future purchases to apologize. So that was great.*
- ⇒ *I've twice had an incident where what I opened was completely off, so I emailed them and within the same evening I got a voucher that I could just use as a discount for the next one, and that's what you want. So yeah, very, very focused on customer service, I would say. In a store I would have had to drive back to*

the store probably now and then, and you know, where is my slip, and...ugh. With them, it was an email. I didn't have to take a picture or anything, I just explained what happened, and 'sorry, we'll speak to the supplier, see if it's the packaging or whatever, here's a voucher to offset against your next one. So it's seamless.

⇒ *"I had an issue over the Easter weekend, they just delivered a box which I hadn't ordered. I don't actually know how that all came about but anyway... we were away for most of Easter weekend. And I phoned them and said listen guys, actually first of all we wasted food because we had to throw it away. And they were like, you are 100% right don't worry about a thing, we are crediting you straight up for that.*

Website & Branding

Branding and brand personality appeared to play a small part in establishing and cementing that relationship and trust between participant and their preferred meal-kit provider:

⇒ *You know it's an interesting thing because UCook for me has got a personality, everything about them, they have just got a big personality. Their website has got a personality, ok they need a lot of help on their social media, but like their recipe cards are so engaging, it's not just do this and do this, you get a little tip here and a little hint there, and you did good 'chef.'*

⇒ *Their branding is phenomenal.*

⇒ *The site's easy to operate, you know it just felt modern and sophisticated, user-friendly.*

Packaging

Although packaging was largely a contentious issue, with environmental considerations discussed at length by participants (discussed later in 5.3.10), the quality, functionality, and visual appeal of the meal-kit packaging was viewed by participants as a positive representation of the preferred meal-kit provider brand.

Most participants mentioned the appeal of the packaging in a general way, and the context of the comments was related to the actual product packaging which included the outer box, the ice packs, the meals packed in separate brown bags, the ingredients in

each packet or container, and the printed recipe cards. Examples of meal-kit boxes can be viewed in The other thing that's...they package it well

- ⇒ *Packaged really beautifully.*
- ⇒ *The packaging was great. It's beautifully packaged and it's vacuum-packed as well.*
- ⇒ *They pack their things cold enough that it can stay six hours without...it's not frozen, but without losing...you know, it doesn't get warm.*
- ⇒ *They don't skimp, I have to say that. They make it look very professional and that's good.*

Quality of Product

As discussed in previous constructs, above, all of the participants were very aware of overall quality of the product. Although the meal-kit provider is able to manage quality control with regards to the overall customer journey, experience, and they can to a large extent manage quality of ingredients. The quality of the meal is ultimately out of the control of the meal-kit provider and firmly in control of the participants themselves.

But overall the participants, through careful and specific guidance by the meal-kit provider in the form of very detailed and specific recipes and instructions, were able to replicate the meals as they were intended to be:

- ⇒ *So the pictures that you see actually resemble very closely the food that you end up making.*
- ⇒ *It makes me feel good to know that I have got all of the stuff in front of me in a perfect little packet and it's neat, it looks good, I love the picture on what the meal must look like afterwards.*
- ⇒ *After every UCook meal, I can look at it, look at the picture and look at the menu and say 'Yup, I've achieved it, fantastic!'*

And the sense of achievement in delivering a high quality, almost restaurant quality meal, despite the participants skill level was clear:

- ⇒ *I pretty much compare it to a restaurant meal, I really do. 'Cause I think it's that good, I think what they're giving you in terms of ingredients and flavours and*

everything is as good as some fine dining restaurants I've eaten at, if not better to be honest.

⇒ *I'm eating really good quality meals that I think I would be eating in a restaurant, without having to go out.*

This delivery on promise of quality, even when the consumer is responsible for the ultimate product has built trust over time, as one participant put it:

⇒ *You come to trust the meals.*

Innovative Business Model

The concept of being something new and innovative was appealing to only one participant, who described herself as somewhat of an early adopter of innovative businesses who provide increased convenience. But specific elements of the business model, specifically related to the subscription function of the service, was discussed in detail as a rather important factor for both initially subscribing as well as remaining a customer over time.

Almost all participants mentioned the relative ease of trialling the service, and the low risk associated with trialling the service, as a positive factor in making the decision to subscribe:

⇒ *Absolutely. 'Cause I checked, how long am I signing up for? One week, it's like if you don't like it, cancel.*

⇒ *Yeah, low-risk, what do you have to lose?*

⇒ *I think the easy thing for us was that you could sign up for a week and get out. We thought why not, we'll trial it, and we'll see.*

The flexibility to alter the subscription weekly was mentioned by most participants as a benefit, particularly those who have variable schedules, and overall appeared to decrease the psychological cost associated with the product and service tipping the balance in favour of nett benefit and a positive purchase intention:

⇒ *I also like the fact that it's a no contract-based service.*

⇒ *You can pause it whenever it suits you, which is great.*

⇒ *You've got the option of pausing, which makes you feel secure ...it's really very little commitment from yourself.*

- ⇒ *And also it's very, very convenient 'cause you can pause....and then you just reinstate, no questions asked and that's very easy. It's not like I'm locked in for a month.*
- ⇒ *Look there's some weeks we have paused the subscription 'cause there's nothing we like. And it's an agile offering, so you can pause the subscription....it's like a flexible offering.*
- ⇒ *A factor for me was the fact that I could pause the subscription, you are not beholden financially.*
- ⇒ *And if I don't feel like having UCook for a while I'll just chuck it and do my normal grocery shopping for a month - and then when I get tired again I go back to UCook. So the flexibility also is a big-big factor for me, it's the cherry on the top.*

It was evident that the flexibility in subscription was positively associated with purchase intentions and loyalty:

- ⇒ *I think if, certainly, you had to commit every week of the year, I wouldn't, because we go away a lot and I wouldn't be happy with that.*
- ⇒ *I don't feel tied in, because I can pause. So that's amazing, ...in December I can pause for six weeks, and I'm not going to be penalized. So I think it's a brilliant side of the business, that you can switch it on and switch it off.*
- ⇒ *What's quite nice is it's not a long, lock-in period, you can literally decide this week, let's try it once, and if I don't like it, you know I like the fact that I could get out of it, which of course I didn't. I think I've been on now just over six months, every week we do UCook.*
- ⇒ *I just don't like operating life on contract, I must be honest...If you are going away you don't need to kind of worry about stopping and pausing of subscription it just happens... you're not bound by anything. So you've still got choice, if you want choice you got choice. I mean I must be honest there are sometimes where Shaun and I are like listen let's just not do UCook this week and let's cook our own meals, but that has happened twice in 6 months so yes.*

Conclusion: The Customer Journey and Experience as a factor

The customer journey and experience was positive to almost all participants with great value being placed on customer service, communication, messaging relating to ethical

consciousness, brand positioning and overall quality of the product. The packaging of the meal-kit was viewed as both a positive and a negative by participants.

A major functional benefit offered by meal-kit delivery services appeared to be the flexibility in the subscription model, that is the ability to easily sign up and pause subscription.

5.3.8 Wastage as a Factor

Wastage has been discussed previously in the context of convenience (5.3.2), time scarcity (5.3.3) and in the context of economics (5.3.6). This was unsurprising as consumers are looking to minimise wastage in all aspects, whether as time and effort or as food wastage. These concepts are at times considered by the consumer in monetary terms, in line with literature on the market economy.

Later on in this chapter the concept of wastage will be discussed further in terms of social and environmental consciousness and the associated consumer guilt (5.3.10).

But, because wastage was cited by every participant and in the same context and meaning, it is considered by the researcher for the purposes of this study to be a major factor in and of itself. Thus this section shows results of the research identifiable as wastage to be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Wasted Money

Wasted money due to wasted ingredients and food in general was cited most often by all participants. Although the quotes used here are not always expressly stating the economic values, the following quotes were extracted during portions of the interviews where the discussion was in economic terms.

It was clear from participants responses that wastage due to poor shopping habits, the availability of pack sizes in retail stores, exotic ingredients, and general food waste was something considered by consumers prior to using a meal-kit delivery service and was a factor considered when deciding to subscribe:

⇒ *We throw a lot of food away. When I shop for myself.*

⇒ *I find that if I go to the shops every day and cook, I waste so much by the end of the week that I give it to the staff or in the bin.*

- ⇒ *So you end up buying a whole chicken, you cook that, and either I share with Prudence or throw it away if it's gone awful, so it's like a waste of food.*
- ⇒ *It's also the...the shopping, you need a herb or whatever, I've got to buy a whole bag of herbs for one meal. I'm probably not going to use that dill again. I only will probably eat fish once a week, so I'm not going to use it. So I ended up wasting more food, which is a huge pet highlight of mine.*
- ⇒ *you end up throwing it away and it's wasteful. I think it really comes down to the wastage element.*
- ⇒ *I mean now, if you go into my fridge, you'll find a mint sauce that's probably been used once, never to be used again.*
- ⇒ *So, before, if two of the recipes within a week called for spinach, let's say, I would end up throwing a whole bunch away on the Sunday, because I didn't go through all of it in a week....and it's actually a waste.*
- ⇒ *Frustration in terms of throwing out ingredients at the end of a week 'cause I hadn't managed to cook all of those ingredients.*
- ⇒ *When I buy ingredients to cook food, often I need to throw ingredients out at the end of the week, so I know that there's wastage.*

Meal-kit delivery services are aware of overall wastage and the associated consumer guilt, and have used it in their marketing campaigns to drive subscription:

- ⇒ *There is always far too much food left over, I end up throwing away half of the ingredients - just like the uCook ad says.*

And it was also clear from responses that participants valued the reduction of wasted food and ingredients in monetary terms through using a meal-kit service:

- ⇒ *So I'm very conscious about spending money unnecessarily on things. So if something's in my fridge, then we must have it. And if we're not going to have it, then we must never buy it again, it's a waste of money.*
- ⇒ *John will go to Woolworths and will put blueberries [in the basket], when blueberries are three times what they should cost, and when avos are fifty-six rand for two avos, and I'm like, but why did you buy this?*
- ⇒ *Guilty, you know, that food's going to waste...I don't like that.*

- ⇒ *So when it comes to groceries I don't want to be needlessly wasting money on groceries that I end up throwing away.*
- ⇒ *An opportunity cost in terms of, if I were to cook on my own, I'd throw out...fairly often throw out ingredients, whereas with UCook, I don't throw out a lot of ingredients, so that would be a positive for costs.*
- ⇒ *So I'm glad about the reduced wastage, 'cause you know it's money well spent and there's no, 'Oh we didn't use so throw it out.'*
- ⇒ *I really like the fact that there's no wastage.*
- ⇒ *I'm not buying bulk when I only need a cup of...or a spoon of...*
- ⇒ *We waste so much food on a weekly basis it's disgusting, whereas, you use and finish everything on our plate from uCook, and there's literally nothing besides the packaged or the plastics and stuff that goes to waste, nothing. Which is great, I like that.*
- ⇒ *So instead of, let's say you get the exact allocation that you need, you are not wasting.*
- ⇒ *At least with UCook you kind of get...I need yogurt, I get that much yogurt. I need garlic, I get a garlic clove. Instead of going and buying a whole bunch of it and I end up throwing half of it away, so it's cost saving as well, because you end up not having all that extra wastage.*
- ⇒ *So at least then with UCook, I've got my twelve spices but I've got this much of each of them, so I can use them, get the flavour that I want, but not have to throw away and kind of bulk buy.*
- ⇒ *But there's really zero wastage in the sense of...everything is measured off, even the containers that it comes in, it's the minimum.*

This concept of increased psychological cost in planning meals was highlighted by a participant, who shops and cooks for just herself:

- ⇒ *So I guess there are two ways of dealing with the wastage. Either you have to cook the same thing again, or you have to deliberately plan for a recipe that is different but requires the same ingredients. I think unless you are doing one of those two things you will almost always throw away those ingredients.*

Wasted Time & Effort

Participants, particularly those who enjoyed cooking less than others or perceived themselves to be less skilled than necessary to plan, shop, and prepare meals cited dinner related activities often as a waste of time and / or effort:

- ⇒ *It's like sitting in traffic. It's a damn waste of time! It's unproductive.*
- ⇒ *Frustration, in that I would waste...what I perceive as...for me personally, wasting time in the kitchen, the kitchen isn't where I want to be.*
- ⇒ *So just the irritation of hacking around, spending an hour cooking for one meal for one person, which I then eat in fifteen minutes.*
- ⇒ *Grocery shopping and food...it is a grudge purchase, it's a grudge hour or two of your life every week.*
- ⇒ *You go to the store, of the ten ingredients you need for each recipe, they don't have three of the ten, so you end up buying the seven, but then you don't end up really cooking with the recipe because you're missing a whole lot of stuff and it's just a waste of time.*

The perceived wastage of time and effort was exacerbated when the output (meal) failed to satisfy needs, which seems to increase associated risks and therefore psychological costs of trying to cook for oneself:

- ⇒ *It's a lot of time and effort, especially for a roast, to then stuff it up.*
- ⇒ *Often we've spoken about what are we going to eat this week? And then it's like ugh, I don't know, why don't you grab a book and let's have a look, maybe we'll cook something... And inevitably you end up paging through a hundred Jamie Oliver recipes, you know, three of which you think might work.*
- ⇒ *It's a waste of time because then I have to...I'll be dissatisfied with what I'm eating and then have to cook something else afterwards if I'm learning something.*
- ⇒ *I would be very disappointed if I spent a lot of time and effort preparing a meal and it wasn't tasty. If I was to spend somewhere upwards of forty-five minutes preparing something for myself and it's just bland, then I'd be dissatisfied.*

And meal-kit delivery services alleviated some of the risks and helped participants decrease the feeling of wasted time and effort:

⇒ *I don't need to spend the time and effort preparing those meals, buying the ingredients.*

Wasted Food, Ethical, Social and Environmental Consciousness

Some participants cited factors associated with guilt, such as social and environmental consciousness, as a factor of wastage. It appeared that by using a meal-kit delivery service food wastage was perceived to be reduced dramatically which decreased participants feelings of guilt, related to social and environmental consciousness:

⇒ *You know I think uCook portions—and certainly on the carbohydrates and vegetable side—is more than adequate, and I think we eat what we've cooked and there is limited wastage, we don't throw things away, which is fantastic.*

⇒ *What it has done—and again, my environmentally conscious brain—is, we don't throw away any food. Flip we threw away a lot of food before. Because some nights both John and I would go to Woolworths. Zip, get home, two bags of food...mmm, okay we feel like that one, and then the next night we don't feel like that one, and the next night we don't feel like that one...and then suddenly five days later, throwing away all the veggies we've bought. Constantly throwing away food. Now, I get to the end of the week, no food left, unless we've missed a night with the meal, and I give it to Linnea [nanny] anyway.*

⇒ *I just think there's...you know, in a world where things are disposable, I think it's...you know, what we cook, we should eat. And potentially, previously we weren't doing that. So there was things...you know, rice, or mashed potatoes or chips or whatever that was being thrown away, that wasn't being eaten, and I think it's a waste.*

⇒ *It's terrible. You know we shouldn't be wasting, we live in a resource...already a resource-depleted planet, and it's really not good enough to be wasting anything.*

Conclusion: Wastage as a Factor

It was evident that wastage was a major factor considered by consumers in their decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service. Wastage has been discussed previously in the context of wasted time and effort, relating to convenience, as wasted money, in the context of economics, and how food wastage increases consumer guilt relating to social and environmental consciousness.

The finding of is unique the context of this study as participants were more aware of social and environmental impact, relating to the state of inequality in South Africa and global awareness relating to the environment. Wastage was often considered by participants in economic terms, despite the relative wealth of the sample, and this may also be representative of the economic climate within South Africa at the time of the research.

5.3.9 Living up to Family Values as a Factor

It was evident across almost all participants that there is a relationship with food that includes family values. Some of it was based on one's upbringing and family values instilled while growing up, others were about providing for their family and instilling aspirational family values, at times in contradiction to their upbringing.

- ⇒ *I grew up in a family where you have to have one green, one yellow, one orange every night on your plate with your protein. So you needed to have the different food groups. I feel like I'm getting all those food groups with uCook.*
- ⇒ *So for me, I grew up in a family, we...we always sat at a table, all five of us...and we spoke about our day, and work, and...so for me, meal time's very important as a catch-up.*
- ⇒ *I grew up with everybody learning to cook.*
- ⇒ *I grew up in a very middle class house, my mom didn't experiment with food. It was very, very...you know, plain and normal and repetitive—a protein, a vegetable, a carbohydrate. I've never really cooked myself, when I was a student and bachelor, it was...cooking was more about just getting the nutrients in than it was about spending time in the kitchen. It was about feeding a hungry Ryan instead of cooking.*
- ⇒ *Well it is very important to us, we like to chat to the kids at night, and see how their days went, and touch base with them. I've grown up, sitting around a table my whole life.*
- ⇒ *I remember growing up, we'd all just sit at the table...it wasn't such a big thing for us 'cause my mom was always home so she was the touchpoint between us and my dad or whatever...and he was a business man and worked long hours, so he wasn't always around but yeah, it was... I don't know, my husband...his*

mom raised him on her own and so it was a touchpoint for him too, because she worked full-time.

⇒ *it's the time of the day when you are with your family and you connect with - I don't know I always had that growing up, as an Italian household food is huge in our house... that was that time of day, breakfast you know wasn't an option it wasn't - but lunch and dinner were sort of that... I don't know it's a social, it's a social part of our day. No matter what happens, stress at work, kids sick or whatever it's that time of the day when you sit down, and the meal has got to be good do you know what I mean.*

Providing for the Family

A number of female participants supported the literature reviewed in 2.2.8.5, in that they appeared more likely to suffer from guilt with regards to providing meals for their family, and expressed how meal-kit delivery services helped them fulfil their goals of providing meals for their husbands and / or children. This, however, appeared to be either an expression of love, a way of achieving shared family values, or a way to align to social norms:

⇒ *It's nice for him to finish his day and there's a meal waiting.*

⇒ *Because my love language is service, so the service component of it I enjoy, for me and for my husband.*

⇒ *You know he comes home from work he doesn't even want to boil an egg, so it's on me... which is fine, I don't mind that.*

Quality Time

In the time-poor sample of participants, with the stresses and strains of a busy life with competing demands, participants recalled their relationship with food and the importance placed on food and 'eating events' to bring the family together.

It was unanimous across participants with partners or children that time spent eating together was important to them and that the meal-kit delivery service helped them achieve the goal of spending quality time together eating as a family:

⇒ *Well there's still the cooking element, so I still feel like we are...again, societal norms, so I still feel like we are like, cooking, and being husband and wife, and*

mom and dad, as opposed to...like, we're living in New York and do take away all the time or whatever it is.

- ⇒ *Mealtime for us, especially in the evening—and I think it's because I've got small kids—I try to make it an event. At the table, yeah. The kids would have eaten already probably, because they go to bed at seven and that's often when we eat, but they sit with us. They might have their dessert or fruit or something, but they sit with us.*
- ⇒ *It's an important time for the family, because we work full-time and it's...sort of...when we have dinner, you've got to sit at the table, everybody's got to say what's good and bad...we have a conversation, so...it's an important time.*
- ⇒ *Well I think it's more of a time out than a celebration. It's a time where—in this family anyway—we sit down, there's no phones, we talk about our day, we talk about what's going on in the world...it really is just like a forced time out in our family.*
- ⇒ *The most important thing in terms of what a home meal does is it bring my family together, so that's huge... you can get philosophical about it... but it's just - it's a very important time of the day to reconnect with your family, and good food it's amazing what it does it really-really makes people feel good and it makes you unwind and you're relaxed, it de-stresses you and its basic you need to eat to live right.*

Rather interestingly though, the meal-kit delivery service provided additional time, reduced the stress around dinner time, and provided simple enough instructions, ingredients and preparation methods that some participants felt that they could now include the meal preparation as quality family time too:

- ⇒ *I don't like the FitChef idea, is because that's our bonding time.*
- ⇒ *So, the cooking is...I mean, we sit to have a glass of wine, have a cooking session, have a chat...so that's quite nice.*
- ⇒ *Just really around that it's a bonding time for us. So I like that time we can sit around and as I say, have a glass of wine, have a chat, whatever, while the cooking...he handles something, I'm chopping something else.... Instead of cooking becoming a chore to do, it becomes more of kinda something that is adding value to our relationship, catch up on our days, that sort of thing.*

⇒ *What I like about it is the fact that Shaun and I can cook together which is quite... it's fun.*

Even the participants who were cooking just for themselves indicated that they would value the preparation time with a partner:

⇒ *I would be happier cooking in the kitchen if I had somebody to cook with. Somebody to share recipes with, share the responsibilities with, somebody to chop the onions while I chop the carrots or whatever it is.*

Education

Education with regards to teaching their children meal preparation skills as well as how to form a good relationship with food was important for a number of participants.

Educating their children, in line with their own personal family values, placed additional stress onto the person responsible for meals, mostly women and moms:

⇒ *I think another thing that's interesting, and it's part antiquated in its thinking, but...Brendan has this thing in his head that his girls must learn to cook, right? I think 'cause his sister can't cook and I think that's horrifying to him. But I think he likes the fact that my girls are watching me cook every night, they're not just seeing me put out a dish; they are seeing methods and efforts, and you can make something and it tastes nice, and it... And it is getting to the age he keeps saying to me, "The girls need to watch what you do, you need to get them to help you, so that they..." And I look back and I think well, it wasn't that precise for me growing up, but my mom and my gran always cooked around me. And I'm not saying they ever said "Okay, this is how you do this," it's just from watching, you learn. It's quite a big thing in his world, not my world, but his world.*

⇒ *I didn't grow up in the kitchen... So I was never taught the basics of cooking when I was young.*

But more importantly to those participants was the ability to use a meal-kit delivery service as a method of educating their children to have a healthier relationship with food in general. This was often referred to their own upbringing and even cultural background:

⇒ *Well, I mean, we come from Italian background, so already food is half the...half of life.*

- ⇒ *So being Greek, we eat. Everything's always around food, whether it's a funeral or wedding, life will always be better once you've eaten something. So it tends to become a habit and I think it's a bad habit because you get fat and it's also unhealthy. So I want to teach my children to have a good relationship with food, to enjoy it, and that's what uCook definitely brings, 'cause some of these meals are like...so they have chefs that will contribute to their database of recipes. So I want them to enjoy food, to know that it is part of life and it's the best part of life, you know, sharing food and that kind of thing. But they must also understand that there are implications to eating too much.*
- ⇒ *The other advantage with uCook specifically is there's portion control. So it's for four people there's nothing left...I mean, you can you imagine ten-year-old boys that can eat... But that also helps them to understand that there's only so much and that's all you got to eat.*
- ⇒ *Kids need to understand also you know where food comes from it's an important it's a very sort of grounding time of day.*

Experiences of new ingredients, cooking methods and meals were also a way to expand horizons for children, and even oneself:

- ⇒ *Expanding my horizons in terms of taste, and my kids' horizons.*
- ⇒ *The other benefit for me is at the moment, I'm actually using it for my son as well. So, whatever I cook the night before, squish it up, make it into a puree, and he gets that for dinner the next night. So...then at least, I know that my son is being introduced to a wide range of...I mean he's now...he eats kale and he eats...pretty much anything they throw at us, he now eats as well. So that's really nice as well...*

Post Purchase Benefits

It was evident to some participants that the benefit of quality time spent with loved ones was a post-purchase benefit that was established through the use of the meal-kit delivery service:

- ⇒ *When I sat down and first looked at doing uCook, it wasn't...I mean the bonding time wasn't even a consideration for me because I hadn't realized what the benefits would be until we did it.*

- ⇒ *Where here I like that there's different elements, there's always like a side...like a salad or something, which is not hot or whatever, the kids can do it. Then there's a meat element that I'll do. But there's always something to chop or to squeeze or to do, so the kids love that.*
- ⇒ *I can actually involve them [children]. Usually I just have to chase them out, but yeah, so...because there's easy things that I know will not hurt them and there's like physical things. They like to squash things or blend things or whatever.*
- ⇒ *It's fun because you talk about the day, and plan the weekends and this one is chopping that and the other one is chopping that.*

Conflict Avoidance

But without a doubt the most interesting finding of this research in this context was how meal-kit delivery services were used by participants as a way to avoid conflict. Conflict was avoided by ensuring that meals are available, by being able to outsource the preparation of meals (discussed in detail in 5.3.2), and to eliminate conflicting demands with regards to specific preferences or what different members of the family felt like eating at the time. In fact, two participants highlighted the improvement in their relationship due to the introduction of a meal-kit delivery service as a way of avoiding conflict:

- ⇒ *To avoid irritation...me getting irritated with him because he's late back from work, and then there's no food in the house 'cause I haven't been able to go out and buy it, so then there's no dinner and then there's WWII. So it's also, from that perspective, great for our relationship, it's nice and easy.*
- ⇒ *This is going to bring up another point...happiness in a relationship. So, there's no expectation for me to go to the shops now. Some nights John's going to be like, why have you not gone to the shops again? It doesn't matter. Every Monday, Daily Dish arrives and it's happiness for the rest of the week, there's always food in the fridge.*
- ⇒ *I don't have to debate in the morning whether 'you want' and 'I want', 'do we feel like,' 'don't we feel like it,' tells you how many days so there's no debates as to, should we have this tomorrow, or this today? The worst question in the entire world—and don't ever do it—(laughter) is 'What are we having for dinner?' Honestly if there is a divorce-like trigger, that has to be it. Don't ask me what*

we're having for dinner. So this way, from a relationship perspective as well, he doesn't have to ask me.

⇒ *So if somebody says to me 'what's for dinner?' So okay on the nights that we don't have uCook, it's like 'what's in the freezer?' 'Have I done any cooking?' 'You don't feel like...' 'Do you want this?' 'No.' 'Do you what that?' 'No.' 'What about this?' 'No.' 'What about that?' And you go through the whole list till eventually you trigger on something that he's like, 'Mmm, yeah, that sounds okay.'*

⇒ *So it actually adds to my well-being in my relationship, I am not a very nice person when I am stressed, so it is a relief, I must say, to have that basic thing that you need to get done for your day just done for you, that's great.*

Conclusion: Living up to Family Values as a Factor

It was evident that across the sample participants felt strongly about the role of food and mealtimes, specifically dinners, played in living up to family values. Many used mealtime to replicate their upbringing or to achieve aspirational family values (contrary to their upbringing). The increased convenience of meal-kits played a role in alleviating stress around meal-time preparation and allowed participants to spend more quality time with family while eating and preparing dinners. The convenient nature of meal-kits allowed participants to pass on preparation and cooking skills to their children as well as help them form a healthy relationship with food in general.

Most notably as a finding in this research was how some participants highlighted the benefit of decreased conflict in the household due to elimination of choice of "what's for dinner" and the guarantee of a meal to be provided.

5.3.10 Consumer Guilt: Ethical Consciousness as a Factor

Consumer guilt, with respect to providing for one's family, has been covered extensively in this results chapter as part of 5.3.2, 5.3.3, 5.3.4, 5.3.5, and 5.3.9. It was clear in the results in each of these sections that participants, particularly women, carried feelings of guilt to live up to their own norms, and societal norms, with respect to providing for one's spouse and children. It appeared from the results in these sections that women were looking to provide healthy, balanced, nourishing meals for their loved ones as a show of affection and to alleviate guilt. Time scarcity combined with the goals of wanting to provide healthy meals and live up to family values had participants trying to manage goal

conflict through searching for convenience options for mealtime. Meal-kit delivery services were viewed as a viable option in the consumer consideration set.

This section on consumer guilt, however, focuses on consumer guilt as a result of social and environmental consciousness, which has been touched on in previous sections 5.3.5, 5.3.7, and 5.3.8. The reason for this section specifically is to discuss fully how participants appeared to use meal-kit delivery services as a mechanism to alleviate consumer guilt in this regard and how consumers make trade-offs or compromise their values in search of convenience.

Social Consciousness

It was clear that some participants were concerned with the social inequalities of their individual context and that concepts such as food wastage, job creating, and ethical sourcing in the sense of supporting smaller and local businesses were contributors to their carrying of consumer guilt.

Participants expressed their social consciousness in the context of wasting food as such:

- ⇒ *I feel bad wasting food.*
- ⇒ *Because I'm not wasting food. There's so many people out there who don't have food. So...that goes back to the portioning side of the conversation; it is enough for two people, no more, no less. Which is...if all of us could do that and stop throwing food away...so....I feel better, I feel like I'm not contributing to land waste and all that jazz. So...yeah.*
- ⇒ *There are people in the world that are very hungry! And me throwing away food isn't...doesn't sit well with me.*

Supporting smaller companies who are marketing themselves as creating jobs was also considered by participants as a reason to use the meal-kit delivery services to alleviate their own guilt:

- ⇒ *They're creating, I think, nice employment for people.*
- ⇒ *They'd come and say these are the farms that we're sourcing from, this is how they come up with their produce, this is the type of people that they are employing. So that was quite nice to know, just that you kind of know you're doing your bit...*

- ⇒ *I do have this social conscious thing going at the moment, it's very much like, employment.*
- ⇒ *I feel like, that's so sweet, this lady now has a job because of this. Did she have a job before? I don't know. People at Woolworths will always have a job, this is not a new job for someone.*
- ⇒ *I suppose it's [feeling of] just...less guilty. This is going to open up a whole different conversation, you know, guilt in South Africa. Less guilty I suppose for my privileged life that I get to order...I mean, the lady packs a box for me every week because I'm too lazy to go to Woolworths...like, she doesn't have this option, so she doesn't ever get to do this kind of food, in fact, she can't even shop at Woolworth's...making an assumption but, you know? So....I'm like okay well at least, every week she packs my box, she still has a job, you know? So...employment, I'm helping someone with employment, makes me feel less guilty, and I suppose somewhat...somewhat happy.*

And consumers considered supporting businesses who support smaller and /or local businesses (in this context farmer) as being a more sustainable business practice:

- ⇒ *The poor labourers on the farm need to be paid justly.*
- ⇒ *And sustainable is I like that they're supporting these smaller guys .*
- ⇒ *I think we should be supporting the smaller guys, because they're working their butts off to make a living, and I'm all for that.*
- ⇒ *It's nice to know that you're supporting the local farmers. You know it's...they give you a little bit of a story around, where the...the...sourcing of like the meat, and things like that. And you know that you're actually making a difference in some little small farmer's life.*

And it was clear that the marketing messages delivered by these smaller meal-kit delivery services are landing on fertile ground with the participants and is impacting their cost vs. benefit analysis by alleviating some consumer guilt and therefore psychological costs:

- ⇒ *I also in that vein was considering you know where they are getting their produce for example, I am thrilled that they get their produce locally.*
- ⇒ *Because you don't feel like you are throwing money into a... you don't feel like you are making other people rich, and you probably are, I think they are doing*

particularly well for themselves. I mean I have seen them get some private equity, and all things going on, interesting things like that - but they don't make you feel like your money is going to funding a house in Clifton.

⇒ *Well it's almost...I almost feel like...like you're making a...not a donation, but it's...do you understand what I'm saying? Like you're supporting...you're helping the smaller guy.*

It was clear that some participants would show additional patience when dealing with smaller businesses because of their ethical positioning:

⇒ *And then they'll say, the recipe includes cucumbers but, because of recent rains or whatever it is, we actually couldn't include cucumbers, so we've included this as an alternative, happy cooking.*

Environmental Consciousness

As important to participants was environmental impact of their decisions and how narratives around food wastage, plastic usage, and resource scarcity impacts on the environment was weighing on participants minds.

It was clear that this was a priority for some participants:

⇒ *'Cause I don't want to kill turtles in the sea.*

⇒ *It is I have tried to make this year the Year of being more environmentally conscious. My younger sister and I do this thing each year is the year of something. And this year is the year of being more environmentally conscious, and so at home now we do several different kinds of recycling like for example, we have got organic waste and compost, we've got recycling. I try and be slightly more environmentally conscious and I am trying to use less plastic overall, no plastic coffee lids you know and that sort of thing, fewer plastic bottles and buying more raw products and that sort of thing - and so in every decision that I am making this year I am trying to think about it slightly more.*

⇒ *That we're destroying it. So I think if each person had to just contribute a small amount of something each day, recycle...I suppose...*

⇒ *It's a consideration when I go to the supermarket as well because there is just as much plastic in the supermarket because every product is individually wrapped.*

Some participants felt that their preferred meal-kit provider was alleviating some of this consumer guilt:

- ⇒ *I'm a little bit of an animal rights person. In fact, my box is now actually vegetarian boxes, 'cause I'm feeling a little bit guilty about animals rights and stuff. So if I know that it's at least been done in a humane...as humane as possible...I mean, you're slaughtering an animal, but you know what I mean.*
- ⇒ *So I'm going to refer to my vegetarian side of things now. I listened to a podcast of Richard Branson and how, by alleviating poverty they've actually created a whole other problem, because when you alleviate poverty, people can suddenly afford fast food, and buying fast food it's destroying the rainforest. You know, one burger patty, and how many trees it cuts down, it's all related somehow. And I was like flip, I've got to do something, I'm educated and I can consciously do something to change this, stop eating meat. I'm not...I'm not...I suppose...like I said, I'm one person. That's the vegetarian side of it.*
- ⇒ *They've been very good as well recently with water-wise, so you can also see as well in their recipes they will break their steps up a lot more. They'll say first do this, empty the pan, wipe it, use the same pan...I don't think other people would think of that. I do, 'cause, you know, less things for the dish washer. But I thought that was a nice way of also bringing that in so if you...let's say you rinse the...I don't know...vegetables or whatever...they'll tell you to do something else with that water again, or whatever. I thought that was a nice gesture.*
- ⇒ *I think it's also...you know, we live in a water-scarce country and...they also had one option one week when load shedding was announced, that didn't involve an oven or whatever.*

Trade-Offs

The use of plastic and non-recyclable packaging is a sub-set of environmental consciousnesses but because it was cited so often by participants the researcher decided to spend some time discussing it. It was very interesting for the researcher as to how often the guilt associated with the use of plastic, non-recyclable packaging, and the carbon footprint of delivery and logistics was mentioned by participants.

Interestingly, while these factors did not necessarily lead to an increase in consumer guilt, it did appear that because the meal-kit providers are positioning themselves as ethical, they appeared to be held to higher environmental standards by participants than

alternate options available by larger organisations, and as a result participants were perhaps expecting a larger decrease in consumer guilt by using these ethically positioned meal-kit delivery services.

Some participants were aware that they may indeed have a decreased environmental impact through the use of their meal-kit delivery service:

- ⇒ *I feel there's less packaging even, you know, than when I have to buy that from a retail shop.*
- ⇒ *No because I think Woolworths are worse than them [uCook]; so if I do my shopping, I'm probably creating more plastic by shopping at Woolworths. But that might change.*
- ⇒ *Because I always buy stuff from Woolworths and I think, ah, there's so much waste here, from a food point of view and then also from a plastic point of view.*
- ⇒ *From a packaging point of view... I know Woolworths are incredibly conscious of the environment and contribute money, and, and, and...but I think when it comes to their packaging, they really aren't conscious of it, so I'd rather buy broccoli in a free standing broccoli stem as opposed to one that's been packaged in polystyrene with cling-wrap wrapped over it...*

But overwhelmingly participants felt that the major trade-off considered in using meal-kit delivery services was compromising their guilt associated with environmental consciousness through the use of meal-kit delivery service providers:

- ⇒ *I think they could probably improve on the...what interests me is they've got a lot of plastic and they have to have it because of the transporting thing...but when everyone's moving away from plastic.*
- ⇒ *I just noticed the other night, a particular meal, I think there were about six different plastic containers that everything was in.*
- ⇒ *From a packaging point of view, something that I have raised with Daily Dish is they use too much plastic.*
- ⇒ *I do have a big thing about their packaging, 'cause there's lots of plastic, and...you know I understand ...you know they need to...I'm sure it's expensive not to do what they do, but I don't love the boxing and the polystyrene and the plastic.*

- ⇒ *I kept thinking what am I going to do with this polystyrene, somebody should be using it. What should I do with...I mean I don't need ice packs, but you get two every week.*
- ⇒ *But I just don't think that those cardboard recipes need to be on such good quality thickness of paper.*
- ⇒ *There's without a doubt their overuse of plastic. Every ingredient...individual ingredient comes wrapped in some sort of plastic. That's a cost to the environment, and that's a major negative about them. In fact, I've got a few friends that refuse to...that are very, very conscious of the environment and refuse to use uCook because of the plastic. They want to use it, they want the service, but they can't bring themselves to order it based on the...the lack of recycling. So I think that's a cost we incur.*
- ⇒ *So I do think the plastic thing is something that they could handle, and you know it really is something that we should be very conscious of, and that said, we still use uCook, so obviously I'm not that big of an activist.*
- ⇒ *There's one in particular with uCook, I have done some research into other ones as well, and it seems to be a general criticism, but certainly with uCook plastic is a big factor. And there is a lot of plastic in a uCook Box there is a lot of separate Packaging. They do a fairly good job in that they put some things, they have got that brown paper bag system.*
- ⇒ *And that's pretty good because they will pop certain vegetables and you know like a clove of garlic sort of thing and straight into the brown bag - which some of the others don't, they will individually plastic wrap each bay leaf for example - but there is a fair amount of plastic in a uCook box, everything comes in a sachet, everything comes in a Ziploc bag, everything is plastic wrapped."*
- ⇒ *And then add all of the individual plastics that it comes in, including the ice-packs in the box for example. Right in the beginning, because I start ordering uCook the beginning of last year before they were as big as they are now, and right at the beginning you used to be able to leave your used uCook box polystyrene and the ice packs in the bottom and when they deliver your new box they would take back the old box, they don't do that anymore. And so there is environmental impact in particular that I am slightly concerned about uCook.*

- ⇒ *When I was ordering uCook every single week, last year it just kind of struck me that there was a lot of plastic - and when you opened up a uCook box and... it does concern me that there is a lot of plastic.*
- ⇒ *I also think obviously there's a the carbon footprint issue... the delivery...the delivery of the food from whatever warehouse it goes to... to us, so I think we pay that price.*
- ⇒ *For me the biggest one is environmentally actually, I mentioned the plastic earlier that comes in the uCook box, but also uCook in particular comes from Cape Town. And I am still on the fence about essentially ordering my groceries from Cape Town, it's a bit of an ethical dilemma I still don't have an answer to, because on the one hand I am creating less waste in that I am throwing away far less food when I use uCook and that's of course a very good thing. But at the same time it requires groceries for one or for two to be put in a box in Cape Town, wrapped in plastic and then flown to Joburg, and I am not sure about the environmental cost of that, it seems to be quite a lot.*

It was clear for participants that although this weighed heavily as a cost in their cost vs. benefit analysis, the perceived benefits outweighed the costs:

- ⇒ *So there can be frustrations but you sort of get over it quite quickly.*
- ⇒ *That said, we still use uCook, so obviously I'm not that big of an activist. But...yeah, that's something that makes me feel shit.*

Conclusion: Consumer Guilt, Ethical Consciousness as a Factor

It was evident from the results that meal-kit delivery services are hitting the mark for consumers in alleviating consumer guilt with regards to social consciousness, job creation, ethical sourcing, and supporting smaller and local businesses.

But the major finding was how the majority of participants felt that meal-kit providers are not delivering on their promises of being environmentally conscious and how participants felt that they are compromising their own values and managing their consumer guilt as a trade-off in their search for convenience through subscribing to meal-kit delivery services.

It was interesting to the researcher just how much emphasis was placed in holding meal-kit providers to such high ethical standards, perhaps as a result that these meal-kit providers are using ethical consciousness as a major part of their marketing strategy.

5.3.11 Mistrust and the Trend to Support Local Business as a Factor

Evident in the results discussed in 5.3.10, participants perceived additional value in supporting smaller, local businesses. The comparison between meal-kit delivery service providers, viewed as smaller start-ups who position themselves more ethically, and the larger, more traditional, retailers was made by almost every participant. This was in line with research reviewed indicating a global trend to support smaller, local businesses:

- ⇒ *Whereas with Woolworths you know, you're kind of...it's the whole consumerist...you're making the rich guys richer type idea.*
- ⇒ *Your big Brands absolutely don't, like Pick 'n Pay, Spar, Checkers, none of them do it for me.*

There appeared to be elements of mistrust of larger corporate businesses and their marketing messages with participants questioning the authenticity of their messaging and practices. Participants made up their minds about the authenticity of larger corporate retailers and manufactures based on their own experience and one retailer in particular bore the brand of the criticism:

- ⇒ *I don't know what Woolworth's spray on their stuff, that their carrots would last three weeks, and the fresh uCook one only lasts for four days.*
- ⇒ *And I know with Woolworth's, their lettuce or vegetables lasts a month because they're pumped full of preservatives and oxygen and whatever else they give their veggies.*
- ⇒ *I'm worried about the food source. Where's that...I suppose, I mean if I go to Woolworth's I actually don't know where it's coming from.*
- ⇒ *Even though at Woolworths I know you're kind of eating a whole lot of preservatives and things like that, because otherwise they wouldn't last in the fridge for so long.*
- ⇒ *It's sitting on their shelves and you bring it home, and it still lasts forever and ever and ever and ever, which kind of makes me wonder...exactly how?*
- ⇒ *I've kind of convinced myself that we're not eating as many chemicals as probably we would be if we do Woolworth's.*
- ⇒ *You know it's not these pristine little packets that you buy in Woolworth's.*

⇒ *Like Woolworths the meat and the Lambs or whatever done in the sauces and you look at what's in there, it's so horrendous.*

Mistrust and the trend to support small and local was expressed well by one participant who referred to a recent outbreak of listerioses in South Africa and the manner in which the large corporate food manufacturer and associated retailers (Woolworths included) handled the outbreak:

⇒ *We've seen what happened with Listeriosis, and Tiger brands are still there. They may have lost God knows how many millions on the stock exchange, but they're still there. If it was a small guy, he'd be out of business, and that's why I think we should be supporting the smaller guys, because they're working their butts off to make a living, and I'm all for that.*

Conclusion: Mistrust and the Trend to Support Local as a Factor

Whether true or untrue the perception that participants have of both large and small food producers and retailers effect their cost vs. benefit analyses and have major implications for their respective business. Participants held views of the food products they bought from retailers and questioned the authenticity of the marketing messages and business practices of large businesses constantly. Traceability and the supply chain of businesses, big and small, were questioned by participants and it was evident from the results that there was growing mistrust of large retailers and manufacturers which drives consumers to support smaller, local businesses. One participant gave the researcher a possible reason as to why when she stated “*because [with uCook] you don't feel like, you feel like you are one on one, you don't feel like a number.*”

5.3.12 Skills and Knowledge as a Factor

Every participant in the sample made reference to how they felt that they did not have the necessary skills or knowledge needed to fully take care of dinner related activities such as meal planning, shopping, preparation, and cooking when asked as to why they felt they could not fully take care of home meals:

⇒ *I don't know enough, I don't know enough recipes.*

⇒ *It's definitely a skills thing.*

⇒ *Well I don't know how to cook!*

- ⇒ *I'm just not great in the kitchen.*
- ⇒ *Me perhaps being a little bit inefficient in the kitchen.*
- ⇒ *I'm a bad shopper.*
- ⇒ *I'm a really bad chef, I can't cook to save my life.*

Participants expressed further detail as to exactly why they lacked confidence in the kitchen and how using a meal-kit delivery service decreased the psychological costs associated with their feelings of inadequacy and drove them to purchase:

- ⇒ *I literally only started to cook when I moved into digs with friends, and there was an obligation to cook meals, and of course, that's just the most basic meals you can get away with. So I think that's where my lack of confidence comes from.*
- ⇒ *I would shop, but then...it's like you didn't really know...it's almost like I needed a bit of direction, into planning my meals.*
- ⇒ *I'm not arty or anything like that, so I don't have this creative thing going on where I can visualize my beautiful piece of chicken on a bed of rocket with...I don't know. You can see I'm not very good at this. (Laughter)*
- ⇒ *I'm more of a functional cooker. So I literally will make spaghetti bolognaise every night of the week if I can because it's easy, it's quick, it's done. I have no imagination.*
- ⇒ *I don't know anything about what ingredients go with other ingredients, how to mix ingredients to bring out flavours...yeah. I'm a very basic cook, I know that you put tomato, and you put onion, and you put spaghetti and that's...*
- ⇒ *I don't know what the most efficient way around the kitchen is. I would assume there is a more efficient way than the way I do things. So given that I always take a long time to do things I kind of stayed away from trying to cook anything...bold.*
- ⇒ *It also appealed to me because I am a bad cook, so I wanted to test my cooking skills and see if I could be a better cook.*
- ⇒ *Also you can't really make a mistake because I am not a very good cook, so you can't really make a mistake.*

Post-Purchase Skills and Knowledge Development

It was clear that participants felt that meal-kit delivery services with their exact portions, easy to follow recipes and preparation methods provided additional post-purchase benefits in the form of skills and knowledge development. The development of skills however were focused on preparation and cooking rather than planning and shopping due to those elements being fully outsourced whereas cooking was still a requirement of using a meal-kit. One participant expressed the post-purchase benefit related to skills and knowledge development as:

⇒ *It wouldn't have been...a reason for initially signing up, but yes, it's turned out to be a benefit.*

Participants expressed the value adding benefit of improved skills and knowledge with regard to preparation and cooking methods, and knowledge of ingredients:

⇒ *I don't know how to cook red meat, don't know how to cook pork...wouldn't...I mean, if it wasn't a braai, I wouldn't have a clue how to cook it. So...so he...if wanted red meat, he would have to braai it. So now at least they...they tell you, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, so from that perspective, obviously...from a skills perspective, it's really helped. I can now cook whole different varieties of meat that I'd never been able to cook before.*

⇒ *I can now cook whole different varieties of meat that I'd never been able to cook before.*

⇒ *I mean I can identify now the different types of green flowery things and I'm like, fantastic! I know that this is rocket, and that's basil and that's awesome. You completely learn new things.*

⇒ *I'm not a cook, but it's like I get a cooking lesson every meal we cook because it's a new ingredient, it's something I've never done before .*

⇒ *It's nice to learn how to cook vegetables, learn how to cook fish in different ways...*

⇒ *It's exposed me to the fact that meals can be prepared in a short amount of time, you don't have to spend you know, six hours in the kitchen to have some good food.*

⇒ *It's interesting 'cause you learn the skills. You know I've never cooked, never cooked, I've always been the person who stays out of the kitchen, 'cause everyone else was in there. So like, you learn about timings, and how to mix*

flavours, and things like that, which I've never really had the experience of doing, so...

- ⇒ *So at least this way, I'm doing it on a daily basis, doing something new on a daily basis, enhancing my skills on a daily basis, so when it does come around to actually having them for dinner I can do something that's a little more impressive than, say, spaghetti bolognese.*
- ⇒ *uCook has been great in that it's taught me how to do certain things like okay grating garlic instead of chopping garlic. I never realized the difference in taste until I had uCook. So yes it helped me to be a little bit more confident and just better just more natural. I can just look at certain ingredients and just go with the flow versus...*

The result of which was participants citing an increased confidence in the kitchen:

- ⇒ *I'm more confident that I'll be able to replicate the pictures that they show me, within a reasonable shortish period of time.*
- ⇒ *I feel more confident as well, because you kind of do it more. So I feel like I can now...you know if you hand me something to cook, I can at least probably get it ninety percent right.*
- ⇒ *I am sort of getting better at just being a little bit more intuitive in the kitchen.*

Across the whole range of participants the greatest post-purchase benefit, from a skills and knowledge development point of view, and directly increasing perceived benefit, was the overwhelming sense of achievement that participants experienced upon cooking a meal-kit meal, regardless of their individual level of skill and knowledge.

- ⇒ *It's feeling nice about yourself.*
- ⇒ *It's almost like a bit of an achievement, I mean I was home last night and I cooked this meal and I was like ooh,, this is quite delicious! I was quite of proud of it and I sent John the picture and said I made this!*
- ⇒ *Feeling like I've achieved something. I think that after every uCook meal, I can look at it, look at the picture and look at the menu and say 'Yup, I've achieved it, fantastic! Well done Ryan, little high five!'*
- ⇒ *I feel like I've done it...where I haven't really, but I feel like I have, I feel like I'm Jamie Oliver.*

The perceived benefit, from a social status point of view, is further increased through the fact that participants used meal-kits as a way to look good and take credit for cooking a meal from scratch:

- ⇒ *And it's quite funny because Brendan...you know Brendan said the other night (laughter) "Thanks for dinner, luv, although you didn't really..." I said, "Hang on, I actually cooked it! Yes, the meal got delivered in its...but I cooked it."*
- ⇒ *My in-laws think that I'm a better cook than I actually am, so... My mother-in-law's convinced I can't cook so at least this way I can kind of prove her wrong a little bit every once in a while.*
- ⇒ *It's makes it simple and you look amazing, you look like you just whipped up a leg of lamb.*

The fact that consumers value the element of preparing and cooking meals, the very thing that decreases convenience in the meal-kit delivery service, is considered a major finding in the context of this research:

- ⇒ *But we're still cooking, it still feels like, look at what we made! It's the act of cooking.*
- ⇒ *I feel like I've put the work in and there's a reward at the end of it, whereas a pre-cooked meal I feel like I'm cheating a bit, it's just too easy and convenient.*
- ⇒ *Here, you...you're still cooking, you still feel like you're doing your chore, I still feel like I'm not...I'm not taking the easy route, I'm just taking an easier route.*
- ⇒ *It feels like...it feel like proper cooking, it feels like a family meal that I prepared.*
- ⇒ *I feel like I've cooked it, you know? I've prepared it, I've served it, and it's something that I've done.*

Participants were however aware of the increased perceived cost associated with having to cook the meal and yet benefits exceeded costs:

- ⇒ *I can't say it's time because I'm probably putting in more cooking time than I did when I was shopping for myself.*
- ⇒ *It actually takes me longer to cook now than it did before and I've got to put in more effort.*

Conclusion: Skills and Knowledge as a factor

Participants often cited their perceived shortage of the necessary skills and knowledge required to fully take care of home meals as a barrier to doing so. It was evident that meal-kit delivery services with their simple recipes and detailed instructions helped participants alleviate their associated feelings of inadequacy.

Furthermore, participants extracted value through the use of meal-kits by recognising improved skills and knowledge, improved confidence, an overwhelming sense of achievement and the ability to take credit for the meals entirely.

The major finding in the context of this research is that the required element of actually preparing and cooking the meal, something that in fact requires additional time and effort (less convenient) is indeed creating additional perceived value to the consumer.

5.3.13 Social Referral as a Factor

Participants were acutely aware of the marketing tactics used by meal-kit delivery services through the use of high quality photography, adverts, competitions, and association with celebrities. Even though participants had noticed these elements, they did not appear to be a driving factor to subscribe to any specific meal-kit delivery service.

What participants did cite as a factor, particularly to trial the product, was positive experiences and referral of their social circles. Participants appeared to place more value on what the friends and family in their social circle had to say about the benefits of meal-kits and cited this a driver to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services:

⇒ *Advertising, I think, is cheap; you know it's easy to make an ad and have a good-looking girl tell you the food is fantastic, but until someone you actually know has done it...I mean we all read the...I read the reviews on Amazon about books people have written because I trust people on Amazon versus, you know, what a critic says. So I think it's that referral thing.*

⇒ *'Cause actually he [husband] went to Cape Town, Dylan's house, and actually had dinner that night and he was like, "What is this?" He was like, "Dude, you've got to get this, this is like the game changer." So he said "We need to try this for a week."*

⇒ *I had friends who tried it before me, who raved about it...just, for them, it was the convenience, the ease...and cost, as well. So I decided to go with it.*

- ⇒ *So it's friends who usually cook well, let's say, said it was great. And I was like okay, the food must be decent, let me try.*
- ⇒ *I went for uCook by word of mouth. A friend of mine was just telling me how impressed she is and we thought, we should try.*
- ⇒ *I joined because of word-of-mouth, friends of ours have tried it... and she said try it, believe me it will change your life. I'm like, ah, why not? That's all. That's why signed up.*
- ⇒ *A business can tell you about quality ingredients, they can tell you about tasty meals, but until you chat to someone who's actually had a tasty meal and touched their quality ingredients, you don't believe them.*
- ⇒ *I got on to uCook from some good friends of mine they got to me on it.*
- ⇒ *I was there [at a friend's house] the one day and they got this box delivered and that was my story with uCook. I was blown away by the price how much, it was it wasn't that much.*

And based on their own positive experience, some participants became advocates of the product and actively endorsed it to their own network and social circles, further increasing the perceived benefit associated with social status of the meal-kit delivery serviceL

- ⇒ *I don't think we would have done it ourselves had we not seen my sister-in-law do it successfully. And subsequently a lot of people at the office have started, based on just talking about it, you know? Which is interesting, I thought about asking uCook for some commission.*

Conclusion: Social Referral as a Factor

Responses from participants in this research cited positive referrals from friends and social circles based on their own actual experience was more of a driving factor to trial or subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service than advertising or celebrity endorsements.

5.3.14 Safety Concerns as a Factor

Safety as a factor considered in the reason to subscribe or remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service was discussed by two, female participants and is viewed in the context of this research as a very interesting finding.

Each participant discussed safety from different angles. One participant described how she used the meal-kit delivery service as a way to avoid shopping. Because she worked long hours and shopped for dinners daily, she found herself at convenience shopping centres after dark. Combined with an increased presence of vagrants at these centres, she often felt unsafe and so looked at the benefit of meal-kits delivered as an opportunity to avoid being in such a position:

⇒ *Going to the shop after work you just don't feel safe going to the shops at 6 o'clock at night. So 6 o'clock at night and it's getting dark and you are busy in the aisle and you have got people asking you to buy them bread. And you have got people following you to your car to help you park or unpack or stealing your money or take your laptop, and it's just a hack.*

⇒ *I feel very vulnerable when I am out at Shops at 6 o'clock at night, because honestly... sitting in the Pine Slopes Spar and you've got people coming to you and saying please can you buy me this piece of chicken, or can I help you carry your bags. You don't want that. I don't like people coming up to me and asking for things. And when it's dark and you are going out to your car you are vulnerable, and now you don't have that worry... so yes.*

The same participant was clear about how subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service decreased the psychological costs associated with feeling unsafe while shopping for dinner:

⇒ *I think it's a feeling of safety which is a huge benefit, I mean it gives you peace of mind.*

The other participant described safety for her family while taking delivery of groceries she had ordered online. She viewed the functionality of the packaging, that it could remain cold for longer periods of time, combined with the flexibility in delivery options, where she could change delivery addresses based on where she would be at the time of delivery, as beneficial in that she did not have to have the meal-kit delivered to her home where her children may potentially be in harm's way. She further explained that the positive experience and relationship she has formed with her meal-kit delivery service, and the consistency in their delivery process has built trust with her to accept delivery at home.

⇒ *So in South Africa we've got other concerns like safety. So for a while I was concerned about someone going to my house and deliver. So I investigated the option of them coming to my office. So I asked initially, rather than how much ice*

do you put it or whatever, they had no issue, just sign it, you can change every week where you want it delivered. But now I must say I realize they use exactly the same courier company...the whole electronic thing, they...your name's clearly marked on the box so my nanny just has to go out to the gate, open the gate this much and take it, so...that was one of my concerns why I actually don't use normal deliveries either, like a Pick 'n Pay... because the whole truck needs to come into your yard, you don't know... I mean you can't be careful enough. So that was the one thing I was worried about...but I've got the option to have it delivered right here, and I can tell them do it by three o'clock in the afternoon, and I put it in the car and I go home, which is what I like. Hence, someone tells me 'Why don't you pre-order your stuff from Woolworth's from the internet, and they'll deliver it for you as well?' But, it's that factor.

Conclusion: Safety Concerns as a Factor

Although safety was discussed by only two participants the benefits raised by the two participants, combined with the specific South African context, makes this finding unique.

5.3.15 Additional Post-Purchase Benefits Discussed

Participants identified and discussed additional perceived benefits they discovered through continued use of the meal-kit delivery service, that have not yet been discussed as part of the factors above. These additional perceived benefits provided additional food for thought for the researcher as possible additional factors that consumers considered when deciding to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service.

Three additional factors, not yet mentioned above, were highlighted by participants: 1) The ability to recreate recipes, 2) an activity to keep busy, and 3) increased enjoyment of cooking.

The Ability to Re-Create Recipes

Nine participants highlighted the additional benefit of being able to collect the simple and instructive recipes with the intention to recreate them in the future. Because the recipes show the list of ingredients and exact quantities, participants indicated that it could potentially become a convenient shopping list, which helps with meal planning and shopping, as well as knowing that the meal met their expectations.

This was expressed by two participants as follows:

- ⇒ *My husband and I will do uCook every second week. And then the weeks that we don't do uCook, we've collected the recipes that we like and that are quick and easy to re-create, and then, I'll literally take those recipes, buy the ingredients, and re-create them.*
- ⇒ *I can take out a uCook recipe, I can shop for the ingredients online, it gets delivered at home, and on Saturday morning I can prepare a great lunch for my family.*

Although this is a possible reason for subscribing and remaining subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service, after an extended period of time where the consumer has collected a sufficient quantity of favourable recipes, this may indeed become a reason to unsubscribe, as indicated by participant 3's reference to only using uCook every second week.

A Leisure Activity to Pass Time

Although all participants indicated their perceived time-scarcity, one participant specifically indicated that a benefit of using a meal-kit delivery service was that it kept her busy for a period of time during the evenings at home. It must be noted that this participant was recently widowed and her children lived abroad, and based on the emotions shown by the participants during the interview the researcher inferred that she was using the time required to prepare and cook a meal as a way to pass the time in the evenings and take her mind off of what was very obviously a traumatic time in her life:

- ⇒ *I cook it myself and it's a unit of time, you know, you have to keep busy.*

Increased Enjoyment

Only one participant did not express an increased enjoyment of preparing, cooking and eating meals as a result of using a meal-kit delivery service. It appeared that the removal of the less enjoyable dinner-related activities, such as planning and shopping, combined with the new experiences and learnings as a function of using the meal-kit recipes ultimately resulted in participants enjoying the time spent preparing and cooking meals, as well as enjoying eating new meals and experiencing new ingredients and tastes.

Participants expressed their increased enjoyment as such:

- ⇒ *Oddly enough it's made cooking a little bit more fun for us now.*
- ⇒ *I don't find it such an arduous task anymore. It's like, oh actually, yeah, dinner, cool, let's do it.*
- ⇒ *After like two weeks of that, it was like, this is actually quite cool, we would cook together every night, and I wasn't going oh please, don't make me come and cook with you! I was like cool, what do I need to do?*
- ⇒ *Instead of cooking becoming a chore to do, it becomes more of kinda something that is adding value to our relationship, catch up on our days, that sort of thing.*
- ⇒ *I'm actually starting to find...like I said, I've never really enjoyed being in the kitchen, but I'm starting to find that I really do enjoy it. You know cooking has actually become also like a time out in the day for me.*
- ⇒ *I'm actually enjoying the learnings of new dishes.*
- ⇒ *It's made weekly meal times more exciting, because it's nice to try new recipes, and eat more variety, and...I mean the five default meals that I kept going back to, got very boring and flavourless, so...yeah it's made...it made eating exciting...mid-week eating exciting.*

Conclusion: Additional Post-purchase Benefits as a Factor

It was clear from the results of this research that there are a multitude of additional benefits that each individual participant valued through the use of the product and that these additional post-purchase benefits are valued differently, by different individuals, based on specific context. It would be very difficult to generalise some of these findings across a general consumer base because they are so specific to individuals but it is important to note that these such specifics further support the fact that the consumer decision making process is indeed very complex and at times very personal to the consumer themselves.

5.3.16 Unmet Needs

In the pursuit of identifying factors consumers consider to subscribe, or to stay subscribed, to a meal-kit delivery service so participants shared their criticisms of meal-kit delivery services, which the researcher deemed significant in answering Research Question 2: What factors subsequently affect customer loyalty to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service?

Although some criticisms appeared to be relevant to the participants specific meal-kit provider, the researcher extracted factors that are applicable to meal-kit delivery services, broadly.

Broadly, four major criticisms were discussed by 13 of the 14 participants. These criticisms were: 1) Diet Specific, 2) Inadequate choice, 3) Personalisation, and 4) Cost

Diet Specific

Many participants expressed dissatisfaction with meals not meeting their individual diet preferences. Criticism ranged from inadequate portions of protein, to unhealthy preparation practices such as frying, and even the inability for the meal-kit to cater to specific context preferences such as when a participant was pregnant or breast-feeding.

Participants expressed their criticism as follows:

- ⇒ *I'm not using it at the moment because of the food aversions with pregnancy, so it was just too complicated, so I'm doing my own thing now, but as soon as that's gone...I like uCook, I would like to go back.*
- ⇒ *Their meal portions are very small, I think for men.... but often the meat portions are not big enough...*
- ⇒ *I was a bit frustrated that, more often than not, they would tell me to fry products. So the healthy aspect, I felt, got lost in the preparation which I kind of, was a bit concerned about...*

Inadequate Choice

Some participants were disgruntled as to the limited choice of number of meals in a week, the number of portions in a meal, and the repetition of ingredients over time.

Meal-kit services as a subscription are available for three or four nights of the week, and cater for either one, two or four people per meal. This posed a problem for participant wanted anything different, and was further exacerbated when participants wanted different options depending on the day and / or week:

- ⇒ *Daily Dish you can only do four days. uCook you can do three days. I don't know why, we've asked them, it's one irritating part of it.*

- ⇒ *Would I be, every now and then, up for a fourth night? I probably would, in a week.*
- ⇒ *Probably my only comment, being single, is that I can't always get through the three meals in a week, so if there was a two-meal option, I'd probably take it.*
- ⇒ *But with uCook, like, I wish we could have five meals a week, I really do.*
- ⇒ *I've still got four nights that I have to handle. So that would be my next thing, what can they improve? Give me seven nights a week and I'd be happy.*
- ⇒ *The only thing that I would say with them and maybe it's because of the type of meals I choose, is that I'm feeling like there's a lot of the same. Obviously from a costing perspective for them...so like, if there's a biggish dish like last night, cottage pie, that's the hero of...that's like a meal on its own, you don't need elements, it's got elements within it. Like the side is always just rocket with some lemon and, like okay guys, we gotta move from the rocket. So there is some repetition on their side and I think it's...and a lot of (mince) because obviously meat's expensive, so I think a lot of the options incorporate (mince), rather than an actual piece of meat, 'cause meat's expensive. So I am noticing that, and that's something I'll monitor.*

Another major criticism of meal-kit delivery services was how the meals were not 'family friendly' and usually too exotic or spicy for children:

- ⇒ *Brendan and I, funny enough, have discussed it, and as I've said, is uCook viable if it comes down to four of us? And essentially it's not, and the reason being is not because of the cost so much, but more because of the types of meals that they offer. It's not family orientated. I think they're a little bit more adult. I think it's fine if you've got teenagers. But my girls... last night was a cottage pie which they would have eaten, but one night was angel fish with veggies and a lemon...whatever, my girls aren't going to eat that.*
- ⇒ *I mean it's a bit more of a hack because I have to cook two separate things, but they [kids] won't eat it [meal-kit meal]. Thomas will eat a little bit, he'll taste, but Sophie flat out will not eat it. Also, I'm not eating what they eat, so, we have to compromise.*
- ⇒ *We don't do the Family option yet. Because my kids are a bit small, sometimes the food is a little bit spicy...*

Personalisation / Customer Knowledge

A number of participants felt that through the continued use of the meal-kit delivery service, their preferred service should gather data of specific preferences on them so that when they do forget to specifically choose the meals for the week, and are sent their default choice made when initially subscribing, that they should not be sent dishes that they perhaps would not enjoy:

⇒ *I mean it is a problem, if I forget to do my box...like, to change it...flip and like last night, there was angel fish, I don't even love fish, Brendan hates fish, so Nozzie got fish last night, and I mean, it's a waste. Well it's not a waste, she's eaten it, but it's a waste for him and I, we don't have a meal this week, 'cause I forgot to...so there's some things where I think, I should be able to put on there Don't ever give me a fish dish (laughter) or at least, swap it out for something, so those...*

Cost

Finally, by far the most significant criticism of meal-kit delivery services was related to cost. Participants, as discussed in 5.3.6, were acutely aware of costs and that meal-kit delivery services were a single option in their total consideration set of dinner options, and that if costs rose to where total perceived costs exceeded total perceived benefits then they would consider unsubscribing:

⇒ *And perhaps most disappointing is the price, upwards of a hundred rand per meal, which I had to cook myself and then I had to wash all the dishes after so I could cook the next night. I found that was...it was just a bit too expensive for me, I can pay less at a restaurant and get a nice, good, healthy meal prepared for me, than me having to prepare a healthy meal, cook, wash the dishes afterwards, and be ready for the next night.*

⇒ *I suspect that I would probably order more uCook meals, if they said meal A is sixty rand, meal B is seventy rand, meal C is eighty rand, whatever. I would conceivably buy three uCook meals for the week if...as long as each of them was less than eighty rand or ninety rand. But given that it's a flat price regardless of which three meals that you cook, that probably does dissuade me from cooking it 'cause it's not as flexible as me being able to choose price range...meals which are in my price range.*

Conclusion: Unmet Needs as a factor

Whilst this research did not specifically aim to identify how meal-kit delivery services may not meet the needs of consumers, it is interesting to note how openly consumers are willing to criticise their preferred meal-kit provider in a manner which appears to be authentic and in the interests of the meal-kit provider; participants appeared genuinely intent of helping the meal-kit provider succeed. This is perhaps supportive of the trend to support smaller, local, ethical businesses where the consumers feel apart of their journey.

5.4 Conclusive Findings

The results presented in Chapter 5 provided interesting insight into the factors that consumers considers in both initially subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service as well as factors considered when deciding to remain subscribed to, or to unsubscribe from, a meal-kit delivery service.

It was evident that no consumers fully rely on meal-kit delivery services but rather use this new and innovative service offering as an option within their overall consideration set when deciding on how to fully take care of home dinners. Figure 4 visually represents the various options that participants considered when discussing the merits of subscribing to meal-kit delivery services during the research interviews.

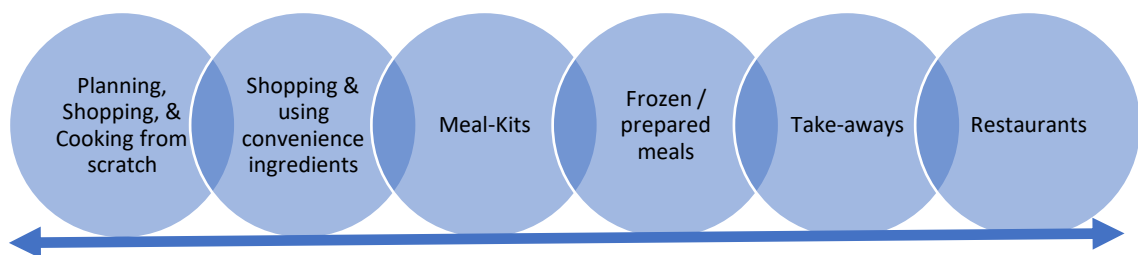


Figure 4: Consumers consideration of options relevant to home dinners

Interestingly, the researcher found that meal-kits were regularly compared to eating out at a restaurant as participants expressed the high quality of meals they were now capable of making with the help of a meal-kit delivery service.

It was also abundantly clear that the framework developed from the review of literature, presented in Figure 2, is over simplistic, in that it does not look at the links and interplay between the factors, as well as not being fully exhaustive.

5.4.1 Conclusive Findings Related to Research Question 1:

What are all the factors that consumers consider when initially deciding to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service?

Factors considered by consumers when making the decision to initially subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service include:

- Quest for convenience
- Managing goal conflict as a result of multiple, conflicting goals
- Goal to eat a variety of healthy and tasty meals
- Economic considerations
- Appeal of the brand and customer journey of the meal-kit service especially how easy it is to trial.
- To decrease wasted time, effort and food
- To provide for family and spend quality time with family
- To manage consumer guilt
- To make up for lack of skills and knowledge
- Recommendations of friends family, and social circles
- To decrease safety risks associated with shopping

5.4.2 Conclusive Findings Related to Research Question 2:

What factors subsequently affect customer loyalty to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service?

- Realised overall convenience, especially through the ability to share responsibility
- Successful management of goal conflict through meeting multiple requirements to achieve goals and objectives, often through nudging tactics
- Improved healthy eating behaviour
- Economic considerations as a result of decreased wastage and a lower grocery food bill

- Appeal of the brand and customer journey of the meal-kit service especially relating to complain resolution and flexibility of subscription
- Decrease wastage relating to time, effort and food
- Improved ability to live up to family values especially relating to providing for family, quality time spent together as a family, and decreased conflict relating to meal decisions
- Improved management of consumer guilt
- Improved skills and knowledge as a result of increased participation in meal preparation
- Increased social status and overall sense of achievement in preparing meals
- Increased perception of safety through changed shopping behaviour

5.5 Conclusion

Chapter 5 highlighted interesting results, most of which support academic literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as to why consumers may consider subscribing, or remaining subscribed, to meal-kit delivery services. However some surprising results highlighted in this research were not expressly considered in the literature and provide deeper insight into the consumer decision making process relating to meal-kit delivery services, as well as dinner related activities. The major findings in this research are:

1. The convenience offered through exact ingredient quantities, simple and instructive recipes, as a functional benefit of meal-kits allowed participants to outsource dinner preparation and cooking as a means to further increase personal convenience.
2. Retailer pack sizes, which encourage buying larger quantities, are driving wastage, particularly for those cooking for one or two people, and are considered by consumers therefore as more expensive due to economic cost associated with wasted food.
3. Consumers are using meal-kit delivery services as a mechanism to decrease conflict in the house related to choosing meals that satisfy the goals and needs of all members of the family
4. The element of cooking, the very thing that decreases convenience to time-poor individuals, is in fact viewed as a benefit and increases overall perceived value to consumers.
5. Consumers have used meal-kit delivery services as a way to increase their feeling of safety by avoiding shopping centres at times when they feel unsafe

These major findings are discussed in detail in Chapter 6 and considers the result in the context of this research in light of literature reviewed.

Chapter 6 Discussion of Results

6.1 Introduction

In this, Chapter 6, the findings and results of Chapter 5 is discussed in detail as related to the context of this research while taking into consideration the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The insights obtained from this research are contrasted and compared to the possible factors identified in the literature. In addition, additional factors that may be considered by consumers when making a decision to subscribe or remain subscribed, to a meal-kit delivery service will be introduced.

Chapter 6 aims to discuss the results and findings per research question. Therefore the researcher has used his judgement in discussing what results and findings presented in Chapter 5 relate to each research question. There is considerable overlap of the factors discussed, nevertheless each factor will be discussed from the point of view of each separate outcome: RQ1) initial subscription and RQ2) remaining subscribed (loyalty).

The relevance of the results, findings, and insights obtained through this research study as it pertains to literature are explored in the following sections.

6.2 Discussion of Research Question 1:

What are all the factors that consumers consider when initially deciding to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service?

Research question one specifically aimed to discover an exhaustive list of factors that consumers in an emerging market, and specifically South African, context considered as reasons to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service. Naturally, it sought to confirm specific factors identified from literature, as per the framework developed from literature in Figure 2.

Literature specifically identified consumers who are more likely to experience time scarcity (Venn & Strazdins, 2017) as being the target market for meal-kit delivery services, with such time-scarcity having a direct bearing on healthy meal-time decisions (Jabs & Devine, 2006), and as a result consumers experience goal conflict (Etkin et al., 2015; Strazdins et al., 2016). Literature then suggested that consumers are, as a result of such goal-conflict, therefore seeking more convenience applicable to dinner related activities, expressly to save time and effort (Jiang et al., 2013; Olsen & Mai, 2013;

Wieseke et al., 2016). Additional possible factors found in literature included mood management (Kidwell et al., 2015), outsourcing of meal decisions to trusted advisors (such as brands) (Spiteri Cornish & Moraes, 2015), customer experience and brand trust (Izogo & Jayawardhena, 2018), nudging oneself to eat better and more healthy (Torma et al., 2018), managing consumer guilt associated with ethical consciousness (Haynes & Podobsky, 2016), and safety concerns (Lutchminarain, 2015).

This section discusses all factors, those found in literature as well as new findings as a result of this research study. Although all factors are closely related and intertwined, this section is written per factor, in light of the literature reviewed and as the factor specifically relates to answering Research Question One.

6.2.1 Convenience as a Factor

The results of this research indicate a common understanding of the definition of convenience as consumers looking to save time and effort with reference to dinner related activities such as planning, shopping, storing, preparing, and cooking meals. This is in line with the definition of consumer convenience orientation in the same context by Olsen and Huynh (2013).

The relative strength of convenience as a factor, as cited by participants, is in line with the relative strength of convenience as a factor found in literature . However, the results from this research provided additional insight on exactly where consumers are seeking convenience regarding dinner related activities, especially when there is significant goal conflict (Etkin et al., 2015).

It is worth noting that although convenience is written as a factor itself, the concept of convenience is a common theme that is discussed throughout this chapter and is intertwined to almost every other factor.

Meal Planning

Consumers indicated that meal-planning requires considerable time and effort, particularly when faced with achieving multiple goals such as preparation time, taste, being nutritionally balanced, and meeting the tastes and preferences of others. Notably in this research ensuring variety in meals with respect to both tastes and ingredients were also a consideration. The cognitive effort and perceived time spent by consumers on meal planning increased the perceived costs associated with meal time decisions,

which is in line with the findings of Haws et al. (2017) and Ducrot et al. (2015). Consumers quest for convenience in meal planning was evident in the research findings and consumers are clearly looking to decreased perceived costs associated with meal planning by subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service.

Shopping and Storing

Findings in this research indicated a strong propensity for consumers to search for convenience related to shopping for food, as grocery shopping was largely seen by consumers as a chore or grudge purchase. It was evident in the findings that consumers would prefer to be doing other activities, rather than shopping for food, which is supported by Jiang et al. (2013). The subscription nature of the meal-kit delivery service further decreases participation in the shopping process by consumers (Hertz and Halkier (2017) and appeared to be a driving factor as to why consumers are willing to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service. This trend is also supported by Jiang et al. (2013) as well as by Wang et al. (2005) in terms of the merits of a subscription services business model applicable to consumable goods.

Interestingly, insights from this research revealed that propensity to search for shopping related convenience by consumers was stronger by consumers who are less likely to plan meals and treat meal planning and shopping as a single activity, in line with findings by Rudi and Çakır (2017). Participants were explicit in their reasons for subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service as a way to decrease effort and time related to shopping for food as well as an effort to decrease perceived psychological costs related to grocery shopping. Subscribing to a meal-kit service indicated that consumers were looking at ways to decrease both the number of shopping trips as well as the time spent shopping, a nudging tactic described by Rudi and Çakır (2017)

It was evident that the findings of this research indicated that consumers are actively seeking ways to change their shopping habits as part of their quest for convenience. Torma et al. (2018) is of the opinion that this tactic used by consumers to decrease the complexity of consumer decision making.

Two interesting findings from this research are not explicitly mentioned in literature reviewed but relates to shopping convenience. The first finding is the risk of wasted time and effort while consumers search for ingredients in store, often requiring additional shopping trips due to stock availability. The second finding is the availability of retailers pack sizes, specifically for consumers cooking for a smaller number of people (usually

just themselves), and the associated wastage related to being incentivised to buy in 'bulk.'

Both these findings have managerial implications to retailers and are exacerbated when combined with a third finding of this research, that some consumers have limited storage capacity in their homes. Consumers in this research cited additional perceived costs associated with storing food ingredients and subscribed to meal-kit delivery services as a way of managing their inventory of food items at home. Convenience relating to storing food items is briefly touched on by Etkin et al. (2015) but appears to be gap for further research.

Preparation and Cooking

Not only were all participants unanimous in their belief that cooking from scratch was healthier than alternatives, but they also agreed that time was required in order to do so, as was suggested by Venn and Strazdins (2017). Findings of this research related to the increased perceived value being placed on physical participation, through actual cooking of meals, was also supported by Hagen et al. (2017, and Olsen and Huynh (2013), and consumers indeed expressed the value placed on cooking from scratch. This value is placed mostly related to health and participants believed that cooking from scratch is healthier than convenient alternatives such as prepared meals and take-aways, supportive of findings by Hertz and Halkier (2017 and Jackson and Viehoff (2016).

The insights from this research proposes a new finding, which is that there is a limit as to how long consumers are willing to commit to preparing and cooking meals and suggests that anything longer than 45 minutes begins to be perceived as additional cost and begins to negate the perceived value in consumer participation. As a result consumers are strongly searching for convenience related to preparation and cooking of meals from scratch. The results from this research indicate that the functional benefits of a meal-kit delivery service where all ingredients are packaged and labelled as a single meal, provide exact ingredients quantities, offer instructive recipes, and require simple cooking techniques allowed for time saving as well as decreased cognitive and physical effort.

Overall Added Convenience

It was evident from the results that time and effort with respect to dinner related activities, weighed heavily on consumers' minds and the quest for convenience was an effort to

decrease associated psychological cost, but it was often challenging to establish exactly which activity consumers were most interested in eliminating. It was overwhelmingly clear that consumers considered convenience in the overall context of dinner related activities as onerous and taxing, and that overall convenience was a driving factor of at the very least trialling a meal-kit delivery service.

Consumers who subscribe to meal-kit delivery services appeared more convenience conscious and placed high value on convenience in their cost vs. benefit analysis of various dinner solutions and it was clear in the results of this research that any overall convenience that aligns with alleviating goal conflict was perceived as valuable which support the findings by Strazdins et al. (2016), Venn and Strazdins (2017), and Wieseke et al. (2016). The resulting decision by the consumer to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service is supported by the work of Kumar and Reinartz (2016) and Sweeney and Soutar (2001) as part of the consumers effort to decrease perceived costs associated with meal-time decisions.

6.2.2 Time Scarcity as a Factor

The results from this research were aligned to literature with regard to how consumers experience time scarcity and how lack of time is cited as a major reason for not making healthy mealtime decisions. Time scarcity is the main driver of the consumers quest for convenience (Venn & Strazdins, 2017).

Interestingly, and contrary to the market economy theory of time being equated to money (Etkin et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2015), there was not any specific mention relating time to money. This may be due to the relative wealth of the sample who may not consider money as a much of a scarce resource as time is. Although money, budget, and home economics was raised as a factor and is later discussed in 6.2.5 and 6.3.5, the researcher proposes that this may simply be participants stating what they believe the researcher would like to hear in an attempt to save face. This was highlighted in 4.3 as possible social-desirability bias as presented by (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

Limited Time Available

The sample in this research was diverse in consumers' individual context regarding committed time based on gender, employment, and providing for others. It was evident that for different consumers, and at different times, overall time-scarcity involving both actual available time as well as the feeling of being pressed for time, and the resulting

increased stress and anxiety associated with time-scarcity, was a driving factor to search for convenient dinner options. Time-scarcity in the context of this study was, to a great extent, aligned with mealtime decisions, particularly as it relates to healthy choices. (Etkin et al., 2015; Kalenkoski & Hamrick, 2013; Strazdins et al., 2016; Venn & Strazdins, 2017).

Findings of this study are also in agreement with the fact that time-scarcity causes physical and cognitive fatigue, which increases the perceived cost of planning and preparing a healthy meal. In reaction consumers often fall back on heuristics by either choosing unhealthy alternatives or creating basic, 'boring' meals that consumers knew were quick and easy (Strazdins et al., 2016).

Opportunity Cost of Time

The results of this research further supported Strazdins et al. (2016) in that opportunity cost of time spent on dinner related activities was a factor. Even consumers who enjoyed cooking prioritised work, family, and leisure activities as a priority over dinner related activities. Consumers were clear that they consciously subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service as a way to save time on dinner related activities so as to spend time on alternate, more important activities.

6.2.3 The Goal to Eat Healthy as a Factor

The goal to eat healthy, combined with time-scarcity, was a significant cause of goal conflict for the consumers who participated in this research and it was clear by every participant that eating healthy, and providing healthy meals to others, was an important priority. As indicated by Venn and Strazdins (2017) the goal to eat healthy directly conflicts with time scarcity thereby increasing stress and anxiety and perceived costs of time and effort required by consumers to plan and prepare healthy meals (Haws et al., 2017).

It was clear from the results of this research that there is a motivation to maintain a healthy lifestyle and that participants generally considered home meals cooked from scratch as healthier than alternatives in their consideration set, as shown in Figure 4. This is supportive of the discussion around what consumers consider as healthy, convenient meals by Jackson and Viehoff (2016).

Eat Healthy

In general participants from this sample considered meals to be healthy if they were cooked from scratch using fresh ingredients, offered finite portions, had a high proportion of vegetables, offered nutritional variety, and was overall nutritionally balanced. It is suggested that the goal to eat healthy was a considerable factor for consumers to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service and the results were supportive of the reasons related to meal planning and healthy eating behaviour discussed by Ducrot et al. (2017), VanEpps et al. (2016), and Venn and Strazdins (2017).

The results of this research also supported the notion of using meal-kits as a self-nudging tactic proposed by Torma et al. (2018) in that consumers felt committed to eating the meals provided by their meal-kit delivery service and were less likely to make an unhealthy dinner decision due to fatigue, time scarcity, or impulse. This viewpoint was also supported by Hagen et al. (2017) and VanEpps et al. (2016) who proposed that pre-planning led to more of a commitment to eating healthy.

Quality and Knowledge of Ingredients

Hertz and Halkier (2017) proposed that a benefit to subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service is indeed the consumer participation in preparing and cooking the meal from scratch. The result of this research support Hertz and Halkier (2017) but also consider an additional factor that consumers consider as to why choosing to cook a meal from scratch. This research found that consumers placed considerable value on knowing exactly what ingredients go into a meal and being able to inspect the quality of the ingredients during preparation.

Consumers, meaning the participants in this research, were consistent with Hertz and Halkier (2017) in that they subscribed to meal-kit delivery services to eat more organic food and eat more healthy, but this research provided more specific reasons such as the flexibility and control in the actual cooking process, and the ability to leave out less healthy ingredients during meal preparation.

6.2.4 Managing Goal Conflict as a Factor

Etkin et al. (2015) were clear in how goal conflict increased stress and anxiety for consumers thereby increasing perceived costs relating to meal-time decisions and directly impact how consumers make decisions. Further academic literature highlights the additional goal conflict related to meal-time decisions due to healthy vs. tasty meals,

healthy vs. convenient, managing consumer guilt, and managing complex family demands regarding tastes and preferences (Costa, 2013; Hertz & Halkier, 2017; Jackson & Viehoff, 2016).

The results of this research support the findings in literature and indicate that goal conflict is based on an individual's specific context, need, mood, goals, and objectives at any given point in time. It was evident that goal conflict was ever present in consumers' daily meal-time decision making processes and that it was a major driver in creating additional complexity regarding decisions of dinner related activities. This drives consumers to continue to search for ways to decrease perceived costs associated with such decision making and the researcher suggests that this is an additional driver for consumers' quest for convenience.

It can therefore be inferred, based on the factors discussed in this section that consumers subscribed to meal-kit delivery services in an attempt to manage goal conflict. Interestingly, neither literature nor the results of this research indicated increased goal conflict relating to budget, possibly due to the relative wealth of the sample.

Complex and competing demands (family & other)

Consumers who were providing meals for others indicated a strong feeling of goal conflict relating to complex and competing demands of the people they were providing meals for. Complexity of providing meal that satisfy tastes, preferences, schedules, and health goals of all the members of the household increased goal conflict and perceived costs related to mealtime decisions. This was supported by Ducrot et al. (2015) and Casini et al. (2015).

The results from this study highlighted that consumers looked to the meal-kit delivery service to provide convenience in dinner related activities so as to decrease perceived costs, but also to provide variety in meals so as to overcome boredom, while also providing a healthy, balanced meal. Consumers placed value on the participation in the cooking process once again as it meant that consumers could control the cooking method and thereby cook in a healthy manner, as well as leave out ingredients that did not cater for all tastes and preferences.

Healthy vs. Tasty

Although the goal to eat healthy is a significant contributor to goal conflict, as discussed in 6.2.3, results indicate that the requirement of the meal to be tasty was equally as

important to consumers. The goal conflict of tasty vs healthy was briefly addressed by Etkin et al. (2015). This theme was also explored in detail by Belei et al. (2012) who suggested that consumers are not only demanding food that is healthy and functional, also tasty.

Consumers from this sample were so conflicted by healthy vs. tasty goals that they often contradicted themselves when reflecting on what was more important to them. This was complicated further when considering the importance of healthy vs. tasty and the individual preferences of each member of the household.

This research found that consumers subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service in an attempt to ensure meals were both healthy and tasty largely based on the premise that home meals cooked from scratch are perceived to be both healthier and tastier than alternatives and findings supported the research conducted by Hagen et al. (2017) and Torma et al. (2018).

Managing Consumer Guilt

Consumer guilt in the context of meals was very obviously prevalent in the results of this research. Findings supported findings by Kayal et al. (2017) in that women felt more guilt related to providing the family with healthy, tasty, home cooked meals that satisfied the needs of all as well as findings by Meah and Jackson (2013) in that women were more judgemental of their own skills and bad habits used in dinner related activities. Consumer guilt was also increased by food wastage, spending time with loved ones, and ethical consciousness as suggested in literature by Jackson and Viehoff (2016).

Results of this research indicated that consumers subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service in an attempt to alleviate such consumer guilt and support the findings of Hertz and Halkier (2017).

Enjoyment and Fulfilment

Hertz and Halkier (2017) refer to pleasure derived from cooking as a potential cause of goal conflict. Olsen and Huynh (2013) supported this concept and by underscoring the perceived value consumers place on participation during the cooking process. Although it has been discussed that consumers may value the element of preparing and cooking meals related to health benefits, an interesting finding of this research indicated that some consumers view the cooking as a leisure activity. Some participants explicitly stated that they subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service so as to eliminate the mundane

and boring dinner related activities (such as planning and shopping) without sacrificing the part they enjoy, cooking.

Nudging

Once more, results of this research show consumers subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service as part of a self-nudging strategy so as to force themselves to eat at home more, and reduce choice and susceptibility to unhealthy cravings as a result of poor planning and shopping; these results were supported by Torma et al. (2018) and VanEpps et al. (2016).

6.2.5 Economic Considerations as a Factor

Economics and food budget were not presented as a strong factor in the literature reviewed and was only referenced by Haws et al. (2017) in light of the perception by consumers that eating healthy is perceived to be more expensive.

Few consumers participating in this study had a legitimate food budget that they monitored in detail and monetary cost appeared to be considered as a single factor in the overall cost vs. benefit analysis when deciding to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service. This finding is supportive by the work of Kumar and Reinartz (2016), and Sweeney and Soutar (2001), particularly relevant to how consumers placed greater value on convenience when faced with goal conflict and indicated that they were indeed willing to pay more for convenience when faced with greater goal conflict.

Although consumers expressed that monetary cost was indeed a factor to consider, their behaviour suggested that cost was more an order qualifier in their decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service as part of their cost vs. benefit analysis, and the need to feel like they are gaining perceived value was greater than just parting with money. This was evident in the consumers flexibility in their analysis when comparing the value meal-kits offered compared to a range of alternative considerations, as well as when consumers related meal-kit meals to restaurant meals. Consumers were happy to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service as long as it did not significant increase their current food costs.

Interestingly, consumers contradicted themselves when discussing the importance of monetary cost in their analysis which Torma et al. (2018) suggested is as a result of the complexity in the decision related to meals and satisfying multiple objectives. The same

consumers who indicated that cost savings was a prerequisite would later mention that cost is in fact ranked lower in their analysis to other factors, such as convenience and quality. The researcher suggests that this may be due to the fact that consumers who looking to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service are already paying a premium through their existing shopping behaviour, which was corroborated by the results outlined in 5.3.6.

The results of the research strongly indicated that consumers perceived traditional retailers, particularly the high-end retail store Woolworths, as being unacceptably expensive, especially with regard to the healthy and convenient food items. Consumers acknowledged their ability to find cheaper alternatives but agreed that it would be at a cost of quality (cheaper retail alternatives), time (additional shopping trips and time spent doing pricing analysis) or effort (in planning and shopping more efficiently). This comparison of meal-kits to high quality retailers and restaurants appeared to be the primary driver of monetary cost comparison in the context of this research.

Because consumers were already spending relatively high monetary amounts on quality, convenient meals, their motivation to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service was less based on realising economic benefit and rather in increasing the perceived net benefit gained through increased convenience, better management of goal conflict, the perception of equal or better quality ingredients and meals offered by the meal-kit delivery service, more meal variety, alleviation of consumer guilt, and decreased food wastage.

It was evident that consumers were already paying a premium for convenience and ethically positioned products, as per work done by Haynes and Podobsky (2016), and Pelozo et al. (2013), and so the decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service was more in line with increasing the perceived net benefit.

Overall, consumers appeared content to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service as long as it did not significantly increase their existing food costs but they believed there was a perceived net benefit gain in subscribing.

6.2.6 The Customer Journey / Experience as a Factor

Izogo and Jayawardhena (2018), and Lemon and Verhoef (2016) found that an overall positive customer experience helped build trust between the consumer and the brand and was a key factor in driving purchase and repurchase (loyalty).

In terms of the customer journey pre-purchase, consumers cited an overall positive image of the meal-kit delivery service as a result of branding and marketing was a significant influence in driving them trial the service.

The brand story, delivered through the meal-kit delivery services' website and advertising was, focused on functional benefits such as decreased wastage, quality ingredients, convenience and ethical consciousness, and was viewed in a positive light by consumers.

This research supported findings of Haynes and Podobsky (2016), and Pelozo et al. (2013) in that consumers are indeed showing increased ethical, social, and environment consciousness. Such consciousness plays a role in increasing consumer guilt and drives consumers to support meal-kit delivery services, who are using guilt and ethical consciousness in their marketing strategies. In an attempt to alleviate guilt, consumers are supporting more meal-kit delivery services who emphasise decreased food wastage, ethical sourcing, and job creation. The findings of this research indicate that this is a factor considered by consumers in their decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service.

Easy to Trial

Consumers choose subscription based business models as a way to increase convenience and decrease perceived costs associated with dinner related activities. As indicated by Rudolph et al. (2017), consumers see value in the almost automatic replenishment of weekly dinners, deemed an everyday consumable. Consumers in this research expressed how easy it was to initially trial the meal-kit delivery service and expressed that the very short weekly commitment, combined with simplicity of pausing or cancelling the service, drastically reduced the risk associated with trialling the meal-kit delivery service and incentivised them to try out the service.

6.2.7 Wastage as a Factor

Wastage has been discussed previously in the context of convenience, time scarcity, and economics.

Results show that consumers are looking to minimise wastage in all aspects of daily life relating to time, effort, money and food, Wastage in the context of this research was primarily viewed in monetary terms, with consumers willing to pay more in order to

decrease overall wastage, which is supportive of the work done by Lee et al. (2015), and Macdonnell and White (2015).

Wasted Money

Consumers viewed wasted food, as a result of inefficiency in executing dinner related activities, directly as wasted money and the promise of decrease wastage by meal-kit delivery service providers in their marketing was cited as a reason for consumers to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service.

Economic impact of wasted food was considered a major factor in driving the subscription to a meal-kit delivery service based on how regularly consumers discussed the concept. As with the findings throughout this research relating to consumers shopping for one, the availability to retail pack sizes contributed significantly to those consumers weekly wastage, was referenced by those consumers as a reason to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service, and has significant implications for retailers. This finding is supportive of Haynes and Podobsky (2016), and Meah and Jackson (2013) as consumers attempt to alleviate guilt associated with wasting food and money.

Wasted Time & Effort

Consumers also viewed element of dinner related activities, particularly meal planning and shopping, as wasted time and effort and they believed that this time was inefficient and could be better spent elsewhere. This was discussed in detail in 6.2.1 relating to convenience.

6.2.8 Living up to Family Values as a Factor

Literature reviewed in the context of this research was not explicit in citing the need for consumers to live up to specific family values relating to food and meal-time. A review of the literature references consumer guilt related to providing for one's family (Dahl et al., 2005; Haynes & Podobsky, 2016; Kayal et al., 2017; Meah & Jackson, 2013) and the opportunity cost of time, part of which is family time (Strazdins et al., 2016; Venn & Strazdins, 2017; Wieseke et al., 2016), but does not specifically reference goal conflict between family values and providing meals.

This research provided interesting points of view about the value and importance consumers place on food and meal-time, and the resulting effect on family relationships.

Consumers in this research appeared eager to find ways and means to make meal-time a time of the day to live up to set standards of family values, such as eating together as a family. The resulting guilt of failing to these meet such standards can be explained by the work done by Labarge and Godek (2006).

Providing for the family

The complexity of providing meals that satisfy the needs and preferences of all family members and the resulting guilt carried by the person responsible for providing meals has been discussed in this chapter as part of other factors and is supported by Casini et al., 2015, and Ducrot et al. (2015). The results of this research support findings by Hertz and Halkier (2017), and Haynes and Podobsky (2016) in that consumers are looking to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services in an attempt to alleviate consumer guilt associated with providing for others and thereby decrease perceive costs. This study found that children different meals and at different times to parents and consumers subscribed to meal-kit delivery services so as not to duplicate effort around dinner related activities as well as to decrease stress around meal preparation and cooking so that there is less stress and anxiety around meal-time, which usually coincided with getting children ready for bed, an already stressful time and more so when time is scarce (Strazdins et al., 2016; Venn & Strazdins, 2017).

Quality Time

It was clear that consumers who experience time-scarcity placed greater importance on individual prioritised leisure or family activities. The results of this research indicated a strong motivation for consumers with families to use meal-times as a way to spend quality time together. This quest to save time is covered in detail by the factor of convenience and time-scarcity and the goal to do so is a driving factor for consumers to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service in order to 1) spend more time with one's family and 2) decrease stress associated with meal-time and dinner related activities to ensure the time spent together is indeed quality time. These findings are supported by Ducrot et al. (2015) who found that improved meal-planning was positively correlated to frequency of family meals.

Education

Education of children with regards to their relationship with food, and improving children's knowledge of ingredients, tastes, and skills in the kitchen also appeared to be a

motivation for consumers to cook more meals from scratch and did not appear in literature reviewed in the context of this research. These goals were as a result of attempting to live up to the standards set during one's own upbringing, or one's partners upbringing, but nonetheless consumers were eager to achieve the goal of better educating children around food and food-related activities. This was indeed a reason for subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service for some consumers and is correlated with seeking convenience around dinner related activities.

This goal of consumers to achieve an ambition of living up to certain family values around food and meals as a motivation to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service appears to be a new insight and has implications for marketers and meal-kit delivery service providers.

6.2.9 Consumer Guilt: Ethical Consciousness as a Factor

Both the results of this research and literature reviewed (Burnett & Lunsford, 1994; Dahl et al., 2005; Kayal et al., 2017; Labarge & Godek, 2006; Pelozo et al., 2013) highlight the role increased consumer guilt plays in the perceived costs of evaluating options available for providing and eating meals. Consumer guilt has been discussed extensively in this chapter and this section specifically discusses guilt associated with ethical, social and environmental consciousness, and the how such guilt carried by consumers due to increased consumer consciousness impacts consumers' likelihood to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service.

Social and Environmental Consciousness

The increased consumer social and environmental consciousness per Pelozo et al. (2013) is supported in the results of this research in that consumers acknowledged guilt relating to inequality, unemployment, food wastage, plastic usage, resource scarcity, and carbon emissions, and expressly indicated a preference to support smaller, local business in an attempt to alleviate their own guilt. The marketing messages delivered by meal-kit delivery services communicating their strategy of more ethical and sustainable sourcing, as suggested by Han et al. (2014), appeared to land on fertile ground with these consumers and was a clear motivating factor for consumers to spend less money with larger retailers and move that budget to supporting smaller businesses who appear to have more sustainable business practices.

The goal to alleviate guilt associated with social and environmental consciousness, combined with growing mistrust of large corporates found in the results of this research,

appears to be a motivating factor for consumers to consider subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service. In this research Woolworths, specifically, was heavily criticised with consumers regularly questioning how and why the fresh produce of Woolworths stayed fresh for so long and how 'dirt on the potatoes,' and other imperfections in the fresh ingredients, supplied by meal-kit delivery services were being considered as more authentic and of higher quality, particularly relating to chemicals and sustainable sourcing.

These findings have significant implications for the way traditional retailers present their fresh produce and how their marketing messages are perceived by their customer base. The researcher suggest additional research for consumers perceive the way retailers present fresh produce.

6.2.10 Skills and Knowledge as a Factor

Meah and Jackson (2013) indicates how consumers, particularly women, are critical in their perceived ability to fully take care of dinner related activities. The results of this research fully support these findings and suggest that the feeling of inadequacy relating to meal planning, shopping, preparation and cooking was a strong motivation for consumers to subscribe to meal-kit delivery service. Even consumers who considered themselves relatively experienced in the kitchen felt that they were not adequately skilled enough to develop (plan) and shop for meals that would satisfy all need and preferences for themselves and the family.

This feeling of inadequacy relating to perceived ability increased perceived costs associated with dinner related activities and in response consumers subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service in an attempt to make up for the perceived shortfall of ability; a function of convenience.

6.2.11 Social Referral as a Factor

It was clear in the results of this study that consumers placed considerable value on the opinion and experiences of trusted members of their social circle. The reviews and referrals offered by trusted peers help consumers make the final leap of faith to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service, or at the very least trial. Most consumers in the research indicated that their decision to trial a meal-kit delivery service was directly as a result of the positive experience and enthusiastic recommendations of trusted peers. This was a point made in literature by Spiteri Cornish and Moraes (2015) and appears to be a tactic

successfully executed by innovative meal-kit delivery service start-ups to drive trial of their service.

6.2.12 Safety Concerns as a Factor

Literature reviewed is clear that safety is an important factor in the overall shopping experience and that shoppers will not shop at a shopping centre where they feel unsafe (Calvo-Porrall & Lévy-Mangín, 2018; El Hedhli et al., 2013; Kajalo & Lindblom, 2015; Rosenbaum et al., 2016), but the literature is conducted in a USA or European context and does not refer to physical safety relating to violent crime.

However the results of this research indicate that consumers consider the threat of violent crime and harassment while shopping, and seek active measure to avoid high risk areas, especially after dark. The resulting decrease in weekly shopping trips reported by subscribers of meal-kit delivery services is considered a functional benefit of the service and a reason for consumers to consider subscribing to the service. The presence of vagrants and the resulting impact of shopper intention is considered in the work by Burns et al. (2010) and supports the findings of this research.

The threat of violent crime while shopping and the resulting impact on shopper intention, however, is only supported by the work of Lutchminarain (2015), which has not been peer-reviewed, and so suggests that further academic research be conducted to understand the impact that violent crime has on consumer shopping behaviour. This research would be considerably valuable to retailers, property owners, and brands. This could also have implications for online retailers who may use the relative safety of online shopping in their marketing messages.

6.3 Discussion of Research Question 2:

What factors subsequently affect customer loyalty to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service?

Research question two specifically aimed to understand if any additional factors, or if the factors are considered differently from the context in Research Question One, when consumers decide to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service.

Findings of this research study indicate that participants found benefit through the acquisition and use of the meal-kit delivery service and suggests that participants'

reasons for remaining subscribed may differ from the ones they identified with when deciding to subscribe at first.

This section discusses all factors, those found in literature as well as new findings as a result of this research study. This section is written per factor, in light of the literature reviewed and as the factor specifically relates to answering Research Question One.

6.3.1 Convenience as a Factor

Meal Planning

Consumers recognise the benefit of convenience related to meal planning through the acquisition and use of a meal-kit delivery service from a number of aspects. Firstly consumers recognise the cognitive effort and perceived time savings by effectively outsourcing meal-planning to a meal-kit delivery service. This is realised through the limited, but adequate, choice of meal options available, combined with the ease of choosing the meals wanted for each week, which decreased both time and effort related to meal planning.

Secondly, consumers benefitted by realising convenience in meal planning, post-purchase, by keeping the recipe cards which were used as shopping lists, allowing consumers to re-create their favourite recipes from previous meals. Consumers found comfort in the fact that they were confident in their ability to re-create the recipes because they had already been successful and were sure of the outcome being satisfactory.

Additionally, consumers recognise the benefit of meal planning convenience in that the meal-kit delivery service did indeed meet most of the requirements sought by consumers, most notably in this research the requirement for variety.

These findings are aligned to the findings by Hertz and Halkier (2017) who found that consumers benefitted by convenience in that there was a decreased participation required in meal planning.

Shopping and Storing

It is clear from the findings that consumers realised a benefit of convenience through the use of a meal-kit delivery service. This was expressed by participants who stated that their shopping habits had indeed changed as a result of the meal-kit delivery service. Although all participants were still required to shop for other household and food items,

there is evidence that suggest being subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service cut down both time spent on shopping trips as well as the number of shopping trips significantly. This also allowed consumers to postpone shopping trips should they feel they were not able to get to it at the time, because the meal-kit gave them peace of mind that dinner was take care of. These findings are corroborated by findings related to the decrease of time spent shopping by consumers utilising the internet by Jiang et al. (2013) and decreased consumer participation related to shopping by Hertz and Halkier (2017).

Preparation and Cooking

Convenience related to preparing and cooking of meals was the cited the most by participants in this study and the realised benefit through the use of a meal-kit service provider indicates that it is a major factor in remaining subscribed to the service.

Other than the product delivering on promises of simple and instructive recipes, exact ingredient quantities, and relatively easy cooking techniques, consumers also perceived additional value as they became more familiar with the products themselves. Consumers cited increased familiarity with their preferred meal-kits through improved understanding of the recipes and cooking techniques suggested as valuable and resulted in further simplifying and speeding up the processes.

Such convenience related to preparing and cooking delivered by meal-kit service providers begins to question the validity of time being required for healthy meal preparation, as discussed by Strazdins et al. (2016) and Haws et al. (2017).

Shared Responsibility

A new finding in this research illuminates how consumers used meal-kits as a way to effectively outsource meal preparation and cooking, either wholly or in part based on skills of the person outsourced to. Some consumers expressed that the simple and instructive nature of the recipes and cooking techniques allowed for spouses (usually men) to be more involved in preparing dinner. Possibly unique to an emerging market and South African context, was the way consumers outsourced dinner preparation to domestic workers. The researcher proposes that this is due to the proliferation of domestic help available in South Africa.

Overall Added Convenience

Consumers were clear in how they placed value on the overall time and effort savings realised by remaining subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service. It was clear that convenience was constantly evaluated as part of the perceived benefits associated with the subscription. It was, however, noted in the findings of this research that convenience was consistently related to individuals' given context at any moment in time, supported by Jiang et al. (2013) and that sometime meal-kit delivery services were in fact deemed less convenient.

It was found that the variability and inconsistency of consumers perceived time available, wants, needs, mood, and context directly impacted their perceived value placed on the functional benefits of the meal-kit service. At times the very thing that consumers perceived as convenient, such as the subscription service and delivery, were deemed inconvenient. At times consumers felt tied in to the set number of meals and portions for that week when they in fact required less, or more, based on specific weekly context.

So evident is the quest for convenience that consumers who subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service felt that, despite the constant email reminders, the requirement to log on to a website and choose meals for the following week was tedious and became inconvenient, especially when a deadline was in place (meal-kits referenced in this research require meals to be chosen before a specific time and day). Other times the requirement for consumers to ensure that someone can take delivery of the meal-kit when being delivered was viewed as an inconvenience, expressed by one participant:

⇒ *The other cost is that you have to have it delivered. So I get it delivered to work but that means that I can work from home, my office hours are incredibly flexible because I am self-employed, so it does mean that I have to be in the office on a Monday, and that I have to go home at a particular time in order to ensure it gets into the fridge. So I do have to change my day ever so slightly, and I do have to remember to choose the recipes that are coming.*

6.3.2 Time Scarcity as a Factor

Consumers experience of time-scarcity appears to remain constant before subscribing and whilst subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service. It was clear that remaining subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service alleviated pressure on both time available, by not having to spend as much time planning and shopping for meals as before

subscribing, and the feeling of being pressed for time was alleviated when consumers knew that dinner was “*take care of*” and they had “*one less thing to think about.*”

Perceived value placed on the benefit of getting back some time was clearly considered by consumers in their decision to remain subscribed.

One of the main time-related benefits consumers raised in this research was the realisation of being able to spend less time on dinner related activities and more time on other priorities such as spending time with family and completing additional work. The emotional response by consumers to having more time available and their perceived increased happiness and wellbeing as a result of being subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service supported the argument made by Lee et al. (2015).

6.3.3 The Goal to Eat Healthy as a Factor

The results of this research did not indicate any obvious differences related to the goal to eat healthy and remaining subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service other than consumers felt that the meal-kit delivery service lived up to promises made of fresh, healthy, and ethically sourced ingredients as discussed in 6.2.3.

There was, however, the acknowledgment by consumers that their perception of quality and freshness of ingredients delivered by the meal-kit delivery service were not necessarily based on fact, and that they perceived benefit in feeling like they were consuming fewer chemicals and preservatives.

The perceived benefit related to eating more healthy meals through knowledge of ingredients, participation and control in the cooking process, supports the finding of Hertz and Halkier, (2017), and Olsen and Huynh (2013) and the perceived benefit realised by consumers resulted in alleviated consumer guilt with regards to eating healthy and is considered by consumers when deciding to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service.

6.3.4 Managing Goal Conflict as a Factor

Consumers were clear that their preferred meal-kit delivery service provider was a help in managing goal conflict and decreased associated perceived costs.

Consumers remain subscribed as they found that the convenience offered by meal-kits helped save them time and effort thereby reducing goal conflict associated with time-

scarcity. Meal-kits aided consumers to manage competing demands of not only family members, but also oneself, by providing quick, healthy, and balanced meals that satisfied tastes and preferences, thereby alleviating consumer guilt. It was clear that the sense of accomplishment through cooking from scratch made consumers feel better about themselves and was perceived as a benefit in their analysis. Consumers were very clear that if the meal-kit failed to satisfy the majority of their needs that increased goal conflict they would simply unsubscribe.

Nudging

A finding that appears unique to this research, but related to the self-nudging strategy as described Torma et al. (2018), is how some consumers realised that they were able to use their subscription to a meal-kit delivery service as a way to eliminate choice, debate, and potential conflict amongst family members around what will be served at dinner. Consumers used the commitment to the subscription as a way to force compromise and indicate to all members of the household what was available for dinner in the week and that there was no alternative.

Given that the meals met other pre-requisites, consumers faced less stress and anxiety related to having to decide what to serve for dinner whilst trying to satisfy the needs and wants of all.

Post-purchase, consumers realised the change in their shopping and eating habits. It was evident that consumers ate more vegetables, ate more meals at home that were cooked from scratch, felt less pressure around planning meals, shopped less, felt better about themselves in the way they provided for themselves and others, attained variety in meals and overcame boredom, decreased food waste, and generally considered their eating habits more healthy. These findings directly supported the work of Hertz and Halkier (2017) and are considered strong indicators of why consumers remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service.

6.3.5 Economic Considerations as a Factor

Although economic benefit, with regard to monetary costs associated with subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service, was not a considerable reason as to why consumers initially subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service, the monetary savings that consumers realised through the use of the service was indeed a factor considered when deciding to

remain subscribed. Consumers indicated a significant monetary cost saving that they attributed to their subscription to a meal-kit delivery service.

As discussed in other sections, meal-kits certainly offered an increased net benefit gain as a result of convenience and managing goal conflict, but this net benefit was further increased through actual monetary cost saving realised. Consumers cited various reasons for the monetary savings; most significant was the decrease food wastage, which consumers considered in monetary terms.

An interesting finding from this research related to the successful use of self-nudging as a strategy (Torma et al., 2018), point to the fact that consumers realised monetary savings by reducing the amount of items purchased on impulse whilst shopping in a retail outlet.

Consumers appeared to be aware of tactics used by retailers to increase shopper basket sizes and used their subscription to a meal-kit delivery service to either avoid shopping, and therefore spend less money on unnecessary purchases, or by making shopping trips more efficient due to less time spent wondering the isles searching for dinner ideas and susceptible marketing messages encouraging additional purchases. This finding has significant implications for retailers.

A significant finding of this research was again how consumers who were preparing meals for just themselves realised the greatest monetary savings through decreased food wastage. Consumers shopping for one showed significant frustration at the retailers strategy for incentivise bulk purchases which are cheaper per unit but incentivise larger basket sizes and increased wastage. Costs savings for these consumers was realised through exact meal portions delivered by the meal-kit delivery service. This too has significant implications for retailers.

The results support Kumar and Reinartz (2016) in that consumers place different levels of value on monetary costs, as with convenience, based on individual context at any point in time and their review of cost vs. benefit is ongoing. Consumers expressed that they were willing to pay the premium as long as the meal-kit delivery service continued to offer them 'value for money.' Consumers appeared to compare meal-kits with different alternatives based on context and thereby changed the perceived value offered by meal-kits constantly. This was evident in how most consumers made the decision to use a meal-kit delivery service weekly and often paused the subscription if they felt they could gain better value using an alternative for a time.

6.3.6 The Customer Journey / Experience as a Factor

As was expected, and supporting the work by Izogo and Jayawardhena (2018), Lemon and Verhoef (2016), Seiders et al. (2005), and Woo and Ramkumar (2018), positive customer experience was a strong indicator of loyalty; that is remaining subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service.

Post-purchase, consumers placed value on the personalised customer service and communication received from meal-kit providers, website and ordering experience, quality of packaging, quality of ingredients and ultimately the meals, and the meal-kit delivery service delivering on promises of ethical, social, and environmental consciousness. These findings are in line with literature reviewed and the results do not offer any significantly new insight.

The research results do offer three other significant findings. Firstly, consumers valued the social consciousness of the meal-kit delivery service and cited feeling better about themselves when supporting a small, local business who in turn create jobs. Consumers felt that by supporting the meal-kit delivery service they were helping create jobs in their community and were happier that their money contributing to the large profits of big business. The researcher proposes that this is partly due to the fact that smaller business leverage the social consciousness and job creation as part of their marketing messages better than big businesses (Antonetti & Baines, 2015), partly due to the economic conditions of South Africa at the time this research was being conducted, and partly due to how topical the discussion of inequality and unemployment was at the time of the study in South Africa. By remaining subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service, consumers alleviate their guilt, feel like they are making a difference, and align themselves to socially acceptable standards as suggested by Labarge and Godek (2006); this is viewed as a perceived benefit gain as per Haynes and Podobsky (2016), and Pelozo et al. (2013).

The second significant finding of this research, that was not highlighted in literature as a benefit of a subscription based business models, was the value consumers placed on the flexibility of the offering. Consumer perceived decreased cost and risk of subscribing to the service based on how easily they were able to pause and / or cancel the service, never to be questioned as to why. This gave the consumers peace of mind that they were not committed to an unreasonable contract period and were able to change their subscription weekly, based on their context. This, however was not limited to simply subscribing or unsubscribing but also that consumers were able to alter delivery address, and the number of portions needed. However, this may have an implication for meal-kit

service providers in that the flexibility, and not being locked in, made consumers more likely to stay and not to cancel, but rather pause their accounts.

Despite the flexibility of the offering being deemed a benefit, consumers did criticise the meal-kit delivery service offering in being too rigid at times based on the set number of portions across all meals, as well as the set number of dinners delivered per week. Some consumers required fewer, or more, nights to be catered for and often required less, or more, portions on different nights. This rigidity has implications for the meal-kit delivery service providers going forward.

Hertz and Halkier (2017) highlight the emotional benefit consumers receive through the use of a meal-kit delivery service in the context of alleviating consumer guilt, but the results of this research indicate just how much value consumers placed on the resulting sense of achievement they felt from preparing and cooking the meals. This was a strong indicator of repurchase intention by consumers in this research.

All these factors and considerations help build trust between the consumer and the meal-kit provider which increases loyalty and the intention to repurchase (remain subscribed) supporting the findings of Izogo and Jayawardhena (2018), and Lemon and Verhoef (2016).

Consumers were contradictory in their views on the packaging of the meal-kits. Although consumers placed value in how well presented and functional the packaging was, they were clearly feeling guilty for the overuse of packaging by the meal-kit delivery service providers, particularly of single-use plastic. Although some consumers acknowledged that by subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service they were indeed using less packaging than when shopping at a retail store, they still felt that there was more the meal-kit delivery service could do in reducing the amount of packaging. This was viewed by the researcher as an interesting finding and supported by literature (Hauser et al., 2013; Kayal et al., 2017; Wilson, 2015) as consumers appeared to hold meal-kit delivery service providers to a higher environmentally conscious standard. Work by Hauser et al. (2013) highlights this as a possibility when ethical consciousness and guilt are used in marketing strategies. This too has implications for meal-kit delivery service providers when looking at the sustainability of their offering.

6.3.7 Wastage as a Factor

Wasted Money

As discussed in previous sections of this chapter, consumers indicated direct monetary savings realised through decreased wastage of food, time and effort spent on dinner related activities, and ancillary purchases while shopping. Remaining subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service was helping in consumer executing a self-nudging strategy thereby saving money and as proposed by Torma et al. (2018).

Wasted Time & Effort

Interestingly, it was found that wasted time and effort with respect to dinner related activities was increased when the meal failed to satisfy the needs of the consumer as the time and effort in providing the meal had already been used. It was interesting then that consumers remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service in an attempt to de-risk the possibility of a meal not satisfying their overall needs. One possible explanation is that by using a meal-kit delivery service consumers are saving time and effort and that should the meal not satisfy their needs they were able to shift blame onto someone else, in this case the meal-kit delivery service provider.

Meal-kits significantly reduced time, effort and risk associated with dinner related activities, which drives repurchase intentions and supports the findings of (Hertz & Halkier, 2017).

Wasted Food, Social and Environmental Consciousness

Consumers realised benefit of decreased food wastage significantly alleviated feelings of guilt associated with social and environmental consciousness. Consumers felt that they were 'doing their bit' by not wasting as much food as before they subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service, or by using alternative convenient meal options, and the alleviated guilt increased perceived net benefit of the service. This finding support the literature reviewed by Jackson and Viehoff (2016) who found that convenience meals were largely unsustainable, environmentally unfriendly, and resulted in significant wastage.

6.3.8 Living up to Family Values as a Factor

Providing for the family

Results of this research related to helping consumers better provide for their family, decrease feelings of guilt associated with not feeling like they are adequately providing for their family, and the attempt to decrease perceived costs related to dinner related activities has been discussed in detail throughout this chapter and it was clear that consumers in this research remained subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service as they believed the meal-kits helped them achieve their goals, and even help them express the love and care for their family. These results support the work of Hertz and Halkier (2017) and Jackson (2018) who found that consumer are able to strategically use convenient meal options as an expression of love and care for their family.

Quality Time

This research found that, even for consumers who didn't specifically subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service expressly to spend more quality time with family, the post purchase benefit for consumers with spouses, partners, and children, was that they unintentionally spent more time eating together as a family and placed significant value on that as a benefit. Ducrot et al. (2015) found that improved meal planning increased family meals frequency, but interesting in this research was that consumers began to spend more time with family members during the cooking process too. Some consumers cited the decreased stress and anxiety around meal preparation and cooking, provided by meal-kits, as a functional benefit of meal-kits which allowed for a more relaxed experience during preparation which spouses, and even children, could now participate in.

Education

The goal of consumers to educate their children on ingredients, tastes, and kitchen related skills was achieved through the ability to include them in the preparation and cooking processes as well as how the meal-kits provided variety, and expanded the exposure to new ingredients, preparation methods, recipes, tastes and cooking methods.

Results from this research are in agreement with Jackson (2018), and Meah and Jackson (2013) with the fact that it is still considered the duty of a women or mother to prepare and provide meals for the family. The subscription to a meal-kit delivery service by consumers in this research supported the findings of Ducrot et al. (2015), and Hertz and

Halkier (2017) in that more time was spent at home cooking meals from scratch, exposed consumers to more variety in meals, tastes and ingredients, increased vegetable intake and was considered educational.

An new finding from this research highlighted the value that consumers place on meal-kits as a way to educate children to have a healthy relationship with food. This was with related to educating children around where food comes from, what food looks like in raw form, how food is cooked, and possibly unique to this research in this context, how to eat adequate portions (that is not overeat) and to not waste food.

Conflict Avoidance

The researcher also proposes that the use of meal-kits in forcing compromise and avoiding family conflict relating to meal-time decisions is a possible unique finding. This is additional evidence that consumers use meal-kits as part of self-nudging as highlighted in literature by Torma et al. (2018). Consumers used the commitment to a meal-kit delivery service as a way to eliminate unnecessary debate and conflict around what is served for dinner. Some consumers, in fact, credited their preferred meal-kit delivery service as helping them improve their relationship with their spouse. This was due to the fact that 1) they felt their spouse was now able to help out in preparing and cooking dinner and 2) the increased family time spent both cooking and eating together in a more relaxed atmosphere allowed for better relationship building.

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Savings of time and effort, realised by consumers subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service, and how this added convenience helped consumers achieve their goals of living up to their own family values, relating to providing for one's family, educating one's children, spending more quality time together, and avoiding conflict as a result of decreased stress and anxiety, is considered a strong motivating factor for consumers to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service and these perceived benefits appear to be highly valued by consumers.

By understanding benefits associated with family value goal and the value placed on them by consumers, marketers, meal-kit providers, and retailers will be better positioned to use them in their marketing messages in an attempt to get consumers to buy their product or service.

6.3.9 Consumer Guilt: Ethical Consciousness as a Factor

Social and Environmental Consciousness

Results of this research support academic literature showing that consumers remain subscribed a to meal-kit delivery service by spending less money with large retailers and favouring smaller, local businesses, who may do a better job of marketing their sustainable business practices, consumers feel less guilt and feel like they are doing their part to help (Han et al., 2014; Haynes & Podobsky, 2016; Pelozo et al., 2013).

This was particularly evident in job creation, which the researcher proposes is related to the high levels of unemployment and inequality that South Africa faced during the period of this research. Consumers valued how their preferred meal-kit delivery service communicated how their support created employment and used very personal ways to do so, such as hand written notes from the person packing their individual box. This appeared to create a relationship between consumer and employee and played on the minds of the consumer when evaluating the decision to remain subscribed. Interestingly, where consumers appeared to have a less personal relationship with employees and where they perceived bigger corporate profits, such as with larger retailers, consumers didn't even consider the impact of their lower spend with those larger businesses relating to employment.

Consumers were more critical of the promises made by a meal-kit delivery provider around environmental impact, particularly related to packaging. As discussed earlier, consumers viewed the presentation and functionality of the meal-kits packaging in a positive light as part of the product experience but it was clear that consumers still carried significant guilt associated with the overuse of plastic and other non-recyclable materials. Results support the findings of Hauser et al. (2013) and Wilson (2015) in that the marketing tactic to position a meal-kit delivery service as more ethical and sustainable allows consumers to hold the meal-kit providers to a higher ethical standard and consumers were clear that the meal-kit providers should be doing more to improve their packaging. Consumers who are more environmentally conscious also questioned the environmental impact of the carbon footprint caused by delivering large quantities of meal-kits each week and often failed to consider their own carbon footprint impact driving back and forth to shopping trips.

The strong ethical positioning of the meal-kit service providers, used as a marketing tactic to differentiate themselves from retailers, appears to contradict recommendations

made by Izogo and Jayawardhena (2018) and can lead to consumers feeling like the meal-kit providers are under-delivering on their promises. This appears to weigh heavily as a cost on consumers' minds and is a strong motivation for cancelling their meal-kit delivery service subscription.

Ironically, consumers appeared to blame the meal-kit providers for environmental impact related to packaging and questioned the meal-kit providers' commitment to help the consumer recycle. Consumers failed to mention what they themselves were doing to recycle in their own home. The researcher suggest that by blaming the providers, whether it be the meal-kit provider or retailer, the consumer alleviated one's own guilt whereas this guilt would be increased should they accept the responsibility for recycling at home. This, the researcher suggest, is an opportunity for further research and exceeds the scope of this study specifically.

6.3.10 Skills and Knowledge as a Factor

An significant finding of this research and supportive of the findings by Hertz and Halkier (2017), is how consumers, through continued use of a meal-kit delivery service, in fact improved one's skills and knowledge. It was evident that skills and knowledge were related to preparation and cooking methods, ingredients, tastes, and flavour combinations due to the consumer participation in these activities. Because there was significantly less participation involved in planning and shopping there was zero resulting skills and knowledge development in those areas and consumers appeared to be happy with that as an outcome.

Interestingly, consumers further found additional value in the development of skills and knowledge of other members of the household, being spouses, children and domestic workers, as a result of increased participation, simplicity, and detailed instructions offered by the meal-kits. As a result consumers experienced increased confidence in the kitchen and this appeared to carry through to other meals, especially on weekend when cooking was viewed more as a leisure activity.

This finding also supports the work of Olsen and Huynh (2013) stating that meal-kits demand increased consumer participation. This finding directly answers the question as to why consumers choose to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service which on the surface is in fact less convenient than other alternatives, and suggests that other factors, perhaps less obvious to the consumer, offer significant benefit that may override the primary

driver of only saving time and effort and are in fact considered in the cost vs. benefit analysis.

The overwhelming sense of achievement and development expressed by consumers support Hertz and Halkier's (2017) findings and can be considered a significant motivating factor to remain subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service. This insight and knowledge of consumer perceived value has significant implications as to how meal-kit delivery services should market benefits related to using their service.

6.3.11 Social Referral as a Factor

Although social referral was found to be a significant reason why consumers decided to initially subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service, there appeared to be enhanced social status offered to consumers by being subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service. The results of this research suggest enhanced social status through the ability of consumers to be able to participate in conversation around this new and innovative service which seemed to be woven into conversation at social events. Additional social value was gained by consumers who considered themselves as early adopters and problem solvers in that they were able to help their peers find a convenient solution to dinner related activities that helped achieve goals and objectives. This enhanced social value gained by consumers is established confirmed by Kumar and Reinartz (2016), and Sweeney and Soutar (2001) highlighting that enhanced social value is a motivating factor for consumers to remain subscribed to a meal kit delivery service, even if only in the short term.

6.4 Conclusion

It is evident that consumers consider numerous additional factors along with convenience in their decision to subscribe, remain subscribed towards a meal-kit delivery service. It is also clear that a meal-kit delivery service is simply an additional option considered by consumers in their attempt to adequately take care of home-meals whilst also achieving multiple, and conflicting, goals.

This section, however, indicates that the value placed upon each factor in the consumer decision-making process differs per individual consumers and at different times. This value is largely dependent on the consumer's specific context, need, mood, and preferences at any specific point in time. It was also clear that perceived time-scarcity

and goal conflict are main drivers of such context with the other factors almost being dependent upon the specific context of the consumer.

This Chapter has discussed all factors found as a result of this research, in light of literature, and how they are related directly to the decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Based on the literature review, insights and results presented in the previous chapters, Chapter 7 presents a conceptual model of factors that consumers consider when making the decision to subscribe, or remain subscribed, to a meal-kit delivery service. A conceptual framework presents the major factors considered by consumers in subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service.

A section will be devoted to a discussion on the implications for retailers and meal-kit delivery service providers, while recommendations will be proposed to managers in both the retail and meal-kit delivery service industry. Recommendations for future research will be considered upon which limitations of this research will be acknowledged.

7.2 The Resulting Framework

7.2.1 Developing the Framework

This research expressly aimed to develop a conceptual framework of factors considered by consumers in their decision-making process relating to subscribing, or remaining subscribed, to a meal-kit delivery service.

The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 5 and has been developed through the careful consideration of factors presented in this study, combined with academic literature on the themes (factors). The researcher has considered the themes, categories, and codes developed during the qualitative data analyses. The factors are considered exhaustive and relevant to the context of this research, being reflective of the views of consumers of meal-kit delivery services in South Africa.

Figure 5 presents a single framework of factors, or reasons, for both initial subscription intent as well as loyalty. All factors are considered in both instances but the manner in which they are considered varies slightly. Factors found to be considered only related to the intent to repurchase (remain subscribed) are presented in a grey colour block in the framework.

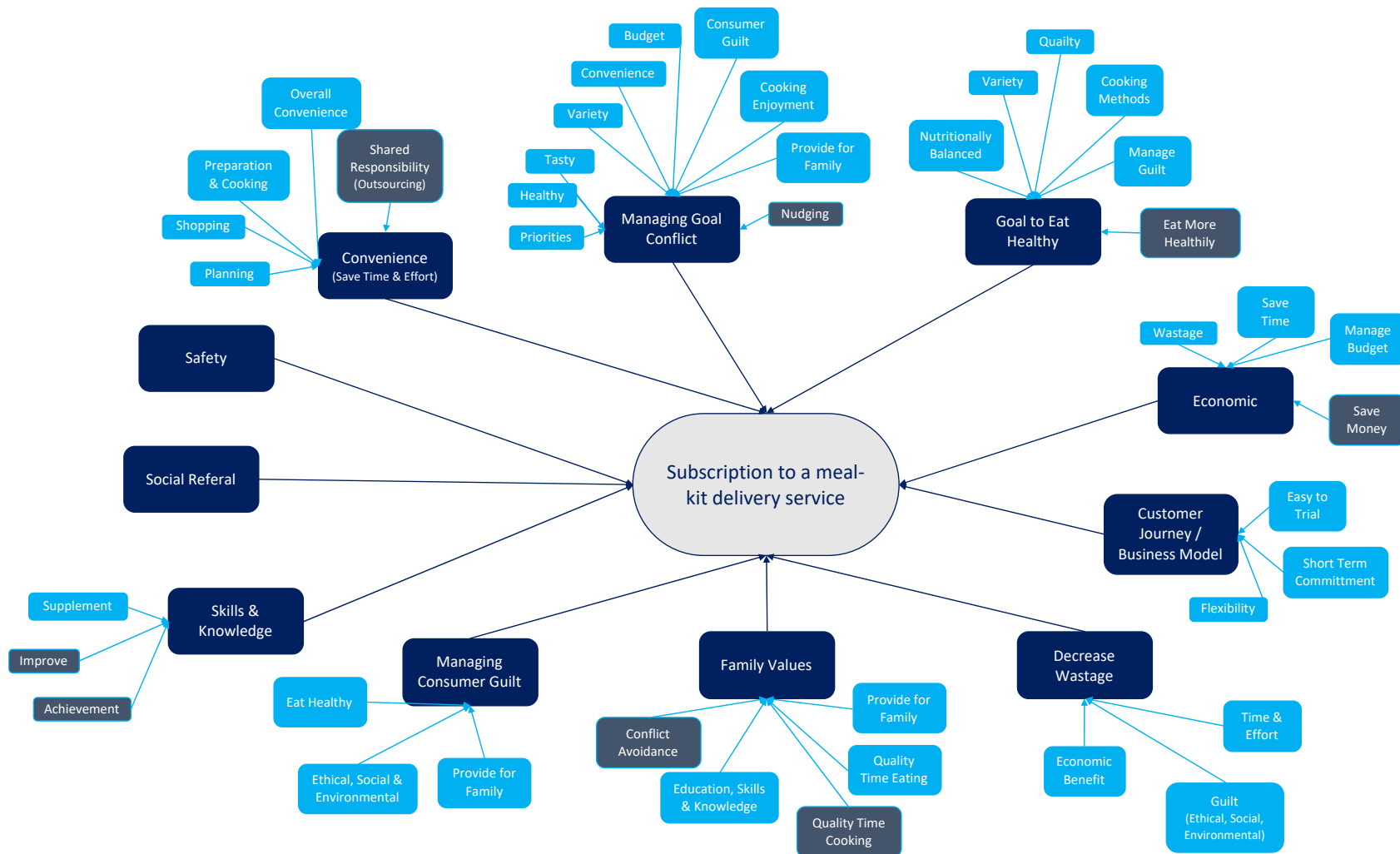


Figure 5: A Contextual Framework of the Factors Considered by Consumers When Subscribing to Meal-kit Delivery Service

7.3 Principle Findings

It is clear from the results of this research that no single factor is considered independently. Different factors are considered by consumers in various ways and are often linked, related, dependent, and interdependent. Furthermore, value placed on each factor is weighted differently for each individual consumer based on the specific context they find themselves in at any given point in time. This supports the notion that the consumer decision to subscribe, or remain subscribed, to a meal-kit delivery service is both complex and dynamic (Jabs & Devine, 2006; Torma et al., 2018).

One example of the complexity consumers face in their decision-making is how interrelated the factors of managing goal conflict, decreasing wastage, and consumer guilt are and it can be argued that consumers attempt to decrease guilt and wastage through convenience. This is then further complicated when considering additional goals and complexity such as budget, health, taste, ethical sourcing, and negative perceptions of convenience food, to name only a few.

The complexity of the decision-making process is primarily based on the consumers' needs, wants, mood, goals, and objectives at any point in time and consumers use heuristics, or mental shortcuts, in evaluating the overall costs and benefits of the service as a whole. This provides validity to the research as the finding is directly supported by the work of Kumar and Reinartz (2016) relating to the overall perceived value scale, referenced in Chapter 1, and the consumers need to increase the perceived net benefit in order to make a purchase decision.

The results and finding of this research support all possible factors considered in literature but also provides additional insight into additional factors that consumers may consider.

It is evident that time-scarcity and goal conflict are the primary drivers of consumers' quest for convenience and that many factors can be essentially distilled to consumers' goal to save time and effort. However, this research found that consumers consider additional goals outside of just health, taste, and convenience during dinner-related activities, which is exactly what the research set out to achieve.

Consumers considered economic implications of subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service, and from various positions, such as nudging oneself to spend less money on items deemed unnecessary or not related to achieving a goal. It is noteworthy how

imperative the overall customer journey was to consumers. Of equal importance was the value that customers placed on social referral. The management of consumer guilt relating to wastage, providing for one's family, eating more healthy, supporting local business, and social and environmental concerns played a large part in the decision making process. An interesting finding of this research was the high value that was placed on achieving objectives relating to family values, especially relating to food and dinner. Consumers with families place a great deal of value on the time spent with loved ones and found that meal-kits allowed them to do so in ways that they had not considered before. Finally, it was noteworthy how the threat to one's physical safety impacts the consumers' shopping behaviour.

7.3.1 Major Findings

Five major findings of this research can be highlighted as a result of this research:

1. Meal-kits provided consumers a convenient way to achieve goals. One manner in which consumers increased their convenience that is very contextual is using the meal-kit to share the responsibility of dinner-related activities. The simplicity and functional features of the meal-kits, particularly the simple recipes and pre-portioned ingredients allowed consumers to effectively outsource all, or parts, of meal preparation to spouses and domestic workers. The meal-kits, in their form, decreased the skills and knowledge required to plan and prepare meals and even enhanced them for the spouses and domestic workers, further increasing perceived value.
2. A compelling finding of this research relating to convenience, wastage, associate guilt, and economic benefit was that meal-kits were highly valued by consumers who cook for one. This was driven directly by the sizes of packs of ingredients available in retail stores. The exact ingredient quantities delivered by meal-kits per meal proved to be a highly valued element of the product for all, but particularly for those cooking for just one or two people.
3. Consumers are aware of the stress and anxiety associated with dinner-related activities which appeared to often cause friction within the family unit. The use of meal-kits to avoid or decrease conflict associated with dinner related activities is thought to be a nudging tactic and a unique finding of this research.

4. A key question during this research related to "would consumers would in their strong quest for convenience, consider a less convenient meal option where they are required to cook?" This was answered directly in the results of this research in two ways. 1) The overall net perceived benefit was increased through increased convenience in activities not related to cooking. Meal-kits offered increased convenience related to planning, shopping, preparation, and even some increased convenience in cooking that makes up for the decreased convenience caused by the need to still cook the meal. 2) Other factors when considered in conjunction with convenience created a greater net perceived value benefit overall and consumers in fact value the requirement to cook the meal.
5. Finally, an insight worthy of noting in the context of South Africa, is that consumers may use a meal-kit delivery service in an attempt to decrease time and frequency of shopping trips in order to decrease the risk of being a victim of violent crime or harassment.

7.4 Recommendations to Management

Implications for management of meal-kit delivery service providers, marketers and retailers were highlighted in Chapter 6 and this section discusses makes relevant recommendations to management in light of these implications.

7.4.1 Recommendations to Meal-kit Delivery Service Providers' Management

Meal-kit delivery services appear to drive the benefit of convenience as their main marketing message and therefore target a very specific audience of time-scare consumers. The findings of this research clearly show that convenience, although crucial to this target audience, is only a single factor in the consumers' decision making and that there are many other factors and associated benefits to subscribing to a meal-kit delivery service. Marketers who best understand which specific factor, or combination of factors, are most important to individual consumers and at specific times of the day, week, month, or year will best be able to deliver effective marketing messages that drive purchase.

Additionally, the understanding of factors other than convenience will allow meal-kit delivery services to target a much larger target market to 1) reduce risk associated with

targeting a niche audience and 2) deliver increased growth through improved customer acquisition.

Interestingly, many participants were very critical of their preferred meal kit delivery service and offered criticism openly. One criticism of meal kit delivery services shared by participants was how the rigidity of the business model in itself became a burden to consumers based on specific context at certain times. These included the fact that a meal had to be chosen a week before, the fact that only 3 days in the week were catered for, that delivery was only available on certain days (generally a Monday), and that all meals for the week were for a set number of portions (people). These were viewed as limitations and inconvenient to the consumers and a recommendation to meal-kit delivery service providers is to explore the possibility of on-demand delivery of meal-kits. This will allow additional flexibility for consumers in on-demand or ad-hoc meal catering and combat the entry of retailers into the segment.

The findings of this research indicated a strong preference of consumers to support ethically positioned products and services. This is also a key message used in marketing meal-kit delivery services. In support of recommendations by Izogo and Jayawardhena (2018) it is critical that meal-kit service providers ensure they deliver on their ethically positioned promises relating to job creation, sourcing, quality, and environmental impact. Most critically, in this research, meal-kit providers must ensure they are aware of consumer guilt associated with the use of plastic and non-recyclable materials in their packaging and employ a strategy that will alleviate consumer guilt.

A contextual finding of how meal-kits are utilised as a way to outsource meal preparation to domestic workers presented an opportunity for meal-kit delivery services to secure their place in a consumer's home. By offering more simple and detailed recipe delivery, possibly through the use of online video and domestic cooking lessons, meal-kit service providers can extend their brand trust to influencers of the consumer decision-making such as the domestic workers themselves.

It was also evident that meal-kit delivery services did not adequately make provision for the tastes and preferences of young children. Meal-kit service providers need to take note of the duplicated effort in providing two subsets of consumers in a single household and provide additional meals or ingredients that cater to younger members of the household.

It was also apparent that meal-kits are only a part of the total consideration set of meal-options used by consumers (Figure 4) and in order to ensure sustained growth must consider catering for more than just dinner. Meal-kit providers must take advantage of their acceptance by consumers and begin to offer additional options for consumers such as catering for breakfasts, lunches, school lunches, weekend, and special occasion meals.

7.4.2 Recommendations to Retailers' Management

Money spent on meal-kit delivery services was traditionally spent in retail stores. Traditional business models employed by retailers to attract consumers into stores and then to maximise the size of their baskets is therefore under threat. Retailers should raise their awareness of how consumers are using their subscription to a meal-kit delivery service as a way to decrease frequency of shopping trips, and time spent in retail stores, and the possible impact on sales. Retailers should also be aware of how meal-kits are only an additional option considered by consumers and that all consumers are still required to shop at a retail outlet. Retailers must explore the options of creating a meal-kit and also offering an on demand meal-kit delivery service. This is easily achieved through a partnership with on demand food delivery partners such as UberEats.

Retailers must also be conscious of how onerous meal planning is and how important variety is to consumers. Since many consumers treat meal planning and shopping as simultaneous activities there is an opportunity for retailers to better help consumers plan meals whilst shopping. A section of the retail store can be dedicated to offering themed menu options with all the fresh ingredients already laid out which can be purchased as part of a 'bundled offering' and includes a simple and instructive recipe card. This helps consumers manage multiple goals found to be important in this research such as health, variety, budget, wastage, and managing consumer guilt.

Retailers should become acquainted with a growing trend to support smaller, local, more ethically positioned businesses and the growing mistrust of large retailers. By knowing this retailers can deliver marketing messages educating consumers on their specific strategies relating to job creation, social and environmental impact, economic impact in their supply chain, and ethical business practices.

Retailers currently incentivise consumers to buy larger packs of produce and ingredients by offering economies of scale. Consumers are aware of this perceived increased cost of shopping at retailers due to increased guilt and economic impact related to food

wastage. Retailers need to deliver options more suited to consumers' needs in order to decrease overall wastage for the consumer.

Finally, retailers need to be attentive to consumers' perceived feelings of safety while shopping, as well as how this perception may impact their overall shopping experience and ultimately decision.

7.4.3 Conclusion of Recommendations to Managers

Overall these implications and recommendations have relevance to all marketers and managers who would like to better understand the consumer decision-making process around dinner related activities and convenience food.

An improved understanding of the complexity of the decision-making process will support marketers and managers to better position the functional benefits of their product or service to the right consumers, at the right time. Ultimately a clear message and perceived benefit which are well understood will best drive the consumer decision to purchase.

7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The results and findings of this research indicate vast complexity in the consumer decision-making process relating to home meals and associated dinner related activities and how these implicate and impact industry stakeholders. It is therefore imperative that additional research is done in the area of meal-kit delivery services and the researcher makes the following recommendations for future research:

- Since this research was exploratory it is important that a quantitative study to test the framework developed is conducted. This quantitative study may also include a rating of relevant strengths associated with each factor to determine significance.
- This research only explored what factors consumers consider in their decision to subscribe to a meal kit-delivery service, but fails to survey consumers who are aware of meal-kit services, but have not yet subscribed. These new insights will be of immense value to meal-kit delivery service providers.
- A surprising theme considered in this study that warrants further is how consumers perceived the threat of crime, most importantly violent crime, and how it impacts their shopping behaviour and ultimately foot traffic and sales at

physical retail outlets or shopping centres. These insights will be most valuable to both physical and online retailers.

- Results of this research also indicate vast differences in consumers' preferences between week-day and weekend meal choices. It appears, in general, that although time scarcity decreases over weekends so does the goal to eat healthy. Research attempting to understand the differences between weekday and weekend meal choices will best allow service and product providers to position different products that meet the individual needs of consumers at different times of the week.
- Finally, it was interesting to note how consumers held the meal-kit delivery service be more accountable to ethical positioning specifically related to the use of plastic and other non-recyclable packaging. Further research could establish whether this is due to the fact that they use ethical positioning as a primary marketing tactic or if it is due to the consumers feeling that a smaller business, such as a meal-kit delivery service provider, is more approachable and that the consumers feels that they have a stronger share of voice with a smaller business.

7.6 Research Limitations

This research was limited to consumers of meal-kit delivery services in Gauteng, South Africa. As discussed throughout this research the impact of consumer context is a contributing factor of consumer decision-making and the specific context of consumers who live in the Northern Suburbs of Johannesburg may be a limitation of the generalisability of the findings.

The sample of this research was drawn from the database of a single meal-kit delivery service. This, combined with the relatively short existence of meal-kits available in South Africa, may be a limitation in that consumers are still experimenting with this relatively new and perhaps novel concept. The researcher closely followed the international meal-kit delivery service industry, which is a few years ahead of the South African market, and has noted the demise of USA based meal-kit delivery service providers as a result of retailers fighting back and meal-kit providers failing to pivot their business model and strategy to better align with customer wants and needs (Doering, 2018; The Motley Fool, 2018). The researcher therefore implies that the full customer lifecycle of meal-kit delivery services in South Africa is therefore not yet complete and consumers may still find a novel appeal to meal-kit delivery services in the South African context.

Although reflective of the population, the sample of this research was largely Caucasian and is not reflective of a much larger possible consumer based who may hold very different values based on specific context. The cultural difference of consumers was highlighted in 2.2.8.5 by the noted difference of how consumer guilt is experienced between individualist and collectivist consumers.

The very notion of meal-kit delivery services being novel and new supports the possibility of social desirability bias presented in consumer responses. The researcher proposes that consumers may be subscribed to a meal-kit delivery service largely due to the benefit of social status and the ability to contribute to conversation. With this in mind participants may have responded in a manner they thought the researcher would have liked them to respond (Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2012).

Another limitation, inherent in qualitative research, is how the specific time, location, context and mood of the participant may have effected response (Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2012). This would be particularly relevant if the interviewer was pressed for time during the interview or may have had more pressing issues on their mind.

The researcher in this study aimed to be clear and concise but the subjective nature and complexity of consumer decision-making, particularly in light of elaborate consumer goal conflict relating to home meals, may be a limiting factor.

7.7 Conclusion

Limited academic research exists that is directly related to meal-kit delivery services and why the type of service might be successful; the only journal article directly related to meal-kit delivery services was by Hertz and Halkier in 2017, published during the period this research was being conducted. The researcher suggests that this is primarily due to how new the concept of meal-kit delivery service is. Literature reviewed on the consumer decision-making process associated with dinner-related activities and the consumers' options available to take care of home-meals presented a number of possible factors that might be considered by consumers but was not exhaustive and not specific to meal-kit delivery services. This research aimed to close the gap in academic literature available by trying to understand more about the consumers decision-making process directly related to meal-kit delivery services.

This study contributes to literature by providing a more exhaustive list of factors that consumers consider when faced with the decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery

service. The resulting framework contributes both theoretically and practically in that it was developed from the concepts emergent from the data itself, and should now be empirically tested. From a managerial point of view, meal-kit delivery services seem to be a recent trend by niche start-ups intent on disrupting traditional retail and food industries and their commercial growth cannot be ignored. Research in this field should be continued to best understand consumers needs and preferences related to convenient home meal options and what the next possible disruption will be to both meal-kit service providers and retailers alike.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Invitation to Participate in Research

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Research: Factors that influence consumer purchase decisions to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services

Researcher: Tyron Sharnock, MBA Candidate, Gordon Institute of Business Science

Dear XXX,

As discussed over the phone / email earlier I am a second year MBA student at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) and I am in the process of completing my research project as a compulsory component to my degree.

My research is exploratory and is aiming to understand factors considered by consumers when making the decision to subscribe to a Meal-kit Delivery Service. You, as a subscriber to such a service, are in a position to give me valuable insight toward answering my research question.

Due to the nature and objectives of my research I will need to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews that will last 45 minutes to an hour. I plan on conducting my interviews during the months of June and July. I am flexible to suit your schedule and so will fit in with you with regards to venue, date and time. The interview itself will be confidential and your identity will remain confidential throughout the process.

The title of the research is: Factors that influence consumer purchase decisions to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services.

The research questions I am aiming to answer during the project are:

1. What are the factors that consumers consider when deciding to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services?
2. How, and why, do the factors identified impact the consumer decision to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services?

3. How do these factors interact with each to drive the decision to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services?

Please would you confirm your agreement to take part in my research by responding to this email in writing with a date, time and venue that suits you.

Thank you in advance,

Tyron Sharnock

tyron@sharnock.com

MBA Candidate, Gordon Institute of Business Science

Appendix 2: Interview Consent Form

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Title of Research: Factors that influence consumer purchase decisions to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services

Researcher: Tyron Sharnock, MBA Candidate, Gordon Institute of Business Science

I am conducting research on factors that influence consumer purchase decisions relating to meal-kit delivery services. As a subscriber to such a service you are in a position to give me valuable insight into your individual context and reasons as to why you choose to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service. Data will be collected through a semi-structured, in-depth interview, expected to last approximately an hour, and with your permission will be recorded for analysis. Your participation is voluntary, you can withdraw at any time without penalty, and your identity will remain confidential throughout the process. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Tyron Sharnock

Mignon Reyneke

tyron@sharnock.com

reynekem@gibs.co.za

082 929 4998

082 474 0330

Please indicate your consent by signing this consent form:

Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Researcher's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Title of Research: Factors that influence consumer purchase decisions to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services

Researcher: Tyron Sharnock, MBA Candidate, Gordon Institute of Business Science

Participant Name: _____

Date: _____

Male / Female: _____

Start Time: _____

Race: _____

End Time: _____

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. Your time and effort is highly appreciated.

The title of this research is: **Factors that influence consumer purchase decisions to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services.**

The key research questions are:

1. What are the factors that consumers consider when deciding to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services?
2. How, and why, do the factors identified impact the consumer decision to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services?
3. How do these factors interact with each to drive the decision to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services?

The nature of this research and interview is exploratory and encourages open conversation so you are encouraged to speak openly and honestly. You can be confident that all information shared will be kept confidential and you will remain anonymous.

Introductory Questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Are you the decision maker with regards to home meals?
3. Are you married?
4. How many dependents live in your household?

5. What meal delivery kit services have you subscribed to within the past 6 months?
6. Do you feel like you have enough capacity to dedicate to home meals?

Further Questions:

1. Why do you feel you're unable to fully take care of home meals? (Time, mental availability, fatigue, ideas)
2. How do you feel about not being able to fully take care of home meals (Guilt?)
3. Why do you subscribe to the meal-kit delivery service(s)?
4. Can you elaborate on reason xxx (Convenience, time saving, meal planning, recipe ideas, wastage, environmental consciousness, etc.) and explain why it is important?
5. Please rank, in order of importance, the reasons given for subscribing to meal-kit delivery service X,
6. What are the most important elements for you regarding home meals?
7. Can you elaborate on element xxx (health, time spent as a family eating, cooking is leisure, etc.) and explain why it is important or not?
8. Please rank, in order of importance, the elements of home meals you consider important
9. What non-monetary benefits do you gain from subscribing to meal-kit delivery services?
10. Can you elaborate on benefit xxx
11. What non-monetary costs do you incur in subscribing to meal-kit delivery services?
12. Can you elaborate on cost xxx
13. Do you consider the factors (given) individually, in combination, or as a whole?
14. What trade-offs do you consider when evaluating the decision to subscribe to a meal-kit delivery service?

Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Letter of Approval



14 June 2018

Sharnock Tyron

Dear Tyron

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee

Appendix 5: Copyright Declaration Form

COPYRIGHT DECLARATION

Student details			
Surname:	Sharnock	Initials:	T R
Student number:	17367302		
Email:	tyron@sharnock.com / 17367302@mygibs.co.za		
Phone:	0829294998		
Qualification details			
Degree:	MBA	Year completed:	2018
Title of research	Factors that influence consumer purchase decisions to subscribe to meal-kit delivery services		
Supervisor:	Mignon Reyneke		
Supervisor email:	reynekem@gibs.co.za / mignon.reyneke@gmail.com		
Access			
Please select			
A.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	My research is not confidential and may be made available in the GIBS Information Centre and on UPSpace.		
I give permission to display my email address on the UPSpace website			
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
B.			
<input type="checkbox"/>	My research is confidential and may NOT be made available in the GIBS Information Centre nor on UPSpace.		
Please indicate embargo period requested			
Two years	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please attach a letter of motivation to substantiate your request. Without a letter embargo will not be granted.	
Permanent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permission from the Vice-Principal: Research and Postgraduate Studies at UP is required for permanent embargo. Please attach a copy permission letter. Without a letter permanent embargo will not be granted.	
Copyright declaration			
I hereby declare that I have not used unethical research practices nor gained material dishonesty in this electronic version of my research submitted. Where appropriate, written permission statement(s) were obtained from the owner(s) of third-party copyrighted matter included in my research, allowing distribution as specified below.			
I hereby assign, transfer and make over to the University of Pretoria my rights of copyright in the submitted work to the extent that it has not already been affected in terms of the contract I entered into at registration. I understand that all rights with regard to the intellectual property of my research, vest in the University who has the right to reproduce, distribute and/or publish the work in any manner it may deem fit.			
Signature:	<i>T R Sharnock</i>		Date: 01 November 2018
Supervisor signature:	<i>M Reyneke</i>		Date: 1 November 2018

Appendix 6: uCook Letter Granting Access to Customer Database

U C O O K

— COOKING MADE EASY

Company Reg # 2013/143507/07

Unit 12, The Meat Factory, 372 Voortrekker Road, Maitland, 7405

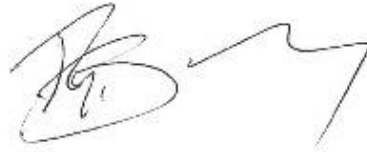
To Whom It May Concern:

This letter serves as permission for Tyron Sharnock to have access to the UCOOK customer database for purposes of research during his MBA.

All data is strictly confidential and may not be distributed. Customer data and collection of information per customer must fully comply with relevant privacy laws and guidelines.

Signed

Ryan Brouwer
COO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RB', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Appendix 7: Themes, Categories and Codes

Table 6: Ranking of themes

Theme	Times Coded	Ranking
01 BUSINESS MODEL	33	12
02 CONSUMER GUILT	35	11
03 CONVENIENCE	499	1
04 CUSTOMER JOURNEY	116	6
05 ECONOMIC	132	4
06 FAMILY VALUES	58	9
07 GOAL TO EAT HEALTHY	112	7
08 MANAGE GOAL CONFLICT	206	2
09 MISTRUST	26	13
10 POST PURCHASE BENEFITS	160	3
11 SAFETY	7	15
12 SKILLS	44	10
13 SOCIAL REFERRAL	23	14
14 TIME SCARCITY	121	5
15 WASTAGE	72	8

Table 7: Codebook Key

Theme	
Category	
Code	

Table 8: Themes, Categories and Codes (exported from Atlas.ti)

	P 1	P 2	P 3	P 4	P 5	P 6	P 7	P 8	P 9	P 10	P 11	P 12	P 13	P 14	TOTA L
01 BUSINESS MODEL	3	1	0	0	6	4	2	0	7	2	2	4	2	0	33
01.1 Innovative	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	4
01.1.1 Innovative Business Model	1				1				1	1					4
01.2 Subscription	2	1	0	0	5	4	2	0	6	1	2	4	2	0	29
01.2.1 Easy to trial		1			3	1	1		3		2				11
01.2.2 No long term commitment / Pause / Cancel	2				2	3			2	1		3	2		15
01.2.3 Payment options									1						1
01.2.4 Flexible to changing weekly							1					1			2
02 CONSUMER GUILT	1	1 4	0	4	0	0	5	2	2	1	0	3	1	3	36
02.1 Environmental Consciousness	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	11
02.1.1 Food wastage															0
02.1.2 Resource scarcity		1							2						3
02.1.3 Use less plastic	1	4												2	7
02.1.4 Sustainability										1					1
02.2 Social Consciousness	0	9	0	4	0	0	5	2	0	0	0	3	1	1	25
02.2.1 Food wastage		1		3											4
02.2.2 Job creation		4					1								5
02.2.3 Ethical / local sourcing		4		1			4	2				3	1	1	16
03 CONVENIENCE	6 5	3 8	3 2	2 0	2 8	3 6	2 8	4 2	4 7	2 8	3 7	5 1	2 8	1 9	499
03.1 Added convenience	5	7	6	2	0	5	2	6	4	6	5	9	7	2	66

03.1.1 Added convenience	5	7	5	2		5	2	6	4	6	5	9	7	2	65
03.1.2 Special day kits			1												1
03.2 Cleaning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	6
03.2.1 Cleaning									1				5		6
03.3 Eating	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
03.3.1 Eating															0
03.4 Planning	2	1	9	9	6	1	9	7	1	3	1	7	8	3	130
03.4.1 Planning	1	7	4	3	5	6	6	4	5		6	5	4	2	70
03.4.2 Provides me choice and variety	1	3	5	6	1	4	3	3	5	3	5	2	4	1	60
03.5 Preparation	1	1	1	8	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	144
03.5.1 Ability to outsource	2							8		1					11
03.5.2 Exact ingredient quantities	2	2	4	1	1	2		2	2		4	8	1	1	30
03.5.3 Flexible recipes	5	2			1	1			4		3	3			19
03.5.4 Instructive recipes	2	3	3		4	5	1	1	3		2	1			25
03.5.5 Simple recipes	1		3	2	1	2			3			1			13
03.5.6 Limited time willing to cook	5	1	2	1	2	2		1			2				16
03.5.7 Cooking		6	2	4	6	1	1	4			3			1	28
03.5.8 Cooking for one							1							1	2
03.6 Shared responsibility	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
03.6.1 Shared responsibility		1						1		1					3
03.7 Shopping	1	5	6	3	1	7	8	1	7	1	1	6	8	3	106

03.7.1 Shopping	1	6	2	1	5	3	9	6	6	7	4	1	3	2	66
03.7.2 Delivery	4		1		2	4		1	5	2	2	6			27
03.7.3 Shopping for one						1	5							4	10
03.7.4 Sourcing ingredients									1	1		1			3
03.8 Storing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	3	0	0	7
03.8.1 Exact ingredient quantities (measured)									3		1	3			7
03.9 Psychological Cost	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	7	0	1	4	5	37
03.9.1 Alleviated stress / anxiety								5	5	7		1	4	5	37
04 CUSTOMER JOURNEY	8	1	5	2	1	3	1	5	2	1	6	1	1	3	116
04.1 Brand Story	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
04.1.1 Environmental Consciousness									1						1
04.1.2 Social Consciousness		3						1							4
04.2 Brand Trust	4	4	0	0	4	2	2	2	8	0	4	0	9	1	40
04.2.1 Positive customer experience	4	4			4	2	2	2	8		4		7	1	38
04.2.3 Brand Personality													2		2
04.3 Customer service	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	5	1	0	0	4	0	15
04.3.1 Customer Communication		1	1			1	1		1	1			2		8
04.3.2 Customer complaint resolution					1				4				2		7
04.4 Website	1	1	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	12
04.4.1 Branding	1	1			2		3				1			1	9
04.4.2 Functionality				1							1			1	3
04.5 Packaging	2	2	1	0	2	0	2	0	4	0	0	1	1	0	15

04.5.1 Recipe Cards	1				1						1				3
04.5.2 Stays Cold			1				1	2							4
04.5.3 Packaging	1	2			1	1	2					1			8
04.6 Quality	1	1	3	1	3	0	1	2	6	0	0	0	2	0	29
04.6.1 Ingredients quality		1	3	1	1		4	2	4						16
04.6.2 Meal Quality	1				1		4		1				2		9
04.6.3 Recipes					1		2		1						4
05 ECONOMIC	1	9	9	9	5	1	7	7	1	8	9	1	5	1	132
05.1 Cost effective	5	0	3	3	0	4	4	1	8	2	4	7	1	5	47
05.1.1 Like for like ingredients	4						3	1	4		2	1			15
05.1.2 Quality / Perceived value	1		3	1		1	1		2	1	2	6	1	3	22
05.1.3 Availability of package sizes				2		3			1	1				2	9
05.1.4 Seasonality of ingredients									1						1
05.2 Save monetary costs	6	5	2	5	4	7	2	5	1	5	0	0	3	4	49
05.2.1 Ancillary Purchases	1	2		2		2	2	2		2				1	14
05.2.2 Decreased Grocery Bill	4	2		2		2		2	1	3			3	2	21
05.2.3 Discount incentives					4										4
05.2.4 Cheaper than alternatives	1	1	2	1		3		1						1	10
05.3 Premium	0	0	4	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	5	5	1	5	25
05.3.1 Willing to pay for for convenience			2			1		1	1		2	3		3	13
05.3.2 Willing to pay for for quality			1												1
05.3.3 Limit to what I'm willing to pay			1				1		1		3	2	1	2	11
05.4 Budget	0	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	2	11

05.4.1 Ancillary Purchases	1														1
05.4.2 Healthy is expensive				1										1	2
05.4.3 Helps me stick to my budget	3		1						1	1		1		1	8
06 FAMILY VALUES	9	5	5	3	5	2	0	9	5	4	4	5	1	1	58
06.1 Aspire to live up to Family Values	5	2	4	2	3	1	0	4	5	3	4	3	1	1	38
06.1.1 Quality family time cooking	2	1			3			3					1	1	11
06.1.2 Quality family time eating	2		2	1					5	2	3	3			18
06.1.3 Relationship with food						1				1					2
06.1.4 Providing for family	1		2	1							1				5
06.1.5 Being a family		1						1							2
06.2 Education	4	1	0	1	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	13
06.2.1 Cooking / Preparation skills	4				1	1		1							7
06.2.2 Healthy eating										1		1			2
06.2.3 Ingredients		1		1	1			1							4
06.3 Conflict	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	7
06.3.1 Conflict avoidance		2	1					3				1			7
07 GOAL TO EAT HEALTHY	3	1	3	1	1	2	7	1	0	1	1	9	2	6	112
07.1 Knowledge of ingredients	0	8	0	3	2	0	1	6	0	3	3	6	0	3	35
07.1.1 Cooking from scratch is healthier		1			1		1	1		1	2	1		2	10
07.1.2 Raw form					1			2							3
07.1.3 Knowing what ingredients are in the meal		4		3				3		2		4		1	17
07.1.4 Flexible Recipes		3									1	1			5
07.2 Market confusion	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

07.2.1 Choice Fatigue						2									2
07.2.2 Education	1														1
07.2.3 Trust															0
07.3 Quality	1	0	2	5	4	0	3	4	0	4	0	2	1	3	29
07.3.1 Ingredients	1		2	5	3		3	4		4		2	1	3	28
07.3.2 Meals					1										1
07.4 Wellness Trends	1	7	1	8	2	2	3	6	0	6	7	1	1	0	45
07.4.1 Diet Specific	1	3		3	1	1	1	1			1		1		13
07.4.2 Nutritional variety			1	2	1		2	2		1	3				12
07.4.3 Portion Control		3		2		1				2	2				10
07.4.4 Providing for family		1		1				3		3	1	1			10
08 MANAGE GOAL CONFLICT	1	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	206
	6	8	2	1		4	8	4	5	5	3	4	0	2	
08.1 Complex & Competing Family Demands	9	5	0	3	1	1	4	5	3	5	4	4	2	2	48
08.1.1 Changing family contexts	1									1		1		1	4
08.1.2 Diet specific	1	4		1			1								7
08.1.3 Requirement for variety	7				1	1	3	4	1	4	2	2	2	1	28
08.1.4 Taste preferences		1		2				1	2		2	1			9
08.2 Consumer Guilt	3	3	2	1	0	3	1	7	0	3	2	9	0	0	34
08.2.1 Environmental Consciousness	1														1
08.2.2 Provide for family	2	3	2	1			1	6		3	2	9			29
08.2.3 Social Consciousness						1		1							2
08.2.4 Feeling of inadequacy						2									2
08.3 Healthy vs Tasty	3	6	3	4	3	8	9	1	1	2	3	2	7	5	71

08.3.1 Health Conscious	1	2	2	2	1	2	4		3	1		1	2	1	22
08.3.2 Healthy & tasty						4	4			1	2	2	1		14
08.3.3 Meets taste requirements	1			1	2	1			5			2	2	2	16
08.3.4 Meals cooked from scratch are healthier		4	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		2		1	14
08.3.5 Meals cooked from scratch are tastier	1								3					1	5
08.4 Time Scarcity	0	4	2	3	0	2	0	0	4	0	2	3	1	5	26
08.4.1 Time Scarcity		4	2	3		2			4		2	3	1	5	26
08.5 Enjoyment	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	6	3	2	1	1	0	19
08.5.1 Cooking			5				1		6	2		1			15
08.5.2 Eating										1	2		1		4
08.6 Nudging	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	8
08.6.1 It forces me to eat healthy							2			1	1		1		5
08.6.2 Forces me to eat at home	1														1
08.6.3 Eliminates choice and debate							1	1							2
09 MISTRUST	0	2	1	1	2	0	4	6	0	1	1	1	7	0	26
09.1 Corporates	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	7	0	13
09.1.1 Corporates		1					2	1					2		6
09.1.2 Supporting the smaller guys							2						5		7
09.2 Food manufacturers	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	5	0	1	0	1	0	0	11
09.2.1 Ethical sourcing															0
09.2.2 Food manufacturers		1	1	1	1			5		1		1			11
09.3 Marketers	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
09.3.1 Complex messages															0

09.3.2 Conflicting / contradictory messages															0
09.3.4 Perceived false messaging						1								1	2
10 POST PURCHASE BENEFITS	17	15	8	0	10	13	11	22	15	7	19	8	4	1	160
10.1 Alleviated consumer guilt	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	7
10.1.1 Environmental Consciousness									3		1				4
10.1.2 Social consciousness							1	2							3
10.2 Enjoyment	8	9	4	0	7	8	9	5	3	2	7	1	1	1	75
10.2.1 Cooking	1	7	3			1	4	1	2	1	3	1		1	25
10.2.2 Excited for experience	1	1	1			1	2		1	1	2		1		11
10.2.3 New ingredients	1		2		3	1	1	1			1				10
10.2.4 New methods								1							1
10.2.5 New recipes / meals	5		6		3	5	1	2			1				23
10.2.6 Eating					1										1
10.2.7 It is an activity to keep me busy							1								1
10.2.8 Ability to recreate recipes		1	2												3
10.3 Quality family time	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	4	4	0	0	2	3	0	17
10.3.1 Cooking		3					1	2	4				3		13
10.3.2 Eating								1				2			3
10.3.3 Shared responsibility								1							1
10.4 Skills development	2	0	3	0	1	3	0	8	2	5	4	3	0	0	31
10.4.1 Ability to recreate recipes	1		2		1			1	2	2	1				10
10.4.2 New ingredients								3			1				4
10.4.3 New methods			1			1		1		1	1				5

10.4.4 New recipes	1					2		1		1	1				6
10.4.5 Enhancing my skills								2		1		3			6
10.5 Achievement	7	3	1	0	2	2	0	3	3	0	7	2	0	0	30
10.5.1 Sense of achievement	5	3	1		2	2		1	1		7	1			23
10.5.2 Take Credit	2							2	2			1			7
11 SAFETY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	0	7
11.1 Safety	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	0	7
11.1.1 Delivery to home									2						2
11.1.2 Going to the shops													5		5
12 SKILLS	3	1	2	4	1	4	3	8	3	1	0	2	2	0	44
12.1 Blame	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
12.1.1 Ability to blame someone else when it's not great	2														2
12.2 Skills shortage	1	1	2	4	1	4	3	8	3	1	0	2	2	0	42
12.2.1 Meal Planning				1	2	2	2	4	2						13
12.2.2 Meal Preparation / Cooking		1	2	2	9	2		4	1		2	2		25	
12.2.3 Meal Shopping	1			1			1			1				4	
13 SOCIAL REFERRAL	0	2	1	0	6	3	1	0	4	0	3	2	1	0	23
13.1 Social Referral	0	2	1	0	6	3	1	0	4	0	3	2	1	0	23
13.1.1 Friends / Network		2			1	3	1		2		3	2	1		15
13.1.2 Public Personalities			1		1				2						4
13.1.3 Advertising					4										4
14 TIME SCARCITY	1	1	1	8	8	8	0	5	7	4	8	7	1	1	121
	3	9	2										0	2	

14.1 Committed Time	3	8	5	0	3	4	0	1	3	1	1	0	1	4	34	
14.1.1 Travel	1								1					1	3	
14.1.2 Long days	2	6	2		1	1		1	2		1		1	1	18	
14.1.3 Changing / unknown time demands	1	1	3		2	3					1			2	13	
14.2 Feeling of being rushed	8	5	3	4	2	1	0	2	0	1	2	3	6	7	44	
14.2.1 Competing demands	1	1	1	3				1			1		2		10	
14.2.2 Lifestyle / Individual Context	5	4	2	1	2					1		2	1	5	23	
14.2.3 Pace of life												1	2		3	
14.2.4 Tired after a work day	2					1		1			1		1	2	8	
14.3 Opportunity cost of time	2	6	4	4	3	3	0	2	4	2	5	4	3	1	43	
14.3.1 Leisure	1		2	3	3	2					4	2	1	1	19	
14.3.2 Quality Family Time		5		1				2	3	1	1		1		14	
14.3.3 Personal priorities	1	1	2			1			1	1		2	1		10	
15 WASTAGE	8	4	5	5	1	6	4	4	6	3	6	6	0	1	4	72
15.1 Effort	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
15.1.1 Wasted Effort					4										4	
15.2 Environmental Consciousness	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	5	
15.2.1 Food wastage		1										4			5	
15.3 Money	7	3	3	4	4	4	3	6	3	6	0	0	1	4	48	
15.3.1 Food wastage	3	3	1	4		4	3	2	2				1	1	24	
15.3.2 Ingredients wastage	4		2		4			4	1	6				3	24	
15.4 Time	1	0	2	1	8	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	15	
15.4.1 Wasted time planning					1							1			2	

15.4.2 Wasted time preparing					5										5
15.4.3 Wasted time shopping	1		2	1	2		1				1				8
17 INCREASED NON-MONETARY COSTS	4	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	3	1	0	1	24
17.1 Less convenient (time & effort)	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	18
17.1.1 Cooking	3				4			2							9
17.1.2 Cleaning					3										3
17.1.3 Committed to uCook					1										1
17.1.4 Planning / choosing					2										2
17.1.5 Delivery availability					1									1	2
17.1.6 Having to stick to a recipe											1				1
17.2 Increased consumer guilt	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	6
17.2.1 Feels like cheating	1	1				1					3				6
17.3 No increased non-monetary costs		2				1									3
18 TRADE OFFS	6	2	2	4	0	4	4	2	1	2	6	0	0	5	38
18.1 Environmental consideration	3	2	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	5	20
18.1.1 Non-recyclable packaging	3	2				2	4				2			3	16
18.1.2 Carbon footprint of delivery											2			2	4
18.2 Benefits outweigh costs	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	10
18.2.1 Benefits outweighs costs	3					2		2		1	2				10
18.3 Satisfaction	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
18.3.1 Contextual satisfaction			2												2
18.3.2 Certainty of meal										1					1

18.4 Healthy Eating	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
18.4.1 Less food available at other times				3												3
18.4.2 Less effort in kids meals				1												1
18.5 Rewards and incentives	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
18.5.1 Loyalty programme points lost									1							1
19 UNMET NEEDS	1	2	3	5	1	4	1	2	1	1	6	1	2	0	68	
19.1 Diet specific	4	1	2	2	5	3	0	0	0	0	4	5	2	0	28	
19.1.1 Context preferences	2			2	1	3							2		10	
19.1.2 Portions too small	2	1	2		4						4	5			18	
19.2 Inadequate choice	7	1	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	0	2	5	0	0	21	
19.2.1 Number of nights	2	1				1	1	2			1	1			9	
19.2.2 Number of portions															0	
19.2.3 Preparation preferences					2							1			3	
19.2.3 Repetitive ingredients	2											3			5	
19.2.4 Inadequate choice / meal options	2														2	
19.2.5 Ad hoc purchases	1										1				2	
19.3 Not family friendly	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	
19.3.1 Taste preferences	1			1					1						3	
19.4 Customer knowledge	5	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	
19.4.1 Know more about my preferences	5														5	
19.4.2 Perceived recipe difficulty (Skills)			1	2											3	
19.5 Economic	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	
19.5.1 Too expensive					7					1					8	

Appendix 8: Codebook (Exported from Atlas.ti)

Codebook
01 BUSINESS MODEL
01.1 Innovative
01.1.1 Innovative Business Model
01.2 Subscription
01.2.1 Easy to trial
01.2.2 No long term commitment / Pause / Cancel
01.2.3 Payment options
01.2.4 Flexible to changing weekly
02 CONSUMER GUILT
02.1 Environmental Consciousness
02.1.1 Food wastage
02.1.2 Resource scarcity
02.1.3 Use less plastic
02.1.4 Sustainability
02.2 Social Consciousness
02.2.1 Food wastage
02.2.2 Job creation
02.2.3 Ethical / local sourcing
03 CONVENIENCE

03.1 Added convenience
03.1.1 Added convenience
03.1.2 Special day kits
03.2 Cleaning
03.2.1 Cleaning
03.3 Eating
03.3.1 Eating
03.4 Planning
03.4.1 Planning
03.4.2 Provides me choice and variety
03.5 Preparation
03.5.1 Ability to outsource
03.5.2 Exact ingredient quantities
03.5.3 Flexible recipes
03.5.4 Instructive recipes
03.5.5 Simple recipes
03.5.6 Limited time willing to cook
03.5.7 Cooking
03.5.8 Cooking for one
03.6 Shared responsibility
03.6.1 Shared responsibility
03.7 Shopping

03.7.1 Shopping
03.7.2 Delivery
03.7.3 Shopping for one
03.7.4 Sourcing ingredients
03.8 Storing
03.8.1 Exact ingredient quantities (measured)
03.9 Psychological Cost
03.9.1 Alleviated stress / anxiety
04 CUSTOMER JOURNEY
04.1 Brand Story
04.1.1 Environmental Consciousness
04.1.2 Social Consciousness
04.2 Brand Trust
04.2.1 Positive customer experience
04.2.3 Brand Personality
04.3 Customer service
04.3.1 Customer Communication
04.3.2 Customer complaint resolution
04.4 Website
04.4.1 Branding
04.4.2 Functionality
04.5 Packaging

04.5.1 Recipe Cards
04.5.2 Stays Cold
04.5.3 Packaging
04.6 Quality
04.6.1 Ingredients quality
04.6.2 Meal Quality
04.6.3 Recipes
05 ECONOMIC
05.1 Cost effective
05.1.1 Like for like ingredients
05.1.2 Quality / Perceived value
05.1.3 Availability of package sizes
05.1.4 Seasonality of ingredients
05.2 Save monetary costs
05.2.1 Ancillary Purchases
05.2.2 Decreased Grocery Bill
05.2.3 Discount incentives
05.2.4 Cheaper than alternatives
05.3 Premium
05.3.1 Willing to pay for for convenience
05.3.2 Willing to pay for for quality
05.3.3 Limit to what I'm willing to pay

05.4 Budget
05.4.1 Ancillary Purchases
05.4.2 Healthy is expensive
05.4.3 Helps me stick to my budget
06 FAMILY VALUES
06.1 Aspire to live up to Family Values
06.1.1 Quality family time cooking
06.1.2 Quality family time eating
06.1.3 Relationship with food
06.1.4 Providing for family
06.1.5 Being a family
06.2 Education
06.2.1 Cooking / Preparation skills
06.2.2 Healthy eating
06.2.3 Ingredients
06.3 Conflict
06.3.1 Conflict avoidance
07 GOAL TO EAT HEALTHY
07.1 Knowledge of ingredients
07.1.1 Cooking from scratch is healthier
07.1.2 Raw form
07.1.3 Knowing what ingredients are in the meal

07.1.4 Flexible Recipes
07.2 Market confusion
07.2.1 Choice Fatigue
07.2.2 Education
07.2.3 Trust
07.3 Quality
07.3.1 Ingredients
07.3.2 Meals
07.4 Wellness Trends
07.4.1 Diet Specific
07.4.2 Nutritional variety
07.4.3 Portion Control
07.4.4 Providing for family
08 MANAGE GOAL CONFLICT
08.1 Complex & Competing Family Demands
08.1.1 Changing family contexts
08.1.2 Diet specific
08.1.3 Requirement for variety
08.1.4 Taste preferences
08.2 Consumer Guilt
08.2.1 Environmental Consciousness
08.2.2 Provide for family

08.2.3 Social Consciousness
08.2.4 Feeling of inadequacy
08.3 Healthy vs Tasty
08.3.1 Health Conscious
08.3.2 Healthy & tasty
08.3.3 Meets taste requirements
08.3.4 Meals cooked from scratch are healthier
08.3.5 Meals cooked from scratch are tastier
08.4 Time Scarcity
08.4.1 Time Scarcity
08.5 Enjoyment
08.5.1 Cooking
08.5.2 Eating
08.6 Nudging
08.6.1 It forces me to eat healthy
08.6.2 Forces me to eat at home
08.6.3 Eliminates choice and debate
09 MISTRUST
09.1 Corporates
09.1.1 Corporates
09.1.2 Supporting the smaller guys
09.2 Food manufacturers

09.2.1 Ethical sourcing
09.2.2 Food manufacturers
09.3 Marketers
09.3.1 Complex messages
09.3.2 Conflicting / contradictory messages
09.3.4 Perceived false messaging
10 POST PURCHASE BENEFITS
10.1 Alleviated consumer guilt
10.1.1 Environmental Consciousness
10.1.2 Social consciousness
10.2 Enjoyment
10.2.1 Cooking
10.2.2 Excited for experience
10.2.3 New ingredients
10.2.4 New methods
10.2.5 New recipes / meals
10.2.6 Eating
10.2.7 It is an activity to keep me busy
10.2.8 Ability to recreate recipes
10.3 Quality family time
10.3.1 Cooking
10.3.2 Eating

10.3.3 Shared responsibility
10.4 Skills development
10.4.1 Ability to recreate recipes
10.4.2 New ingredients
10.4.3 New methods
10.4.4 New recipes
10.4.5 Enhancing my skills
10.5 Achievement
10.5.1 Sense of achievement
10.5.2 Take Credit
11 SAFETY
11.1 Safety
11.1.1 Delivery to home
11.1.2 Going to the shops
12 SKILLS
12.1 Blame
12.1.1 Ability to blame someone else when it's not great
12.2 Skills shortage
12.2.1 Meal Planning
12.2.2 Meal Preparation / Cooking
12.2.3 Meal Shopping
13 SOCIAL REFERRAL

13.1 Social Referral
13.1.1 Friends / Network
13.1.2 Public Personalities
13.1.3 Advertising
14 TIME SCARCITY
14.1 Committed Time
14.1.1 Travel
14.1.2 Long days
14.1.3 Changing / unknown time demands
14.2 Feeling of being rushed
14.2.1 Competing demands
14.2.2 Lifestyle / Individual Context
14.2.3 Pace of life
14.2.4 Tired after a work day
14.3 Opportunity cost of time
14.3.1 Leisure
14.3.2 Quality Family Time
14.3.3 Personal priorities
15 WASTAGE
15.1 Effort
15.1.1 Wasted Effort
15.2 Environmental Consciousness

15.2.1 Food wastage
15.3 Money
15.3.1 Food wastage
15.3.2 Ingredients wastage
15.4 Time
15.4.1 Wasted time planning
15.4.2 Wasted time preparing
15.4.3 Wasted time shopping
16 BEHAVIOUR CHANGE
16.1 Eating
16.1.1 Eating
16.2 Planning
16.2.1 Planning
16.3 Preparation
16.3.1 Preparation
16.4 Shopping
16.4.1 Shopping
17 INCREASED NON-MONETARY COSTS
17.1 Less convenient (time & effort)
17.1.1 Cooking
17.1.2 Cleaning

17.1.3 Committed to uCook
17.1.4 Planning / choosing
17.1.5 Delivery availability
17.1.6 Having to stick to a recipe
17.2 Increased consumer guilt
17.2.1 Feels like cheating
17.3 No increased non-monetary costs
18 TRADE OFFS
18.1 Environmental consideration
18.1.1 Non-recyclable packaging
18.1.2 Carbon footprint of delivery
18.2 Benefits outweigh costs
18.2.1 Benefits outweighs costs
18.3 Satisfaction
18.3.1 Contextual satisfaction
18.3.2 Certainty of meal
18.4 Healthy Eating
18.4.1 Less food available at other times
18.4.2 Less effort in kids meals
18.5 Rewards and incentives
18.5.1 Loyalty programme points lost
19 UNMET NEEDS

19.1 Diet specific
19.1.1 Context preferences
19.1.2 Portions too small
19.2 Inadequate choice
19.2.1 Number of nights
19.2.2 Number of portions
19.2.3 Preparation preferences
19.2.3 Repetitive ingredients
19.2.4 Inadequate choice / meal options
19.2.5 Ad hoc purchases
19.3 Not family friendly
19.3.1 Taste preferences
19.4 Customer knowledge
19.4.1 Know more about my preferences
19.4.2 Perceived recipe difficulty (Skills)
19.5 Economic
19.5.1 Too expensive
Compared to Alternatives
Compared to eating at a restaurant
Compared to eating frozen / prepared meals
Compared to eating take-aways
Compared to other box services

Compared to traditional cooking for oneself
Consideration Set
Considered as a whole (Emotive)
Considered selective / individual analysis (Functional)
Considered with certain qualifiers
Routine
Weekday routine
Weekend Routine

Appendix 9: Additional Detail of References Used

Table 9: Additional Detail of Journals Referenced

Journal	ABS4*	ABS4	ABS3	ABS2	ABS1	Not ABS	JQL
Advances in Consumer Research				X			
Annual Review of Psychology		X					
Appetite							X
Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy (formerly "Review of Agricultural Economics")				X			
British Food Journal						X	
Competitiveness Review					X		
European Journal of Marketing			X				
Food Policy			X				
Gender, Place & Culture						X	
Global Environmental Change			X				

Journal	ABS4*	ABS4	ABS3	ABS2	ABS1	Not ABS	JQL
International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity						X	
International Journal of Consumer Studies				X			
International Journal of Management Reviews			X				
International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management				X			
Journal of Applied Psychology	X						
Journal of Business Research			X				
Journal of Consumer Behavior				X			
Journal of Consumer Marketing					X		
Journal of Consumer Psychology	X						
Journal of Consumer Research	X						
Journal of Electronic Commerce Research					X		
Journal of Interactive Marketing (formerly JDM)			X				

Journal	ABS4*	ABS4	ABS3	ABS2	ABS1	Not ABS	JQL
Journal of Marketing	X						
Journal of Marketing Management				X			
Journal of Marketing Research	X						
Journal of Organizational Behavior Management				X			
Journal of Retailing		X					
Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services				X			
Journal of Service Management (formerly IJSIM)				X			
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	X						
Management Research Review					X		
Marketing Review St. Gallen						X	
Organizational Research Methods		X					
Psychological Science	X						
Psychology and Marketing			X				

Journal	ABS4*	ABS4	ABS3	ABS2	ABS1	Not ABS	JQL
Qualitative Health Research						X	
Qualitative Report						X	
Qualitative Research in Psychology						X	
Social Science and Medicine		X					
Sociology of Health and Illness		X					
Transportation				X			

Table 10: Additional Detail of Journals Referenced per Chapter

Chapter	Total References	ABS4*	ABS4	ABS3	ABS2	ABS1	Not ABS	JQL
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research Problem	21	4	-	-	3	-	3	3
Chapter 2: Literature Review	83	20	4	8	20	6	8	5
Chapter 4: Research Methodology	37	7	2	5	3	1	3	1
Chapter 6: Discussion of Results	51	15	4	7	12	5	8	4
Chapter 7: Conclusion	9	2	1	-	2	-	2	2

Appendix 10: Examples of Meal-kit Delivery Box Images





UCOOK



