

# **Factors affecting customer satisfaction: a case study at Biáng! - a Chinese restaurant in Helsinki.**

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## Abstract

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Abstract <p>This paper examines the role of customer satisfaction in restaurant settings with specific application to the case study: Biáng! restaurant. The objectives were set to generate significant factors affecting the satisfaction of customers in general and in the case-study restaurant. The research also mentioned the work of customer service, customer quality and customer loyalty via literature review, which are in close proximity to the main topic.</p> <p>Qualitative and quantitative research were selectively utilized within the study, including both primary and secondary data that help to make the research more comprehensive and credible. A survey was designed to collect different perspectives on customer experience at Biáng! restaurant, and an interview was conducted to gain a point of view from business owners.</p> <p>Our analysis finally showed several problems that both influence and contribute to customer satisfaction. Solutions and recommendations were offered to the case-study restaurant by measuring the quality of its service and products.</p>		
Keywords Customer satisfaction, service quality, customer loyalty, customer service		

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## 1 Introduction

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses were forced to close down since not only did nobody go out for a dining experience, but also the lockdown regulations were introduced by most governments. Therefore, organizations decided to raise their service standard to attract more potential customers, which led to both positive and negative effects on other businesses due to an increase in customer expectations. According to “ABC news”, the restaurant and service industry lost nearly 120 million dollars in sales in the first three months of the pandemic (McCarthy 2020). More than 70,000 restaurants closed permanently (Repanich 2022).

### 1.1 Background

Customer satisfaction is a crucial metric when it comes to securing the future success of a business (Smith 2022). Conducting business is a process of discovering what the market is about and how customers react to a new range of products, a set of strategic management, or a level of quality. The objective of this research is to obtain knowledge of customer satisfaction and establish the solutions for existing problems that occur in the application research into Biáng Restaurant. Although the business had a very impressive customer journey throughout the pandemic, there is still room for development in the aspects of customer service and customer satisfaction that should be addressed.

The case study, Biáng!, is a Chinese restaurant located in Helsinki, Espoo and Tampere. The main object of the business is to bring the authentic taste of Chinese food to potential customers. The name “Biáng!” comes from the famous hand-made noodles, it is 100% made by hand and when straightened out on the kitchen table, it will make the Biáng! Biáng! sound. More interestingly, the word “Biáng!” is one of the most complicated letters in Chinese by having 56 individual brushstrokes. Opened for the first time in Stockman Mall in the heart of Helsinki but due to the previous pandemic that had taken down several organizations, Biáng! had to move to CityCenter Mall. In 2019, the business managed to open two more branches in Espoo and Tampere.

Biáng! has a diversity of customers because of its central location in Helsinki and Espoo city. Most customers are Finnish, Chinese, European, and travellers from other parts of the globe. Therefore, to assist customers during the service, the staff of Biáng! is equipped with a set of required knowledge to make observations and decisions based on the wants and needs of customers. Additionally, the diversity in customers resulted in a challenging

attempt at customer satisfaction since they are different in behaviours. Therefore, the purpose of this research on customer satisfaction was brought together to look further into the factors affecting it.

## 1.2 Objectives, Research questions and Delimitations

Two main objectives were set out for this research on customer satisfaction. The first objective is to achieve a basic comprehension of the concept in the service application, especially referring to food and beverage services. The second goal is to examine the core factors contributing to how they affect the operation of a customer-oriented business. To attain the two objectives, a main research question was introduced and followed by three more sub-questions:

### **How has customer satisfaction become an integral part of the development of the case-study restaurant?**

- What are the characteristics of customer satisfaction?
- What are the leading factors affecting the stability of customer satisfaction?
- How can customer satisfaction be evaluated and improved at Biáng! restaurant?

In terms of delimitations, hospitality comprises a set of distinct operations within its scope such as hotels, restaurants, casinos, amusement parks, events, cruises, entertainment, and other tourism-related services. In addition, it shares a relation to various businesses that are linked to leisure and customer satisfaction. Each sector in the industry serves a distinct purpose which results in differentiation in the desires of the customers. That is why this study will solely focus on the ground understanding of customer satisfaction in the food and beverages sector, more specifically in restaurants (Revfine 2023).

## 1.3 Theoretical framework

Customer satisfaction plays a key role in the success of every business. In a globalized society, managing customer relationships is crucial for keeping loyal customers. When a business improves the quality of its product, customer loyalty, and revenue, it is a continuous process by begins with finding how customers react to these plans. Measuring satisfaction is one way to start.

Customer satisfaction does not reveal how customers feel in general, it points out the weaknesses, the strengths and the health of a business. All the strategies, products, and services were created to satisfy the guests with their desires and a firm to boost the venue. Organizations should not assume what their customer wants, instead, they need to understand the voice of the customers through surveys.

### 1.3.1 Theories of customer satisfaction

Every business needs to understand what customers want and need. The only thing that they will not compromise while spending time in a restaurant is their satisfaction. A customer would tend to come back to the restaurant based on their satisfaction in every circumstance.

Customer satisfaction is a general principle of customer service in general (Rana 2022). It could be a tool to help a business see their customers' perception of the products' quality, utility, and service. Plus, customer satisfaction can be measured through loyalty, offering a product or service.

To understand the theory, we lay down five points including: Dissonance theory, Contrast theory, Comparison Level theory, Value Percept theory and Attribution theory.

#### **Dissonance theory**

*Dissonance is a psychology term to describe a person who simultaneously holds two or more thoughts, ideas or beliefs which leads them to find conflict in themselves. It also refers to a person who expects high-value and received a low-value product will appear to be disparity and feel Cognitive Dissonance. Moreover, this could create a Dissonance stage and mental discomfort. This theory can be explained with "Cognitive Dissonance" when a customer is interested in a product's promise from a company but does not receive to requiring expectation (Rana 2022). For example: when a person purchases an expensive headphone from a well-known brand with high hopes that it will last long but when they get home, open the box and find out, it is defective and contact customer service to get a refund or a change would not be easy since they would answer 3-5 business day.*

#### **Contrast theory**

Opposite to the Dissonance theory, when product expectations are not matched by actual performance, the contrast between expectations and outcome or the surprise effect will

cause the consumer to exaggerate the disparity (Rana 2022). It also states that with high product expectations and low performance, consumers will exaggerate between the expectation and outcome.

### **Value Percept theory**

*This theory explains customer satisfaction by two factors that are central to customer perception of value – Actual Value (AV) and Ideal Value (IV) (Rana 2022).* Customers will always have their standard in pricing, quality, and satisfaction. That means when a business changes its systems, consumers will go through their standards to see if the new system could fit their minds. The value that every business offers to the customers is the key factor in this theory, although, they can change their quality and service the value that they can bring to their customers has to be the same or higher to satisfy them.

### **Attribution theory**

The Attribution theory has been mostly used in dissatisfaction/ complaining behaviour models than in satisfaction models. According to this theory of the customer satisfaction model, consumers are regarded as rational processors of information who seek out reasons to explain why a purchase outcome, for example, dissatisfaction, has occurred. These reasons may include the product itself, the service, the price, and even the person who sold the product (Rana 2022).

In the field of social psychology, Fritz Heider, Dorwin Cartwright, and Leonard Bostwick published "The Psychology of Judgment" in which they established the attribution theory. The writers of this paper stated that people's judgment processes are rational and that there are conditions under which their judgment is rational.

### **1.3.2 Service quality**

Customer satisfaction and service quality are the two main elements that are interchangeably influenced to create an impact on a business, especially in the restaurant industry. There is no single, unequivocally accepted definition of service quality. However, the concept has been perceived by several perspectives. According to Carol A. Reeves and David A. Bednar, quality is classified into four dimensions which are *Excellence*, *Value*, *Conformance to specifications* and *Meeting and/or exceeding expectations*. George E. Kroon suggests two other dimensions of service quality by implementing *Market perception*, which is *the market evaluation or ranking of how well you are doing compared to your competitors*, and Strategic planning, which is *the combination of price and quality the company wants to provide to the market* (Hernon et al. 1999).

The most common explanation of the difference between customer satisfaction and service quality is that perceived service quality is a form of attitude, a long-run overall evaluation, whereas satisfaction is a transaction-specific measure (Cronin et al, 1992). To answer the second sub-question, the concept of service quality will be incorporated in chapter 2 with further factors contributing to the main concept, which is customer satisfaction.

## 1.4 Research methodology

### 1.4.1 Research approach

The research approach is designed as a general plan or procedure for conducting the study. As there are a variety of approach categories that can be selected from, it, therefore, comes down to the thesis's objectives aimed to achieve in the end (Business Research Methodology 2023). The authors have selectively chosen the inductive approach as a fundamental methodological system in terms of its logic, generalizability, use of data and theory.

An inductive approach requires research questions, objectives and aims that have been formulated in the previous section by the writers. The process of gathering data to look for patterns and developing theory will be specifically explained in the coming section by both conducting qualitative and quantitative research.

### 1.4.2 Research methods

Research methods are the strategies, processes or techniques utilized in the collection of data or evidence for analysis to uncover new information or create a better understanding of a topic (Research Guides 2023). Qualitative and quantitative approaches are the most common methods utilized by researchers (Sheppard 2012). Qualitative research gathers data about lived experiences, emotions or behaviours, and the meanings individuals attach to them. It assists in enabling researchers to gain a better understanding of complex concepts, social interactions, or cultural phenomena. On the other hand, quantitative research gathers numerical data which can be ranked, measured, or categorized through statistical analysis. It assists with uncovering patterns or relationships, and for generalizing (Research Guides 2023). However, as the complexity of research has risen, researchers nowadays are allowed to combine the two main methods under the name as being mixed-methods approach. Technically, it provides an authentic framework for gathering strengths from qualitative and quantitative data to generate solutions and understandings of the problems (Sheppard 2012).

The primary data of this thesis was drawn from applying the mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data will be carried out in the form of a survey to collect information from customers who are frequent visitors to Restaurant Biáng!. The survey was designated to evaluate insights and levels of satisfaction given by the service from our case-study restaurant to its customers. Conversely, qualitative data was performed as an interview with the General Manager at Biáng! to arrive at a set of possible solutions to enhance the quality of customer satisfaction.

## 1.5 Thesis structure

The structure of our thesis includes 6 chapters:

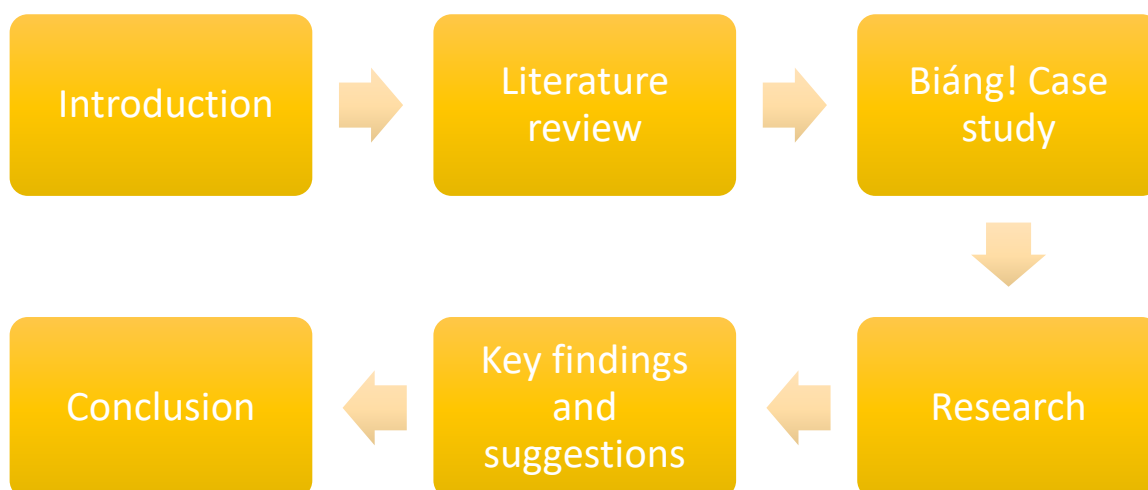


Figure 1: Thesis structure

In the first chapter, a background on how the choice of our topic will be thoroughly presented along with a section of objectives, delimitations and research questions that are aimed to acquire within the scope of our thesis. An overview of theories will be formulated within this chapter to build the required knowledge for customer satisfaction and service quality.

In the second chapter, a literature review unveils a deeper understanding of the customer satisfaction concept that was practically examined in different ranges of research and industries over the years. Added to that, an introduction to SWOT analysis was followed as a main strategic tool to measure the current business situation of the case-study restaurant – Biáng!.

Chapter three was where our authors presented the case company - Biáng! with an extension into its values, missions and customer segmentation in the Helsinki and Espoo branches. Chapter four was designed for data collection by conducting a survey and an interview in the premise of the case company, in which results and analysis were drawn in each approach.

Key findings and suggestions were followed in the fifth chapter to make assumptions about the future of customer satisfaction within the restaurant industry in general and at Restaurant Biáng! in specific. A conclusion chapter was given to bring an end to our discussion.

## 2 Literature review

In this chapter, theory and knowledge were highlighted in deeper research on the concept of customer satisfaction followed by factors affecting it.

### 2.1 Customer Satisfaction

#### 2.1.1 Definition

Customer satisfaction (CSAT) is a measure of how well a company's products, services and overall customer experience meet customer expectations. It reflects business' health by showing how well your products or services resonate with buyers (Franklin 2023). Every business needs to understand what their customers want and need. The only thing that they will not compromise while spending time in a restaurant is their satisfaction. A customer would tend to come back to the restaurant based on their satisfaction in every circumstance. Customers are the ones who will develop brand loyalty when they have a positive emotional connection to a brand. Highly satisfied customers tend to introduce their experience to their friends and family to give a free promotion about your business.

Companies in many industries focus on their metric to ensure they are meeting their customers' needs. Customers can include anyone to whom a company provides products, services or experience (Indeed Editorial Team 2022). Measuring customer satisfaction can help businesses acknowledge what they are doing well which will allow them to continue emphasizing those processes. To understand whether customers are happy or not, analyze their feedback, and attitudes with email, communication, and social media. Next, identifying and addressing unhappy customers is the key factor in every business. Reading and observing negative customer reviews or face-to-face communication based on their bad experience can help businesses find out what has been up to the customers' requirements. Especially in today society, people can access all kinds of services around the world through the Internet, so the desire is getting bigger every day. As a result, some businesses can find it hard to catch up with the market and the requirements of the customers which could lead to unsatisfied customers with negative reviews on social media, which could make your potential customers will not choose your business anymore.

In addition, when creating a business, an entrepreneur should put their strategy into how to satisfy their segmentation of customers first then think about making a profit. Customer satisfaction plays a vital role in this market nowadays, as a single bad review could lower the number of consumers which leads to loss of profits.

### 2.1.2 Characteristics

What makes customers satisfied and unsatisfied in doing business with a brand are their product quality, services, and affordable price. The following list presents characteristics of customer satisfaction in operating a business:

- They will tend to come back for more, as some people would stick to their “usual” or some would try new things that bring out the curiosity in them and some would come back for the service in a specific restaurant to experience again. The best way to know that your customer is happy with your product is to come back to buy more of what you sell (Alexis 2023).
- Free promotion will happen between the customers’ family and friends when they are completely satisfied with the business’s products and services. They feel that the value that they spent needs to be tried by their relatives which leads to mouth-to-mouth marketing which will have some beneficials towards the businesses.
- In modern society, the Internet is a popular tool among every human on this planet. People will do research on social media first to check for the reviews of a restaurant that they are planning to spend their time in. To achieve those positive reviews, impress customers with all abilities that a business has, this will make them both want to come back alone and with their friends as well as leave a good review on the Internet for the next potential customer to easily reach.
- Customers will follow the restaurant's social media channels to catch up with the new products and programs. Satisfied customers always want to know more about products, services, company’s policy, so on and this will drive them to want to connect more with the business and the easiest way to connect nowadays through social media platform (Alexis L 2023).

Think - one of the authors has experienced this situation that customers will show their appreciation verbally to show their satisfaction. This is an easy way to measure their satisfaction with one product and makes the waiter find interest in the job and do it even better.

### 2.1.3 Factors affect Customer Satisfaction

#### **Segmentation**

Customer segmentation is the process of dividing a company's customers into groups based on common characteristics so companies can market to each group effectively and appropriately (Davey 2022). When segmenting customers into groups, businesses can easily acknowledge their customers deeply to know a way to market and sell their products, which group of customers to invest in as well as improving marketing techniques.

This section is the most important part in the research because a business needs to know thoroughly their consumer to support their market. Most of the companies segment their customers into: Demographic Segmentation, Geographic Segmentation, Psychographic Segmentation and Behavioral Segmentation.

#### Demographic Segmentation

This segment groups customers according to shared characteristics, such as gender, age, marital status, and educational level (Jolaoso 2023).

#### Geographic Segmentation

For this group, business must separate their customers based on their geography including their common language and location or their mode of transportation.

#### Psychographic Segmentation

This kind of segment will be based on the customers' interests, values and personality traits (Jolaoso 2023).

#### Behavioral Segmentation

This group is the process of sorting and grouping customers based on the behaviors they exhibit. These behaviors include the types of products and content they consume and the cadence of their interactions with app, website, and businesses (Karnes 2023).

#### **Customer Service**

According to the Cambridge English Dictionary (2023), customer service illustrates *the fact of treating customers in a polite and helpful way, which is considered an important part of running a good business*. In simpler terms, customer service was created based on the needs of customers seeking help and solutions amid problems occurring while using a

product (Bernazzani 2023). In the sense of customer satisfaction, customer service happens to play a key role in the practice of bringing in potential customers with genuine support formed by the people who oversee it. There is a variety of ways to operate customer-service performance in a business, most of which can be done via the usage of telephones, in-person interaction, and a website built solely for supporting customers (Investopedia 2023). The first two forms are well-known to the fundamental system of customer service; however, the last form, which can be seen as online customer service, has been only integrated recently due to the escalating growth of technology, enabling customers to get more access to the assistance they need.

In customer-oriented industries, especially tourism and hospitality, the demand for good customer service is inevitable. There is a slight difference between customer service and hospitality, although both terms share the same pattern which is to help and support a guest or customer. Hospitality considers a greater amount of care and attention to the quality of customer experience in the service's premises. It is regarded as creating an enjoyable experience with an utterly welcoming gesture and making them feel at ease when using the service. It has essentially become a principal idea in the field to maintain guest relationships with the service provider, as well as to ensure that problems are solved on a professional term (Les Roches 2023.).

Furthermore, to enhance customer service is to understand their perceptions, which simultaneously requires a customer provider's ability to constantly grasp the differences in their desires and needs. It was not an easy task to fulfil due to the complexity of human thinking. George and Jones (1991) discussed this problem by explaining that the role of the customer must be emphasized thoroughly from the perspective of the customer provider. In this way, both parties' desires were interchangeably understood; as a result, the quality of customer service was upgraded.

Another research conducted in 1990 by Becker and Wellins was meant to examine the impact of customer behavior on customer service, as well as explore different patterns between the perceptions of customers and customer-service people. There is no doubt that good service was advised to be a priority when it comes to customer retention, as otherwise, a business easily lost a certain number of loyal customers. It is worth noting that not only should a focus lay on the fundamental rules surrounding the service, but also should it be as well on the importance of providing proper training for customer-service people (Becker & Wellins 1990.).

Satisfaction, as the term speaks for itself, relates to a range of expressions expected after a customer experiences a service. That is the mindset to follow if a company opts to

maintain a good service as it may influence other aspects of a business's operation. Companies must acknowledge customers' core desires and execute them wisely, which is a beneficial aspect when it comes to profitability. A study shows that a *5% increase in customer retention produces more than a 25% increase in profit*, due to the likelihood of customers who return to a business aimed for greater amounts of purchase and the company's operating costs simultaneously were lessened (Reichheld 2001). Not only did customer retention happen to be a great value added to the growth of a business, but also did employee retention lead to referrals, increases customer lifetime value and an advantage in market competition are also what make a huge impact on the development of building a great customer-service system in every business (Investopedia 2023).

### **Customer Relationship Management (CRM)**

One of the ground principles in doing business is to develop an effective relationship between a business and its customers. In addition, customer management, which has been influenced by the tremendous development in technology in recent times, demands better consideration in order to gain customer retention and loyalty. In terms of profitability, the cost spent for a new customer was approximately sixteen times greater than that for a lost one (Lindgreen et al. 2000, according to Ivkov et al. 2015). It is also one of the core determinants for firms nowadays to consider investing resources into the work of CRM. The Pareto Principle, which is well-known as the 80/20 rule, briefly explains that 80 per cent of a business's profits come from 20 per cent of its clients. Therefore, companies were recommended to adopt CRM into their operating system, as most markets and industries are crowded with competition and intense effort is generated to keep up with their existing customers (Hassan et al. 2014.).

CRM was referred to as a long-term process that can be interchangeably handled by different departments to eventually gain positive results in business performance (Greve & Alber 2006). A more detailed take on defining the concept is by Parvatiyar & Sheth (2001) which *is a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring, retaining, and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer; it involves the integration of marketing, sales, customer service, and the supply-chain functions of the organization to achieve greater efficiencies and effectiveness in delivering customer value*. These definitions are evident in the flexibility aspect of CRM to satisfy the needs of the customer (Ngai 2005).

As aforementioned, customer service plays a crucial role in the development of customer satisfaction, and CRM was considered as the evolutionary advancement of customer service (Hoots 2004). In the data-driven era of today, enterprises and businesses keep track

of their customer's data to create personalized experiences/products based on their interests prior to directly asking them (University of Massachusetts Global 2023). Ultimately, this is how CRM steps in as a processor for that sophisticated information and turns it into a convenient strategy to manage customer data and improve marketing productivity.

### **Customer Loyalty**

Making customers satisfied requires an establishment to be fully engaged in the expectations coming from customers. On the other hand, the act of keeping one customer to repurchase products at the same service provider speaks volumes and becomes a measure of an effective business. That means loyalty coming from customers. To define it, loyalty refers to *a person's devotion or sentiment of attachment to a particular object, which may be another person or group of persons, an ideal, a duty, or a cause* (Britannica 2023). Here, when it comes to the service sector, the concept illustrates the state of being loyal to a business intentionally. Furthermore, earning trust from customers over time and being different in ways that can exceed the expectations of customers place an establishment at a superior advantage, especially in the recent market where competition takes place among rivals domestically and internationally. An equivalent to the achievement of customer loyalty is the five score on a 5-Likert scale (Aksu 2006.)

In fact, there is a correlation between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. While the former concept is a key operational element for sustainable customer behavior, the latter creates an impact on value and cost-effectiveness to business. The two elements are both vital and have significant influence on each other. Customer satisfaction can be a powerful indicator of willingness to repurchase and endorse the product to friends and family (Al-Maamari & Abdulrab 2017).

In research on customer loyalty and the role of customer satisfaction and image in the hotel industry, Kandampully and Suhartanto (2000) showed that satisfying customers alone is not fundamentally sufficient as a guarantee of return to purchase. Also, a commitment to increase customer loyalty can do wonders for a company in at least six areas, according to Griffin (1995): reduced marketing cost, lower transaction costs such as contract negotiation and order processing, reduced customer turnover expenses, increased cross-selling success leading to a larger share of customer, more positive word-of-mouth, and reduced failure costs.

#### **2.1.4 Customer expectations and its importance**

Generally, customer expectations are a set of ideas about a product, service, or brand that a customer holds in their mind (Pabley 2023). Customers want these desires to be satisfied

with the value that they have purchases; however, some expectations are not so easy to know.

One of the most important things to every business is understanding the customers' expectations, whether it is a small or large enterprise organization. There are several factors influencing customer expectations such as product and service quality, brand reputation and price (Mladenov 2023):

**Product and service quality:** this is related to the performance of the products that customers are expecting from a business that they have prior experience. For instance, if a consumer purchases a smart TV from a specific luxury brand and finds it slow in usage, they will lower their expectations of that brand immediately.

**Brand reputation:** this is how customers perceive the company, which is based on their past interactions with them or other people's opinions of your brand (Mladenov 2023). For example, if a restaurant is known for excellent food quality, customers will have high expectations for that restaurant in the future.

**Price:** the factor will set the bar for what customers expect from a business. The more expensive your products, the higher your customers' expectations will be (Mladenov 2023).

Satisfying customer demands is the key to success in business. Generally, doing business is selling products to customers to make a profit. If a business fails to meet the customer's requirements, they will be less likely to buy again. In contrast, customer expectations are often not fully understood by businesses (Mladenov, 2023) and in fact, the satisfaction and expectation from the customers can make or break a sale as if they do not feel like they are getting what they want, that is a huge chance of losing a customer forever. This year, 60% of large organizations plan to increase the effort they put into improving their customer experience compared to the previous year (Pabley 2023).

It can be understood for businesses not able to understand the expectation from their customer is the rising of customers' expectations. As the authors mentioned above, modern society helps humans interact more with information from all around the world and leads to them becoming more accustomed to constant innovation. Also, COVID 19 had a huge impact on the businesses as they are trying to continuously deliver the best service possible, and as a result, customers tend to change their expectations over a short period of time which makes it even harder for the enterprises.

However, meeting these requirements is necessary since everything is for profit and the profit comes from those who purchase the products, therefore, companies have to always try to catch up with the market. Everybody will have their own standard in terms of creating expectations, from family to friends, daily life and so on. Maintaining expectations is a common practice, yet fulfilling these expectations necessitates a deeper understanding. The following compilation encapsulates the fundamental principles of meeting customer expectations.

Understanding customers: this is an underlying need, especially at this particular time. Acknowledging customers' demands will create customers' loyalty to do more business. It is also a useful way to catch up with the modern markets in order to publish some suitable promotions. To understand this, business not only needs to be obsessed with customer feedback from all platforms, but also become a student of it. Do not just collect it, analyze and apply it to reality, also put the passion into the consumers' pain point to come up with a plan and this will set the business apart from their competitors (Franklin 2023)

Put user experience first: Customers are paying for their own experience with the service and the needs they want to meet (Arakelyan 2023). Nobody wants to be treated poorly when they purchase something on a business trip, when spending their money, they will expect to be satisfied. Therefore, if they feel satisfied with most of the things, they will be back for more.

Making complaints becomes easier for customers: meeting the businesses' customers' needs and fostering loyalty also includes making it easy for them to complain (Arakelyan 2023). Online reviews are just words, businesses will not know how they feel through their words, interaction with customers is a fantastic way for companies to learn about customers' feelings.

Learning and Development for the staff (L&D): the communicators, the one who introduces products and manages the restaurant's situation is the employees. L&D is a function within an organization that is responsible for empowering employees' growth and developing their knowledge, skills, and capabilities to drive better business performance.

## 2.2 SWOT Analysis

Generally, in the business world and specifically, in strategic management, organizations are fascinated with using recent strategic tools, such as Porter's Five Forces, SWOT analysis, BCG growth matrix, or value chain analysis, as a measurement test between stakeholders to evaluate a business's operation and management. These tools are distinct in

characteristics and objectives, so they are selected based on a company's industry, context, and values. In the sphere of our work, SWOT analysis was selectively chosen as the main tool due to its compatibility with the analysis for our case-study company – Biáng! Restaurant. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats whose original idea belonged to a social psychologist named Kurt Lewin. Continuous work and effort were later invested by many professors from well-known and prestige universities with different forms of applications, to finally deliver and arrive at an actual purpose for SWOT, which has been utilized dominantly for market research and business strategy management (Leigh 2009).

SWOT analysis is done by stakeholders, managers, or consultants in business development. The main reason to conduct one is to identify the internal (Strengths and Weaknesses), external (Opportunities and Threats), the enhancer (Strengths and Opportunities) and the inhibitor (Weaknesses and Threats), which all contribute to the future well-being of a business, according to Figure 3 by Leigh (2009). Our primary goal in conducting a SWOT analysis for Biáng! is to grasp a comprehensive idea of its current position in the market and to present feasible strategies for an improvement in its business performance.

<b>Internal</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
	a. b. c.	a. b. c.
<b>External</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
	a. b. c.	a. b. c.
	<b>Enhancer</b>	<b>Inhibitor</b>

Figure 2: A conventional SWOT table (Leigh 2009).

### 3 Biáng! Restaurant

As mentioned above in the story, vision, and background of the case study, in this section, the authors wanted the readers to not only understand the mission and passion of Biáng! but also understanding their customers' segmentation in each branch to have a different look for this research. Biáng! has three branches in three different cities, including Helsinki, Espoo, and Tampere, however, in this research, Helsinki and Espoo will be discussed. The detailed information of the case study is taken from the interview with two of the employees.

When mentioning Chinese restaurants, some people will surmise the loud atmosphere, grumpy staff, etc. since most of these kinds of restaurants are small businesses and family businesses, they tend to not pay attention to the atmosphere, or professional staff but only focus on the quality of their products which is a good thing to do. However, people nowadays expect more than just good food, Biáng! acknowledges that and builds its image to be a well-groomed restaurant that is good in both quality and professionalism. It can be said that Biáng! is professional in service and food quality because they invest their time in training new staff and importing their ingredients as they put their responsibility and passion into the restaurants. Several positive reviews have been written on their Google site of how good service and good food quality they are offering which set a new standard for the customers who have visited there. With a variety of choices for both buffet and à la carte, Biáng! is passionate about bringing the authentic taste of Northern Chinese food to customers in Finland with the signature dish "Oil Spill Noodles" which the noodles are 100% made by hand the chefs. The buffet choice mainly aims for a variety of selections for people who want to have lunch with 12 different kinds of hot food and 6 kinds of salads. For à la carte, the menu has 40 selections of food which are divided into 10 categories. They also offer gluten-free, lactose-free, and vegan products to fit Finnish lifestyles. Biáng! also has a wide range of hand-picked fine wines to serve along with their food.

In addition, not only do they segment their customers very clearly, though they mainly serve office workers, families, Chinese who are living in Finland, students, and tourists but also, they understand their customers well. The employees even remember their loyal customers' faces and orders so that their customers will not have to go through the menu all over and it is amazing how they mesmerize every single customer. Biáng!'s staff were trained on how to deal with every kind of person they meet in the shift and a nice thing is that every single one of them will always try to learn Finnish to have an easier way to communicate with their general customer's segment, the Finnish. This business will do anything to satisfy their

customers, creating loyal customers through their skills. With their knowledge and skills, they amazed their guests every day.

## 4 Research

Information, knowledge, and theories about customer satisfaction have been carefully gathered, as well as pointed out how important the role it plays in the customer service industry is in the thesis's previous chapters. To reach a higher level of practicality and impact on an existing business, which is the case-study restaurant - Biáng!, two main research methods were generated based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Firstly, the quantitative approach was in the form of a survey questionnaire designed to collect the perspectives of customers based on their past experiences at Biáng!. The second approach was qualitatively conducted through an interview with the restaurant's General Manager, the restaurant staff and customers, which is to collect different points of view about the current situation of customer satisfaction in the restaurant and draw a handful of solutions on how it can be further improved.

Two styles of data collection were implemented in this study with the intent of creating a better insight into the perspectives of both service providers and receivers, as conflicting ideas can occur. Eventually, results and their analysis will be drawn out in each research application.

### 4.1 Survey

#### 4.1.1 Survey Design

To reach the comprehension of the customer satisfaction concept, especially in a practical operation, a survey was designed in the form of quantitative research to collect data and opinions from customers who visited and experienced the customer service at Biáng, so that a general idea of customer satisfaction can be withdrawn for a result of our analysis, as well as to bring out answers for the thesis's main question and sub-questions.

In terms of the delivery tool, the survey was self-designed using an online tool named Webropol, and the data collected is regarded as primary data. The main objective is to grasp the contributors that can affect the scale of customer satisfaction at Biáng!. The survey was published in the time range from October 26 to November 13, 2023, which accounted for a total of 19 days for the process of data collection. Data was gathered chiefly via a QR code given to customers who frequented the restaurant in the mentioned period and simultaneously shared on its Facebook page. Additionally, another platform that was utilized to reach a broader audience is social media. The survey was mainly shared on Facebook groups such as the Vietnamese Community in Finland and Students in Lappeenranta.

The survey is a combination of 19 questions which are also divided into four sub-sections in a way that supports achieving the research's objectives. The first two questions help to classify the demographics of the survey. Then came four questions about product usage, which refers mainly to segmentation in customer behaviour as in how long and when they have known about the products at Biáng!. The main theme of the survey is followed by nine questions on the satisfaction factors affecting customer experience. It ends with four questions about the overall experience as well as recommended improvements that surveyors would like to see in the future.

#### 4.1.2 Survey Results and Analysis

After 19 days of data collection, the survey reached a total number of 69 respondents, combined from both being shared online via social media and conducted directly at Biáng!.

##### Demographics

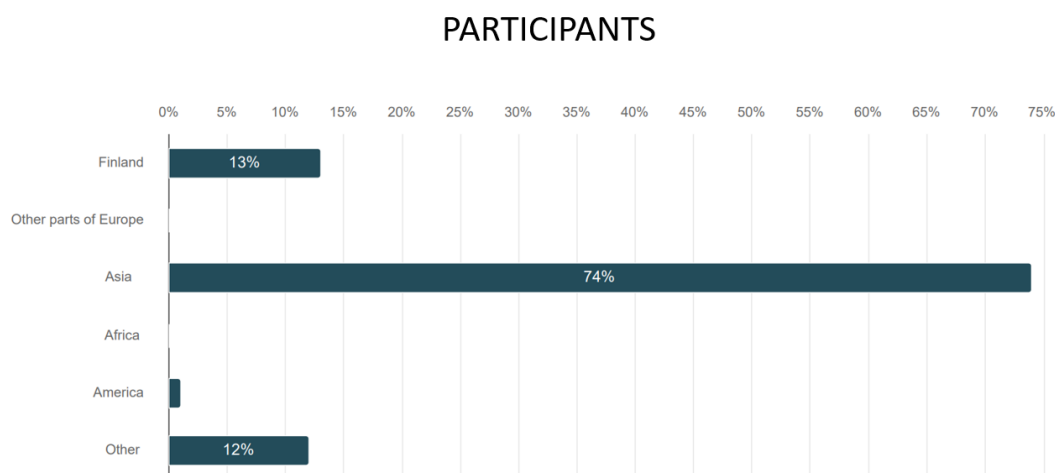


Figure 3: Demographics of participants

Figure 3 shows the origins of the participants who mostly come from Finland and Asia. More specifically, Asia holds the highest percentage within the category with a percentage of 74, while the second demographic belongs to Finland with a percentage of 13, where the restaurant is located. There were 12% in the written answer for the 'Other' option, and all of them are either Vietnam or Indonesia, which can be included in the 'Asia' option as well. In general, the majority of customers of Biáng! has Asian nationalities, which is foreseeable since the restaurant serves largely Asian cuisines, specifically Chinese food.

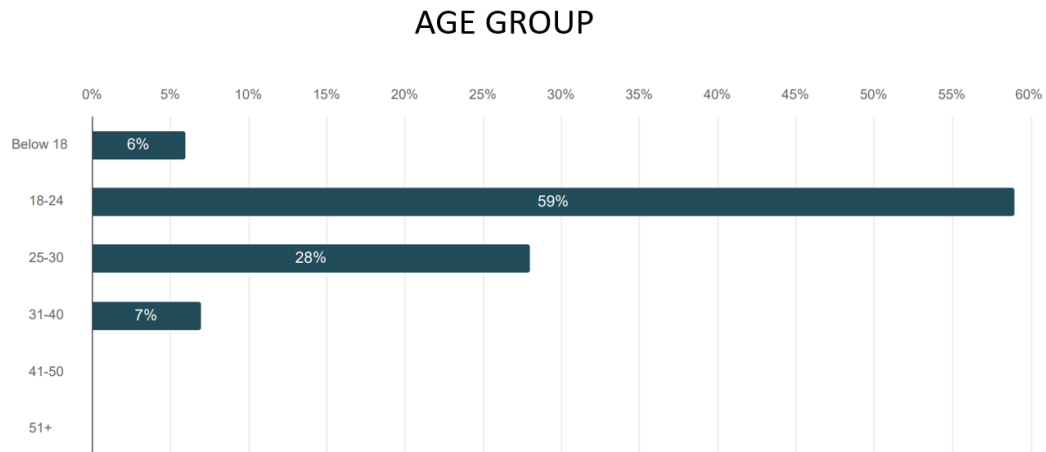


Figure 4: Age groups of participants

The given presentation of Figure 4 expresses the ratio of six different age groups ranging from below 18 to over 51. As a result, the majority of customers who once visited the restaurant had an average age of 18 to 24 with 59%, which depicts a relatively young generation of customers. Followed by that are participants from 25 to 30, sharing a fair portion of 28%. Customers who are in the age range of 31-40 make up 7%. As can be seen in the figure, the lowest group has 6% of respondents who are below 18 years of age.

### Product usage



Figure 5: General expectations when visiting a restaurant

This question was mentioned in the survey to acquire the expectations from customers when they visit any restaurant in general. As perspectives vary and come in different waves

of opinions, it is worth understanding the sole desires of customers so that restaurants are encouraged to improve their service logically.

It could be noticed from Figure 5 that a large number of respondents opt for the 'Quality of products' such as specialities in flavours or ingredients on the menu. It was top with a percentage of 99 when compared to other elements in the same question. In the second ranking, 'Value for money' and 'Good service' shared a relatively fair percentage of 78 and 75, respectively. 65% of participants considered the 'Clean and welcoming atmosphere' as an expectation when first experiencing a restaurant. The last option that sees more than 50% of participants is 'Friendly & knowledgeable staff' which has a total of 55%. Elements that contribute the least to the customer's decision-making process with a percentage of below 50% are 'Ideal location', 'Unique experience', 'Clear communication', and 'Efficient operations'. It can be concluded that high-quality products combined with good service would be likely to bring a good experience for customers when they were to pay for a restaurant experience.

### HOW DID YOU KNOW ABOUT BIÁNG!?

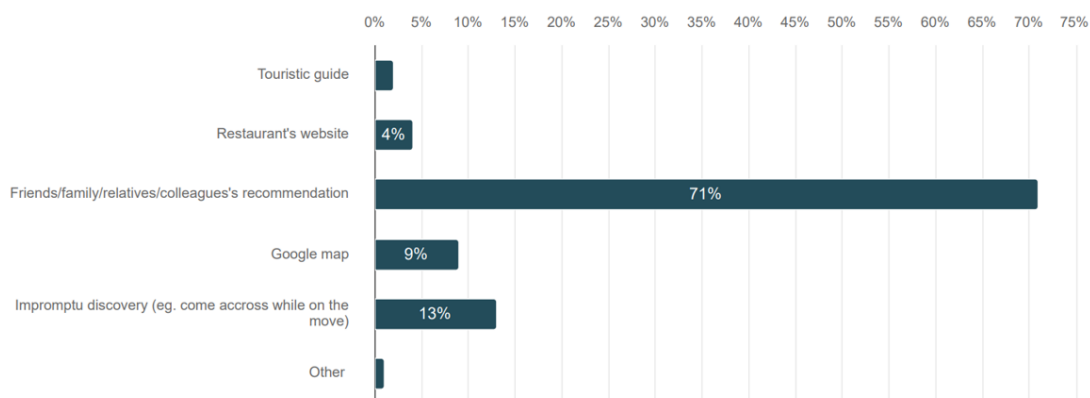


Figure 6: Different ways of knowing about Biáng!

The second question tackling the customer behavior segment is to ask about how customers learnt about our case-study restaurant. Five different ways were included and the 'Recommendation from friends, family, and colleagues' option ranked the highest as 71%. This has implied the huge impact of the word-of-mouth method when it comes to marketing for a business. The second way is by 'Impromptu discovery' with a rate of 13%. There were 9% who reached out to the restaurant via 'Google map' and 4% via directly its website. One answer in the 'Other' option mentioned the reason they knew about Biáng! is due to past employment at the restaurant.

## HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT AND EXPERIENCE THE FOOD AND SERVICE AT BIÁNG! RESTAURANT?

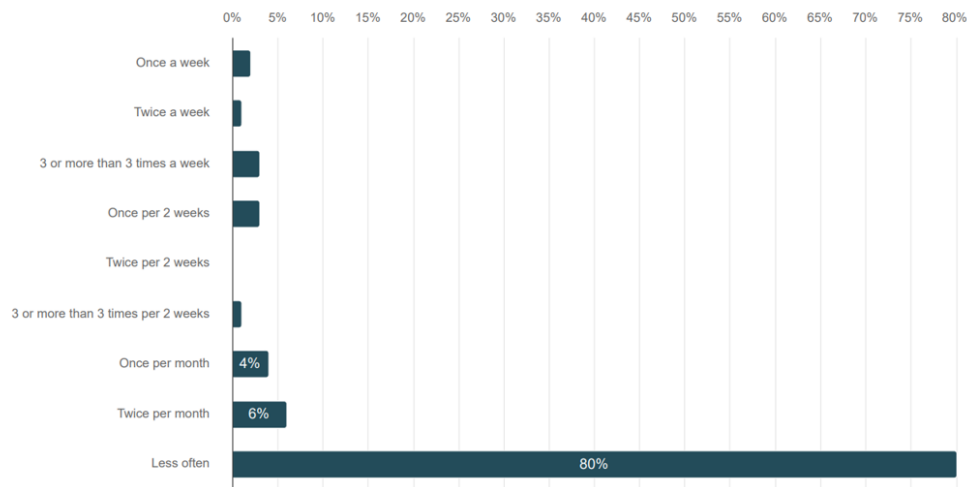


Figure 7: Different ways of knowing about Biáng!

In Figure 7, the data suggests the frequency of paying for a visit to Biáng! is less than often which accounts for 80% of the respondents. With a rate of 6%, 'Twice per month' is the number of visits of 4 out of 69 answers. The rest of the respondents rarely came back with less than 5%.

## THE MOST CONTRIBUTOR TO THE DECISION ON VISITING BIÁNG!

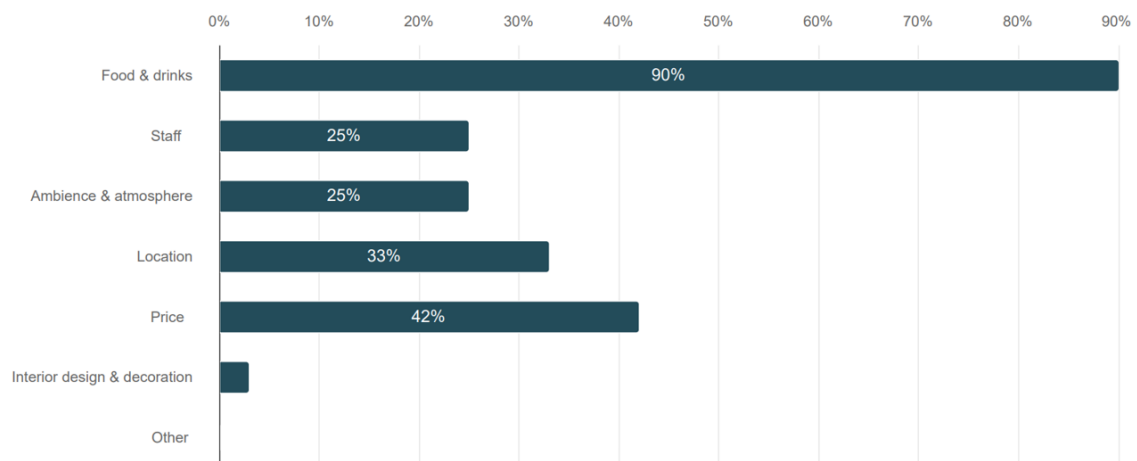


Figure 8: Contributors to the decision to visit Biáng!

It is explicitly observed that 'Food & drinks' are one of the important elements contributing to the decision to visit Biáng! with a very large portion of 90%. For the second factor which made up 42% of the answers, 'Price' was fairly selected that is worth a visit to the restaurant. 'Location' arrived third in this ranking since the restaurant, as aforementioned, has been ideally located within the central regions of Helsinki and Tampere. 'Staff' and 'Ambience &

atmosphere' surprisingly shared the same percentage of 25. In general, 'Interior & decoration' attracted the least from customers as it covers less than 3%.

### Satisfaction factors

In this section, respondents were to evaluate their perspectives of satisfaction on Biáng!'s products and services by conducting a scale from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied).

#### Products

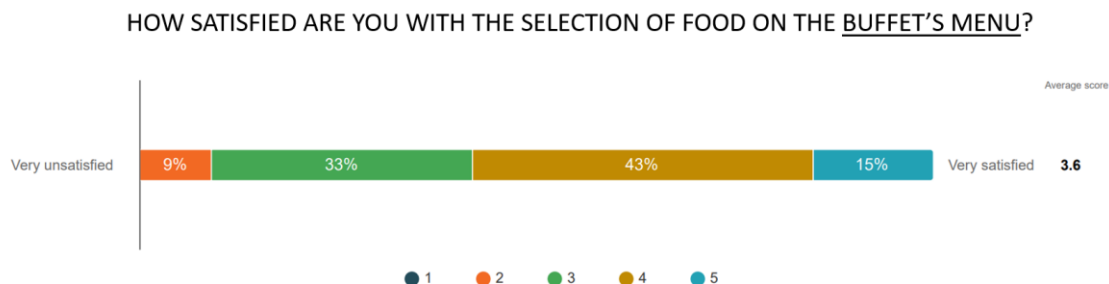


Figure 9: Level of customer satisfaction on Biáng!'s buffet menu

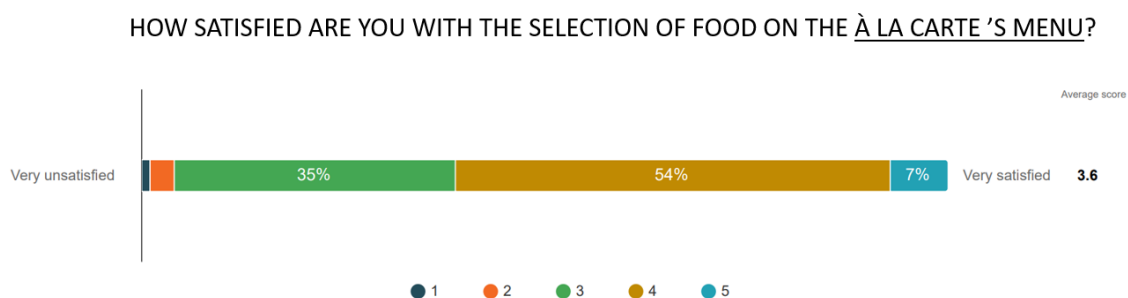


Figure 10: Level of customer satisfaction on Biáng!'s à la carte menu

The selection of food on Biáng!'s buffet and à la carte menu was examined in Figures 9 and 10, respectively. At first glance, it can be seen that a fair number of respondents were at the 'Satisfied' level in this category, which is shown as 43% in the buffet menu and slightly higher as 54% in the à la carte one. On the other hand, more participants are 'Very satisfied' with the buffet options than the à la carte, with 15% compared to 7%. At the 'Neutral' score, both segments shared a relatively same pattern from 33 to 35% satisfaction from surveyors. Lastly, less than 10% of respondents were unhappy with the food at Biáng! restaurant considering its products. On average, both menus achieved a score of 3.6 out of 4, which illustrates a good amount of satisfaction in the selection of Biáng!'s food.

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE VARIETY OF FOOD ON BIÁNG!'S MENU?

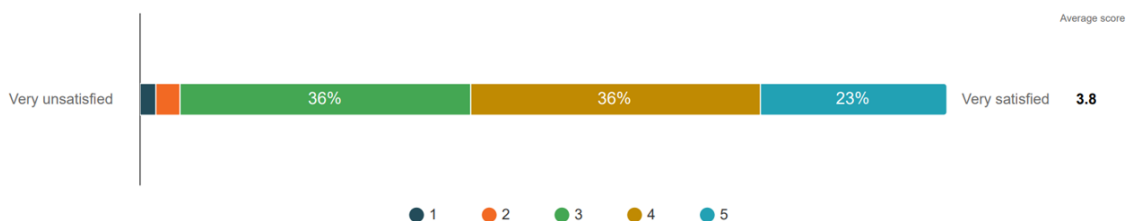


Figure 11: Level of customer satisfaction with the variety of food on Biáng!'s menu

In terms of the variety of food on Biáng!'s menu, 36% of respondents agreed on the 'Satisfied' score and the same amount also goes to 'Neutral'. On top of that, 23%, which is approximately 16 people, opted for the 'Very satisfied' level. This can be interpreted that most participants were pleased with the distinct options that they could choose to order from Biáng!'s menu. On average, this segment achieved a 3.8 score out of 4, which means the restaurant offered an excellently diversified menu to their customers.

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE QUALITY OF FOOD ON BIÁNG!'S MENU?

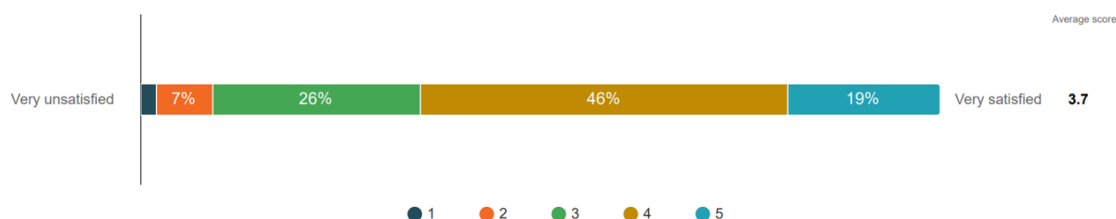


Figure 12: Level of customer satisfaction with the quality of food on Biáng!'s menu

Quality plays an essential role in any restaurant operation. In Figure 12, it shows that 46% of respondents were 'Satisfied' with the restaurant's food quality in general. Approximately 19%, which accounts for 13 people, were 'Very satisfied' with the products. However, 26% fell into the 'Neutral' score, 7% were not entirely pleased with the food from the 'Unsatisfied' and 1.5% were not happy at all. On average, a 3.7 score out of 4 can be seen as a great measurement of the quality of food on Biáng!'s menu.

## Service

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE ATTENTIVENESS AND FRIENDLINESS OF THE STAFF AT BIÁNG!?

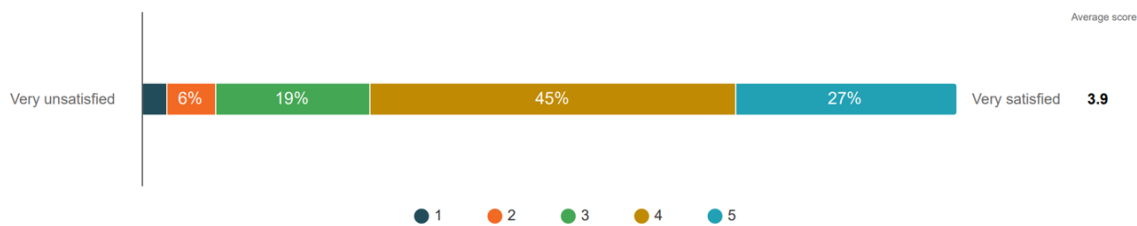


Figure 13: Level of customer satisfaction on the attentiveness and friendliness of Biáng!'s staff

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE STAFF'S RECOMMENDATION ON HELPING YOU CHOOSE A DISH TO TRY OUT?

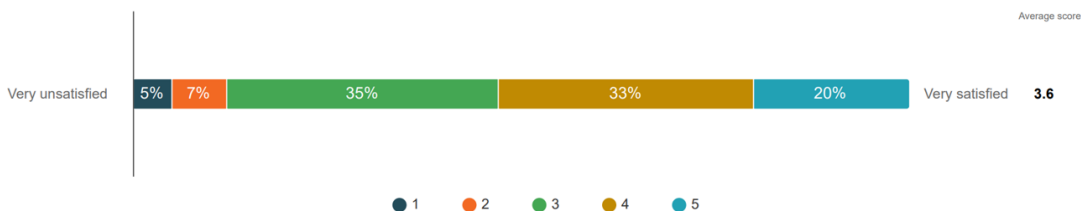


Figure 14: Level of customer satisfaction on Biáng!'s recommendations from staff

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE TIME TAKEN TO TAKE ORDERS DURING THE À-LA-CARTE SERVICE?

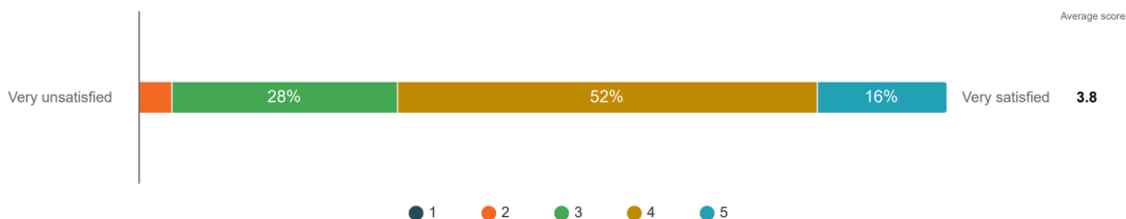


Figure 15: Level of customer satisfaction on the time taken to make orders in the à-la-carte service

The second satisfaction factor is service. According to Figures 13,14 and 15, staff at Biáng! received a positive score on their general service and interaction with customers. More particularly, the satisfaction of 'attentiveness and friendliness', product knowledge as in 'staff recommendations', and efficiency as in 'time taken to make orders' stood mostly at the 'Satisfied' score, with a percentage of 45%, 33%, and 52%, individually. It is worth noting that the efficiency factor is slightly higher than the other two, which translates to a good operation and workflow being incorporated into the restaurant.

In the 'Very satisfied', staff's 'attentiveness and friendliness' had the highest percentage which is 27%, compared to the other two with 20% in 'staff recommendations' and 16% in 'time taken to make orders'. On the 'Neutral' side, 'staff recommendations' saw 35% of respondents, 19% for the level of 'attentiveness and friendliness' and 19% for the 'time taken to make orders'.

Regarding the negative portion of the scale which refers to the 'Unsatisfied' and 'Very unsatisfied', all three aspects received less than 10% from participants. On average, the service factor at Biáng! achieved a score in the range of 3.6 to 3.9 out of 4, which depicts outstanding customer service coming from the restaurant staff.

### Other elements

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE PRICING FOR THE QUALITY OF FOOD AND SERVICE PROVIDED AT BIÁNG!?

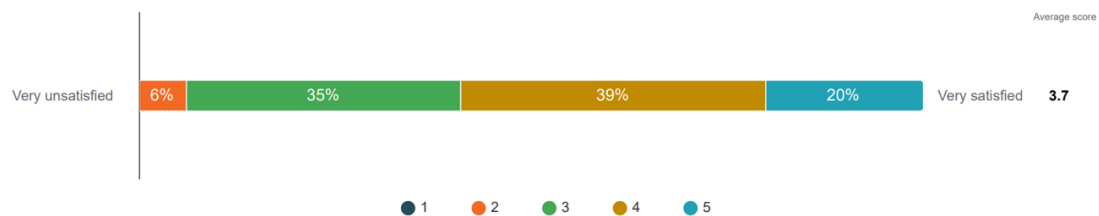


Figure 16: Level of customer satisfaction with the pricing of products and services at Biáng!

Pricing is one of the crucial factors affecting customer satisfaction. Figure 16 illustrates the satisfaction of respondents who once experienced the quality of food and service provided at Biáng!. Most of them were 'Satisfied' with a percentage of 39 on the scale, and 20% responded that they were 'Very satisfied' with the price. There were 35% answers with a 'Neutral' score and only 6% were 'Unsatisfied'.

HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH A LIST OF FACTORS LISTED BELOW THAT CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR WHOLE EXPERIENCE AT BIÁNG!?

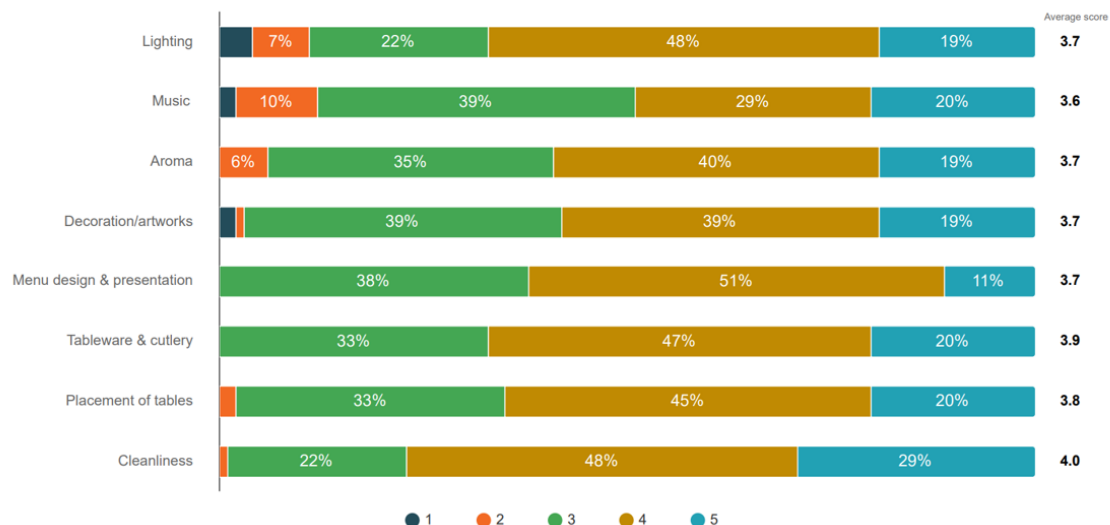


Figure 17: Factors affecting customer experience at Biáng!

Figure 17 shows a list of elements in Biáng!' that contribute to the respondent's whole dining experience and satisfaction. Eight aspects that are included in this question are Lighting, Music, Aroma, Decoration and artwork, Menu design and presentation, Tableware and cutlery, Placement of table, and Cleanliness.

As it is presented, most answers were 'Satisfied' in each of the above-mentioned elements, with the percentage ranging from 29 as the lowest for Music to 51 as the highest for Menu design and presentation. The Cleanliness element received the highest percentage, which is 29%, compared to the others in the 'Very satisfied' score. Music had the biggest percentage of 10 in the 'Unsatisfied' score, compared to other elements in the list, followed by Lighting (7%), Aroma (6%), and an amount of less than 5% in the Placement of tables and Cleanliness factors.

On average, all the elements achieved a very good score from 3.6 to 3.9, especially the Cleanliness factor which got the maximum 4 out of 4.

## Overall experience and improvements

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RETURN TO BIÁNG! AFTER THE EXPERIENCE?

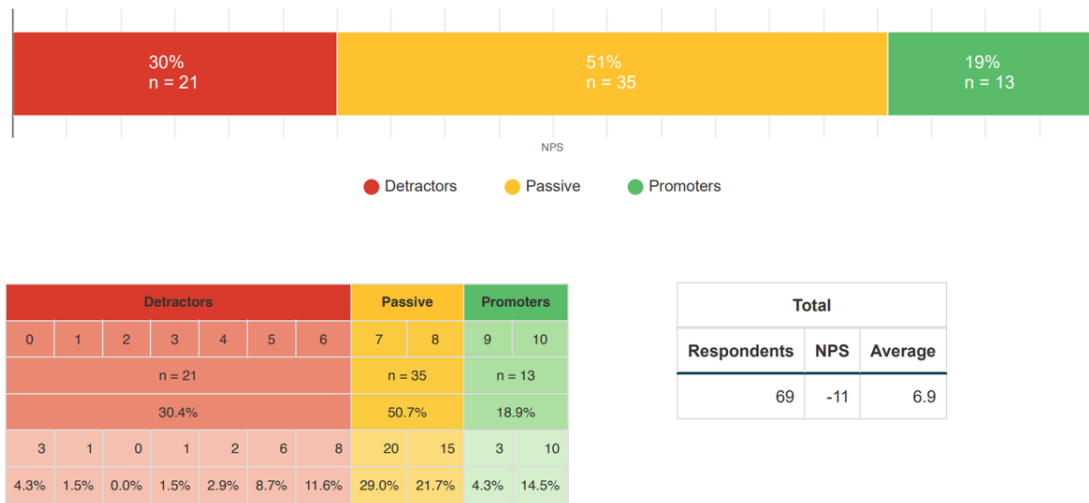


Figure 18: Likeliness of returning to Biáng! from respondents

According to Figure 18, 19% of participants would be likely to make a comeback to the restaurant after the experience of its products and services. This percentage is implied as a 'Promoters' score with 13 out of 69 people who have done the survey. A more 'Passive' score between 7 and 8 had 51% with 35 respondents. Lastly, with the 'Detractors' score from 0 to 6, it reached 30%, making up for 21 people who were less likely to visit Biáng! more frequently.

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO RECOMMEND BIÁNG! TO OTHER FRIENDS AND FAMILY?

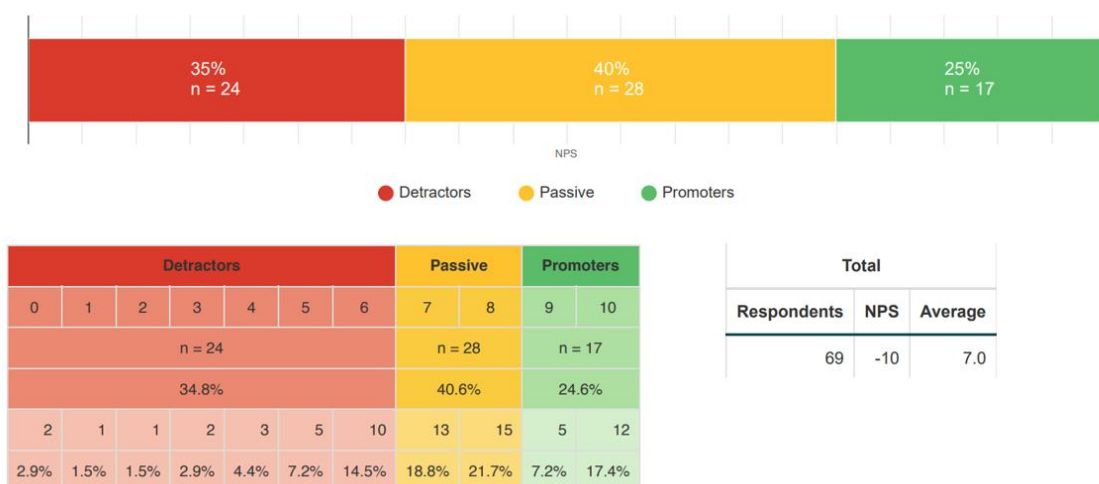


Figure 19: Likeliness of recommending Biáng! to friends and family

Contradicting the return score, more respondents (25%) would favourably recommend Biáng! to their friends and family as shown in Figure 19 which presents the likeliness of recommending. In the scores from 7 to 8, there were approximately 41% of participants who were likely to the recommendation, and with a percentage of 35, it happened to be 24 respondents who were less likely to recommend Biáng! to others.

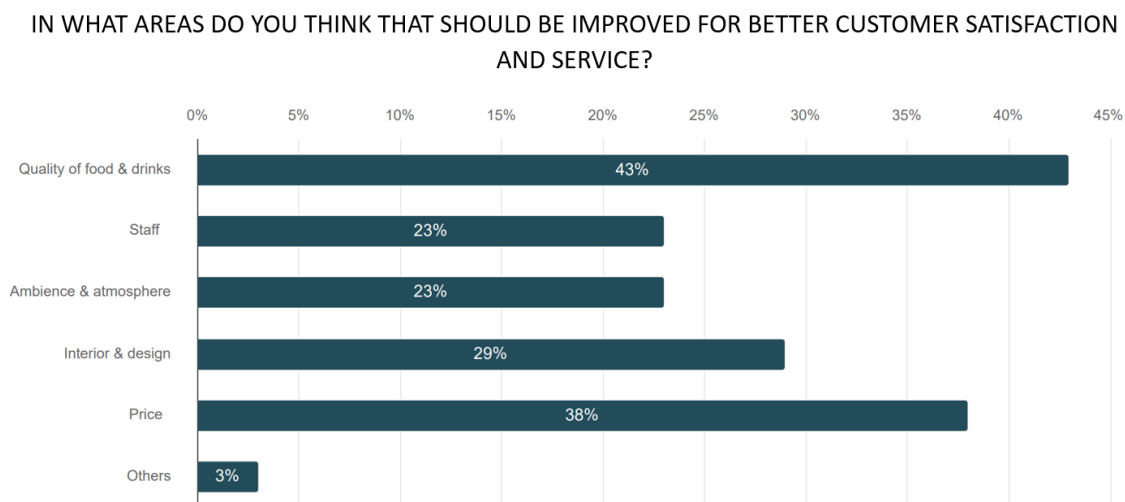


Figure 20: Key factors for improvement

Figure 20 shows areas that need improvement at Biáng! for an enhancement in customer service and satisfaction. The top three factors for improvement according to 69 respondents are 'Quality of food & drinks', 'Price', and 'Interior & design', with the received percentages of 43, 38 and 29, respectively. Other criteria such as 'Staff' and 'Ambience & atmosphere' were both given by 23% of all the answers. In the 'Other' factor, there was a comment from one respondent that the restaurant should improve its 'additional promotions' to bring out better results for customer service engagement.

## 4.2 Interview

### 4.2.1 Interview Design

The authors got on the line with Ms Linh Nguyen - the general manager of Biáng!, Mr Thinh Nguyen - the employee - to provide the information as much as possible because the satisfaction of customers could come from many perspectives. Plus, Ms Linh has managed the restaurant for over three years now, and she is the one who recognizes the problem the most. Thinh has worked at the restaurant for over one year and a half and is also majoring in Hospitality Management in his current study, so he knows how to define and tackle the problem quite well. The restaurant was very happy to cooperate with the authors in this

research because they were curious about the level of satisfaction and problems from a different perspective.

#### 4.2.2 Interview Results and Analysis

The organization of Biáng!'s staff is easy to manage since there are only four main sections in groups of employees from the owner to the staff. Figure 21 presents the general construction of staff organization in the restaurant.

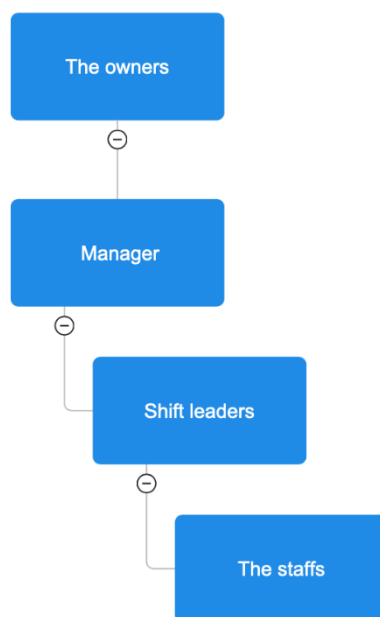


Figure 21: The organization of employees at Biáng!

If big problems occur, the staff of the restaurant are required to report to their superiors who are tasked with overseeing the problems at work and seeking appropriate solutions that will be then sent to the staff as a way for them to know how to tackle them in the future. Additionally, all information should be informed to the manager. It is a better and easier practice for both the managers and staff to control the situation, given the fact that the restaurant has several branches.

The collection from Biáng!'s perspective involves interviewing one member of the management, two staff members, and three customers. Most of the information provided was useful for this research, Biáng! restaurants are running well in terms of business operation.

However, there are days not like other days which means some days will be quite busy and some days will not. According to one of the management members, at this time (November) last year, the restaurants were packed with customers almost every weekend, but this year is not what they are expecting. The problems mainly are not customers feeling unsatisfied, but this year's economy is downgraded, so people tend to cook at home more often, Biáng! in Espoo is still able to keep their profit and customers stable daily and busy on the weekend. In contrast, the Helsinki branch is unable to guess. Having said that, customers tend to enjoy their time in the restaurant because of their professionalism and friendliness regardless of how busy it gets, the staff keeps their hospitality at the top. Some customers were surprisingly happy with the experience they had at Biáng!, as compared to other Chinese restaurants in Helsinki, the service was more worthwhile. Biáng! did a great job of designing a service that can impress the targeted customers.

On the other hand, Biáng!'s staff sometimes find themselves in a hard place when they are faced with some specific customers. Biáng! serves a buffet at lunch until 15:00 on the weekdays, and after 15:00, it is time for à la carte, which means the kitchen has to close the buffet kitchen at 14:30 to prepare and clean for the a la carte time. Still, there would be customers who did not have time to grab their lunch on time, they arrived after 14:30 and figured out there would not be so many food selections left for them, and the restaurant could not refill the food anymore, some of them are happy with the remaining while some are not too happy, this is one of the reasons why unsatisfied customers appeared. During the weekends, they will serve only on the menu, which makes some of the customers confused if they do not read the information carefully, they already planned where to have lunch on the weekend and found out that Biáng! does not serve a buffet for lunch, which results in unhappy customers. Plus, Biáng! has its own website for the information needed for the customers as well as a big board hanging beside the door to show the time for each section and the staff would be happy to answer all the questions that come from their audience.

Managing customer satisfaction is a challenging task due to the diverse range of personalities they exhibit. Individuals working in the service field must cultivate the ability to remain composed in their responses to customers. However, there are some moments when customers fail to comprehend the effort invested in maintaining professionalism, leading to cases where staff members at Biáng! may face discomfort during their shifts. In contrast, some pleasant customers do not hesitate to compliment the staff as an encouragement to keep them working harder. Such positive interactions serve as the sole motivation for the staff to appreciate these customers, as well as to advance in their careers. For them, satisfying customers is a measurement of their work, they will base on the compliments to

acknowledge whether they do something right or wrong. The staff have their way of communicating with their customers if it makes the guests feel comfortable while spending time in the restaurant. Biáng! will try their best to recommend a suitable dish for their customer to experience the best. It is fascinating how they manage to understand their customers with one or two questions, for example, the Chinese usually enjoys spicy and strong flavour in their dish, and the staff are aware of this and will ask them some basic questions to confirm their thoughts to introduce some of the dishes on the menu to satisfy the customers' desire. In their opinion, a satisfied customer will not hesitate to leave positive feedback and come back occasionally. Satisfied customers tend to come back to where they feel comfortable the most, which results in loyal customers. On the opposite side, negative reviews are seen on their Google platform, some of them are good opinions for Biáng! to change for the better, but some are misunderstood in communication. Image 1 illustrates real-time reviews taken from the Google platform where people usually check out the service before visiting a restaurant.

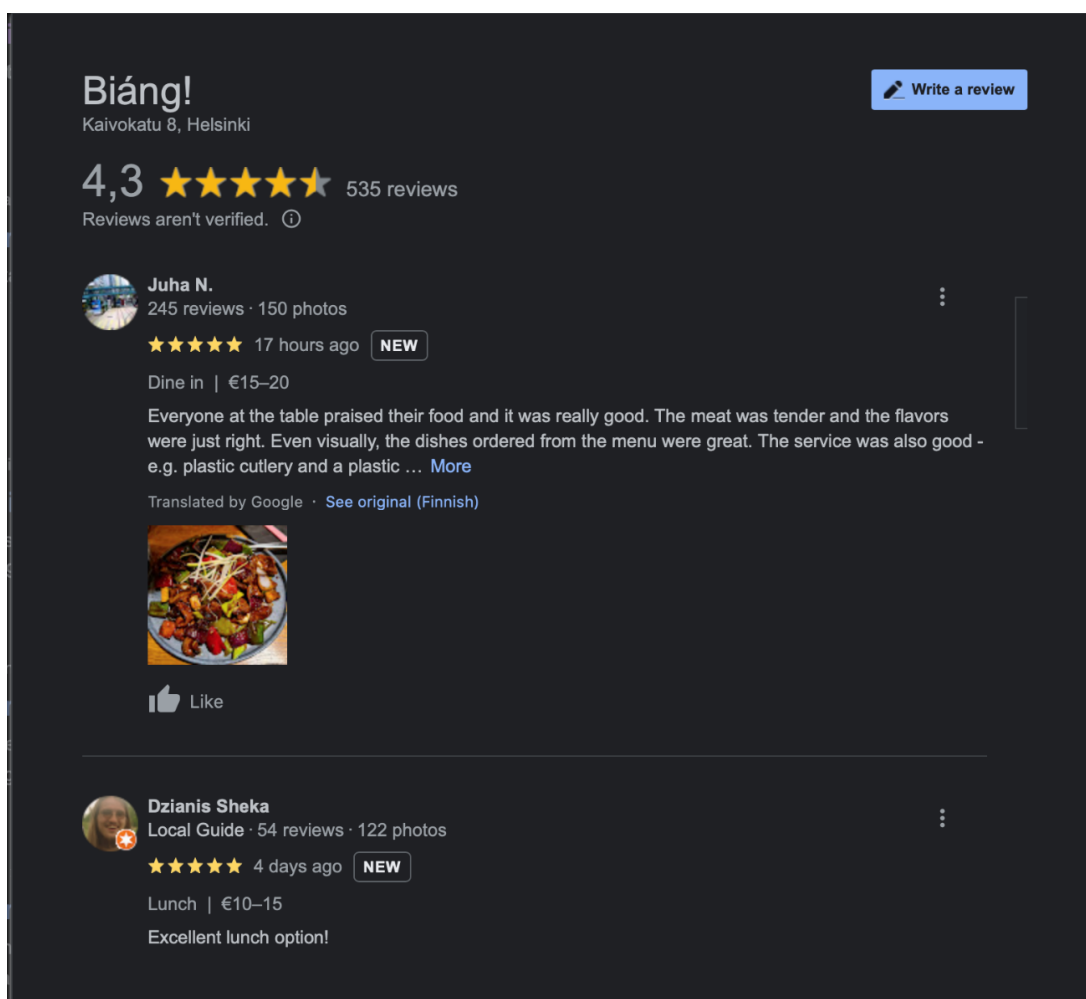


Image 1: Customer feedback of Biáng! on Google review platform

Distinctions in expectations are bound to occur in a restaurant. The challenge for staff at Biáng!, who serve a large volume of customers daily, is the difficulty of meeting all the unique preferences of each customer. The consequences are the fatigue happening to the staff which falsely presents a dismissive attitude toward customers, and potentially leads to a situation when the staff forget orders, adding to customer dissatisfaction in the end. All staff at Biáng! respect and appreciate all the reviews from online to offline and they will use it as a foundation to boost the business as high as possible.

The professionalism, good hospitality skills and affordable prices at Biáng! are three key factors for them to draw back their loyal customer. They also have many signature dishes which can be found exclusively on the restaurant menu including “Yuxiang Eggplants”, “Oil Spill Noodles” and “General Tso Chicken” which cannot be found anywhere in Finland, as the taste is authentically Chinese but still fits into the Finnish lifestyles. Some customers said that they came back not only because of their unique taste and quality but also their welcoming spirit, even if the restaurant is packed with customers, the staff will not leave any customers waiting for too long to make their order or for their drinks. “They are amazing in how fast and observative in such a big and busy place” - a customer shared. Other restaurants might use promotion and marketing to retain their customers, but Biáng! use their skills and quality. In terms of quality, Biáng! imports their own ingredients for the foods and selects drinks such as wine, soft drinks, etc by themselves, in this way, they can manage the quality of the products they are offering to customers.

## 5 Discussion

After having conducted both two qualitative and quantitative research methods, this chapter dives deeper into the potential problems that could be discussed in more detail. Furthermore, the application of SWOT analysis, with its purpose as aforementioned in the previous chapter, plays as a central tool to evaluate the management system that has been incorporated in the business operation of Biáng!.

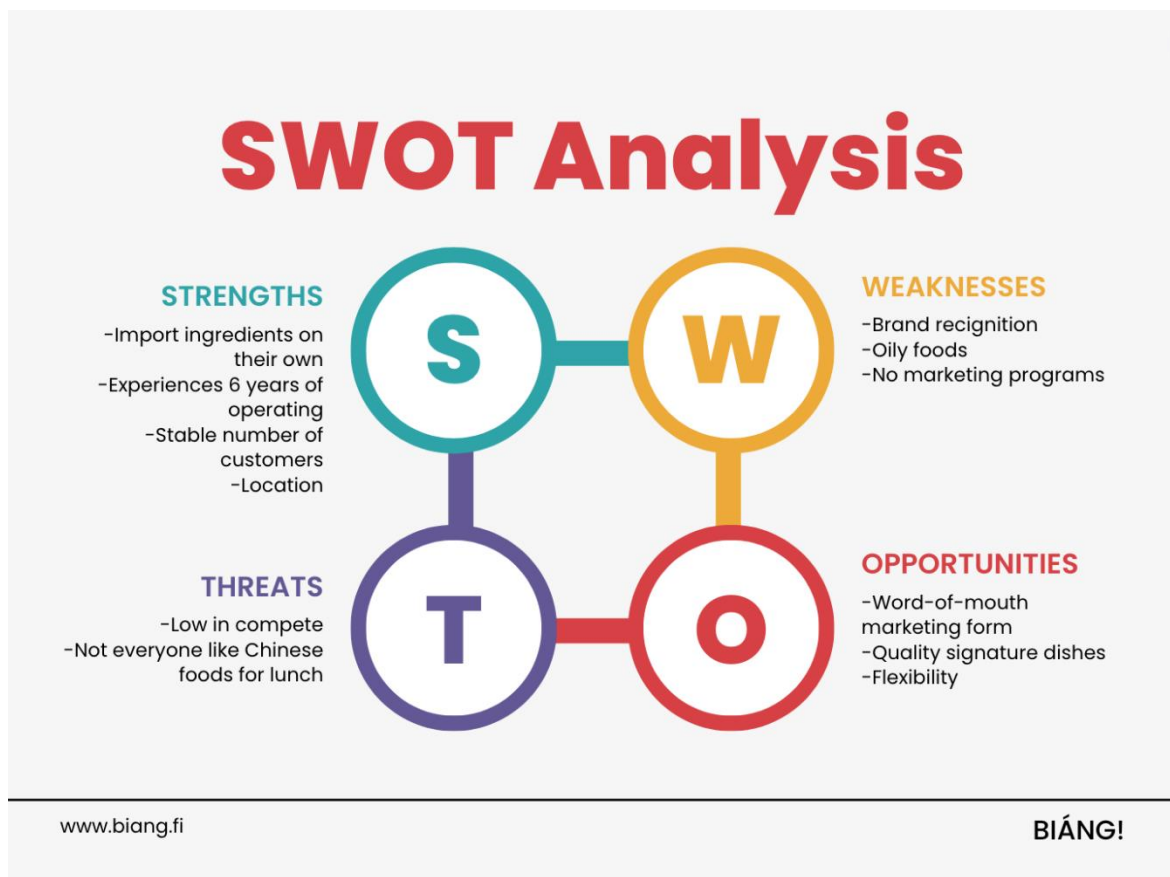


Figure 22: SWOT analysis at Biáng! restaurant

The first element is the strengths, Biáng! has a separate wholesaler run by the same owner so that they import their ingredients on their own. In this way, they can control the quality of the products. They even import spices and flavours from China to ensure the authentic taste in every meal and with a perfect location in the shopping malls that are connected to bus stations and train stations. With six years of experience in operating restaurants, Biáng! can easily attract tourists from many places to try their foods. With the demand for lunch for specific segments of customers, the restaurant has a variety of choices for the buffet that is served only at lunchtime on weekdays, but not available on the weekends since their customer segmentation for the buffet is people who are going to work and study.

Next is the weakness, they have low recognition compared to other Chinese restaurants that are located in Helsinki since they have zero marketing programs that can attract potential customers. Chinese food usually has a lot of oil, Finnish lifestyle does not include that much oil, they are still trying to reduce the oil as much as possible.

In terms of the opportunities, they have success in collaborating in bringing authentic taste and suit into the Finnish lifestyles, customers who are happy with their experience will have the urge to take their friends, families, and relatives to dive into the happiness. This leads to a free promotion that is called a “word-of-mouth” form of marketing that comes from their customers. Their signature dishes, which will be illustrated in the key findings section, are amazing according to the experience that the authors had; these are the key factors in satisfying customers. If people have an allergic reaction to a specific ingredient on their menu, the staff will remind the chef to take it out, which is flexible for people who are afraid of dining out with their allergies and restrictions.

The last element is threads. Since Biáng! is not highly recognised among other restaurants in Finland, they are not well-known to compete with their competitors. This is why not a lot of people know about Biáng! when mentioning the restaurant.

## 5.1 Key findings

First, the perspectives on customer satisfaction were distributed by the survey made by customers who visited Biáng! restaurant.

According to Figure 24, Biáng! did a very good job in satisfying their customers through their customer service skills, customers were either satisfied or neutral, not a single dissatisfaction has been mentioned about their services. Through the interview, the manager of the restaurant shared that all the staff will be trained based on their skills which means Biáng! will upgrade from their basic to professional, the staff can work with their ways but have to be suitable with the working rules. As a result, they get to be themselves while working, which creates comfort in the way that they serve the customers if the customers are happy with it. Even when the authors interviewed one of the staff, he said that he had worked with the restaurant for over one year and a half, he felt very comfortable and always ready to dedicate himself to every situation. In this Learning and Development field, Biáng! has successfully developed the required skill set, knowledge and competence to have a better work setting, good training and development skills are useful in gaining and retaining potential employees as well as boosting productivity and increasing profit (Ottawa University 2021).

As a result, customers are very satisfied with the service in the restaurant, which could create a relationship to build up loyal customers if the quality of their products is at a certain good level.



Figure 23: Main factors affecting the satisfaction of customers at Biáng!

According to the survey, loyal customers are the missing factor in the business since Biáng! does not have any programs that could draw in potential customers to create loyalty. They use their own skills and quality of products to create loyalty with customers. The quality of the products in the restaurant is high because most ingredients are carefully imported. Therefore, they can check everything thoroughly. With the original spices and authentic taste, they could impress customers and by constantly offering them high-quality products, the restaurant will satisfy a huge number of customers. As a result, customers who are happy with their experience will tend to come back for more (Jessica Hall, 2020), this will lead to loyal customers and Biáng! is successful in doing this. From the interview, the manager said that Biáng! owns a stable number of customers from time to time through the quality and delicious taste of its products. Most of the customer groups that often come will be people with families, office workers and Chinese people living in Finland. They come on average 1-2 times a week. The survey was done mostly by the young generation who have higher expectations for their experience. In contrast, loyal customers of Biáng! are mostly married and have family so they feel comfortable in what brings out the satisfaction in them. The problem that is quite important to Biáng! is the marketing, they do not have any

marketing programs to interest more customers as well as satisfy loyal customers. Sometimes they need something new to satisfy them even more.

The interior and lighting in Biáng! are cosy and dim, although not all people enjoy this kind of lighting. Finnish people are very enjoying this; however, Chinese customers are not, they demand light so that they can read the menu carefully and see the food. The vision of aged people is not as good as the young, they also need light to read the ingredients on the menu to avoid situations where they have allergic reactions. The lighting of Biáng! in Espoo is sufficiently bright but the branch in Helsinki is not. The staff have received negative feedback about the lighting as well.

Finally, customer satisfaction is not only a key factor in increasing profit and raising brand awareness but also is hard to achieve. The authors considered both results from the survey and interview to conclude the potential problems that came from the perspective of customers and the business. Two of the problems were spotted by the authors that are lighting adjustment and marketing programs.

## 5.2 Suggestions to improve the satisfaction of customers at Biáng!

The problem that can be seen easily from the discussion is the lighting adjustment in the restaurant. As mentioned, Finnish people love to enjoy their meals in a dimmish cosy atmosphere, but the rest contrasts with that style. Especially in the winter, when the darkness surrounds them almost all day long, people need more light to lighten up their day after spending hours working hard, more amount of light to read the menu carefully to avoid things they are not interested in and more light to chat with their relatives on a special occasion. Lighting in a restaurant plays a vital role in design and experience in terms of feelings from customers, and acknowledging how the light will affect the restaurant is crucial (Umiten IV 2023). Adjusting brighter lights can help the restaurant attract more potential customers and more loyal ones, which could raise its annual profit.

The second problem is to publish marketing programs for both acquaintance customers and new customers. By establishing effective marketing, the restaurant can raise the awareness of customers of the food and dining experience and open a new opportunity for Biáng! to build a strong name for the restaurant, this will make them stand out from the competition which will result in a growing customer base and higher profit (Ross 2022). Raising brand awareness of Biáng! will solve another missing factor in the weakness of the business. A new marketing program could create positive reviews as well as hype up their loyal

customers with something new. They already invested enough in skill training for their employees, now it is time to invest in more marketing programs so that they can reach a new segment of customers.

## 6 Conclusion

Customers have been considered as the backbone of any business, as they are in control of creating profits for a company. Having said that, customers are packed with a diversity of backgrounds, preferences, and personalities, which explains the struggle to sustain a good level of satisfaction everlastingly. In light of this, the authors were compelled to draw further from the simple question of how to define a satisfied customer to an examination specialized for this concept, which is customer satisfaction.

The exploration of customer satisfaction is a multifaceted journey that evolves in various industries and businesses. Some sectors are less focused on the customer aspect while there are ones that make it a foundation to maintain business. This research has aimed to centralize the topic of customer satisfaction in customer-centric operations, more specifically in the food and beverages industry. Key determinants were underpinned by a distinctive selection of literature to support the weight of customer satisfaction in the said industry. Ultimately, what a business seeks is the vicarious pleasure from customers after experiencing its service. Through a comprehensive review, it becomes evident that a holistic approach is necessary to sustain customer loyalty by providing sufficient customer satisfaction.

The primary objectives and research questions have been thoroughly met by an in-depth insight formed by characteristics and significant factors affecting the concept of customer satisfaction that were justified in the above chapters. Moreover, our study revealed the dynamic interplay between customer satisfaction and other factors such as customer loyalty, customer service, customer relationship management and expectations. It has been established that a satisfied customer exhibits a higher likelihood of returning and positive word-of-mouth, resulting in long-term success for business performance.

The following research chapter was designed to be an application of the literature review and theories with the employment of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. It was intended to simultaneously understand the two essential perspectives in a business, which comprises one from the owner and the other from the customers. The findings from the survey and interview were tremendously helpful in shaping the varied perceptions of customers that can make a difference in bettering the service at the case-study restaurant, which is *Biáng!*, a casual-dining Chinese establishment located in central Helsinki and Tampere, Finland.

To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address the implementation of customer-centric strategies to boost the level of satisfaction. Business owners are free to express their personality by how they aim to deliver it to the target customers.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that customer expectations are set to exceed which relies on how the owners choose to tailor the products and services, as well as invest more in robust customer service which can reflect their products. What is more, in the world of dominant technology, integrating technology into the existing business system would leverage the personalized interactions between customers and the business they are experiencing. Lastly, customer feedback should be emphasized as a crucial aspect of a proactive approach to customer satisfaction management.

As we conclude, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research, since the spectrum of customer satisfaction within this study is broad. Our study is unable to convey the entire factors influencing this concept in the dynamic essence of the food and beverages industry. However, further research on the same topic can be inspiringly acted on to leverage the complexity of customer satisfaction.

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Figure 23: Main factors affecting the satisfaction of customers at Biáng!

Image 1: Customer feedback of Biáng! on Google review platform

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Appendix 1. Survey



## **FACTORS AFFECT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT BIÁNG! RESTAURANT.**

Mandatory questions are marked with a star (\*)

Dear participants/customers,

We are students in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management from LAB University of Applied Sciences. The survey we created is aimed at our thesis's research purpose of investigating the factors contributing to levels of customer satisfaction at Biáng! Restaurant, located in the heart of the Helsinki area in Finland.

In order to reach the objectives of our thesis and dive deeper into the practical means of our theories based on customer satisfaction, customer service and customer quality, we would love to hear from you, customers who are frequent visitors to Biáng! Restaurant, about your opinions on general services such as food quality, staff, and other elements that would meet your expectations for a dining experience. We appreciate distinction in answers so do not hesitate to open up, as they will eventually be helpful in the light of our research process.

We are incredibly grateful for the participants in this survey, which is why we ensure all the information provided will be kept confidential.

Thinh Nguyen and Phuong Nguyen.

**1.**

**Where are you from?**

\*

- Finland
- Other parts of Europe
- Asia
- Africa

- 
- America
  - Other
- 

**2. What is your age group? \***

- Below 18
- 18-24
- 25-30
- 31-40
- 41-50
- 51+

**3. What comes to your expectations when visiting a restaurant? \***

- Quality of products (flavours, ingredients,...)
  - Value for money
  - Ideal location
  - Friendly & knowledgeable staff
  - Good service
  - Unique experience
  - Clear communication
  - Efficient operations
  - Clean and welcoming atmosphere
  - Other
- 

**4. How did you hear about Biáng! Restaurant? \***

- Touristic guide
- Restaurant's website
- Friends/family/relatives/colleagues's recommendation
- Google map
- Impromptu discovery (eg. come accross while on the move)
- Other

**5. How often do you visit Biáng! Restaurant? \***

- Once a week
- Twice a week
- 3 or more than 3 times a week
- Once per 2 weeks
- Twice per 2 weeks
- 3 or more than 3 times per 2 weeks
- Once per month
- Twice per month
- Less often

**6. What is the most important factor contributing to your decision on visiting Biáng!?!? \***

- Food & drinks
- Staff
- Ambience & atmosphere
- Location
- Price
- Interior design & decoration
- Other

Next, we would love to know your perspectives on the levels of satisfaction based on the products and services provided at Biáng!

(1= very unsatisfied/2= unsatisfied/3= neutral/4= satisfied/5= very satisfied)

**7. How satisfied are you with the selection of food on the buffet's menu? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

**8. How satisfied are you with the selection of food on the à la carte 's menu? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

**9. How satisfied are you with the variety of food on Biáng!'s menu? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

**10. How satisfied are you with the quality of food on Biáng!'s menu? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

**11. How satisfied are you with the attentiveness and friendliness of the staff at Biáng!?!? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

**12. How satisfied are you with the staff's recommendation on helping you choose a dish to try out? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

**13. How satisfied are you with the time taken to take orders during the à-la-carte service? \***

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

**14. How satisfied are you with the pricing for the quality of food and service provided at Biáng!?** \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

**15. How satisfied are you with a list of factors listed below that contribute to your whole experience at Biáng!?**

(1=very unsatisfied/2=unsatisfied/3=neutral/4=satisfied/5=very satisfied)

\*

	1	2	3	4	5
Lighting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aroma	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decoration/artworks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Menu design & presentation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tableware & cutlery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement of tables	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cleanliness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**16. How likely are you to return to Biáng! after the experience?** \*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**17. How likely are you to recommend Biáng! to other friends and family?** \*

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**18. In what areas do you think that should be improved for better customer satisfaction and service?** \*

- Quality of food & drinks
- Staff
- Ambience & atmosphere
- Interior & design
- 
- Price
- Others

**19. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us in general?**

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Appendix 2. Interview questions

1. Introduction of the business
2. What is the daily number of customers regarding buffet and à la carte?
3. How do you segment your customer groups?
4. What are the difficulties when dealing with customers?
5. How does the business keep loyal customers?
6. How will the employees be trained?
7. Can all the employees solve the problems?
8. What will the business do after receiving negative reviews?