

# **Cultural and Culinary Concept for a Sri Lankan Restaurant in Lappeenranta**

LAB University of Applied Sciences  
Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management  
2024  
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## Abstract

Author(s)	Publication type	Completion year
Disna Umagiliya Gamage Poornima Hiniduma Vithanach- chige	Thesis, UAS	2024
	Number of pages	
65		
Title of the thesis		
Cultural and Culinary Concept for a Sri Lankan Restaurant in Lappeenranta		
Degree, Field of Study		
Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management		
Name, title and organisation of the client		
Abstract		
<p>This thesis outlines the development of a cultural and culinary concept for creating an authentic Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta, Finland. The study, in the light of increasing diversity in the city and the lack of specialized Sri Lankan culinary offerings, researches the feasibility of offering a unique dining experience that combines traditional Sri Lankan cuisine with enriching cultural components. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews carried out with restaurateurs and a quantitative survey targeted at local consumers. Results from the research highlight consumer preferences for ethnic cuisine, a desire for cultural experiences, and a strong demand for authentic Sri Lankan food products. The dissertation is underscored by the importance of a strong business strategy: an elaborate business plan, market analysis, SWOT analysis, and an inclusive marketing strategy that would ensure the success of the restaurant. The outcome provides concrete suggestions on how to open a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta that promotes sustainability, cultural authenticity, and customer engagement.</p>		
Keywords		
Sri Lankan restaurant, cultural concept, ethnic cuisine, business plan, market analysis, customer preferences, Lappeenranta, mixed-method research, authenticity, culinary experience, marketing strategy, SWOT analysis. Business Canva model		

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The background of the thesis

Starting a restaurant in a foreign country requires not only an understanding of the local market but also an ability to introduce a unique cultural and dining experience. The focus of this thesis is to create a cultural and culinary concept for an authentic Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta, Finland. It is in this context that an attempt will be made to trace how such a restaurant might succeed in offering an experience that will bridge Sri Lankan cuisine with its rich cultural heritage, rendering an atmosphere that would captivate both locals and international visitors.

Lappeenranta is a beautiful city in the southeast of Finland, close to Lake Saimaa. It is one of the few cities becoming more diverse, partly due to its international student community and strategic location (Visit Finland 2024). Although there are quite a few international cuisines found in this city, there is no purely Sri Lankan food restaurant. With only two Sri Lankan-owned restaurants operating in the city, they mostly serve international dishes such as pizzas and kebabs, there are only limited Sri Lankan options. This thus provides room for a restaurant fully embracing authentic Sri Lankan cuisine and culture to bring novelty, rich in culture, to Lappeenranta.

This study will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather insights from the owners of existing Sri Lankan-owned restaurants in Lappeenranta, together with feedback from potential customers, in an attempt to understand how a restaurant offering not only traditional Sri Lankan dishes but also a cultural ambiance through design, decor, and service can fit into the growing appetite for diversity in dining experiences in Lappeenranta. This will contribute to the restaurant business field by highlighting the role of cultural authenticity in enhancing the overall customer experience in the hospitality industry.

The thesis is therefore organized to first discuss Lappeenranta's local food culture and market trends. Objectives, limitations, and research questions will be presented after this, mapping out the scope and direction of the study. The theoretical framework and research methods will be described next. This research will conclude with a detailed proposal for the Sri Lankan restaurant, elaborating on marketing strategies, customer analysis, and operational plans that combine both culinary and cultural elements.

## 1.2 Sri Lankan cuisine

Sri Lankan cuisine is one of the most vibrant, multi-dimensional aspects of the country's cultural heritage, amalgamating all the local food traditions together with its South Indian, Southeast Asian, European, and Middle Eastern influences. Through the centuries, Sri Lanka has served as a crossroads of trade, bringing many foreign culinary influences into its food practice (Lokeshwara et al. 2023, 287-297.) Sri Lankan cuisine, therefore, is not only replete with flavor and aroma but also strongly connected to culture, where food plays a great role in festivities, religious ceremonies, and even daily life (Mihiranie et al. 2020, 1-6).

In the heart of Sri Lankan cuisine is the staple food rice. Forming quite an integral part of the main meals, it is often served with an array of side dishes containing vegetable curries, sambols, and chutneys all usually prepared in coconut milk, using local spices and fresh herbs. A staple in Sri Lankan cuisine, coconuts are a product that makes curries rich and is used as a base for kiribath, or milk rice, which happens to be a staple food at many vital festivals and times. (Mihiranie et al. 2020, 1-10.) It is balanced with spices like cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, and curry leaves since the island has a historical association with the spice trade (Chathuranga 2019).

One of the special features of Sri Lankan cuisine is that it gives importance to both taste and health. In many traditional dishes, the Ayurvedic way of cooking combines ingredients, not only in terms of taste but also for their medicinal properties. Spices like turmeric, black pepper, and ginger are commonly used in boosting digestion and generally promoting health. Meals are balanced, usually presenting a juxtaposition of spicy, sour, and savory flavors, appealing to all senses while supplying optimal nutrition. (Mihiranie et al. 2020, 5-12.)

The diversity in Sri Lankan food also testifies to the regional and ethnic variety of the country. While Sinhalese cuisine is based on combinations of rice and curry, the Tamil food fauna is more vegetarian with a different seasoning profile. The Muslim community contributes sweetness and spice, as represented by watalappam and biryani. (Bisht 2024.) Moreover, the culture of street foods has developed with much popularity among locals and tourists, contributing iconic snacks like kottu roti and isso vadei to the splendor of Sri Lankan cuisine in a highly vibrant and accessible manner (Devaraja 2013).

Sri Lankan cuisine is a confluence of native and foreign influences, a wide use of spices, and deeply health-, cultural-, and community-linked traditions. Centuries of history and con-

tact with other civilizations have given the flavors an identity unique to this island. This distinct culinary identity distinguishes Sri Lankan cuisine as one of the most characteristic and cherished traditions in South Asia.

### 1.3 The objective and delimitation of the thesis

The main idea of this thesis is to create a cultural and culinary concept for a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta, Finland. The concept will focus on serving Sri Lankan authentic food with an immersive experience reflecting the traditions and atmosphere of the island. The thesis tries to find the best way of combining food and culture by answering such questions as the menu, restaurant atmosphere, location, and target customers. The other objective is to introduce Sri Lankan culture through its cuisine and a stimulating dining atmosphere for those who seek new adventures and experiences in food.

This thesis focuses on developing a cultural and culinary concept for a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta, Finland, emphasizing authentic Sri Lankan cuisine and cultural representation. The research will specifically target the local market dynamics of Lappeenranta and will not extend to other regions of Finland or explore other ethnic cuisines. Interviews with local restaurant owners and an online survey of potential customers will be carried out. The financial aspects, such as budgeting or profit projections, are not going to be analyzed in detail. While the study is going to look into marketing strategies and customer engagement, it does not offer a detailed competitor analysis within the larger restaurant market in Lappeenranta.

### 1.4 Research question and research methodology

This is generally the main research question that this thesis will answer and will be supported by other sub-questions.

#### **Main Research Question:**

- How to present a cultural and culinary concept for a successful Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta?

#### **Sub Research Questions:**

- What are the challenges and opportunities involved in introducing Sri Lankan cuisine to Lappeenranta?
- What type of pure Sri Lankan food does the customer like most?
- How does a traditional Sri Lankan ambience attract customers?

## **Research methodology**

There exist three kinds of research methods, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed. The quantitative method focuses on numbers and structured analysis, which prove quite instrumental in hypothesis testing. On the other side, qualitative research seeks to explore in-depth examples by using data like words and pictures, thereby offering very important insight regarding the cultural and social context. Mixed techniques adopt both approaches and therefore give a clearer picture since each is exploiting its strengths. (Neuman 2014.)

Primary data collection will be conducted through a mixed-method technique. In this regard, semi-structured interviews with Sri Lankan restaurant owners located in Lappeenranta will be conducted with the view of exploring in detail the business issues and consumer preferences qualitative data. In addition, an online survey will be conducted to collect quantitative data on client preferences for Sri Lankan food in the local market. The qualitative data will be analyzed through thematic analysis, and the survey data will be analyzed using statistical tools. Such an approach follows an inclusive knowledge regarding the market potential for a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta by bringing detailed insights together with broader numerical trends.

This would be an approach befitting a mixed-method study, which combined insights from interviews with Sri Lankan restaurant owners and data from a larger online survey of local customer preferences. That is, the qualitative interviews provide more depth in understanding the issues and experiences that restaurant owners go through, while the quantitative survey yields measurable data on the attitudes and preferences of customers towards Sri Lankan food. By adopting both approaches, this research will take a comprehensive overview of the market potential, challenges, and opportunities involved in opening up a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta.

## 1.5 Implementation Process

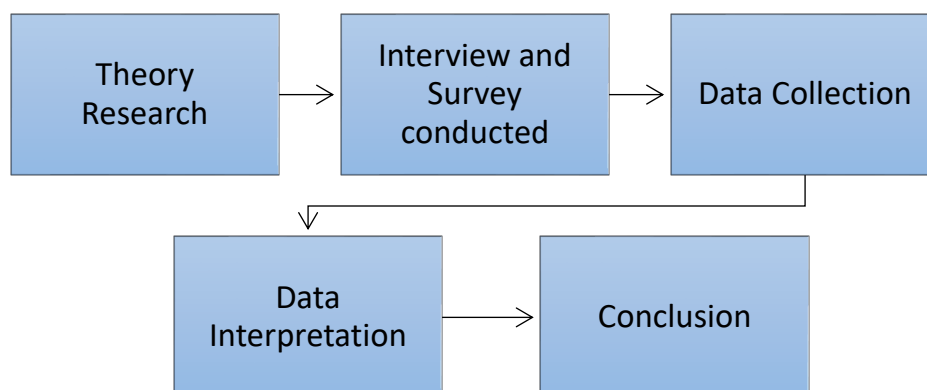


Figure 1: Implementation Process

### **Theory Research**

First, there will be a need for theoretical research that can form a basis of understanding relevant concepts to the restaurant business planning, marketing of ethnic food, and customer preferences. This would involve literature research on successful ethnic restaurants and effective marketing strategies implemented by such restaurants, especially in cities like Lappeenranta, Finland. The theoretical frameworks guiding this study could be SWOT analysis and issues of cultural authenticity in dining. This groundwork will also assist define the survey questions, which will centre on customer interest in Sri Lankan cuisine's cultural atmosphere and authenticity.

### **Interviews and Surveys Conducted**

Theoretical research will be followed by collecting primary data through interviews and a survey. Semi-structured interviews with Sri Lankan restaurant operators in Lappeenranta will reveal their problems and customer acquisition techniques. At the same time, an online poll will be carried out in order to collect the quantitative data relating to the dining preferences of potential customers, eating out, and readiness to taste Sri Lankan cuisine. Questions on cultural events and the importance of restaurant atmosphere will help capture personal opinions as well as measurable trends, hence giving a clear view of market dynamics.

### **Data Collection**

Data from interviews and surveys will be collated properly. Qualitative data from the interviews will be categorised into market challenges, customer feedback, and approaches to popularize ethnic food. Statistics from the quantitative survey results will show how often

locals go out for dinner and how much they enjoy Sri Lankan cuisine. This combined data will be used to help examine the market potential and consumer interest in a Sri Lankan restaurant.

### **Interpreting data**

The collected data will be critically analyzed after the completion of its compilation. Qualitative data, through interviews, will have their results interpreted to understand common themes and problems faced by the owners of restaurants. Statistical tools will be used with the quantitative data from the survey to point out trends, if any, in consumer preferences, including the importance of the atmosphere at a restaurant and which factors impact their choice of dining. This research will connect the problems of managing a restaurant with what customers' desire, helping to find effective strategies to promote Sri Lankan food in Lappeenranta.

### **Conclusion**

The final step is summarizing all the research outcomes. A summary of key findings from both theoretical and practical study will be presented with regard to the possibility of building a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta. Recommendations will be generated by taking into consideration the answers from the customer survey, such as interest in culture events and the value of an authentic eating experience, and will be directed towards operations, menu design, and marketing tactics. This brief will outline the processes for effectively starting a restaurant that matches local demand while also contributing to Lappeenranta's culinary diversity.

## 2 Theoretical part for business concept

### 2.1 Business plan

A business plan is an orderly guide necessary to start and operate a restaurant. It represents a strategic document that lays down the vision, missions, and road map to realize them. For the restaurant able to offer authentic culture and cuisine, a business plan becomes indispensable in establishing its identity and market difference. (Bangs 1995.)

A business plan is important for a Sri Lankan restaurant since it not only gives but also highlights the special culinary offerings and a cultural atmosphere. This can become an effective marketing tool to attract investors, partners, or even customers by the unique value proposition of the restaurant. Through the inspiration of successful small restaurant concepts, such as farm-to-table dining and ethnic fusion, the plan should point out the restaurant's focus on authenticity while adapting to local trends. (Bartoszek 2024.) The example that can be tried here would be a pop-up dining concept, testing customer interest in the Sri Lankan cuisine before fully opening the restaurant. This approach will create excitement, allowing the restaurant to attract the early adopters.

Furthermore, new restaurant concepts currently in the global market, such as interactive dining or a community-driven space, will enhance the cultural and immersive experience of the restaurant. The plan is to create a memorable dining experience by integrating both cultural traditions and local preferences. A good business plan successfully conveys this growth prospect of the restaurant while responding to its various target audience comprising the locals, tourists and the multicultural community (Schwetje & Vaseghi 2007).

In addition, the cultural and culinary concept in the business plan helps reduce the risks. The business, by making good market research and competitive analysis, can anticipate the challenges and spot the opportunities. For example, one must understand local diners' preferences and an increasing interest in ethnic foods to shape the offerings in a restaurant. This must be accompanied by adaptation to local tastes and trends, a feature that ensures its relevance and appeal. The concept of elevated comfort food, where there is re-evaluation of traditional dishes for a wider audience, could have further enhancement of its appeal. (Bartoszek 2024.)

Location is a crucial issue when it comes to the success of a restaurant with an ethnic cuisine. Particularly, the location in Lappeenranta is ideal for both domestic and international customers to present new kind of food. Easy access to suppliers will also be vital in terms of finding authentic ingredients to preserve the quality and authenticity of the food

supplied (Cantù 2010). Due to that, the business plan needs to reveal the strategic importance of its location and logistics concerning the sourcing of high-quality ingredients. Probably, the restaurant will also consider a zero-waste kitchen model related to the current trend in restaurant design when it comes to the issue of sustainability. This will further enhance its brand and appeal to eco-sensitive diners. (Bartoszek 2024.)

The general business plan structurally includes an executive summary, description of the business, market research, marketing strategy, operational plan, and financial forecasts (Frederick et al. 2007). More specifically, in the case of a Sri Lankan restaurant, the cultural aspect will be specially addressed in the business through making sure that the business offers more than just simple food. Rather, it is the serving style and the culinary narration create an ambience for the customers. This will distinguish the restaurant from competitors by offering an authentic dining journey. Adding features such as a chef's table or live culinary demonstrations could enhance this immersive experience, creating a dynamic and unique atmosphere (Bartoszek 2024).

Market analysis is another aspect of a plan of business. Increased attention towards diverse international cuisines throughout Europe therefore gives this restaurant a big chance especially in Finland. Knowledge of local competition and overall ethnic food market will help the restaurant establish itself as a place for those customers who are interested in real Sri Lankan food. Furthermore, integrating solutions to the business plan in accordance with the principles of sustainability, or engaging the community at large, creates an ethical customer base (Blackwell & Eppler 2004.) Attempting to focus on simple aesthetics, trends of minimalism could be utilized further when it comes to the use of wooden materials which would make the restaurant warm and welcoming, fitting the modern trends of small restaurant design (Bartoszek 2024).

Forecasting figures play an important component within the business plan. Some of these are the cost of ingredients, employees, rent, and advertisement all of which must be well financed for the restaurant to be profitable. That means initial financial decisions such as pricing policies and menu selection will influence the restaurant's future success. Seamless financial planning will also be required for attracting investors or an agency. Apart from the dine-in concept, by diversifying to a delivery/takeaway, having a mobile outlet such as a food truck, or banking on catering services for events the business could tap into other forms of revenue streams, besides popularising the brand in other areas. (Bartoszek 2024.)

Regarding internal factors, the restaurant should create a loyal customer base by offering a reward for frequent visits or cooperate with local companies and organizations. This could involve, for instance, the use of interior decor crafted by local artisans to improve the cultural

touch, while supplementing the local revenue source (Push 2022). Conducting a workshop, or cooking class, can build a rapport with the patrons and can also help the restaurant brand itself to the community.

Briefly, a restaurant should comprise a strategic business plan that embraced cultural business and operational and financial savvy aspects of a restaurant business. This document will serve the purpose of both a development plan and a marketing brochure to achieve strategic and marketing goals of the restaurant today while also planning for continuous growth and success into the future. In comparison to the small restaurants around the world, the plan will make Rock and Roll the most innovative, efficient and relevant restaurant in the growing market competition.

## 2.2 Current market preferences and ethnic trends

Over the past five years the global tendencies have change in terms of ethnic cuisines due to globalization, immigration, and multiculturalism. Modern consumers are quite experimental with their taste buds they want real taste and unique dining experiences where they can feel the difference between different cultures. This trend is clear in many regions of the world, for instance, Europe as there is as increase in the consumption of ethnic foods. In Finland, for instance, there has been an increasingly demand for, different exotic foods and the folks there have developed a feeling of wanting to taste foods from the Asiatic, African or Hispanic continent. However, as pointed by Wood, although there is increasing availability of information on consumer preferences but there is some degree of uncertainty in getting a precise view of such trends due to the gradual and slow shifts in taste for foods. Wood also notes that such trends are related to historical and sociological criteria that define tastes in possessing and preparing food. (Wood 2018.)

The prospect of ethnic restaurants, especially those offering Asian menu, has continued to grow in the Finnish market. As identified below there are several causes: international exposure, introduction of diverse foods because of integration of immigrants and increase in the availability and convenience of Food Delivery services. Ethnic food is a growing segment as more clients in Finland are adjusting into non-European food products. (Euromonitor International 2021.) Herbs, spices, and other ethnic foods are trendy with today's climbing organic and plant-based diet lines, exotic fruits and vegetable are commonly used in ethnic foods.

The extra information we found connected to a significant trend is that ethnic foods are especially popular if they are authentic. Consumer worldwide especially the youths are become more sophisticated in their demands, and they are looking at more than just the food

they are eating when they go for dining out they want to learn more of the particular culture of the people they are associating with. This is well illustrated by the emergence of chain specific restaurants, that deal with regional cuisine or those that promote traditional form of cooking and the natural products used in preparing foods. For instance, restaurants that provide foods from South Asia, Middle East or Africa are in high demand because they serve food made with spices imported from home country and recipes of their homeland. (David & Kofahl 2017.)

In the context of the specific restaurant of Sri Lankan cuisine in Lappeenranta, emphasis on the concept of authenticity provides a good chance to capture customer brackets who are willing to indulge themselves in the South-Asian food delicacies inherent in Sri Lankan restaurant business. Sri Lankan cooking is diverse and layered organization of spices and herbs including coconut, curry leaves and tamarind. It has exotic food like hoppers, kottu, string hoppers which are unique from the flavours of India, Malay, Dutch and Portuguese which stimulates the growing Finnish desire for authentic ethnic foods. (Gooneratne et al. 2022.)

Moreover, there has been appreciable trend of environmentally conscious consumerism in Finnish market especially in dining, which coincide with many ethnic grubs. For example, consuming traditionally, Sri Lankan food containing locally available, plant base food materials with least processed foods, it caters the health conscious and environmental friendly customer segment. This is something that the proposed Sri Lankan restaurant could well use to help build its differentiation since it wants to use locally sourced foods that are fresh and healthy in its foods.

A second factor that has led to the call for ethnic foods is the growing possibly a need for special dining experiences. Such individuals are seeking out dining places that can provide not just the food, but the associated culture as well. Those elements can include the location, style, appearance, or even behaviours of both the restaurant and people in it, which can increase people's experience. For instance, a Sri Lankan eatery must fashion itself as Sri Lankan from furniture to music, and perhaps cooking presentation to resemble the country's setting.

However, there are some other characteristics of ethnic foods, which are more specific to the given market, to which the Sri Lankan restaurant could target. The customers as young people and especially those in the age group of 25- 40 years are showing growing inclination towards spicy and tasty foods which are in compliance with nutritional profile of Sri Lankan food. Not only the Finnish diners looking for tastes that are gentle to their palates

but also, they are ready and willing to try out for the daring flavours which makes the curries, spices sambols and coconut-based chutneys as suitable to the operation and trend.

Flexitarianism has become more common and the increasing number of restaurants offering vegetarian and vegan dishes is a potential for the restaurant in Finland. Sri Lankan food culture for the most part includes a plethora of vegetarian and vegan options including lentil dhal, coconut sambol and jackfruit curry. These dishes go a long way toward serving the vegan market but also demonstrate the many potential states of Sri Lankan food. The increasing awareness towards veganism in Finland, particularly the consideration of more plant-based diets around ethnic vegetarian meal is most appealing in a global perspective. (Mäkinen et al. 2016.)

If one compares it with other competitors in the ethnic food market, one soon realizes that there is still space for newcomers, especially those, who offer fewer common cuisines. There is an abundance of Indian and especially Chinese restaurants throughout Finland, but Sri Lankan food is not so popular, which is actually advantageous for the restaurant. With the concept of authentic homemade-style Sri Lankan dishes, the proposed restaurant can be a way beyond conventional Asian food that is offered by intense competition. Also, a better developed marketing mix which would stress such aspects of differentiation as the offer of Sri Lankan cuisine and the environmental responsibility of the restaurant, would attract customers who wish to eat something else than a typical ethnic food.

Contributions made by digital platforms cannot be released from the question of food trends. This study has identified that through social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, food blogs and through online food delivery sites ethnic cuisines are highly promoted and consumers are sensitized. Finnish consumers rely on social media such as Instagram, YouTube or sometimes recommendations coming from food influencers from their favourite ethnic restaurants. This trend could be utilized to the Sri Lankan restaurant through introduction of hashtags on social media platforms to market the colourful and the various types of dishes promoted by the restaurant as well as promoting environmentally friendly policies of the restaurant. Additional work could also be done with food bloggers and ethnic food related influencers as it would extend the audience further and ensure the project is as sustainable as it can be.

Another reason proving the consumer behaviour change is that Finns have also become more dependent on the food delivery services especially during and post COVID 19 viruses. Many ethnic restaurants have reported a high uptake for delivery and take-away services

since people are testing new foods from the comfort of their homes. Thus, through the delivery through such platforms as Wolt and Foodora, the restaurant can effectively address this segment of demand, making food available to more customers at the same time continuing to give customers what they want in the contemporary global world of eating out, the convenience of diversification of the means of eating.

Altogether, the observations of the modern stereotyped ethnic food in Finland show a concerning tendency in terms of youthful consumer expectation towards sharply unforgiving flavours, responsibly sourced ingredients, and peculiar, albeit exciting consumptions. In addition, the proposed restaurant selling Sri Lankan food is in the right place to benefit from these trends tapping an opportunity of a unique and ethnic dining locale in Lappeenranta. Staying closest to the customers' genuine needs and wants, offering sustainability and creativity in its marketing and services, the restaurant will be fit for the new environment within the ethnic restaurant segment in a competitive Finnish market.

### 2.3 Market analysis and competitors

Market analysis helps the operating business environment to get everything they need for the market such as size, potential customers, competitors, and many others. Such knowledge assists organizations in place-making and the formulation of improved plans. (Freedman 2020.) The analysis is one of the key functions for efficient utilization of marketing tools and studying of strategies.

When carrying out the market analysis of a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta, it is observed that there is a developing interest in food and culture. Finns' appetite is gradually diversifying through exposure to other cultures, travels, and interconnectivity that curves the local consumers taste buds toward different cuisines. This is also true for Asian and Middle Eastern restaurants to fill the demand for more varied restaurants. Therefore there is a good chance to introduce Sri Lankan cuisine.

The key clients within the restaurant location are the Finnish people, the Asian populace, Sri Lankan expatriates and equivalent people traveling to the region. A strategy of enhancing the food delivery options to the customers by going online through the ordering platform could also reach out to those two segments of customers.

Currently, competitor analysis is the process of examining business entities that in one way or the other serve the same market segments as your business and or offer relatively similar products, services, or business types. This is particularly helpful in enabling a company to

make a position analysis to know where it stands in the particular market under consideration. Having carried out an analysis of its rivals, one can make product differentiation and form strategies for the businesses. The analysis also assists in mapping a business's opportunities and threats. (Perry et al 2008.)

Market positioning requires evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of competitors to enable Sri Lankan restaurant to offer its unique selling proposition well. The major rivals are Asian dishes restaurants, which offer foods that are quite like those offered by the business, for instance, Indian and Thai foods. They may again be in the same line and may include food service outlets serving European or Fin dishes.

## 2.4 Business strategy

Business strategy is a general plan which defines how an organization intends to attain its vision and missions. This way it acts as a tool for carrying out decision-making and assists the organization in enhancing its operating financial position and its competitive advantage in the market. This strategic plan helps businesses to operate in given markets, channelled available resources, and ensure sustainable business success. (Heubel 2024.)

Therefore, the business strategy for the Sri Lankan restaurant that should be used to competes with similar restaurants is to differentiate itself based on authenticity and cultural experience. Differentiation can be obtained with new or special Lankan cuisine like hoppers, kottu and variety of Sri Lankan spices used curries. Not only the food but the building itself and its main idea should be completely devoted to the Sri Lankan culture.

Hence, segmentation of customers based on local, international customer and tourists should be considered. Further promotion method will be to involve in the food festivals, associating with local tourism boards and taking part in cultural events will continue to build the brand image of the restaurant (Johnson and Tellis 2008). Today's home-delivery market can also be accessed through affiliations with online food delivery companies.

### 2.4.1 SWOT analysis

SWOT Analysis represents an important strategic management tool implemented in many organizations to help identify the principal factors which impact on productivity and make the right decision. It enables an organisation to strategically allocate scarce resources towards the achievement of stated objectives, and for that reason, it constitutes a framework for both external and internal evaluation. (Gürel 2017.)

SWOT Analysis is a narrower tool existing within the strategic management process that consists of vision, mission, objectives, and the environment and directly aims to determine the organisational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal circumstances, while opportunities and threats concern out-side circumstances, collectively enabling the organisation to match resources with competition and capitalize on distinctiveness. This organized framework enables organizations to make strategic decisions with relative certainty and modify policies and measures that enhance its market position. (Gürel 2017.)

**Strengths:** Factors that are within the company's control and provide the competitive advantage against the rival organizations include, proficient team, recognized brand, sound financial and a good image (Inbound 281).

**Weaknesses:** Factors inside the organization that act as a constraint to competitiveness may include a brand not well known, fewer resources, or a particular sector within the company (Inbound 281).

**Opportunities:** That are outside the firm's purview but generate opportunities for new markets, new technologies, obscure trends, or shifting regulations. (Inbound 281).

**Threats:** Threats on the outside that could harm the organisation and its goals including high competition, uncertainty and changing patronage (Inbound 281).

## Business Model canvas

Business Model Canvas, as the name suggests is a single page tool that identifies the goals and objectives of a business. The BMC can be utilized as a strategic management tool allying business owners and stakeholders in building new business models or appraising pre-existing models because it offers organized and visual models of the important segments of a business. (MasterClass 2021.)

**Key Partners:** Lists essential partnerships, such as suppliers, joint ventures, or strategic alliances, which are necessary to achieve business goals.

**Key Activities:** Specifies critical tasks the business must perform, such as production, marketing, or problem-solving, to create value and generate revenue.

**Key Resources:** Identifies primary assets, including staff, finances, equipment, and intellectual property, that support key activities.

**Value Proposition:** Highlights the unique products or services the business offers, addressing how it meets customer needs or solves specific problems.

**Customer Relationships:** Describes the type of relationship the business builds with customers, from personal assistance to self-service models.

**Customer Segments:** Defines the target customer base, segmented by characteristics and importance, to better understand and serve different customer types.

**Channels:** Outlines how the business reaches and communicates with customers, whether through direct methods or third-party channels.

**Cost Structure:** Lists all operational costs, such as fixed and variable expenses, that are incurred in both startup and ongoing operations.

**Revenue Streams:** Details how the business generates income, which can include one-time transactions or recurring revenue, like subscription fees. (MasterClass 2021.)

## 2.5 Marketing strategy

A marketing strategy is a detailed plan that outlines how a company will connect with its target audience and achieve its marketing goals. It involves making choices about how to engage with key stakeholders, allocate resources, and time actions to effectively compete in the market. As marketing has evolved, it now includes both strategic and everyday decisions, highlighting the need for businesses to adapt to global market changes. Companies must create marketing strategies that consider whether to standardize or adapt their marketing programs, coordinate their activities across countries, and integrate their competitive approaches worldwide. (Furrer 2006.)

### **3 Description of the business idea**

The concept of opening a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta is rooted in the researcher's desire to introduce Finnish locals and visitors to the unique flavors and culture of Sri Lanka. The restaurant will be an ideal destination for those seeking an authentic ethnic dining experience and will provide a warm, welcoming atmosphere that makes customers feel at home. In addition to serving delicious food, the restaurant aims to be a cultural hub, hosting special events on Sri Lankan holidays such as Vesak, the Sinhala and Tamil New Year, and Independence Day. These events will not only feature special dishes but also traditional music, decorations, and informative background on the cultural significance of each celebration.

#### **3.1 Vision, Mission and Objectives**

##### **Vision**

To be the premier destination in Lappeenranta where authentic Sri Lankan cuisine and vibrant cultural experiences come together, inspiring guests to explore the flavors and traditions of Sri Lanka.

##### **Mission**

Authentically, the tastes and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka will be present in Lappeenranta, offering a truly unique dining experience by blending authentic Sri Lankan cuisine with warm and friendly hospitality. Personalized service, a cultural-themed environment, and special occasions to celebrate Sri Lankan festivities will further help to build lifetime bonds with the customers. It is going to be the celebration of diversity that merges people through a common thread of food and culture.

##### **Objectives**

The main goal is to serve authentic Sri Lankan food to the people of Lappeenranta with a menu that includes traditional items such as rice and curry, hoppers, kottu roti, and sambols, which are going to be prepared using authentic ingredients and traditional methods. A restaurant with a dining experience reflecting the richness of Sri Lankan culture in terms of its atmosphere, music, and interior will be created giving a real taste of the country.

Major festivals in Sri Lankan heritage, such as Sinhala and Tamil New Year, Vesak, and Christmas, will be celebrated with special dishes and events to make the customer feel those vibrant traditions. The target audience is Finnish locals, Asians, tourists, foodies, and Sri Lankan expatriates seeking a taste of home.

A warm, welcoming space will be created to bring cross-cultural understanding into the restaurant. To ensure repeat visits and encourage positive word-of-mouth for an overall excellent experience, the most important things are quality, hygiene, and customer service. This will underpin sustainable growth and a strong presence in the community over time.

### 3.2 Start-up company's business plan components

#### **Location**

The restaurant will be located in busy areas of Lappeenranta: either in the city center or at the IsoKristiina shopping mall. Many customers, including locals and tourists, will find the restaurant easily accessible, as will the growing Asian population already living in the city. Being close to other points of interest and busy areas really helps more people see the restaurant and makes them curious about trying different foods.

#### **Operation**

The restaurants will aim to provide a profound cultural dining experience. It includes different Sri Lankan food for lunch, and dinner, prepared to give the real taste of it. There are also regular cultural events that provide an opportunity for customers to experience Sri Lankan culture. Better management of reservations and take-out/delivery through platforms like Wolt is important to customers due to various needs. All the main goals encompass great customer service and high quality of food to build a good local reputation.

#### **Products and Services**

##### **Product**

This menu has been prepared to bring out the deep flavors and cultural traditions behind Sri Lankan cuisine, catering to a lunch and dinner audience alike. Most of the food items during lunch are rice-based, as rice and curry are the two most fundamental components in Sri Lankan cuisine. There is a variety of rice dishes ranging from fried rice to steamed rice and even what is known as "lamprais" a savory rice dish wrapped in banana leaves. Lunch buffet is set out with several types of curries, such as dhal, chicken curry, egg plant moju, cashew curry, and spicy sambal like gotu kola sambola with an accompaniment of chutneys and salads. Biryani is also presented as an exceptional option for people craving for a meal both aromatic and flavorful through its spices.

Traditional spices define the flavors, but milder versions are also made available for guests who would want a less intense spice factor, thus attuning Sri Lankan cooking traditions with local palates. Desserts are genuinely Sri Lankan sweets like watalappan, a coconut custard

flavored with cardamom, jaggery, and nutmeg; though traditional delicacies like kavum, kokis, helapa, dodol, and aluwa are also made from rice flour.

Many well-known Sri Lankan Street foods and cooking specialties are available during the dinner service. Of these, Kottu is prepared a popular street food that is a stir-fry of minced roti with vegetables, meat, and an assortment of spices. Hoppers in different flavors even are made available, namely egg hopper and cheese hopper and sweet hopper-all of these make it an incredible experience of dining. Also available are string hoppers, pittu, wade, and egg roti with authentic curries such as chicken curry, seeni sambol, dhal curry, and potato curry. These dishes have been designed to provide a genuinely new and exciting dining experience.

The selection of drinks has been highly chosen to complement the food, with an offering of Sri Lankan coffee, Ceylon tea, coconut drinks, and herbal concoctions. Particularly the king coconut drink its unique natural sweetness, and rejuvenating properties add to the list of juices from tropical fruit like wood apple.

Special dishes are emphasized to celebrate Sri Lanka's cultural uniqueness during these celebrations. For one, milk rice is a creamy rice dish cooked in coconut milk which is traditionally eaten on special occasions. Seasonal and culturally significant foods include asmi, a milk and cinnamon dessert; in addition to other dishes such as fish ambul thiyal a sour fish curry, polos, a spicy jackfruit preparation, and vegetarian dishes like gotu kola mallum sambola that comprises of shredded greens mixed with coconut.

These diverse flavors are a sign of a complete culinary experience, acquainting locals and tourists in Lappeenranta with the nutritional value, historical background, and cultural significance surrounding Sri Lankan cuisine. Native spices such as cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, curry leaves, and turmeric are given prominence, adding complexity, fragrance, and medicinal properties to the dishes. The menu is crafted to not only maintain but also to honor the culinary traditions of Sri Lanka, while simultaneously providing guests with a fresh and welcoming experience.

### **Services**

The restaurant will have a minimum seating capacity of 20, and the restaurant space will be used for both a lunch buffet at a cost of approximately €12 per person and for dinner on an à la carte basis with prices averaging about €15. According to market analysis and customer interest, the restaurant is estimated to service approximately 50 lunch buffet customers and 30 dinner customers per day, which is expected to increase as the restaurant becomes more popular.

The restaurant will accept payment in cash and by debit and credit card options. This Sri Lankan restaurant is not only going to serve food to the lovers of Sri Lankan cuisine but also act as a gateway for the people of Lappeenranta to experience Sri Lankan culture, be it locals or expatriates. The restaurant is committed to quality, hygiene, and excellent service.

#### Customer Engagement through Services

The restaurant will focus on a holistic cultural experience apart from food. Traditional Sri Lankan decor, light music, and cultural outfits of staff give the overall feel that should immerse customers in the hospitality of Sri Lanka. To build further engagement:

#### Cooking Classes

More rarely, cooking workshops will also enable guests to learn how to cook simple Sri Lankan dishes. Those sessions will create a connection with the cuisine, making the dining experience memorable.

#### Tasting Events

Tasting events will also be held from time to time for the guests to try out different types of Sri Lankan dishes. The events can also consist of explanations regarding the spices, cooking techniques, and cultural significance of the foods being served.

#### Catering and Takeout

Catering services are provided for events, especially to the Asian and Sri Lankan community gatherings in Lappeenranta. Takeaway and delivery services will also be made available so that customers have an opportunity to enjoy Sri Lankan food from the convenience of their homes.

#### Business Hours

The opening hours of the restaurants will also be designed to catch the peak demand times by considering the existing dining culture in Lappeenranta.

#### Standard Hours

The restaurant will operate six days a week, from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM, to service both the lunch and dinner dayparts. These hours should support the 'quick in and out' diner during the lunch hours and the evening customer that desires a more leisurely dinner.

#### Weekend and Event Expansions

The restaurant will extend its operating hours until 10:00 PM on weekends to accommodate families and bigger groups who prefer going out for dinner during Friday and Saturday evenings. This will also offer more time for possible cultural activities or special gatherings.

#### Holiday and Festival Hours

During Sri Lankan festivals, the restaurant will open earlier and close later to enable special celebrations and events. For example, extended hours during the Sinhala and Tamil New Year would enable holding traditional meal events that will attract both Sri Lankan and Finnish customers who would like to celebrate such occasions.

#### Special Event Days

The establishment will open up its operational hours for scheduled events such as tasting evenings and cooking classes. These may require the earlier opening in the morning or later evening hours to ensure sufficient time to handle customers.

#### Customer-Focused Flexibility

Its working hours might be subject to change to cater to more people, especially during high-peak seasons in tourism.

### 3.3 The restaurant interior atmosphere

The interior of the restaurant is designed to depict the real Sri Lankan ambiance, which is friendly and interactive for customers. Distinctive features include:

#### Ornaments

Handwoven tapestries, masks, and wood carvings depicting Sri Lankan heritage and mythology will be used as the traditional Sri Lankan artifacts on the walls. This would help in beautifying the place but at the same time introduce the customers into the Sri Lankan culture.

#### Furniture and Layout

Seating will be designed for comfort, utilizing wood-based furniture with natural fabrics that add earthiness and warmth to a given space so typical of a Sri Lankan atmosphere. The seating layout will remain intimate, so conversation is elicited, with larger tables accommodating groups while smaller, more secluded tables can handle couples or singles dining alone.

### Lightings

Soft ambient lighting will be used to set up a warm and inviting atmosphere. Hanging lanterns with soft, warm light will make one feel like the old classic oil lanterns, giving soft light to make the setting cozy and authentic.

### Music and Sounds

The softness of traditional Sri Lankan music will accompany the setting, where the instrumental elements like tabla and sitar enhance the auditory dimension of the cultural encounter. Live music shall be incorporated into particular cultural evenings or those scheduled during special festivals in order to further augment this experience.

### Scent and Aromas

Aromas of freshly prepared Sri Lankan spices will be allowed to permeate the dining area, thus providing customers with an olfactory introduction to the flavors they taste. This kind of sensory approach increases the feeling of involvement with Sri Lankan culture.

## 3.4 Cultural activities

Events and activities that this establishment will be organizing will also let patrons experience the cultural dimension of Sri Lanka.

### Festive Celebrations

All major Sri Lankan festivals like Sinhala and Tamil New Year, Vesak, and Deepavali are celebrated in the restaurant. A special menu featuring traditional festive food is offered during these events, along with decorations and music typical of the tradition and culture of that particular festival.

### Cultural Exhibitions

Periodic events will include Sri Lankan dance performances and folk music nights. These events will cater to customers who are more interested in the cultural aspects of Sri Lankan heritage other than food.

### Cooking Demos and Workshops

Sometimes, the restaurant plans some cooking classes or demonstrations on the preparation of certain dishes in demand within Sri Lanka. Further, this idea will attract food lovers, and at the same time, it will create a core circle of people associated with the restaurant.

### Storytelling and Cultural Narrative

Introduce the educational element: Either through information boards or short narrative sessions concerning historical and cultural importance about particular dishes or festivals, this would further enhance customers' understanding and appreciation of the cultural context of their experiences.

### 3.5 Target customer

The target customers are a mix of individuals comprising locals and a mix of people with international backgrounds; hence, the unique tastes and cultural value attached to Sri Lankan cuisine would attract them. The main targets are the local people of Lappeenranta, such as families, working professionals, and young adults in their twenties, as their interest in trying new restaurant concepts has been recognized. A range of palates is catered to by a menu that offers mild and spicy alternatives, besides buffet and à la carte choices that are designed to suit different dining preferences.

Another major category of tourists coming to Lappeenranta is also a significant one. To many people in search of authentic culinary experiences, the restaurant provides an opportunity to experience Sri Lankan culture through its traditional food.

Sri Lankan diaspora living in Finland are also catered to. To those who miss the flavors of back home, a true-to-form and warm experience of Sri Lankan cuisine is offered.

Health-aware consumers form a considerable consumer base, as many Sri Lankan dishes, by nature are vegetable-based, healthy, and include medicinal ingredients like turmeric and ginger, to mention a few, that appeal greatly to the health-aware consumer.

Cultural lovers, interested in learning about different cultures through their food experiences, are another target for the marketing campaign. Specific events and cultural celebrations are designed for these guests to enjoy an interactive culinary experience. The purpose is to create a welcoming atmosphere for everyone in Lappeenranta by serving diverse customer profiles.

### 3.6 Market analysis

An examination of the market reveals multiple advantageous elements that suggest the prospective success of the restaurant. Finnish residents are increasingly exhibiting a curiosity and appreciation for ethnic cuisine. In recent years, the trend of exploring diverse international culinary offerings has intensified, especially in smaller municipalities such as Lappeenranta, where opportunities for such experiences are relatively scarce. Still today, no restaurant in Lappeenranta specializes in Sri Lankan food, and, therefore, this would fill

the gap that exists. Still, though there are quite a few restaurants owned by Sri Lankans, they all serve a variety of dishes without sticking to the traditional Sri Lankan food completely.

The peculiar cultural features in Sri Lankan food, like the number of vegetarian dishes and specific spices, naturally also fit the food trend apparent in Finland today. Cultural restaurant concept, where customers are allowed to eat but also experience Sri Lankan culture, would be an appealing idea for those who would like to get more out of eating.

### 3.7 Competitors

In Lappeenranta, many ethnic restaurants are marketing different types of international cuisines, and this will pose some competition for our restaurant. None specialize in Sri Lankan food, though. Most of the Sri Lankan restaurants here sell various kinds of international foods, such as pizzas, kebabs, and some Indian dishes, diluting the orientation and emphasis on Sri Lankan cuisine. The reason our restaurant is so unique is that it was the first in the area of Lappeenranta to introduce different, more authentic Sri Lankan food and a distinct cultural atmosphere.

In the region, restaurants specializing in mixed-cuisine typically incorporate elements from Mediterranean, Indian, and Sri Lankan culinary traditions. Although a selection of Sri Lankan dishes is available, these offerings are not prioritized and are frequently modified to align with local palates, potentially resulting in a deficiency of authentic flavors. Our establishment seeks to address this shortcoming by providing entirely traditional Sri Lankan cuisine, employing authentic spices and preparation techniques to ensure a genuine dining experience.

Other competitors would be Indian restaurants in Lappeenranta because people in this area like Indian food, and thus there are restaurants offering only Indian dishes. Although some of the flavors and ingredients used in Sri Lankan and Indian cooking overlap, our restaurant will focus on distinctly Sri Lankan spices and unique dishes and methods of cooking. This will help differentiate our menu and appeal to customers who may be interested in trying something different but related.

Indirect competitors include fast-food restaurants and casual dining. This would be for customers seeking convenience and affordability. At the same time, however, it lacks the rich cultural taste or the authentic dining experience that one can have with our restaurant. Our focus on atmosphere, culture, and unique tastes provides another alternative for those customers who desire a more authentic cultural atmosphere.

Our restaurant would therefore have a different kind of experience to offer from all other ethnic restaurants in the locality since it focuses on one aspect alone: Sri Lankan cuisines. We plan to please clients who would search for authenticity from taste to the whole dining experience so as to position our restaurant as the best authentic Sri Lankan food outlet in Lappeenranta, filling the prevailing gap in the market.

### 3.8 Business strategy

#### 3.8.1 SWOT analysis

Table 1. SWOT analysis

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authentic and ethnic Sri Lankan cuisine.</li> <li>• Immersive cultural setting and customer experience.</li> <li>• Increasing the interest in the Finnish Market towards ethnic foods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce relatively new cuisine in the neighbourhood.</li> <li>• Marketing in the beginning will have to be highly focused on cultural education.</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced tendency of Finnish people towards ethnic food.</li> <li>• A rising Asian community who can be a good consumer of such food.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition from other ethnic restaurants.</li> <li>• Changes in economy that could impact food consumption outside the home.</li> </ul>

#### 3.8.2 Business Model Canvas

The key components our business model will focus majorly on include:

Table 2. Business Model Canva

<b>Key Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh fruits and vegetables and Sri Lankan spices suppliers</li> <li>• Joint marketing with regional cultural facilities.</li> <li>• Delivery service partnerships</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborations with local businesses and tourist organizations</li> </ul>
<b>Key Activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Menu development: Seasonal and festive foods</li> <li>• Cultural activities that contribute to the gastronomic experience.</li> <li>• Social media marketing, website, and local promotion</li> <li>• Staff training for quality and personalized service</li> </ul>
<b>Key Re-sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skilled manpower comprising very experienced cooks and waiters in Lankan food and hospitality.</li> <li>• Quality kitchen apparatus combined with comfortable dining furniture showcasing Sri Lankan cultural elements.</li> <li>• Traditional trimmings: real plates, good ethnic atmosphere with music and lighting.</li> <li>• Digitalized reservations and complaint systems to smoothen the operation.</li> </ul>
<b>Value Proposition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original Sri Lankan cuisine with traditional options and seasonal changes.</li> <li>• Immersive cultural experience through décor, music, and events.</li> <li>• Variations for vegetarians and non-vegetarians, targeting different tastes.</li> </ul>
<b>Customer Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every visit is memorable, friendly, and personalized.</li> <li>• Introduce our food through "buy one, get one free" promotions, etc., and from free samples.</li> <li>• Regular updating through social networking sites and monthly newsletters.</li> <li>• Improvements sourced from customers, through feedback and questionnaires.</li> <li>• Special events on Sri Lankan holidays and theme-based menus for occasions such as Mother's Day.</li> <li>• Discount on birthdays, complete with free cake and a gift on combined celebrations.</li> </ul>

<b>Customer Segments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finnish natives interested in foreign cuisines</li> <li>• Asian community members accustomed to Sri Lankan flavors</li> <li>• International tourists seeking new cultural experiences</li> <li>• Adults aged 20-50 open to diverse cuisines</li> </ul>
<b>Channels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restaurant website including menu, events calendar, reservations</li> <li>• Social media for updates, photos, and announcements of events</li> <li>• Flyers and local marketing through partnerships</li> <li>• Platforms for home dining delivery</li> </ul>
<b>Cost Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fixed costs include rent, utilities, and salaries.</li> <li>• Variable costs: materials, trim, and marketing programs.</li> <li>• Marketing expenses are attributed to social media, events, and print.</li> <li>• Initial investment in renovation, equipment and opening marketing</li> </ul>
<b>Revenue Streams</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales of food and beverages via dining-in customers.</li> <li>• Revenue from cultural events and special dinners</li> <li>• Convenience ordering of takeout or delivery</li> </ul>

### 3.9 Marketing and advertising

#### 3.9.1 Branding and Visual Identity



Figure 2. Unique Branding Inspired by Sri Lankan Cultural Heritage

Creating a Unique Brand - A unique branding reflecting Sri Lankan culture will be developed, including a memorable logo, colour scheme, decor, and printed materials (menus, signage) that speak to the essence of Sri Lankan heritage. Each guest who will visit will be given a colourful postcard showing iconic images of Sri Lanka, such as famous landmarks and cultural symbols and elephants. These postcards, carrying the name and details of the restaurant, will serve as cultural artifacts while at the same time contributing to brand recall among customers.

Printed Marketing Materials Colourful flyers, handouts, and posters of the dishes, together with the opening date and any opening specials, will be posted around Lappeenranta. The special offerings of this restaurant will be showcased to entice the community.

#### 3.9.2 Social media management and digital marketing

Restaurant Website - Information on the concept, menu, geographic location, and promotional incentives will be available on the restaurant's own website. The feature of online ordering will be enabled, and the website designed so that it is clear and easy to navigate through, ensuring customers have ease accessing information on what is offered and making an order.

Social Media Strategy - Excitements and awareness of the launch will be created through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and local WhatsApp groups. The images of the dishes, events, and special offers are regularly posted to activate followers and attract a local audience.

Digital Advertising - The ad targeting will be done on Facebook and Google by targeting the audience in Lappeenranta, with special emphasis on those who show potential interest in new food adventures.

#### Word-of-Mouth Engagement

Word-of-Mouth and Referral Discounts Referrals will be encouraged through unique discounts offered to customers who refer new customers. In addition, customers visiting for special occasions, such as their birthdays, will be provided with small tokens of appreciation that show Sri Lankan culture, thereby making them feel that the experience is well customized and memorable.

### 3.9.3 Events and special promotions

#### Promotion Activities and Free Samples

There would also be attractive offers like "buy one, get one free" at the launch, and free samples of certain menu options. Free samples would be available even for the three months afterward to the dine-in and online-ordering customers with the hope that it would introduce the customers to Sri Lankan flavors.

#### Seasonal and Thematic Events

Special events shall be planned for Sri Lanka's major cultural festivals and other widely observed dates like Mother's Day and Father's Day with theme-based menus and promotions.

#### Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays are typically celebrated by having promotional offers on food items. A party booking customer gets a complimentary cake and a privileged present in the form of small souvenir figurines to remember the birthday.

#### Influencer Partnerships and Customer Reviews

Local food bloggers and social media influencers will be invited to come and sample the foods, then share their experience on various digital platforms to create public awareness. Positive online forum reviews from satisfied customers will also be encouraged, in order to boost the digital presence of the restaurant.

### 3.10 Suppliers

To achieve this objective, purchasing will be done locally and internationally from trusted suppliers through which authentic Sri Lankan food can be delivered. Quality and authenticity are stressed upon within the products in order to present the actual taste of Sri Lanka, and reliable sources for specialty and staple products have been identified.

The high-quality and pure spices of Sri Lanka, namely Ceylon cinnamon, nutmeg, black pepper, cardamom, and ginger, will be directly sourced from internationally recognized suppliers. This list of prestigious companies supplying these spices is known for their stringent policy regarding authenticity and ethical trade practices, hence assuring that the flavors used will be full bodied and typical of ancient cooking traditions in Sri Lanka. This collaboration will aid in preserving traditional heritage so that genuine food products are enjoyed and presented in the most deliciously exceptional way.

#### Commonly Used Parts Sourced from Local Suppliers

All fresh produce and various food supplies are to be sourced from local, reputable suppliers in Finland. This is where cost-effectiveness will be achieved without compromising on the highest standards of freshness and quality. Also, using seasonal local produce will assist in the introduction of Sri Lankan flavor profiles using ingredients sourced locally.

### 3.11 Legal structure

The establishment operates as a limited liability company where there is a partnership between two owners. This legal structure offers the owners some personal liability limitation, thus allowing a collective approach in management and decision-making responsibilities. The limited liability company structure ensures flexibility in operations while at the same time, it protects the owners from individual financial risk .(Macey 1995.)

### 3.12 Management structure

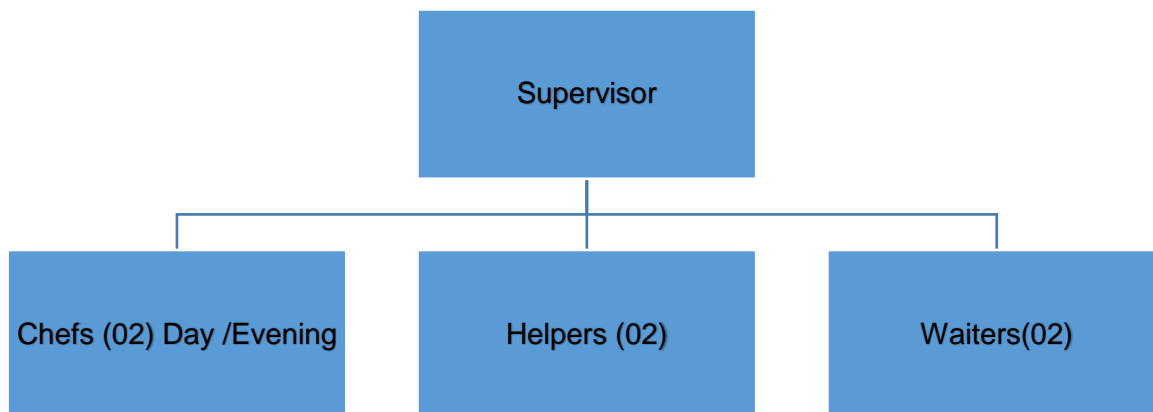


Figure 3. Organizational Structure for Great Customer Service

The organizational structure within our Sri Lankan restaurant will be directed towards being functional to offer very good customer service through our specialized staff.

The supervisor will work 6 hours per day, managing daily activities, coordinating workers, and ensuring smooth service at all times.

Two chefs, with each working 4 hours a day, would prepare all authentic Sri Lankan cuisine dishes, maintaining the utmost quality of food. They also manage kitchen workflow and make sure that the preparation of the meal is done in time. Also, two waiters must work 4 hours a day to ensure very good customer service, explain the menu to the guest, place orders, and make sure guests enjoy the meal.

Two helpers will support both the chefs and waitstaff. Each helper will work 4 hours per day, assisting with food preparation, maintaining kitchen cleanliness, and handling other tasks as needed to support smooth operations.

### 3.13 Pricing structure

#### 3.13.1 Initial investment and start-up plan

The restaurant's startup capital, totalling €30,000 from partner investment, will provide for all necessary start-up costs, purchase of assets, and working capital. Among the major purchases are furniture and kitchen equipment, costing €5,000 each, besides a deposit costing €3,000. The remaining balance of €17,000 is liquid in the bank to offer flexibility during the early stages of operation. Other initial costs will include licensing and registration

to meet local business law. The following startup plan has balanced key assets against a stable cash reserve in support of early growth and smooth operations.

Table 3. Initial investment and start-up plan

<b>Equity</b>	Partner shares	30,000
<b>Opening Balance sheet</b>		
Assets	Furniture	5,000
	Kitchen Equipment	5,000
	security deposit	3,000
	Cash in Bank	17,000
	<b>cash in bank after expenses</b>	<b>17,000</b>

### 3.13.2 Planned income statement

The forecasted income statement of the restaurant shows the forecasted revenues and expenses for each quarter of the financial year, considering slow sales growth but maintaining the same fixed cost structure. The income from sales will be derived from four key items, which are: lunch, dinner, online delivery, and drinks; consisting of cola and fruit juices. The price per unit for lunch is € 13.50, the price per unit for dinner and online delivery is € 15.00. Prices for the drinks will be set at €2.50 for cola and €6.00 for fruit juice. An initial estimate of daily sales forecast is 45 units for lunch, 20 units each for dinner and online delivery, as well as 10 cups of cola and 6 fruit juices. Sales for these products, following a 5% increase in the second quarter, shall see a 7.5% increase in the third quarter and a 10% increase in the fourth quarter.

They run two 4-hour shifts: lunchtime from 10:00 to 14:00 and dinnertime from 17:00 to 21:00. There are five employees: a supervisor, two cooks, two waiters, and two helpers in the kitchen. Their wages vary from €10 to €13.50 per hour, depending on their jobs. Every shift must have one supervisor, one cook, one waiter, and one helper in the kitchen.

Quarterly Estimated Financials would be a VAT deduction of 14% on the total sales, leaving one with the net income before deducting the cost. The cost of sales, covering ingredients, is estimated to be 35% of the total sales, giving a contribution margin after deduction. Fixed expenses cover salaries, utilities, rent, marketing, and other operative costs. As projected, all these expenses remain constant while variable expenses like marketing and delivery are

adjusted each quarter based on the prevailing conditions. The profit before tax and resultant net profit reflects expected losses in the first two quarters due to initial setup costs and marketing expenses. However, the business predicts that it will become profitable in the third and fourth quarters as sales volume increases and the operation becomes more efficient.

Table 4. Estimated Income statement

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
<b>Sales</b>	114887.5	113659	131222	132450.5
VAT (14%)	16084.25	15912.26	18371.08	18543.07
Net Income	98803.25	97746.74	112850.92	113907.43
Cost of Sales (Ingredients, 35% of Sales)	40210.62	39780.65	45927.7	46357.67
= Contribution Margin	58592.62	57966.09	66923.22	67549.75
<b>Fixed Costs</b>				
Salaries	32123	32123	32123	32123
Additional Salary Costs (35%)	11243.05	11243.05	11243.05	11243.05
Electricity & Water	1200	1200	1200	1200
Telephone & Internet	200	200	200	200
Marketing	3500	3000	2000	2000
Depreciation	750	750	750	750
Insurance	1000	-	-	-
Rent	4500	4500	4500	4500
Accounting	1200	1200	1200	1200
Cleaning	150	150	150	150
Food authority supervision cost	300	-	-	-
Delivery cost	4095	4299.75	4709.25	4709.25
Other Costs	500	500	750	1000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>60761.05</b>	<b>59165.8</b>	<b>58825.3</b>	<b>59075.3</b>
Interest Cost				
<b>= Profit Before Income Tax</b>	<b>-2168.425</b>	<b>-1199.71</b>	<b>8097.92</b>	<b>8474.45</b>
Taxable income for the year				<b>13204.24</b>
Income Tax (20%)				2640.84
<b>Net Profit/Loss for the year</b>				<b>10563.39</b>

Units Sold per Day				
Buffet				
Lunch	45	47	51	52
Dinner	20	21	23	23
Online delivery	20	21	23	23

### 3.13.3 Cash flow analysis

The amount of €17,000, to be invested by the investor, is planned to be used as the opening balance for the restaurant.

Table 5. Cash Flow Analysis

<b>Cash Inflows</b>				
Opening/Beginning Cash Balance	17,000	15,582	15,132	23,980
Bank Loan	-	-	-	-
Sales	114887.5	113659	131222	132450.5
<b>Total Cash Inflows</b>	<b>131,888</b>	<b>129,241</b>	<b>146,354</b>	<b>156,430</b>
<b>Cash Outflows</b>	-	-	-	-
Ingredients	40210.63	39780.65	45927.7	46357.675
Salaries	32123	32123	32123	32123
Additional Salary Costs	11243.05	11243.05	11243.05	11243.05
Rent	4500	4500	4500	4500
Electricity & Water	1200	1200	1200	1200
Telephone & Internet	200	200	200	200
Marketing	3500	3000	2000	2000
Delivery cost	4095	4299.75	4709.25	4709.25
Insurance	1000	-	-	-

Accounting	1200	1200	1200	1200
Cleaning	150	150	150	150
Food authority supervision cost	300	-	-	-
Other Costs	500	500	750	1000
VAT (14%)	16084.25	15912.26	18371.08	18543.07
Interest	-	-	-	-
Loan Repayment	-	-	-	-
Income Tax	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Cash Outflows</b>	<b>116305.93</b>	<b>114108.71</b>	<b>122374.08</b>	<b>123226.04</b>
<b>Net Cash Flow / Closing Balance</b>	<b>15,582</b>	<b>15,132</b>	<b>23,980</b>	<b>33,204</b>

## 3.13.4 Balance sheet

Table 6. Balance sheets

<b>Assets</b>		<b>Liabilities</b>	
Cash	33204	Capital	30000
Furniture (minus Depreciation)	3500	Bank Loan	-
Kitchen Equipment (minus Depreciation)	3500	Retained Earnings	
security deposit	3000	Tax Payable	2640.85
		Profit for Year	10563.39
	<b>43204</b>		<b>43204</b>

## 4 Research implementation

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design adopted in establishing whether it is viable to establish a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta. The paper outlines the methods and procedures followed in the collection and analysis of data to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives set out in the study. In addition, the paper explains the research design adopted, the methods of data gathering, the target population, and the sample adopted in this study. Also, it explains the methodology followed for data analysis and depicts the findings to set a premise for understanding consumer preference and market dynamics.

### 4.2 Research methodology

These are the three great categories of research methodologies: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Quantitative research focuses on numbers and statistical analysis and is often used in hypothesis testing. On the contrary, qualitative research focuses on in-depth cases by making use of data that contain textual and visual components and, hence, provide critical insights into social and cultural contexts. Mixed methods adopt both approaches in order to provide a holistic view and leverage the benefits of each. (Neuman 2014.)

A mixed-method approach will be followed to collect the primary data. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with owners of Sri Lankan restaurants in Lappeenranta to seek information on business challenges and consumer preferences. Additionally, an online survey will be conducted to quantify information on client preferences for Sri Lankan cuisine within the local market. The qualitative data will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, and the survey data will be analyzed using statistical methods. This approach should hopefully bring a complete view of market opportunities for a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta by adding in-depth insights to the overall numerical patterns.

A mixed-method approach is appropriate for the study, since it combines qualitative insights from interviews with Sri Lankan restaurant owners and quantitative data from a large-scale online survey relating to local customer preferences. Qualitative interviews provide a much more nuanced view of the challenges and experiences of the restaurant owners; likewise, a quantitative survey provides measurable data on attitudes and preferences of customers in relation to Sri Lankan cuisine. This will help to incorporate the strengths of both methodologies into a more holistic view regarding market potential, challenges, and opportunities in relation to establishing a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta.

### 4.3 Data collection method, population and sampling

#### Data collection methods

The methods of data collection are significant to the quality and complexity of research results. A method is chosen based on the research questions, the population under study, and the aims of the research. Qualitative research uses methods such as interviews, focus groups, or observational studies in obtaining detailed, contextually relevant data, while quantitative research uses organized methods like surveys in testing hypotheses to produce measurable information. (Paradis et al. 2016, 263-264.) The current research employed a combination of semi-structured interviews and an online survey to gather data on consumer preferences and demand for Sri Lankan cuisine in Lappeenranta.

#### Population

The target population of this research involves the residents of Lappeenranta, Finland, native and other expatriates with diverse interests in culture and culinary tastes. Its multicultural attributes and growing interest in ethnic food make Lappeenranta very relevant for establishing meaningful insights into the potential success of a Sri Lankan restaurant. Specifically, the population consists of Finnish residents who perhaps would like to try something new, immigrants and international residents possibly from Asia who might be familiar with or interested in Sri Lankan food, and Sri Lankan residents in Lappeenranta themselves who can presumably give an authentic view of how well our menu and concept represent Sri Lankan culture.

#### Sampling

To get a fair representation of the diverse population residing in Lappeenranta, a random sampling was carried out. This method was chosen since it gives every individual in the target population an equal opportunity to be picked for the sampling, thereby reducing selection bias and increasing the general representativeness of the sample. This would be especially so in the case of studying heterogeneous populations, as it reduces the possibility of bias and truly represents the characteristics of the population under study. The application of random sampling allowed the research to collect different views and thus included a variety in dining choices and cultural backgrounds in Lappeenranta. It selected a sample size of 65 respondents, which was adequate enough to generate meaningful information about the population's culinary choice at local levels. This approach lowers the risks of assumptions and subjective influences on selection, thus permitting generalization of the findings to the whole population and enhancing the strength of the results. (Etikan & Bala 2017, 217.)

#### 4.3.1 Data collection process

For this thesis, data is collected through an online survey and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative data regarding the preference of the customers will be collected through the survey about Sri Lankan cuisine and dining linked to the culture. Qualitative insights will come from semi-structured interviews with the restaurant owners of Sri Lankan restaurants in Lappeenranta. Both the selection methods are so devised that full comprehension regarding the customer perspective is gained, along with industrial expertise that further aligns with the research objectives.

An online questionnaire was designed and distributed using the Webropol survey tool. This survey consisted of fourteen questions aimed at investigating the level of interest in Sri Lankan gastronomic culture and dining out in Lappeenranta. Webropol was selected due to its ease of use and accessibility, which makes it a tool very well-suited to reaching a wide range of respondents.

The survey was distributed via social media platforms, such as the Facebook groups "International Students in Lappeenranta," "Sri Lankans in Lappeenranta," and which helped to connect to students, youngsters, and locals. The link was also shared directly with Finnish respondents in order to make sure good representation of locals using personal contacts and community networks. For reaching the students from LAB and LUT universities, internal university platforms such as WhatsApp groups were used.

This survey took 28 days, running from 25 October to 22nd November 2024. While preparing the questions, careful attention was paid to the objectives of the research and its sub-questions in such a way that their scope encompassed the very important aspects of the research. The structure of the questionnaire had two parts: demographic data and analytical questions. The section of demography sought to derive general information on respondents' age, gender, ethnicity, while an analytical part of the survey was directed to capture preference about Sri Lankan food and motivation towards the trial of cultural dining.

Semi-structured interviews with the owners of Sri Lankan restaurants in Lappeenranta were conducted along with the questionnaire. These interviews provided qualitative information related to the challenges, opportunities, and consumer behaviour linked with the promotion of Sri Lankan food in the local market. The interview questions focused on such issues as how the ethnic restaurants work, how they attract customers, and what determines their menu offerings and marketing decisions.

The interviews provided insight into expert opinions as well as the identification of problems and opportunities that are likely to arise in the market. The data gathered from the survey

and interview will be analysed for deep insight into consumer preference and the local food industry.

#### 4.4 Data analysis

##### 4.4.1 Analysis of the survey

The survey, which is called Preferences regarding Sri Lankan Food and Culture in Lappeenranta, is designed to gain information about the eating preferences and cultural interests of potential customers. The survey targets the residents of Lappeenranta using social media, focusing on experiences relating to ethnic food, with a focus on Sri Lankan cuisine. The purpose of this survey was to survey the characteristics of respondents, eating habits, interest in cultural affairs, and expectations from the opening Sri Lankan restaurant. Data collection is anonymous and helps to understand how Sri Lankan cuisine and culture can pragmatically be combined into local food culture. This discussion outlines the main findings that emerge from the responses.

##### Age

The age of respondents was analyzed in order to understand the target demographic for the Sri Lankan restaurant. From the figure 4, it can be shown that most of the respondents were in the age group 30–39 at 50.8%, 20–29 at 18.4%, and below 20 at 15.4%. Smaller representation was observed for the age groups 40–49 at 10.8%, 60 and above at 3.1%, and 50–59 at 1.5%. The findings were that the main target demographic of interest falls between 30 and 39 years; however, younger groups showed significant interest as well. Therefore, marketing campaigns may be targeted towards these demographics.

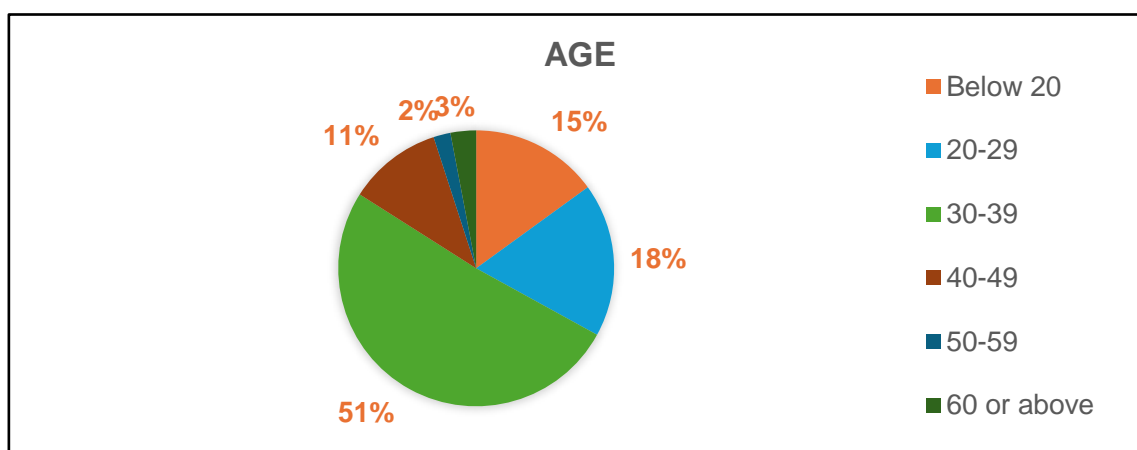


Figure 4. Age Distribution of Respondents

<b>Age Groups of Survey Participants</b>		
	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Below 20	10	15,4%
20-29	12	18,4%
30-39	33	50,8%
40-49	7	10,8%
50-59	1	1,5%
60 or above	2	3,1%

## Gender

An analysis of the gender distribution of respondents was carried out to assess prospective marketing strategies. As shown in the figure 5, females accounted for 60.3% of the respondents, while males constituted 39.7%. The fact that there is a higher rate of participation among females suggests that marketing strategies will be more effective if targeted toward this demographic group. However, it indicates that men constitute a considerable portion of the target group, and attempts should be made to reach out to both genders.

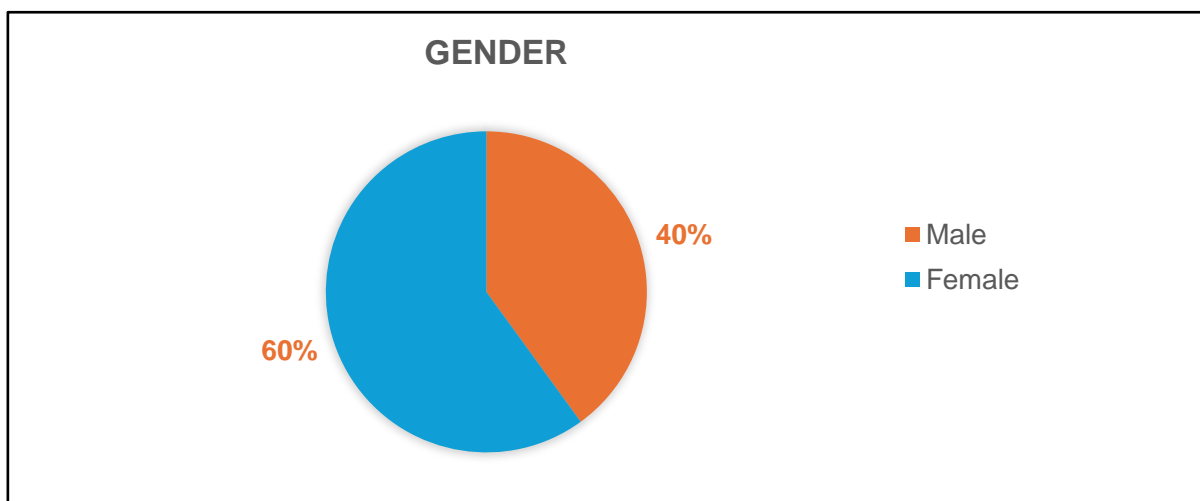


Figure 5. Gender Breakdown of Respondents

<b>Gender Breakdown of Respondents</b>		
	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	25	39,7%
Female	38	60,3%

## Nationality

The question of nationality attempted to find out the cultural background of the respondents. As illustrated by the figure 6 below, the sample was almost equally split between those who identified as Asian (43.1%) and Finnish (46.2%). Smaller fractions identified as Other European citizens (3.1%) and Other (7.7%). These results give an indication that the survey was able to reach a rather diverse audience, showing substantial representation from both the native Finnish population and the Asian community. This diverse composition suggests that marketing strategies geared toward promoting Sri Lankan cuisine need to consider the tastes of both populations.

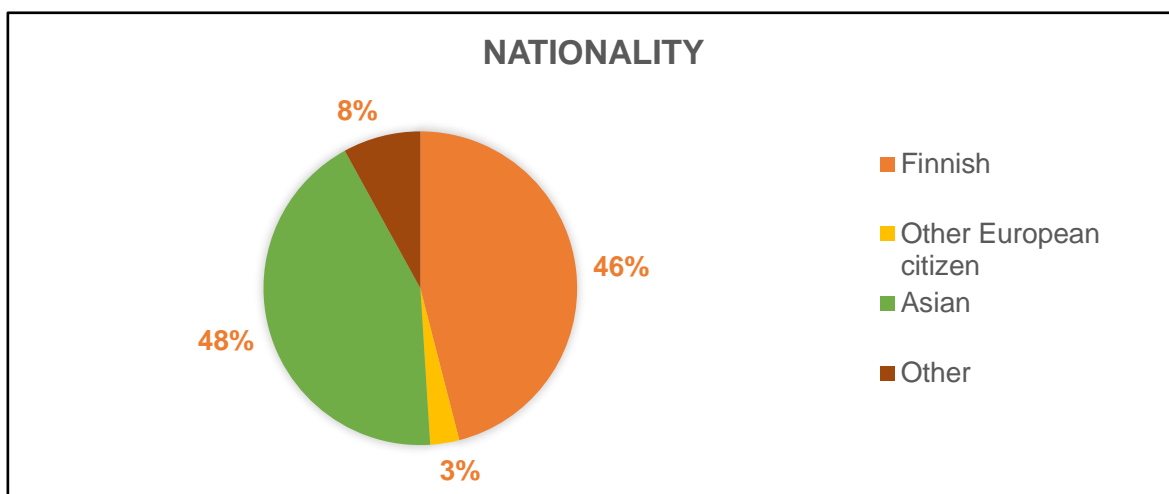


Figure 6. Nationality Distribution of Respondents

Nationality Distribution of Respondents		
	Number of respondents	Percent
Finnish	30	46 %
Other European citizen	2	3 %
Asian	28	43 %
Other	5	8 %

## Dining Out Frequency

The survey researches the frequency of respondents eating out. From Figure 7, it can be induced that the highest percentage of respondents go out for dinner on a weekly basis (44.6%), while one-third go out monthly (33.9%). A minority go out occasionally (21.5%), while none of the respondents dine out every day. These results indicate that the majority of potential customers dine out regularly either once a week or once a month, which suggests a high possibility of targeting frequent diners with promotions and special offers.

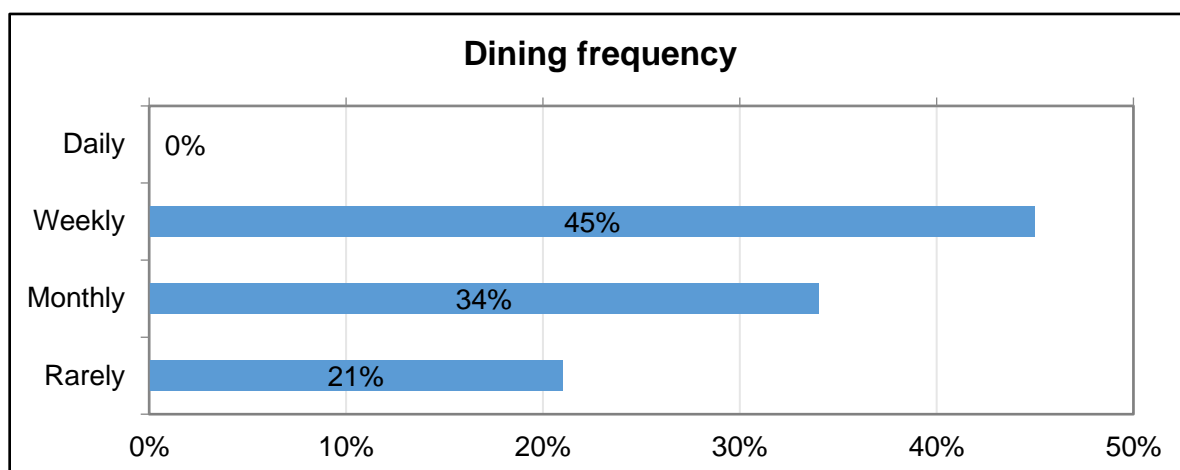


Figure 7. Dining Frequency of Respondents

Dining Frequency of Respondents		
	Number of respondents	Percent
Daily		,0%
Weekly	29	44,6%
Monthly	22	33,9%
Rarely	14	21,5%

#### Interest in Asian Cuisine

The study examined the participants' preferences regarding Asian food. As shown in the figure 8 below, a great majority of the participants, 96.9%, preferred Asian food, while a negligible percentage, 3.1%, were not interested in it. The result shows a great demand for Asian food and an enabling environment for marketing Sri Lankan foodstuffs in Lap- peenranta. The findings suggest there is a market openness to varied Asian flavors, which might help attract new customers by offering unique and authentic Sri Lankan culinary experiences. This further indicates that the local population is most likely open to new dining experiences, hence an opportunity to leverage this interest through well-crafted marketing strategies.

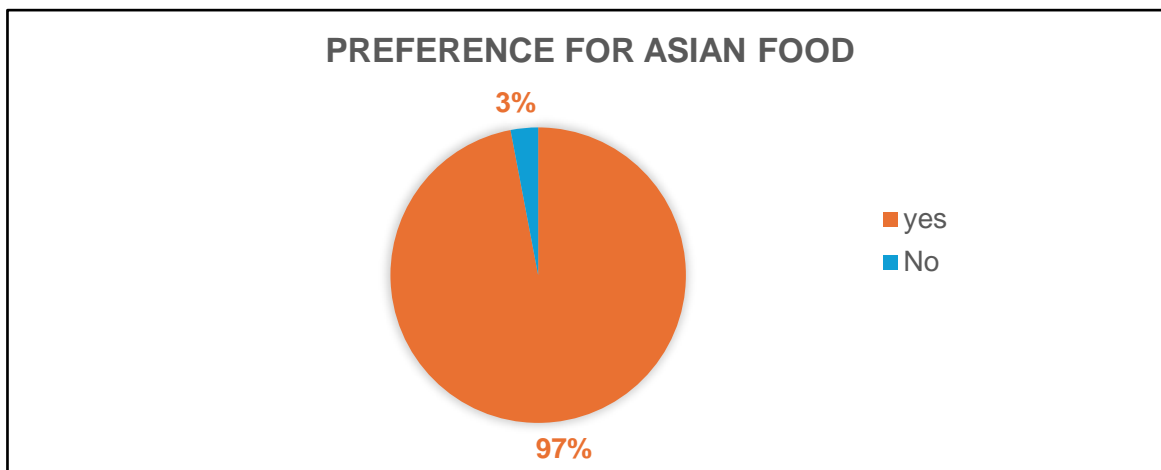


Figure 8. Preference for Asian Food Among Respondents

Preference for Asian Food Among Respondents		
	Number of respondents	Percent
yes	62	96,9%
No	2	3,1%

#### Experience with Sri Lankan Cuisine

The survey also asked about respondents' previous experience with Sri Lankan food. As shown in the figure 9, only 6.2% of the respondents said they had tried Sri Lankan food, whereas 18.5% said they had not.

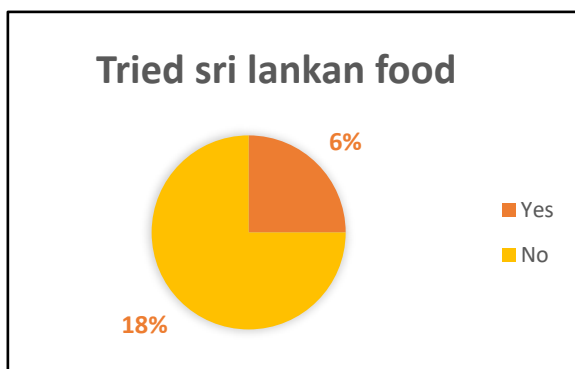


Figure 9. Experience with Sri Lankan Cuisine

According to figure 10, among those who had tried it, 21.6% liked the spices, 15.4% liked the variety of dishes, and 9.2% pointed out the taste, while 1.5% gave other reasons. Among those who had not yet tried Sri Lankan food, 21.5% showed a clear willingness to try it, 4.6% were neutral, and 1.5% were not interested at all. This clearly implies that there is a

lot of potential to attract new customers by marketing the unique taste and variety within Sri Lankan cuisine to a wider audience.

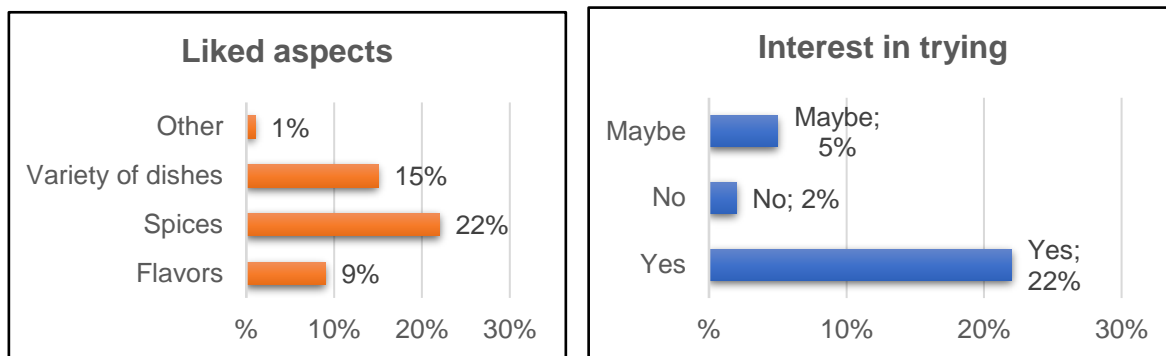


Figure 10. Experience and Interest in Sri Lankan Food Among Respondents

	n	Percent
Have you ever tried Sri Lankan food before		
Yes	4	6,2%
No	12	18,5%
If yes, what did you enjoy most about it?		
Flavors	6	9,2%
Spices	14	21,6%
Variety of dishes	10	15,4%
Other (please specify): _____	1	1,5%
If no, would you be interested in trying authentic Sri Lankan food?		
Yes	14	21,5%
No	1	1,5%
Maybe	3	4,6%

#### Importance of Cultural Atmosphere in Restaurant Selection

The survey showed how cultural ambiance, decor, and music contribute to the choice of a restaurant. From the data table below, the mean ranking for cultural atmosphere importance was 7.3, with a median of 8.0. These results depict that most respondents attach an important value to cultural components in creating a good dining out experience. However, a standard deviation of 2.1 shows that some of the respondents placed less importance on these factors. These findings are evidence of the importance of implementing cultural elements in the restaurant environment to capture a large proportion of potential customers.

Importance of Cultural Atmosphere (Decor, Music, etc.) in Restaurant Choice					
Min value	Max value	Average	Median	Sum	Standard Deviation
1,0	10,0	7,3	8,0	474,0	2,1

### Interest in attending cultural events at a restaurant

This survey researches the level of interest in taking part in cultural activities, like Sri Lankan festivals, in a restaurant. From the figure 11 below, one could deduce that 90.8% of the respondents were very interested, and only 9.2% were not at all. These figures are very promising, showing great interest in cultural activities among potential customers. Holding these kinds of events could really help improve customer interaction and greatly improve their dining experience. This would further help the restaurant to establish a unique identity and create a sense of community associated with Sri Lankan heritage.

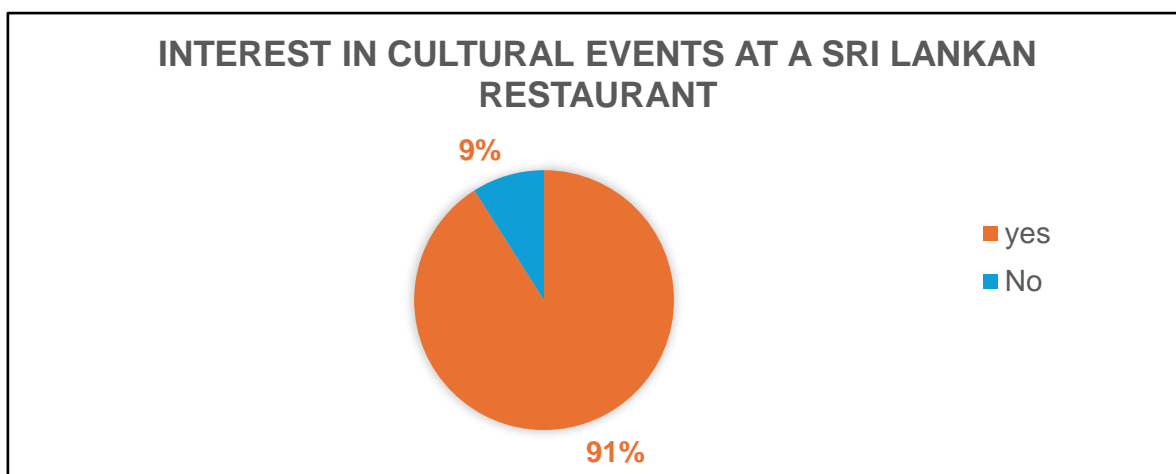


Figure 11. Interest in cultural events at a Sri Lankan restaurant

<b>Interest in cultural events at a Sri Lankan restaurant</b>		
	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
yes	59	90,8%
No	6	9,2%

### Influence of a Traditional Sri Lankan Setting on the Culinary Experience

This study was conducted to test the influence of a traditional Sri Lankan ambiance represented in this case by music, decorations, and the dress code of the employees on the overall dining experience. According to the figure 12, the findings were 62.5% of respondents stated that it would be an added advantage, 31.2% were undecided, and 6.3% perceived no advantage at all. All this shows the importance of authentic cultural ambiance in meeting or exceeding customer expectations in helping to create a memorable and enjoyable dining experience.

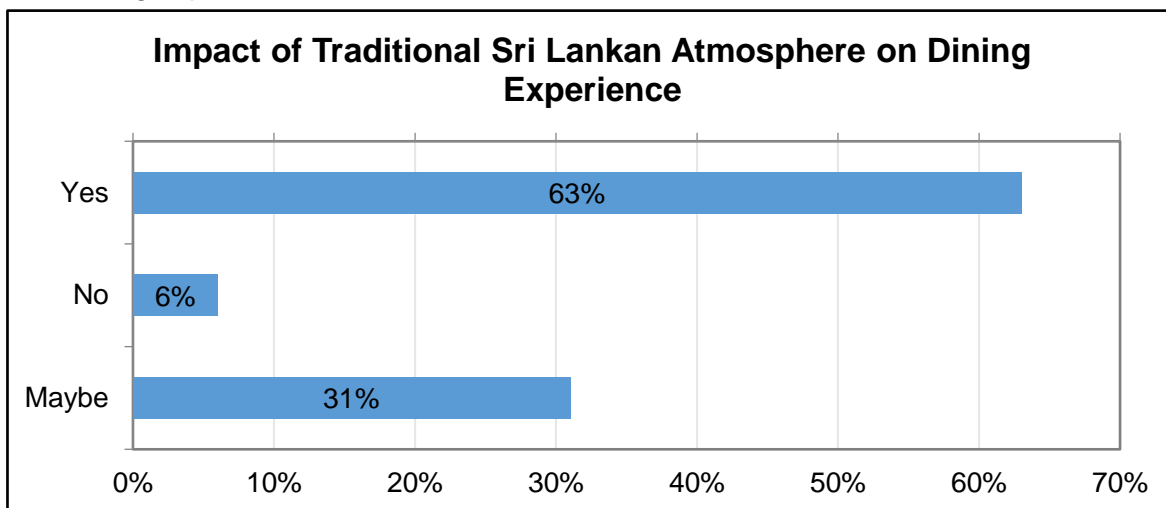


Figure 12. Impact of Traditional Sri Lankan Atmosphere on Dining Experience

Impact of Traditional Sri Lankan Atmosphere on Dining Experience		
	Number of respondents	Percent
Yes	40	62,5%
No	4	6,3%
Maybe	20	31,2%

### Value of Cultural Explanations by Staff During Dining

It specifically aimed to find out if diners would like staff to explain the cultural significance of dishes or ingredients. From the figure13, 85.9% of respondents were interested in such explanations, whereas 14.1% were not interested. It is indicative that adding education to the dining experience may greatly enhance customer engagement with and appreciation for the culture behind Sri Lankan cuisine.

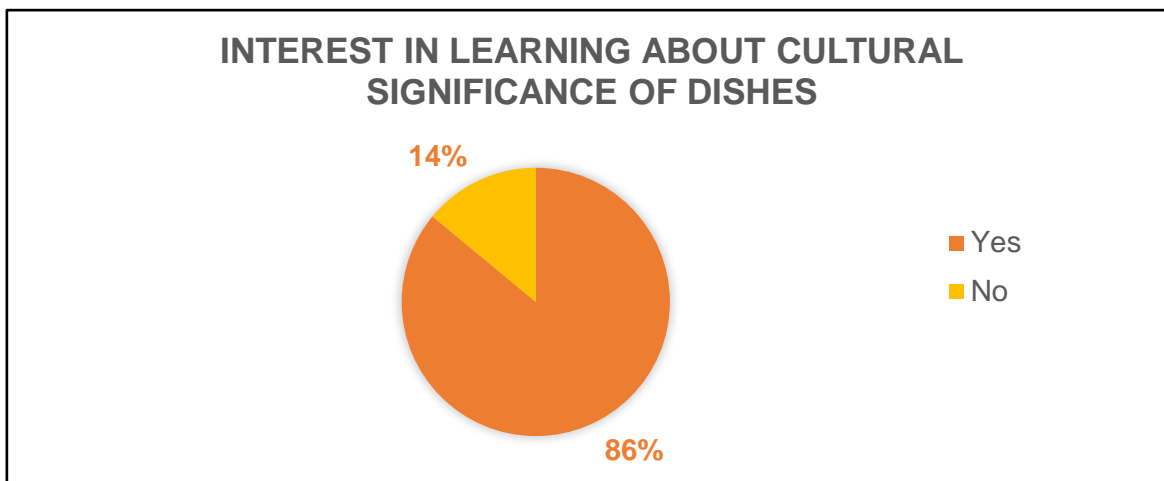


Figure 13. Interest in Learning About Cultural Significance of Dishes

Interest in Learning About Cultural Significance of Dishes		
	Number of respondents	Percent
Yes	55	85,9%
No	9	14,1%

#### Key Factors to Attract Customers to a Sri Lankan Restaurant

Figure 14 depicts, a unique menu was accounted for by 39.7%, the second most prominent variable were affordable prices by 30.1%. Likewise, 23.8% of them would come just since the place offers an exotic culture in some way, whereas conveniences like location or the special promotion offers held an influence of 3.2% each, on relative terms. These findings indicate that new menu offerings and competitive prices, coupled with cultural elements, may effectively attract potential customers.

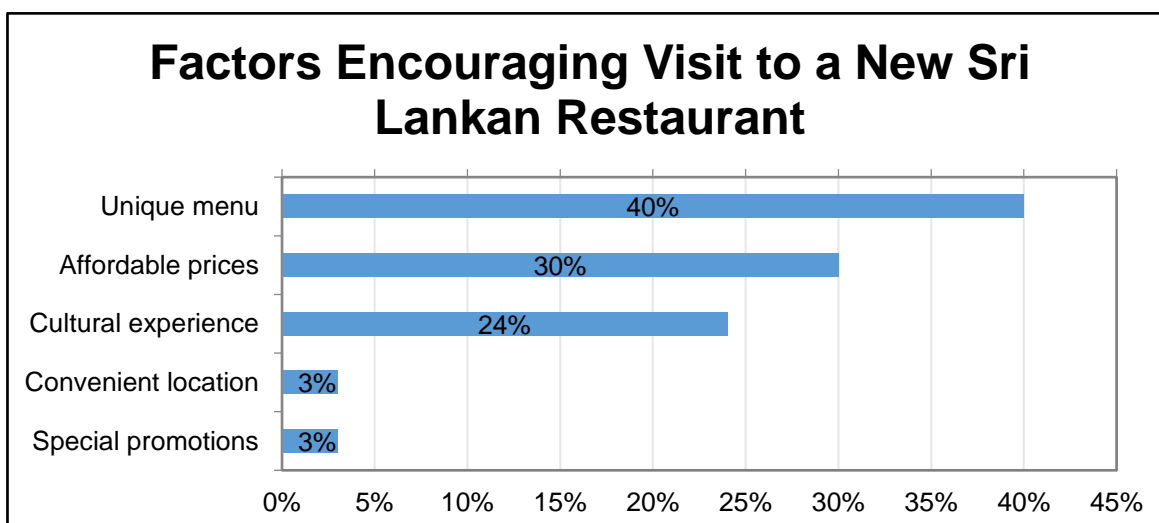


Figure 14. Factors Encouraging Visit to a New Sri Lankan Restaurant

<b>Factors Encouraging Visit to a New Sri Lankan Restaurant</b>		
	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Unique menu	25	39,7%
Affordable prices	19	30,1%
Cultural experience	15	23,8%
Convenient location	2	3,2%
Special promotions	2	3,2%

### Channels for Discovering New Restaurants

Looking at this figure 15, the source of knowledge about new restaurants placed social media at the top with 63.5%. The next most effective were personal recommendations, with 17.4% choosing word of mouth. Wolt and Foodora restaurant delivery platforms each accounted for 12.7% of the responses; their role in modern dining choices is evident. Only 4.8% chose flyers and leaflets as a means of advertising that garners little attention. The "Other" category was 1.6%, where respondents said that beautiful pictures and positive reviews also helped them to become interested. The results emphasize the importance of keeping a strong online presence through social media and delivery services and word-of-mouth promotion, combined with visually appealing content, in order to bring more visibility to the restaurant and attract customers.

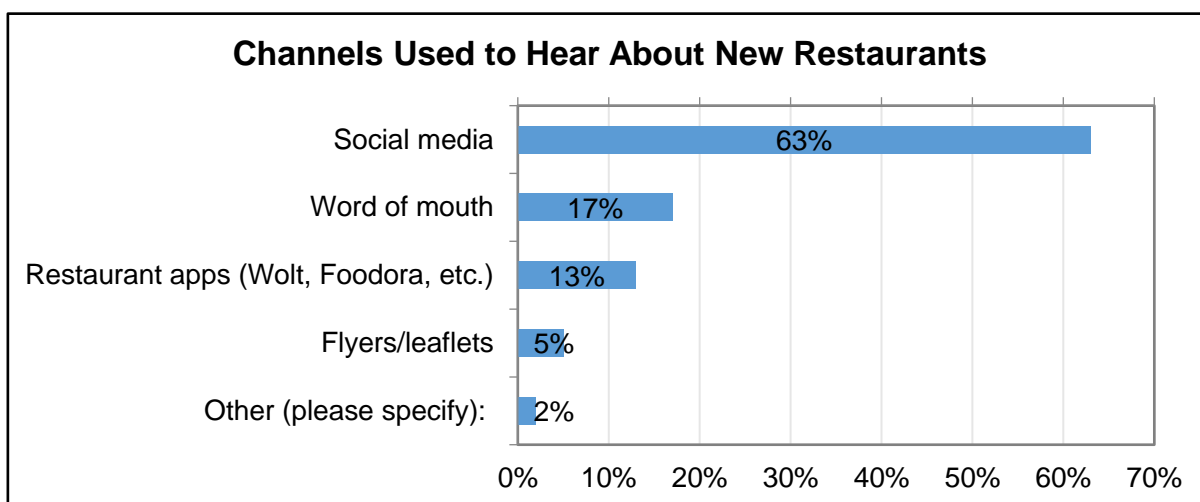


Figure 15. Channels Used to Hear About New Restaurants

Channels Used to Hear About New Restaurants		
	Number of respondents	Percent
Social media	40	63,5%
Word of mouth	11	17,4%
Restaurant apps (Wolt, Foodora, etc.)	8	12,7%
Flyers/leaflets	3	4,8%
Other (please specify):	1	1,6%

### Reasons for Returning to an Asian Restaurant

As illustrated by the figure 16, 41.5% of respondents reported that it is the authentic taste of the food that mainly attracts them to come back again to the Asian restaurant. This depicts that authentic and delicious food is crucial in attracting customers and maintaining them. Additionally, 23.1% of the respondents pointed out service quality and ambiance; this signifies that the overall experience in the restaurant, in terms of atmosphere and service provided by staff, plays a very major role in customer satisfaction.

In addition, 15.4% of respondents named variety on the menu as an incentive for a repeat visit, which indicates that a wide selection might bring happiness and encourage re-patronage. Although the friendly staff, reasonable prices, and unique cultural experience were considered relatively less important, they still contributed positively to the overall dining experience. It confirms that a real menu, high service quality, and a cozy place are the main factors to improve customers' loyalty and earn repeat business.

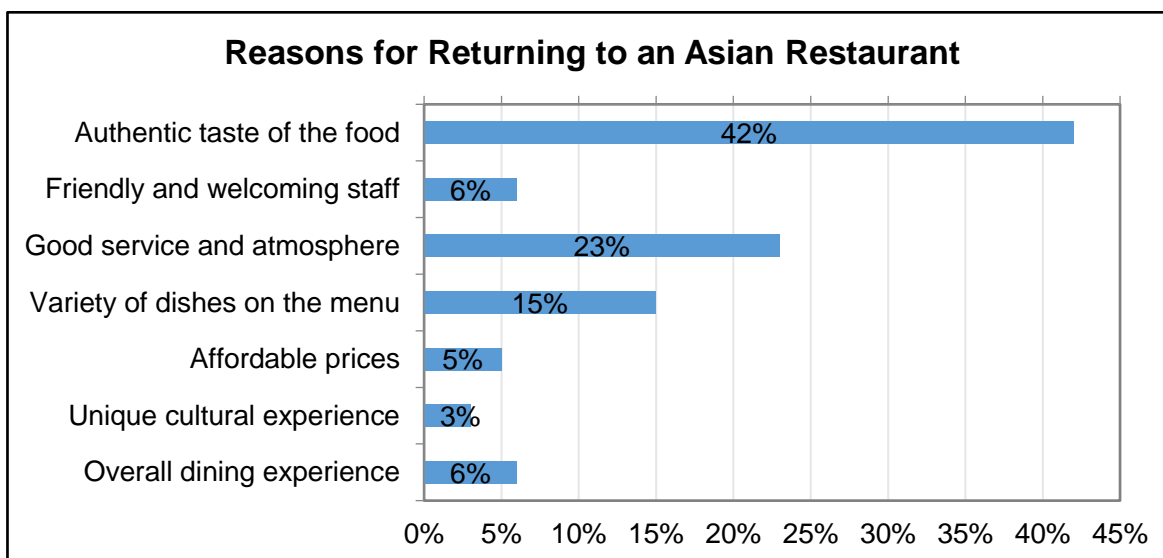


Figure 16. Reasons for Returning to an Asian Restaurant

<b>Reasons for Returning to an Asian Restaurant</b>		
	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Authentic taste of the food	27	41,5%
Friendly and welcoming staff	4	6,1%
Good service and atmosphere	15	23,1%
Variety of dishes on the menu	10	15,4%
Affordable prices	3	4,6%
Unique cultural experience	2	3,1%
Overall dining experience	4	6,2%

#### Expectations from a New Sri Lankan Restaurant in Lappeenranta

Answers to the question, what would you expect from a new Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta? Show big interest in both authenticity and affordable prices. Several people said that an authentic taste of Sri Lankan food should not be lost, and its typical spice blends and traditional ways of preparation should be maintained. Authenticity is the keyword since several of the participants stressed that they like to eat dishes that remind them of home or at least represent the spirit of the Sri Lankan food culture.

Affordability was also mentioned, many people noted that it needs to be affordable so that the restaurant will be in a position to include a variety of different customers. At the same time, one feels a wish to be exposed to novelty and new experiences provided by the food and beverage industry in town. People do not want only good food but to experience a whole cultural thing: atmosphere, service, and related to this restaurant, Sri Lankan culture presented in a way that is approachable and inviting.

Besides, diversity and adaptability are welcome. Several participants suggested having a variety of menu options to suit each taste and diet, like having milder dishes or even halal dishes. Accessibility regarding place and price was also a common suggestion. Consumers want it in the heart of the city, in a welcoming location, where they can enjoy both superior food and premium service. These observations reveal consumer expectations and provide valuable guidance to develop the concept and menu item creation of the restaurant.

#### 4.4.2 Analysis of the semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two Sri Lankan owners of restaurants in Lappeenranta to gather the precious information about their operational processes and experiences. These interviews were carried out based on a predetermined questionnaire to gain pragmatic knowledge relevant to the conceptual development of our restaurant. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify patterns and contradictions in their responses.

Thematic analysis is the search for and identification of themes in qualitative data, focusing on both overt and covert concepts. This process goes further than the quantification of words or phrases by way of organizing data into codes representing major themes. While this method encapsulates complex meanings well, it requires very careful consideration of reliability due to the interpretative nature of the coding, especially when more than one analyst is involved. Strategies to improve intercoder agreement are recommended to maintain rigor in the analysis process. (Guest et al. 2014.)

##### Long-Term Goals and Customer Demand

A steady increase in demand for Sri Lankan food from customers has been found by the restaurant owners, this can be attributed to a growing interest in ethnic foods. However, one owner mentioned that although demand is on the rise, it remains relatively small when measured against other foods, currently estimated at about 50%. There are plans to increase this percentage to 80% over a period.

On the long-term perspective, both owners have noted their wishes for the development of their businesses. One of the owners said there is a need to introduce new menu items and open more outlets. The other owner pointed out that cultural events could help to promote Sri Lankan food and attract more customers. These results imply that the strategic plan of development by diversification and cultural marketing should be integrated with the fundamental operations.

##### Target Audience Preferences

Both the interviewed owners named some specific customer preferences: popular dishes like Kottu, Fried Rice, and Biryani. The first owner mentioned that Finnish customers prefer less spicy dishes, while the second owner preferred to be able to change the spiciness of dishes based on demand.

Promotional activities are important to retain their customer base. One owner mentioned that they offer discounts and free drinks at special times. The second owner mentioned

making buffet arrangements with some special family deals. It seems like the inclusion of flexible menu choices or special discounts would be able to accommodate many customers.

#### Operations and Menu Adaptations

Both owners insisted on the need for a balance between the traditional and the modern taste in the menu. In fact, one owner even suggested having parallel choices of Finnish and Sri Lankan dishes to maintain the restaurant's popularity, especially for groups with diverse tastes. In the meanwhile, some limited changes are made to the levels of spices upon customer feedback without compromising the traditional cooking.

Both owners reported that the development of personnel in Sri Lankan culinary techniques and in providing customer service was integral to the business. As one owner explained, authenticity would not be compromised if Sri Lankan chefs were employed. These views illustrate a great need for a highly developed staff training system to appeal to the local market while authenticity is maintained.

#### Competitors' Strategies and Customer Loyalty

It also emerged that competition watching was among the means of relevance in the market. One informant used applications like Wolt and Foodora to gain knowledge about all offerings and trends; another informant used local events and studied competitors' marketing strategies. Proprietors agreed that quality assurance, high-quality service, and competitive prices are strategies that guarantee customer loyalty.

#### Advice and Market-related Challenges

Both the owners emphasized that following the hygiene policy and getting the necessary certificates are their legal duties. The maintenance of consistency of taste and avoidance of expansion of menus were identified as the key factors by them.

Pre-identified problems dealt with the competition stemming from other Asian restaurants and the increase of food costs relating to the availability of inflation. Given recommendations included the price adjustment to meet fluctuating economic status and the offering of new food products to meet the changing trends of food preferences. Conclusion The interviews have produced valuable information on how to manage a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta. In fact, it is observed that the strategies for success would involve offering adaptable menu selections, maintaining consistent quality, offering competitive prices, and executing dynamic promotional initiatives. By adopting these approaches, this restaurant would be in a position to establish itself as a distinctive, sustainable culinary destination within the area.

## 4.5 Discussion with research findings

### 4.5.1 To identify how the start and run Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta

Starting and running a Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta requires emphasizing key target customer demographics and preferences. According to the survey, the majority of potential customers are people aged between 30–39 years, followed by younger groups, and thus assure a strong base of working professionals and young families. The authenticity of flavors and immersing customers in the cultural experience are important for attracting such consumers since the data shows interest in authentic Sri Lankan cuisine and unique dining experiences. Also, competitive pricing is essential, as stated often in open-ended responses was affordability. Marketing should majorly take place on social media since this is the most preferred platform by participants. Friendly and knowledgeable personnel will also continue to complement improving customer satisfaction and loyalty.

### 4.5.2 To establish how well Sri Lankan cuisine will be received by the consumers in Lappeenranta.

This will involve introducing customers to real Sri Lankan cuisine while creating cultural awareness. Many of those who tried Sri Lankan food appreciated the spiciness, variety of tastes, and overall diversity, which perhaps could be used more widely in promotions through focused events or tastings. It might also be helpful to use cultural elements such as native music and decor to frame the cuisine not just as food but as an experience of culture. The social media campaigns directed at the oddity of certain foods and dining experiences will likely make a case for both locals and tourists. Additionally, staff explaining the history and significance of different dishes may help reach those less familiar with the food tradition, thus creating an all-inclusive environment.

### 4.5.3 To determine the current ethnic trends and preferences in the marketplace.

The survey results reveal that ethnic dining, particularly Asian cuisine, is growing in popularity. Most respondents expressed an interest in authentic tastes and good dining atmospheres, reflecting a trend toward exploring diverse cultural food experiences. Weekly or monthly dining habits dominate, indicating customers prioritize quality and affordability for special occasions. Lappeenranta lacks genuine ethnic options, so that Sri Lankan restaurant would fill the void where the unmet demand exists. That fusion of rich flavors with a

cultural dining experience will align with current trends and present a market for something different.

#### 4.5.4 To identify competitor analysis in the market

competitors would be other Asian and ethnic restaurants already established in Lappeenranta. The survey, however, detected certain gaps which a Sri Lankan restaurant can fill. Many respondents believed that existing Asian restaurants lacked authenticity as they tended to adjust flavors to suit the locals. Offering genuine Sri Lankan recipes will thus make the restaurant stand out.

Also, the competition usually does not focus on developing an immersive cultural environment, and therefore the Sri Lankan restaurant has an available niche to provide this experience uniquely. Combining authentic food with a cozy atmosphere, supported by the right marketing plans, the restaurant will thus be able to gain its identity and attract customers who seek more authentic ethnic food experiences.

## 5 Conclusion and recommendations

### 5.1 Answer for the research questions

Main Research Question: How to present a cultural and culinary concept for a successful Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta?

Formulation of the cultural as well as culinary framework for the effective Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta, as derived from the research and analysis conducted, would need strategic integration of genuine cuisine, cultural engagement, and proficient marketing techniques. The restaurant should serve authentic Sri Lankan cuisine with special dishes, including signature items such as rice and curry, hoppers, Kottu roti, and watalappan. One should also consider the local taste by offering options with decreasing intensity of spices since Finnish customers usually prefer milder flavors. For a traditional Sri Lankan ambiance, various things can be considered in terms of decoration, music, and activities, which will submerge the customer in the culture through cultural events, live music, storytelling, and celebration of festivals like Vesak and the Tamil New Year.

A strong digital presence through social media and collaboration with food influencers is a must to attract customers who have never tried Sri Lankan food. This can also be developed through community engagement and participation in cultural food events. Moreover, the experience of dining needs to be taken further than just food live cooking demonstrations, cooking classes, and themed events that create an experience and a memory. Highlighting sustainability and environmentally aware practices, including the utilization of locally procured ingredients, can effectively cater to the increasing desire for responsible dining options. This holistic strategy guarantees an equilibrium between cultural authenticity, customer involvement, and contemporary dining trends.

Sub Research Question 1: What are the challenges and opportunities involved in introducing Sri Lankan cuisine to Lappeenranta?

Introducing Sri Lankan cuisine to Lappeenranta is not a task without challenges, this involves lack of awareness concerning the traditions of this kitchen, competition from already present ethnic restaurants, and balancing the level of spiciness to Finnish taste without losing authenticity of the dishes. At the same time, there are considerable opportunities in increasing interest in ethnic food, a multicultural population that has its say in the demand for Sri Lankan culinary products, and appeal through cultural tourism and sustainability trends that could attract both locals and tourists.

Sub Research Question 2: What type of pure Sri Lankan food does the customer like most?

The most common Sri Lankan dishes found in the survey are rice and curry, from mild to spicy options; kottu rotti, a flavorful street food prepared with rotti, vegetables, and meat; and hoppers, pancake like with various fillings. Watalappan is also popular a dessert based on coconut milk. The survey showed there was strong interest in vegetarian and vegan options, further showing plant-based eating trends. To cater to local tastes, offering milder versions of these dishes while maintaining authenticity would be key.

Sub Research Question 3: How does a traditional Sri Lankan ambience attract customers?

The traditional Sri Lankan atmosphere is very important in attracting customers and enhancing their dining experience. Authentic decorations, including Sri Lankan artifacts, bright textiles, and wood furniture, create a warm, welcoming atmosphere. Cultural elements such as traditional lamps, and ornate carvings, and musical elements like live drumming performances further enhance the diners' experience of Sri Lankan culture. There are also cultural activities regarding cooking classes and festivals, for example, Vesak. These activities give people further means of interaction. It will also educate consumers about the historical backgrounds and origins of food products; such cultural information will raise awareness among customers and reinforce loyalty.

## 5.2 Conclusion

This thesis explores the ways and possibilities of creating a successful Sri Lankan restaurant concept in Lappeenranta, Finland. Although recently there has been growing interest in ethnic cuisine and cultural diversity, a gap still remains on the local market for authentic Sri Lankan food. It also offers a unique fusion of traditional Sri Lankan food together with an entertaining cultural dining experience. Research into the topic shows that the multicultural population in Lappeenranta consists of a relatively large group of expatriates who are from Sri Lanka, thus creating a viable target market for authentic Sri Lankan food products.

The main conclusions that can be drawn from the study indicate that although there are challenges in the form of lack of awareness of Sri Lankan cuisine, competition from other ethnic restaurants, and the need for adjustment of spice levels to local palates, significant opportunities also arise. Growing interest in ethnic foods, surging demand for cultural experiences, and trends toward sustainability offer promising prospects for development. In this study, it was further revealed that many respondents showed a high interest in traditional Sri Lankan Cuisine, which included rice and curry, kottu roti, and hoppers cultural events such as cookery demonstrations and Sri Lankan festivals.

The traditional ambience of Sri Lanka, with its real decorations, music, and cultural events, has been found to be an important factor in enhancing the dining experience and promoting customer loyalty. The proposed restaurant can be singled out from its competitors as it comprises authentic taste together with live cultural events and activities. The results shed light on the opportunity for a Sri Lankan restaurant to take off in Lappeenranta by capitalizing on the city's expanding multicultural environment and the community's demand for diversified and authentic gastronomic experiences.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations should help to successfully launch the proposed Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta and to further expand.

#### Authenticity Through Local Adaptation

This would be of great importance in maintaining the authenticity of Sri Lankan culinary traditions while making adaptations to suit local tastes. This also caters to the diverse needs of the Finnish consumer in relation to the level of spiciness, ranging from mild to very strong, without compromising on the authenticity of traditional Sri Lankan flavors. More importantly, vegetarian and vegan options also fall under this umbrella for the contemporary world's tendency and trends in diets to attract a wider audience.

Cultural immersion and participation can be created in a Sri Lankan setting so as to enhance the dining experience. The atmosphere must radiate cultural authenticity in the form of design elements incorporating either Sri Lankan artifacts, colorful textiles, or natural materials. Live performances, cultural celebrations, and educative activities such as cooking demonstrations and storytelling sessions will draw customers and initiate a cultural exchange with them.

#### Digital and social media marketing must be used

The unique elements of the restaurant should be projected, including its events and promotional specials. This would allow increasing brand awareness and reaching a diverse customer base through digital marketing tools. Further, it can also collaborate with local influencers and food bloggers to increase visibility and footfall in the outlet.

#### Customer Loyalty Programs

The creation of such loyalty programs as referral incentives and rewards for frequent diners is necessary for a loyal customer base to grow. Quality service, with a good experience,

would also likely generate word-of-mouth advertising, hence sustaining relations with clients.

#### Monitor Competitor Strategies

The restaurant has to monitor competitors in the local market, especially ethnic restaurants, to get a feel of market trends and further calibrate its offerings. It is the flexibility and responsiveness to consumer tastes that would be the key to holding a competitive edge in such a growing and changing marketplace.

They would really be able to meet the expectations of this diverse population at Lappeenranta through authenticity, cultural engagement, and strategic marketing plans in place, creating a unique position for Sri Lankan cuisine within the local food scene.

#### 5.4 Suggestion for Further Research

Future research could focus on an in-depth financial analysis to improve the understanding of the economic viability and potential profitability of the restaurant; it would include a study of costs, pricing practices, and long-term financial planning. More extensive research into market trends and consumer behavior would further fine-tune the business model.

Additionally, a better analysis of market trends and consumer preferences would further the development of the business idea. A deep study on the economic impacts on local employment, tourism, and supply chains would provide knowledge of great value regarding the financial sustainability of the restaurant and its place in the community.

It also suggested looking into sustainability practices, such as using locally sourced ingredients and waste reduction, in order to better attract the environmentally conscious customer and trend with the world. This could further investigate business strategies and have a much broader view of all the factors leading to success in ethnic restaurants.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire

#### Preferences for Sri Lankan Food and Culture in Lappeenranta

Online Questionnaire for Social Media (Target Customers)

We are third-year students at LAB University of Applied Sciences, working on a thesis about the cultural and culinary concept for a new Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta. This survey will help us understand your food preferences, interest in ethnic foods, and thoughts on introducing Sri Lankan culture and cuisine to the local food scene.

Your responses are anonymous, and the results will only be shared in Theseus.

Thank you for your support

##### 1. Age

- Below 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 or above

##### 2. Gender

- Male
- Female

##### 3. Nationality

- Finnish
- Other European citizen
- Asian
- Other

##### 4. How often do you dine out?

- Daily
- Weekly

- Monthly
- Rarely

5. Do you like Asian food?

- yes
- No

6. Have you ever tried Sri Lankan food before?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what did you enjoy most about it?

- Flavors
- Spices
- Variety of dishes
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

7. How important is the cultural atmosphere (decor, music, etc.) when choosing a restaurant?



8. Would you be interested in attending cultural events, such as Sri Lankan festivals, at a restaurant?

- yes

- No

9. Would a traditional Sri Lankan atmosphere (music, decor, and staff uniforms) enhance your dining experience?

Yes

No

Maybe

10. Would you appreciate staff explaining the cultural significance of certain dishes or ingredients while dining?

Yes

No

11. What would encourage you to visit a new Sri Lankan restaurant?

Unique menu

Affordable prices

Cultural experience

Convenient location

Special promotions

12. How do you usually hear about new restaurants?

Social media

Word of mouth

Restaurant apps (Wolt, Foodora, etc.)

Flyers/leaflets

Other (please specify):

13. Which of the following could be reasons for you to return to an Asian restaurant?

- Authentic taste of the food
- Friendly and welcoming staff
- Good service and atmosphere
- Variety of dishes on the menu
- Affordable prices
- Unique cultural experience
- Overall dining experience
- 

14. What would you expect from a new Sri Lankan restaurant in Lappeenranta?  
(Open-ended)

## **Appendix 2: Semi structured interview questionnaire**

### **Questionnaire for Sri Lankan Restaurant Owners**

#### **General Questions**

1. How has customer demand for Sri Lankan food changed over time since you opened?
2. What are your long-term goals for your restaurant?
3. How do you ensure the quality and consistency of your dishes?

#### **Target Audience**

4. Do you notice any particular trends in customer preferences for certain types of Sri Lankan food?
5. Do you offer any special promotions or events to attract different customer groups (e.g., cultural nights, discounts)?

#### **Operations**

6. How important is maintaining a balance between traditional and modern tastes in your menu?
7. What steps do you take to train staff on Sri Lankan cuisine and customer service?
8. Have you adapted any dishes to suit the local Finnish palate? If so, how?

#### **Competitors**

9. How do you monitor or respond to trends in the local restaurant market?
10. What strategies do you use to build customer loyalty in a competitive market?

#### **Advice**

11. How did you navigate the legal requirements for opening an ethnic restaurant in Finland?
12. What mistakes should new restaurant owners avoid when launching an ethnic restaurant?
13. How do you keep up with changing customer preferences and ensure your menu stays relevant?

#### **Market Risk**

14. How do you assess if there's enough demand for Sri Lankan food in Lappeenranta?
15. What challenges do you face from competing restaurants in the area?
16. How do rising food costs or changes in the economy impact your restaurant?