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THE TASTE PREFERENCES
OF FINNISH PEOPLE
TOWARDS SOUTHEAST ASIAN FOOD
THE CASE OF VIETNAMESE FOOD AND THAI FOOD

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TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli selvittää suomalaisten kuluttajien kiinnostustaso Kaakois-Aasialaista ruokaa kohtaan. Tässä tutkimuksessa keskityttiin vietnamilaiseen ja thaimaalaiseen ruokaan. Lisäksi tavoitteena oli että tätä opinnäytetyötä voidaan käyttää jatkoselvityksiin samasta aiheesta.

Tutkimusosuus tehtiin käyttäen kvantitatiivista tutkimusmenetelmää. Tutkimusmenetelmänä oli kyselylomake, johon haastateltiin yli 18-vuotiaita suomalaisia. Kysely toteutettiin pääasiassa Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulussa sekä Facebookissa. Pääteoriat, joita kyselyssä sovellettiin, ovat maun ja makumieltymysten teoriat. Myös kulttuuriteoria otettiin huomioon kysymyksiä laadittaessa. Vastaajien tuli täyttää kaksi vaatimusta: Vastaajan täytyi olla suomalainen ja maistanut joko vietnamilaista ja thaimaalaista ruokaa.

Tutkimus analyysi paljasti, että suomalaisilla on tietoa, kiinnostusta ja positiivisia ajatuksia Vietnamilaisesta ja Thaimaalaisesta ruoasta, vaikka suurin vastaajista ei ole käynyt Vietnamissa tai Thaimaassa. Tämä osoittaa, että Kaakois-Aasialaisella ruoalla on mahdollisuus parempaan menestykseen suomessa. Tämä päätelmä tarvitsee tuekseen kuitenkin syvällisempiä tutkimustuloksia.

ABSTRACT

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The aim of this research was to reveal the interest level for Southeast Asian food in Finland by studying the attitudes of Finnish people towards Southeast Asian food; in this research are Vietnamese food and Thai food. The ultimate goal is to find out if it is possible for a better long term success for Southeast Asian restaurants in Finland.

The research was conducted within a population of Finnish people aged from 18 upwards by quantitative research method. The questionnaire was created and distributed mainly in Vaasa University of Applied Sciences and on Facebook. The main theories that were applied to the questions are the theory of taste and taste preferences. The theory of culture was also taken into consideration when the questions were created. The respondents had to satisfy two required characters, they had to be Finnish, and have tried either Vietnamese food or Thai food.

The research analysis mainly revealed that Finnish people, in fact, do have knowledge, interest and positive attitudes towards Vietnamese and Thai food, even though the majority of them have never been in either Vietnam or Thailand. This indicates that there is possibility for a better success of Southeast Asian food business in Finland. In addition, the research could be used for further and broader study on the same matter.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the origin of the research problem, how it occurred and in what situation. Also it reveals the general idea about the demand for and purpose of this research, as well as the goal it is aiming to discover.

1.1 The Reason Behind The Research

The idea for this research arose from an observation that is evident in many Asian restaurants located in Vaasa and nearby. They provide the presumed Asian food, and especially Vietnamese food with a false taste.

With a profoundly long history, Asian foods are composed of fresh, exotic and diverse ingredients to produce distinguished, unique and sophisticated flavours. The distinctive sophistication of Southeast Asian foods should be recognized correctly through continents and nations. However, it is observed by the author that not only in Vaasa, but also in most other regions in Finland, the Southeast Asian foods familiar to the Finns offer the same dishes by the restaurants, regardless of from which country the food comes from. Thus, it is highly possible that a distorted image and impression of Southeast Asian cuisines has been created in the Finnish minds.

Therefore, the idea is to research the attitudes of Finnish people on the Southeast Asian food tastes, in this case the Vietnamese food and Thai food. Based on this the aim is to find out whether or not there is a further possible success for Southeast Asian restaurants in Finland.

1.2 Goal of the Research

The research is conducted within the population of Finnish people aged from 18 upwards, as the main goal is to investigate their taste preferences towards Vietnamese food and Thai food offered by restaurants in Finland.

The research problem of the thesis is “How do Finnish people receive the differences in Vietnamese food and Thai food?”

To clarify the research problem, these questions are set:

- How frequently do Finnish people have Vietnamese food and Thai food?
- What elements do Finns like and dislike in Vietnamese food and Thai food?
- What do Finns think that is the difference between Vietnamese/Thai food and Finnish food?

1.3 Structure Of The Thesis

The thesis starts with an Introduction chapter where the reasons for the research, the goal of the research as well as the research problem are explained. Chapter 2,3 and 4 give a theoretical base for the thesis. Chapter 2 gives a general introduction of the backgrounds of the different food cultures: Finnish food culture, Southeast Asian food culture, and Vietnamese food culture. In this chapter, the aim is to already give a first impression of the differences amongst the food cultures. Chapter 3 explains the basic senses of human beings. In this chapter the tongue functions are described and the taste preferences are explained from different perspectives. Following is Chapter 4, which represents the definition of food as well as culture, and explains how culture works in the gastronomic aspect. Also in this chapter, Finnish food culture and Vietnamese food culture are compared in order to describe in more detail the differences between the two food cultures. Chapter 5 explains the food choice process. Chapter 6 and 7 start the empirical part of the thesis, where the research methodology, research implementation process, research validity and reliability are explained. The data collected from the questionnaire is analysed in chapter 7. Finally, Chapter 8 presents the conclusion of the study and Chapter 9 presents criticism and discussion from the researcher.

2 THE FOOD CULTURE BACKGROUND

This chapter introduces the food culture of Finland, Southeast Asia in general and in Vietnam. It is aimed to give a glance of the differences in the food cultures as well as the characteristics of each food culture. In addition, this chapter also aims to support the empirical study when analysing the questionnaire, where the respondents are asked to indicate the differences between the Southeast Asian food culture and the Finnish food culture.

2.1 Finnish Food Culture

Even though Finland was under the control of the Swedish empire for six hundred years and Russian domination for a hundred year, the country still managed to maintain the unique characteristics in its own language as well as food culture. (You eat what you are, p.144) However, with such a long history with Sweden and Russia, Finnish cuisine was still greatly affected by the cuisines of these two nations, mostly from the west Sweden and the east Russia. A typical Finn meal is usually accompanied with breads, cooked grains, potatoes and dairy products. (Tanttu, A.M, 2011,p.6)

2.2 Southeast Asian Food Culture

Southeast Asia consists of 11 countries include Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Laos, Malaysia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Myanmar, Brunei and East Timor, everyone of which all has the general and distinct flavours in their own cuisines. However, there are only several well-known cuisines such as Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. (Gwenda, L, 1993, ix)

Southeast Asian food is famous for its sophistication in flavours created from fairly simple cooking techniques, which yet produce some of the most creative cuisines in the world. Rice is the basic food, usually accompanied with vegetables,

meat, fish and every other possibly suitable ingredient. However, different from the European cooking, in the cuisines of Southeast Asian, meat is used in a noticeable moderate amount and oil in a minimal amount. With a typical tropical weather, the region has the strongest advantage in producing vegetables and fruits, which are cleverly combined in numerous of dishes and create some of the most healthful cuisines in the world. (Gwenda, L, 1993, ix)

The fascinating factor in these cuisines is that even though the cooking methods are relatively simple, yet it constructs assertive, sharp, sweet and clean flavours from the blend of some basic dynamic ingredients such as fish sauce, lime, lemongrass, tamarind and sugar. In addition, the abundant use of various kinds of herbs from the unusual ones such as Kaffir lime leaves to the very familiar ones such as basil and mint adds a pleasant freshness to the foods. Wild leaves, which are collected from forest or field, also contribute in forming many different textures in the flavours. (Gwenda, L, 1993, ix)

Contradict to meat, fish on the other hand, provided from the surrounding seas, is consumed twice as much here as anywhere else in the world. Thus, fish is the main source of protein in this region with about 2500 species. Furthermore, bean curd is as well another main source of protein especially for the strict Buddhist vegetarians. (Gwenda, L, 1993, ix)

The people in this region tend to put everything on the table at once in their meals, which usually comprises of soup dishes, noodle dishes, meat dishes, cooked rice, vegetable platters, small bowls of some dipping sauces (fish sauce, soy sauce) and some other possible extra condiments such as chilli, chilli sauce, pepper, and lemon. The desserts from this region are mostly made from tropical fruits and coconut and usually served at more formal meals. (Castorina & Stais, 1995, p.6)

2.3 Vietnamese Food Culture

Vietnam's history was characterized by the Chinese invasion for thousands of years; hence, almost every single of Vietnamese cultural aspect has a conspicuous mark of China, and so does its food culture. Many things that Vietnam is well known for in its cuisine are originally Chinese legacies such as chopsticks, bean curd, star anise, rice noodles and fermented soybeans, or the technique of mixing meat and shellfish in fillings. Furthermore, during the thirteenth century, the Mongolians brought in their traditional beef dishes, for instance the hot pot. Yet the Vietnamese people were able to invent their own unique flavours and cooking methods in a very much lighter and more delicate style compared to Chinese cooking, which delivers one of the finest, leanest and most healthful cuisines not only in Southeast Asian but also in the world. (Gwenda L.Hyman, 1993, p.78-96)

The most noticeable difference is the Vietnamese modest use of cooking oil and thickeners, since boiling, stewing, steaming of fresh ingredients are the most applied cooking methods. One can always easily find shallots, which are barely used by the Chinese, in a Vietnamese kitchen as a base for garnishing and also for the cooking of many dishes. Another dominant difference from Chinese cooking, the Vietnamese famous fish sauce acts as a main ingredient in plenty of recipes instead of soy sauce. This indicates the unique taste of Vietnamese cuisine, as it is hardly possible to mistake these two flavours with each other. Vietnamese cooking is also easily recognized from the exclusive use of many fresh herbs such as cilantro, basil, dill, and fresh mints; as well as distinct condiments which are shallots, garlic, lemongrass, chillies, ginger, galangal, shrimp paste, turmeric, tamarind and lime juice. Rice is the most basic and essential ingredient to the Vietnamese. The rice is diverse in types grown in various textures, grain sizes, qualities, colours, and especially aroma and taste. (Gwenda L.Hyman, 1993, p.78-96)

Like any other countries in Southeast Asia with an advantage of being surrounded by the sea and filled with rivers, fresh fish and shellfish are widely used by Vietnamese cooking. Fish sauce, thereby, was invented with this abundance of fish,

which eventually became the most necessary legacy in most of the dishes. (Gwenda L.Hyman, 1993, p.78-96)

Apart from China, there are also many influences from other nations in Vietnam history and cuisine. In 1535, the arrival of Portuguese traders brought in potatoes and chilli pepper. In 1874, the French successfully colonized Vietnam and divided it into three separated provinces, which were ruled for almost a hundred years. This as well affected a great deal in the taste and dishes of Vietnamese cuisine. The French cuisine had initiated a love for café au lait, milk, yogurt, butter, ice cream, asparagus, white potatoes, pâté, and specifically French bread. Nowadays, the Vietnamese baguette is well known for its special flavour combined between the French bread, pâté and other typical Vietnamese ingredients. In addition, the Indians, together with two great religions Hinduism and Buddhism, introduced their unique curry paste that eventually was also modified in the Vietnamese ways and used in many recipes. (Gwenda L.Hyman, 1993, p.78-96)

Some famous Vietnamese recipes are: beef noodle soup, spring rolls and many other kinds of rolls, bean curd with vegetables and noodles in coconut milk, Vietnamese pork chops, Vietnamese baguettes, and Vietnamese hot pots. (Gwenda L.Hyman, 1993, p.78-96)

3 THE SENSES

A human's senses are acknowledged with five basic senses, which are taste, smell, sight, hearing and feeling. All the senses have particular effects on how we receive and recognize foods, however in this part of the research, only taste and smell are observed and analysed. (Dunn, Winnie, 11/2007, p.24-26)

Oral sensations help one to recognize things in the mouth from their textures, temperatures and especially tastes. The mouth contains a large range of sensory receptors, which gives one the ability to receive lots of information about the object from their mouth very quickly. On the other hand, nose, which provides the sense of smell - a human's primitive system, identifies smell of the earth and other objects through its own receptors. (Dunn, Winnie, 11/2007, p.24-26)

Even though these are the very two distinct senses, according to Eugene Newton Anderson in *Everyone Eats*, "What we usually call "taste" is actually smell", from which he explained that the tongue which contains the actual taste receptors, detects only five basic tastes: salty, sweet, bitter, and sour as well as umami. Other than that, the more complicated taste characteristics as meatiness, rose and saffron flavours, scorched tastes, yeasty and fermented notes are processed through the nose's receptors. Therefore, he impressed that if we want to understand the actual meaning of food taste, we have to first comprehend smell. (Anderson, E.N, 2005, p.70-73)

There are again different arguments about human preferences in scent. Is it innate or is it eventually learned through the process of nurturing? Humans are realized to prefer the scent of volatile oils that are found mostly in plants. Anderson argued, "Most of the "taste" we favour in food are actually the scent of volatile oils", from this viewpoint the instinctive attraction of humans to smells is proposed to dominate. However, the foods that we eat the most also give us the most nutrition are basically tasteless and odourless in their natural, raw state such as starches, grain, nuts, beans and meat. Humans discovered fire and later on learned to process food using the heat, from which gradually adapted the skilled cooking that produces good smells that finally led to the reactions to smells created and

released during cooking (see McGee 1984, esp. 608-9). This provides a clear evidence of human's learning process in their preferences of smells. (Anderson, E.N, 2005, p.70-73)

Nevertheless, Anderson had also stated some arguments of Barkow et al., Profet, Orians, Heerwagen and Kaplan in *The Adapted Mind* (1992), which indicates the innate possibility of human's deeply felt preferences. It is argued that the neurological capability of humans determines the learning process as a human's instinct. Thus, the humans themselves don't decide what and how to detect smells, but it is undoubtedly a genetically determined matter, as proved through human preferences towards particular landscapes and volatile oils. Anderson concludes, "In short, human preferences seem to have biological bases". (Anderson, E.N, 2005, p.70-73)

In addition, even though, many authors have construed "human preferences in scent are strictly learned", a recent research proposes the fact that humans do find some scents attractive and some others unattractive and this even shows in infants from for instance their likings of strawberry in a very early state of life, has evidently proved the innate tendency in human preferences of smells. (Anderson, E.N, 2005, p.70-73)

To sum up, one can hardly deny the essential role of genetic system which influences a great deal in building a human's sense of smell and taste. Yet, as a learning animal specified in higher primates, humans develop their senses mostly through the learning process consciously or subconsciously after times, therefore created a wide range of differences in the recognition and perceptions of taste. Taste preferences, as a matter of fact, are bio-cultural.

3.1 Taste

This part describes not only the real meanings of taste but also the tongue functions of humans' and how they affect humans' basic taste.

3.1.1 The Definitions

Taste according to the Cambridge dictionary is defined as “the flavour of something, or the ability of a person or animal to recognize different flavours.”

Throughout decades of evolution and adaptation, humanity has learned and been taught to evaluate food as either good or bad, even though there is no absolute definition as such. The organ of taste as recognized is not the tongue that is usually considered as the main direct sensation part to receive the flavour of food, but the brain. Despite the fact, there exist two main distinct arguments of the actual meanings of taste. (Montanari, A, 11/2006, p.61)

One of the arguments is “taste understood as flavour, as the individual sensation of the tongue and palate – an experience that is by definition subjective, fleeting, and ineffable”, basically affirms the experience of taste is only recognized based on the feelings of the tongue and palate as true, from which the history of food is anyway despairingly denied. (Montanari, A, 11/2006, p.61)

Another point of view, taste is evaluated as knowledge collected from the environments and cultures differentiated in space and in time, which provides the sensorial judgment of what is good or bad starts from the brain then approaches the palate. Thus, according to the second definition, culture is linked to taste as its belonging, thus taste is not in fact intuitive and limited, but rather cumulative and communicative. One is given the sense of taste from birth alongside other variable values of society. (Montanari, A, 11/2006, p.61)

Even though these two arguments direct the perceptions of taste to two totally different directions, yet one can't deny either of them. The tongue and palate play an essential role in recognizing taste physically, while the brain distinguishes taste

according to psychological, environmental and cultural facts. The next parts will describe how these two facts work separately as well as together.

3.1.2 The Tongue and The Taste

The tongue is basically a muscle with rough surface contains numerous of small bumps, works as the main part that receives food directly then transfers it to the body through the process of chewing and swallowing. The small little bumps in the tongue's surface look like and might be mistaken as taste buds, however they are not and are visible to the naked eyes, while the actual taste buds are not observable unmagnified. These taste buds are found in the walls of the bumps, which also called papillae". (Korsmeyer, Carolina, 1999, p.68)

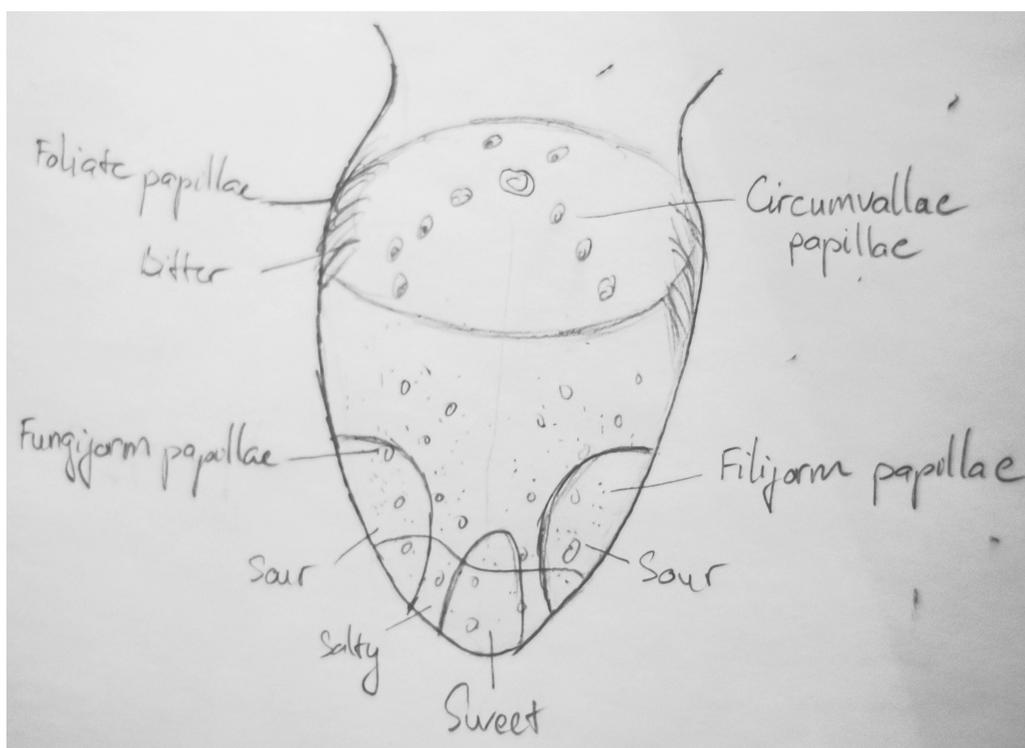


Figure 1: The tongue

The functions of the tongue can be explained according to the papillae. Foliate papillae lie at the side and near the back of the tongue as *stripy projections*. Circumvallate papillae are placed in the back of the tongue right before the throat as *large circular protrusions*. Fungiform papillae look like mushroom when magnified are distributed numerously all over the surface and especially toward the front, as well as the smaller Filiform papillae. The function of the papillae of the tongue is thought to be to flush materials from the base of the circular depression to help taste buds respond to ever-changing stimuli. They are located on the upper surface of the tongue. (Korsmeyer, Carolina, 1999, p.68)

On the other hand, the tongue can also be mapped relatively following the different sensitive zones that characterize different tastes. Taste buds are built of around 50 and 150 taste receptors spread out over the tongue, which play the role of recognizing all tastes, while sensitivity distinguish and separate the characteristics of each taste (sweet, sour, salty, bitter and one recently discovered taste called umami). As seen in figure 1 above, sweet taste is detected mostly on the tip of the tongue, while sourness is mainly recognized at the sides. Saltiness is spotted both in the front and along the sides and bitterness in the back of the tongue, right before the slide down the throat. This distribution as studied is built along with safety reasons. Since sweetness specifies healthful carbohydrates from *tentative licks*, thus the sweet receptors are placed right at the tip of the tongue. Whilst the bitter receptors are distributed far back on the tongue at the last point as a guard to stop the swallowing right at the moment it spots the intense bitterness from most poisons. (Korsmeyer, Carolina, 1999, p.68)

3.2 Different Perspectives Of Taste

Since taste is perceived in many different ways, this part explains in details the different perspectives of taste.

3.2.1 Sociology of Taste

In a society, food choices vary greatly amongst individuals and classes due to the diverse motivations from different incomes and types of needs. It is obvious that hunger was or is the initial reason that has struck humans or any other animals living on the earth to look for foods. Nevertheless, as societies are formed gradually, food choices have become an important part of eating habit. It is mentioned in Food Is Culture of Albert Montanari “food choices made by the people and by individuals are always determined according to a more or less conscious calculation of the resulting advantages and disadvantages”, from which it is further explained that food choices at their ultimate point are relatively *conscious calculations* according to the most practical and economical possibilities. Thus, there exist *nutritional customs* as well as the perceptions of good food and bad food. (Montanari, A, 11/2006, p.71-74)

These choices diverge in two main directions. With lower classes and their hardly satisfied hunger, the adoptions of food are made based mostly on their very basic need to *fill the belly*. Hence, the tastes are decided by the ease to get foods that immediately fulfil the hunger strike. Thereby, starches such as wheat, legume, pasta, and potato...have become the popular taste. It is difficult to actually distinguish the need and appreciation for foods in this class. (Montanari, A, 11/2006, p.71-74)

On the other hand, rare food is preferred than abundance in the richer and wealthier classes of society since these people eating perception is not to fill but to *whet the appetite*. For them, foods that constantly available in loads, are vile and represent only the lower classes. *Anti-low-cost* as a result developed into a crucial mo-

tor in the progression of formulating the taste of upper classes. (Montanari, A, 11/2006, p.71-74)

3.2.2 Taste and Culture

As it was mentioned in the definition of taste, taste is not in fact intuitive and limited, but rather cumulative and communicative, and one is given the sense of taste from birth alongside other variable values of society, which in this case is referred as culture. Taste in a definite acknowledgement has a cultural characteristic and therefore a historical characteristic. Thus, in a particular chapter of Food Is Culture, taste is described as a cultural product. (Montanari, A, 11/2006, p.61)

The chapter brought us to a history trip of gastronomy from the medieval and Renaissance society in order to demonstrate how nowadays concept of cuisine and taste have changed compared to that in the Middle Ages and even just several centuries ago. What we usually consider as the natural preferences of taste has actually been culturally differentiated through times and history. One very basic characteristic, which differs nowadays cuisines and cooking techniques from the ancient gastronomy, is the use of fats in cooking. It is observed that fats were extremely sparingly used back in the medieval, Renaissance time and even further back, compared to the today's cuisines that contain a noticeable amount of fats. One of the particular examples is the sauce, which accompanies meat, and fish were the combinations of mostly acidic ingredients such as wine, vinegar, and citrus juice instead of oil, butter, mayonnaise, and béchamel... in the modern European gastronomy. Meanwhile, the sauces of the modern Southeast Asian cuisines through a different history somehow resemble the medieval European cooking, which are highly lean. (Montanari, A, 11/2006, p.61)

Culture, hence, definitely plays an essential role in identifying what tastes or smells good and what tastes or smells bad – Anderson stated in Everyone Eats (2005)

4 FOOD AND CULTURE

“We may be what we eat, but what we eat also produces who we are”

Bell and Valentine, 1997

4.1 Food

Food as the definition in Cambridge dictionary is “something that can be taken in by an animal and used to keep it alive and allow it to grow or develop, or such things considered as a whole”. Or “any substance that provides the nutrients necessary to maintain life and growth when ingested” (Kittler, P, Sucher, K, Food and Culture, 2001, p.2)

As human eat and developed different ways of using food, they created their own food habits, which indicate food storing, preparing, serving and consuming (food intake). Since humans tend to approach a new level of need after achieving the lower level, food habits following Maslow’s hierarchy is clearly explained and described as following: (Kittler, P, Sucher, K, Food and Culture, 2001, p.2)

1. *Physical needs for survival:* food consumed to fulfil physical needs, which is the most basic way of using food as human body asks for a certain amount of nutrient daily to survive. (Kittler, P, Sucher, K, Food and Culture, 2001, p.2)
2. *Social needs for security:* as soon as the hunger stops strike, the instant need for food to fill the belly is satisfied, storing of food is considered, which represents security. (Kittler, P, Sucher, K, Food and Culture, 2001, p.2)
3. *Belongingness:* the ways of using food also specify the group an individual belong to. The need for belongingness is achieved when the individual consumes the same type of food as the social group. People could feel a high sense of belongingness when eating their own society’s foods, which

brings them happiness and release them from stress. *Sometimes people adopt a special food habit to demonstrate belongingness.* (Kittler, P, Sucher, K, Food and Culture, 2001, p.2)

4. *Status*: to this level of needs, food can represent social position. Abundant and easy to get foods (potatoes, wheat...) are traditionally associated with the lower classes. While rare foods (caviar, lobster...) are considered as luxury products for higher social classes. (Kittler, P, Sucher, K, Food and Culture, 2001, p.2)
5. *Self-realization*: this stage only occurs once all other needs are achieved o a full satisfaction level for an individual. (Kittler, P, Sucher, K, Food and Culture, 2001, p.2)

4.2 Culture

For the beginning of this part, a look into the actual meaning of culture is requested as to understand culture correctly in the most sensible ways amongst various other ways of cultural acknowledgement.

In general, it is understood that “Culture is broadly defined as the values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices accepted by a community of individuals” (Pamela, K; Kathryn, S; 2001, p.4)

Every man as a human being was born with a culture; it represents one’s controlled instincts, recognizable sentiments, as well as intellect. Culture separates humans from their primary natural interactions and defines human beings’ areas of interest or activity, which appears in many different forms in human life such as language, custom, convention, and habit. “Culture then, for early anthropology, was the common domain of the human”, it distinguishes human from other creatures as well as amongst themselves, yet brings them together. (Jenks, C, 1993, p.9)

Humans with their basic instinctive needs started to look for food in many forms such as gathering fruits and hunting animals. Gradually, the instant growth in population together with the need for foods required much larger natural resources, which were no longer enough. Agriculture and raising livestock were because of that found as permanent solutions to produce more food from available resources. This evolution transformed *hunting economy* to *economy of production*, which as well changed the relationship between humans and their natural environment, and also initially produced the culture of food. Men started to raise their own domestic animals and grow their own plants of which have always been the most nutritious and productive, especially grains. As the matter of fact, each region would grow the cheapest possible grains, wheat in Mediterranean regions, sorghum on the Africa, corn in America and rice in Asia. (Montanari, A, 2006, p.3-6)

4.3 Culture In Gastronomy Aspect

"We eat what we are"

Every human is strongly connected to one's own culture, and so are his or her food habits. Thus, it is almost not possible to produce an exact scientific analysis of culturally based food habits as there is no an absolute right or wrong in the ways people using and appreciating foods. (Pamela, K & Kathryn, S, 2001, p.11)

Food is one of the most enduring aspects in every culture. It is observed that every cultural group as well as individual has their own favourite specific food, which "evoke a pang of loving nostalgia" in their soul. (Stein, 1999, p. 14)

It is an obvious and also strange fact that people all over the world don't just eat what is available, but they eat only what they consider as edible for them. For instance, dog meat, cat meat, sheep's brains or frog legs are favoured for some people, but repugnant to the others. (Stein, 1999, p. 14)

Food is the most basic necessity of humanity. It brings comfort and security, also represents social status and religions. Cultural inheritance has a profound effect on the food people chose to eat, as well as their ways of preparing and serving food. Yet one's food habits change constantly. Humans over the history have migrated mostly to find food, which ultimately drove them away from their old food habits according to the food, condiments, and cooking methods that are available in the new location. (Stein, 1999, p. 14)

Human beings, like any other animals, tend to love the food they have been raised with. They learn to eat, enjoy and appreciate their food from watching the ways their parents chose and deal with food. As it is mentioned earlier in this research that human natural instinct plays an important role in the taste preferences, yet experience appears to be certainly essential, even more than genetics. Americans love bread, hamburgers and ketchup, while Asians love rice, noodles and soy sauce. (Anderson, 2005, p.99)

Food somehow has found its way out of being considered as only human's basic necessity, to become a social communication system, which defines an individual's position in society. Since every single person eats, thus at a more serious level, food may develop to be one's real identity that tells the world a great deal about the eater. (Anderson, 2005, p.125)

People for hundreds of years have come to usually associate food habits with a country's identity. Jean-Jacques Rousseau characterizes for instance the British and the French as the nations of vegetables, meat and wine (Scholliers, 2001, p.4).

And in the next part, Finnish food culture and Vietnamese food culture would be brought out in comparison as to identify the similarity as well as the differences in each country's food habits.

4.4 Comparison Of Finnish Food Culture And Vietnamese Food Culture
 (Stein, B, 1999, p.134-137, p.443-446)

	Finland	Vietnam
Dairy products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clabbered milk or buttered milk. - Big variety of cheeses: Aura, Emmenthal, Kestti, Kreivi, Tilsitter. - Fresh rich cream and sour cream. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oriental milk – canned evaporated milk. - Oriental cheese, which refers to soybean curd. - Cream is not used often but growingly slowly in time.
Fruits and vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fruits are mostly berries: blueberries, raspberries, cloudberries, lingonberries, cranberries, strawberries, and gooseberries. - Citrus fruits are imported. - Apples, rhubarb, rosehip and dried fruits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abundant wild fruits: mangos, bananas, coconuts, and other common tropical fruits. - Leafy green vegetables, onions, scallions, garlic, varieties of mushroom, radishes, cabbages.

Meat and Alternates

- Vegetables: potatoes, cauliflower, cucumbers, onions, beets, carrots, radishes and many types of mushrooms.
- Roasted, stewed, jellied beef, pork, veal, lamb, chicken, reindeer.
- Game birds, bear meat and elk consumed occasionally.
- Fish: herring, sardines, whitefish, bream, flounder, pike, and salmon.
- Eggs.
- Fresh herbs: mint, dill, coriander, sprouts, basil, and green.
- Hogs, chickens, ducks, beef, are widely used.
- Fish, from inland water sources, and deep sea, is an important protein source.
- Soybeans

Bread and Grains

- Eggs.
- Wholegrain bread.
- Porridges and gruels made from various grains.
- Yeast breads.
- Rye, barley, oats, wheat are commonly used.
- Rice
- Rice flour used to make dumplings.
- Western-type breads and rolls.
- Noodles made from rice, or wheat flour.

Fats

- Consumed in the form of whole milk, butter, cheeses, cream, and sour cream.
- Pork and bacon fat.

- Port fat
- Coconut oil
- Groundnut (peanut) oil

Sweets and Snacks

- Fresh berries
- Cookies
- Pound cake

- Juicy fruits
- Small cakes
- Sweet dumplings

Seasonings

- Natural flavour
- Preference not for sweet flavour
- Seasonings: dill, onion, garlic, juniper berries, pine needles
- As smoked meat and fish are popular, smoke is considered also as flavouring.
- Milk and cream.

- Garlic, scallions, onions, ginger, soy sauce, fish sauce.
- Chilli peppers, black pepper, cayenne, sugar.
- Citrus juices, coconut juice, vinegar.
- Lemon grass
- Herbs: dill, mint, coriander, green onions, hot chilli, limes.

5 FOOD CHOICE

Everyone eats and chooses their food everyday, thus food choice has become one of the most common decision making processes in daily life. It essentially expresses people's cultural identities and tastes preferences. Food choice is observed to have a two-way influence with biology, psychology, economy, society and culture. As to understand food choice more thoroughly, three theoretical models will be presented and explained in the coming part. (Shepherd, Raats; 2006, p.1)

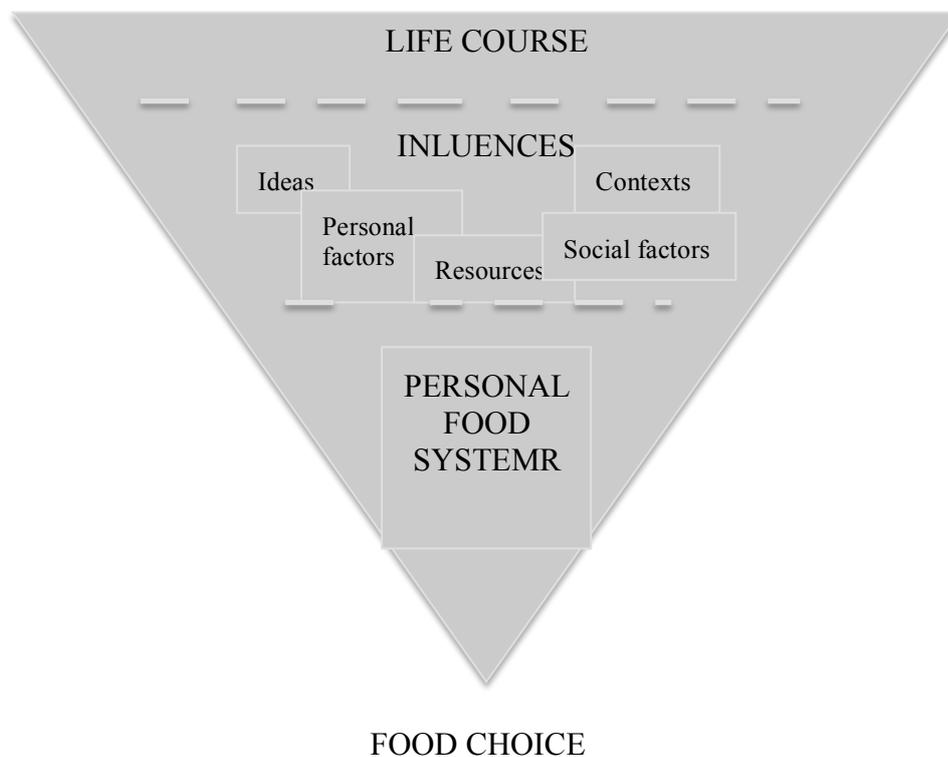


Figure 2: The Existing Models - Food Choice Process

(Adapted from Falk et al, 1996; Furst et al, 1996; Connors et al, 2001)

This model explains how food choice is created and processed from planned behaviour, health beliefs and social cognition. From figure 3, it is seen that a food choice process involves three main elements that are life course, influences and personal food system. As it was discussed earlier in the research that experience plays a more important role than genetics, *Life Course* appears to be the decisive factor and also the key element in this model. People tend to always take into consideration both their past experience and their current life when describing their choices of food. Therefore, these are the main *Influences* in the model. (Shepherd, Raats; 2006, p.1)

It appears clearly that a person's past and current experiences, developed and shaped by their surroundings constantly through time, play an essential role in choosing their food. Thus, food choice is dynamic and changeable. A person who has a diverse experience background would be likely to construct their food choice in many more different ways than a person with limited experience. Past and current experiences are considered as the main influences in the model, which is divided into five factors: ideas, personal factors, resources, context and social factors. (Shepherd, Raats; 2006, p.5)

Ideas are formed differently from different individuals and cultures. Ideas are often learned culturally from the surrounding environment through families, friends, and society in general. They eventually shape the perception of which food are acceptable and preferable in a human's mind according to their own cultural and ethnic groups. (Shepherd, Raats; 2006, p.5)

Personal factors are the individual's characteristics, which affect the process of food choice. This includes different factors such as physiology, psychology, emotion and relation that are learned, developed and occasionally changed through time. These personal factors of an individual dominate and take the priority over other influences in the decision making process of food choice. And they are in a close relation with social factors that involve family, groups, networks, organizations, and other institutions. (Shepherd, Raats; 2006, p.6)

People are often aware of the resources when making decisions in everything as well as in the food choice process. Resources refer to an individual's knowledge, money, time, mean of transportation, and other *intangible social capital*, which often contributes in the structure of food choices. Shepherd has stated in the book that: "...most people consider some types of food choices 'out of bound' because they do not have the money, time, facilities or cooking skills to choose them". (Shepherd, Raats; 2006, p.6)

All the above-mentioned factors bring an ultimate influence to the personal food system, which affects directly on the food choices. "Personal food systems are the mental processes whereby people translate influences upon their food choices into how and what they eat in particular situations" (Shepherd, Raats; 2006, p.7)

6 THE RESEARCH

This chapter explains the research methodology, research sample, research implementation process, the validity and reliability of the research, as well as analyses the research questionnaire and the answers from the research sample.

6.1 The Research Methodology

In any social sciences two types of research that are frequently used are quantitative research and qualitative research. (Muijs, D., 05/2004, p.7) The quantitative method was chosen as the research method for this thesis study. Quantitative research is described to mainly answer four types of research questions: questions which need quantitative answers, numerical questions, questions about the state of something, and hypotheses (Muijs, D., 05/2004, p.7). The first reason why this method is chosen is because quantitative answers are required in order to measure the scale of participants' opinions. The next essential reason is to find out the liking state of the Finnish people towards Vietnamese food.

In his book *Doing Quantitative Research in Education with SPSS*, Daniel Muijs has described: "Quantitative research is explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)". According to the definition, the research is to explain the *phenomena* which is the attitudes of Finnish people towards Southeast Asian food. Even though attitudes are the main object of the study, which do not exist genuinely in quantitative form, a questionnaire was built numerically in order to fulfil the research method requirement. The *numerical data* was collected based on a set of questions:

- What elements do Finns like and dislike in Vietnamese/Thai food?
- What do they think that is the difference between Vietnamese food and Finnish food?
- How frequently do they like to have Vietnamese food?

6.2 The Research Implementation Process

The survey was conducted in three days, from 17th to 19th February 2013, at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences in Vaasa, and on Facebook. The research sample was chosen within a population of Finnish people who not only have Finnish nationality but also were born genetically as Finnish. For this research, the research sample came from Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK) in Vaasa, and on Facebook. As the questionnaire was mainly distributed directly as well as by email from the researcher to people who are students and officers in VAMK, therefore most of the respondents are from that institution.

The questionnaire was created into two forms: the normal word form and a fillable word form. The questionnaires with the normal word form were distributed on printed-paper directly from the researcher to the sample. The questionnaires with fillable word form were distributed through Facebook and email. 53 questionnaires were handed out in the normal word form, and 49 people responded. 34 questionnaires were sent out via Facebook, and 19 people responded. Approximately 400-500 questionnaires were sent out through email to the students and teachers in VAMK, but only 3 people responded. In total, there are 71 respondents out of more than 500 people who received the questionnaire.

The questions in the questionnaire were built based on the research problem, the research questions and also the theoretical framework. The main theories that were applied to the questions are the theory of taste and taste preferences. The theory of culture was also taken into consideration when the questions were created. The respondents had to satisfy two required characters, they had to be Finnish, and have tried either Vietnamese food or Thai food. The basic information collected from the questionnaire is sex and age. At the beginning, a question was asked to indicate the frequency of the respondents' eating habit of Vietnamese food and Thai food.

In the next set of six questions, the respondents were asked to rate their liking level towards some of the ingredients and condiments in Vietnamese and Thai food on a scale from 1 to 5. These questions were created in order to detect the re-

spondent's taste preferences on Southeast Asian food. This purpose was also applied in the following two questions where the respondents were asked to rate their liking level on a scale from 1 to 5 for some of the Vietnamese popular main dishes and desserts. These two questions also collected information on the respondents' knowledge on Vietnamese cuisine, as the respondents were asked to choose one of the two boxes that indicate whether they know the food but have never tried or they do not know the food.

The next question separates the respondents who have been in Southeast Asia (either Thailand or Vietnam) and the respondents who have never been there. And the respondents who have been in Southeast Asia then are asked in the following question to indicate the differences between the Vietnamese and Thai food they ate in Vietnam/Thailand and the Vietnamese/Thai food they have eaten in Finland. In the second last question, the respondents were asked to indicate the differences between the Southeast Asian food culture and the Finnish food culture. The answers collected from the received questionnaires are next analysed according to the theoretical framework.

6.3 Reliability, Validity of The Research

Since quantitative research is always about measuring something, reliability and validity are the two main concepts of quantitative research method which all relate to measurement. "Validity asks the question: are we measuring what we want to measure?" (Muijs, D., 05/2004, p.65) There are three types of validity, which are: Content validity - the accurate level of the variable: if the variable is right for measuring the concept that the research is trying to measure; Criterion validity refers to the accuracy of predicted outcomes from a research; and Construct validity. (Muijs, D., 05/2004, p.64-66) For this research, only content validity is taken into consideration, as there is no hypothesis made by the researcher.

In any research, it is highly possible for errors to occur in the measurement of any research, which is called *measurement error*. However, these errors rarely happen

in systematic measurement without being noticed, since “systematic error is error that is the same from one measurement to the next.” (Muijs, D., 05/2004, p.71) Unsystematic measurement, such as attitude measurement in this research, is more likely to create unsystematic errors, which are unpredictable and vary from one measurement to the next. Reliability indicates the accuracy and quality of the research’s measurement’s tools. (Muijs, D., 05/2004, p.71-75)

The variables of this research are the questions in the questionnaire. These questions were created based on the theoretical framework and according to the research problem as well as the research questions. Therefore, the content validity in this aspect is relatively good, since the questions are aimed to measure exactly what the researcher is trying to measure. However, since it is unavoidable for errors to occur in any research, thus the accuracy of variables is not in any case absolute.

As this is a study about attitude, thus it is likely for unpredictable unsystematic errors to occur amongst the respondents. Nevertheless, because the sample was selected to be having the same typical characteristics, the research result should be reliable. Furthermore, the respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaire without any time pressure, so that the answers would be more accurate as the respondents have time to process their thinking carefully through the questions.

7 ANALYZING THE QUESTIONNAIRE'S RESULTS

As mentioned in the Research implementation, the research sample was chosen within the population of only Finnish people who not only have Finnish nationality but also were born genetically as Finnish. Even though each element of the sample might vary in background, they nevertheless should represent the typical taste preferences of the Finns. Seventy-one people, both female and male, within the range of age from 18 to 56 had answered the questionnaire. The gender distribution is 73.2% of female and 26.8% of male. Even though there is a big difference in the percentage of male respondents and female respondents, this does not represent any particular problem.

Age is divided into three main groups: 18-24 year-old with 45 respondents, 25-34 year-old with 18 respondents, and over 34 year-old with 8 respondents. Figure 3 below describes the age distribution visually and detailed in percentages.

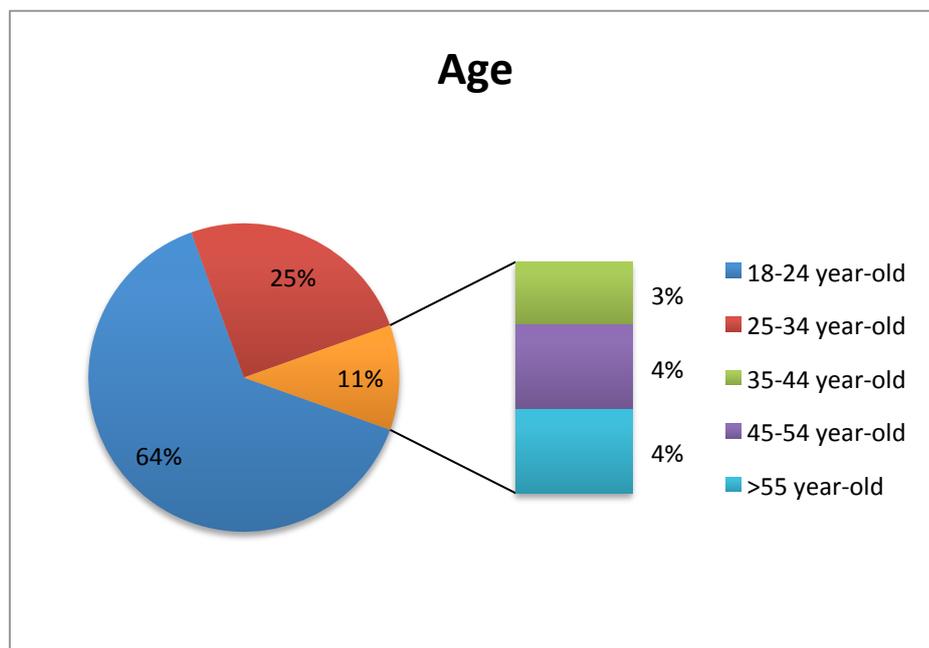


Figure 3: Respondents' age distribution (n=71)

Out of 71 people who have answered the questionnaire, there are 8 respondents who have never tried either Vietnamese food or Thai food. However, all of them answered that they would like to try the food one day, and 2 out of 8 people also said the reason is because they didn't know how to cook Asian food.

Following is figure 4, which describes visually the numbers of respondents who have not tried either Vietnamese food or Thai food from each age group, in percentages. From there, it is possible to observe the big difference in each age group: the younger age compared to the older age, and their experience in South-east Asian food.

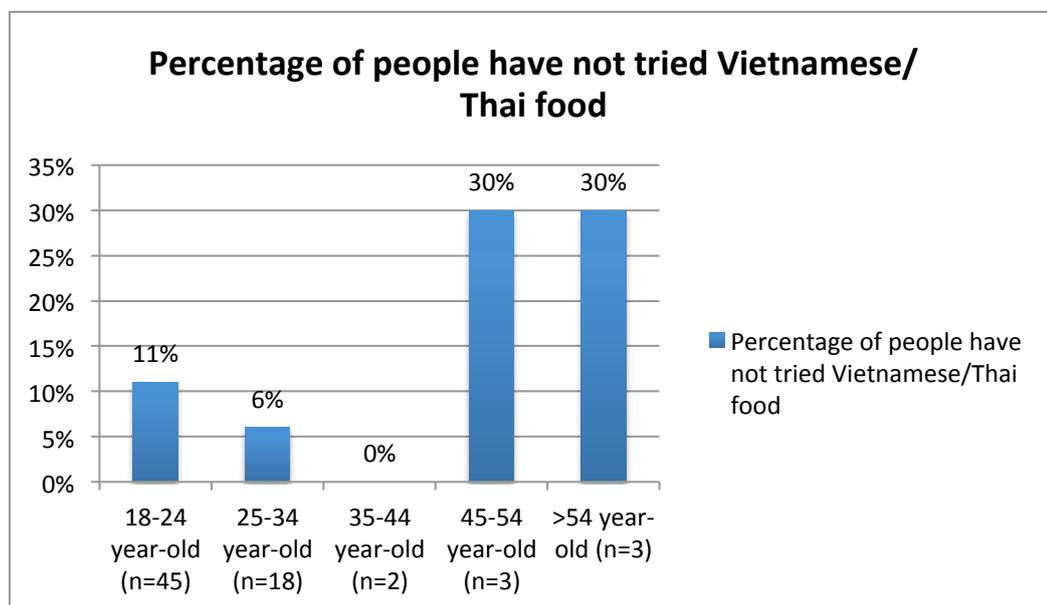


Figure 4: Respondents who haven't tried both Vietnamese/Thai food

As shown in Figure 5, the age groups 18-24 year-old and 25-34 year-old strongly dominate in the number of respondents compared to the group of people who are over 35 year-old. Nevertheless, the percentages of respondents from the two younger age groups who have never tried both Vietnamese food and Thai food are relatively low. There is approximately one person out of three people who has never tried Southeast Asian food in these older age groups.

As 8 respondents have never tried both Vietnamese food and Thai food, therefore for the rest of the analysis, only 63 answers are taken into analysing. Among 63 people who have tried Vietnamese and/or Thai food, there are respondents who have tried both, or have tried only Vietnamese food, or only Thai food.

Out of 63 respondents, 41 people have tried both Vietnamese food and Thai food, 18 people have never tried Vietnamese food and 4 people have never tried Thai food. The following Figure 9 describes these numbers in percentages. Below are the details for each age group shown in percentage in Figure 5.

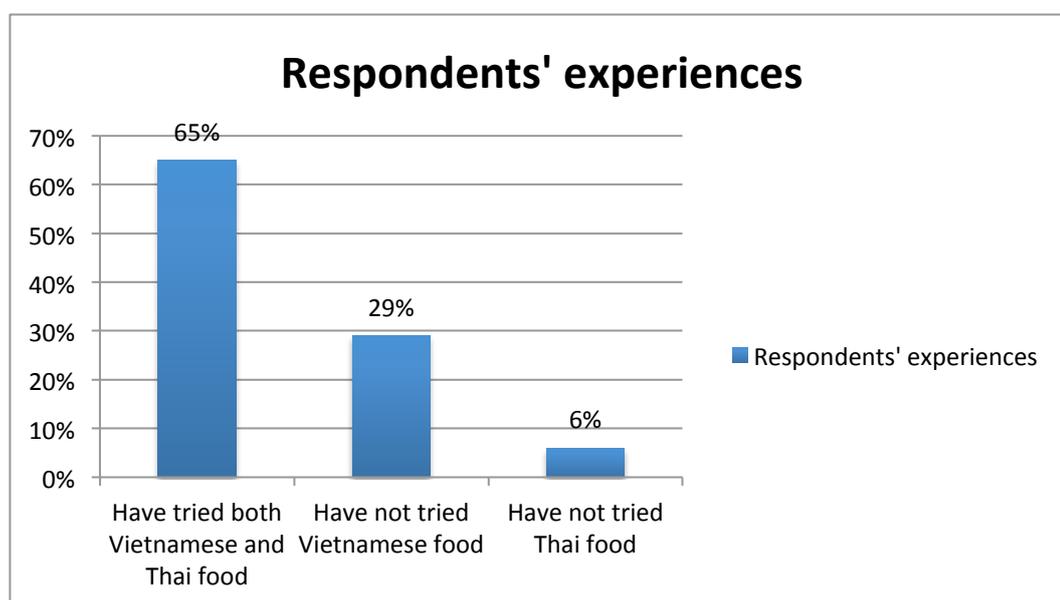


Figure 5: Respondents' experiences (n=63)

As Figure 5, it shows most of the respondents have experienced with both Vietnamese and Thai food (65%). However, the percentage of people who have not tried Vietnamese food (29%) is much higher than the percentage of people who have not tried Thai food (6%). Also this fact is for every age group. From a different angle, there are 45 (71%) respondents who have tried Vietnamese food and 59 (94%) respondents who have tried Thai food. Even though the percentage of the respondents who have tried Thai food dominates the percentage of the respondents who have tried Vietnamese food, yet there is 71% of the respondents know and have experienced Vietnamese food.

For the next sections of the analysis, the respondents are divided into two groups: 45 respondents who have tried Vietnamese food and 59 respondents who have tried Thai food, also followed by the age groups.

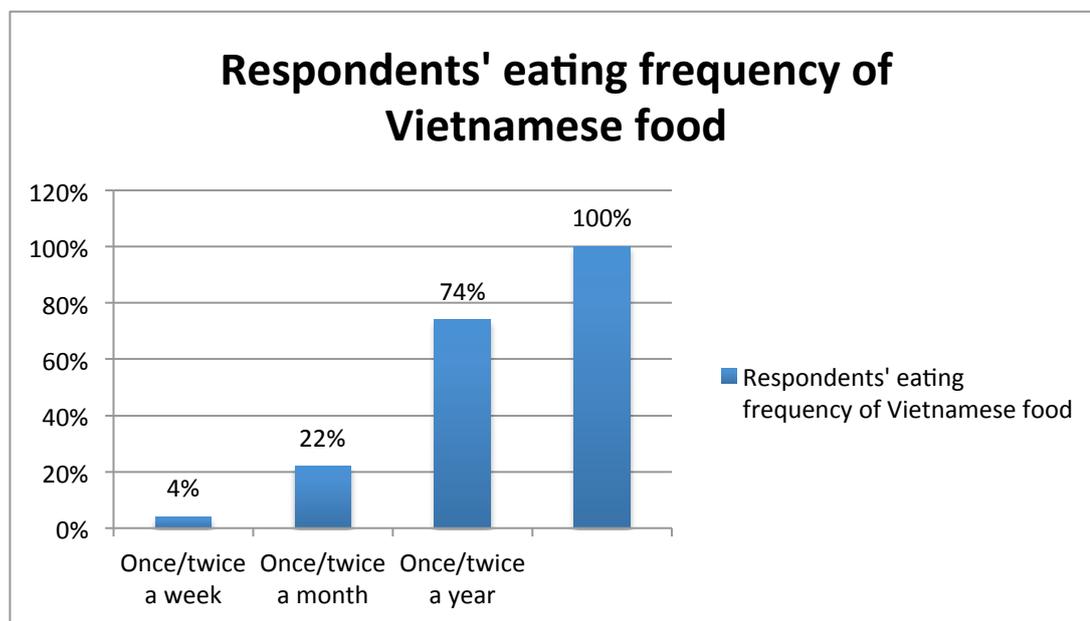


Figure 6: Respondents' eating frequency of Vietnamese food (n=45)

It is shown in Figure 6 above that in every age group most of the respondents eat Vietnamese food only once or twice a year, among 74% of the 45 respondents have tried Vietnamese food, 22% of them eat Vietnamese food once or twice a month, and only 4% eat Vietnamese food weekly. Especially in the age group 18-24, out of 28 respondents, no one eats Vietnamese food weekly, 22 (79%) of them eat Vietnamese food once or twice a year, and only 6 (21%) of them eat Vietnamese food monthly.

On the other hand, although there are only 14 respondents from 25-34 year-olds, 2 (15%) of them eat Vietnamese food once or twice a week, and 3 (21%) of them eat Vietnamese food monthly. However, the majority of them (64%) still eat Vietnamese food just once or twice a year.

Figure 7 shows how frequently the respondents eat Thai food. Differently from the data on Vietnamese food, the number respondents who eat Thai food monthly dominate the number of respondents who eat Thai food yearly.

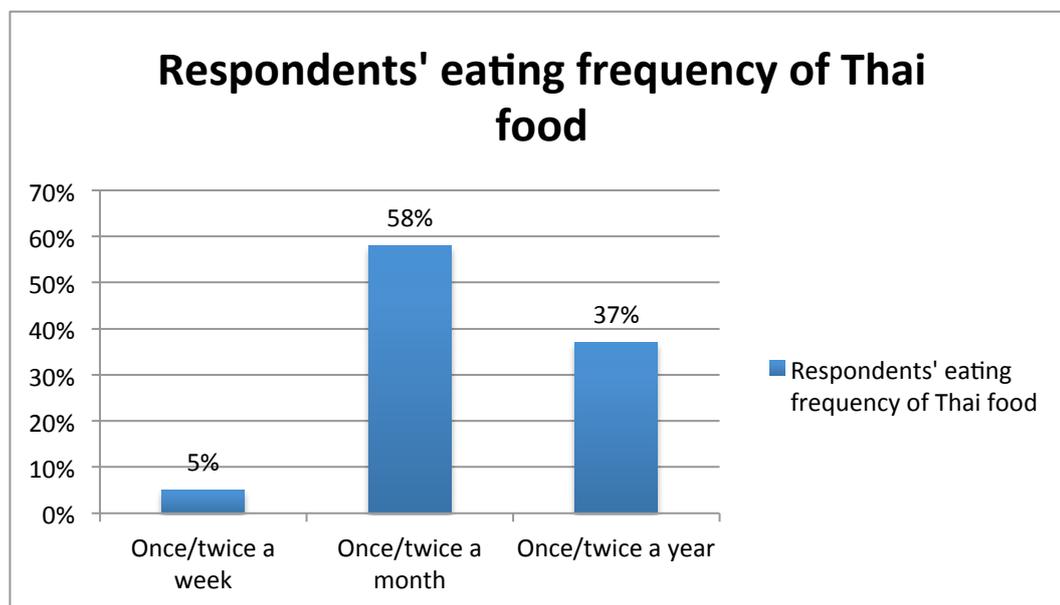


Figure 7: Respondents' eating frequency of Thai food (n=59)

More than half, or 58% of the respondents eat Thai food monthly once or twice, and 37% eat Thai food once or twice a year. Only 5% of the respondents eat Thai food weekly. Remarkably, in the group of 18-24 year-olds, 24 (64%) out of 37 respondents said they want to have Thai food once or twice a month. However, it is just a very small minority of the respondents who are willing to have either Vietnamese food or Thai food weekly.

For the next questions, on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all, and 5 = Very much), the respondents were asked to give a grade to different characteristics, elements and ingredients in Vietnamese and Thai food, and leave out the ones they don't know about. The majority of the respondents know most of the elements and ingredients of Vietnamese food and Thai food. For this part of the analysis, the respondents are also divided into two groups: the respondents who have tried Vietnamese food and the respondents who have tried Thai food, and followed by the age groups.

Table 1 below shows the statistics of the liking level of Vietnamese spices amongst 45 respondents who have tried Vietnamese food as well as showing the liking level for Thai spices amongst 59 respondents who have tried Thai food.

Table 1: The liking level for Vietnamese and Thai spices

I like the spices	Vietnamese food		Thai food	
	N	%	N	%
I don't know the food item	1	2%	1	2%
1- Not at all	0	0%	0	0%
2	4	9%	4	7%
3	10	22%	10	17%
4	18	40%	24	41%
5 – Very much	12	27%	20	34%

It is shown in Table 1 that 67% of the respondents gave Vietnamese spices on evaluation value of 4 and 5. The majority, or 40%, graded Vietnamese spices with 4; 27% graded Vietnamese spices with 5; 22% graded Vietnamese spices with 3; and only 1 person (2%) did not know about Vietnamese spices. Similar statistics are received for Thai food spices with 41% of the respondents grading Thai spices with a 4; 34% of the respondents like Thai spices very much. None of the respondents chose 1 for either Vietnamese or Thai spices.

The following table 2 shows the liking level for the hotness (amount of chili) in Vietnamese food amongst the 45 respondents, who have tried Vietnamese food, and in Thai food amongst the 59 respondents who have tried Thai food. And from there, it will show whether Finnish people adapted the hotness in Vietnamese and Thai foods as well as if they adapted the spices in Vietnamese and Thai food.

Table 2: The liking level for the hotness in Vietnamese and Thai food

I like the hotness (amount of chilli)	Vietnamese food		Thai food	
	N	%	N	%
I don't know the food item	4	9%	2	3%
1- Not at all	2	5%	5	9%
2	8	18%	9	15%
3	15	33%	17	29%
4	10	22%	17	29%
5 – Very much	6	13%	9	15%

Table 2 shows a clear change from the percentage distribution in the liking level for the hotness in both Vietnamese and Thai food compared to the spiciness. Most people stay in level 3 of hotness for either Vietnamese food (33%) or Thai food (29%). However, quite a big percentage of respondents, 22% for Vietnamese food and 29% for Thai food, graded 4 for the hotness. Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents who do not like the hotness at all or just like it a little bit is also quite big, 23% for Vietnamese food and 24% for Thai food.

Figure 9 below shows clearly this difference in the liking levels between fish sauce and sweet chilli sauce.

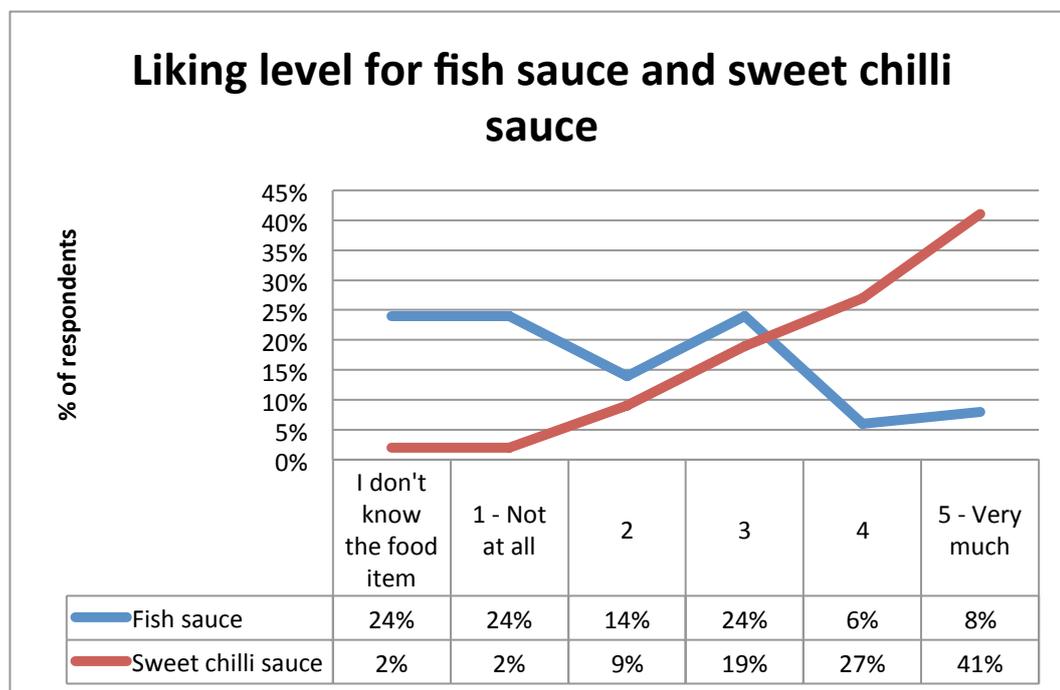


Figure 9: Liking level for fish sauce and sweet chilli sauce (n=63)

As a matter of fact, fish sauce and sweet chilli sauce are the two most popular Southeast Asian sauces in Finland. Therefore the next question is about the liking level in the scale from 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much) of the respondents towards these two sauces, in both Vietnamese food and Thai food, amongst 63 respondents who have tried either of the food. There is a huge difference in the liking level of the respondents between fish sauce and sweet chilli sauce. A majority of respondents do not know fish sauce (24%) or do not like fish sauce at all (24%), while a majority of respondents like sweet chilli sauce pretty much (27%) or very much (41%).

The respondents were asked to grade, on the scale at 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much), different herbs used in Vietnamese cooking. Figure 10 below shows the results collected from the respondents.

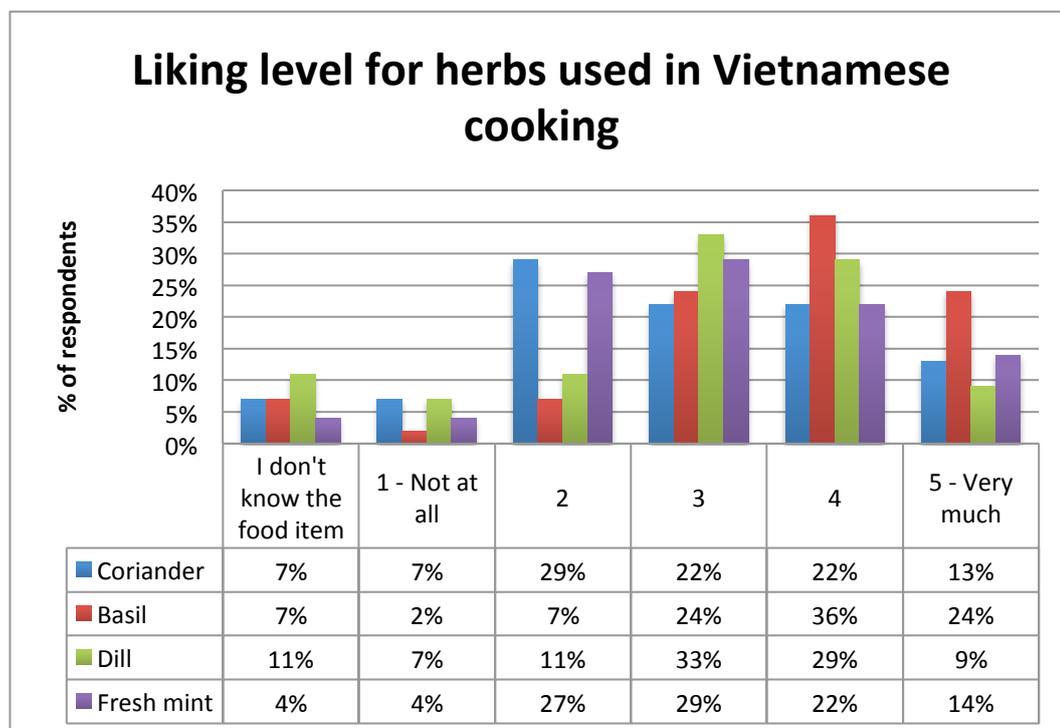


Figure 10: Liking level for herbs used in Vietnamese cooking (n= 45)

Figure 10 shows the majority of respondents graded 3 or 4 for most of the herbs, as these herbs are more or less similar and popular in most cuisines. However, it shows also that coriander is not among the respondents' favourites since 28.9% of them graded 2 for coriander. Basil is the most favourable herb as 24.4% to 35.6% like it very much. Dill and fresh mint, on the other hand, collect quite a moderate level of liking, as most people stay within 2 – 4 in the grading. Nevertheless, despite how popular these herbs are, there is still a certain number of respondents who don't know the herbs.

Figure 11 below shows the liking level for herbs used in Vietnamese and Thai cooking from 63 respondents who have tried Vietnamese and Thai food.

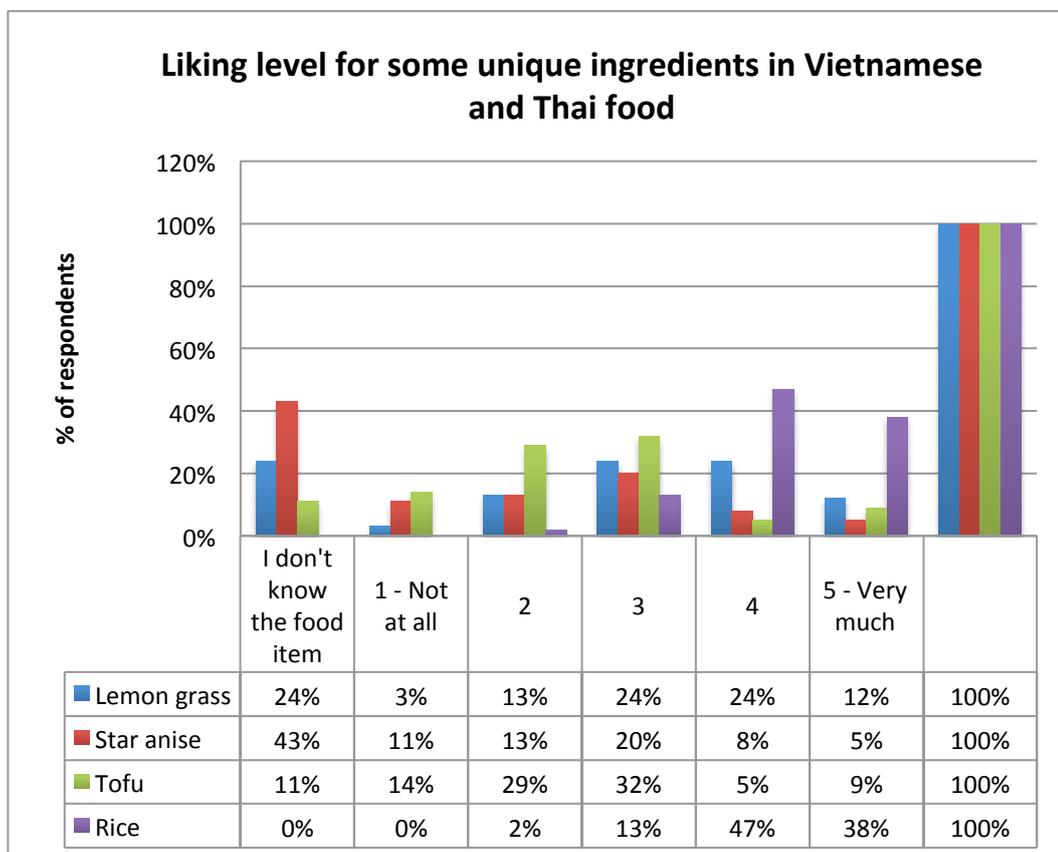


Figure 11: Liking level for other ingredients in Vietnamese and Thai cooking (n=63)

Figure 11 shows that lemon grass and star anise are the most unrecognized amongst the ingredients. 24% of the respondents do not know lemon grass, and 43% of the respondents do not know star anise. Even though with lemon grass, 48% of the respondents gave 3 and 4 for the liking level, which means most of the respondents who know lemon grass favour its taste providing that it is considered as a strange ingredients in the Finnish cuisine. 11% of the respondents do not know tofu, and the rest who know gave it either 2 for their liking level (29%), or 3 for their liking level (32%). This shows that most respondents don't actually favour tofu. Every respondent knows rice and almost all of them (98%) gave rice a 3 and above for their liking level.

For the next question, the respondents were asked to grade the four basic tastes: sweet, sour, salty, bitter in Vietnamese food and Thai food, in the scale from 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much). Figure 12 below shows the results from 41 respondents, who have tried Vietnamese food and Thai food, on the level of sweetness of Vietnamese food and Thai food.

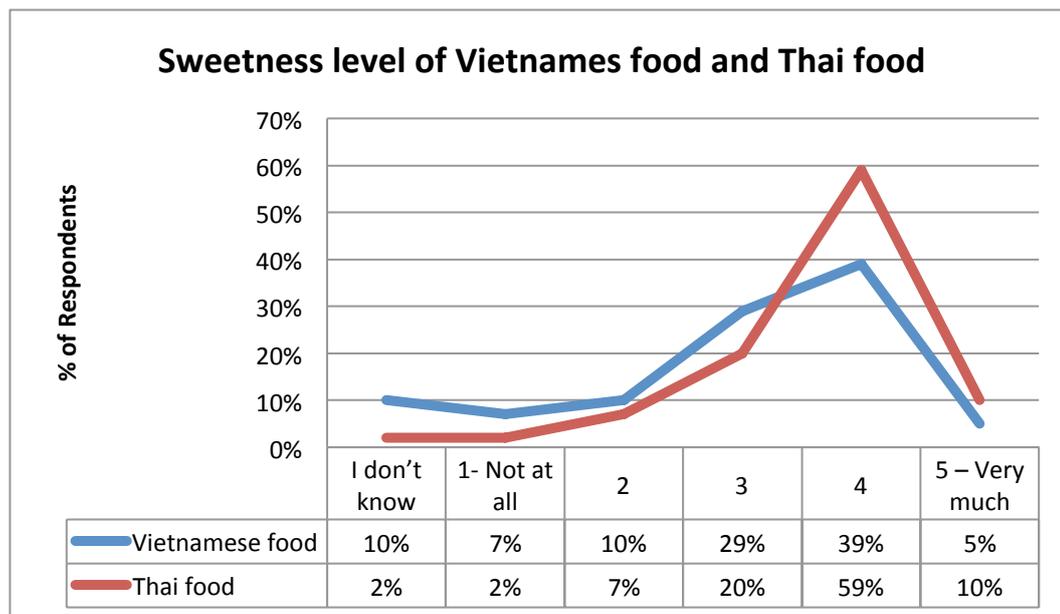


Figure 12: Sweetness level of Vietnamese food and Thai food (n=41)

It is shown in Figure 12 that the majority of respondents give a 4 for the sweetness of Vietnamese food (39%) and Thai food (59%). Yet quite many people graded 3 for the sweetness in Vietnamese food (29%) and Thai food (20%). However, only 5% of respondents graded 5 for the sweetness of Vietnamese food and 10% for Thai food sweetness. Looking more closely, it is clear that Thai food is rated to be sweeter than Vietnamese food, since 59% of the respondents gave a 4 for the sweetness level of Thai food while only 39% of the respondents chose 4 for the sweetness level of Vietnamese food.

Figure 13 below shows the results from 41 respondents, who have tried both Vietnamese food and Thai food, the sourness level of Vietnamese food and Thai food.

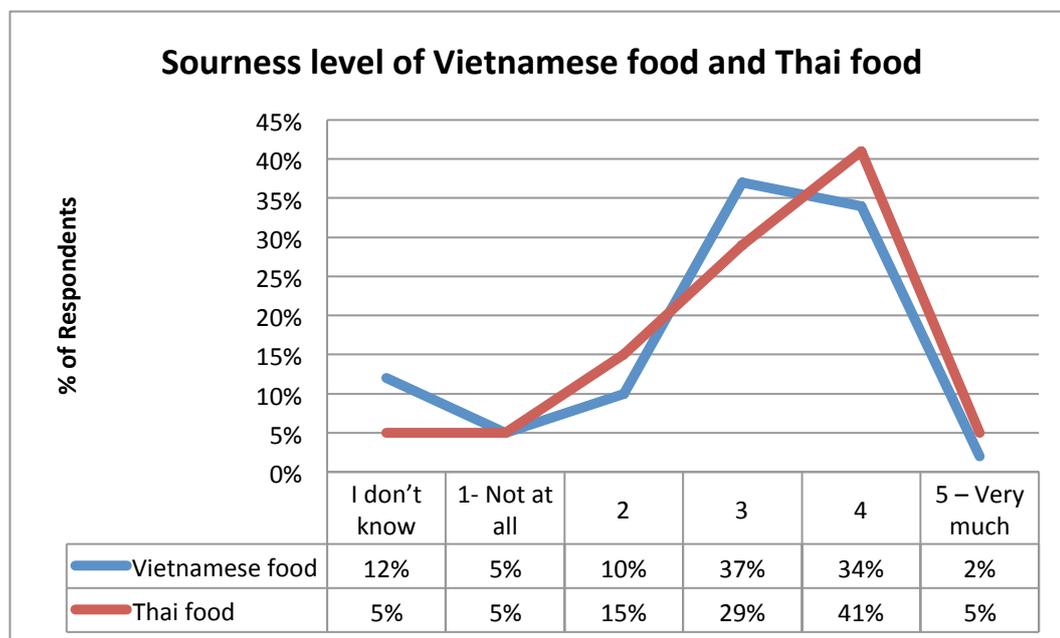


Figure 13: Sourness level of Vietnamese food and Thai food (n=41)

Similar to the sweetness level, Figure 14 shows that most people think that Vietnamese and Thai food are sour or quite sour. Most of the respondents chose a 4 for the level of sourness in Vietnamese food (34%) and Thai food (41%). Also quite many people graded 3 for the sourness in Vietnamese food (37%) and Thai food (29%). Only 2% of the respondents graded 5 for Vietnamese food sourness and 5% for Thai food sourness. So the sourness level of Vietnamese and Thai food is quite moderate in general for the Finnish people. In figure 14 it is also shown that the sourness of Vietnamese food and Thai food are rated approximately equal to each other.

Figure 15 shows the results from 41 respondents, who have tried both Vietnamese and Thai food indicating the sweetness level of Vietnamese food and Thai food.

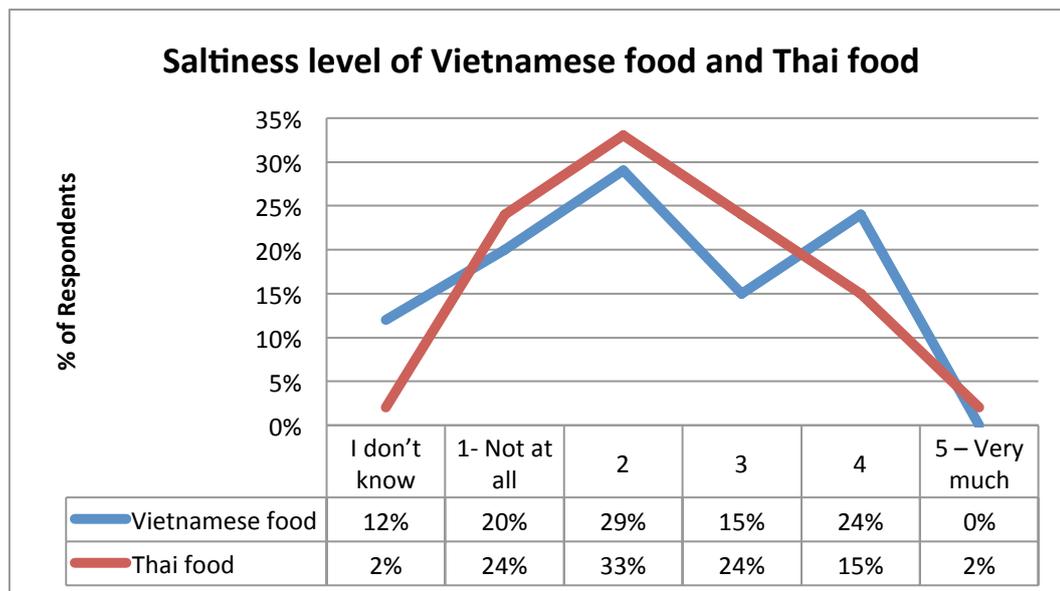


Figure 14: Saltiness level of Vietnamese food and Thai food (n=41)

It is shown in Figure 15 that the saltiness level in Vietnamese food is distributed quite equally among the respondents. People seem to have quite different opinions on the saltiness of Vietnamese food, 20% of the respondents said Vietnamese food is not at all salty, 29% of them agreed that Vietnamese food is not so salty, yet 24% of the respondents think Vietnamese food is pretty much salty. However, none of the respondents said Vietnamese food is very salty.

Thai food, on the other hand, is shown to be not salty as 57% of the respondents rated 1 and 2 for its saltiness level. 24% of the respondents agreed that Thai food is moderately salty, 15% said Thai food is quite salty. Only 2% rated not at all salty for Thai food. From the statistics, Thai food is less salty to Finnish people than Vietnamese food.

Figure 16 shows the results from the 41 respondents, who have tried both Vietnamese and Thai food, the bitterness level of Vietnamese and Thai food.

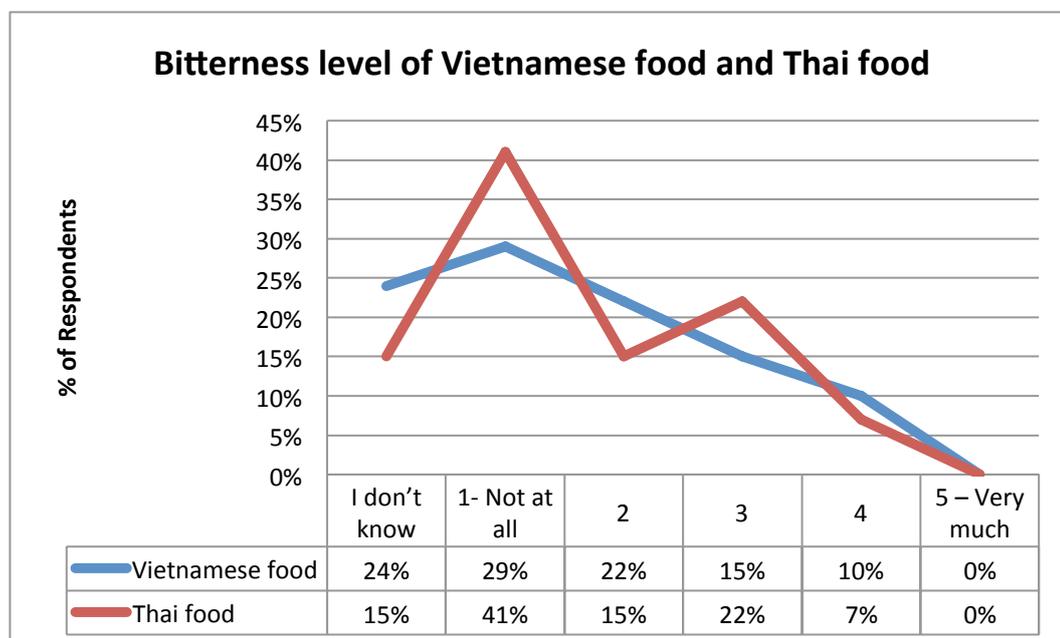


Figure 15: Bitterness level of Vietnamese food and Thai food (n=41)

It is shown in Figure 16 that most of the respondents agreed that both Vietnamese and Thai food is not at all bitter. The majority of respondents chose not at all salty for both Vietnamese food (29%) and Thai food (41%). None of the respondents chose 5 for the bitterness level of both Vietnamese and Thai food. Only 10% said Vietnamese food is pretty bitter and 7% said Thai food is pretty bitter.

For the next questions, the respondents were asked if they know or don't know some of the famous Vietnamese dishes, and also to rate their liking level for those famous Vietnamese dishes according to the scale from 1 to 5 (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much). The following figures show the results from the respondents in detail.

Figure 17 shows the liking level of 45 respondents, who have tried Vietnamese food, towards some Vietnamese main dishes.

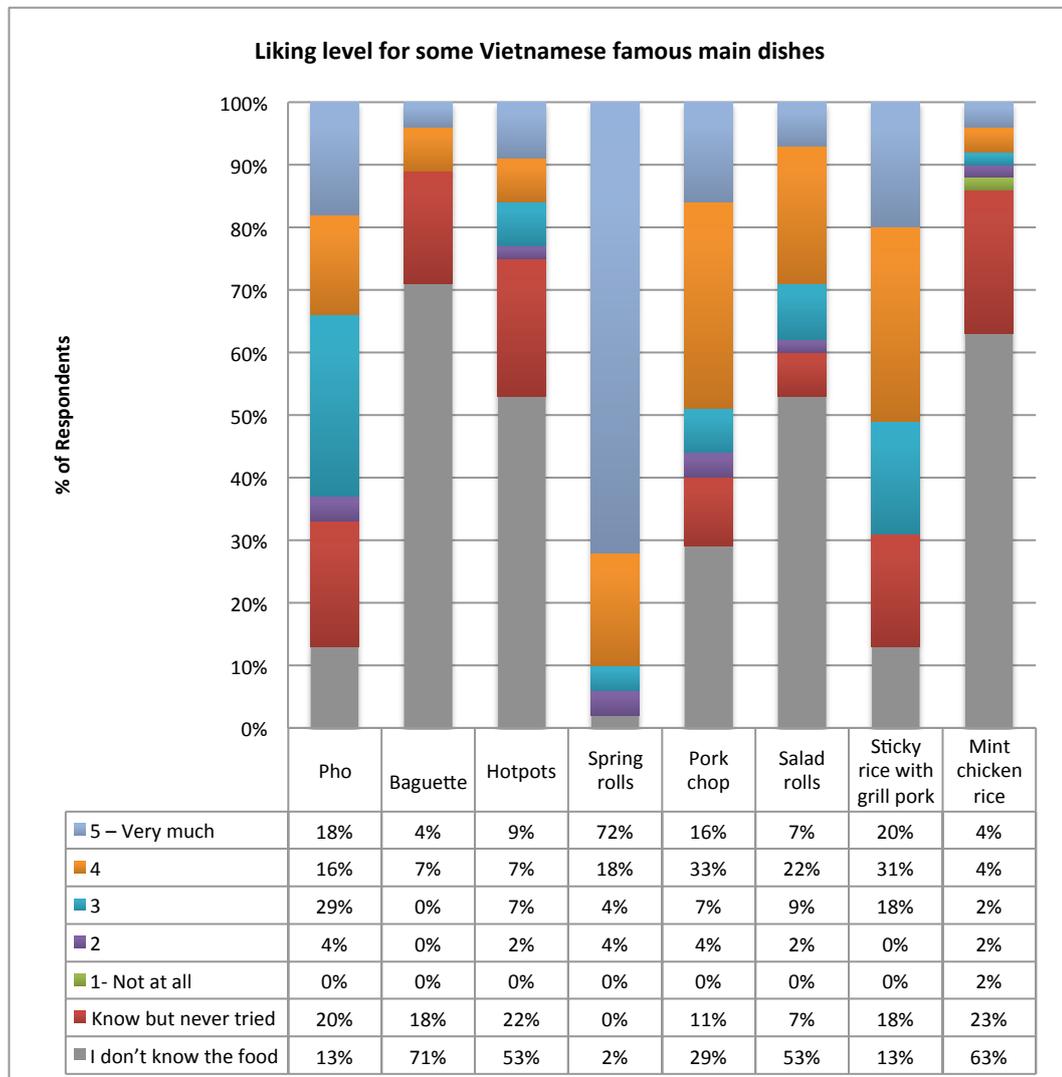


Figure 16: Liking level for some of famous Vietnamese main dishes (n=45)

The majority of the respondents did not know most of the dishes. For Pho (noodle soup) 13% of the respondents did not know the food, with spring rolls only 2% of the respondents did not know them, 29% of the respondents did not know pork chops, and also 13% of the respondents did not know Sticky rice with grilled pork. The rest of the dishes got more than half of the respondents who did not know about those dishes: Vietnamese baguette with 71%, hotpots with 53%, salad rolls with 53%, and mint chicken rice with 63%. In addition, there are quite many people who knew about the dishes but have never tried them: 20% of the respond-

ents know Pho, 18% of the respondents know Vietnamese baguette, 22% know hotpots, 11% know pork chop, 18% know sticky rice with grilled pork, and 23% know mint chicken rice. Spring roll is the best-known dish, and Vietnamese baguette is the least known dish. Even though there are not a lot of people who know the Vietnamese main dishes, those who know and have tried the food graded mostly 4 and 5 for their liking level. 72% of the respondents said spring rolls are very good. 33% of the respondents gave pork chop 4, and 31% of the respondents gave Sticky rice with grilled pork 4.

Figure 18 shows the liking level of 45 respondents who have tried Vietnamese food, towards some Vietnamese desserts.

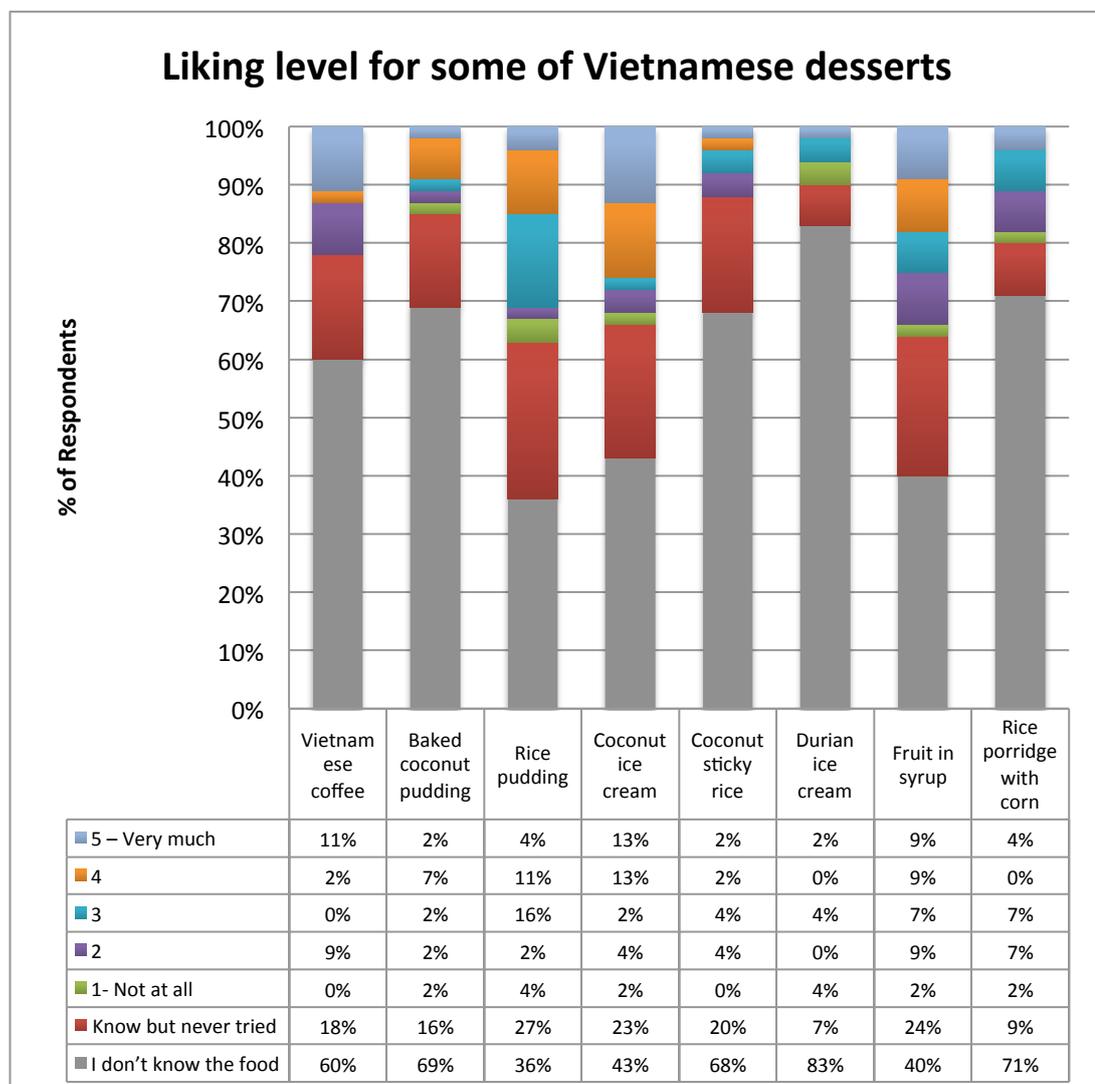


Figure 17: Liking level for Vietnamese desserts (n=45)

Figure 18 shows that the majority of respondents either did not know the food items, or knew the items but had never tried them.

For rice pudding, 36% of the respondents, the lowest number of people, didn't know about it. 27% of the respondents who knew the food item but had never tried it. And amongst 37% of the respondents who knew and have tried rice pudding, 16% of them gave a 3 for the liking level, and 11% of them gave a 4 for the liking level.

For durian ice cream, 83% of the respondents, the highest number of people, didn't know about it. 7% of the respondents knew the food item but had never tried. And amongst 10% of the respondents who have tried the durian ice cream, 4% gave a 1 for the liking level, 4% gave a 3 for the liking level, and only 2% gave a 5 for the liking level.

For Vietnamese coffee, 60% of the respondents did not know the food item, and 18% of the respondents knew but had never tried the food item. Amongst 22% of the respondents who have tried Vietnamese coffee, 11% of them gave a 5 for their liking level, 2% of them gave a 4, and 9% of the respondents gave a 2 for their liking level.

For baked coconut pudding, 69% of the respondents didn't know the food item, and 16% of the respondents knew the food item but had never tried. Amongst 15% of the respondents who have tried baked coconut pudding, the liking level is distributed rather equally.

For Coconut ice cream, 43% of the respondents didn't know the food item, and 23% of the respondents knew but had never tried the food item. Amongst 34% of the respondents who have tried coconut ice cream, 13% of them gave a 5 for their liking level, 13% of them gave a 4 for the liking level.

68% of the respondents did not know coconut sticky rice, 20% of the respondents knew about it but had never tried the food item. Of the 12% of the respondents who have tried coconut sticky rice, 8% of them stayed above 3 for their liking level for the food item.

For fruits in syrup, 40% of the respondents who did not know the food item, and 24% of the respondents knew the food item but had never tried. Among the 36% of the respondents who have tried baked coconut pudding, the liking level is distributed rather equally.

71% of the respondents didn't know coconut sticky rice, 9% of the respondents knew it but had never tried it. Among the 20% of the respondents who have tried coconut sticky rice, 16% of them stayed under 3 for their liking level for the food item.

The next question asked if the respondents have been in Southeast Asia, either Vietnam or Thailand. Out of the 63 respondents who have tried Vietnamese food and/or Thai food, only 24% (14 respondents) have been in Southeast Asia, in both Vietnam and Thailand. Five respondents have been in Vietnam, and eleven respondents have been in Thailand. These respondents were asked to indicate the differences between the Southeast Asian food they have eaten in Finland and the Southeast Asian food they have eaten in Vietnam and/or Thailand. However, since there is a low number of the respondents who have been in Southeast Asia, the statistical analysis would not be accurate. Therefore, no further analysis is done on this question.

For the next question, the respondents who have tried Vietnamese food or Thai food, were asked to indicate the differences between Southeast Asian food and Finnish food. Approximately 90% of respondents answered that Finnish food is different from Vietnamese food and Thai food in the way of cooking, the ingredients, the level of spiciness and the way of serving.

8 CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the analysis of the questionnaire results, interprets deeper the analysis based on the set of theories given in the first six chapters to answer the research questions:

- How frequently do Finnish people have Vietnamese food and Thai food?
- What elements do Finns like and dislike from Vietnamese food and Thai food.
- What do the Finns think that is the difference between Vietnamese/Thai food and Finnish food?

The research question for this part is “What elements do Finns like and dislike in Vietnamese food and Thai food?” and “How frequently do Finnish people have Vietnamese food and Thai food?”

It is shown in the research from the percentage of participants that Finnish people who are over 45 years old are not likely to have tried Vietnamese food and Thai food, as there is approximately 1 person out of 3 people who has never tried Southeast Asian food in these older age groups. Yet Southeast Asian food is rather popular in Finland since most of the respondents (65%) have experienced with both Vietnamese and Thai food. However, the percentage of people who have not tried Vietnamese food (29%) is much higher than the percentage of people who have not tried Thai food (6%), which proves Thai food to be more popular in Finland than Vietnamese food. Also this fact is correct for every age group. Even though the percentage of the respondents who have tried Thai food dominates over the percentage of the respondents who have tried Vietnamese food, yet Vietnamese food is rather popular in Finland, since there is 71% of the respondents know and have experienced Vietnamese food.

A small minority of the respondents is willing to have either Vietnamese food or Thai food weekly. Approximately 73% of the respondents would like to eat Vietnamese food once or twice a year, while about 58% of the respondents would eat

Thai food once or twice a month. This once again proves that Thai food is more preferred and popular in Finland than Vietnamese food.

A high percentage of the respondents (approximately 67%) like Vietnamese food spices as well as Thai food spices. This shows that even though there's a big difference in Finnish spices and Southeast Asian spices, Finnish people adapt and cope rather well with Southeast Asian spices. Or from another angle, Southeast Asian spices are different, though not too spicy for the Finnish taste. Compared to the spiciness, the hotness (the amount of chilli) of Southeast Asian food is not as well received by Finnish people. However, it is not either strongly rejected by Finnish people. Most Finns prefer sweet chilli sauce, but fish sauce does not quite fit the Finnish taste.

Since herbs are more or less popular and similar in most cuisines, thus the majority of respondents like the herbs used in Vietnamese cooking. Lemon grass and star anise, which are two of the most unique ingredients in Vietnamese cuisine, are not recognized or liked by Finns. Rice, on the other hand, is most preferred by almost all Finnish people. The respondents agreed that Vietnamese and Thai food is mostly sweet and sour. Saltiness and bitterness seem not to be remarkable in the food for Finns, especially bitterness.

The respondents who have tried Vietnamese food or Thai food were asked to indicate the differences between Southeast Asian food and Finnish food. Approximately 90% of respondents answered that Finnish food is different from Vietnamese and Thai food in the way of cooking, the ingredients, the level of spiciness and the way of serving.

The result collected revealed that Finnish people, in fact, do have knowledge, interest and positive attitudes towards Vietnamese food and Thai food, even though the majority of them (approximately 60%) have never been in either Vietnam or Thailand. Nevertheless, many respondents don't know lots of famous dishes in Vietnamese cuisine. However the people who know and have tried the dishes seem to like them rather much.

9 RESEARCH CRITICISM AND DISCUSSION

The reason why the younger age (18-34) dominates in the number of responses more than half is because the questionnaire was mainly distributed in Vaasa University of Applied Sciences. This, on one hand, could be considered as a weakness of the research considering the main purpose is to study the attitudes of Finnish people in general regardless of age. On the other than, it is also reasonable to conduct the study mostly amongst the younger people, since it is assumed by the researcher that younger people are more likely to be more open, and adapt more easily to food from different cultures.

As argued in Chapter 3 – The Senses, humans' senses are bio-cultural, which is built innately as well as developed through experiences over times. And from the above analysis, it is quite obvious that Finnish people have developed rather well their senses in order to adapt to the differences in Southeast Asian cuisines. In addition, for the basic senses of the tongue, it shows in the results that Finnish people have highly positive attitudes about the basic tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter) of Vietnamese food, even though the condiments used in Finnish cuisine are approximately 90% different from the condiments used in the Vietnamese cuisine as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4. Some respondents, when being asked to give further possible comments on Southeast Asian food, have stated that they especially loved the sour-sweet taste in the food. However, as the researcher has been observing, the Southeast Asian restaurants in Finland offered quite similar dishes regardless of which country the food comes from, which shows in the results of the questionnaire so that a big percentage of respondents did not recognize most of the famous Vietnamese dishes. As the matter of fact, it is suggested by the researcher that a traditional Vietnamese restaurant would possibly be a big success in Finland.

It is also discussed in Chapter 2 that Vietnamese food is not only greatly healthy and lean but also sophisticated, which is a common food trend today in consumers' food choice process. This fact together with the theory on Sociology of Taste and Maslow's Hierarchy which suggest that a human's taste is developed accord-

ing to the differences in society's classes: the lower classes tend to choose easy to get food just to feed their hunger, while the upper classes are more concerned about health and other higher life values. As Vietnamese food appears to fit in the higher category of food choice, hence, fine-dining Vietnamese restaurants in Finland also have a positive future.

The main aim of the thesis is to find out whether or not there would be a further better success for Southeast Asian food in Finland. From the analysis of the questionnaire, it is to be predicted that Southeast Asian food has a greatly positive future in Finland, especially in Vaasa and the nearby regions as the research was mostly done in Vaasa.

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APENDIX

Study on Attitudes about Southeast Asian Food

The main goal is to investigate the attitude of Finnish people towards Southeast Asian food, mainly Vietnamese and Thai food.

Your participation is voluntary and your data is guaranteed to be anonymous and confidential.

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age: _____

3. Have you eaten Thai food and/or Vietnamese food? (You can tick in more than 1 box)

		Neither	Neither	Neither	Neither
Vietnamese	Thai food	Neither	Neither	Neither	Neither
food		(I don't like	(I'm not used	(I don't know	(But I would
		Asian food)	to food other	how to cook	like to try one
			than Finnish	Asian food)	day)
			food)		
<input type="checkbox"/>					

(If your answer is "Neither", you don't have to answer more questions. Thank you very much for your time!)

4. How often do you eat Southeast Asian food?

	Once/twice a week	Once/twice a month	Once/twice a year
Vietnamese food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thai food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

From questions 5 to 10, please choose a number from the scale below (1-5) and write it next to each statement to indicate how much you agree with that statement.

0	1	2	3	4	5
don't know the food item	Not at all				Very much

5. I like the spices in Vietnamese food____ Thai food____
6. I like the hotness (amount of chili) in Vietnamese food____ Thai food____
7. I like the sauces Fish sauce____ Sweet chili sauce____
8. I like the herbs in Vietnamese food
- Coriander____ Basil____ Dill____ Fresh mint____

9. I like other ingredients in Vietnamese food and Thai food

Lemon grass____ Star anise____ Turmeric____ Tofu____ Rice____

10. I think Southeast Asian food is

Vietnamese food Sweet____ Sour____ Salty____ Bitter____

Thai food Sweet____ Sour____ Salty____ Bitter____

For question 11 and 12, please give a number for the Liking Level according to the scale 1-5 below OR tick in a box.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all				Very much

11. I like these Vietnamese dishes

	Liking level	I don't know the food	Know but never tried
Pho (noodle soup)	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vietnamese baguette	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vietnamese hotpots	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spring rolls	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vietnamese pork chop	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vietnamese salad rolls	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vietnamese sticky rice with grill pork	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mint chicken rice	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. I like these Vietnamese desserts

	Liking level	I don't know the food	Know but never tried
Vietnamese coffee	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Baked coconut pudding	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rice pudding	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coconut ice cream	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coconut sticky rice	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Durian ice cream	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fruit in syrup	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rice porridge with corn	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For the next several questions, please tick in the box of the answer you agree with.

13. Did you eat Southeast Asian food when you were in Southeast Asia?

	Every meal	Sometimes	Never	Ate only Western food	Never been there
Vietnamese food	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Thai food	<input type="checkbox"/>				

14. If yes, what do you find is different from Southeast Asian food you've eaten in Finland?

Vietnamese food:

	More	Less	Not different	I don't know
Spicy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sweet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thai food:

	More	Less	Not different	I don't know
Spicy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sweet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Salty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

15. What do you find is different between Southeast Asian food and Finnish food?

Vietnamese food:

	Different	Not different	I don't know
Way of cooking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ingredients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level of spiciness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Way of serving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Thai food:

	Different	Not different	I don't know
Way of cooking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ingredients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Level of spiciness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Way of serving	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Other possible comments for Southeast Asian food:
