

## Service design for Chinese restaurant management in Finland

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<b>The title of your thesis</b> Service design for Chinese restaurant management in Finland	<b>Number of pages and appendices</b> 45+ 3
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<p>The main objective of the thesis is focused on understanding the service and operation model of Chinese restaurants in Finland, identifying the gaps between the service suppliers' and the customers' view on service quality and trying to find out the best Chinese restaurant service design in Finland.</p> <p>The conceptual framework of the thesis is based on the service design, the scale to measure the service quality - SERVQUAL model, and the comparison of Finnish and Chinese food culture and restaurant management.</p> <p>A combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods has been applied to analysis the research results. The face to face interviews on three Chinese restaurant owners give the qualitative perspective of the restaurant entrepreneurs and the surveys on 70 students from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Science give the quantitative view of the restaurant customers.</p> <p>In conclusion, the more than 200 Chinese restaurants in Finland are sharing the same service and operation model – the excessively localized Finnish-Chinese food with slightly different serving styles. From the restaurant entrepreneurs' point of view, the lack of raw material and expensive labour cost in Finland are the main reasons for missing the taste of genuine Chinese food. They hope to present the authentic Chinese culture and offer the genuine Chinese cuisine. On the other hand, the customers are eager to experience the authentic Chinese cuisine and food culture in Finland. Wishes from both parties merged into one goal, which is to offer the genuine Chinese food to customers in the Chinese restaurants in Finland. This should serve as the main strategy for future Chinese restaurant management in Finland.</p>	
<b>Key words</b> Chinese, Finland, restaurant, culture, service, design, service quality, SERVQUAL, DINESCAPE, Chinese food	

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Being the number one population on the world, Chinese people are becoming worldwide nowadays. Along with the existence of the oversea Chinese people, there is a survival and profitable business – the Chinese restaurant. Restaurant business has ever been one of the oversea Chinese main industries, known as the oversea Chinese “Noah's ark”.

The total number of immigrants in Europe is about more than one million. The immigrant Chinese people, with their Chinese restaurant and light industry products, have constituted a visible phenomenon in most of the Europe cities. There are more than 5,000 Chinese living permanently in Finland according to the Finnish immigration service data (Finland population information system, 31.12.2009). Some parts of Chinese living in Finland are self-employed, including people running Chinese restaurants, food retail shops, clothes shops.

At present, there are at least tens of thousands oversea Chinese restaurants on the world. In Finland, there are more than 200 Chinese restaurants in operation (Kiinalainen- Ravintola.fi, 09.10.2011). One of my research result from 2007 shows that Chinese restaurant exists in every city in Finland where the population is more than 20,000. In the city of Helsinki, there are close to 1,300 restaurants, of which 13 are Japanese, 26 are Indian, 63 are Chinese, 8 are Nepalese, and 6 are Thai (Ravintolaopas source, 12.02.2011). It is clear that Chinese restaurants occupy the largest present in the Helsinki's Asian food catering.

However, one may notice that most of the oversea Chinese restaurants are sharing the same working philosophy in decoration, in operating and serving style and even in menu design. Especially for the countries where the Chinese community is small, the food and service from the Chinese restaurants are very much localized and apart from the ones in China. In Finland, this phenomenon is more sever so that one may only remember a Chinese restaurant by its location but not by the food and service. The impressions on the food taste of each Chinese restaurant are more or less similar from one to another. From the Chinese customers' point of view, they are not authentic Chinese restaurants but just restaurants who are making Finnish-Chinese (Fin-Chi) taste food. Moreover, many of the Finnish customers who have ever been to China state the same that the Chinese restaurants in Finland are so much different than the ones they have experienced in China.

Therefore it is an interesting topic to identify the problems of the Chinese restaurant management in Finland. Some research work is needed to find out the different views of the entrepreneurs' and customers', and then try to combine them together to suggest an improved model of service design for the Chinese restaurants in Finland.

## **1.2 Research motivation**

The motivation of choosing the topic is of my personal interest. Not only because my study was in Hotel, restaurant and tourism management, but also because I am one of the customers for the Chinese restaurants in Finland. The situation of current Chinese restaurant business in Finland is far from flourishing. I would like to do some research to help improving the Chinese restaurant business in Finland. Also as one of the entrepreneurs who have ever run a Chinese restaurant in Finland, I prefer to take this study to find out what the best way is to start such a business and how to build up my own competence. In order to improve the food and service quality of the Chinese restaurant and present the genuine Chinese food culture to the customers in Finland, the fundament of the topic was built.

Moreover, I hope to change the view of Chinese restaurant in Finns' mind. Indeed, not as they always commented that all the Chinese restaurants look like the same. As a business idea, it is also important to find out the suitable marketing solution, which is to keep the business profitable as providing the Finns with the experience of the genuine Chinese food and the authentic Chinese culture. Therefore, the cultures study was also carried out in order to boost up the Chinese restaurant business in addition to the Romans with their own characteristics.

## **1.3 Research objectives, scope and question**

In correspondence to the above discussed background of the thesis topic it can be seen that the current Chinese restaurants' operation in Finland are successful in some extend but still missing some distinguishable characteristics in service design. Therefore, the thesis is focused on the following main objectives:

- To understand the service and operation model of Chinese restaurants in Finland
- To identify the service quality gaps between entrepreneurs' and customers' view
- To find out the best Chinese restaurant service design in Finland.

The scope of the research for the thesis is set to be the capital of Finland – the Helsinki city. The research targets were divided into two groups: entrepreneurs and customers. For the entrepreneurs, the owners of three Chinese restaurants that located in Helsinki have been chosen. For the customers, the students from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences are the respondents of the surveys. They include both Finnish and international students.

Based on the research objectives and targeting groups, the main research questions were designed in the following directions:

For the entrepreneurs:

- What are the main successful factors and why they are important?
- What are the missing points of your restaurant business in Finland and how to improve?

For the customers:

- What do you like and dislike about the Chinese restaurants in Finland and why?

#### **1.4 Research methodology in brief**

In order to gain valuable data and find out the research result for the thesis topic, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods has been used. In order to gather information of the research field, it is necessary to gather the primary data as well as the secondary data. Primary data has been collected through own research work, and secondary data has been compiled from the literature by other researchers.

The secondary data were collected from the books, journals, and online findings of the interested field. In addition to the secondary data collection, the primary data were gathered through the face-to-face interviews and wide range surveys which are based on the selected focus and scope. So, the qualitative face-to-face interview was applied to the entrepreneurs and the quantitative surveys were sent to the restaurant customers.

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters. An introduction chapter starts the thesis with its background and objectives. The literature chapter and the methodology chapter form the secondary data and primary data collections. Then the research results are listed in chapter 4. In the end, the conclusion chapter summarizes the outcome of the thesis with personal recommendations and points out the direction for future research.

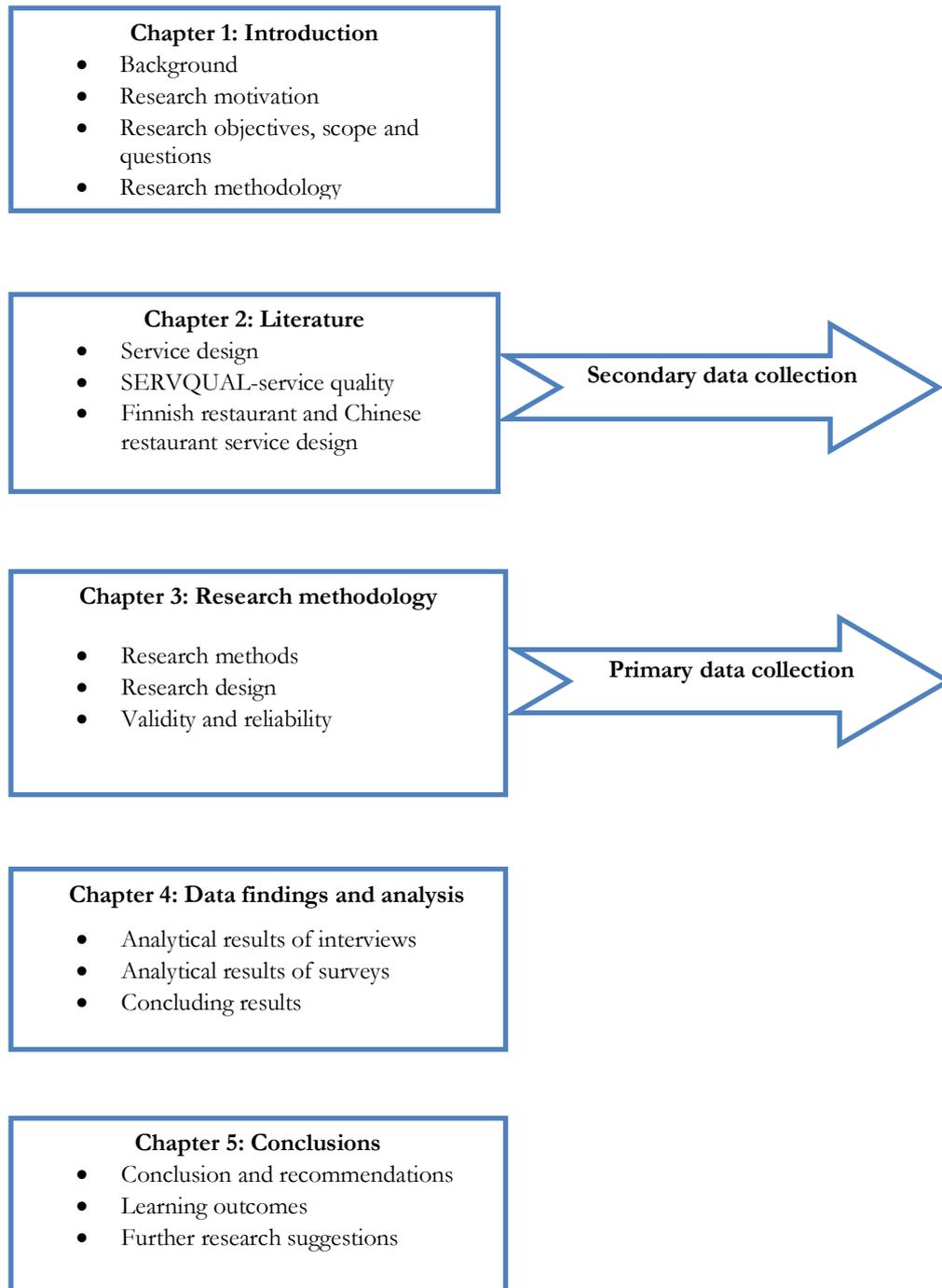


Figure 1. Structure of the thesis

## **2 The literature review**

This chapter will be concerned with a detailed literature analysis in order to achieve the blueprint of service design in the hospitality industry. It forms the secondary data collection to give theoretical support to the topic.

At the beginning of this chapter, it is to define the main idea of service design, which includes interior design and hospitality service design. Then the following section presents the importance of the measure tool-SERVQUAL, which is the best way for the organizations to improve service quality for customers in the hospitality industry. The last section forms the comparison of the difference between Finnish and Chinese food culture in service designs.

### **2.1 Service design**

A failure of the majority products and service has shown to be a lack of understanding of customer requirements. To provide an efficient and effective service, a design needs to be service concept, which is seen as a world-class manufacturing in product development. Then the progress will be made. (William Hollins, 1993)

#### **2.1.1 Definition**

Service design is the activity of managing people, infrastructure, communication and material components of a service for the provider to provide the good quality to the customers. The purpose of the service design is to meet the customers' needs, to improve the service quality and interaction between customers and providers.

Service design is not yet a profession job for somebody. Always, system design is a necessary pre-conditions work for the quality of service. It is the first stage that you can prevent errors and avoid failure costs. Evert Gummesson (1990) defines that when a service is designed the process is often more haphazard. Service quality is a main point to get competitive and profit for any companies. It is the master key. Service is not a product, you cannot buy from a shop or second-hand market. Service is an activity, the products' market depend on the service activity. Services are intangible! And products are tangible. (Evert Gummesson.1990)

Keith Alexander (2007) states that when take a design to offer the service, the market research results, marketing analysis and agreed supplier obligations should be merged with the service

brief. The brief defines the customers' needs and suppliers' capabilities as a set of requirements and instructions which form the basis for the design of the service.

William Hollins in 1993 defines some points of the successful implementation of design in many companies. First of all, you need to find out the customers' needs and interests, then make sure the quality and reliability. Secondly, motivated and involved staffs, they can understand the organizational systems and its capabilities and limitations. In the end, the clear vision of future and a sincere and visible commitment to good design is needed. You have to know the competitors' products activities as well.

Figure 2. shows the important elements of the product design scope. When the company has all of these items, it is the right time to have the service design.

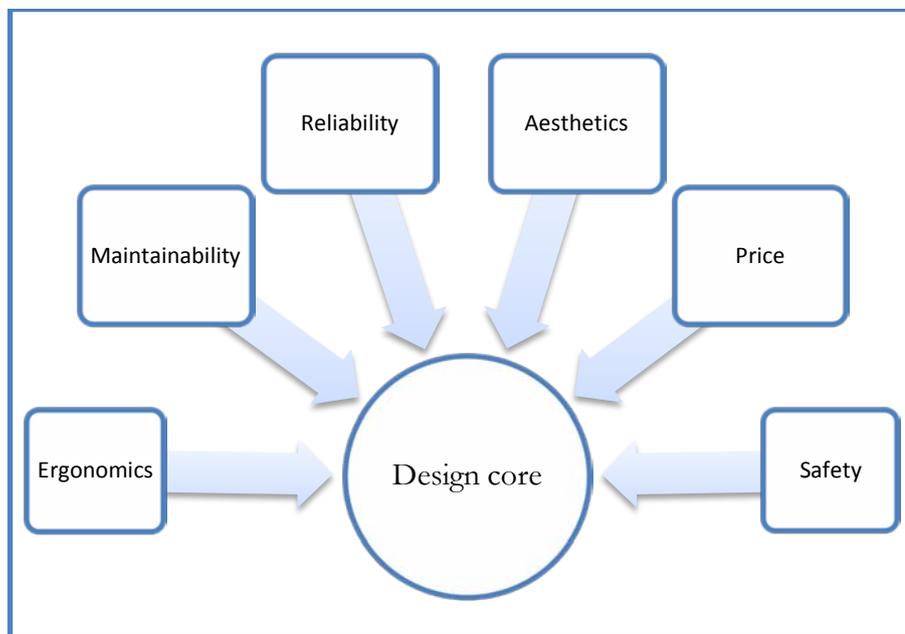


Figure 2. Important elements of product design specification  
(William Hollins, March 1993)

### 2.1.2 Interior design

The interior design of the restaurant includes restaurant decoration, food menu, print style, and so on. Keith Alexander (2007) states that the interior design can be concluded as three points:

1. Products and service
2. Environments
3. Communications and behaviour

Products and service –what you make or sell

The products and service in the restaurant, is that you know what you made and sell to the customers. In order to get your loyal customers, good quality products and high quality service is appreciated during the business. You should make sure that the customers can easily get the idea of what kinds of products you will offer them immediately after they enter your restaurant. Such as the food menu, “the act of giving a menu to a restaurant guest has been described as, the ability to place an advertisement in every customer’s hand before they part with their money” (Sybil S. Yang, Sheryl E. Kimes, Mauro M. Sessarego, 2009). The menu is the guide of the operator to tell the customers what kind of dishes they want to sell. Menu design is also a strategy to get the competitive advantage for the restaurant business. Leo Yuk Lun Kwong (2005) claims that a short menu with lots of techniques is the direct design to attract customers’ view; they should easily acquaint themselves with the most popular dishes of the restaurant. In addition, the items location on the menu, print and illustrations style, and the language in the menu are also the advertisement for the restaurant.

Environment – where you make or sell

The importance of restaurant environment is become a key factor for the hospitality managers in attracting and satisfying customers to get profits. Moreover, as stated by Kisang. Ryu and Heesup. Han (2010), that customer’s reaction to the environment is more important, especially when the hedonic consumption is highly involved. The environment is a resolution of customer psychology and behavior.

Environment may include two parts for the restaurant business: location and decoration. Restaurant location is one of the important factors for the business, the location depends how many customers you can get from the area. In addition to location, a pleasant decoration inside the restaurant can also determine consumers’ satisfaction and loyalty. Such as, table setting, music, lighting, decoration painting, and color scheme. According to K. Ryu and H. Han (2010), customers want to go out dinner, they would like to search some places special and unique for them, not feel like eating at home. To get the unforgettable and memorable

experience for the dinner, place can play a critical role. Surprisingly, the first time visitors will become loyal customers. From the DINESCAPE scale (K. Ryu and H. Han, 2010); it is easy to find out the relationship between environment and customers in the restaurant.

The DINESCAPE have sixes factors: facility aesthetics, lighting, ambience, layout, table setting, and service staff. The details are shown as follow in Figure 3.

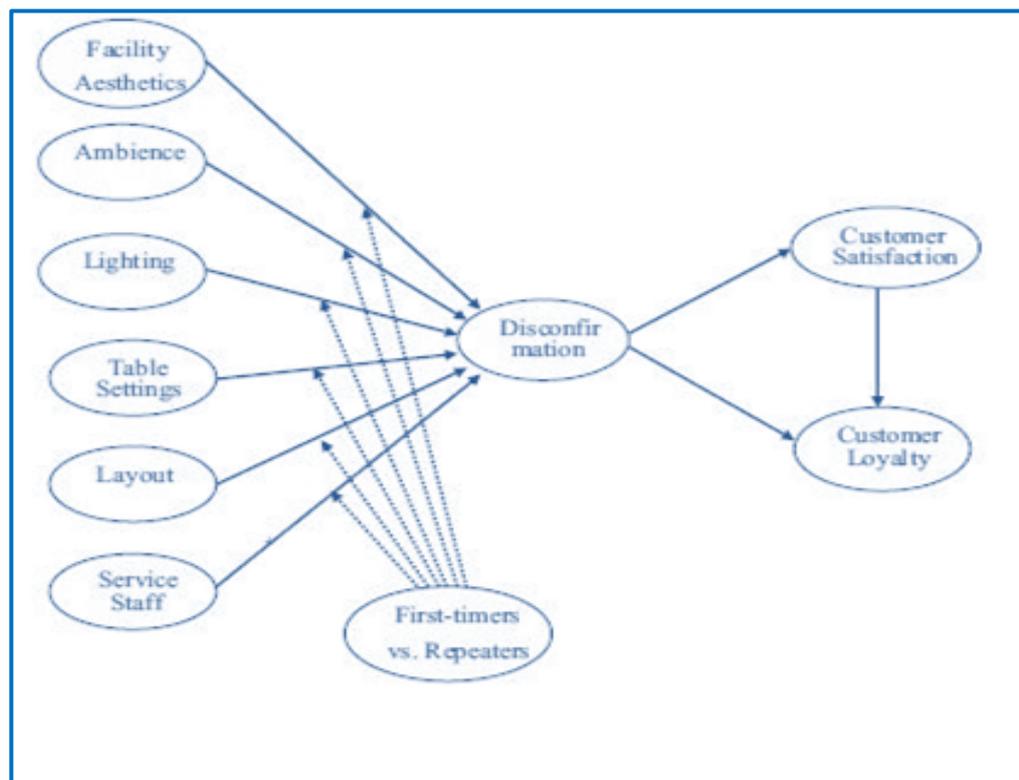


Figure 3. DINESCAPE scale model (K. Ryu and H. Han.2010, DINESCAPE)

Communication and behavior – how you present and promote to do, how to do it

Service staffs play the main role in the service management; it is good to know that the interactions between service staffs and customers are quite important in hospitality field. As K. Ryu and H. Han (2010) mentioned that employee appearance, the number of employees, and the gender of employee are included, to present the service to the customers. Because the service staffs are the first direct influence customers' pleasure when they are in the restaurant. K. Ryu and H. Han (2010) refer to Oliver (1980) highlighting customers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction is a key to successful marketing management in the hospitality industries.

Magnus. Söderlund and Sara. Rosengren(2010) states that many studies of service encounters illustrate that the staffs' display of emotions, like staffs' behavior and language, have impact

on customer satisfaction. A smile behavior shows on the staffs' face will get a positive point from the customers, and they would enjoy having the dinner in the restaurant.

On the other side, service language can be one reason to influence customers' satisfaction during the service. The right language should be used in the right place to the right customers. The research work of this thesis was done in Finland. Since the mother language of the Finns is Finnish, service with Finnish in the restaurant can get a good point from the customers in Finland. It is another key to open the Finnish market in Finland.

### **2.1.3 Hospitality service**

According to Yinghua.Liu and Soocheong. Jang' (2009) study, the hospitality service involve there sections: the food quality, the employees' service quality, and the atmospherics of restaurant. If the restaurant can present these three elements in a good way, it can say that the restaurant have the rich service experiences for the customers. The three categories are direct to influence the customers' overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

As we know that food is the core product that you should offer to the customer in the restaurant, it acts the most important role in the restaurant service for customers. It is the main factor to present what type of restaurant you are and affect the customers' satisfaction. For instance, food taste, colour, temperature, and the most important of food safety are the factors to react customers' behavioural intention.

In the hospitality industry, Y.Liu and S. Jang' (2009) proposes that customers not only evaluate the food quality but also the employees service quality during their dining experiences. So the service quality is another important factor to influence customers' satisfaction. The service worker's display of happiness and unhappiness on her face will affect the level of customers' satisfaction; a smiling service is appreciated during the restaurant service.

Atmospherics is the quality of restaurant surrounding for the customers. For example, restaurant location, table setting, lighting, music, and colour. Y.Liu and S. Jang' (2009) claim that research in environment psychology has suggested that the surrounding of the restaurant has a powerful impact on people's emotions, attitudes and behaviour. In the restaurant, a good and comfortable surrounding will attract customers to spend more time there, and in turn influence customers' post-dining behavioural intentions.

## 2.2 SERVQUAL-service quality

### 2.2.1 Definition

SERVQUAL is originally developed by A.Parasuraman, Valarie A. Zeithami, and Leonard L.Berry (1985, 1988); it is a common measure and technique that can be used in the service field to find out the service quality gap between providers and customers' service quality needs.

The SERVQUAL was originally applied by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) in 5key dimensions: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy.

SERVQUAL is a method that the service organization can apply to improve their service quality. By this method, the providers can get the information from the customers, and provide the services meeting the target customers' needs. The resulting gap analysis can be used as a driver for the service quality improvement.

The SERVQUAL or Gaps Model in Figure 4 shows a clear flow chart where the gaps come from. There are five gaps in the figure. According to Parasuraman *et al.* (1985), these five gaps are influencing the customers' perception of service quality. Riadh. Ladhari (2009) defined the five gaps in his SERVQUAL research as follows:

Gap 1: shows the difference between the customers' expected service and providers' management perceptions of consumer expectations.

Gap2: represents the difference between the providers' management perceptions of consumer expectation and the transition of perceptions into service quality specifications.

Gap3: reflects the difference between the providers' perceptions of the management and the service delivery to the customers by personal.

Gap 4: It is different between the external communication to customers and the service delivery.

Gap 5: it is influenced by Gap 1-4; it represents the difference between the customers' perceived service and their expectation.

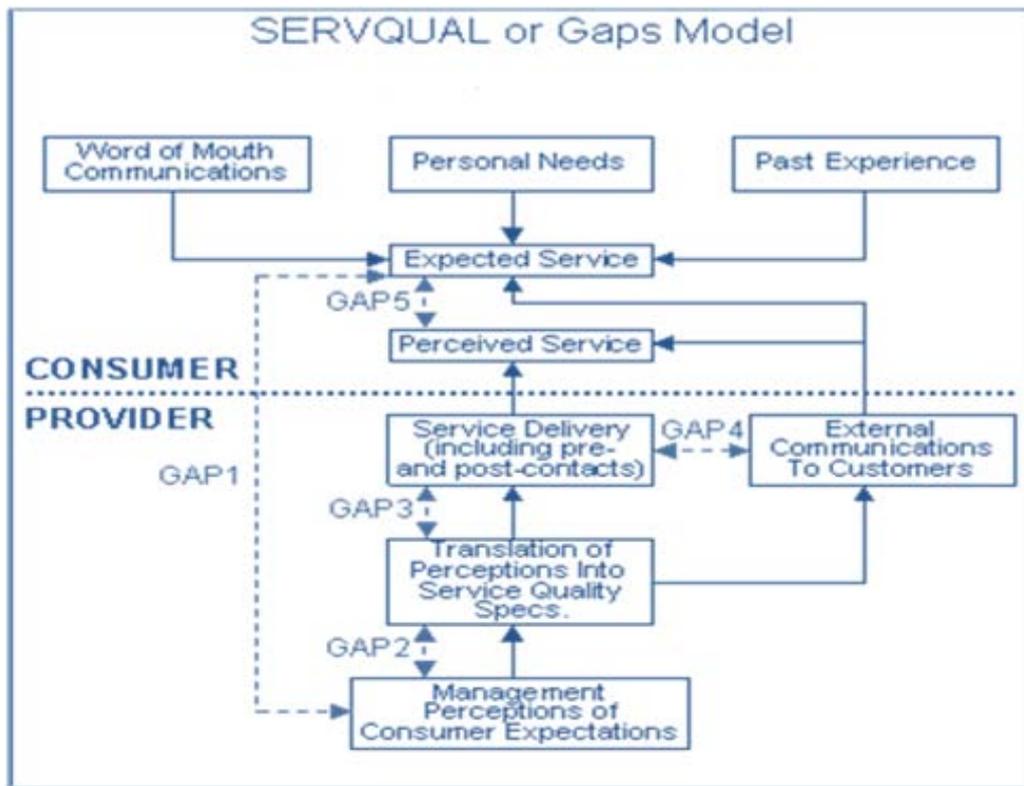


Figure 4, SERVQUAL or Gaps Model

(A.Parasuraman, Valarie A. Zeithami, and Leonard L.Berry, 12manage.com24. 06.2011)

These five gaps can be used to measure the difference between the providers' perceptions of customers' service quality dimensions and the final customers' perceptions of service quality that provided by providers.

### 2.2.2 SERVQUAL scale

Nowadays, there are many definitions of service quality that can be found in the literature. In recent years, the customers pay more attention to the product and service quality. They are eager to receive the products and service which meet their expectations. Andreas.C. Soterious and Richard.B. Chase (1998) stated that service quality can be summarized as company quality, interactive quality, and physical quality. The most widely used instrument to measure the service quality is still SERVQUAL.

Refer to Yun Lok Lee and Nerilee Hing (1995), the five dimensions considering measure the service quality and their definitions are as follows:

1. Tangibles, Appearance of establishment's physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personal. Not only the meals, but also the component of restaurant is important when you provide service to the customers. They are all the facts to influence the customers' satisfaction. Customers would feel good when they have the dinner in a good, clean, and comfortable surrounding place with tidy employees; which undoubtedly assess service quality.
2. Reliability, the organisations' the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. These services include the table setting; bring the right menu to the customers when they are asking; and also check the bill for customers clearly. They are basic service you need and promise to provide to the customers in a good way. Make the customers enjoy the necessary service.
3. Responsiveness, which refers to willingness to help customers and provide prompt service. There are "four frequently" in the service filed in China: walk frequently, ask frequently, watch frequently, hand work frequently. They mean that when you are working the restaurant, you need to be active to serve the customers and to provide the service in the right time. Therefore, they will feel that you are happy to have them, and offer a good service when they are have dinner.
4. Assurance, the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. Employees are the deliver instrument for the managers; they communicate with customers face to face. That a good quality, confidence, well-educated employee is appreciating for the restaurant service. Customers would feel good that the employees know the restaurant food quite well, make sure the food safety, and can solve the customers' problems in a good, effective way. To make the customers trust on the employees is the big point to affect the service quality in restaurant.
5. Empathy, the individual attention and caring that provide to the customers. When customers enjoy their dinner in the restaurant, they really care about their existed. Because they will feel welcome when you pay attention to them. As an employee in the restaurant, you need to take care of all the customers in the restaurant, give each of them the personalised attention. Such as, ask them the requirements of special dietary, or by being sympathetic towards customers' problems. After this, they would feel you provide the good service to them.

SERVQUAL is the best tool to solve and improve the service quality in the hospitality field. It can highlight strengths and weaknesses of the restaurants, thus, it can help the organizations to provide better service. As Yun Lok Lee and Nerilee Hing (1995) note, “the power of the SERVQUAL tool is the greatest in situations involving comparisons of one company with another within a common service segment. For that information as to which organizations are perceived to provide better service is available, along with the potential to identify specific areas of excellence or weakness.” In a word, SERVQUAL instrument is useful in the hospitality field to improve the service quality for the customers.

### **2.3 Finnish and Chinese restaurant service design**

Due to the different culture and eating habit of Finns and Chinese, a big gap exists between the two hospitality industries. And the restaurants’ service designs of these two countries show the different situation, both of them have their own characteristic.

#### **2.3.1 Finnish food culture**

Finnish cuisine – East meets West in the Scandinavian style. Finnish Food and Culture Resources (22.05.2011) states that after six hundred years of Swedish rule and a hundred years of Russian domination, Finnish food is influenced by Sweden and Russia also. Moreover, due to the location, regional variations have developed in taste habit and cooking methods. Owing to the location and climate, grain and potato are the main food for Finns. As Finland has thousands of lakes and big amount of forests, game, fish, and all kinds of berries are the symbol of the food culture.

Kirsti Grönholm (2008) claims that until the mid-nineteenth century, the main foods of Finns are cereals, fish and milk product. The meeting of eastern and western cultures influence people dietary in Finland nowadays. The Finnish food culture has been influenced from East and West, so people combine the two regions food together as their own food. For example, they have the rye bread, sour cream, buckwheat, and beetroot from the East; while from the West they have gained meat balls, salted fish and sweet bread. Also Finns use quite much milk products. In Finnish cuisine, they appreciate freshness, nature taste, and pay attention to the food safety. They harvest the fresh raw material from the forests, fields, sea and lakes.

Apart from the potatoes and grain products, rice and pastas are common in Finnish cuisine. Then the fish, game, forest mushrooms and wild berries form the basis of Finnish

gastronomic culture. According to Kirsti Grönholm (2008), Finns eat different food in different seasons, because during the right season, the food can bring their own strong flavor and bring their own contributions. Each dish tastes best when eaten at the right time. Refer to Ruokatieto (14.06.2011) information, when February comes, Finns enjoy the Runeberg cakes and Shrove Tuesday buns. Then on the Easter, their dishes are full with Slavic flavors. In early summer, the first potato harvest season, it is time for dishes made with the first potato, rhubarbs and false morels. Finns celebrate their Midsummer festivities with barbecuing sausages, smoking fish and making crepes. In deep summer, strawberries, blueberries, cloudberries and all the other berry varieties are picked in the farm and forest. They make the dishes with mushrooms, crayfish, wild duck and all the greens in August. In the fall, reindeer, elk and wildfowl offer excellent dishes. At Christmas time, Finns have the best traditional dishes, such as ham, rosolli salad, and salted salmon.

Finns prefer natural flavor, so the traditional Finnish cooking use a little or none seasonings. Their seasonings include dill, onion, garlic, and pine needles. Also milk and cream are used for seasoning the raw material for Finns. They do not prefer sweet flavors to sour taste.

Fast food is becoming more and more popular in Finland, especially for the young people. But home cooking is still very much appreciated by Finns.

### **2.3.2 Eating habits of Finns**

Eating habit refers to why and how people eat, what kinds of food they eat. In a word, different social, cultural, and environmental have the different style eating habit.

Finnish eating habit seems simple compared to the Chinese way. The dinner table settings include fork, knife, spoon, and plate. They put food on their own individual plates, not like Chinese people share with each other.

Pirjo.Laaksonen, Martti.Laasksonen, and Kristian. Möller (1998) state that Finns' eating habit has changed nowadays: they reduced the consumption of milk and grain products, and paid more attention to meat, fruits, and vegetables. They recognized the importance of body health building. Meanwhile, Finns' eating habit also becomes more modern and international. Foreign foods are accepted by Finns not only in restaurants, but also at home.

In Finland, three meals are usually served per day. There are also two coffee breaks between lunch and dinner. At breakfast, Finns prefer a wake up coffee, served with Finnish pulla, bread with butter or cheese; Finnish porridge is also common for the breakfast. At the lunch time, a heavy meal of meat or fish with potatoes or rice, bread with butter or cheese, and salad are usually offered. The evening dinner seems a little bit lighter than the lunch; it is also a family time to enjoy food together. Milk and cheeses are used quite much, mostly because of the dark and cold winter. Coffee is the national beverage in Finland; they consume very much coffee, about 4 cups per person per day.

Finnish people prefer nature taste of food, they don't use spices so much, only salt and pepper. They are paying more attention to food fresh and safety. They usually eat outside home about 2-3 times per week.

### **2.3.3 Finnish restaurants**

Finnish cuisine in the Finnish restaurant is based on the fresh and natural ingredients according to the seasons in Finland. Such as, vegetable, mushroom, berries, reindeer, and fishes, they are natural and fresh taste during the season. In addition, Finnish cuisine is also influenced by East and West.

When you are at the Finnish restaurant in Finland, you will be offered with the special, seasonal dishes made of Finnish ingredients. The restaurant menus are different depends on the restaurant and season. While the Finnish cuisine appreciates traditions, at the same time, they design the tradition menu in a new and exciting way nowadays.

For the environment, Finnish restaurants have different types of modern decorations, classic music, usually with the warm lights hanging above the table. For people who get used to light environments, they will feel that everything in the restaurant is too dark.

### **2.3.4 Chinese food culture**

Food is only one aspect of culture traditions, but it is may be one of the most persistent. Food plays a core role in people's life, people cannot survive without food. In addition, food is a symbol of country hospitality, religions, and social status. In different countries, people have their own ways to prepare food. By cooking and eating, people compose the countries' food culture.

China has many different local cuisines based on the regions. Especially, the food styles from northern, southern, eastern and western China are different. Because of the different weather in China, northern dishes are oilier and with more garlic; on the other side, southern food focuses on light taste and tenderness, eastern dishes are using a lot of sugar and the western dishes are famous of chili peppers. These four regions' dishes represent the china varied cuisines. In Chinese food, you may also easily find the combination of several tastes (e.g. sweet, salty, bitter, sour, and spicy) in one single dish.

Chinese people enjoy eating different kinds of good food. They try all the best to develop several of food so that the Chinese cuisine has become a sophisticated art. Houston Chinatown Portal (2005) stated that the Chinese food art has been processed more than hundreds of years. The food culture started from the 15th century BC during the Shang dynasty of the first Empire of Yin.

There is an old saying by Confucius in China: "Eating is the most important part in people's life." Food is not only for the survival needs, but also bring happiness, mental and physical well-being. Cooking is becoming an art in china, not just a task to do. According to Houston Chinatown Portal (2005), Confucius established the standards of cooking and table manners. Most Chinese still use those standards until today. For example, people cut the meat and vegetable into small pieces before cooking, then use the chopsticks to eat instead of using knife and fork. People consider it as a good table manner.

Chinese dishes pay more attention to color, smell, and taste; they are almost cooked with vegetable and meat together with different seasonings. As mentioned above, Chinese cuisine can be divided into four major regions: northern, southern, eastern and western. Refers to the Houston Chinatown Portal (2005) information, the difference between these four cuisines is as follows:

Northern cuisine, Beijing cuisine can be the delegate. Because of the weather, wheat is growing in the region so that wheat is more often used, such as noodles, pancakes, steamed buns and dumplings. Northern cuisine has heavy flavor; they use a lot of onion, garlic, dark soy source and oyster source.

Southern cuisine, also mainly refers to the Cantonese cuisine, is well-known dishes in the western countries. Western people know the sweet and sour dishes and enjoy them so much.

Rice is the staple in Cantonese cuisine; fishes and seafood are used more in the southern cuisine with freshness.

Shanghai cuisine is representative of eastern cuisine; rice and wheat are the combination staples. Sugar is grown in this area, therefore, Shanghai cuisine uses more sugar. Because of the river, fish and seafood are also largely used in the cuisine. Moreover, wheat noodles can also be found in Shanghai cuisine.

Sichuan food can be named as the typical western cuisine; they use a plenty of chili pepper in many kinds of dishes. As we mentioned Sichuan food, the spicy and salty come to our mind. The most famous dish is the Kung Pao chicken. Sichuan cuisine can be a unique dining experience for us to make up of adventurous and creative taste sensations.

Moreover, the food can be also used as medicines to prevent disease and promote the healthy life in China. K.C.Chang (1977) mentioned that food may affect people's health so that food must be chosen on the right time depending on the person's health condition. Food sometimes can be medicine in China depends on the region. In the theory of Chinese medicine, human bodies can follow two statuses: Yin and Yang. Many food species are also characterized into two functions. The Chinese traditional medical doctors always say, when the Yin and Yang are not well balanced in the body, the disease will come. In China, people use natural food in supplement to medicine. At times, the food treatment is needed; however, when the body is normal, overeating food with one function can also cause diseases.

### **2.3.5 Eating habits of Chinese**

Chinese people eat three meals a day along with snacks, tea is served whenever favorable. Porridge, as well as soybean milk or wonton, is often used in the morning. Sometimes Mantou (Chinese steam bread) is served with pickle vegetable. For lunch and dinner, rich foods are consumed. Several dishes with soup will be served together. As well-known, rice is the staple in China; rice is served together with the dishes in bowls or can be served later on. Other staples, such as dumplings, noodles, fried pies are also common food for both lunch and dinner. Many Chinese people drink tea daily.

People use chopsticks as their eating instrument in China. According to Asian –Nation data, a Chinese legend notes Confucius' influences on the development of chopsticks through his

non-violent teachings. The belief was that knives were associated with war and death. Confucius suggested using no knives at the table, so the chopsticks become the eating tool.

In China, many cuisines can be served together at the same time. People have the opportunity to enjoy many different dishes in one meal. People eat food together around the table and the dishes are placed on the center of table. Everyone on the table shares the food with their own chopsticks. The main difference between Chinese and Western eating habit is about sharing: In western countries everyone has their own plate of food.

Another eating habit in China is that, people need to sit around table to eat together. It is a polite manner to greeting everybody and waits until all are seated to start the meal. Especially for families with senior people, the juniors should not start before the seniors.

Furthermore, people eat outside home very often in China. Restaurants are the main venue for many formal or inform gatherings.

### **2.3.6 Chinese restaurants in Finland**

Chinese restaurants are ubiquitous in most western countries; they are promoting the local economic development. As SooCheong Jang (2010) mentioned, the type of overseas Chinese restaurant is usually family owned where the family members are also the employees. They have the table settings in the Chinese way, such as chopsticks with bowls and plates, Chinese teapot and cups. The interior surroundings of the restaurants are usually decorated with Chinese-style painting and artifacts. The menu is mostly printed in Chinese, English, and the local languages, such as in Finland, the mother tongue language is Finnish.

Chinese restaurants in Finland are having the similar characters as mentioned above. The decoration materials and table wares are imported from the same few importers, so that the patterns and colors are more or less the same. Nowadays, the Chinese restaurants are throughout all the cities in Finland, the owners include the early immigrant, later workers, and some former students. The first restaurant opened in 1973 in Finland is the Restaurant China in Helsinki, and it serves the Cantonese cuisine. They offer the Cantonese cuisines including Dim sum, roasted duck, and sea food. Due to the earliest Chinese immigrants in Finland were from Hong Kong and Canton area, they are more Cantonese cuisine Restaurants in Finland. Followed on, Sichuan cuisine, shanghai cuisine, and northern cuisines are emerged in Finland.

As Finland is a non-immigration county, the Chinese community in Finland is rather small, so that main stream customers for the Chinese restaurant in Finland are Finns. Since Finns are quite conservative in many things, foods without an exception, the earlier Chinese restaurants surrendered to change the original Chinese food taste into the Finnish styles in terms of survival. This is the fact of when and where the Fin-Chi food started. Until now, many Chinese restaurants in Finland are still making Fin-Chi food as sort of tradition. But as Finns are getting more open and international minded, genuine Chinese food are becoming more attractive and some restaurant owners start to think about re-designs of the food and services.

The raw material of the Chinese food is another issue for the Chinese restaurants in Finland. The old saying in China states that “Even the best wife cannot cook a meal without rice!” It means that raw material is source of any ready-made cuisines. Finland is so up north on the world that not many vegetables can grow here. Even with the modern logistic technologies, seasonal vegetables cannot always be imported from China. Furthermore, many Chinese food industries are missing outside China. For example the soybean products, such as Tofu and soybean milk, they are supplied to the market with a very limited amount. Those limitations prevent the Chinese restaurants in Finland from serving genuine Chinese food to the customers.

### **2.3.7 Comparison**

The findings from the above literature resource provide good information about the food culture existing in China and Finland. The food culture determined by the natural resources that are available in one country, people consumed the main food which grows in their country land. So that the food consumed in China and Finland differ in ingredients. Besides the differences in ingredients, every country tends to have their way to preparing the food, the prepared way of the food is different from culture to culture. For example, the potato can be found in China and Finland, it is the main food in Finland. But, the way it is prepared and serviced is different in these two countries.

As mentioned above, the food culture is depended on the natural resources of the country; the people consume the food which grows in their country lands. According to the differences ingredients of the countries, every culture has their own way to preparing and serving the food. So that it forms one country’s own food culture. The food culture of China and Finland is very different from each other. The differences in the food cultures, main food, eating

habits, and restaurants from Finland and China are compared and shown in the following table.

Table 1. Summary of Finnish and Chinese food cultures (Yan Yang. 02.09.2011)

	<b>Finland</b>	<b>China</b>
<b>Food Culture</b>	East meets West in Scandinavian style cuisine(Swedish and Russian ), different food in different seasons	Different cuisine based on region: northern, southern, eastern and western cuisine.
<b>Main Food</b>	Potato, grain products, fish, chicken, beef, milk products, sausage, pork, berries	Rice, vegetable, pork, beef, mutton, chicken, duck, sea food, wheat products, eggs
<b>Eating Habit</b>	Table settings: fork, knife, spoon, and glasses individual plates three meals with two coffee breaks nature taste eat outside: 2-3 time per week	Table setting: chopsticks, spoon, and bowls, share dishes in the table three meals with snacks, tea spicy food eat outside: almost every day
<b>Restaurants</b>	Menu: fresh and natural ingredients based on season. Atmosphere: modern decorations, classic music, warm lights hanging above the table	In Finland: family type Menu: Chinese food with Finnish flavour Atmosphere: Chinese-style painting and artifacts, red color

### **3 Research methodology**

In order to get the result of the research topic, several research methods are used to collect information. The literature review focus on the secondary data collection, it includes electronic journal, magazines, articles, and some online findings. The secondary data gathers the information of the topic, and it strengthens the validity and reliability of the research topic.

In order to collect the primary data of the entrepreneurs', face-to-face interview is applied. It is an efficiency way to collect the direct data; asking ten questions in personal with Chinese language to the three entrepreneurs, and gathering their thinking and opinions directly from the interview.

On the other hand, for the customers' group, Haaga-Helia UAS students are the main target. The survey research method is used to get the primary data from them, there are total 70 survey questionnaires were sent to ask their opinions, attitudes, motivations, and characteristics about the Chinese restaurants in Finland.

The following sections described the profile of the interviewees and design the interview and survey questionnaires of the empirical research; the research has been conducted through the personal interview and survey.

#### **3.1 Methods of data collection**

##### **3.1.1 Interview**

Interview is the research way that I used for the topic. From the interview, you can ask the people questions face to face, and collect their thinking and ideas directly; it is easy to get the desired information from interview.

As A.N. Oppenheim (1992) states that it is important for the survey researcher to conduct good interviews. The statistical analysis of the research project is depended on the interviews. Moreover, A. N. Oppenheim (1992) mentions that the interview requires interpersonal skills. First of all, you should put the respondent at ease, and ask them questions in an interested manner, not down the responses without upsetting the conversational flow, then give support without introducing bias.

Refer to Sandy Q.Qu and John Dumay (2011); the research interview is an important qualitative data gather method. It is used widely in conducting studies and ethnographic research. Even when it is not the primary method of data collection in a quantitative study, the interview method is employed often as a pilot study to gather preliminary data before a survey is designed. The interview requires not only the various skills, such as listening and note taking, but also planning and preparation. In order to gather the useful data for the research, it is important for the researchers to develop as much relevant topic areas as possible. In terms of the interview process, many decisions are needed to consider. Such as: the interviewers and interviewees, the type of interview, and interview data analysis method. Interviewing requires “a respect for and curiosity about what people say, and a systematic effort to really hear and understand what people tell you” (Sandy Q.Qu and John Dumay, 2011).

An interview is a good way for the researcher to learn about the world of others, real understanding other things. Even when interviewers and interviewees speak the same language, they may have the different culture meaning. Therefore, a well prepared interview can collect a rich data.

There are two kinds of interviews: exploratory interviews and standardized interviews. According to A.N. Oppenheim (1992), exploratory interview is the depth interview, or the free-style interview, it also including the group interviews. On the other hand, the standardized interview is used in the public opinion polls, market research and government surveys.

When reflecting to the interview methods, there are three interview methods: structured interviews, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Sandy Q.Qu and John Dumay (2011) mentions that “In developing insights into the interview methods, we argue that the neo positivist view corresponds more to structured interviews, and the romanticist view to unstructured interviews, while semi-structured interviews are reflective of the localism perspective, with overlap at the boundaries. We use a reflective approach to develop critical insights into questioning and interpreting the answers.”

### **3.1.2 Survey**

Survey is a method for gathering valid information from people’s description, comparison, or their opinions. Refer to Fink (2010), the survey system activities are including the survey

objectives definition, respondents' selection, reliable and valid survey instrument preparation, and all the activities conduction in an ethical manner. The researcher is responsible for investigating the survey activities and to ensuring the quality.

Survey information can be gathered by asking people to answer the questionnaires, or by written, oral, and visual records of people's opinions and ideas. Researchers use surveys to find out about people by asking their questions about their background, beliefs, motivations and feelings (Fink, 2010).

The surveys instruments consist of mailed or self-administered questionnaires and face-to-face or telephone interviews. A self-administered questionnaire is full of questions that one finishes by himself. The respondents can get the questionnaires from site, the mail or Email. The interviews can take place face-to-face, on the phone, or web cam. It is possible to have the group interview (Fink, 2010).

Fink (2010) states that the survey data quality is depending on level of respondents understands survey questions. It can affect by the respondents' language skills, education, and culture background. So that the pretest of the survey is needed for the researcher to evaluate the respondents reliably interpret questions. The respondents are also asked to record the required time to complete the survey.

## **3.2 Research design**

### **3.2.1 Design of the interview questions**

The main reason of the interview was to receive the entrepreneurs' ideas about the current Chinese restaurants' operation in Finland, and the business situations of Finland on their point of view. Therefore, it seemed helpful to choose more restaurants from the different background to interview. In the thesis three Chinese restaurants that located in Helsinki were chosen; they have different background, different restaurant type and surrounding. Due to the differences, they have own opinions about the hospitality marketing in Finland.

The interviews have been conducted face to face with the owners of the three restaurants in Helsinki during June to July. Just because we are all Chinese, so the interviews were conducted in Chinese language. The interview duration for one interviewee lasted about 1 hour in which

ten questions have been asked. The interview questions can be reviewed in Chinese as well as in English in appendix and in appendix 2 at the end of this report.

In order to get the background of the entrepreneurs, therewith, the first three questions asked “How many years have you been in Finland, why you want to stay in Finland?”; “How many years is your restaurant now, what is the reason that you want to open a Chinese restaurant in Finland?”, and “What kind of type is your restaurant, Family or cooperate?”

As we know that culture plays an important role in the business life, the question focused on the food culture of China and Finland. Therefore, the fourth question asked was “What do you think about the Finnish food culture and Chinese food cultures influence your business?”

Question five was focused on some big Chinese restaurants successful operation in Finland. They are accepted by Finnish customers and have their business market in Finland. Consequently, the question is asked as “What the main successful factors of your restaurant are?”

In order to get the customers’ feedback, and the owners’ opinions of customers in Finland, the sixth question was focused on “What do you think about the Finnish customers and Chinese customers?”

The seventh question was focused on current Chinese restaurant situation in Finland, and the owners’ opinion about it. It was asked “What do you think about the current similar Chinese restaurant operation model?”

The eighth question was the most important in the research field, it can find out the owners’ ideas and opinions about the weakness of current Chinese restaurants operation, and the affect factors, and their methods to improve the Chinese restaurants’ business in Finland. The question was asked as “What are the missing points of your restaurant business in Finland?”

In order to receive the overview of how the entrepreneurs think about Chinese restaurants in Finland, and the current and future of Chinese restaurant marketing. The last two questions focused on “What are the advantage and disadvantage to have the business in Finland?” and “How do you think about the Chinese restaurant future in Finland?”

### 3.2.2 Design of the survey questions

As the focus of the research is based on the Finnish and international customers in Finland, it seems easy to make the survey at school: Haaga-Helia UAS. The purpose of survey in Haaga-Helia UAS was to get the opinions of the Finnish and international students customers about the current Chinese restaurants in Finland, and their expectation of Chinese restaurant food and service in Finland.

The surveys were conducted face-to-face and E-mail with total 70 students in Haaga-Helia UAS during April to August. That 30 of them are Finnish students, and 40 are international students (20 Chinese, 10 Russian, and 10 German). All the surveys language is English as it was the study language in Haaga-Helia UAS. Furthermore, the length of face-to-face survey for each student was about 5-10 minutes. There are all seven questions in the survey for every student. The survey questions can be reviewed in English in Appendix 3 at the end of the report.

In order to get the basic information of the customers' interest in Chinese food, therefore, the first two questions were asked as "Do you like Chinese food? a) YES b) MEDIATE c) NO" and "How often do you go to Chinese restaurant? a) 3-4days/week b) 1-3days/week c) 4-6times/month d) 2-3times/month e) Never".

Moreover, their ideas about the current Chinese restaurants' operation in Finland seem quite important for the thesis research. It is necessary to find out their satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the current Chinese food and service in the restaurants in Finland.

Therewith, the third question was "How do you like the food in the Chinese restaurant in Finland? A) Taste good b) Just like the same taste in all restaurants c) Don't like the taste

Question four was focused on the culture factor. The Chinese food culture is quite different from Europe, in order to gather the information about their understanding about the Chinese food culture and the reason that they like Chinese food. The question was asked as "Why do you like Chinese food? What about Chinese food culture?"

Furthermore, the fifth and sixth questions were concerned on the customers' mind of the current Chinese restaurant in Finland; their opinions about the food taste, service, decoration, and so on....on the other hand, their expectation of the genuine Chinese food, the genuine Chinese food that they want to experience in Finland. Therewith, the questions asked were

“How do you think the Chinese restaurants in Finland? Fin-Chi taste food? Decoration? Service?” and “Are you eager to have some Authentic Chinese restaurant in Finland? Genuine Chinese food? Not just Fin-Chi style? a) YES b) NO” from the answers it can find out the customers’ needs of the Chinese restaurant in Finland.

The last question asked was an open question focusing on the level of the recent Chinese restaurant in Finland from customers’ point of view. The question is “the recent Chinese restaurant level in your mind: 1 2 3 4 5.” (1 very bad, 2 bad, 3 good, 4 very good, 5 excellent)

### **3.3 Profile of the respondents**

#### **3.3.1 Profile of the restaurants**

Three different Chinese restaurant entrepreneurs have been interviewed personally. All of them didn’t allow publishing their company name, but their companies profile as well as their answers and opinions are permit to publish. So they were named restaurant A, restaurant B, and restaurant C in the thesis.

The three restaurants have been chosen because of the different opening year, decoration, and operation mode. Hence, one tradition decoration Chinese restaurant, one semi-modern Chinese restaurant, and one modern Chinese restaurant and bar have been selected in Helsinki. Because of the different background; different opinions, data and expectations could be gathered from the interviews. The three restaurants’ profiles are listed in table 2.

Restaurant A is a family-owned company with 5 main staffs, yet in the busy season, the staffs increased to 8, which was establish in 2007. But they live in Finland more than twenty years, and had their restaurant in other city before. Restaurant A is one of the most popular Chinese restaurants in Helsinki area. Inside the restaurant, you can feel the Chinese traditional decoration atmosphere with red and golden colour; also it serves the customers with the same national cuisine for more than twenty years.

Restaurant B is another family-owned Chinese restaurant in Helsinki; the restaurant was opened in 2006 by a Chinese-Finnish family for whom genuine Chinese food is matter of honor. The decoration inside is contemporary Chinese style, but you can still find some tradition decoration with the red color. It has 5 regular staffs.

Restaurant C is a cooperation Chinese restaurant with three partners, which was established in 2008. The restaurant is also a bar for the ice hockey fans during the hockey season. The decoration inside is totally modern without any other Chinese traditional symbol. But the food is still the Chinese cuisine.

Table 2. Profiles of the three Chinese restaurants

<b>Restaurant name</b>	<b>Opening year</b>	<b>Type of restaurant</b>	<b>Owners</b>	<b>Amount of staff</b>	<b>Opening days per week</b>	<b>Day amount of customers</b>
<b>Restaurant A</b>	2007	family owned	2	5-8	7 days	150-250
<b>Restaurant B</b>	2006	family owned (Finnish and Chinese)	2	5	7days	80-150
<b>Restaurant C</b>	2008	co-operate company	3	4	7days	30-80

### 3.3.2 Profile of the customers

On the other hand, the survey that I took in Haaga-Helia University of Applied Science, there were 70 students that I took a quite short oral ask interview for them. They were included 30 Finnish students, 20 Chinese students, 10 Russian students, and 10 German students. Because of the different background, so, the different opinions, data and expectations for the Chinese restaurant I got from the survey.

Table 3. Profile of the customers

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Number</b>
Finnish	30
Chinese	20
Russian	10
German	10

### 3.4 Validity and reliability

According to Dinana E.Carter and Sam Porter (2000, 29), “validity and reliability are the criteria upon which the veracity and credibility of research findings are judged and are important in all research although the methods of achieving these qualities will vary depending of the type of research.” And the measure instrument must be valid and reliable, such as the theoretical resources, questionnaire, or interview schedule.

Dinana E.Carter and Sam Porter (2000, 30) mentioned validity is quite important in the all research process, and it includes internal validity and external validity. Internal validity is addressed usually in the theoretical studies. External validity concerns on the questions of the interviewers.

In this thesis research, internal validity is got carefully from theoretical and practical information. They are from well-known authors and researchers; and some on-line findings. External validity is the interview and survey situations of the topic, which include understand the questions, listen carefully and record clearly of the interviewees’ information. The theoretical framework in the thesis is the foundation of the interview discussion. The interview questions came from the theoretical framework. On the other hand, the interview can help modify the questions, and find out the best research answers from the interviewees in a good way. The interviewees have the best knowledge of the research problem in this field.

According to Dinana E.Carter and Sam Porter (2000, 32), reliability is a precondition for validity. It is a measure for the consistent results. The reliability data in the study was collected by the interview and survey, they can prove the thesis research field because in other western countries have already investigated and tested the theories. And the questions in the thesis were created according to those theories.

On the other hand, I am from China, I know quite well about China: language, hospitality field, and culture. Moreover, I was once a Chinese restaurant entrepreneur in Finland. I can communicate quite well with the interviewees, and use the right words to get the needed information from them. I can communicate with them use the mother tongue, tell them the idea of the thesis, not to make them feel that I a spy for the business.

## **4 Data findings and analysis**

The following chapter provides an overview of the research results of the topic; both entrepreneurs and customers' respondents have their reasons and opinions about the current Chinese restaurants in Finland, and the suggestions and expectations of the future Chinese restaurants' style.

### **4.1 Analysis of secondary and primary data collection**

In order to get enough data to report the result, it is necessary to gather primary data as well as secondary data. Primary data is collected after secondary data is collected; the data is never gathered before, that data needs to suit own purpose. So that the personal interview and survey are valuable to get the primary data. However, secondary data is the pre-existing data of other authors. It is usually easier to gather than primary data. From the secondary data, I can lay out the relative questions for the interviewees.

Secondary data can be gathered from the electronic journal, magazines, articles, books, and some online information. A large of resources should be found and checked, then narrow the range and find out the related materials.

In order to gain the resources of the research topic, a great amount of information materials were gathered. Firstly, the literature of the topic focuses on the service design in the hospitality industry. Secondly, the measurement tool of service should be given to identify the customers' satisfaction: SERVQUAL. Thirdly, try to find out the difference of Finnish and Chinese restaurant service design, because of the different food culture.

Furthermore, in order to get current situation of Chinese restaurants marketing in Finland; and the owners and customer' opinions about the restaurants' operation, so that different interviews with different groups have been conducted. It is necessary to analyse the restaurant entrepreneurs' opinions about the current business marketing in Finland, therefore, three restaurants' entrepreneurs have been interviewed personally. In order to gain the overall picture, so that one traditional decoration Chinese restaurant, one semi-modern Chinese restaurant, and one modern Chinese restaurant and bar have been interviewed.

In addition, customers' satisfaction is the most important for the hospitality industry. For the large numbers of the customers, a widely survey was done from the Haaga-Helia UAS students: Finnish students and international students; the type of survey can be also described as semi-structured interviews. From the survey, it showed that they have the different sense about the Chinese food in Finland, especially, the Chinese students in Haaga-Helia UAS.

#### **4.2 Analysis of the interview results**

After define the three restaurant entrepreneurs' profile, they have been asked the opinions about the Chinese restaurants' marketing in Finland as owners. All three entrepreneurs responded very activity about the questions. Even though they have different opinions about the current Chinese restaurant marketing; interestingly, most of the answers were almost the same.

According to the three respondents, most of the restaurants in Finland are family-owned. This is a fact even from other countries in the world. The biggest number of the overseas Chinese firms is the restaurant since it is the easiest way for the Chinese immigrates to survive. Moreover, the restaurant business is more secure – people need to eat even during the economic crisis. On the other hand, Chinese people's hard work is appreciated by foreigners. Furthermore, they stated that family-owned restaurants are the good way to save investment. Since the taxation and labour cost are quite high in Finland, most Chinese restaurants in Finland are operated in a small business. It is hard to withstand large investment and for the same reason, the restaurants' workers are mostly family members.

Focusing on the culture fact, the three respondents have their own opinions. Respondent A stated that culture different doesn't have much influence on business; because the Chinese restaurants need to follow the location and Finns eating habit, not blindly idealistic. Therefore, it is important to combine Chinese and Finnish culture and use it into the business. According to respondent A, it is a fast way to make the Finns interested in genuine Chinese food. In comparison, respondent B and C argued that authentic Chinese restaurant will have more attention for the Finns; nowadays more and more foreigners are interested in Chinese food and culture and Finns are becoming more opening and willing to accept other countries' culture. They claimed that the authentic Chinese restaurant style is should be popular in Finland, and it can get good market.

According to the three respondents, the current Chinese restaurants are successful in Finland. Because they are accepted by Finnish customers and still have the business. Respondent A claimed that Chinese food is delicious and health food compare to other western dishes; and a nice price attract more customers, the Chinese dishes are usually offering lower price. He said another factor is that most of the Chinese restaurants are family type; they work hard for one clear goal. Respondent B and C stated that Chinese people is hard working, they pushing them into work longer days than others, they are confidence and powerful. All the entrepreneurs in the restaurants have the basic cooking skill, management and social skill. They use their skills to deal with the customers, and they are flexible to the customers' requests. Respondent C added that some big Chinese restaurants' entrepreneurs have sufficient funds in some big cities in Finland, so they can do the interior and hospitality service deign according to the customers' needs in Finland. In the end, three respondents said that customers are God; they did their best to offer the best service to the customers, and get the catering market in Finland.

Moreover, the three respondents were asked about their opinion of customers in Finland; it includes Finnish customers and Chinese customers. Respondent A stated that more and more Finnish people interested in Chinese culture and Chinese food, they are longing to experience Chinese culture in their own country, and they also hope that they can have genuine Chinese food in Finland. Respondent A said that the Finnish customers always discuss the dishes with him, and give him some suggestions. Respondent B and respondent C argued that some of the Finnish customers are quite conservative; they don't want to try new things, in other words, it may be take long time to make them change the opinion of other dishes. For example, if they are interested in one kind of the dishes, they order it every time when they are in the restaurant, they don't want to try other dishes. The people that want to try real Chinese food are those who know a little bit Chinese culture, or maybe they have been travelling to china before. For the Chinese customers, the three respondents claimed most of the Chinese customers are white-collar workers, and some tourists. Other Chinese people prefer to cook at home by themselves in Finland.

Focusing on the factor of the recent Chinese restaurant service style, the three respondents reached the same point. They stated that the Finns are very conservative, it is very difficult for them to accept new things in a short time, and they don't like change all the time. For this reason, the current restaurants operation are look like all most the same in Finland, and the food taste is combined with Finnish and Chinese taste, so called Fin-Chi food. Although they argued that from the customers' view, the Chinese restaurants look the same; but they still

have their own characteristic. They said that they are from different parts of China; they have the different food culture, so they present the different food to Finnish customers in their own way.

According to the main reason that they don't open the genuine Chinese restaurant in Finland, and their opinions about the missing points of the current Chinese restaurants in. Respondent A, B, and C had the same answers. They claimed that the lack of raw materials in Finland is one of the points; it is not so easy for them to find all the raw materials that they needed. Respondent B stated that the most important factor is the Finnish customers, not all the Finns can accept genuine Chinese food, such as the Sichuan cuisine. No matter how you change the restaurant's menu, the main target is Finnish customers, the food need to adopt the Finns taste. Focusing on the atmosphere, Respondent C answered that it is a big cost for renovation, most of the Chinese restaurants are small business, they can't bear so large investment, and the material and labour cost are quite high in Finland. Most of them hire the Chinese design company in Finland, for this reason most of the Chinese restaurants' decoration look like the same, such as red and gold colour. For improving the missing points, they laid out three strategies: offering the lower dishes price to the customers, being more flexible to the customers' requests, and trying their best to offer the best service and genuine food to the customers.

As concluding questions, the three respondents were asked about the hospitality marketing situation in Finland and Chinese restaurants' future. For the marketing situation in Finland, three respondents stated that it is easy to have business in Finland, but you have to understand Finnish market very well, not just blind investment. They said that the disadvantage is the language, the high tax, and expensive labour cost in Finland. It is not suitable for the small business in Finland. For the future development of the Chinese restaurants, they all hope they can offer the genuine Chinese food to the Finnish customers with modern Chinese decoration, to promote the authentic Chinese food culture, not just Fin-Chi food.

### **4.3 Analysis of the survey results**

There are total 70 survey respondents are from Haaga-Helia UAS students, they are including Finnish, German, Russian, and Chinese. All of them were happy to reply the survey questions, and gave their opinions about the Chinese restaurants in Finland. Because of the different background and nationality, their answers are different.

Focusing on fact of the interesting level for Chinese food, 90%of the respondents stated YES, and most of them went to Chinese restaurant in Finland for 2-3 times a month, some of them went to Chinese restaurant to enjoy the food for 4-6times a month. But still there are 10% of the respondents said NO! They don't like Chinese food, they don't want to try and have it. Within those dislike Chinese food respondents, most of them are Finnish students, also the Chinese students. The Chinese students said the food in the restaurants is not genuine Chinese food; it is difficult for them to eat it, they are prefer to cook at home by themselves. For the taste fact, the 90% YES-respondents claimed that the Chinese food is just like the same taste in all restaurants in Finland. They found that most of the restaurants' menus are look like the same.

About the reason they like Chinese food, most of the respondents described that Chinese cuisine is quite different from the other country cuisine (from European point of view). The cooking style is quite unique, the Chinese cuisine always use the fresh vegetables, and lot of sauces and spices. Such as: soya and oyster sauce. Moreover, they are interesting in Chinese culture, and they want to experience the authentic Chinese culture in Finland.

Focusing on the current Chinese restaurants service situation in Finland, the entire respondents have their own opinions. 70%of the respondents include Finnish students and international students claimed that the Chinese restaurants in Finland are similar to each other, no matter dishes menu or restaurant decoration. The food in the current Chinese restaurants is kind of adapted to Finnish customers, Fin-Chi style. They said that the service is always pleasant in some large Chinese restaurants in Finland, waitresses are always helpful, and without culture difference they try to do their best in serving customers, in a way the Finns want to be served, but in the small Chinese restaurants, the service is informal. 20%of the respondents argued that the Chinese restaurants in Finland are really quite bad. Especially, for some of the customers have been to china or the Chinese, they have the idea about the genuine Chinese food taste and service in China. From their opinion, there is no genuine or even decent-tasting Chinese food in Finland. They don't want to go to Chinese restaurant to have the Fin-Chi taste food, they said the restaurants always offer food with sweet and sour, sweet and cloggy, sweet and yuk... but the truth is that it is hard to find sweet and sour food in China. It's the same thing with pizzas, pastas and kebabs in Finland, not really close the real thing. Moreover, still 10% respondents stated that the Chinese food is great here in Finland. They like the food taste and customer service in the restaurants. In their mind, sweet and sour pork is a typical Chinese dishes.

The figure below showed the current Chinese restaurants situation in Finland from the customers' point of view in a clear way. 70% of the customers stated that the operation model is similar to each other; 20% customers said that the Chinese restaurants are very bad in Finland; but, there are still 10% customers like the current Chinese restaurants' business in Finland.

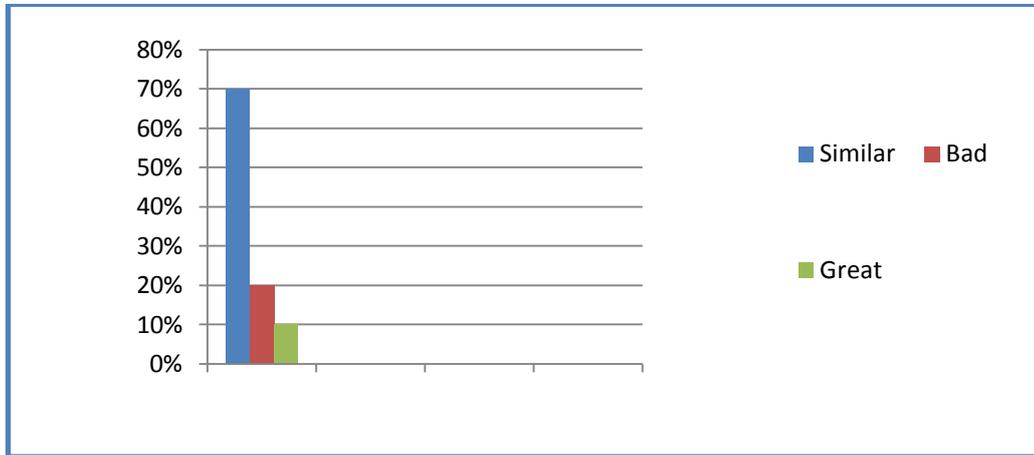


Figure 5. Chinese restaurant operation in customers' point of view

The survey shows that 95% of respondents stated that they are eager to have the genuine Chinese food in Chinese restaurants in Finland. So they can fall into the culture as much as they can while enjoying the meal. They also would like to experience the authentic modern Chinese culture. 5% of them argued that a genuine Chinese food would be probably too strong for Finnish and other nationalities in Finland. It may be difficult for them to accept it.

In the end, the survey of the recent Chinese restaurant level in the customers' mind: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 (1 very bad, 2 bad, 3 good, 4 very good, 5 excellent). Figure 7 shows the results.

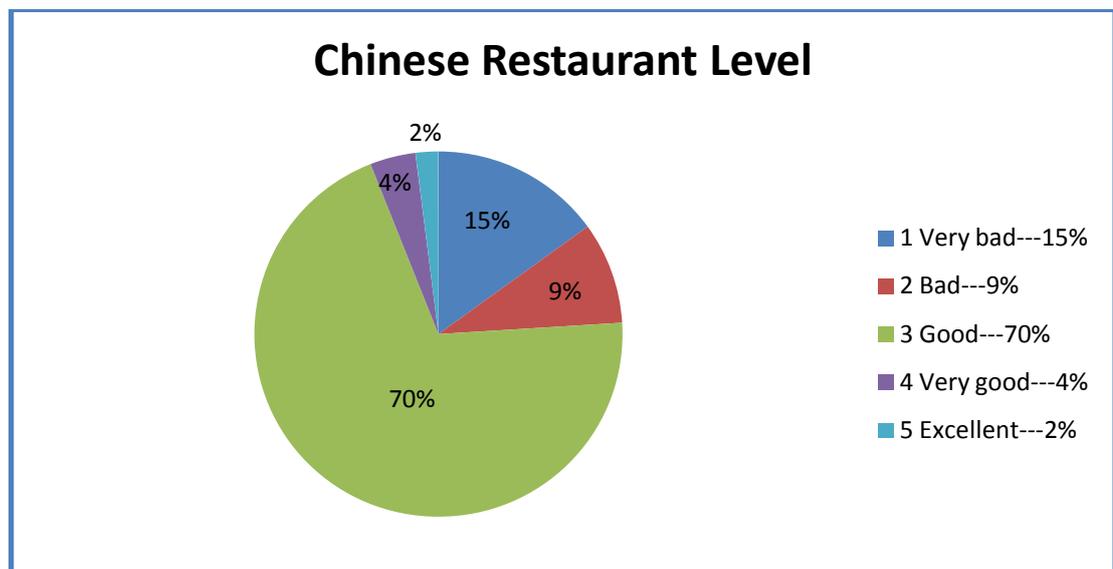


Figure 6. The recent Chinese restaurant level in customers' mind

## 5 Concluding the interview and survey results

In order to get a better understanding of the three restaurant entrepreneurs' interviews, as well as 70 Haaga-Helia UAS students' surveys results, a summary of the interview and survey results are given as follows.

From the literatures review, it was learnt that Service design is the activity of managing people, infrastructure, communication and material components of a service for the provider to provide the good quality to the customers. The purpose of the service design is to meet the customers' needs, to improve the service quality and interaction between customers and providers. The Chinese restaurant entrepreneurs are the service providers, who need to know design the service of the restaurants. Not only the interior design, but also the hospitality service, they are including the food product and service, restaurant environment, and communication and behaviour.

The customers to the restaurant will not only consider the food quality but also evaluate the employees' service quality and the atmospherics of restaurant. Therefore, even a family owned small restaurant needs the service design to improve the restaurant service quality as well as the food safety and quality. SERVQUAL is the best tool to solve and improve the service quality in the hospitality field. It can highlight strengths and weaknesses of the restaurants, thus, it can help the organizations to provide better service.

In order to provide the Chinese food to the Finnish customers in Finland, the Chinese entrepreneurs need to understand the Finnish food culture, eating habits of Finns, and the Finnish local restaurants model. It is necessary to find out the culture different between China and Finland. Such as the eating habits of Finns need to be taken into account when doing service designs, such as classic music and warm lights, seasonal ingredients and nature tastes. But, the differences of food culture between Finns and Chinese should not be worried too much, the world is open nowadays; people are becoming easy to accept other countries' culture. And it is also one of the purposes of the oversea Chinese restaurants to bridge the culture gaps by supplying the different diet to the local hospitality market. Therefore, genuine Chinese food should be presented to the Finnish customers without any fears.

After analysis the interview results, the most interesting fact is that all the three respondents are eager to have the authentic Chinese restaurants with good service in Finland, and they hope to promote the real Chinese food culture.

The samples that I interviewed and surveyed are small and limited, but I believe that in America and other European countries those research results should also be widely applicable. It is a good thing to have so many Chinese restaurants in Finland; most of the current Chinese restaurants are family owned. They are successful in doing the business and having their own customers in the Finnish catering market, because of their hard work, confidence, and cooking, management and social skills. In order to improve the service design for the Chinese restaurants in Finland, there are still many factors are needed to develop. Otherwise, from the interviews, it showed that there are several reasons limiting the Chinese entrepreneurs' mind, so that they can only open the Chinese restaurants in current similar operation. First of all, the lack of raw material in Finland market is the most important fact. Because Chinese cuisine is a complex process; it needs a lot of materials to make the special taste. In addition, the other reason is the high tax and expensive labour cost in Finland. Most of the Chinese restaurants are family-owned; it is hard for them to undertake the high cost. Furthermore, the main target marketing for the Chinese restaurants is still Finnish people, and the earlier Chinese restaurants operation model still influences the Finnish customers mind. In order to reduce the risk and attract the Finnish customers, they have to combine Chinese and Finnish food culture and make the food taste adept to Finnish customers, because most of the Finns have conservative ideas; it is hard for them to accept the new things, Finns feel safe to keep the same way that they are familiar with. Because of these reasons, the restaurants have to be operated in the similar way in Finland.

However, the entrepreneurs have strategies to improve the restaurants service quality in future: working hard in a family core, offering lower price to the customers, and being flexible to the customers' special requirement. They have the belief that they can promote the genuine Chinese food and culture in Finnish market. They are feeling confidence about the future developing of Chinese restaurants in Finland.

On the other hand, more interesting is that about 95% customer respondents hope that they can have the authentic Chinese restaurants with good interior and hospitality service in Finland. For the Finnish, Russian, and German students, they real want to experiences the genuine Chinese food and culture in Finland, and understand more facts about china. Some of foreign respondents have been to china before, they knew the genuine taste of Chinese food, so that they real eager to have the same taste in Finland. On the other hand, for Chinese students, they are away from own country; they are real hope to have the same taste food in Finland. It is helpful to reduce their homesick.

Surprisingly, there is still 5% respondents are satisfied with the current Chinese restaurants in Finland. They like the Fin-Chi taste food that the current restaurants offer. They don't want to try the new things, they said the genuine food is too strong and hard for them to taste. For the service part, they also hope that some small Chinese restaurants can improve the service quality for customers.

The Figure 5 illustrates the research results of the service design of Chinese restaurants in Finland in a clearly way; the reasons of the current Chinese restaurants operation from the entrepreneurs' point of view and the customers' opinions of the current Chinese restaurants in Finland. At the end, both of them have the same expectation of the future Chinese restaurants in Finland; the genuine Chinese food is expected by them.

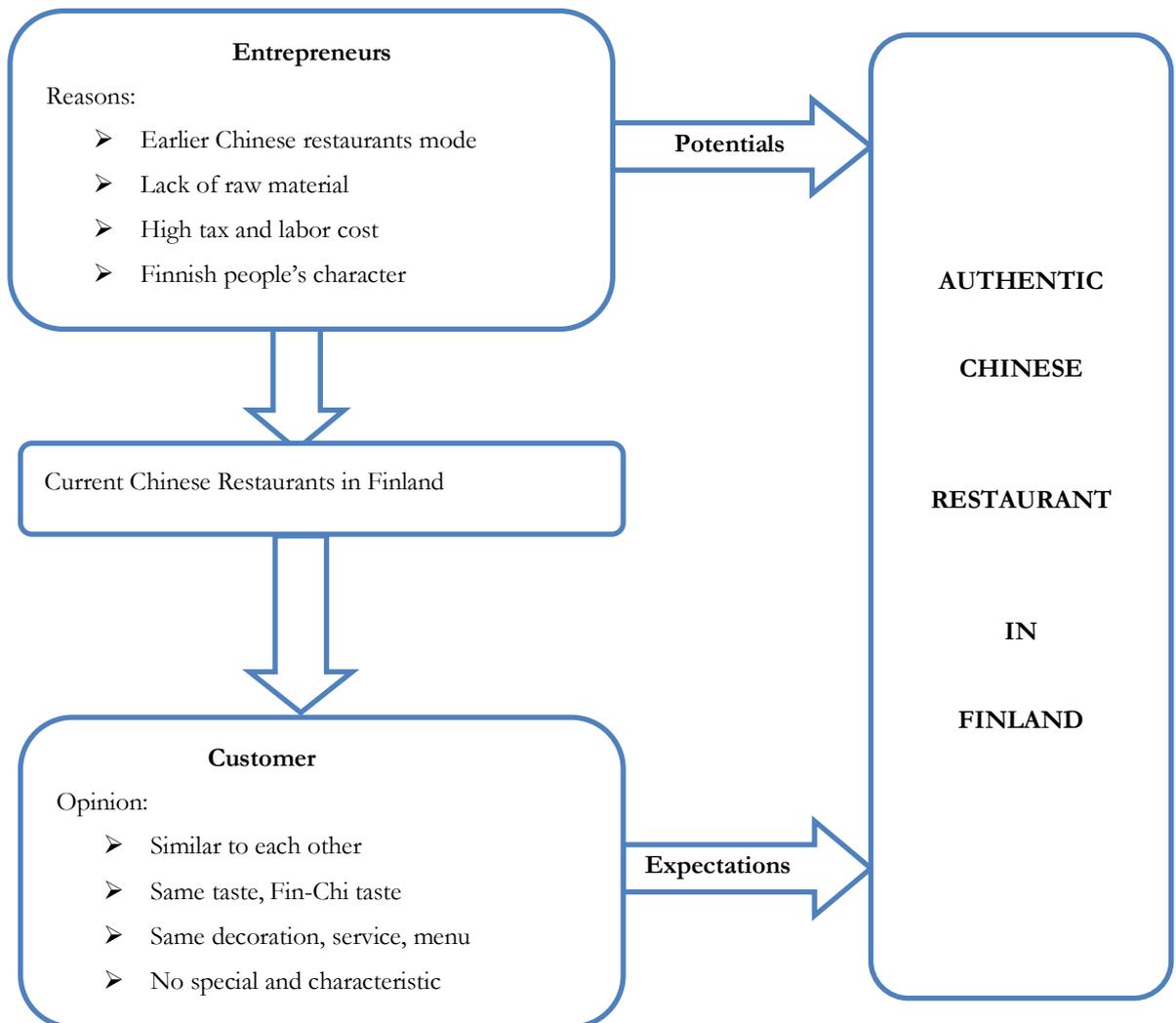


Figure 7. Summary of the research results.

## **6 Conclusions and recommendations**

The following chapter concludes this thesis in a few aspects. Conclusions from the literature study and empirical research are drawn with personal recommendations. It forms the main constructive achievements of the thesis. And then, my personal learning outcomes are clarified. It explains how I have chosen my thesis topic and what I have learned by writing this thesis. In the end, further researching suggestions based on or extended from this thesis topic are given.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

Chinese restaurant has long been a main business for overseas Chinese, especially for the first generation of Chinese immigrants in Finland. The Chinese restaurant history in Finland has been almost 40 years old since the first Chinese restaurant opened in Helsinki in 1973. Many of those Chinese restaurants started from a family owned size and finally developed into a symbol site of their located cities for experiencing Asian food and culture. They are successful in gaining both market and customers in Finland. However, there are some limitations for the existing Chinese restaurants in food and services, especially the lack of service designs. Those limitations prevent the business from being more flourishing. Therefore, it is important to solve the problems with suitable service designs and improve the Chinese restaurant service for the customers in the current Finnish hospitality market.

It was learned that the purpose of the service design is to meet the customers' needs, to improve the service quality and interaction between customers and providers. As a service provider, the Chinese restaurant owners also need to learn how to manage the resources, including people and restaurant environment, communication and materials, and how to provide the good quality to the customers. The customers to the restaurant will not only consider the food quality but also evaluate the employees' service quality and the atmospherics of restaurant. Therefore, even a family owned restaurant needs some interior design and service training to improve the service quality in addition to the food quality. To provide Chinese food to the Finnish customers, eating habits of the Finns need to be taken into account when doing service designs, such as classic music and warm lights, seasonal ingredients and nature tastes. However, the differences in food culture between Finns and Chinese should not be worried too much. It is one of the purposes of the overseas Chinese restaurants to bridge the culture gaps by supplying the different diet to the local hospitality

market. Therefore, aside from anything that can be denied as a culture shock, genuine Chinese food based on the rich and diversiform Chinese food culture should be presented to the Finnish customers without any fears.

According to the research methodology studies, interviews and surveys were applied to the Chinese restaurant entrepreneurs and the Haaga-Helia UAS students in Finland. The Chinese restaurant entrepreneurs stated some limitations in the current restaurant management: short of supply for the raw materials, high labor cost, and the cultural differences in Finland. Some of them have the strategies to improve the service, such as, lower the price and be more flexible to the customers' requests. But most of the small sized or family owned Chinese restaurants are still concerning more about their survival, heavily localized Fin-Chi food and low quality services are consequently inevitable. In other words, the desire of supplying genuine Chinese food with high quality services to the customers was overwhelmed by the reality of practicing in a simple profitable way without any market research and theoretical studies. More investment and administrative guidance are needed to fulfill their wish of presenting the authentic Chinese food culture in Finland.

Moreover, from the surveys of the Haaga-Helia UAS students, opinions about the current Chinese restaurants' service model and operation in Finland were collected. Most of respondents are interesting in Chinese food and its culture, but the current Chinese restaurants in their mind are running in the same model and being cheaply positioned in Finland. As customers, they are eager to enjoy the genuine Chinese food and to learn something about the Chinese food culture. They also hope that each restaurant has its own characteristic so that they can experience different aspects from the Chinese food culture just like in China.

Based on both theoretical studies and practical research results, I have drawn a conclusion of the future Chinese restaurants' service design in Finland. The right service model and operation should be the authentic Chinese restaurant in Finland, with genuine Chinese food and characterized interior design and service quality to present the rich and colorful Chinese food culture to the customers.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

For the recommendations, to the existing Chinese restaurants and the people who are interested in starting Chinese restaurants in Finland: First of all, it is important to spend much

more time to research the market, to understand the customers' real needs. Secondly, the entrepreneurs need to keep their own characteristic and show their strengths to the customers, not just follow the simple business model blindly. Finally, don't be afraid of culture conflict. The world is becoming smaller and smaller nowadays, people from all over the world are opening their minds and willing to try other countries' culture. The good way is to take the advantage of Chinese food culture and see it as an important invisible asset and to show the genuine Chinese food and be ready get your own loyal customers.

Moreover, food should be categorized based on their culture background and special ingredients should be clarified in the menu. The restaurant atmosphere should be designed according to the main stream customer positioning, e.g. the classic music and warm lights are needed if the main stream customer of the restaurant is positioned to be mostly Finns. Of course some of the Chinese elements should be kept in both decorating and table setting considerations. Employees need to be trained to deal with customers having different food cultures. Multi service languages are preferred, especially the service in Finnish.

## **7 Achievements and further research**

### **7.1 Achievements**

Starting with the first step of the research topic, I have some difficulties of set up a particular topic. As I personally have been a restaurant entrepreneur in Finland; moreover, my course of studies is focus on the hospitality industry. The topic seemed wide ranging and difficulties, however, my personal interesting in the food and beverage department. With the support and help of my supervisor, I narrowed down the topic to service design for Chinese restaurants management in Finland. Due to her support, I now understand that the exact topic is easy to help me get the certain focus.

With the decided topic, I was able to identify the research questions for my topic, and justify my data collection methods. After that, I started data collection and identified research methods in order to get the idea to use them and combine them to gather the useful data. Then I laid out the clear framework of my thesis research. During the data collection period between April to August I knew how time consuming of this research part. I interviewed different parties of interest groups after literature reviews were analyzed. The interviewees helped me to get important and good quality information. Furthermore, my supervisor helped me to stay focused, concentrate on the particular research questions.

After the data collection, the summary of the result showed the facts and ideas, and the further research suggestions. During this stage, I learnt how to organize my thought in perfect order and carefully. Overall, going thought the research process of my thesis, it provide very useful important for personal interest and deeper impression of Finnish food culture, also better understanding of the hospitality industry. The most important is that it is a good resource for my future restaurant business in Finland.

### **7.2 Further research suggestions**

Chinese restaurant covers many areas, such as marketing strategy, cost control, service quality, customer satisfaction, menu design, green restaurant, Chinese food culture, etc... The following topics define future research suggestions. It might be helpful to encourage the readers of this thesis or future researchers studying at the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences to do further studies in the following topics:

- Perceptions of Chinese restaurants in Finland
- Marketing strategies for Chinese restaurants: a customer view
- Customer satisfaction
- Factors influence customer dining experience in Chinese restaurants
- Factors influence successful operating a Chinese restaurant in Finland

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Interview questions for the restaurant entrepreneurs



### Interview questions for Chinese restaurant entrepreneurs

Case restaurant      A                              B                              C

Name:

Location:

1. How many years have you been in Finland, why you want to stay in Finland?
2. How many years is your restaurant now and what is the reason that you want to open a Chinese restaurant in Finland?
3. What kind of type is your restaurant, Family or cooperates?
4. What do you think about the Finnish food culture and Chinese food cultures influence your business?
5. What are the main successful factors of your restaurant?
6. What do you think about the Finnish customers and Chinese customers?
7. What do you think about the current similar Chinese restaurant operation model?
8. What are the missing points of your restaurant business in Finland?
9. What are the advantage and disadvantage to have the business in Finland?
10. How do you think about the Chinese restaurant future in Finland?

**Thank you for your support!**

## Appendix 2: Interview questions for the restaurant entrepreneurs (Chinese)



### 中 餐 馆 企 业 家 的 访 谈 问 题

餐馆:           A                                   B                                   C

名字:

地点:

1. 请问您在芬兰呆几年了,是什么原因让你想在芬兰呆下呢?
2. 请问您的餐馆开业几年了,为什么会想到在芬兰开餐馆呢?
3. 请问您的餐馆是属于什么性质的,家庭企业还是合资企业?
4. 对于芬兰文化跟中国文化的不同, 您觉得对你的生意有什么影响的地方?
5. 您觉得你餐馆成功的因素是什么?
6. 您对芬兰的顾客和中国顾客有什么样的看法
7. 您对现芬兰餐馆的相同经营模式有什么看法?
8. 您觉得你的餐馆有什么不足点?
9. 您觉得在芬兰创业的优点和缺点是什么?
10. 对了在芬兰的未来中餐馆您有什么看法呢?

感谢您的支持!

### Appendix 3: Survey questions for Haaga-Helia UAS students

#### Survey questions for “Chinese Restaurant” concerning the topic of Bachelor Thesis of Yan Yang:

Survey location: Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

Target: Finnish students and International students

A: Finnish students

B: International students \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you like Chinese food? a) YES b) MEDIATE c) NO
2. How often do you go to Chinese restaurant? a) 3-4days/week  
b) 1-3days/week  
c) 4-6times/month  
d) 2-3times/month  
e) Never
3. How do you like the food in the Chinese restaurant in Finland?  
a) Taste good b) Just like the same taste in all restaurants c) Don't like the taste
4. Why do you like Chinese food? What about Chinese food culture?
5. How do you think the Chinese restaurants in Finland? Fin-Chi style food? Decoration? Service?
6. Are you eager to have authentic Chinese restaurant in Finland? Genuine Chinese food? Not just Fin-Chi style? a) YES b) NO
7. The recent Chinese restaurant level in your mind: 1 2 3 4 5  
(1 very bad, 2 bad, 3 good, 4 very good, 5 excellent)



Thank you for your time and your support!

