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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STAFF TRAINING IN PROVIDING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN VIETNAMESE FINE DINING RESTAURANTS

Thesis

Abstract

Author(s)	Type of publication	Published
Minh, Dao	Bachelor's thesis	Autumn 2021
	Number of pages	
	41	

Title of publication

The significance of staff training in providing customer satisfaction in Vietnamese fine dining restaurants.

Name of Degree

Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management

Abstract

The primary goal of this study was to investigate the significance of staff training in Vietnamese fine dining restaurants aiming to provide customer satisfaction. Particularly, the author took account into the essences of client satisfaction and the mechanism for fine dining restaurants to achieve it through employee training practices.

Qualitative research method was employed as the main research method of this thesis. For building a comprehensive literature base, a critical literature review was performed with proper reference to the related research papers to provide the most useful and authentic information. As for the implementation section, the author employed the semi-structured interview method to collect more information from four interviewees which were undertaken in different fine dining restaurants across Vietnam.

The study's results confirmed the essential needs of staff training. Accordingly, fine dining restaurants not only provide a professional work atmosphere but also offer superior customer services – the solid premise for establishing customer trust. Following that, it is possible to ensure that customers are completely satisfied with the services of fine dining restaurants.

Keywords

Staff training, fine dining restaurants, customer satisfaction.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Food and beverage: F&B

Front-of-house: FOH

Back-of-house: BOH

Vietnamese currency: VND

European currency: EUR

Customer Satisfaction Index: CSI

Net Promoter Score: NPS

Customer Satisfaction Score: CSAT

Customer Effort Score: CES

On-th-job Training: OTJ

1 INTRODUCTION

The hospitality business, particularly the luxury hospitality industry, is continuously chang-
ing to provide a genuinely exquisite experience to clients who deserve to be treated in a
high-class manner for the money they have spent. The term "*Luxury*" is often associated
with extra particular attention and care, as well as the provision of high-quality products
composed of rare materials. The term is also referred to as the sense of being treated as
royalty and knowing that they are properly cared for (The Cruise Web 2013).

Fine dining is the highest level in the restaurant business, offering clients with the finest
culinary services and top-notch service methods. Staffing is the most essential characteris-
tic in any luxury business, and it is also the most difficult combination to accomplish in all
the required and adequate circumstances to provide a classy service (Boussard 2021, 43.)
Fine dining restaurants must concentrate their efforts on training and development to en-
hance human resources in order to obtain a competitive edge in the luxury hospitality sector.
Diners will be pleased with the value they have paid as a result of efficient training and
development of human resources, and they will tend to become regular consumers of the
restaurant, from which word-of-mouth marketing will begin to operate, and the company will
create a loop. These beneficial actions boost the restaurant's revenue and return on invest-
ment. Harbison (1973) also said that an organization's wealth may be measured by its level
of development, efficient use of energy, manpower, and business information (according to
Tesone 2008, 351).

By far, fine dining has grown popular in Vietnam, being available in a variety of settings and
styles rather than being limited to five-star hotels as it formerly was. Fine dining restaurants
have been built and expanded in response to increasing consumer demand, rapid urbani-
sation, better living standards, and a growth in population of the middle and upper classes.
To compete with other restaurants, however, each restaurant must develop a strong brand
image, and guarantee that all its culinary edges are well integrated in the offerings to cus-
tomers.

1.1 Research question and the aims of the thesis

In line with the guideline of Tracy (2019, 19) regarding construction of research questions it
is proposed that the main research question which best represent the aim of this study is
as follow:

- Why does staff training play an important role in fine dining satisfaction?

This research question is consistent with the thesis topic of *"The significance of staff training in providing customer satisfaction in Vietnamese fine dining restaurants"*, through which it is imperative to define the importance of the staff training in fine dining restaurants in the process of maximizing customer satisfaction. With the aim of establishing a solid knowledge base, it is necessary to review and synthesize the concepts in academic papers, particularly those pertaining to the organization and services of a fine dining restaurant. Besides, insight into the level of customer satisfaction enables companies and restaurants to develop a relevant strategy for increasing or maintaining it via adjustments to the variables that directly impact the customer experience.

1.2   Delimitations

The primary focus of this thesis is only on fine dining establishments in the Food & Beverage sector, with a particular emphasis on Vietnam. Besides, for a narrowed search scope, the focal point is set on the significance of educating front-of-house employees, who are responsible for all client interactions. Thirdly, rather than describing a particular employee training plan or approach, this thesis concentrates on addressing the central issue, "*Why does staff training matter for fine dining satisfaction?*" by detailing the advantages and drawbacks as well as reasoning why it matters.

Additionally, qualitative research techniques are included as a restricted component of this thesis. Along with doing secondary research for the theoretical section, the author will conduct semi-structured interviews to demonstrate the experimental findings. Due to geographical constraints and social ties, conducting in-depth interviews is technically time consuming; hence the sample size was restricted to less than ten participants for assurance of study feasibility. Last but not least, while the findings and research theme are closely bound to Vietnam's food and beverage sector, it is possible that certain findings might not be applicable for other nations.

1.3   Research methods

To conduct the study and respond to the research questions, the qualitative research technique was employed as the primary approach. Flick (2009) described qualitative research as a technique that is natural and interpretative, with the goal of discovering things from the inside out (according to Ritchie et al. 2013, 27). Thus, qualitative research entails researchers to be creative and adaptable, since it is impossible to exclusively depend on the raw data collected from the survey to create reports or draw conclusions. On the upside, qualitative research is more favourable in developing a more nuanced knowledge of cultural

values and consumer behaviour, which aligns qualitative research with the aim of this thesis (Nunan et al 2020).

Among the various qualitative research methods used, the author performed semi-structured interviews as part of the data gathering for the thesis. The author will conduct an interview with four to ten interviewees who are all restaurateurs and managers of Vietnam's fine dining establishments. Participants will answer a series of open-ended interview questions based on their experience, observations, and natural abilities to improve. The interview process will be conducted online by Team Microsoft, Zoom, Viber, Skype, Google group. Data will be recorded during the interviews by taking notes, and recording.

1.4   Structure of the thesis

The whole thesis encompasses eight chapters in total. The first chapter serves as an introduction to this thesis, outlining the history of fine dining restaurants in the particular context of Vietnam, the thesis's research objective, research methodology, research questions, and thesis structure. Prior to discussing the primary idea, the author will examine and study related hypotheses in the next two chapters. Chapter 2 will involve basic concepts of fine dining restaurants, ranging from definition, organizational structure to menu categories. The next chapter discusses the many ideas about what factors influence customer satisfaction in fine dining establishments and how to quantify it. Chapter 4 is the thesis's primary theoretical section wherein the importance of staff training will be examined in light of empirical findings from the past research papers. The specific topic to be included are the advantages of a well-planned staff training program and the shortcomings of a fine dining restaurant deficient in staff training.

After concluding the literature gap in the theoretical section, Chapter 5 introduces the methodology section of the thesis. Throughout the development of research methods, various research techniques and data collection strategies relevant to this thesis will be discussed in detail. Following that, Chapter 6 is dedicated to present the research results collected via methods proposed in the Chapter 5. Based on that premise, Chapter 7 will critically discuss the implications for roles of staff training in fine dining establishments. Chapter 8 ends with the conclusion of the significance of staff training in the luxury restaurant sector in particular and for food and beverage in Vietnam in general.

2   FINE DINING RESTAURANT

Fine dining originates from France – one of the culinary capitals of the world. Before the 1700s, wealthy tycoons and aristocrats often had their own chefs to prepare their meals, up to dozens of waiters. At that time, when referring to fine dining, people would immediately think of a luxurious dinner with white tablecloths, candlelight, melodious music, and friendly waiters (Sitwell 2020, 176-177.) For the time being, fine dining is more diverse in the terms of cooking and the restaurant's style, but the basic standards of a typical fine dining restaurant still require attention to every detail: the quality of ingredients; food and wine diversity; a classy atmosphere; the most excellent staff in the field of industry.

Fine dining has gradually infiltrated various culinary traditions around the globe, including Vietnam. Much of the food that Vietnamese people consume today is inspired by French colonisation in southern Vietnam, with many eating customs derived from this renowned culinary culture. Soon after invading Vietnam in 1887, the French brought their culture and strategies to turn Vietnam into a French colony, with fine dining restaurants being also one of those cultural features (Headley n.d).

2.1   Organisation in a fine dining restaurant

Any company, particularly those in the hospitality sector, should have a defined personnel structure in order to maintain consistency and maximise business efficiency. Restaurant is a commercial sector comprising many components that work in tandem, separated into two distinct divisions: front-of-house (FOH) and back-of-house (BOH). Each department will take on a unique task, position, and will provide assistance to the others. By examining fine dining restaurants under the lens of organizational structure, it is possible to acquire thorough understanding of each job and its associated responsibilities inside each department of a fine dining restaurant, as well as the organisational chart for both departments (Boussard 2021, 126.)

Each restaurant will have a unique organisational structure based on its size and scope. Figure 1 illustrates the organisational structure of a fine dining restaurant using the French brigade model:
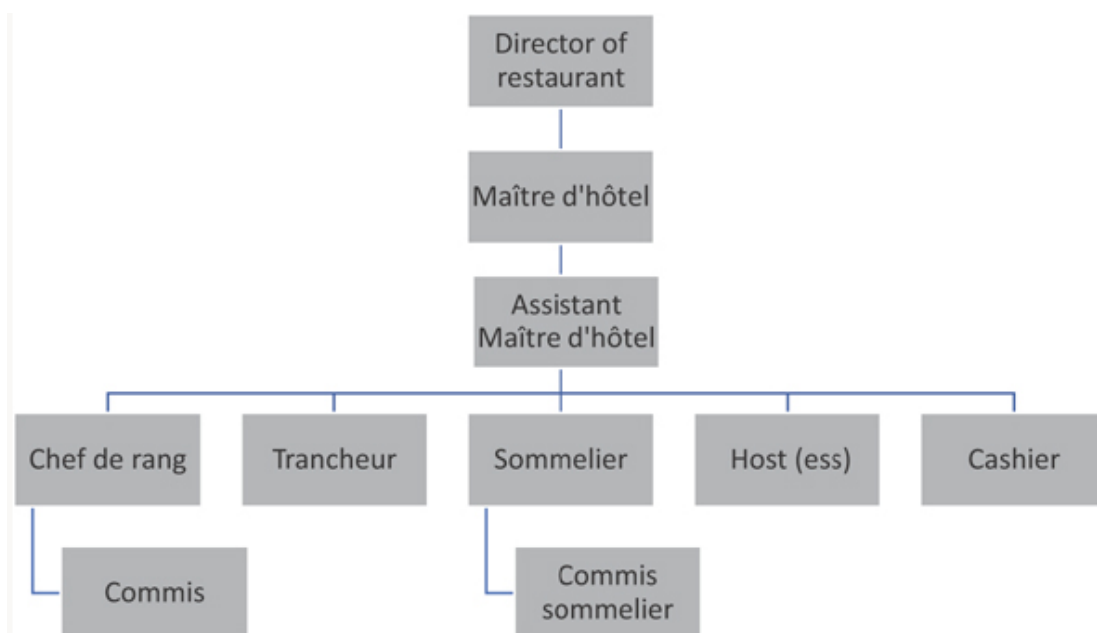
Figure 1. Classical fine dining restaurant organizational chart (Boussard 2021, 129)

2.1.1 Front-of-house

The front-of-house (FOH) is where all contact between restaurant employees and customers takes place. It is the public common area of the restaurant, excluding the kitchen. Apart from that, the primary aim of front-of-house personnel is to ensure that guests have positive experiences which drive them to return to the restaurant.

A fine dining restaurant's front-of-house staff does not have a set number of workers. Director of the restaurant, Maitre d'hôtel, Supervisor, Headwaiter/Headwaitress, Waiter/Waitress, Commis, Runner, Sommelier, Bartender, Lounge staff, and others are among the fundamental roles in the FOH (Boussard 2021, 126.)

2.1.2 Back-of-house

In contrast to the front-of-house area, the back-of-house (BOH) area encompasses all areas behind the restaurant that are not visible to the client. BOH may be referred to as the kitchen section of a restaurant - where food is prepared, cooked, and served prior to reaching the customer's table, and therefore makes the most significant contribution to the success of a fine dining establishment. The majority of the BOH crew is highly qualified, experienced, and capable of organising work in such a way that it runs smoothly, guaranteeing a delectable dinner that attracts guests. Boussard (2021, 127) divided BOH into two major departments: cooking and stewarding. While the culinary department is responsible for preparing

delectable meals for customers, the steward is responsible for maintaining the safety and cleanliness of food and restaurant equipment.

The fundamental roles found in a fine dining restaurant's logistical department are Executive chef (Chef de cuisine), Head chef, Sous chef, Chef de partie, and Commis de cuisine.

2.2 Menu types

As stated by Benjamin (2015), menu flexibility not only provides excitement for frequent clients but also for everyone in the kitchen. Indeed, this is even more true in a fine dining restaurant – where the chefs work hard to create, organize, and design a menu with the desire to bring a "wow" experience to customers, while also making an important contribution to the reputation and success of that restaurant. There are numerous kinds of menus used in restaurants, according to Boussard (2021, 79) and Davis et al. (2018, 121), there are only two most common menu types in fine dining restaurants: à la carte and table d'hôte.

2.2.1 À la carte

À la carte menu is a list of dishes with pricing; the meal price is determined by the number of dishes selected by the client. This is the type of menu that offers a wide variety of choices for customers, from appetizers, main courses to desserts, from which diners choose dishes according to their personal preferences. Since the chef only prepares to order, the prices on the a la carte menu are typically higher than the prices on the other menus (Davis et al. 2018, 121.)

Chefs at fine dining restaurants often offer and alter special meals of the day based on local specialities or seasonal foods throughout the year. Not only does this provide opportunities for diners to experience a variety of great foods, but it is also a way for chefs to test their new dishes with the expectation of positive feedback (Boussard 2021, 78-79.)

As reported by the websites of different Vietnamese fine dining restaurants, the majority of them provide à la carte menus for their clients. This may be explained by Vietnamese people's long-standing eating traditions, which include organising meals in groups of friends or family and sharing food, thus this kind of menu is ideal for this market niche.

Image 1. À la carte menu (Square One Saigon 2021).

2.2.2 Table d'hôte

Table d'hôte, often known as set menu, is a type of restaurant that serves food from a menu at a fixed fee. The number of dishes is limited and will be ready to serve within a certain time. The price of a set menu will be lower than the price of the total dishes in it combined if ordered separately in the form of an à la carte. This menu concept has seen several modifications, including tasting menus, pre/post-theatre, buffets, banquets, cycle menus, and so on (Davis et al. 2018, 123-125.)

In Vietnam, this form of service remains uncommon, though available in a number of restaurants such as: T.U.N.G dining; The Monkey Gallery Dessert Bar & Dining… This menu type serves a large number of dishes in small portions, starting with an appetizer and ending with a dessert. The reason some chefs apply this menu for their fine dining restaurant is that they want to put their enthusiasm, love, and professionalism into each small dish with the hope that customers will experience the entire dish on a single plate, as opposed to sharing dishes at an à la carte menu (Nga 2019).

Figure 3 shows a three-part tasting menu offered by TUNG Dining. There are five dishes in part 1, with each having two major components specified on the menu, but diners will not

be able to figure out the tastes of each dish until they try it. The culinary style is further reinforced by the following nine meals in Part II and four desserts in Part III, which pique diners' interest with the chefs' creations. The fixed price for this entire menu is 1,490,000 VND, equivalent to 55.2 EUR.

Image 2. Tasting menu (T.U.N.G Dining 2019).

2.3   Standards of a fine dining restaurant

The key to waking and gratifying all five senses at the same time is the success of a fine dining restaurant in providing diners: delicious meals made by magnificent chefs; competent and skilled service style; a harmonious environment of music, light, and decorating by the

means of sound, sight, smell, taste, and touch. These expectations may be summed up in three words: menu, customer service, and ambiance (Boussard 2021, 78).

Skilled chefs prepare the cuisine for the fine dining establishment. In this way, the menu's dishes, which are at the pinnacle of cuisine, are all about the chef's passion and attention to detail, giving the impression of exclusivity and uniqueness (Fine dining lovers n.d.). Similarly, ingredients must be fresh and sourced from reputable sources.

Fine dining establishments have some of the toughest service requirements in the restaurant industry. Waiters at a high-end restaurant must be experienced, knowledgeable, skilful, and inventive since they represent the face of restaurants, delivering the finest cuisine, beverages, and service to each customer on behalf of the restaurant's owner and chefs. They are also demanded to stay sensitive and responsive, allowing customers to be satisfied throughout their time at the restaurant (Boussard 2021, 133-134.)

Customers' emotions and eyesight are stimulated by the fine dining restaurant's rich design style, pleasant colours, and melodious sounds. The restaurant's coordination, use of light, interior decorating, and music are all important, with each featuring a subtlety that will create a distinct environment and give the restaurant its own personality. They also play a crucial role in generating aesthetic and emotional impacts for customers when entering the restaurant, as well as an impression and a unique highlight for the establishment (Boussard 2021, 47-54.)

In addition to the three requirements listed above, wine and beverage selection are also attributed to the reputation and success of a fine dining restaurant (Boussard 2021, 79). Wine and other alcoholic beverages serve as the vital catalysts that help meals become more flavourful and richer.

Fine Dining Vietnam restaurants are well aware of these expectations and strive to provide their patrons with the most unique dining experiences possible. For example, El Gaucho Steakhouse, one of Vietnam's most renowned high-end steakhouses, has verified that it only serves the finest beef from Victoria (Canada), New South Wales (Australia), and the United States to its patrons. Despite chaining menus according to the four seasons of the year, the chefs of T.U.N.G Dining ensure that traditional vegetables and ingredients can always be at their best state of freshness.

3   CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction is a marketing and corporate governance phrase that refers to the extent to which a product or service satisfies customer expectations. Technically, customer satisfaction is gauged upon the level that customer is delighted after using the products and services of the enterprise (Grigoroudis & Siskos 2009, 1). Customer satisfaction represents only the feelings of customers with the transactions they have made, but the overall experience with the business. Customers who are happy with the restaurant's service are more inclined to return, generating trustworthy information flows and referring the restaurant to colleagues and friends, allowing the restaurant to grow and consolidate its market position (Jauhari 2007, 10).

3.1   Theoretical basis and overview of previous studies

A happy client is a primary objective of service providers. Consumer satisfaction, according to Yang & Peterson (2004, 804), is a term that encompasses all degrees of customer satisfaction with a service company after customer contact and engagement. As reported by Yüksel & Yuksel (2002), satisfaction may be classified into two categories: customer satisfaction with the product (after consumption) and customer happiness with the service delivery process (during the customer's product experience). Knowing the level of customer satisfaction in fine dining restaurants enables businesses and restaurants to develop a specific plan for enhancing or maintaining it by adjusting the factors that directly affect the customer experience, such as the menu, the quality of the food, or the customer service.

Customer satisfaction is the sum of three factors: service quality, product quality, and pricing (Parasuraman 1994), and it is a psychological condition that results in pre-purchase expectations for goods and services (Oliver 1997, according to Grigoroudis & Siskos 2009, 4).

Customers pleased with service at a restaurant include all of the customer's interactions with the establishment, including physical goods, staff behaviour, ambiance, environment, and affection, as stated by Pizam & Ellis (1999, 333). As a result, the notion of customer experience has been expanded. According to Zeithaml (1988, 13), customer satisfaction may be quantified via the consumer's own experience feedback. It is the customer's assessment of a product's economic and/or emotional worth as a consequence of the experience of being satisfied or dissatisfied with the product. In consonance with the studies mentioned above, the way business managers communicate and treat employees, or the way employees communicate, behave, and cooperate with one another, as well as the way business cares for the environment and contributes to the community, will ultimately affect consumer sentiment.

3.2   Factors affecting customer satisfaction in fine dining restaurant

3.2.1   Service quality, product quality and price

Customer satisfaction, as defined by Zeithaml et al. (2021, 80), is the client's evaluation of a product or service that satisfies their wants and needs. This concretized idea of "customer satisfaction" as an evaluation of a product or service.

According to the research of Zeithaml et al. (2021, 81) on the connection between service quality and consumer satisfaction, which encompasses service quality, product quality, and price; all of which will be discussed thoroughly in this section. In addition, it was also shown that satisfaction is also affected by situational factors and individual factors. Refer to Figure 2 for illustration of this connection.
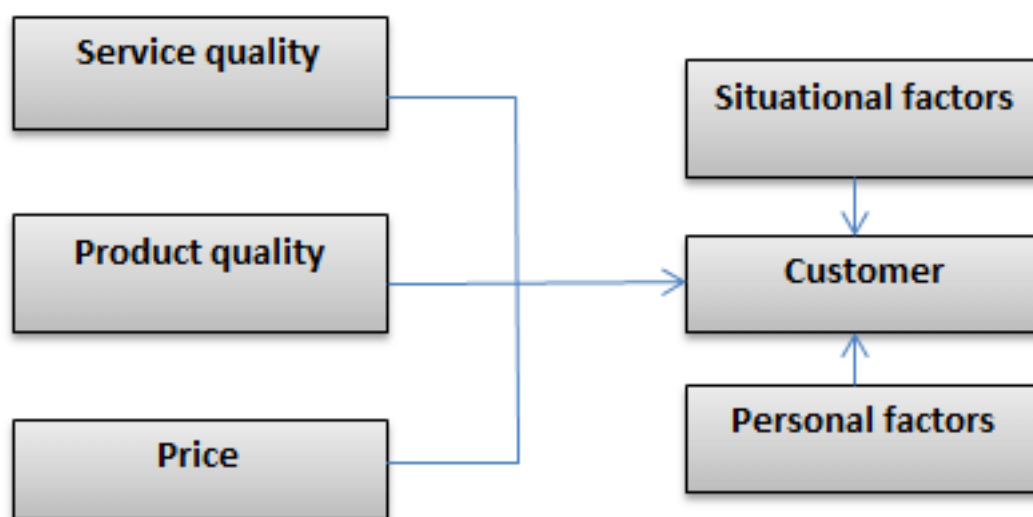
Figure 2. Model of customer satisfaction (Zeithaml et al. 2021, 79).

Product quality

A restaurant is a place that specializes in providing food products and a number of other services to serve the needs of many different customers (Wikipedia 2014). In a luxury restaurant, the main products are the chef's specialties and the beverages made according to the restaurant's own recipe, which incorporates the taste of fresh ingredients and has its own charm.

Food quality is determined by a number of variables, including guaranteeing health, flavour, freshness, diversity, suitable heat and cold, and the design and presentation of meals in restaurants. As can be seen, the quality of food provided at a restaurant plays a significant role in establishing a favourable impression with consumers (Namkung & Jang 2007, 393-

394.) As a result, customer satisfaction is only established as long as the provided product can fulfil or even surpass the expectation of clients.

Service quality

One of the most significant elements influencing service providers' success is service quality (Shahin & Dabestani, 2010). Many researchers have shown that service quality can lead to customer loyalty, attracting new consumers, increasing customer happiness, encouraging customers to return, positive word of mouth, improving corporate image, reducing costs, and increasing business efficiency (Boulding et al. 1993).

The consumer's evaluation of the perfection and superiority of each service package supplied is referred to as service quality (Zeithaml et al. 2021, 87). According to the study by Abbasi et al. (2010, 99), the experiences of visitors shape the impression of the degree of service quality in the hotel business during their stay at. In other words, customers develop perceptions about the quality of hotel services upon the service they receive and the experiences they have. As for the restaurant industry, diners can also judge the service quality of a restaurant after using the food service at that restaurant. Measuring customer service quality perception and satisfaction is considered as an effective strategy to increase profits for the hospitality industry (Claver et al. 2006, 350-354).

In summary, the quality of service has a major influence on consumer satisfaction; in other words, when a carrier provides consumers with high-quality items that satisfy their requirements, the client is first happy. As a result, customer satisfaction and service quality are intimately intertwined, with service quality being the most important element affecting consumer satisfaction. The causal connection between these two variables is a critical point of contention in the majority of customer satisfaction research.

Price

Among the service quality components, the perceived pricing component has a major influence on the perceived quality and satisfaction of the service (Zeithaml et al 2021, 81). Besides, several studies have also confirmed the strong correlation between pricing and consumer happiness.

Price, in its most literal sense, is a monetary representation of the worth of products and services that is determined by the utility of the service and the customer's perceptions of the actual service. Customers do not necessarily acquire the best-quality goods and services; instead, they seek those that give the maximum level of satisfaction. Thus, although consumer perceptions of pricing and cost of usage have no bearing on service quality, they do have an effect on customer satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor 1992, 65.) Nonetheless, in light

of the market's growing competitiveness and changes in consumers' views of goods and services, academic research has concluded that pricing and customer satisfaction are inextricably linked (Patterson et al. 1997, 417). As a result, it is impossible to properly measure customer satisfaction in the absence of this factor.

3.2.2 Customer expectation

Customer satisfaction, as stated by Kotler (2017, 33), is the level of a person's sensory state coming from a comparison of the outcomes achieved from the consumption of a product/service and the customer's expectations. Similarly, Oliver (1997) defined customer satisfaction as the consumer's reaction to the fulfilment of their expectations.

Customer satisfaction is defined as the difference in expectations before and after acquiring a product or service. On that basic principle, Kotler (2017, 33) outlined three satisfaction level: (1) If the outcomes are less than expected, the client will be unsatisfied; (2) if the results are as assumed, the customer will be satisfied; and (3) if the results exceed expectations, the customer will be extremely satisfied with the service.

Every restaurant needs to have a more accurate and extensive view of the customer experience that creates emotional value in order to invest in this activity more effectively. For example, certain customers might prefer service from one restaurant to one another, depending on the customer's income level and past experience. This leads to mutual interaction of customer experiences across different restaurants; hence competitiveness of restaurants is affected as well. Besides, a number of determinants to customer expectation might derive from environmental, cultural, and demographic dimensions, leading to complexity of customer satisfaction

3.3 Measuring customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction measurement is a method to understand the requirements and desires of loyal consumers while also promoting and bringing the company's goods to new customers. Measuring customer happiness will also assist companies in gaining a better understanding of future consumer consumption patterns, allowing them to compete more effectively with competitors in the same sector. In other words, the level of customer satisfaction will reflect the profit as well as the growth or failure of the business in the process of operation (McColl-Kennedy & Scheider 2000, 884.) Hence, metrics of measuring customer satisfaction for this study have been developed with references to existing studies.

3.3.1 Customer satisfaction metrics

During the research process, the author found many indicators of customer satisfaction, including: Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI), Net Promoter Score (NPS), Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT), and Customer Effort Score are all measures of customer satisfaction (CES). Nonetheless, due to their prominence in a significant number of credible prior research publications, only CSI and NPS were used in this investigation.

Customer Satisfaction Index - CSI

The Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) is indeed a measure used to analyze consumer brand awareness, as well as the performance of businesses, industries, and sectors, and, most significantly, many aspects of a country's economy. A CSI program's aim is to create and quantify factors that influence customer satisfaction (Ilieska 2013, 327.)

In many industrialized nations throughout the world, the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) is used to assess customer satisfaction for sectors and enterprises. This index may help restaurants measure customer satisfaction data as a foundation for competitive strategic planning, marketing, brand building, and trade promotion. This ultimately helps increase the competitiveness of business in the hospitality industry.

According to successful models (such as the Norwegian Customer Satisfaction Barometer (NCSB), American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), Swiss Index of Customer Satisfaction (SWICS), and others), CSI has five independent variables: customer expectation, perceived quality, perceived value, customer loyalty (if customers are satisfied) and customer complaint (if the customer is not satisfied) (Ilieska 2013, 330.) It can be said that customer satisfaction can lead to two extremes of customer's perception: satisfaction which develops loyalty to the brand; or dissatisfaction which triggers "negative" perception and impression of the brand.

The VCSI model - Vietnam Customer Satisfaction Index - is no exception to the aforementioned conventional principles. The study will present a VCSI model with seven variables in order to effectively leverage the model's influencing elements. The model's causal factors include business's image, expected quality, perceived quality, and perceived value. Customer satisfaction will be the key component, with customer complaints and customer loyalty as outcome factors. The primary distinction between VCSI and other CSI models is the nature of the connection between the latent variables. The foundation for this study will be built on the successful experiences of some typical previous models as well as the features of Vietnam's economy (Le, Nguyen 2007.)
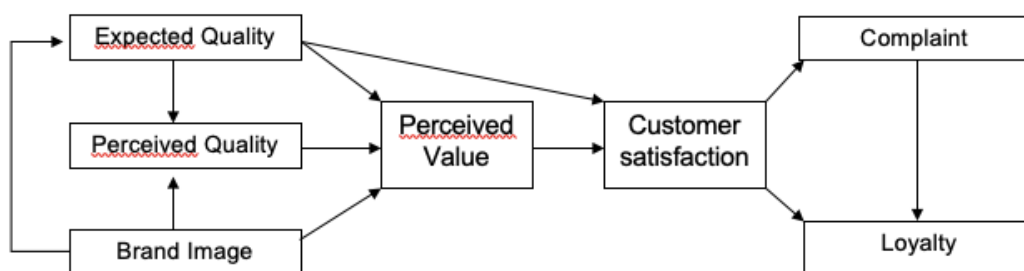
Figure 3. Vietnam Customer Satisfaction Index – VCSI (Le, Nguyen 2007).

Net Promoter Score (NPS)

Coined in the study of Fred Reichheld in 2013, the term refers to a metric of customer satisfaction metric which measures the likelihood for a brand to be recommended to friends and family (Kotler 2017, 157). Therefore, NPS is a standard that allows companies to measure and improve customer loyalty. In light that the concept of "loyal customer" is only relative, finding and managing NPS will be an effective tool to help businesses increase competitiveness and keep customers returning to businesses

NPS is a common response to the question, "*How likely is it that you would recommend this product or service to a friend or colleague?*" (Kotler 157, 2017). The responses to this question may be divided into three categories (Mandal 2014, 217):

Promoters (9-10 points) are passionate and loyal consumers who will recommend the business to their friends and family. This group is important for introducing new consumers.

Passives (7-8 points) are uninterested persons who can become boosters or detractors.

Detractors (0-6 points) are dissatisfied consumers. This group not only exposes businesses to the danger of losing them, but they may also harm the brand by sharing negative experiences with others.

NPS may be computed by taking the proportion of Detractors from the percentage of Passives and expressing the result as an integer (Wikipedia, n.d.):

Net Promoter Score (NPS) = % P (Promoters) – % D (Detractors)
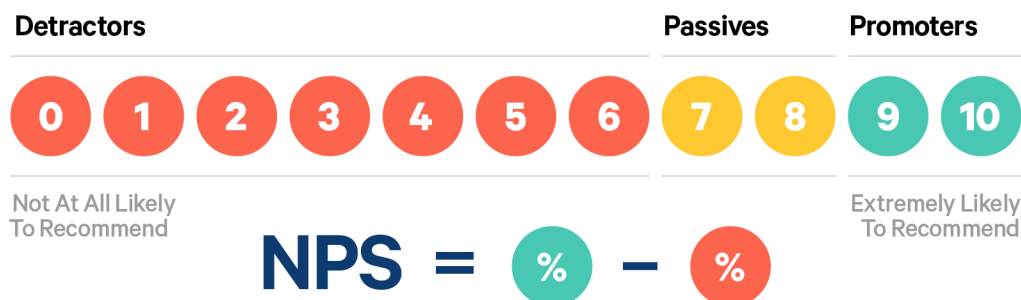
Image 3. Net Promoter Score (NPS) Measurement (Trustmary n.d.)

3.3.2 Measuring customer satisfaction methods

Two researchers Grigoroudis & Siskos (2009, 12-13) have synthesized from many different research sources and documents to divide customer satisfaction measurement into two distinct approaches: direct and indirect measurement methods.

Direct measurement methods

This approach refers to the collection of customers' feedbacks in a direct fashion. Literally, it helps measure perceptions through directly asking respondents to make a rating of their satisfaction (Grigoroudis & Siskos 2009, 13).

The two most direct measuring techniques are interviews and surveys, and both are important in evaluating consumer behaviour (Czarnecki 1999, according to Grigoroudis & Siskos 2009, 13). Each approach will provide managers with a unique perspective on the customers they have been servicing. This enables companies to monitor customer happiness and discontent, and to take corrective or improvement measures in a timely manner to keep consumers coming back and please more new customers (Grigoroudis & Siskos 2009, 13.)

Indirect measurement methods

This is an indirect measuring technique wherein companies do not communicate with consumers in order to gather data as what the direct method does. Instead, data is acquired after an event (sales) occurs (Czarnecki 1999, according to Grigoroudis & Siskos 2009, 13). Managers may evaluate customer satisfaction by observing consumer behaviour and tracking sales statistics like revenue, market share, and so on (Grigoroudis & Siskos 2009, 13).

Although this technique does not provide the best accuracy of customer satisfaction measurement, the information it generates is very useful for customer data management (Grigoroudis & Siskos 2009, 13).

In general, the most critical problem for companies is to choose the appropriate technique and metric for customer satisfaction, ensuring that they provide the most desirable results.

4 STAFF TRAINING

With Vietnam undergoing economic integration and a surge of foreign investment, the issue of high-quality human resources to fulfil the country's needs throughout the industrialization and modernization phases becomes more pressing than ever. Because hospitality is a customer-centric sector that places a premium on service quality, employees are critical to the success of any company organisation in the field. As a result, resource exploitation is a critical problem in the administration of organisations and companies.

While some believe that human tasks would progressively be supplanted by robots in the 4.0 life period, this will not be the case for all kinds of services. Because emotions and connections are critical components of a world-class client experience. This demonstrates that the success of a luxury business is largely based on human interaction and how customers perceive employee behaviour towards them (Boussard 2021, 71.)

Apart from the delectable cuisine, what adds to the success of a luxury restaurant is the competency of the people and the abilities of the personnel. A successful front office team must be capable of directly providing luxurious service to customers, communicating the restaurant's vision and mission to diners, and developing a strong presence in the luxury restaurant. However, this only comes as a result of a rigorous recruitment and training process under the supervision of restaurant leaders. Harbison (1973) once stated that an organization's wealth may be measured by its degree of growth and effective utilisation of people's energy, talents, and knowledge (according to Tesone 2008, 51). Boussard (2021, 272) believed that attitudes will take precedence over skills in recruiting, since although food and beverage abilities may be acquired via training and everyday practise, negative attitudes or poor habits are far more difficult to alter. After conducting a selected recruiting procedure, the staff training process must be performed methodically and correctly to maximise the restaurant's revenue efficiency.

Among all the required and sufficient circumstances for providing exceptional service, staff is the most critical aspect of any luxury restaurant business, yet also the most difficult to accomplish (Boussard 2021, 43). To maintain a competitive advantage in the luxury hospitality sector, fine dining restaurants must concentrate their efforts on human resource development and training.

4.1 Training program

Every restaurant, particularly fine dining establishments, should have a unique staff training procedure. This not only helps minimise training expenses and new employee stress, but it also helps the restaurant manage time efficiently and maximise sales.

The trainer will have various training programmes and routes depending on the new employee's job. Aside from providing professional training and the required abilities for the job, the training process also assists workers in improving their professional working style in order to increase productivity.

To provide a suitable and professional training programme, a restaurant manager or trainer should consider the following issues when planning an employee training programme: duration of the programme; structure of a training programme; training and instruction methods; training facilities; responsible instructors, and so on (Nickson 2007, 159).

Walker (2013, 335) suggests an ideal 6-day-training program for new restaurant employees depicted in Table 1 below:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Orientation Lunch Station tour and observation Study alcohol awareness Employee handbook review Study first third of recipe references Read training manual	On-the-job training shift Alcohol awareness test (open book) Employee handbook review due Recipe review; study second third of recipe references Study for introduction to kitchen and sanitation tests	On-the-job training shift Introduction to kitchen and sanitation tests Recipe review; study final third of recipe references	On-the-job training shift Recipe review; study all recipe references	On-the-job training shift Recipe review; study all recipe references	On-the-job training shift Review with the manager Final test

Table 1. Walker's training schedule in restaurants (2013, 335).

The restaurant's training programme may not be adequate for certain workers to understand all of the information that the teacher and the brand wish to communicate. At this point, the restaurant may add a few more sessions to help trainees with their training. Employees will feel more confident, have a new perspective and way of thinking in their method of serving, and provide memorable experiences to the restaurant's customers after they have completed the training programme and are fully equipped with the required information and abilities (Walker 2013, 336.)

In a nutshell, the process of training new workers is critical to the company's growth. To reach the maximum efficiency, however, it is essential to be based on several factors as well as to ensure certain needs.

4.2 Methods of training

Notwithstanding the fact that employee training and development may be accomplished in a variety of ways, none of which is superior. This necessitates a mix of training techniques in order to produce the optimum approach for the restaurant idea. If the restaurant selects and combines the training methods properly, it will assist in optimising the capacity of the employees and provide the greatest customer experience. All of these approaches are grouped into three kinds of training: on-the-job training (OJT), off-the-job training (OJT), and hybrid training (Sommerville 2007).

4.2.1 On-the-job training (OJT)

On-the-job training (OJT) is a programme intended to directly educate new workers on how to do their duties. The instructor may be a supervisor or an experienced employee who gives trainees step-by-step instructions on how to complete a task (Sommerville 2007, 221). Employees may get the required information and abilities to perform actual job while also acclimating to the workplace. Since both of the mothods need frequent involvement in the training process and numerous jobs originate from various departments, only the OJT technique is appropriate because it provides high training efficiency as well as excitement and newness in the work for the employees (Sommerville 2007, 227.)

OJT is always regarded as the most successful training technique, and it has a number of advantages when it comes to training service personnel. Employees may directly absorb and practise after obtaining knowledge (verbally or via action) from the trainer using this style of instruction. Employees will recall more if they see and participate in real activity, making the training process more successful. Following the acquisition and practise on the

job, the employees will get immediate feedback from the coach, allowing them to advance or adapt to the restaurant's needs (Nickson 2007, 160.)

On the other hand, a poorly designed and organised training programme would result in a lack of flow and confusion among learners. Furthermore, the trainer's transfer of information and manipulations that are in violation of the restaurant's rules has a significant impact (Nickson 2007, 160.)

Sommerville (2007, 222) highlighted the significance of investing in the preparation and step-by-step development of employee training that must be fully and constantly updated throughout time in order to optimise the efficiency of educating front-line employees in the hospitality sector.

4.2.2 Off-the-job training

In contrast to the OJT method, off-the-job training is a training method in which learners are separated from performing actual jobs by classes, lectures, videos, lectures, case study, role-playing, self-study (Sommerville 2007, 224). In which case study and role-playing methods can be applied in the hospitality industry to practice and improve decision-making skill for employees.

It can be seen that the off-the-job training method provides a variety of training methods and is relatively simple to implement but does not bring high efficiency in training service industry employees - the industry that requires friction, contact and collision with reality, rather than the passive acquisition of knowledge (Nickson 2007, 161).

4.3 The significance of staff training in fine dining restaurant

To prove the importance of employee training in a fine dining restaurant, besides bringing customer satisfaction the author relies on the benefits it brings to employees and to business. At the same time, conducting research on the disadvantages when the restaurant does not conduct staff training or training is disorganized and sketchy.

4.3.1 Benefits of staff training

As mentioned above, the primary goal of staff training is to enhance service quality and to provide customers with the greatest experience possible when eating at a fine dining restaurant. Not to mention that employee training also brings great benefits to the staff and the restaurant itself (Sommerville 2007, 209.)

Benefits to employees

With the contemporary economy's continual development, educating employees with required professional skills is the method for individuals and organizations to keep up with shifting orientations and new objectives in the future. Tesone (2008, 374) has concluded from various studies that "*training can improve the KSAs (knowledge, skills, attitudes) of employees, behavioural patterns, productivity, efficiency and flexibility of personnel*". Sharing the same opinion, Sommerville (2007, 210) also believed that training will help employees practice and maintain a positive attitude while providing services to customers.

With a successful training programme, workers will immediately see the importance of their job and position within the organisation, resulting in increased trust and loyalty. Additionally, the arrangement of staff training demonstrates the enterprise's dedication to and care for its workers. Employees will feel as if they are a part of the company and are highly appreciated.

Besides, Heskett et al. (1994) stated that excellent internal services such as employee training, among other elements, contributes to employee satisfaction, which may keep them from wanting to leave the company, thus employee turnover rate can be effectively managed. Not to mention that the training programme will provide trainees the skills to not only be better problem solvers, but also help them to build their confidence. Consequently, employees' performance can be enhanced as long as they are confident in their abilities and are aware of the high standards that they must achieve for their clients. Finally, training helps employees acquire the necessary skills for promotion opportunities and replace managers and professionals when necessary (Sommerville 2007, 210.)

Benefits for businesses

Sommerville (2007, 210) highlighted the many advantages of staff training for businesses. Of which, the primary benefit of training is to assist companies in increasing labour productivity and efficiency while preserving and enhancing the quality of human resources, thus providing restaurants with a competitive edge in the market.

Additionally, training helps to develop a good, friendly, and professional work environment, assist managers in resolving issues of conflict and establish effective human resource management policies for the business (Sommerville 2007, 210).

Moreover, the most significant impact of training lies in the possibility of fostering business growth and return on investment for the restaurant (Tesone 2008, 350). According to Sommerville (2007, 211), the cost of employee training is seen as an investment that will generate future returns in the long run.

4.3.2 Lacking staff training

One might argue that if the trainer follows a thorough and appropriate strategy, his or her efficiency will be maximised, resulting in the aforementioned advantages. On the other hand, insufficient or incorrect training will provide no benefits and may even have negative repercussions for the business (Sommerville 2007, 221.)

From the perspective of the advantages that employee training provides to the workers, a lack of training or insufficient training places a strain on the employees, who are likely to get disheartened and lead to quit their job. According to Sommerville (2007), an employee's 30th to 60th day in a work setting is the most probable time for them to get irritated if they do not receive specialised training and supervision.

The luxury hospitality industry's offering is service and experience, and FOH personnel play a critical part in the connection between the restaurant and its guests. Without ensuring staff happiness, knowledge, and abilities, the quality of service provided to consumers cannot be assured. This not only impacts the restaurant's image and quality, but also has a direct effect on its income (Sommerville 2007, 208.)

Thus, Sommerville (2007, 220) suggested that restaurant managers should consider costs, training requirements, and available facilities when developing a training plan for their business in order to maximise the effectiveness of restaurant staff training while minimising unexpected events that occur during the process of employee training.

5   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1   Qualitative research method

The author has chosen qualitative research as the primary technique of investigation for this thesis, with the primary objective of finding and utilising inside knowledge, the insights of the respondents based on the open question list. This is a technique that involves considerable preparation and commitment on the part of the researcher in the study design; in particular, the interviewer/role moderator is critical in adhering to the discussion rules and collecting qualitative data for analysis.

Qualitative analysis produces information that is distinct from quantitative analysis, since qualitative research often employs deductive logic based on given reasoning. This technique is ad hoc; there is no prescribed procedure to follow, and the researcher is allowed to gather data in whatever way he or she chooses. In comparison, the quantitative research technique involves observing or analysing particular instances or circumstances in order to develop general principles, specific structures, and solid evidence that is then inductively used to make conclusions (Kumar 2011, 104). Thus, the author used qualitative research techniques in order to maximise the views and experiences of interviewees while working at a fine dining restaurant.

5.2   Data collection method

The author employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collecting technique for the empirical section while using qualitative research methodologies. Semi-structured interviews refer to a hybrid of structured and unstructured interviews, featuring the benefits of the two interviewing formats. These include ease and openness, while maintaining category-based questions or topics to cover (Kumar 2011, 145).

The structured portion of the semi-structured interview offers a summary of the interviewees for the interviewers. It enables them to make objective comparisons between interviewees, which is advantageous in qualitative research. For interviewees, since the unstructured portion of the semi-structured interview allowed for more freedom of expression, they often felt less anxious throughout the interview. Consequently, interviewees might be opener to the interviewer and establish a personal rapport with them in a reasonably warm and pleasant environment (Smith 2019).

5.3   Research design

A research design is a plan that outlines the resources and categories of information that will be used to address the research question or issue. An ideal research design will include research methods and procedures that will ensure the successful completion of the project while making efficient use of available resources (time, money), and will enable the reader to grasp the research method, sampling technique, research subjects, and information that the writer collects and analyses during the research process (Kumar 2011, 94).

To investigate the significance of staff training in fine dining restaurants in Vietnam, the author focuses on independent establishments that satisfy fine dining standards or establishments that are part of five-star international standard hotels/resorts (Intercontinental, JW Marriott and so on).

While a prepared questionnaire with a set of questions helps in clearly identifying the topics to be interviewed, it also provides the necessary flexibility to address new problems that emerge spontaneously during the interview process. The collection of open-ended questions was based on the theoretical section's three major theoretical sections. Part one begins with the respondents' basic information, including an introduction to themselves and their work environment. The second section delves further into the organisation, menu varieties, and requirements of a fine dining establishment. Following that, the author makes use of customer data, and the way customer satisfaction is measured in a genuine fine dining restaurant. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, after gaining an understanding of the standards and consumers of a fine dining restaurant, the author concentrates on the process of staff training and its significance.

5.4   Data analysis

Qualitative research uses a range of data forms, including recordings, videotapes, memoranda, and notes taken during interviews.

First, the researcher synthesises all kinds of gathered data into a transcript in this thesis before making notes on material that is interesting or relevant to the study subject based on the detailed report. While this helps create a short note, it continues examining the similarities and contrasts of the information discovered within the notes. This was followed by various steps including examining the list of information and categorising it according to the provided questionnaire. As a result, each set of facts has the potential to explain or throw additional light on the problem that the study is searching for. With major categories/themes

and/or smaller categories/themes being generated on this basis, the author continues comparing and contrasting information in groups of similar themes to discover similarities, differences, or contrasts between them. Lastly, it is important to gather all of the information groups discovered in all of the project transcripts and double-check their relevance and relevance to the subject under investigation, as well as the classification's correctness. group of information

5.5   Validity and Reliability

Successful research requires not just a solid collection of research instruments and sample techniques, but also how the data is gathered. A study is considered excellent when the gathered data ensures reliability and validity, when the data provides an overall picture, delves into depth, and describes the researcher's interest in research (Robson 2011, 78.) The precision and stability of the measurement are often linked to reliability. The validity, on the other hand, determines if the researcher has correctly and fully assessed the study issue (Mehrens & Lehman1987).

According to Kumar (2011, 178), validity may be evaluated using suitable techniques and processes depending on the responses the study gives to the research topic. The author guarantees the article's authenticity by using a variety of research techniques to enhance accuracy. To begin, the information sources are carefully and painstakingly chosen from books, reports by renowned writers, and publishers. In addition, the author synthesizes and offers material from trustworthy books or sources on the same subject in order to create impartial, correct, and valid evaluations for the study. This data collecting method and information source assisted the author in developing and validating a response to the primary study question "*Why does staff training play a significant role in fine dining satisfaction?"*

The cornerstone of reliability is that the researcher gets consistent findings after doing many tests and investigations. In other words, dependability is also known as the consistency of findings across different points of time (Robson 2011, 105). The thesis's credibility is based not only on trustworthy sources of information and papers in the theory section but also on the quality of realistic experiences. To assure the reliability of the information sources, the author selected interviewees who have been working at fine dining restaurants in Vietnam who have obligations and experience in training FOH staff. They understand the procedure, criteria, and standards of an employee training process, which is particularly essential in a setting where customer service is more important than ever. These conditions render responses they provide highly dependable. Furthermore, although the hospitality sector is

always evolving through innovations and updates in the future, the findings of the research on the significance of staff training will not alter substantially over time.

6 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

To ensure the objectivity and reliability of the research paper, the author set a target of four to ten interview participants. In fact, four interviews were conducted and helped the author have a broader and more comprehensive view of the research problem. Research subjects are people who have been directly involved or have an important role in training front desk staff in fine dining restaurants in Vietnam, regardless of gender, age, or geography. The author used LinkedIn as a means of finding interviewees using keywords such as "Intercontinental Hanoi", "Regent Phu Quoc", "restaurant manager". Fortunately, the author had a chance to connect with two managers and get support from them. The remaining two interviewees were contacted by the author via email found on the restaurant's website. Each interview took an average of 45 minutes, conducted online via means such as Skype, Viber, Zoom meeting.

The results of this study were analysed based on the structure of the interview questions list, which consists of four parts: Interviewees' introduction, fine dining restaurant, customer satisfaction and staff training.

6.1 Theme 1: Interviewee's introduction

To begin with, the interviewee A is currently a Manager Assistant at a fine dining restaurant, located in a hotel belonging to a multinational group - IHG Hotels & Resorts in Phu Quoc, a famous tourist destination in southern Vietnam. With over six years of experience working in many fine dining restaurants, and almost a year as a manager assistant, she is very knowledgeable about the luxury service industry. Furthermore, A has directly trained twelve new staff members during the pre-opening period of the restaurant that has just opened in the hotel. With more than forty minutes of online conversation, A shared a lot of useful information and empowered the author to complete the thesis.

B – Director of Food and Beverage in a five-star hotel in Ho Chi Minh city. With more than ten years of experience in the F&B industry, including more than six years in management positions in many large-scale restaurants and has trained no less than a hundred interns and new employees in this field. During the interview process, he focused straight on the problem posed in a concise and succinct manner. Hence, the conversation with B only lasted for nearly thirty minutes. However, the content that B provided helped a lot for the research, helping the author to have a broader view.

C - Owner and Founder of a luxury Western cuisine restaurant, with two establishments located at the heart of Ho Chi Minh City. C graduated with a master's degree in business

administration in the United State, and decided to return to Vietnam to develop career. It can be said that C does not have as much experience as other respondents in the field of F&B and is not directly involved in staff training, but more than anyone, she understands very well the importance of the role of employees in bringing profits to the company and bringing satisfaction to customers. This is yet an interesting share coming from the position of a founder and owner, when she knows what to do to nurture and develop her "child".

D – Co-Founder and Restaurant Manager of a well-known fine dining restaurant in the capital of Vietnam – Hanoi. D has gathered a lot of knowledge and experience in the past five years of living and working in many different countries, many restaurants of famous chefs and even Michelin-starred restaurants. D is mainly responsible for the FOH department, including staff training. With a strong teamwork spirit and extensive experience, D and a team of eighteen members have put their restaurant on "*Asia's top 100 best restaurants in 2021*" list.

6.2   Theme 2: Fine dining restaurants

Upon acquiring the background of interviewees, the author kept exploring the basis of the restaurant where they were employed for an insight of the procedure and conditions of a fine dining establishment in Vietnam.

6.2.1   Organisation in a fine dining restaurant

Based on working experience in the hospitality industry in general, in fine dining restaurants in particular, A and B provided relatively similar answers because they both have experience and work in fine dining restaurants belonging to a large hotel group. On the other hand, C and D work in medium-sized independent restaurants which feature different organizational structure, fewer service staff or absence of bar service supervisor. However, the author has summarized the information as a whole and is described in Figure 8 below:
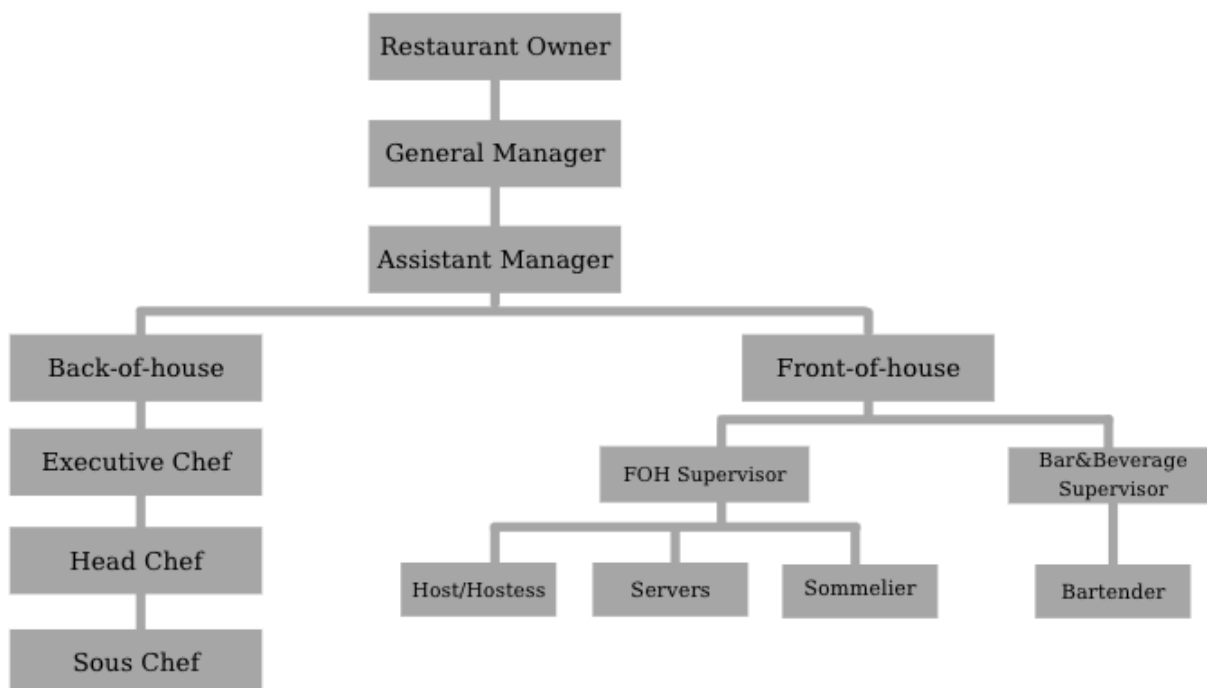
Figure 4. General organizational hierarchy in Vietnamese fine dining restaurants.

According to the respondents, above is a complete restaurant business system, which is set up from superior to lower level. The parts in this system have a close relationship with each other, it is indispensable for any part, then the efficiency and quality of the restaurant's operations will be guaranteed.

6.2.2 Menu types

Based on the responses of the interviewees, the author found that A and C's restaurants both use the à la carte menu, which is the most common and most used in fine dining restaurants in Vietnam. According to them, for this type of menu, the staff will need to introduce the most special dish at the restaurant along with the drinks that match the dish, and advise the dish to the guest if requested. The reason the restaurant uses this menu form is because they want to increase interaction with customers, provide them with a high-class service with service style, dedication and understanding of customers' requirements.

As previously stated, B is the Director of Food and Beverage at a five-star hotel with five restaurants ranging from Asian (Vietnam, Thailand, Chinese) to traditional French. There are two restaurants that offer a luxurious buffet and three restaurants that serve an à la carte menu. According to B, the most notable benefit of this kind of buffet is that the food is always accessible without waiting. Furthermore, the diversity of meals, from appetisers to

main courses, desserts, and buffets, will allow foodies to fulfil their cravings without having to worry about the cost of each dish. However, given its large scale of investment, the price of a luxury buffet will be considerably higher than that of a normal buffet to justify the sense of luxuriousness and elegance. This kind of menu will emphasise food quality, fresh and costly items such as lobster, king crab, wagyu beef, and so on. Nevertheless, the menu involves little requirement for contact and assistance from personnel.

Finally, the restaurant where D works is one of the few in Vietnam that offers a tasting menu. The tasting menu contains a variety of meals, but each dish includes just a tiny amount of food, just enough for one person's taste, and is artistically and visually appealing. The flavour of the meals is meticulously polished by the skilled hands of expert chefs. The tasting menu is the ideal crystallisation of the finest spices, ingredients, inventiveness, and the chef's skilled and creative processing abilities. This kind of menu puts cooks under a lot of strain since they must make all of the decisions themselves, from ingredients to dish structure to flavour, in order to meet customers' demands. Furthermore, waiters/waitresses retain the dish's essence while also playing an essential part in communicating the chef's ideals, tales, and passion for it. This menu's format is continuously changing and adjusting to suit a subject and the chef's culinary perspective.

6.2.3   Standards of a fine dining restaurant

On the report of all the respondents, all standards in a fine dining restaurant must be achieved at the highest level. In this section, the interviewees give relatively similar answers, each person will add one more idea to the other's opinion, which makes a complete answer.

Environment

The pleasing fusion of noise, light, and smell boosts the joy and succulence of those dining. In an effort to help customers enjoy a unique experience, certain restaurants such as those of interviewees A and B will invite pianists and opera singers to play while the patrons are dining. The pianists and opera singers will offer a beautiful presentation, increasing the customers' enjoyment and making for a much more memorable evening. Moreover, the materials utilised in dishes at upscale restaurants (such as stainless steel, high-quality ceramics and so on).

Service

C stated that her business would only accept a specific number of visitors in order to guarantee customer satisfaction and service quality. This restriction was also upheld by other

respondents, who said that when customers pay a premium price, the restaurants should deliver more exclusive services. Furthermore, timing is one of the top priorities in fine dining restaurants. Once the waiter announces that the food will be ready in fifteen minutes, the kitchen must ensure that the food is ready in fifteen minutes. Otherwise, customer experience can be easily ruined by late serving of food.

Furthermore, clients are constantly seeking for a sense of welcome, in order to achieve this, most fine dining restaurants in Vietnam offer a welcoming drink, cheese, or a cool towel and cold water as guests enter the restaurant.

Food quality

Intending to build customer trust, the use of high-quality ingredients is a prerequisite. Because this is an important standard to evaluate a five-star restaurant, many restaurants often attempt to list out ingredients of each dish in the menu for demonstrating food quality. Besides, to excite customers' taste buds, the food selection must be extensive and varied, with various processing techniques and eye-catching decor.

A high-class fine dining restaurant cannot come without top-notch dishes imported from reputable and high-quality places. Besides, chefs in an upscale restaurant are also required to be experienced and creative to bring more "wow" experiences for customers in every dish they make.

6.3   Theme 3: Customer satisfaction

Customers' satisfaction and expectations are very important to company these days since this is a factor linked to the company's interests, such as market share, revenue, and profit. At the same time, client happiness implies that they are more likely to return and promote the restaurant to others. These necessitate restaurant companies managing the quality of their food and services in order to take quick corrective action. For this purpose, the service quality must first be assessed from the perspective of the client - the person who actually encounters it.

With the assistance of assessing customer satisfaction on service quality, the restaurants can constantly improve management and service quality to guarantee that clients get excellent services, and at the same time bring a competitive advantage in the industry for restaurants.

6.3.1   Factors affecting customer satisfaction

Personnel

Based on the long-term expertise in the restaurant business, particularly in fine dining establishments, B refers to human factors as the most determining element of customer satisfaction. Sharing the same point of view, A also stated that "*If the restaurant has a strong and experienced staff team, it will bring a top-notch service to customers and vice versa*." Indeed, when customers pay a relatively large amount for a meal in a fine dining restaurant, they will demand more than a delicious meal, or a romantic environment. Specifically, they would require augmented values such as professionalism of staff who are ready to assist them at any time or always give a friendly and welcoming feeling throughout the session of service provision.

Food quality

Food quality must be a primary concern not just for a restaurant that utilises a tasting menu, but for all fine dining establishments. Customers come to the restaurant to unwind after a long day at work, to share cultural ideas, to catch up with friends and family, and to meet business partners. As a result, they are concerned with tasty meals, sophisticatedly decorated rooms, and a pleasant environment while maintaining privacy. Besides, other factors affecting the food quality such as food safety are also taken into account with high priority.

Professional chefs have utilised their expertise, creativity, and aesthetic perspective to create delicate meals with the utmost devotion and concentration in order to meet the expectation that customers bear for a luxury dinner at a fine dining restaurant, including the desire to experience the most quintessential and distinctive foods. All meals, from appetisers to desserts, must be made with high standards for spices, ingredients, and embellishments. If consumers are engaged in a romantic setting while drinking a glass of wine in the lobby, cooks in the kitchen "fascinate" clients with their own ideas, inspirations, and egos.

Others

Besides excellent food quality and professional service style, the environment and space inside the restaurant are also attributed to the overall customer satisfaction.

Creating a luxury environment with its own style while retaining the restaurant's cheerful, warm, and comfortable characteristics can help impress restaurant customers. Interior decorating items made of high-end and certified materials exhibit luxury, whether they are lamps with a variety of styles, lighting that highlights the interior colours, or paintings demonstrating a harmonious mix. Additionally, music stimulates the taste senses, allowing diners to enjoy their food more delectably. Numerous fine dining establishments invite pianists or opera singers to play in order to create a lively atmosphere directly among the customers. A good soundtrack will assist restaurateurs in communicating their message to consumers,

increasing brand recognition, and establishing harmony across the design and restaurant area.

6.3.2 Measuring customer satisfaction

Listening to and documenting customers' opinions and complaints is the most effective way for any restaurant to meet their expectations. Customer satisfaction is essential in any business, and continual management of staff at a fine dining restaurant may allow the restaurant to discover its strengths and shortcomings based on customer input. Restaurants adopt a particular approach to customer service in order to achieve this, and companies may evaluate customer happiness by studying consumer feedback. The author suggests two basic strategies employed by the majority of fine dining restaurants in Vietnam in the following section.

Direct measurement methods

Customers' feedbacks:

In any fine dining restaurant, the hosts and hostesses are the ones who have an important role in greeting and communicating with customers, likewise, they have more chances to directly collect feedbacks from customers when giving customers a send-off.

It is worth noting that the fast-paced growth of media and social networks has led to the saturation of advertising and product marketing. Since customer trust in online advertising decline, word-of-mouth marketing through reviews, feedback, comments about products and services became a more reliable and favourable source of information.

Customer feedback is the most trustworthy source of data since it does not feature mass marketing but approaches the customers who are already interested in a certain product or brand. Restaurants may check their social networking sites on a daily basis to keep up with the most up-to-date feedback, as well as review sites such as Google, TripAdvisor, and Traveloka. Additionally, with the customer's consent, the restaurant may solicit consumer feedback and comments through email. From these inputs, restaurants may determine the degree of client satisfaction and make necessary adjustments to maximise efficiency in making customers satisfied.

Surveys:

Each restaurant will have its own database system for keeping track of customers. Prior to receiving email and contact information, the restaurant would generally request permission

to distribute advertising or promotional material from the consumers. Hence, whereas sending surveys to clients through email is currently limited, it works and provides a lot of information for the restaurant.

Indirect measurement methods

A fine dining establishment will always respect its customers' privacy. After the food is served, the staff will quietly observe the customers' expressions and body language to assess whether or not they are satisfied. If visitors have any complaints or comments, the service staff will immediately help them, document the issue, and submit it to the staff's system so that other staff members may take note and avoid making the same error in the future.

6.4 Theme 4: Staff training in fine dining restaurant

Each restaurant that the author interviewed has a mission and vision for a unique style of service, and the staff always strive to transmit the brand image and its views to the customers.

Training is an essential responsibility in developing a high-quality human resources team that is aligned with job requirements and the enterprise's business plan. At the same time, it assists businesses in filtering out employees who do not meet the specified requirements.

6.4.1 Methods of training

Employees at restaurants need to learn how to manage problems effectively, and staff training is the ideal activity for ensuring that this goal is met. Yet, since there is no one-size-fits-all method for educating the optimum restaurant staff, organizations should select and combine techniques to solve issues emerging from unique situations and conditions.

On-the-job training

In Vietnam, the on-the-job training technique is used by the majority of restaurants in general, and fine dining establishments in particular. This means that the training work will be carried out by committed senior personnel who have skills and knowledge in the field of the training program. This training technique will take place over a certain length of time, generally between two and three months, depending on restaurant policy and training objectives.

Off-the-job training

Before the grand-openng of any restaurant in the field in Vietnam, off-the-job training is a strategy that most of the restaurants employed. A competent person will be in charge of educating a large group of people at the same time, this type of training involves the trainer having a plan and extensive preparation of training content and essential practical tools, ensuring that both theory and practice training requirements are met.

6.4.2 Training program

On-the-job training is mostly utilized to instruct staff at fine dining restaurants in Vietnam. To save time and effort, management selects experienced workers who are familiar with the task and have good abilities to educate and advise new employees.

While performing assigned responsibilities, trainees must observe and listen to the instructor's instructions. Following that, the person in charge of training will closely observe trainees' communication skills, gestures, attitudes, and manners, and will report back to the Manager or Supervisor as then superiors are kept up to speed on the progress of training. Furthermore, the trainer must guarantee the development of an appropriate working environment for the original objective in order to assist trainees in adapting to and doing the best duties. New workers have a two-month probationary term, after which the manager will assess the situation and continue to plan the next training content, which is deeper and more professional.

For restaurants in the pre-opening stage, managers or trainers will apply the off-the-job training method to provide and supplement the necessary knowledge when working in a fine dining restaurant. New workers have extra time to mentally prepare, practise carrying and role-playing reflexes, and study the menu and each item in order to provide the best possible service to clients.

The training procedure does not just apply to new workers; the restaurant constantly refreshes and instructs existing staff. Training for these workers seeks to enhance professional skills and knowledge, as well as to assist prospective employees get a better understanding of a new job role (besides the current job). Cross-training, in particular, is a method of retraining older workers by using the nature of the job, position, and working environment. This implies that the rotation will allow older workers to get fresh experiences in various roles. Besides, training also takes place when the restaurant gets a new project, task, or request from the leader or client. For this purpose, the leader will train the managers, who will subsequently teach their subordinates.

6.4.3 The benefits of staff training

Benefits to restaurants

Training will help the company select personnel, as a basis for evaluating employees during their probationary term; thereby official recruitment decisions can be made. The process of training new employees also aims to improve the quality of personnel for both new employees and experienced employees. This not only consequently helps increase work efficiency, but also plays a crucial role in stabilizing the organization, creating a uniform professional working style, and ultimately minimizing unwanted errors that may occur at work.

The brand mission and vision are also educated to employees during training. In this aspect, employees play an important role in conveying brand values to employees.

In addition, a good staff training strategy will increase the level of customer satisfaction with the restaurant's service as it helps build trust of diners in the restaurant's brand. The more customers are satisfied with the experience the restaurant has brought, the more often they return and refer the restaurant to family, friends, or colleagues. This not only fetches more revenue, but also helps the restaurant save a great deal of marketing costs.

Benefits to employees

Training new workers will assist them in rapidly acclimating to their new jobs and adjusting to their new work environment. Employees may demonstrate their receptivity and capacity to fulfil work requirements via the training process. Apart from improving their chances of getting hired on a full-time basis, it also helps them form bonds with their co-workers. Additionally, the training procedure will get new workers familiar with the standards of the industry so that they can be ready for future career growth.

After receiving appropriate training, workers would possess the essential abilities to do their jobs effectively and efficiently, thus increasing production and efficiency. Additionally, employees may find new abilities, resulting in possibilities for self-development. Not to mention that staff training helps manifest the restaurant's dedication to and care for its workers, making them feel appreciated and respected in the workplace.

A training programme also streamlines the process of hiring and training new employees; thus, restaurants can save time and money in managing human resources. Along with that, internal training enables employees to interact with one another; hence fostering an open and pleasant culture for a sustainable work environment.

7 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF STAFF TRAINING IN PROVIDING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN VIETNAMESE FINE DINING RESTAURANTS

From the information and data that the author has collected in interviews with executives, managers and owners of fine dining restaurants in Vietnam, it was possible to address the research question of *"Why does staff training play an important role in fine dining satisfaction?"*.

The below diagram conceptualizes the impacts that staff training has on customer satisfaction within fine dining restaurants in Vietnam (Figure 5).

Figure 5. The significance of staff training in providing customer satisfaction.

7.1 Offering the best customer care

Customers who visit a fine dining restaurant mostly expect to receive a ready-to-serve service from the restaurant personnel. The staff greets guests with a pleasant manner and assists them in reserving the most appropriate sitting location in the restaurant, creating an atmosphere of warmth. Even when the restaurant is busy and guests must wait an extended period of time to be seated, the attentive and punctual attitude of the restaurant personnel generates compassion for clients, assisting them in reducing their sense of discomfort and accepting the need to wait their turn.

When it comes to ordering, first-time restaurant patrons will need assistance from the service personnel in order to choose the appropriate meal from the restaurant's extensive

menu. This is an excellent chance for employees to highlight the restaurant's signature dish. Regular guests will be greeted by the staff, who will recommend new items, particularly from the restaurant's daily menu or current specials. At this point, workers' attentive listening abilities are critical.

During a meal, each client has unique habits and needs to be serviced; nevertheless, service personnel should be cautious not to go too near, which creates an unpleasant feeling; a reasonable distance is a good idea in case consumers need urgent assistance.

Indeed, only when staff members are capable of meeting client needs, being sensitive, adaptable, and knowledgeable about the restaurant industry, can work efficiency be maximised. As a result, training is critical for increasing the professional level and feeling of responsibility among the staff at fine dining establishments. Thus, assisting in increasing job productivity and providing the best possible client experience.

7.2   Professionalizing environment

Employee training will result in a professional working atmosphere that will make a favourable impression on consumers. According to D, a working environment is represented in service style, professional look, customer and colleague communication abilities, and issue solving skills.

The welcoming attitude of the employees in the process of servicing clients reflects the staff's professional look (the uniform is neat and tidy; the hair is groomed and so on). This will be educated during training, and the employee's responsibility will be to follow them, while the management will be responsible for monitoring and reminding.

Communication skills are usually seen as important in every professional employee. This competence is especially important for service professionals since they have direct interaction with customers. Good communication skills assist service personnel in making clients pleased with the restaurant and its products.

With the working environment at the restaurant, every day staffs have to deal with a variety of individuals, each with their own personalityl; therefore, it is unavoidable to encounter unpleasant clients who bring along negative comments. As a result, in order to avoid losing consumer trust and developing a negative image of the restaurant, restaurant workers must be problem solvers. Each such situation must be handled kindly by restaurant employees, with the customer's best interests in mind. Effective staff can not only transform customers' unfavourable attitudes, but also turn them into fans of the restaurant.

For the nature of service, it can only be flawless when all phases of the service process function in unison. Internal training is presently the most ideal option for ensuring the development of skills and qualifications of the employees as a mean to adapt and perform the tasks in the restaurant in the best manner possible. Thus, they are able to develop an image not just for themselves, but also as a representation of the restaurant's image, acting as a liaison between the restaurant and the customers.

7.3 Fulfilling brand's promise

Brand's promise is what the company promises to customers about the product or service that they will bring to the customer. For example, IHG's Holiday Inn hotel chain has set out their brand promise *"Champion the joy of travel for everyone"*. Brand's promise is extremely important in forming customers' expectations, which set goal for brand to design offering and ultimately achieve customer satisfaction

Customers do not just buy products, but all brand's values associated to the products, including brand assurance. It is difficult for anyone to pay for an item that people do not trust. In this perspective, the product features functional benefits to customers but also involves augmented benefits which bond customers with the brand

A brand's promise that customers trust will bring many benefits, in which employees are the ones who act on behalf of the brand to deliver their promises. When customers are satisfied, they will not only buy more products, but also share with friends and relatives about the brand. In the current "Internet of Things" era, people engage more in sharing information on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs; thereby referral marketing is becoming more important than ever. When customers are loyal to the brand, each of them becomes a true brand ambassador, diffusing positive words of mouth about the brand. Those are intangible and sustainable assets, which cannot be bought with money.

8   CONCLUSION

In general, staff training improves customer satisfaction, bringing reputation, revenues, and possibilities for long-term growth to restaurants; all workers should have certain impacts on the customer experience. Thus, without appropriate training, communication between workers and customers may diverge from the restaurant's objectives, vision, and purpose. Training may be costly, yet the rewards are enormous.

During the research process for this thesis, the author provides specific advantages that the training of workers in the restaurant offers total pleasure to customers with the aim of emphasising the importance of staff training in any company, not limited to those in the food and beverage industry. Because this is a client-centric service sector, customer satisfaction will play a significant role in the company's success. According to the outcomes of this study, the majority of restaurants with elegant structures and high-quality services, such as fine dining restaurants, should have a strict and well-defined staff training plan. Irrespective of restaurant's organisational structure, supervision and management, the advantages of a successful training approach remain consistent and homogeneous.

This research has provided an answer to the thesis's primary issue regarding the significance of staff training in delivering pleasure to clients of fine dining restaurants in Vietnam. Simultaneously, the author investigated and presented similar topics such as fine dining restaurants and customer satisfaction to build a more cohesive framework for the study report. With trustworthy sources of information and experienced responders in the area of fine dining in particular and F&B in general, the author guarantees the validity and trustworthiness of this work.

The author hopes that this research will bring certain benefits to individuals who are studying and having a passion for the luxury F&B industry. Furthermore, the information collected from documentary sources and during the interview process can help further research on the importance of staff training in restaurants in general and fine dining restaurants in particular in other countries.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Cover letter

Dear Mr/Mrs,

My name is Minh Dao, a senior at LAB University of Applied Sciences, majoring in Tourism and Hospitality Management. I am now working on a bachelor thesis with the topic "The significance of staff training in providing customer satisfaction in Vietnamese fine dining restaurants".

Besides the organization and customer services, this thesis will focus mainly on the training process, training techniques, and especially the importance of staff training in Vietnamese fine dining restaurants to offer the best customer satisfaction. I really hope to find out what makes fine dining restaurants different from others in the same industry, and what makes the customer very satisfied when spending time there.

Hence, I am sending you this email to cordially invite you to an interview on my thesis topic in the near future. Spending time with you will assist me in determining the answers and providing vital knowledge that will be beneficial not only to my academics but also to my professional path.

I have enclosed a list of questions in this email. All the information provided will be kept only for research purposes. If you are fascinated in my thesis subject and have time for the interview, please contact me at minh.dao@student.lab.fi for furhter information.

I greatly appreciate your assistance. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours sincerely,

Minh Dao.

Appendix 2: Thesis interview question

PART I.   Interviewee's introduction

   a.   Could you please introduce briefly about yourself?

        (What is your role in the restaurant?

        How long have you worked here?)

   b.   Could you please tell a bit about your restaurant?

PART II.   Fine dining restaurant

   a.   What is the organizational system of your fine dining restaurant?

   b.   What kind of menu types that your restaurant is using?

   c.   What kind of customer services that a fine dining restaurant offer for their guests?

PART III.   Customer satisfaction

   a.   What is your target segmentation?

   b.   What elements will impact customer satisfaction?

   c.   How do you measure the customer satisfaction, especially for customer retention?

PART IV.   Staff training

   a.   What are the essential skills do you want to train your staffs from the beginning?

   b.   What is a process of training staff in a fine dining restaurant?

   c.   What kinds of training methods does your restaurant apply for the employees?

   d.   How does training benefit to the restaurant/ to customers/ to employee?

   e.   How do you evaluate the importance of staff training in fine dining satisfaction?