ELEMENTS OF DESIGNED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN ETHNIC THEMED RESTAURANTS

CASE STUDY OF THAI RESTAURANTS IN JYVÄSKYLÄ

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to reveal the elements and important factors of a customer experience oriented service delivery process in an ethnic themed restaurant. When a service delivery process is designed, there are many crucial elements which need to be considered, such as interior design, the selection of personnel, and the goods and services provided.

As our economy is in a state of continuous change, which can be followed through history and general business actions and processes, there is a need for change in Food Services as well. The theories were collected to provide a united and structured view of the relevant literature, starting with the economic changes suggested by Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, through the design tools of a service delivery process and the significance of the created authentic image for the customers. This thesis includes an introduction of the Thai culture, and as the case companies add cultural elements to the dining experience, it is essential to know the relevant cultural elements, manners and etiquettes.

A survey was made to provide proof of the mentioned trends and factors in the customer-centered service delivery process during March 2013. The collected data, 277 answers, were analyzed by the SPSS Program to help improve the present services on those premises and to show the clear actions which should be taken when a culturally oriented dining experience has been designed.

Finally, some further action and changes have been suggested to the restaurant management for promoting the provided services.

Keywords customer experience, service design, culinary tourism, ethnic theme
Miscellaneous

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1   INTRODUCTION

In our economy, there are continuous changes which call for modification in actions as well, as these fluctuations have an effect on all kinds of business activities. In this thesis some important elements were found and collected to provide a full and understanding approach for culturally influenced service delivery processes.

During the last years, because of this new phenomenon in businesses, new terms were created such as mechanic and human clues, experience realms, authenticity as business value, culinary tourism or culturally influenced service design. The main goal of this paper is to provide a clear and transparent flow of information regarding how to create and effectively design a customer journey to provide cultural experience to the guests together with the actual goods and services. As in many businesses, the goods and services provided are not enough anymore. Business owners need to create new ways to attract customers and in the case of an ethnically themed restaurant the most conspicuous approach would be to bring the ethnic culture closer to the restaurant visitors.

As the concept of restaurants which are able to provide unique and exotic cultural experiences to its guests is relatively new, there are not many researches made in this field. Nearly the only reasonably close and similar research was conducted in the USA related to the customers' view of Mexican restaurants by Caroline Lego Munoz and Natalie Wood in 2007, but the approach for the research was from a different angle and the presented cultures and inhabitants were unlike as well.

In this paper the focus is on the important elements of a culturally influenced experience oriented service delivery process, how this term became so important and what are the ways of designing and preparing a process flow.

BANTHAI RESTAURANTS

Cooperation has been made between two local Thai themed restaurants and the researcher, to provide a real life example of how to use the relevant theories and terms in the case of an ethnic restaurant, which focuses on culturally influenced experience oriented services. The service offering for both restaurants is based on two kinds of services. From 10 am till 3 pm on weekdays the service is in a buffet style, while during the whole operation from 10 am till around 9 pm there is a possibility for Á la Carte dining.

One of the restaurants is called Banthai, which was founded in 2004. It is located in Kortesuonkatu, near to the city center with the capacity of 50 seats in the dining area. The other restaurant was opened in 2009 with the capacity of 90 seats, just in the heart of the city center, in Asemakatu. The two restaurants are owned and managed by the same person, the personnel works in a circular shift base in both restaurants. Except for the shared personnel, the restaurants also share the same resources and menu, the only difference is the interior design of the premises. There are eight permanent workers and three part-time workers employed in these restaurants and nearly all of them have a Thai nationality. In general, their educational background does not focus on any specific areas of food service businesses, as most of the workers are trained by the manager, Paratsh Asanok to provide standardized service.

In the Banthai in Kortesuonkatu, the design is characterized by simplicity and purity, the only unique items found are some Thai craftworks. (FIGURE 1) On the other hand, in Banthai Deli the designing concept was focused on to provide a very unique experience, with the illustrations of an Asian jungle. In the Banthai Deli the, Thai crafts can be found as well, but the visual focus is more on green leaves and bamboo. (FIGURE 2)

FIGURE 1 Interior design of Banthai restaurant in Kortesuonkatu

FIGURE 2 Interior design of Banthai Deli restaurant in Asemakatu

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   ECONOMIC CHANGES – THE EXPERIENTIAL ECONOMY

In the 21st century our economy shifted to an Experience oriented direction. Now instead of products and services, the experiences and the memorable events can engage the customers. Just as Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (1999) explain in their book, the progress and evaluation of the economy through the history can be defined in 4 major steps. When we talk about these evolutionary steps we refer to the change of economic offerings and values. FIGURE 3 shows the process of customization over these evolutionary steps and we can see that there is a clear historical improvement through these stages.

Economic offering is the process when a company sells tangible or intangible things, activities or events to customers. The economic value can be defined as measurable benefit by an economic actor. These major offerings can be Commodities, Goods, Services and Experiences.
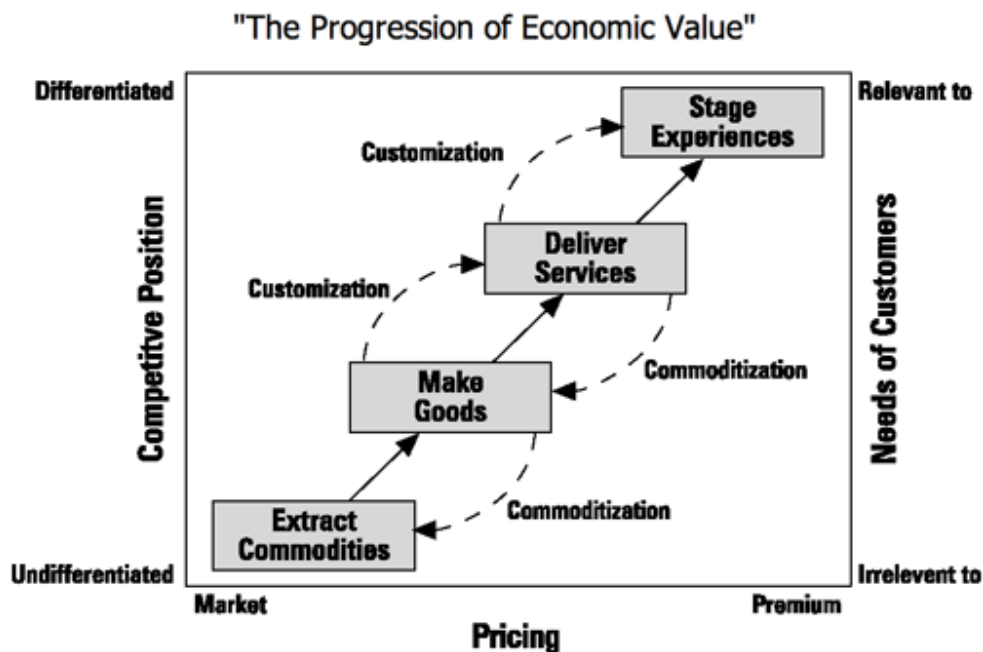
FIGURE 3 "The Progression of Economic Value" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, 72)

When we talk about Commodities offering we describe an Agrarian Economy until the early 19th century, where materials were extracted from the natural world and exchanged owners without being transformed; stayed fungible. The Industrial Revolution was the leading force to change the Agrarian Economy to Industrial Economy. During the Industrial period companies used extracted raw materials to create different goods. These goods are tangible, standardized and most of the time manufactured. Because of the huge number of physical goods in the market, to differentiate between companies, the provided services got to be in the spot light. That is when the period of Service Economy started. Services can be defined as intangible activities personalized to individuals, to create value for them. To be able to perform the service business processes, service providers use goods and commodities.

Nowadays we start to talk about Experience Economy, because goods and services are no longer enough to satisfy customers. So companies started to use services and goods to engage individuals in a personal way. Experience occurs when an individual engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual or spiritual way. This means that every individual has a different kind of experience, because it is an internal reaction to the surrounding events.

EXPERIENCE AS STRATEGY

Because experiences are constructed inside of the customers, these experiences cannot be fully controlled by organizations. To influence customers, companies try to provide a stage to empower guests to create their desire experience. Companies use different tools to design an experience-oriented customer journey. These tools consist of physical and relational elements, just like physical settings, the social actors, and any social interactions with other customers and/or service organizers. (Gopta and Vajic, 2000)

This context can be looked through a drama metaphor, which is often used to describe and understand this phenomenon. It terms the physical elements as the "stage", the employees as "actors", the service delivery process as the "script", fellow customers as the "audience" and the back-office is like the "backstage" in this model. (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) In FIGURE 4 we could see a visual explanation of the drama metaphor, which can help to identify the factors mentioned above. It shows that there is a continuous flow through the delivery process starting from the Back-Office through the Front-Office until the Environment around us.
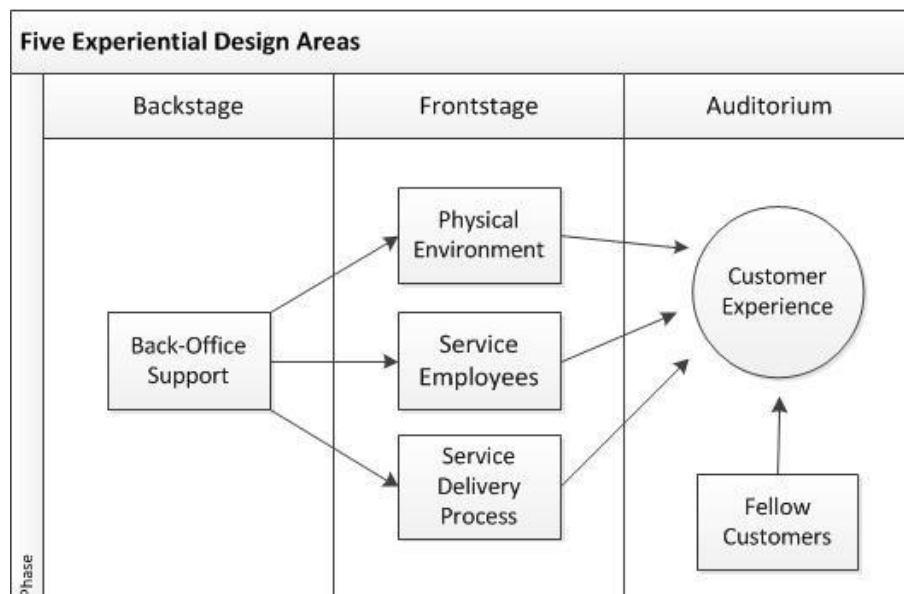

FIGURE 4 "Five Experiential Design Area" (Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010, 79)

Even though companies use this model to provide the desired experience to their customers, they are still not able to fully control all of the elements. When we talk about experiences we mean a relatively long process, because experiences progress over time; cannot be shaped by the moment. It starts in advance and ends after the actual event. It is hard and nearly impossible for an organization to be presented continuously while the experience developing inside of the guests. Berry, Carbone and Haeckel (2002) argue that organizations creates numerous of "clues" produced by product, service or environment, to form a context for the anticipated experience.

These clues can be offered in any point during the delivery process, including before or after the actual event. The customers combine all of the received clues, to experience a total and complete service. In this way the company can influence the ultimate experience. For many companies and organizations this is an ongoing cycle in which clues can flow from one delivery movement to the other. So companies need to carefully and correctly design all the possible clues before, during and after the service process.

These clues can be generated in two different ways. We can talk about mechanic clues, which are created by things, such as interior design, smell or taste etc. There are also human clues, which progress from people, just like the behavior of personnel or other customers.

Companies can design mechanic clues in a more effective way. They carefully create the physical environment and goods to vivify particular emotions, feelings and responses. Bittner (1992) suggests that environment dimensions have cognitive, emotional and physiological effects on not just the customers but on employees as well, so it can influence human clues, just like the interaction between guests and the workforce. When an organization designs an effective service framework they need to focus on all the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch), because people collect information about their surrounding settings through their senses, and it directly route to emotions, even though the customers are not intentionally aware of it.

When companies design the human clues through their services, most of the times they require from employees to get engage with customers through emotional labor. One common form of emotional labor is the creation of rapport between guests and employees. (Gremler and Gwinner, 2000) Rapport refers to pleasant interactions, to build feelings of care, consideration, friendliness or interest. This phenomenon appears when employees are open and able to connect with the customers in an emotional and personal way rather than just perform their duties, responsibilities and roles. This technique used to influence customer satisfaction in this field as well.

To talk about the service delivery process, the drama metaphor can be brought up again, as it is a good way to bring this phenomenon closer to our everyday life. So as it mentioned before, we could refer to the service delivery process as a "script". The duration of the process is an important factor, just as it is when we experience novels, movies or plays. An effective delivery process can also benefit from dramatic structures used in those novels, movies or plays. When we analyze a novel we can see a curve-like structure, which consist of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and finale or catastrophe to achieve a particular artistic or emotional effect. This or most of these structural parts can be seen in a service delivery route as well (Field, 2005).

Most of the scholars argue that customers remember only the high and low point, and the ending of the service flow. As it suggested the end of the performance has the most important effect on the guests and even if the starting point was highly positive and pleasant experience, if the end is neutral or a little negative; the customers will judge the final memory of the whole flow of services as neutral or negative. As in a movie, if we have high expectations for the storyline, and it could not meet with our expectations, the final experience will be negative; even though the movie itself was nice and pleasant.

As it mentioned before the human clues are difficult to control. It can be said about the fellow customers because they influence the atmosphere and the situation even without they recognize it. This is particularly applies to situations when customers share the same settings, resources. Nowadays, because of the internet, this sensation can be understood to a wider number of people, even though in physically they are not presented when they influence each other. When fellow customers are physically presented before, during and after the service process, they presence can develop or destruct other customers' experience. As we know crowding or improper behaviors can have negative influence on the service experience, while the chance to socialize or bond with other customers can please social needs. The only way organizations can address the value of fellow customers is by creating brand communities that encourages customers to share their experiences and feelings. (Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010)

It is important to talk about a well-organized back-office. As it can be understood from the previous figure about the design areas, Back-office is like the base of the whole delivery process. If something does not work smoothly or effectively, it affects the whole process. Another problem is when the back office is totally separated from the front office. It can cause numerous problems, just like coordination issues or harm to the guest experience. Pine and Gilmore (1999) agree that backstage operations should not be treated as a separate unit but rather as a close connection and support for the front stage events. There are several strategies used by different companies to facilitate and coordinate the connection between the front and the back office, but as it can be seen, one of the most successful way, when the front and the back office employees share the same desk and able to communicate and interact daily without any specific hierarchical issues or problems.

Experiences are all about engaging customers. In different business offerings there are different ways of engaging possible clients. Pine and Gilmore developed a realm, to identify what kind of guest participation is needed and what kind of connection clients can build with the offered event or performance.

FIGURE 5 "The Experience Realms" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999)

As FIGURE 5 shows, customers can participate in an active or passive scale to influence the performance. Passive participants experience an event based on pure observation, while active participants are actively contribute to the creation of the experience. There is another dimension to describe connection between guest and experience. When the guests become a part of the experience, it called immersion, while when the experience becomes a part of the guest called absorption.

By coupling these dimensions we could define four areas of experience, entertainment, education, escape and estheticism. Entertainment is when a guest passively observes the experience, and it became part of him/her knowledge. Many experiences can cause entertainment, but we do not talk about them at the moment. Education has a lot common with entertainment, but in this case participants are actively contributed to the delivery process. As the service offering actively engage the mind and/or the body of the observer. In Escaping, guests are actively participating in a created environment. Most common examples for escaping experiences could come from different kinds of motion simulators. In the other hand, the phenomenon when participants of the immerse

environment are not able to change it, because they have little or no effect on the happenings, called the Esthetic experience.

While many businesses are primarily positioned in one of the realm, it is getting more and more eager to mixes these areas and tries to provide an even more engaging and rich experience.

2.2 THE CREATION AND CONSUMPTION OF AUTHENTICITY

There is a significant discussion about the importance of authenticity in the relevant literature. In our Experience Economy people see the world in terms of reality or fantasy, and want to buy something real, original and authentic. Every industry transformed to an experience providing commerce, the issue of authenticity is essential. Customers' sensibility changes correlated to the change in business offerings. During the Commodities phase, the availability of materials was important to the clients. Later it changed to a cost oriented approach when the offering of different goods stepped to the front. It changed again with the improvement of quality during the Service offering stage, and finally customers are sensible about authenticity when the business offering are experiences.

As authenticity gets in the center of attention, nowadays all kind of businesses are accentuating their authenticity and originality to the possible customers. They do this action in the scale that it is difficult to make a difference between the real thing and the phony. Gilmore and Pine (2007) established a guideline of three main actions to decide how to show authenticity.

> *"Axiom 1: If you are authentic, then you don't have to say you're authentic.*
> *Axiom 2: If you say you're authentic, then you'd better be authentic.*
> *Axiom 3: It's easier to be authentic if you don't say you're authentic."* (p. 44)

This is an interesting approach to authenticity. As we know, experiences are generated inside of the customers, just as the view of authenticity. In case a company put pressure on costumers to characterize their products or services as an authentic offering, these costumers would start to focus on unconsciously to see the inauthentic parts of these offerings. Companies need to realize that just because they try to appear authentic; it is not guaranteed that their customers will see them as authentic.

Based on what kind of economic value we are talking about, there are different types of authenticity. In the case of commodities, we call authenticity as *Natural*. It applies to things which exist in their own natural state, remained untouched by human and not artificial. Goods can be *Original* authentic, which means that these goods are original in design, or the first of its kind, not an imitation or a copy. When a service is outstandingly well performed, individualized and filled with feelings it can be called *Exceptional* authenticity. When we refer to authentic experience, it needs to connect different context to the actual service. It has to draw inspiration from history, culture or from some shared memories, than its called *Referential* authenticity. (Gilmore and Pine, 2007, 50)

In our daily life, these authenticities are mixed and we can experience them continuously. Even though these are presented endlessly in our life, companies need to be able to clearly identify what kinds of businesses they are in, which economy offering is relevant to them. They also need to decide which of these authenticity genres are they going to apply to their products or services. As a best practice, organizations need to focus primarily on just one authentic genre to appeal real.

To make difference between an authentic and inauthentic experience is a difficult task, because objects are what they are but we characterize authenticity based on our experiences and expectations. Therefor it is personally determined. In this case we cannot even talk about authenticity, because it is an irrelevant concept, we can only talk about the degree of inauthenticity if we want to describe an experience.

A matrix has been created to help identify the degree of authenticity / inauthenticity; it is called The Real/Fake Matrix. FIGURE 6 shows that there are two standards to find out the degree of authenticity "Being true to itself" and "Being what it says it is" which helps to identify 4 different platforms.

The Real / Fake Matrix

Is what it says it is	**REAL** – **FAKE**	**REAL** – **REAL**
Is *not* what it says it is	**FAKE** – **FAKE**	**FAKE** – **REAL**

Is *not* true to itself   Is true to itself

FIGURE 6 "The Real / Fake Matrix" (Pine and Gilmore, 2007, 97)

If a business is not Real-Real it needs to accept it, and find some elements of the business which are real. After that they can focus on the real thing during the different business processes. In the case of a Fake-Fake business offering, they need to be open about their inauthenticity, because that can be a business approach as well. Nowadays there are more and more customers whose focus on the Faux offerings. It is a new phenomenon, because many customers like Fake products or services because of some other benefits, after which it cannot be called Fake, just Faux.

Based on all the previous mentioned facts and figures, authenticity can be seen as a modern cultural concept for the assumption of a true experience.

2.3 EXPERIENCE IN TOURISM

Butler and Jones (2001) use *tourism* as a term to cover all aspects of people leaving their home for more than 24 hours and *hospitality* as a specific area of providing accommodation and meal for tourist. There is one contradiction in their definition which is that in hospitality the possible guests or visitors can be local residents as well, not just tourists. There are many times when in the literature these 2 concepts used interchangeably, in this case it covers travel, accommodation, food service, theme parks, attractions, entertainment, clubs, gaming, recreation, convention and destination management as well. (Okumus, Altinay and Chathoth, 2010, 22)

Under the Hospitality and Tourism industry the different organizations can be grouped by their core activities, size or geographical service areas. When we categorize them based on their activities we can identify the subsectors of this industry, such as Travel and transport, Accommodation, Food and beverages, Entertainment and recreation, Tourism offices or destination management organizations and Nongovernment tourism organizations. Each of these subsectors can be broken into several subgroups as well. Because there is a huge scale of business variety in this industry we need to be careful not to generalize their businesses because they all have unique characteristics to make themselves visible in this multiplicity.

Tourist has been described as "*someone who visits a place for pleasure and interest, usually while they are on holiday*" in Cambridge Dictionary. The emphasis in this term is that these people need to spend their special time, holiday in these unusual places to call them tourists. During the early twentieth century as part of the improvement of the social systems, we could see an increasing number in the permitted leisure time and income by organizations. We could see an increasing number in inbound and outbound tourism as well. As the social benefits will start to lead the employment enrollment trends, the possible number for leisure travelling will change in correlation to it. FIGURE 7 shows the potential future trends for International Traveling.
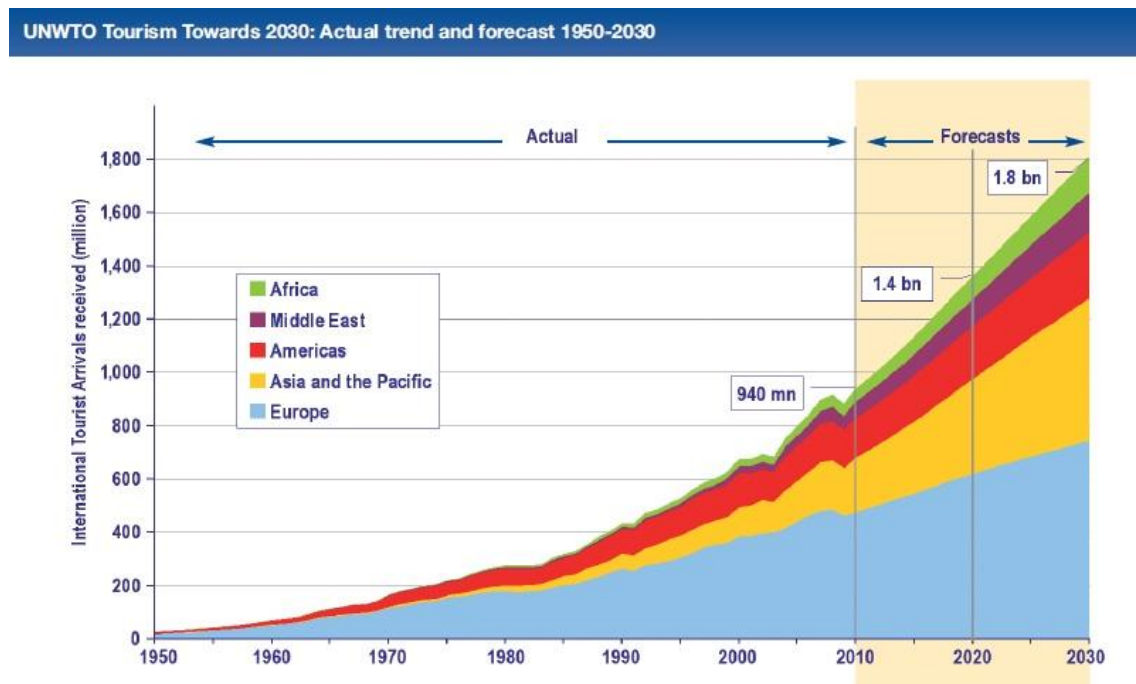
FIGURE 7 "UNWTO Tourism Towards 2030: Actual trend and forecast 1950-2030" (World Tourism Organization, 2012, 14)

As there will be more and more people visiting different countries and cultures, their expectations and perceptions will get closer to reality as well. It can cause that the service providers needs to deliver more accurate and more authentic experience for their guests.

This industry faces many other challenges and difficulties as well. Just like all of the macro trends provide lots of tasks to these organizations, there are new legislations, local or global crisis, sociocultural trends, tense competitions or technological developments. H&T organizations need to be able to follow the contemporary management trends and practices all the time, because their core business is built around the guests' expectations and needs which are continuously changing through different ages.

There is a strong ongoing shift from services to experiences in our economy. This change requires a different mindset from managers and even from employees in this industry. Some organizations specialize in adventure tourism to provide extraordinary transformational experience, while others might involve in routine experiences which are important to their guests' daily life. In any case experience management in this field is a cruel development and now we can see it, as a basic requirement for profit.

It has been established that tourism need to offer a set of experiences, memories and emotions related to a place or an action. As tourist experience is highly subjective, even though the individuals are experiencing similar activities and settings, organizations are struggling to predict and standardize these experiences.

INFLUENCES AND OUTCOMES
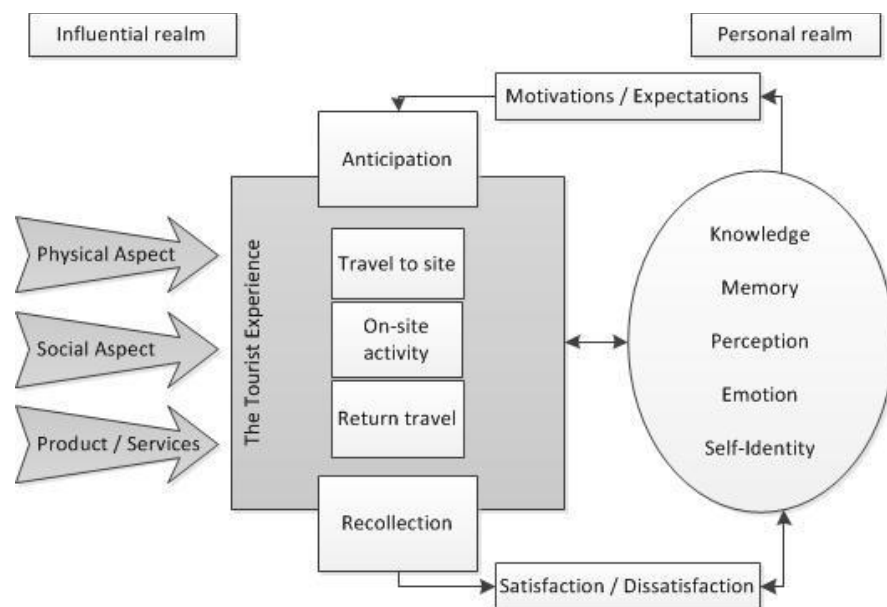
FIGURE 8 "The tourist experience conceptual model" (Clawson and Knetsch, 1966)

When we talk about experience in tourism, most of the time we use Clawson a Knetsch five-phase model. This model (FIGURE 8) identifies five different but interacting stages of the tourist journey which creates a combined and final experience inside of the guests. Based on this model we can indicate that experience changes over time, in this case over these phases. Scholars identified the problem with this model, because it tends to focus only on the outside forces of the journey.

When a service delivery process designed it needs to focus on the possible expectation by the tourists. Travelers arrive to a specific place or destination with ideas of the possible experience they could get. These ideas are influenced by many factors, such as the structure of the home society, ideas and perceptions taken from media or product image, previous knowledge or past experiences related to the destination. These factors are created even before the tangible journey starts. While the tourists are participating in the actual travel, they have many interactions with the environment, with other tourists, employees with the locals, and when they came back from their trip their overall experience can be shaped as well.

This provides the explanation for the fact that the newest and most eager research area in the Service Business, and specifically in the Hospitality Management, is how an organization can measure and modify the guests' experience.

2.4 CULINARY TOURISM

In this section, the connection between food and travel will be described. Most of the time when people try to experience something extraordinary while consuming food, they have two possibilities. They can travel abroad to eat local delicacies or eat to travel by consuming foreign food at home This shows that eating and tourism is closely related to each other. This connection between food and traveling created a new academic term, called Culinary Tourism. When we talk about Culinary Tourism we refer to eating unfamiliar food or participating in an alien food-way to encounter, know and consume other places and cultures. Lucy Long (2004) describes culinary tourism as:

> *"…individuals exploring foods new to them as well as using food to explore new culture and ways of being. It is about the experiencing of food in a mode that is out of the ordinary, that steps outside the normal routine to notice difference and the power of food to represent and negotiate that difference…"* (p. 20)

Culinary Tourism is always individually specific, because it depends on who is eating, and what is the home and alien culture. As we can see, food can act as a transportable icon of place, cultural identity as it became a movable symbol of foreignness. There is a strong relation between food and identity. We can characterize or classify certain locations with certain types of food and we can use this knowledge to guide ourselves or our guests through these regions or countries. This process recognizes food as a cultural tourism product.

Food culture or food habit refers to different ways of humans preparing, selecting, serving, eating, and in general all of the activities they do with the ingredients. Different food habits developed by different groups of people sharing the same culture, the same rules about what is edible, how it can be produced, how it should taste and look like. But still, the final choice of food is made by individuals, influenced by their personality, perspectives and knowledge.

The Cambridge Dictionary describes Foreign as "*belonging or connected to a country which is not its own*" and also "*something can be described as foreign to a particular people if they do not know about it or it is not within their experience*". I should point out that there is a huge pressure to make a well-defined line between "us" and "them" to maintain group separation when we talk about foreignness or otherness. That is an easier way to bring the differences closer to the guests or customers. In this case Culinary Tourists are eating something other than the typical food of their own culture and that is how they are able to experience something new.

It also needs to be clarified, that there is a big difference between Culinary and Gastronomy. As it known in the Hospitality business, Gastronomy is only a narrow subarea of Culinary. To use the definition by Cambridge Dictionary, which describes Gastronomy as the "*art and knowledge involved in preparing and eating good food*", it shows that it is particularly focus on gourmet cuisines. So it is the art and science of selecting, arranging, presenting and appreciating fine food, while Culinary combines all the concepts related to cooking, food and kitchen.

Many cultures use food symbolically, associating different meanings to it and to the way of eating it, and this has become a part of the cultural habits and symbolic system. That is why presenting different dishes and food can bring cultural identity to the table. But a specific dish is not the only way to identify a culture. It can be characterized by its eating habits, use of food, or table etiquette. Food choices are society driven, because of the inborn preferences for taste.

Every food selection is motivated by numerous factors such as sensory selection, variety, cost, convenience, entertainment etc. There are specific combinations of core and complementary characteristics to every ethnic cuisine, which is the reason why just by structure, taste or smell somebody can make a separation of different ethnic food. Because of these characteristics of food, any special ethnic dish can be acceptable or inedible in other cultures.

2.4.1 DISTINGUISHED WAYS OF CULINARY TOURISM

Culinary Tourism is always about eating the differences what mobility can bring to us. Most scholars talk about Inbound Culinary Tourism; when people travel geographical distances to get in contact with, and experience foreign food cultures. In this case it is not just about knowing or experiencing another culture through food, but rather using food as a tool to achieve a sense of adventure, curiosity, adaptation and openness towards the other culture.

On the other hand, the Eat-to-travel phenomenon allows customers to travel around the world without leaving their homes. As we know, most of the time food can create the feeling of being home, belonging or intimacy, but in this case, instead of eating to feel at home, culinary tourists consume food to feel displaced and voluntarily try something alien and exotic for them.

Culinary food tourism also attracts other elements of the foreign culture, like the traditional ingredients, recipes, and often immigrants who can reproduce the authentic taste, and cultural environment. In this way, ethnic restaurants can bring the real cultural experience for the guests, so they do not need to travel abroad from their homes. In other words, the foreign food travels, so the culinary tourist does not need to. This can bring tourist adventure to everyday life.

The term of Cosmopolitan is closely related to the Eat-to-travel phenomenon. Cosmopolitan recently used to describe places that contain people and things from many different parts of the world, and it can also combine a wide variety of "global food". This can be clearly seen in global cities, where there is a huge number of culturally diverse food providers. Because of the fast growing positive view of Globalization, more and more cities try to demonstrate their cosmopolitan status by providing a greater variety of "foreign" food outlets, mobile inhabitants and alien goods. The Globalization process started during the 16th century as the operation of important trading roots connecting different continents just like the European trading routs, trans-Atlantic routes or the Silk route from Asia to the Mediterranean. This widened to its modern understanding during the 1960s.

2.4.2 ROLE OF STORIES AND THEMES IN DESIGNING EXPERIENCE

Theming is the process when a defined environment has given a specific character, theme or story. This strategy is frequently adapted and used by service industry, particular in hospitality and tourism. Often these themes are implemented from history, imagination or different cultures. That is an effective way to get attention from the possible guests and previous studies shows that if stories are used during the presentation of any kinds of information, there is a huge likelihood that the receiver will learn, engage and remember to the information and settings.

To use a theme or story is a good way to give a framework to the delivery process; as the structure of the service will be clear and understandable and visitors will be able to develop meanings and feeling for the experience. (Moscardo, 2007) As it mentioned in Pine and Gilmore's book stories and themes are a good way to bring special experience to the service business, also there are more and more marketing activities which use theme or story to build a strong relationship between the organization and the customer.

To be able to integrate a theme or story to the delivery process, a manager needs to design a framework for the touch-points, and see where the story or theme can fit in to help provide an exceptional service experience. There are lots of discussions in the literature how stories or themes can improve tourist experience, but the findings have not been used to the Food Service Area. As Food Service is part of the Tourism Industry, there are similarities between the two businesses, so the findings in one region can be used in the other, just like it shows in FIGURE 9.
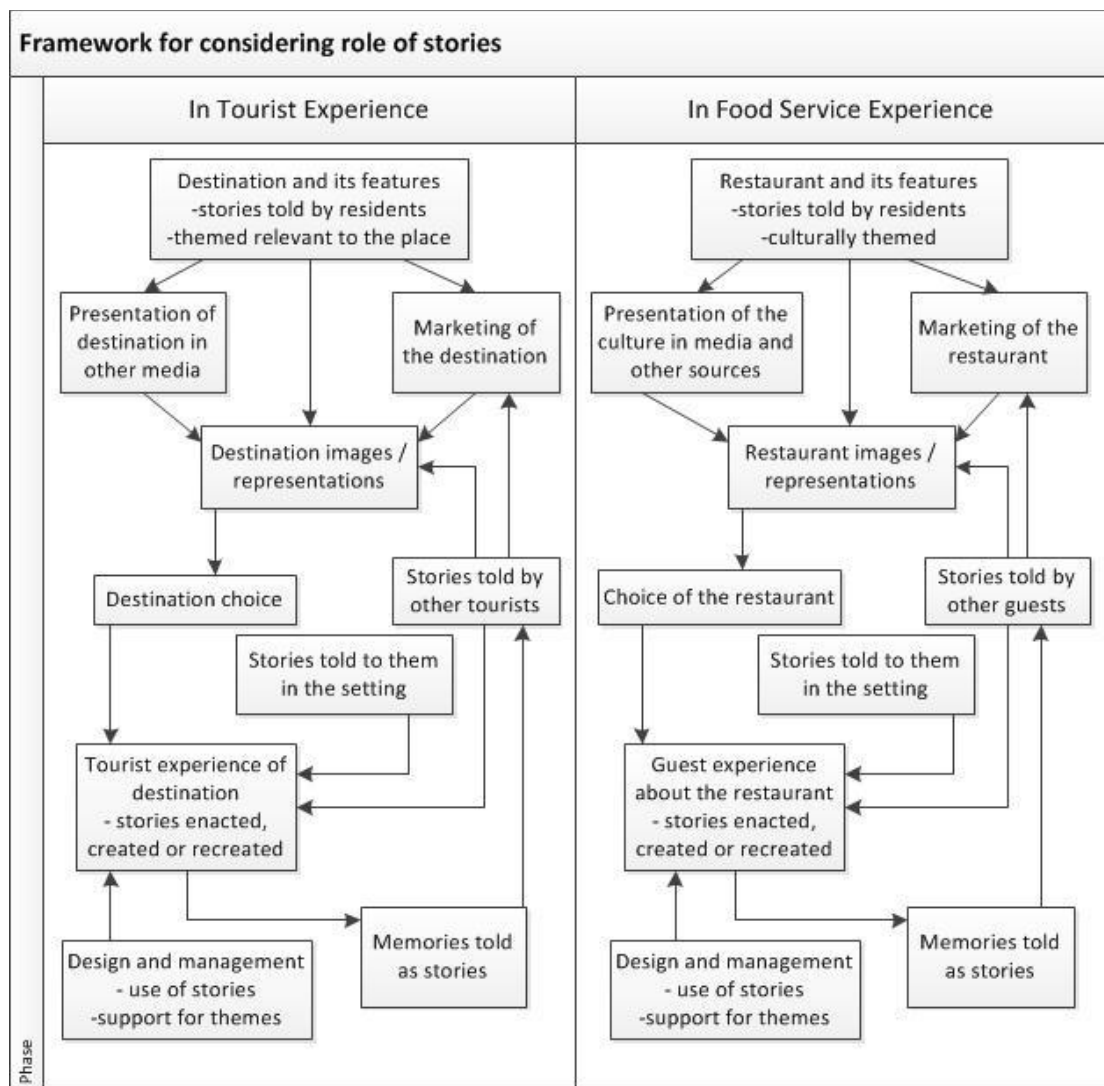
FIGURE 9 "Framework for considering role of stories" (based on Moscardo, 2010, 51)

The framework suggests that stories related to places exist from the beginning, because of the history, location or culture of the place. The companies just need to use these stories through different marketing channels, because any stories or themes could have a positive or negative effect on destination decision making. If a business strategy is built around a story or theme, it needs to be supported by the goods, management, staff and design. As soon as a tourist or visitor creates

its own experience of the story it can be uses and presented later on to fellow visitors as well. That is shows how much is it a cycle. (Moscardo, 2010)

It was suggested that certain types of products could be more effective when presented by certain kinds of stories or themes and certain stories or themes could be used better to attract special market segments. Because in different stages of life, people has different needs, and different personalities attracted by different stories or themes, to eliminate too much segmentations companies use multiple markets and sometimes even multiple themes or stories. It would be a dangerous area, because if a company focuses on multiple themes, it could mean that it will not be able to provide authentic service in any of the themes.

It is clearly seen that the use of theme in place image is likely to create higher lever of intention to visit and awareness of the service. The theme or story can be about the place itself, about the employees, or about the interior design. It was proposed that if a guest can participate in creating the story or the theme the final evaluation of the experience will be highly positive. But still, companies need to take care of creating a balance between providing information about a theme or story and pressuring guests to participate in the process of storytelling.

ETHNIC THEMED RESTAURANTS

In different part of the world, restaurants have different roles and importance. While in some part of the world, dining in a restaurant means a social classification; in other parts it has a significant impact on social and business activities. Ethnic themed restaurants need to provide a wide overlook of familiarity, authenticity, novelty and adventure at the same time, because it has to introduce the habits of the home and the alien culture. Many times ethnic restaurants closely connected to a specific religion as well, because religions values and beliefs are part of the culture.

Ethnicity refers to a group of people who are characterized or related to a specific racial, religious, linguistic or other certain custom and belief traits, and most of the time it states a minor group of people or minority.

Ethnic theming is the way of using ethnic art, décor, goods, music, name and various stereotypes to create a characterized setting which imitates some exotic but recognizable culture. These places can attract various customers for several reasons, for example it can be a way to interact with different cultures, to experience uniqueness or to connect with their own ethnicity. Because of these reasons the demands for newly established ethnic-themed restaurants are in grow.

One of the main reasons to visit an ethnic themed restaurant is because of its ethnic style cuisine, but this attraction has lot more layers that it can be seen from the first sight. Previous studies show that the background stories used during the presentation of the culture has a devoted importance. Through these background settings customers can experience the illusion of authentic ethnic culinary when participating in the food service flow.

When thinking about a specific ethnic food culture, many times food stereotypes came across the mind, because every ethnicity has its habits of eating a specific food or ingredient more often, as a part of the cultural heritage. These food stereotypes create the impression that Germans eat "Wurst" all the time, Chinese has "Fortune Cookies", Italians cannot be without "Spaghetti" or Koreans are "Kimchi" eaters.

2.4.3 EXPERIENCING AND EXPLORING ETHNIC CULTURE

In the literature of Psychology and Cultural studies there are many researches focused on how people can participate in different cultures and how these cultures change them. A general way of seeing the importance of cross-cultural experiences is that it is a way to improve open-minded and acceptable approach. That is valuable for all kinds of businesses. In Food Services, customers need to be open for new tastes, new habits and new settings, they need to be adaptable.

Culture is a way of established life by a group of people and passed through generations. Usually people from the same culture share common values, beliefs, attitudes, practices and perspectives. It is common to use an iceberg analog when describing cultural complexity or heritage. Just like the tip of an iceberg there is only a small part of the culture which can be easily seen or experienced, the core values, beliefs and attitudes are hidden and it takes long and continuous approach to understand it.

Ethnicity is a special way of seeing social identity. In case of ethnicity the groups of people share the same cultural and historical heritage, and see themselves as outsiders compared to the home country isolated by geography or socioeconomic status.

Experiencing a new culture can cause numerous actions. Most of the time, the first reaction to cultural diversity is culture shock. This phenomenon occurs when people are relocated to a culture, different than their own, and it can be described as a continuous feeling of loneliness, anger toward people from the new area and confusion. Other way to react to culture differences is integration. This is the process of adjusting to the new environment, and habits by becoming part of it. (Bahner-Guhin and Wilcox, 2009)

The most conspicuous cultural signs are language, traditional clothing, because it can be seen or heard from the distance, while usually eating is done in hidden of the privacy of ones' home, so to get to know it is a difficult task. Theories suggest that cuisines can be culturally characterized by seasoning. There is a trend that

different cultures use specific seasonings, flavors to prepare their dishes. Fusion restaurants use this fact to characterize their restaurant to a specific ethnic group by preparing their dishes in an ethnic seasoned way.

While consuming a new food culture discomfort can occur, if a consumer is not familiar with the unwritten table etiquette or habits and deliberately breaks one of some of its rules. This can cause culture shock as well.

2.4.4 ETHNIC AUTHENTICITY IN FOOD SERVICE

As it mentioned in the previous sections, culinary authenticity is not the only important thing for guests on food serving premises. Companies need to provide a symbolic ethnicity through subjects, design, processes and performances. Sometimes cultural stereotypes and perceptions have so strong effect on decision making; that managers and business leaders in a restaurant need to change or modify the real ethnic practices to fit to the created impression of authentic cultural presentation.

Most of the time, the use of an ethnic theme in Food Service creates a genuine characteristic, which generates an authentic image in the guests' mind. Another reason for the successful use of ethnicity is that guests has less knowledge or experience related to the ethnic group, so their critical analysis of the place and practices is less cruel. Many times guests want to be part of an alien tradition and customs, so they choose to visit an ethnic themed restaurant. This symbolizes a positive attachment to an alien culture and represents non-judgment against others.

Most of the perceptions related to ethnic culinary items come from a romantic ideology. Such an ideology gives an impression and imitates the idea that some people are more exotic and ethnic than others. Therefore, it is important to examine different cultures from different points of view, because in different parts of the world ethnicity could have a different meaning.

Restaurants could provide a good opportunity to observe interpersonal cultural exchanges as part of the food service. It creates, reproduces and delivers a systematic meaning behind actions. Restaurants are perfect environments to bring together different actors of cultural differences.

In these restaurants, guests observe the quality of the dining experience, and based on what they experienced they would categorize the actors of the food service to different authentic stages. Their evaluation shows how well the restaurant was able to deliver the restaurant's menu, recipes, presentation, and

atmosphere. Just like professional reviewers, customers do not only focus on the inside décor and the taste of the food during their dining experience. For the guests, an authentic presentation of the ethnic serving traditions could mean a lot more than how some professionals appreciate it. This suggests that there are more ways to achieve ethnic authenticity.

Another issue is that ethnic restaurants are not fighting to be traditionally authentic. They are just fighting with the competition to provide a more authentic way of serving their ethnic food. There are many ethnic restaurants, far away from their home country, which are not able to serve entirely authentic dishes, but they can focus on the presentation of the ethnic gastronomy. So the food does not have to be authentic to appear to be authentic.

There are many restaurants which make changes to their ethnic cuisine based on some foreign standards. Most of the time changes were based on aesthetic values, cultural perceptions and costs of ingredients. Customers desire only the illusion of ethnic authenticity regarding their previous knowledge and experiences about the ethnic group. (Lu and Fine, 1995)

There are many times, when restaurant owners try to teach what is real and traditional in their ethnic food ways, but they need to compromise and offer non-authentic items and services because of the customers' demands. There are many times, when owner are not able to change long standing false cultural perceptions, because they have become part of the mainstream of the way of seeing the specific culture. In this case, it can cause conflicts and challenges with the customers, because they could prefer unreal offerings instead of the traditions.

2.5 AUTHENTIC THAI CULTURE – REALITY OR IMAGINATION

THAILAND

Thailand located in South-East Asia and known by foreigners mostly because of its exotic wildlife and nature, Buddhist temples and unique cuisine. Neighbor countries are Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia. Thailand is the 50th largest country in the world with area like Spain, France or Texas. The capital called Bangkok, but other major cities are Chiang Mai and Pattaya. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy the king and the royal family is respected by the whole nation, their pictures are to be seen everywhere, as they serve as a symbol for national identity and unity.

Thailand is the only Southeast Asian state which has not been colony for any other nations, and it kept its freedom for more than 700 years. In their local language 'Muan Thai' the name of Thailand means *"Country of the free"*. They have willingly adapted foreign influences from the neighbor nations, just like from Malaysia, China, India and even from Portugal. They transformed these traditions, so nowadays they are part of the colorful and harmonious image of the Thai culture.

Thailand has the population of 65 million people and among them the majority is ethnically Thai, only about 20% identifies itself as Chinese, Indian, Malay, Mon, Khmer, Burmese or Lao ethnicity.

The official language is Thai, but as the globalization process the Thai elite use English as secondary language.

Thailand has a tropical climate with three seasons and the average temperature is +28 degrees with really high humidity. Even though of this hot and humid weather, appropriate clothing is necessary all the time, which can cover knees and shoulders, even when it is a visit to a temple, city or the beach shore. Thai people wear clothes even when they go for swimming, which shows how decent they are related to showing skins.

Thailand is one of the most Buddhist countries in the world. The domain spiritual expression called Theravada Buddhism, which focuses on personal spiritual growth and a constant search of true life. The religion is built around the concept of Karma, which means that every past action have positive or negative effect on the present, and every present action will have effect on the future. They believe in the Four Noble Truth, the truth of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path to the cessation of suffering. All of these concepts can be described as the Wheel of Life, which is a complex view of the universe through a Buddhist eye. (BBC Religions, 2013)

As Buddhism is an important part of the Thai life, the religious values and beliefs can be seen vividly in their everyday life. Just like that it is expected from Thai males to become a Buddhist monk for minimum of 3 months of their life.

THAI CULTURE, LIFESTYLE AND SERVICE STRUCTURE

An established research and finding related to cultural dimensions by Geert Hofstede is one way to analyze and view the grouped values of the Thai culture. There are five characteristics in Hofstede's dimensions, called Power Distance (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity or Femininity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) and Long Term Orientation (LTO), seen in FIGURE 10.
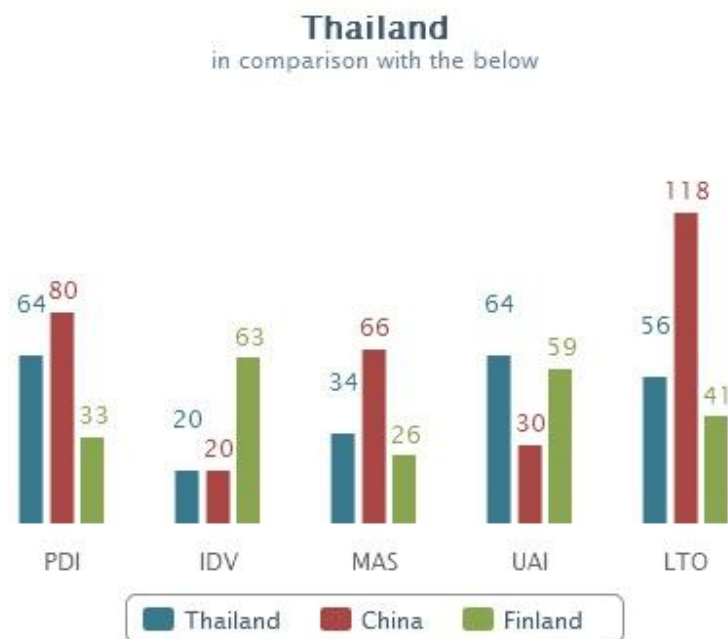
FIGURE 10 "Thai culture through the 5-D model" (Geert Hofstede, 2001)

It can be said that in Thailand inequality is highly accepted, and there is a wide scale of strict rules and protocols used in every aspects of life, which creates the Power distance point in this table. Their society built in a hierarchical system, which created that Thai people can accept ranking privileges and differences easily, and they show loyalty and respect towards their superiors. FIGURE 8 shows as well, that Finland scores low in this scale, because Finland can be characterized as independent, empowering, equal and accessible country.

The Individualism element shows how much the members of a group think in term of themselves or the group. Most of the Asian cultures identified as Collectivist cultures, based on their core values, the loyalty and belonging to a group are the most valuable and important personality traits. In order to avoid confrontation within a group Thai people used to use "Yes" in term of not just acceptance or agreement but to avoid the loose of social face. They are very sensitive not to feel ashamed in front of others and not to lose their respect towards them. In opposite to this, in Finish society it preferred when individuals can take care of themselves and they measure and value decisions and actions taken by individuals rather than groups.

Thailand scores one of the lowest among the Asian countries in Masculinity scale. While China is a Masculine society which is driven by competitiveness, success and achievements, Thailand identified as Feminine, with a dominant value of caring for others, quality of life and harmony. Their society focuses on self-success and happiness in life; they "work in order to live". Still in Thai culture a more traditional picture and role of male and female can be seen, which is not common for Feminine countries.

The Uncertainty avoidance dimension shows how the society sees the future, and a higher value demonstrates that they would do anything to control the future and the outcomes of actions. Thailand considered one of the main uncertainty avoiding cultures in the Asian region. In order to minimize the "non-known" they implemented numerous rules, policies, laws and practices. The Thai society does not ready to accept changes easily, and they avoid risks as well.

The long term orientation is closely related to the teaching of Confucius ideology, which was based on Chinese philosophies of ethical-sociopolitical ideas. As in Thailand the Confucianism was not so popular their score does not group them together with other Asian nations, but still they respect traditions and inequality. In Thailand deadlines are fluid and flexible and their decision-making is based on personal connections rather than facts.

Based on previous analysis it can be seen that Thailand has similarities with other Asian nations, but their culture shows some similar patterns with non-Asian cultures as well. Still, as an Asian country the show of any emotions are considered rude, and it is avoidable. In general Thai people do not like conflicts. Between Thais there is no visual sign of conflict, they use reasoning to solve a problems.

Based on the view by foreign tourists, Thai people are polite and friendly; and among any other tourist destinations Thailand has the most hospitable, polite and spontaneous service system. But when we talk about International or Cross-cultural businesses cultural differences can cause various problems. R Gesteland describes Thai business culture as "*Relationship-Focused, Formal, Polychromic and Reserved*". Which means that their business style is more sensitive, focused on connections rather than deal, with high appreciation of face-to-face conversations. As it said already status differences are valued and there are several business rituals and signs used during a negotiation or meeting. As it is a Polychromic culture, the time looked in a fluid way, schedules and deadlines are flexible, and in general they have a free timeline.

THAI CUISINE AND TABLE ETIQUETTE

Just as its culture got many foreign influences, it can be said about its culinary culture as well. Chinese, Malaysian, Indonesian and Indian cuisine enriched its culinary diversity. Most of the dishes are combined and grouped together based on the original Chinese principles of harmonious versatility, just like to eat mild dishes with strong ones, grilled with steamed courses and liquid with masticated options. They focus on the taste and the visual look of dishes; they use all of the five main tastes during a meal and combine ingredients and dishes based on their colors.

Thai culinary is well known in the world, and made its food culture familiar to foreign taste. The main diet mainly consists of different types of rice, noodles made by rice, wheat or beans, fruits and vegetables, mostly shrimp but they like beef, chicken, pork and duck as well. Most of the time Thai food can be differentiated from other South-East Asian cuisines by its flavors. It is one of the hottest cuisine in the world with constantly use of chili pepper. Typical seasonings are coconut, coriander, galangal, garlic, ginger roots, lime and lemon grass, mint and tamarind. They add fermented fish products to most of their main dishes, and they consume different types of curried dishes daily.

Traditionally a main dish consists of steamed rice, soup, curried dish, fried dish and a salad, and all served at the same time. They use mostly spoon and folk as cutlery, knife is not necessary, because the ingredients have been cut to eatable size during the preparation process. Chopsticks are provided only for noodle dishes. In traditional Thai cuisine, oven does not known or used. The most common cooking methods are steaming, quick-frying and deep-frying.

Compared to Finnish table manners and habits there are many differences in Thai table etiquette. In Thailand people eat communally, rather than in a small group or alone and dining is more of a social activity than a need to stay alive. As dining is a social motion and it is based on the Thai culture, the social status and hierarchy has really important role in it. It is common that the senior ladies order dishes for the whole table and in the end they do not divide the final bill, as the

person who will pays the bill, will show his or her social status and richness which has a really important effect on social life. That is why eating out in Thailand many times can be seen by foreigners as show off after someone's achievement. As it is a social activity the atmosphere in a Thai restaurant preferred to be full with conversations and laughs, rather than quietly enjoying the dishes, which goes against to the Finnish habits as in Finland it is preferred to stay speechless during a meal as a show of appreciation for the cook.

As Thai meals are always shared, they placed on the middle of the table and it is expected that everyone takes only a little part of each dishes, so that the other can taste it as well. When they order the dishes they take it deep consideration the previously mentioned Chinese principles of harmony, so during a meal it is easy to find all the five tastes, textures and colors. Usually they serve the ordered dishes continuously, and it is not rude to start as soon as one of the meals arrived to the table even though the others are not there yet. (Phuket.com, 2013)

3 METHODOLOGY

As a case study the goal is to "*study a case, construct out of its natural occurring social situations and investigate it in considerable depth*." (Botterill and Platenkamp, 2012, 19) This method was chosen as it was seen as the best possible options to study the described phenomenon and its influence on the "home" location.

The case companies are two Thai restaurants in Jyväskylä, Finland, under the same management, which gave place to examine how customers react in an ethnic themed restaurant and how important ethnicity is for them, when they choose their dining destination.

To measure the guest experiences in these premises a quantitative method was used. The data was collected by survey. Survey is a way to "*collect data in a standardized way from a sample of respondents enabling the data to be codified and analyzed*." (Botterill and Platenkamp, 2012, 170)

This way was seen as the best option to gather information from a wide variety of people in a short term of time. As the restaurants lacked of any online ways to contact the consumers, the survey was handed out personally by the researcher in a paper form to every visitors, during 6 days of the restaurants full operation time from 10 a.m. till 8 p.m.

The survey was designed in a way that it would take only a few minute and it is easy for the respondents to fill it out because of the close-end questions. It mostly consisted of some basic demographic information requests, yes/no styled alias dichotomous questions and some semantic differential styled scales, to ask rating from the guests related to different elements of the food service.

There were 3 open ended questions in the survey, to ask the respondent's personal feelings or ideas related to the restaurant. The demographic questions were used as warm-up inquiries and a way to identify the age, gender and nationality characteristics of the restaurant visitors. The dichotomous questions

were designed to separate visitors based on their previous restaurant experiences, and their perceptions. The semantic differential scales were created to rate the guests' impression, perception and experience of services and products by the restaurant. A five-point rating scale was used with two bi-polar adjectives describing the extremist options. (QuestionPro, 2013)

4   RESULTS

During the six days, 277 answers were collected on the premises. 163 responses were collected in the Banthai Deli and 114 in the Banthai. This provides a complex view of the guests based on the differences in size and capacity between these restaurants. FIGURE 11 is a chart showing how the guests were divided between the different premises based on the dining times. Altogether 206 guests had a lunch buffet either in Banthai or in Banthai Deli. This means that only about 25 % of the answers, just 71 are relevant to an Á la Carte dining experience.
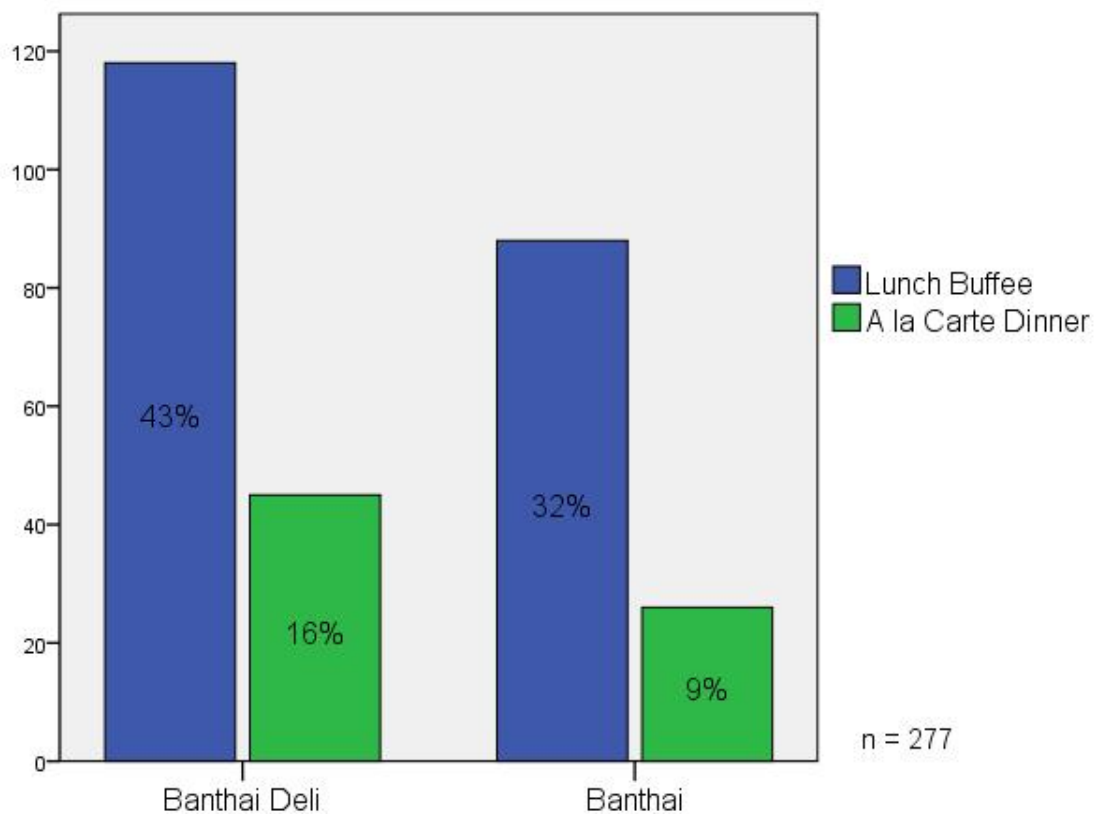
FIGURE 11 Restaurant visitors related to the time and place of collection

Based on the survey, the most common visitors were Finnish, with 95% of the answers coming from Finnish people. The rest of the visitors were American, Canadian, Chinese, French, Italian, Mexican, Swedish and Singaporean.

Two main age groups of customers can be identified, which visit the restaurant more frequently based on FIGURE 12: those between 21 and 30 years-old and from 31 to 40 years old. These two groups covered two thirds of the answers. The third widest group comprises guests from 41 till 50 years old, with nearly one fifth of the answers.
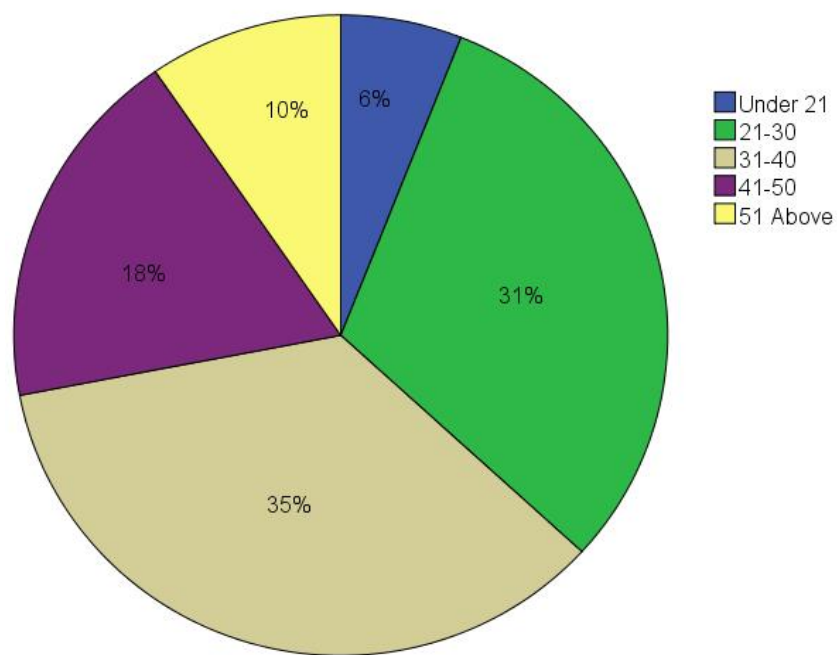
FIGURE 12 Age Groups

Most of the visitors, 58 % of the answers, had had meal in both restaurants before. As soon by FIGURE 13, about 90 % of the respondents had some previous experiences in either of the Banthai restaurants before.
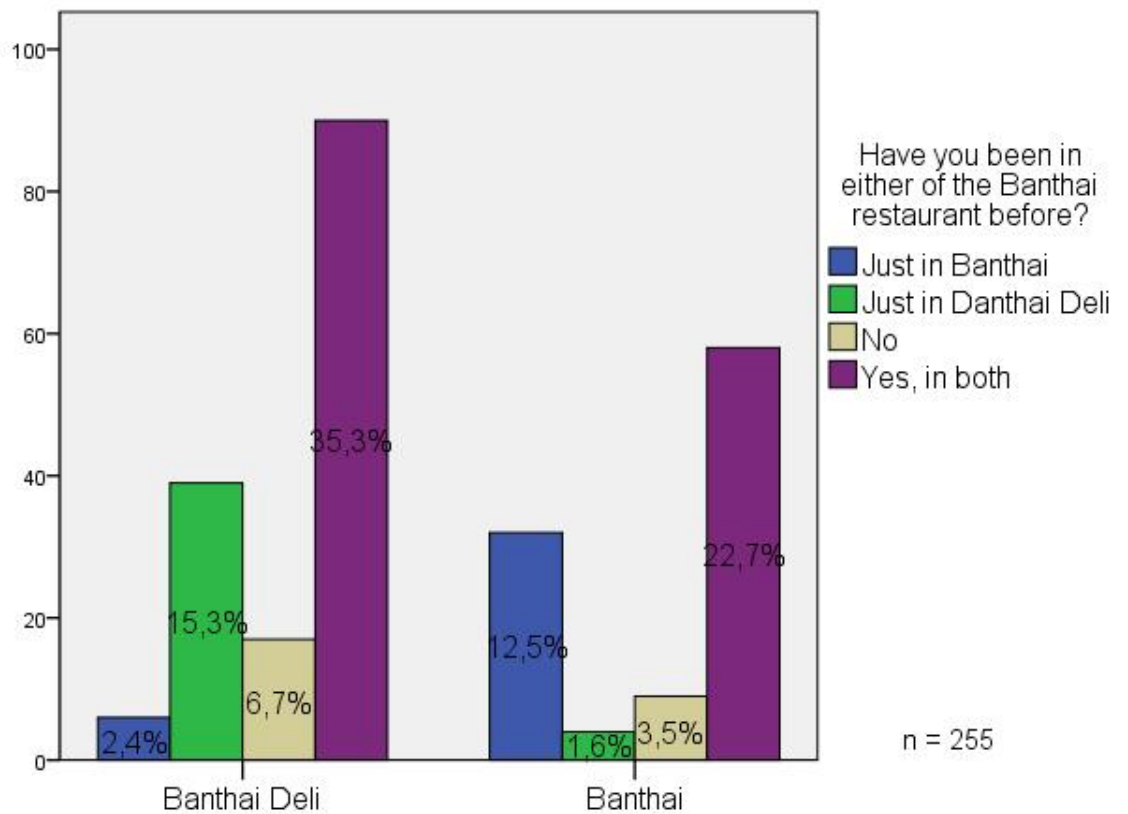
FIGURE 13 Guests divided by their previous experiences in the restaurant based on the time and place of collected
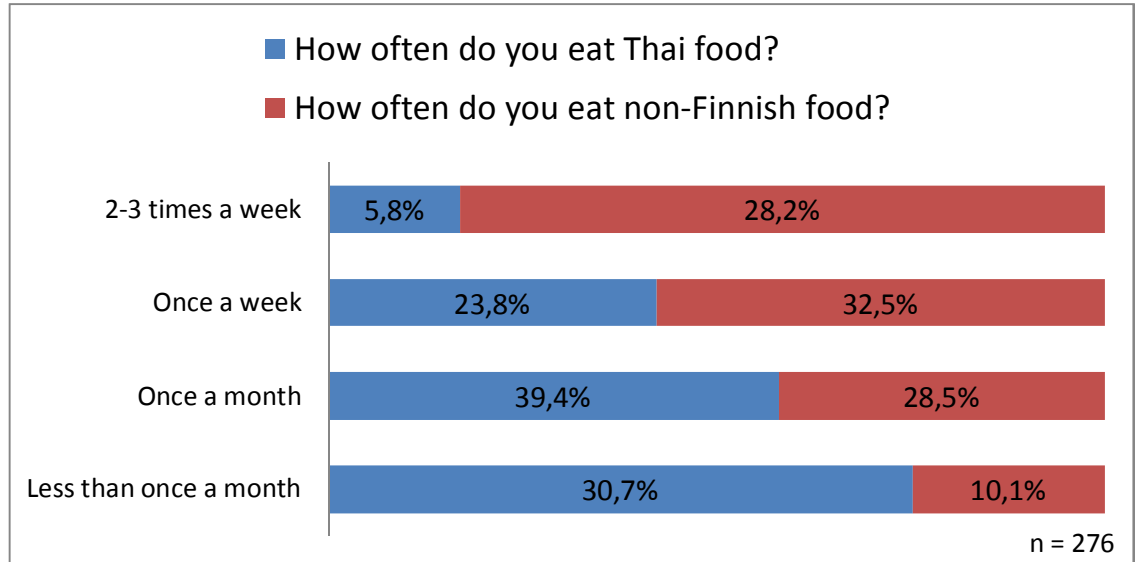
FIGURE 14 Frequencies to eat foreign food

As the data was collected in a Thai restaurant, the frequency to eat Thai food can be considered high. Nearly 6 % of the visitors eat Thai food minimum 2-3 times a week, which provides a continuous connection with the ethnic culinary culture. Otherwise about 63 % of the guests been eating Thai food minimum once a month, which also shows that the Thai food culture is widely known and among foreigners. An interesting fact about how open-minded Finnish people are regarding to different food cultures can be seen in FIGURE 14 as well, as a little more than 60 % of the responders eat non-Finnish food more than once a week.

72 % of the respondents, 170 out of 234, had the feeling that they were able to experience a part of an authentic Thai dining experience. Among them, nearly 41 % felt that the physical presentation of the Thai culture, in this case the craft-arts and statues placed all around the restaurant had some or significant impact on their final dining experience. (FIGURE 15)
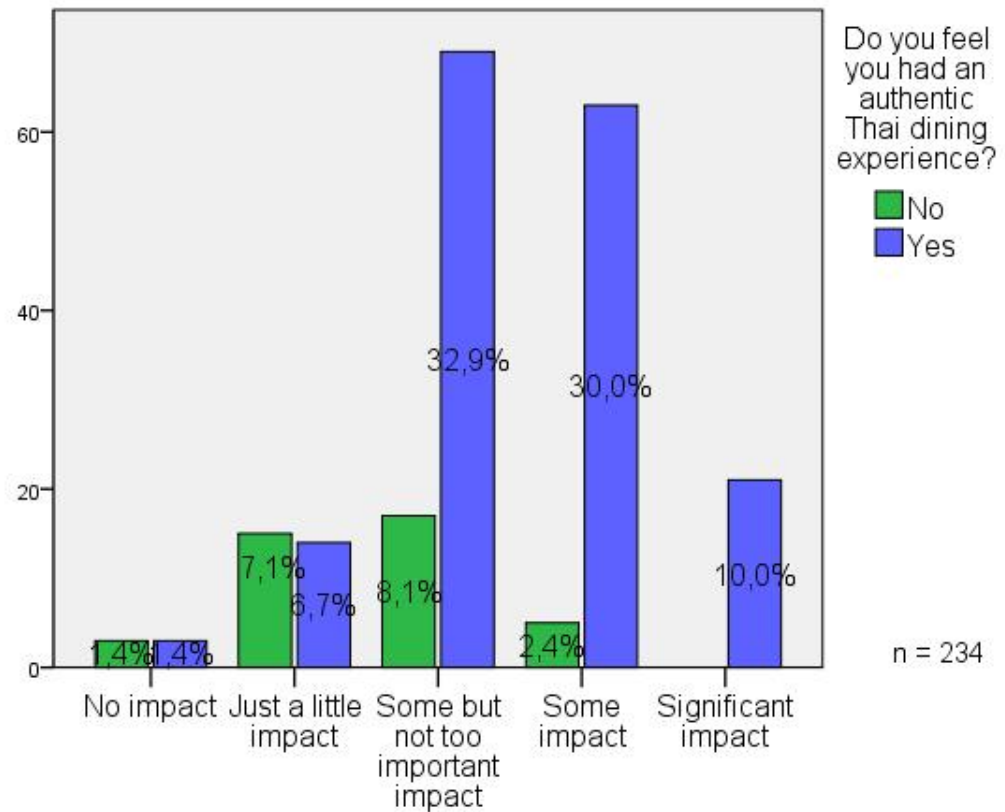
FIGURE 15 The importance of Cultural physical elements in the restaurant
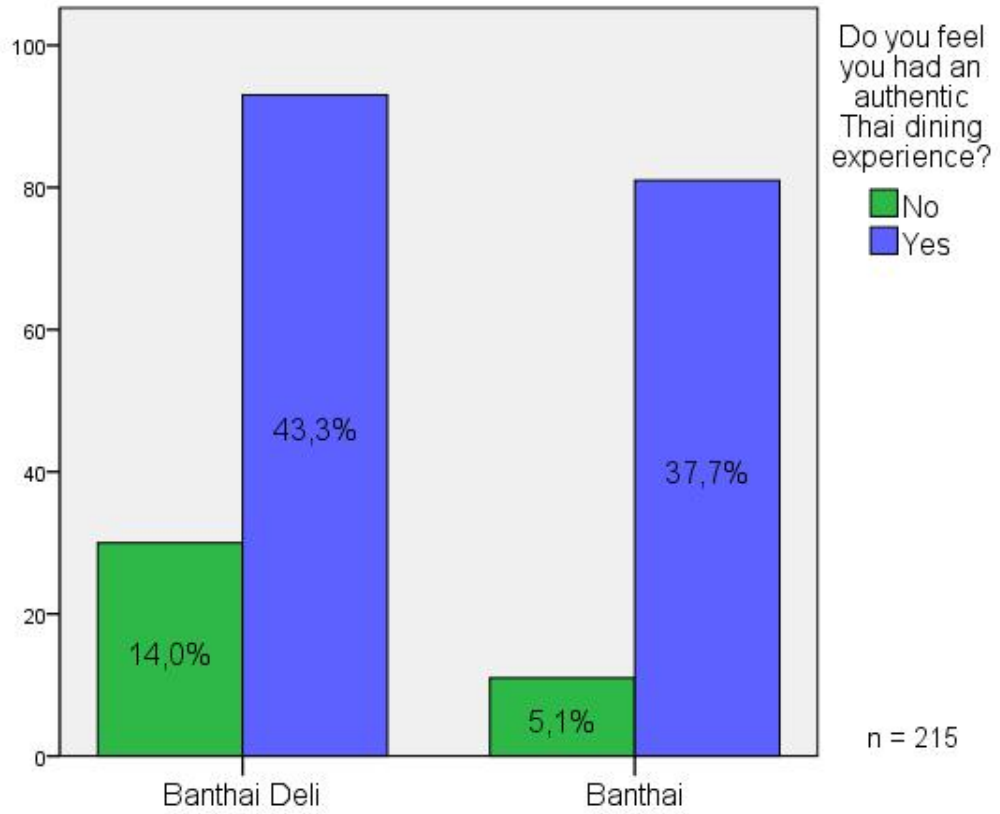
FIGURE 16 Dining experience related to the place of collection

FIGURE 16 shows that guests who filled out the questionnaire in Banthai restaurant had a higher percentage to get a stronger feeling of authentic Thai experience compared to the guests in Banthai Deli. It expects that differences between the two restaurants will have an effect on the guests as well.
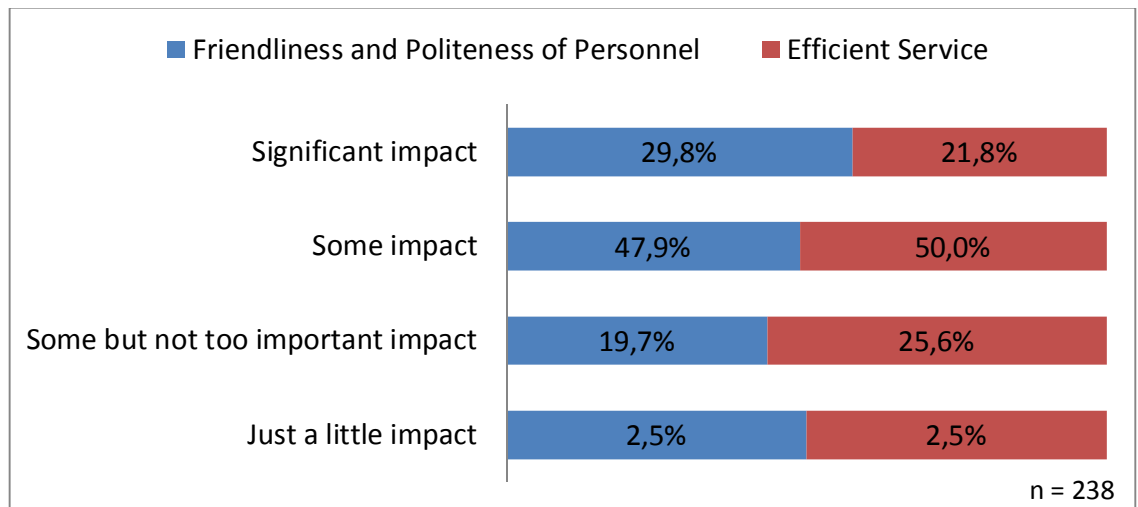
FIGURE 17 The impact of Personnel and Service

In general, guests had high expectations regarding to the serving staffs, as they commented the lack of a gorgeous and friendly smile from the workers, as it is the basic in Thailand. It still can be said that visitors were satisfied with the Friendliness and Politeness of the Personnel as more than 77 % of the visitors said that it had some or significant impact on their final dining experience, which is a really good measure.

The same figure shows that the manager and the serving staff were able to build an efficient service, because nearly 72% of the responses had a positive view of the service impact. In general, when the restaurant was able to provide a Friendly, Polite and Efficient service, the guests were satisfied and recalled the dining experience in a positive and culturally influenced experience.
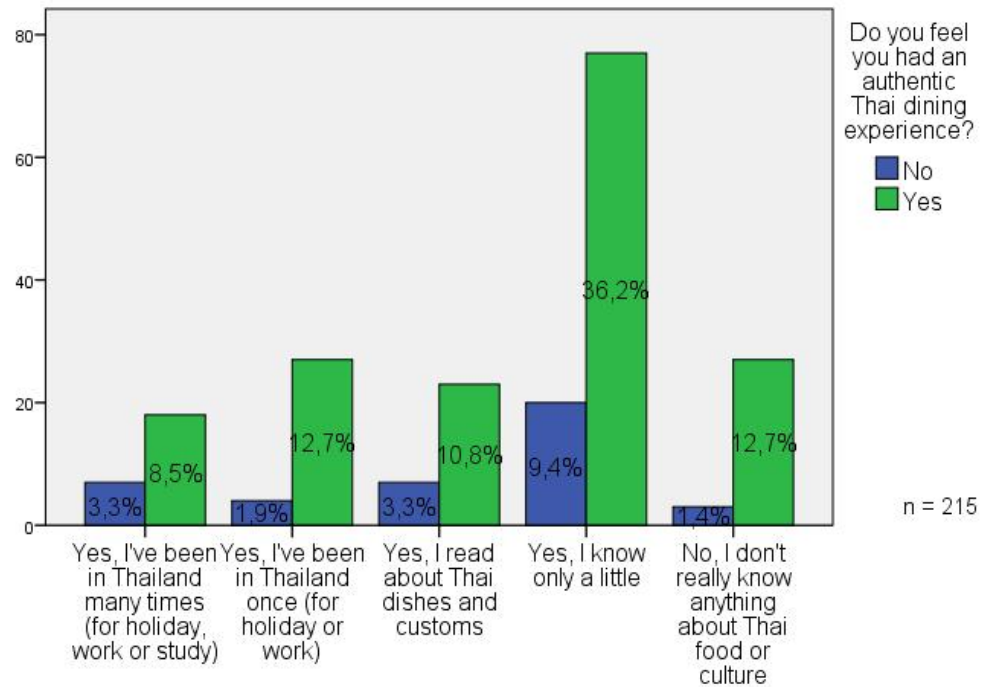
FIGURE 18 Cultural experiences related to dining

As it was suggested in the literature, guests will more likely criticize the service delivery process and the presentation of the customer journey factors when they have a wider knowledge related to the Thai culture. It was easier to make guests with only little knowledge of Thai culture satisfied, than the other visitors with more and wider knowledge, as nearly 50 % of the guests who had an authentic dining experience in either of the Banthai restaurants, came from the group which categorized the visitors with little or no knowledge related to Thai culture and customs. This could mean that the restaurant was able to provide a relatively authentic Thai dining experience in Finland, and the customers with non-constant knowledge related to Thailand are able to appreciate it (FIGURE 18).

Other measuring point is what kinds of Thai menu the guests of the restaurant would like to see. In the following charts, FIGURE 19 and 20, it shows how guests with some knowledge and guests with nearly no knowledge change their preferences. In FIGURE 19, which shows guests with some knowledge, we can see that when a customer has been in Thailand many times or when she or he read about Thai cuisine and culture before would prefer a totally authentic Thai menu. An interesting point is that guests who visited Thailand only once in their lifetime would prefer an Asian menu with some traditional Thai dishes rather than a totally authentic menu, as it suggested by the 17,5 % of the guests. It was another interesting phenomenon, that guests who had no relevant knowledge about Thai cuisine or culture would prefer an Authentic Thai menu as well.
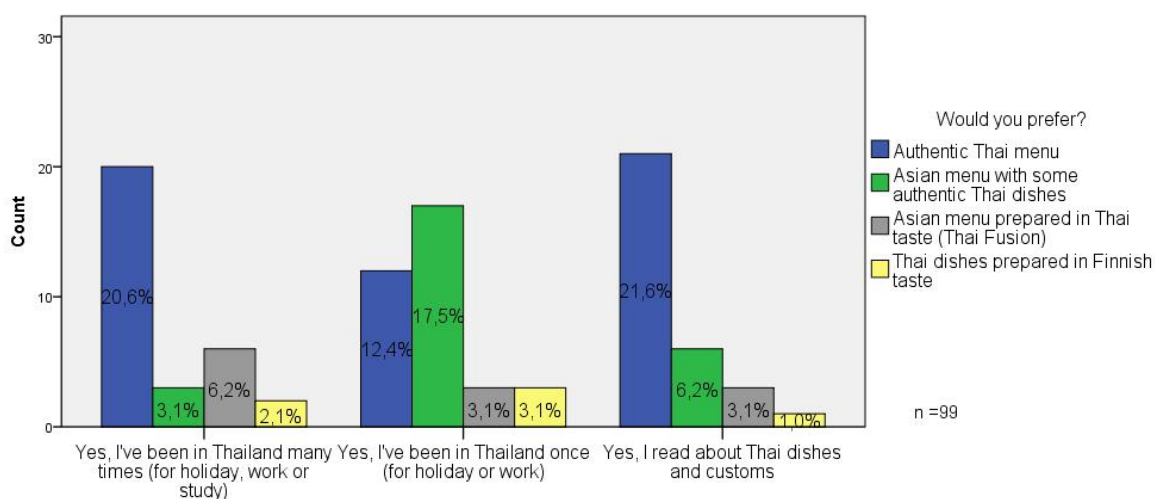
FIGURE 19 Experiences and Menu preferences - Part 1
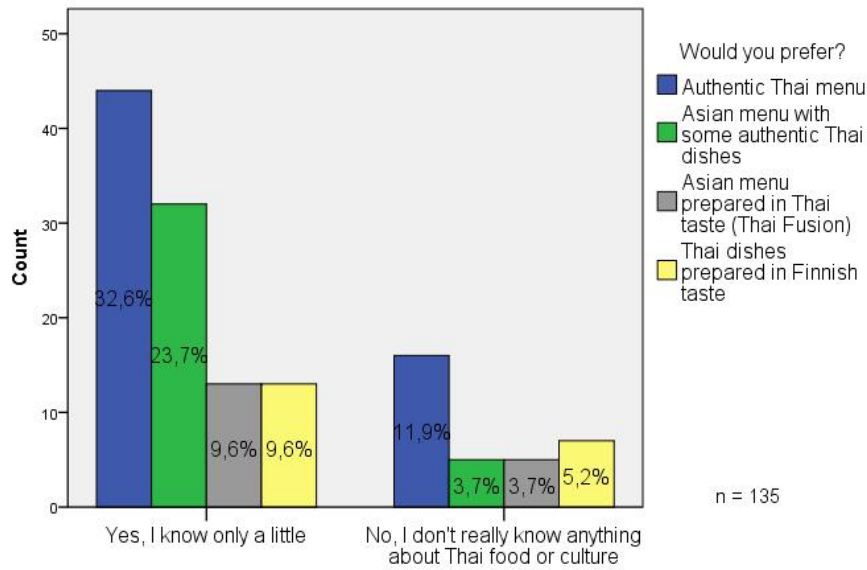
FIGURE 20 Experiences and Menu preferences - Part 2

In a restaurant one of the most important and obvious factor of the dining experience is the food itself. FIGURE 21 shows how satisfied the guests were related to different factors of the provided food. The survey specifically asked about the taste of the provided food, the variety of the present menu, the quality of the food and ingredients and finally the authenticity of the menu and dishes. As it shows the most significant impact of the dining experience is the taste of the food, with 95 % of relatively high response related to this factor. The fact that the responders were not driven by the authenticity of the food was an interesting result, as nearly 80% of the responses said, that when they made the decision where to eat, they did not think about the authenticity of the restaurant. About 2 % of the visitors felt that the menu variety had no impact on their decision making or dining experience.
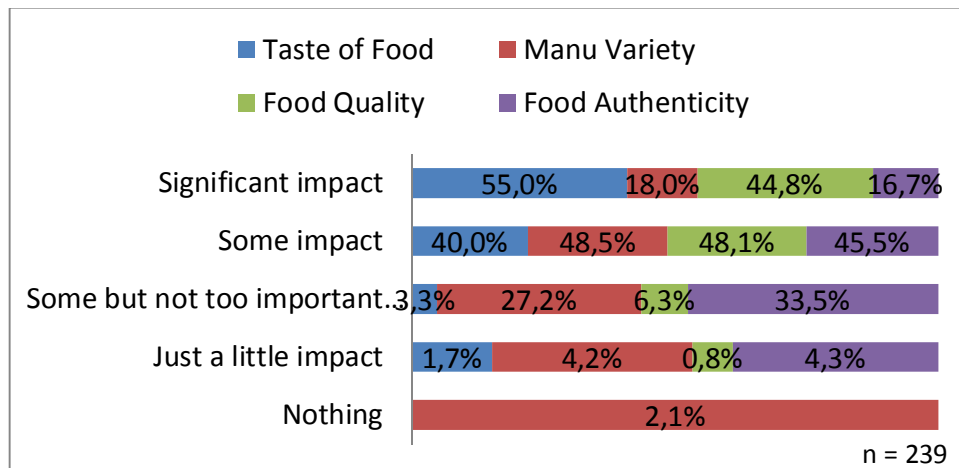
FIGURE 21 Impact of food

FIGURE 22 provide some visual explanations to analyze the general presentation of the restaurant in the eye of the guests. This chart shows that the outlook and the atmosphere of a place have significant impact on the dining experience, and the guests choose their dining destination based on the outlook of the dining premises. Nearly 60 % of the guests felt that the presentation of Thai culture had no significant importance on their final experience in the restaurant.
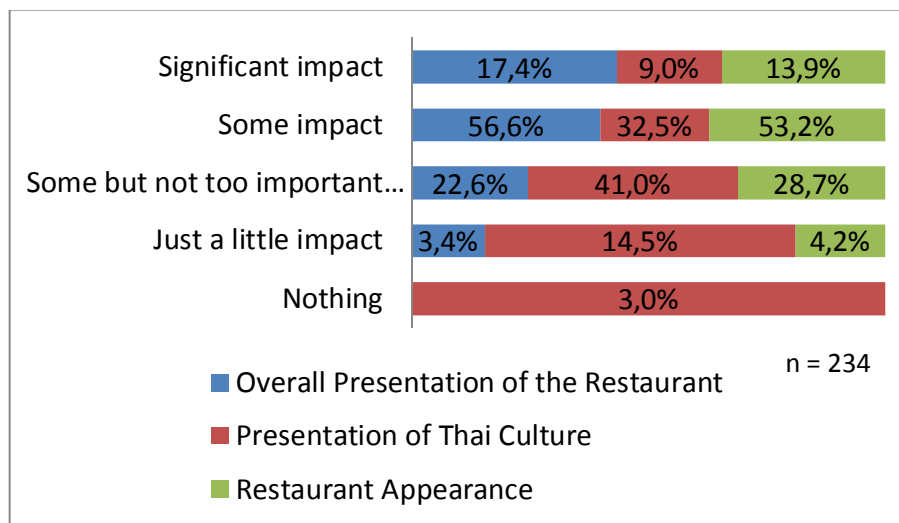
FIGURE 22 Impact of the restaurant presentation

The previously presented figures and results are a selection of the survey responses according to the research relevant information and measures. All of the responses can be found in "Appendix 2. Result of the survey section."

5 DISCUSSION

In this section the previously mentioned figures are going to be analyzed and used as back-up proof of how to design a culturally influenced customer experience journey together with the mentioned theories in the Banthai restaurants. Some suggestions are going to be made on how to change or what to change to attract more customers.

FIGURE 11 shows how guests were divided based on the time and place of the data collection. As explained the majority of the responses came from the Banthai Deli at lunch time. That restaurant provide a very unique experience as the interior design gives the feeling that the visitors have entered to an Asian jungle, but because of this unique spectacle, the authentic Thai craft arts and other presentations of the Thai culture are attenuated.

At lunch time, the restaurant operates in a buffet style, which means that the visitors cannot get personalized service from the staff, and there are limited options of dishes available. The lunch menu changes daily, so if a customer visits any of these restaurants continuously at lunch time, he or she is able to develop a full and complex view about the Thai culinary habits. As many visitors repeatedly eat in either of these Thai restaurants, their vision of the authenticity of the provided service is still applicable.

The main target groups were shown by FIGURE 12, which suggests that mostly students and workers aged 21 to 40 visit either of these restaurants regularly. To make some differences between these two target groups, the author focused on their core activities and the possible outcomes of their primary actions.

The age group between 21 and 30 years-old can be called as potential students. This group is either involved in some educational processes or just started to work in a short term. The age group from 31 to 40 years-old most likely having a stable job now, and they were students during the very late Twentieth century when the whole flexibility and permeability of the international educational system started. That was the time when intercontinental study exchanges started to be popular.

Based on the previous mentioned FIGURE 7, starting from 1990s Asia and the Pacific region was getting more and more attention by international tourists, just like Finns and the trend to travel to the Far-East became recognized by Tourism Organizations and Travel Offices. Because of these factors the majority of the restaurant visitors already have some knowledge related to Thai culture and because the Thai cuisine is world-wide known the manager and restaurant owner need to be very careful what is the content of the menu and what are the way of serving the Thai dishes.

I wanted to figure out how open minded are the Finnish guests to different food cultures. As it showed most of the people eat Thai food minimum once a month and I was really impressed by the 6 % of the visitors who eats Thai food 2 or 3 times a week. The FIGURE 14 showed that most of the Finnish people are really open to foreign food cultures. I would track back this phenomenon to tourist trends which show that international tourism is getting more popular as time goes by. It also provide a sign for the presence of the Eat-to-travel culinary tourism, as the possibility and chance to experience exotic and new food cultures are became part of the everyday Finnish life.

I hoped to figure out and measure, how important the presentation of cultural physical elements when we talk about cultural dining experiences, as the interior design is the only factor which makes significant difference between the two Thai restaurants. FIGURE 15 showed, 81 % of the answerers had the feeling that they were able to experience a part of an authentic Thai dining experience. Based on the reviews the correlation between the cultural presentation and the final dining experience seem to be unknown by the restaurant visitors; as when the specific

questions were asked related to the importance of Thai cultural presentations, authenticity and traditions; the guests would not recognize them as core factors of the cultural dining know-how and the responses were contradictory. This measure goes against to the fact that most of the visitors would prefer a totally authentic Thai menu in the restaurant, which suggests that authenticity is important for them.

When a manager designs the interior elements of a restaurant, it cannot please all of the guests. As it is related to experiences; impressions by outlook developed inside of a personnel and modified by previous knowledge, experiences, cultural backgrounds etc. I would say that based on the survey the restaurant manager had used good techniques when designed and created the interior decoration of the dining premises. But to be able to make it more obvious and clear to the guests, that they are having a cultural experience; I would suggest to focus on only one concept or design element when decorating the inside of the location. As a response from some of the guests; for them a way to improve their Thai cultural experience would be by bringing traditional outfit to the visual serving processes, and to tear down and clear the atmosphere, because now it is a "mixture of everything" and they are not able to appreciate or even recognize the cultural elements.

The other important element of the experience-oriented customer journey is the importance of personnel. As it was said already, it is difficult to control a human clue like the serving personnel, so it is a good strategy by the restaurant manager to employ Thai employees. This makes unity in the service, and the personnel have some basic common culturally connected knowledge and beliefs regarding how service should be provided. Also, it is another good way to bring the "Thai face" to the restaurant. To receive a service from the same ethnicity as the theme of the restaurant, help to build a stronger connection and belief about the authenticity of the restaurant. That could be one of the reasons why many people who have been satisfied with the staff, identified the dining experience positively connected with the Thai dining culture.

With this survey I have been able to measure the three important Front stage elements of the Five Experiential Design Areas; the Physical elements, the Service Employees and the Service delivery process. As it is seen these three elements had a high impact on the final realization of the dining experience. And it shows that the manager need to focus on the expectations of the guests if want to provide a pleasant final impression.

The satisfaction rate for guests, who visited Thailand more than once during their life time, was only about three-quarters of the answers. These guests have a lot wider and deeper knowledge of the Thai customs, habits and practices, so to make them fully satisfied the restaurant need to provide a more personalized service. Usually these guests visited the Banthai restaurants many times before, maybe they are even able to speak Thai language, so to "bring a little Thailand" for them, the personnel could try to speak in Thai with them, to build more emotional connections between the restaurant and its guests.

I was expected that guests with any kinds of knowledge related to Thailand would prefer an authentic menu, as a way to get in contact with the previously experienced exotic culture. But a group of visitors who have been in Thailand only once in their lifetime was requesting an Asian menu with some authentic Thai dishes. This propounds made some changes in my observation. I think that the guests who fall in to that category, most likely been visited the areas of Thailand which are open to massive number of tourists. In these areas nowadays the possible meal what a tourist can get has already changed based on other tourists' expectations. This means these guests were not able to see and experience the real Thai culture, customs and cuisines, so they are not able to appreciate a traditional menu in Finland. This also brings another issue to the table, when an ethnic themed restaurant owner designs the menu of the restaurant he or she needs to know the tourist trends in the country of residence, so the menu can be focused on the target group in a whole scale.

I see the guests who choose a totally authentic Thai menu over any other options in the survey as an example of the existence of the Eat-to-Travel phenomenon. As these visitors would like to experience Thai cuisine, even though they are in Finland, and the possibilities are limited. They want to feel displaced in their own culture, experience something new and exotic. From these people I also received as a reason why they choose these Thai restaurants that they wanted to eat something new, they wanted to try Thai food. This is another proof of the existence of culinary tourism.

So the suggested actions by me would be to have a culturally influenced uniform for the serving personnel. I heard that many years ago, the waiters were wearing the traditional costumes when they served the guests, but it was inefficient and non-useful, so they changed it. My proposal is to bring some elements of the traditional cloth to the uniform in the sign of some motives, colors or shapes.

I figured out the name of the restaurant Banthai has the meaning of a Thai house. The symbol of that house can be seen in the logo of the restaurants. The manager should have some more focus on bringing that symbol closer to the guests, as that would be a good way to change the interiors as well. Just like in Banthai restaurant in Kortesuonkatu above the serving area a symbol of the Thai roof can be seen, and that motive can be used in lot more ways.

My other idea is to clear down the interior design in the premises with the focus on only one concept. My idea could be based on FIGURE 16 as well, where the guests in Banthai had a higher percentage of authentic Thai dining experience than in Banthai Deli. In Banthai a very simple concept is used in the sign of some Thai statues presenting a welcoming woman in the dining area and some Thai craft-arts on the wall.

It was mentioned before that there are many differences between Finnish and Thai dining culture. These differences can produce some problems as well. The view of eating in a restaurant seen differently in culturally and socially, to provide similar experiences as in Thailand the manager should make some changes in the menu as well. Usually in a restaurant in Thailand, the guests order different

flavored courses and they share it. Opposite to this, in Finland customers order dishes personally for themselves and it is considered rude to share it. To be able to bring the real Thai flavor to the restaurant, the menu should have some new items which consist of small portions of different flavored dishes, so when they order it, they would experience the taste of the complex Thai cuisine.

As it said before, to design a service flow, managers need to be careful and wary not to put too much information into it, because not all of the information can be received and cherished by the guests. The decoration strategy used in Banthai Deli is a very good way to provide a unique and exotic atmosphere, but it does not bring the cultural concept close to the guests.

6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the research was to provide clear ideas of how to create a culturally influenced experience oriented service delivery process for a restaurant.

It has been shown that to gain profit and recognition for any kinds of business sectors, a new approach is needed, which can be identified as the need for experience by the customers. Every business sector, not just the food service area needs to provide something new, which can engage the customers. For this new possible tactics, a business needs to know itself, its customers and surroundings. When the different factors are well known for the business it can design its customer journey. The designing process is a crucial part, as the proper trends need to be used and while designing the service flow the possible provided experiences have to be considered.

The actions or tactics mentioned can be used not just for ethnic themed restaurants but for all kinds of business activities, as ethnicity is just a special theme used in the case of those restaurants, and as it was seen, the use of that special theme is a successful approach to attract loyal or future customers.

The relevant academic information was found by using different resources, and as it was expected, it took time to draw a line between the useful and irrelevant written knowledge in these areas. The literature review was designed in such a way that it would guide the reader through the wider business concepts, to many specifications in service management area and finally helps to focus on the mentioned problem, the elements of a culturally influenced and themed customer delivery process in a restaurant.

As it was expected, the data collection took a long time, but the collected data exceeded the expected range as more answers were received than required. The fact that the author personally collected the answers on the premises was a good opportunity to get familiar with the different process flows in these restaurants, and it was also a good chance to improve the author's personal skills in the customer related areas.

Even though the thesis accomplished what it was designed for, there are still certain limitations and weaknesses. First of all, the study was conducted in only two restaurants, which were very similar. That is why the differences are not well-marked, which made it difficult to differentiate the possible perceptions and expectations.

Unfortunately the data cannot provide a clear view on how A la Carte guests see the Thai dining experience, as the relevant responses are only a small share of the record, and most of the responses contradict with each other, which makes it harder to define a correlation between the literature and the case.

Since the survey was designed to measure the guests' appreciations and impacts on the specific customer experienced journey; there is a wide range of other important elements which can have an effect on their view which was not been measured or considered in this study.

As stated before, the research was still a success, as the presence of the design elements mentioned were found, and its importance can be seen in the answers.

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8 APPENDICES

8.1 APPENDIX 1. THE SERVICE EXPERIENCE SURVEY FOR BANTHAI THAI RESTAURANTS

SERVICE EXPERIENCE SURVEY FOR BANTHAI THAI RESTAURANT

Gender: F / M   Age   Nationality ....

Have you been in either of the Banthai restaurant before?

 Yes in both / Just in Banthai Deli / Just in Banthai / No

Why did you choose this restaurant today?

....

How often do you eat Thai food?

Less than once a month / Once a month / Once a week / 2-3 times in a week

How often do you eat any kind of non-Finnish food? -

Less than once a month / Once a month / Once a week / 2-3 times in a week

Do you have any experience related to Thai food or culture?

- ○ Yes, I've been in Thailand many times (for holiday, work or study)
- ○ Yes, I've been in Thailand once (for holiday or work)
- ○ Yes, I read about Thai dishes and customs
- ○ Yes, I know only a little
- ○ No, I don't really know anything about Thai food or culture

Did the restaurant meet with your expectations related to:

	(not at all)					(perfectly)
Service	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Food	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Presentation of Thai Culture	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Restaurant Appearance	①	②	③	④	⑤	

Would you prefer (choose only one option):

- ○ Authentic Thai menu
- ○ Asian menu with some authentic Thai dishes
- ○ Asian menu prepared in Thai taste (Thai fusion)
- ○ Thai dishes prepared in Finnish taste

Is there any particular Thai food that you'd like to see on the menu?

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?

	(nothing)					(significant)
Taste of Food	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Menu Variety	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Food Quality	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Food Authenticity	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Friendliness and Politeness of Personnel	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Efficient Service	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Restaurant Appearance	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Presentation of the Thai Culture	①	②	③	④	⑤	
Overall Presentation of the Restaurant	①	②	③	④	⑤	

Do you feel you had an authentic Thai dining experience?   Yes / No

How can we improve the "Thai" dining experience for you?

....

THANK YOU

(If you won't mind answering further questions,

please leave your e-mail address: ....)

8.2 APPENDIX 2. RESULT OF THE SURVEYS

Collecting Place

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Banthai Deli	163	58,8	58,8	58,8
	Banthai	114	41,2	41,2	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

Collecting Time

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Lunch Buffee	206	74,4	74,4	74,4
	Á La Carte Dinner	71	25,6	25,6	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Missing	2	,7	,7	,7
	Female	105	37,9	37,9	38,6
	Male	170	61,4	61,4	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

Age Group

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Under 21	15	5,4	6,0	6,0
	21-30	77	27,8	30,8	36,8
	31-40	88	31,8	35,2	72,0
	41-50	46	16,6	18,4	90,4
	51 Above	24	8,7	9,6	100,0
	Total	250	90,3	100,0	
Missing	System	27	9,7		
Total		277	100,0		

Nationality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Missing	2	,7	,7	,7
	American	1	,4	,4	1,1
	Canadian	1	,4	,4	1,4
	Chinese	2	,7	,7	2,2
	Finnish	264	95,3	95,3	97,5
	French	1	,4	,4	97,8
	Italian	1	,4	,4	98,2
	Mexican	1	,4	,4	98,6
	Singaporean	1	,4	,4	98,9
	Swedish	1	,4	,4	99,3
	Swiss	2	,7	,7	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

Have you been in either of the Banthai restaurant before?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Missing	22	7,9	7,9	7,9
	Just in Banthai	38	13,7	13,7	21,7
	Just in Banthai Deli	43	15,5	15,5	37,2
	No	26	9,4	9,4	46,6
	Yes, in both	148	53,4	53,4	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

Why did you choose this restaurant today?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Missing	31	11,2	11,2	11,2
	A friend recommended	2	,7	,7	11,9
	Because I like it	1	,4	,4	12,3
	Because I want Tapsa & Molti	1	,4	,4	12,6
	Because it's ethnic	1	,4	,4	13,0
	Because of the food	1	,4	,4	13,4
	Because of the food and location	1	,4	,4	13,7
	Because the food is good	1	,4	,4	14,1
	Best location, best food	1	,4	,4	14,4
	Best solution for this day	1	,4	,4	14,8
	Best Thai	1	,4	,4	15,2
	Best Thai food in Finland	1	,4	,4	15,5
	Birthday lunch + good food	1	,4	,4	15,9
	Boyfriend recommended	1	,4	,4	16,2
	Buffee	2	,7	,7	17,0
	By accident	3	1,1	1,1	18,1
	Car parking is easier than in the city center	1	,4	,4	18,4
	Cheap buffee	1	,4	,4	18,8
	Choosing with friends	1	,4	,4	19,1
	Close to my office and good food	1	,4	,4	19,5
	Close to my workplace	3	1,1	1,1	20,6
	Close to office	1	,4	,4	20,9
	Close to work place	1	,4	,4	21,3
	Close, fast, good	1	,4	,4	21,7
	Close, good price vs quality	1	,4	,4	22,0
	Colleague recommendation	1	,4	,4	22,4
	Colleague was driving the car	1	,4	,4	22,7
	Counter location	1	,4	,4	23,1
	Delicious food	1	,4	,4	23,8
	Delicious food, good location	1	,4	,4	24,2
	Earlier experience	1	,4	,4	24,5
	Easy and fast lunch	1	,4	,4	24,9
	Easy to access, always good food	1	,4	,4	25,3
	Excellent food	1	,4	,4	25,6
	Excellent lunch buffee	1	,4	,4	26,0

Fast food nearby my working office	1	,4	,4	26,4
Fast service and good food	1	,4	,4	26,7
Feeling	1	,4	,4	27,1
Food and location	1	,4	,4	27,4
Food has been always good and comes quickly	1	,4	,4	27,8
Food is excellent and it's located well	1	,4	,4	28,2
For food / location	1	,4	,4	28,9
Free meal	1	,4	,4	29,2
Friend asks	1	,4	,4	29,6
Friend choose	1	,4	,4	30,0
Friend recommend	6	2,2	2,2	32,1
Friend suggests	1	,4	,4	32,5
Friend's suggestion	1	,4	,4	32,9
Friends came	1	,4	,4	33,2
Good and tasty food	1	,4	,4	33,6
Good different food	1	,4	,4	33,9
good food	1	,4	,4	34,3
Good food	10	3,6	3,6	37,9
Good Food	1	,4	,4	38,3
Good food always	1	,4	,4	38,6
Good food and location	1	,4	,4	39,0
Good food, been here before	1	,4	,4	39,7
Good food, easy to come	1	,4	,4	40,1
Good Food, Good service	1	,4	,4	40,4
Good food, lunch time	1	,4	,4	40,8
Good food, restaurant is not in the city center	1	,4	,4	41,2
Good food, we've been here before	1	,4	,4	41,5
Good food! Really good!	1	,4	,4	41,9
Good location	3	1,1	1,1	43,0
Good location and easy to park	1	,4	,4	43,3
Good location, delicious food	1	,4	,4	43,7
Good location, spicy food	1	,4	,4	44,0
Good lunch	2	,7	,7	44,8
Good Lunch	1	,4	,4	45,1
Good meal, good location (today)	1	,4	,4	45,5
Great food, location	1	,4	,4	46,2
Great food, lovely service <3	1	,4	,4	46,6
Habit of visiting occasionally, once a week	1	,4	,4	46,9
Had a gift card	1	,4	,4	47,3
I wanted to eat spicy vegetable casserole	1	,4	,4	47,7
Haven't been here for a while	1	,4	,4	48,0
Here was peaceful	1	,4	,4	48,4
Hunger, lunch time, good experiences, enough food in the menu, buffee	1	,4	,4	48,7
Hungry	1	,4	,4	49,1

I asked for a place where there is a good lunch, and a woman recommended Banthai Deli.	1	,4	,4	49,8
I came in with a friend	1	,4	,4	50,2
I eat here regularly	1	,4	,4	50,5
I eaten once a take away meal and it was delicious, that's why I wanted to visit	1	,4	,4	50,9
I felt like Thai food	1	,4	,4	51,3
I had a voucher	1	,4	,4	51,6
I have been once here before	1	,4	,4	52,0
I have good experience from before	1	,4	,4	52,3
I just felt like Thai food: D	1	,4	,4	52,7
I like Asian food	1	,4	,4	53,1
I like Banthai's food	1	,4	,4	53,4
I like it	1	,4	,4	53,8
I like Thai food	1	,4	,4	54,2
I like Thai food and Thailand	1	,4	,4	56,3
I like Thai food and this restaurant	1	,4	,4	56,7
I like Thai food, it's situated close to my working place	1	,4	,4	57,0
I like Thai food, price	1	,4	,4	57,4
I like Thai ladies	1	,4	,4	57,8
I like the buffee	1	,4	,4	58,1
I like the food and atmosphere. The location suite me too	1	,4	,4	58,5
I live nearby and I was hungry	1	,4	,4	59,2
I met my friend and wanted to eat good food!	1	,4	,4	59,6
I really like Banthai's food	1	,4	,4	59,9
I thought the buffee was still on	1	,4	,4	60,3
I wanted some Thai food; Muang Thai restaurant has treated me bad so I come here!	1	,4	,4	60,6
I wanted to check how good food is here	1	,4	,4	61,0
I wanted to eat here	1	,4	,4	61,4
I wanted to eat spicy red curry	1	,4	,4	61,7
I wanted to eat Thai food	1	,4	,4	62,1
I wanted to have Thai food	1	,4	,4	62,5
I was hungry	4	1,4	1,4	63,9
I was very hungry	2	,7	,7	64,6
I was working nearby of the restaurant	1	,4	,4	65,3
I work close, and here is good food	1	,4	,4	65,7
I'm working nearby	1	,4	,4	66,1

I've been here before and love the food, plus I was nearby and I need lunch!	1	,4	,4	66,4
It is at the centrum and I was busy today	1	,4	,4	66,8
It is close	1	,4	,4	67,1
It is close location from my working place and food is good	1	,4	,4	67,5
It is cozy; I come here sometimes to relax after a long day at work - even alone. Thai food is not even my favorite, I come here mostly for the atmosphere	1	,4	,4	69,0
It was close to Sokos, where I have to do some shopping	2	,7	,7	69,7
It was near to Kortepohja	1	,4	,4	70,0
It was nearby	2	,7	,7	70,8
It was on my way	1	,4	,4	71,1
It was the first one we thought of and wasn't too crowded	1	,4	,4	71,5
It's close to my workplace	2	,7	,7	72,2
It's different	1	,4	,4	72,6
It's in the city	1	,4	,4	72,9
It's not in the city so it's more peaceful	1	,4	,4	73,3
It's the closest one	1	,4	,4	73,6
Kotja asked me	3	1,1	1,1	75,1
Light and good food	2	,7	,7	75,8
Location	1	,4	,4	76,2
Location and good food	1	,4	,4	76,5
Location, food quality	1	,4	,4	76,9
location, price is also reasonable	1	,4	,4	77,3
Lunch meeting	3	1,1	1,1	78,3
Lunch near workplace	1	,4	,4	78,7
Lunch time, good food	1	,4	,4	79,1
Lunchtime/Good Food	1	,4	,4	79,4
Close to jobs	1	,4	,4	79,8
My boss choose this place	1	,4	,4	80,1
My colleague choose the place	1	,4	,4	80,9
My driver come here	1	,4	,4	81,2
My friend likes the food	1	,4	,4	81,6
My friend took me here	1	,4	,4	81,9
My husband likes Thai food	1	,4	,4	82,3
My meeting was nearby	1	,4	,4	82,7
My usual restaurant didn't have a good lunch menu	1	,4	,4	83,0
My wife said I like it, so I wanted to try it	1	,4	,4	83,4
My work colleague wanted to come here	1	,4	,4	83,8
Near and good food	1	,4	,4	84,1
Near location, good food	1	,4	,4	84,5
Near to the bus station	1	,4	,4	84,8

Nearby my working place	1	,4	,4	85,2
Never been before, good site	1	,4	,4	85,6
No reason	1	,4	,4	86,3
Nothing good to eat in university's restaurant	1	,4	,4	86,6
On the way back to home/ like Thai food	1	,4	,4	87,0
One of the best lunch menu in Jyvaskyla	1	,4	,4	87,4
Open from 10 am	1	,4	,4	87,7
Other places were closed/empty	1	,4	,4	88,1
Other restaurants were full	1	,4	,4	88,4
Previous experience	2	,7	,7	89,2
Recommendation from friend	1	,4	,4	89,5
Recommended	1	,4	,4	89,9
Seemed like the best option	2	,7	,7	91,0
Spicy food and good food here	1	,4	,4	91,3
Taste is good	1	,4	,4	91,7
Tasty food	1	,4	,4	92,1
The lunch is good	1	,4	,4	92,4
This is best	1	,4	,4	92,8
This is exotic	1	,4	,4	93,1
This was nearby our customers	1	,4	,4	93,5
Time to get some spicy food	1	,4	,4	93,9
To celebrate my Birthday	1	,4	,4	94,2
Very good food and location	1	,4	,4	94,6
Visiting city center	1	,4	,4	94,9
Wanted a quick, light lunch	1	,4	,4	95,3
Wanted Thai food	1	,4	,4	95,7
Wanted to come for curiosity, got a companion	1	,4	,4	96,0
Wanted to eat some Thai food, best Thai restaurant in Jyvaskyla	1	,4	,4	96,4
We come here every Thursday	1	,4	,4	96,8
We had a gift card	1	,4	,4	97,1
We had a voucher, that expires today	1	,4	,4	97,5
We have a habit to come here once a week and there was nothing interesting in other Easy Break restaurants	1	,4	,4	97,8
We wanted to eat Thai food, something different	1	,4	,4	98,2
We wanted to try something new	1	,4	,4	98,6

Why did you choose this restaurant today?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	We were in the neighborhood	1	,4	,4	98,9
	We were told it would be fast	1	,4	,4	99,3
	Work group come here	1	,4	,4	99,6
	Workmates, Birthday today	1	,4	,4	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

How often do you eat Thai food?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		1	,4	,4	,4
	Less than once a month	85	30,7	30,7	31,0
	Once a month	109	39,4	39,4	70,4
	Once a week	66	23,8	23,8	94,2
	2-3 times a week	16	5,8	5,8	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

How often do you eat non-Finnish food?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		2	,7	,7	,7
	Less than once a month	28	10,1	10,1	10,8
	Once a month	79	28,5	28,5	39,4
	Once a week	90	32,5	32,5	71,8
	2-3 times a week	78	28,2	28,2	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

Do you have any experience related to Thai food or culture?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		2	,7	,7	,7
	Yes, I've been in Thailand many times (for holiday, work or study)	38	13,7	13,7	14,4
	Yes, I've been in Thailand once (for holiday or work)	44	15,9	15,9	30,3
	Yes, I read about Thai dishes and customs	35	12,6	12,6	43,0
	Yes, I know only a little	115	41,5	41,5	84,5
	No, I don't really know anything about Thai food or culture	43	15,5	15,5	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

Did the restaurant meet with your expectations related to: Service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not exactly	6	2,2	2,2	2,2
	Just a little	52	18,8	18,9	21,1
	Close to my expectations	137	49,5	49,8	70,9
	Perfectly	80	28,9	29,1	100,0
	Total	275	99,3	100,0	
Missing	System	2	,7		
Total		277	100,0		

Did the restaurant meet with your expectations related to: Food

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not exactly	4	1,4	1,5	1,5
	Just a little	18	6,5	6,5	8,0
	Close to my expectations	140	50,5	50,9	58,9
	Perfectly	113	40,8	41,1	100,0
	Total	275	99,3	100,0	
Missing	System	2	,7		
Total		277	100,0		

Did the restaurant meet with your expectations related to: Presentation of Thai Culture

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not exactly	16	5,8	5,9	5,9
	Just a little	98	35,4	36,3	42,2
	Close to my expectations	116	41,9	43,0	85,2
	Perfectly	40	14,4	14,8	100,0
	Total	270	97,5	100,0	
Missing	System	7	2,5		
Total		277	100,0		

Did the restaurant meet with your expectations related to: Restaurant Appearance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not exactly	8	2,9	2,9	2,9
	Just a little	61	22,0	22,2	25,1
	Close to my expectations	147	53,1	53,5	78,5
	Perfectly	59	21,3	21,5	100,0
	Total	275	99,3	100,0	
Missing	System	2	,7		
Total		277	100,0		

Would you prefer:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Authentic Thai menu	113	40,8	48,3	48,3
	Asian menu with some authentic Thai dishes	64	23,1	27,4	75,6
	Asian menu prepared in Thai taste (Thai fusion)	30	10,8	12,8	88,5
	Thai dishes prepared in Finnish taste	27	9,7	11,5	100,0
	Total	234	84,5	100,0	
Missing	System	43	15,5		
Total		277	100,0		

Is there any particular Thai food that you'd like to see on the menu?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		227	81,9	81,9	81,9
	All curry dishes with coconut milk	1	,4	,4	82,3
	Anything with coconut milk :D but not too spicy	1	,4	,4	82,7
	Beef and curry	1	,4	,4	83,0
	Beef or chicken with cashew nuts	1	,4	,4	83,4
	Better salads and more variety	1	,4	,4	83,8
	Cashew nuts but not supper hot like now	1	,4	,4	84,1
	Chicken with roasted garlic and pepper shrimps	1	,4	,4	84,5
	Chop sue	1	,4	,4	84,8
	Do not have any knowledge about the topic	1	,4	,4	85,2
	Dud Thai	1	,4	,4	85,6
	Exotic seafood	1	,4	,4	85,9
	Fish	1	,4	,4	86,3
	Fried chicken food	2	,7	,7	87,0
	Fried chicken	1	,4	,4	87,4
	Fruit	1	,4	,4	87,7
	I don't know any food	1	,4	,4	88,1
	I like to see more different kind of sushi or some Thai desserts	1	,4	,4	88,4
	I love green curry chicken	1	,4	,4	88,8
	Lemon Shrimp	1	,4	,4	89,2
	Maybe some exotic fruit or Thai spiced salad	1	,4	,4	89,5
	More fish and fruit (especially fruit)	1	,4	,4	89,9
	More soup	1	,4	,4	90,3
	More vegetarian choices	2	,7	,7	91,0

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	No I'm not familiar with Thai food, that I could name one specific dish	1	,4	,4	91,7
	No, because I know so little about Thai food	1	,4	,4	92,1
	Not really	1	,4	,4	92,4
	Pad-Thai	1	,4	,4	92,8
	Perhaps beef with basil in lunch menu	1	,4	,4	93,1
	Phad Kapraw (my favorite)	1	,4	,4	93,5
	Red curry chicken	1	,4	,4	93,9
	Red curry with coconut milk is the best and already in the menu	1	,4	,4	94,2
	See food/ fishes	1	,4	,4	94,6
	Soups, noodles	1	,4	,4	94,9
	Spicy soups	1	,4	,4	95,3
	Thai ice tea (with milk) "Red Ruby" water, chestnut dessert , lemon grass drink (hot or cold)	1	,4	,4	95,7
	The coffee is always old	1	,4	,4	96,4
	Those sushi that you have now are great	1	,4	,4	96,8
	Tom Ka Khai	1	,4	,4	97,1
	Tom Yam	1	,4	,4	97,5
	Tom-yam soup, different flavors	1	,4	,4	97,8
	Ton-yum soup	1	,4	,4	98,2
	Vegetable dishes please	1	,4	,4	98,6
	Wook Noodles	1	,4	,4	98,9
	Yam Yai Salad	1	,4	,4	99,3
	Yam Yai Salad, Fish cakes	1	,4	,4	99,6
	You choose and surprise me:D	1	,4	,4	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?
Taste of Food

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Just a little impact	4	1,4	1,7	1,7
	Some but not too important impact	8	2,9	3,3	5,0
	Some impact	96	34,7	40,0	45,0
	Significant impact	132	47,7	55,0	100,0
	Total	240	86,6	100,0	
Missing	System	37	13,4		
Total		277	100,0		

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?
Menu Variety

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Nothing	5	1,8	2,1	2,1
	Just a little impact	10	3,6	4,2	6,3
	Some but not too important impact	65	23,5	27,2	33,5
	Some impact	116	41,9	48,5	82,0
	Significant impact	43	15,5	18,0	100,0
	Total	239	86,3	100,0	
Missing	System	38	13,7		
Total		277	100,0		

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?
Food Quality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Just a little impact	2	,7	,8	,8
	Some but not too important impact	15	5,4	6,3	7,1
	Some impact	115	41,5	48,1	55,2
	Significant impact	107	38,6	44,8	100,0
	Total	239	86,3	100,0	
Missing	System	38	13,7		
Total		277	100,0		

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?
Food Authenticity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Just a little impact	10	3,6	4,3	4,3
	Some but not too important impact	78	28,2	33,5	37,8
	Some impact	106	38,3	45,5	83,3
	Significant impact	39	14,1	16,7	100,0
	Total	233	84,1	100,0	
Missing	System	44	15,9		
Total		277	100,0		

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?
Friendliness and Politeness of the Personnel

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Just a little impact	6	2,2	2,5	2,5
	Some but not too important impact	47	17,0	19,7	22,3
	Some impact	114	41,2	47,9	70,2
	Significant impact	71	25,6	29,8	100,0
	Total	238	85,9	100,0	
Missing	System	39	14,1		
Total		277	100,0		

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?
Efficient Service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Just a little impact	6	2,2	2,5	2,5
	Some but not too important impact	61	22,0	25,6	28,2
	Some impact	119	43,0	50,0	78,2
	Significant impact	52	18,8	21,8	100,0
	Total	238	85,9	100,0	
Missing	System	39	14,1		
Total		277	100,0		

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?
Restaurant Appearance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Just a little impact	10	3,6	4,2	4,2
	Some but not too important impact	68	24,5	28,7	32,9
	Some impact	126	45,5	53,2	86,1
	Significant impact	33	11,9	13,9	100,0
	Total	237	85,6	100,0	
Missing	System	40	14,4		
Total		277	100,0		

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?
Presentation of the Thai Culture

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Nothing	7	2,5	3,0	3,0
	Just a little impact	34	12,3	14,5	17,5
	Some but not too important impact	96	34,7	41,0	58,5
	Some impact	76	27,4	32,5	91,0
	Significant impact	21	7,6	9,0	100,0
	Total	234	84,5	100,0	
Missing	System	43	15,5		
Total		277	100,0		

How much impact did the following have in your dining experience?
Overall Presentation of the Restaurant

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Just a little impact	8	2,9	3,4	3,4
	Some but not too important impact	53	19,1	22,6	26,0
	Some impact	133	48,0	56,6	82,6
	Significant impact	41	14,8	17,4	100,0
	Total	235	84,8	100,0	
Missing	System	42	15,2		
Total		277	100,0		

Do you feel you had an authentic Thai dining experience?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		62	22,4	22,4	22,4
	No	41	14,8	14,8	37,2
	Yes	174	62,8	62,8	100,0
	Total	277	100,0	100,0	

How can we improve the "Thai" experience for you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		218	78,7	78,7	78,7
	Be welcoming and smile	1	,4	,4	79,1
	Be yourself :D	1	,4	,4	79,4
	Better music	1	,4	,4	79,8
	Bringing Traditional Thai food to the table	1	,4	,4	80,1
	By clothing	1	,4	,4	80,5
	Cheap price	1	,4	,4	80,9
	Don't know how authentic is in Thailand	1	,4	,4	81,2
	Even more spicy options	1	,4	,4	81,6
	Explanation written on every table about the Thai culture	1	,4	,4	81,9
	Fish, Pork	1	,4	,4	82,3
	For me it is good as it is, perhaps, some Thai entertainment for evenings to spice things up, just an idea	1	,4	,4	82,7
	Free WLAN is good!	1	,4	,4	83,0
	Fruits for dessert	1	,4	,4	83,4
	I can't say, don't know	1	,4	,4	83,8
	I think Banthai is doing well already; after all I'm not in Thailand now, so this is very great what they have done :)	1	,4	,4	84,1
	I think it's perfect now	1	,4	,4	84,5
	I wish that you service the wine grape	1	,4	,4	84,8
	I would like to eat more vegetarian food in buffee	1	,4	,4	85,2
	I'd love more food without onion... just my thing. Would like to eat vegetables, but there is always lot of onions :(	1	,4	,4	85,6
	It is a great experience, don't change anything	1	,4	,4	86,3
	It is difficult to say, I'm quite satisfied	1	,4	,4	86,6
	It was nice for dinner, thanks	1	,4	,4	87,0
	It's already at a good level, keep it up	1	,4	,4	87,4

It's very good that you have Singha beer here, Thank you	1	,4	,4	87,7
Just good as the way it is	1	,4	,4	88,1
Just keep the level	1	,4	,4	88,4
Keep it going, I love your restaurant!	1	,4	,4	88,8
Keep it up, lovely food and great service	1	,4	,4	89,2
Keep the food	1	,4	,4	89,5
Keep the food as it is but improve the restaurant styling to more Scandinavian style	1	,4	,4	89,9
Keep up the good work, no need for change	1	,4	,4	90,3
Keep up the good work! Thai music is important	1	,4	,4	90,6
Leave the sushi out	1	,4	,4	91,0
living Monkey in restaurant	1	,4	,4	91,3
Maybe some seafood	1	,4	,4	91,7
Melohong-soda for dinner drink	1	,4	,4	92,1
More authentic, less like a fast food place	1	,4	,4	92,4
More dish for vegetarians, please	1	,4	,4	92,8
More fish, less meat	2	,7	,7	93,5
More soups	1	,4	,4	93,9
No there's too much of everything, but still looks good	1	,4	,4	94,9
Service and food are already in a good level	1	,4	,4	95,3
Smile	2	,7	,7	96,0
Smile like in Thailand	1	,4	,4	96,4
Sometimes the music is too loud	1	,4	,4	96,8
Table service, make a personal position as before	1	,4	,4	97,1
The food could be hotter	1	,4	,4	97,5
The service could be nicer (As authentic as possible in Finland)	1	,4	,4	97,8
This good enough	1	,4	,4	98,2
Variable dishes during the week	1	,4	,4	98,6
Variety of teas would be great	1	,4	,4	98,9
Water on the tables, two-sided counter for the dishes (because of rush-hour etc.)	1	,4	,4	99,3
You need to get new tables and chairs to this restaurant, need to have ginger tea	1	,4	,4	99,6
You're doing just well	1	,4	,4	100,0
Total	277	100,0	100,0	

8.3 APPENDIX 3. INTERVIEW WITH PARATSH ASANOK, RESTAURANT MANAGER

Anett Lakos: If you can tell a little bit more about the restaurant, it's a Thai restaurant but what was the main point to open it in Finland?

Paratsh Asanok: When I came to Finland, I looked for things I can do here. I studied business when I was young, and I wanted to be able to give service, good service. I never made food before, but I know what the Thai food taste like and what is good quality of Thai food. Here in Finland people know about Thai food, and I wanted to give them another choice, as I have skill, I'm Thai people, I know what Thai is and what is good in Thai. When I started, from the beginning everyday new things came up. You need to learn how Finnish people eat your food; you need to know what kind of problem can happen. Of course I don't like problems, but it's a way of improving and growing in business. And if the same problem happens again, you know what to do, you learned it. Like when costumer complained too spicy, I have a headache, because there are only two complains in my restaurants, too spicy or not enough spicy. We need to learn from experience how the guests' taste is, what do they understood by one chili, two chilies, 3 chilies, what kind of spices do they like or don't like. I think every restaurant has problems like this, but if the restaurant runs for a long time, you learn from your problems and your experience will help you to do profitable business. Somebody told me that if you make a restaurant and if you can pass 2 years than you can stand. You cannot be the same; you need to change all the same. When you just work from routine, when customer come, and everything is the same, it becomes boring. You need to put new ideas. That's why since I started it, I always look for new things, I keep my eyes open and after every 2-3 years I need to change.

A.L.: What other challenges have you met, other than the taste of the menu?

P.A.: In Thailand we don't have this kind of problem, about allergic. People here are allergic for too many things; we need to be really careful, because they are real. I don't know why but so many people are allergic for a wide variety of things. Just like some people are allergic to fresh tomatoes, and that's why I tell to waiters to ask customers to talk to us. Once there was a boy he was allergic to nuts, and I forgot that some food have some nut in the deep, for example number 6, and I forgot to mention it. It was a family which comes regularly, so they trusted in me, that I know about the boy's allergic. He ordered something new, and immediately his lip grows. I was shock, and so so sorry, but luckily nothing serious happened, because he didn't eat it. That's why waiters are trained to be really careful with it, and to communicate with costumers and cooks carefully, because it can be really serious.

A.L.: How many employees do you have and what are their nationalities?

P.A.: Right now there are 8 permanent and 3 part-time workers, plus me. Almost all are Thai, only one who is from Afghanistan, but he has been with me for 6 years now.

A.L.: Do you use this as a strategy to attract customers? Or what are the reasons who have some many Thai employees?

P.A.: You know, Thai food is sensitive food. It's not about how you make the food over here, one cup of this and one cup of that, you cannot really measure it. Because you need to you some "skill in hand" because same food and ingredients, same everything, but different person make it, it will have different taste. For example you make a food in pan. What, when and how you put in it will change to taste of the dish. That's why for me it's important to have Thai as a cook, or kitchen staff. Of course for the front it doesn't matter.

A.L.: So what are they educational background? Do all of the cooks have been learned to be cooks?

P.A.: No, I have tried many times cooks who trained to be chef in a big hotel or something, but I learned one thing. Cook in Thailand and cook in here is different. I have been cooks how worked in hotel, but over here you need to be able to manage everything by yourself, maybe you will be the only one in the kitchen during a shift. The trained cooks are not well organized for that task, and they expect more, than the cooks I train. Who I train see everything in a clear flow in the kitchen. They are able to manage themselves. Over here in Finland you cannot have many workers, so you need to see their skills and abilities. In Thailand is different. Owner doesn't need to do anything; many workers because it's cheaper to hire them. That's why I control; if they work here they all have skills and would be able to work properly in any other restaurants as well.

A.L.: There are differences in design between the two restaurants. What were the reasons to make this difference in interior between them?

P.A.: Basically I asked myself what I like. Usually I like a lot of trees and flowers. I feel that when you are Thai you need a place which reminds you of home, and you can relax. My point for Banthai was that I missed my home; I wanted to be feel home just like in Thailand, to feel Thailand and smell Thailand. I think customers can feel this connection as well. I live here, if I walk anywhere it is Finland, but when I go inside in Banthai it feels like Thailand. I put things as if it would be my home, to be able to relax and work there. If you make another restaurant in the same design it's going to be competition, that's why I was looking for a new concept. I needed to think what Thailand is for Finnish people, what do they think or see about Thailand. So in Banthai Deli I wanted them to feel close to nature, feel that something have sun, not cold, and somehow

connected to Thailand. Of course I didn't make everything in one day. I changed day by day based on what the customers said, what they like, what they didn't like.

A.L.: About the menu, how did you decide what to put on the menu?

P.A.: For first menu, I looked what kind of menu others have. Of course I need to think abouyt the price, that it's not so bad for us or for the customers. Since the frist menu I looked at what food customer liked or don't liked, and changed in based on that. I always pout something new. I many times talked with customers how they feel about the menu, and what do they would like to change.

A.L.: In Thailand when you order in a restaurant you share it, but here it's not common. Was it a lot of trouble for you?

P.A.: I give some instruction for them, but we give them separate plates for rice so if they want they can share or eat their own food. We don't force customers, but we tell them all the time and teach them a little bit. Some like some doesn't really like, that's ok. I also tell it to buffet customers, to take the food separately to small plates, so they will know what they eat and how it really tastes like.