

## **Elements of experience in a restaurant. Case: Restaurant Havis**

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<p>The aim of this thesis is to find out what kind of elements of experience can be found in a Finnish fish and seafood restaurant and what elements the customers find important. The thesis also attempts to examine the service delivery process and the importance of different touchpoints in the service delivery. The thesis goes through culinary trends and if these have a deep affect on visitors of the restaurant. The focus is put on three aspects of the restaurant, which are the food, the atmosphere and the service. Restaurant Havis, a Finnish fish and seafood restaurant has been used as a case restaurant.</p> <p>The study is a combination of a quantitative and qualitative research. A customer questionnaire was made in the case restaurant to find out what elements of experience already were present in the current restaurant environment and what factors the customers found important in this type of restaurant. As the author is an employee of the restaurant, observation and interaction with the customers were also used as a method to collect data.</p> <p>The questionnaire was handed out in the restaurant during March 2014 and all together 76 answers were collected. The answers were then analysed with the help of excel sheets and compared with the theory.</p> <p>Results indicate that currently the restaurant has elements that satisfy the customers' needs, but some further development could be done. The results indicate that the theme plays a big role in creating a memorable experience, as well as local Finnish ingredients. What came as a surprise, was that the the role of music was not perceived as very important. In the end of the thesis these development ideas have been presented and they will be handed to the restaurant manager of restaurant Havis.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Elements of experience, restaurant, customer experience, Experience economy, local food, service	

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# 1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to research in the field of experience in relation to restaurants. Whether companies want it or not, the economy is slowly moving into a more experience based economy. Just like the shift between the goods economy and service economy, there will be a shift into the experience economy. The shift will not be easy and will not happen over night, but it is slowly approaching. The first step is to get enterprises to realize that unless they want to become commoditized, a change in the business has to be done. Sooner or later the companies have to convert into this emerging economy. (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 98).

The idea of the thesis was born in the mind of the author with an interest to combine subjects learned during the studies with her current work place. Since the author is studying Experience and Wellness Management it was a natural choice to choose subjects relating to the Experience Economy. Ever since the beginning of the studies this subject has been part of the every day student life and each year the interest in this subject has increased. Another motivator in choosing this subject was the fact that the case company is a restaurant, which made culinary aspects a natural choice in the selection of the theory. Lastly, since the author holds the position of a member of the service staff this motivated the selection of service design.

The aim of this thesis is to find out what kind of elements of experience can be found in a Finnish fish and seafood restaurant and what elements the customers find important. The thesis also attempts to examine the service delivery process and the importance of different touchpoints in the service delivery. The thesis goes through culinary trends and if these have a deep affect on visitors of the restaurant. The focus is put on three aspects of the restaurant, which are the food, the atmosphere and the service. As a case restaurant, a Finnish fish and seafood restaurant has been used, restaurant Havis.

The research attempt to find out which aspects of the restaurant meet the needs of the experience economy and which ones still need some development, as well as how im-

portant it is to consider several aspects to create a successful whole. This thesis will be focusing on three different elements of the restaurant; the food, the atmosphere and the service. The research tries to answer these questions:

- 1) How to create an experience based customer journey for customers in a Finnish fish restaurant?
- 2) Which aspects of the restaurant are important to consider in creating a memorable experience for customers?
- 3) What elements of experience are present in the restaurant and what elements do the customers find important?

In practise this thesis aims to give the managers and employees of restaurant Havis a picture of various elements that affect the experience customers perceive and what aspects need to be taken into consideration in the whole customer process to make the customer happy and make them revisit the restaurant. The development ideas, which will arise from the analysis, will work as suggestions for future development. The idea behind the thesis was to get some indication on how to increase the customer flow during low season in the autumn and after Christmas holidays in the spring. These development ideas are designed to enhance and improve the already existing elements. With the help of customer opinions and observation the thesis tries to find out what aspects are important in the restaurant environment.

This first chapter of the thesis is an introduction to the research, it comprises the aims and objectives, the research problem and an overall picture of what is to come. The second chapter reviews the relevant literature used in the research, starting with experience factors, continuing with culinary factors and ending with service design. The third chapter shortly explains the case company, its history and values. In the fourth chapter the relevant methodology is introduced and explained. The fifth chapter includes the results of the questionnaire conducted in restaurant Havis and the sixth chapter covers the discussion between the results and theory. Lastly, the seventh chapter concludes the thesis with further research suggestions and learning outcomes.

The research will mainly focus on three different aspects of the restaurant, that is the food, the atmosphere and the service. With the term food the researcher means the food served at the restaurant as a whole, as well as the ingredients used, the cooking methods, appearance and any other feelings the end product produced by the kitchen awakens. The food part includes to some extent also the beverage consumed during the food experience. The atmosphere is the physical environment of the restaurant, which includes the decoration, the music, as well as other aspects in the visual environment. The service defines the interaction between the customer and restaurant; it can be face-to face interaction, as well as the virtual interaction prior, during and after the restaurant visit, with a focus on the stay at the restaurant.

## 2 Literature Review

This part of the thesis will cover the literature used to help analysing and develop the elements of experience in the restaurant. Parts of the Experience Economy will be used as a base for the research, as well as food tourism and service design.

### 2.1 Experience economy

Experience as a concept is not that new, but it is not until now that people slowly start realizing the economic value of it. Constantly more people are getting familiar with this approaching economy, but a lot of literature is still based on the same authors as in the beginning of the experience era. Majority of all literature concerning the Experience Economy is based on the writings of Joseph B. Pine II and James H. Gilmore that first wrote an article in 1998 with the title *The Experience Economy* and later on in 1999 published the book *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage*. Before J. Pine and J. Gilmore and around the same time there were some futurists, researchers, teachers, sociologists and so forth similarly talking and discovering a change in the future society.

In his book *“Future Shock”* (1970, 118) in the early 1970s Alvin Toffler was probably the first one to mention about a future change in the way people consume. Toffler talked about an economy after the service economy “...the growth of a strange new sector based on what can only be called the “experience industries””. Later on, in the early 1980s Holbrook and Hirschman’s article *“The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun”* (1982, 132) discussed an experiential perspective to consumer behavior. They talked about a more emotional, hedonic, playful and creative way of buyer behavior.

But the first ones presenting the concept of experience as an economy to the world were Gerhard Schulze, as well as Joseph Pine and James Gilmore. In the beginning of the 1990s Gerhard Schulze in his book *“Die Erlebniss Gesellschaft – the Experience Society”* (1992 (2013)) talked about a societal change from the materialistic to the experiential. He describes the principles of experience markets, how people will invest more

in experiences than in materialistic belongings. Joseph Pine and James Gilmore wrote the book “The Experience Economy” (1999) and came out with the idea that experience would be the new economic genre and a next step from the service economy. Also in 1999 Rolf Jensen described a new era approaching, he talked about The Dream Society, in his book with the same title.

The term experience has been used in marketing products and services for years. The excess use of this word has resulted in its inflation and it has become a common expression in service in hope of boosting the sales (Tarssanen and Kylänen 2009, 8). It is easy to use the term experience, but to create a memorable and meaningful experience for the customers might not be as easy. Pine and Gilmore (1998, 98) perceive experience to be created when a company on purpose uses service as the stage and goods as props, to involve individual customers in a way that creates memorable events. Gupta and Vajic (2000, 33-34) on the other hand suggest that experience is a learning process, where the customers interact with different elements created by the service provider. Komppula and Boxberg (2002, 29) state that ultimately a meaningful experience is personal and cannot be guaranteed. Though, it can be affected to some extent by paying special attention to the customer experience. Building up a concept that eventually will leave the customer with a smile on their face and a great memory in their mind is not as simple as just using the term “experience”.

As partly mentioned above, the core idea of the experience-based economy is to create a memorable experience for the customers (or “guests” as Pine and Gilmore express it). According to Pine and Gilmore (1999) what differentiates the experience economy from the service economy is that its goal is to engage people on multiply levels like emotionally, physically, intellectually or perhaps even spiritually. They emphasized that it is important to realize that two people cannot have the same experience; even if a group of people are experiencing the same situation none of them perceives it in the same way. Jensen (1999, 20) likewise describes a change to a more emotional society where people focus on dreams, adventures, spirituality and feelings. In this kind of approach it is important that each point of the customer experience is well designed. All



staff members need to be working on the same page when it comes to the image the restaurant wants to give the guests.

As in the past, the economy is constantly developing and moving forwards. As the world is changing, so does the economy. The shifting from one economy to another does not mean that the previous economy will disappear; it just means that the economy is developing and moving forward. Figure 1 demonstrates the development of the economy from the commodities to the experience. As can be seen from the picture, the commodities, goods and service economies are not disappearing, but instead being built upon. Because nowadays fewer and fewer people are needed to perform the same tasks to produce commodities, goods and services than in the past, and the goods and services are becoming commoditized, which by nature means that we need to emerge into a new economy. When a good or service becomes commoditized it becomes very much price centric; companies are competing for the lowest price possible, and this does not generate economic growth, or meaningful experiences. (Pine & Gilmore 1999, 20-24, 72-73).

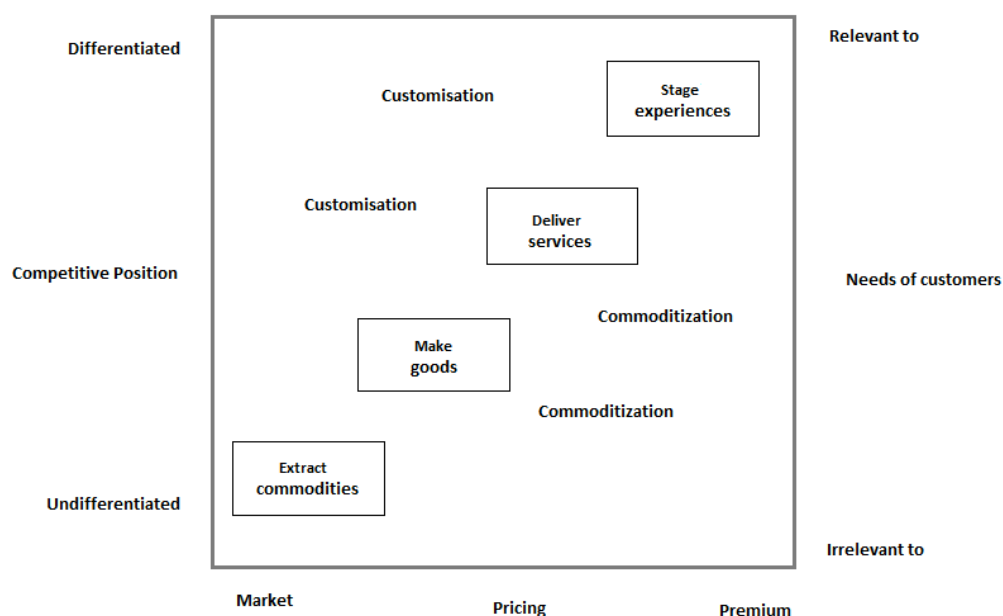


Figure 1: The Progression of Economic Value (Pine & Gilmore 1999)

With the increasing competition between restaurants in the Helsinki area, as well as other areas nearby, it is important to find a way to stand out. Nowadays the tangible and intangible is not enough, people want to engage in into something memorable and this is what the experience economy aims to achieve. Staging an experience is not a new invention. For long people have been going to theatres, cinemas and ballets, already for decades travelling has been a part of life, as well as eating out, not to mention the internet, which all has provided memorable experience for guests visiting it. (Pine & Gilmore, 2002). Think about the cabarets in Moulin Rouge in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century or the crazy underground parties in the alcohol forbidden 1920s New York. People were ready to pay a fair amount of money to enjoy these moments, which would stay in their mind for years to come.

## **2.2 The Experience Pyramid**

The Experience Pyramid showcases a tool for improving and analysing meaningfulness of a product. This model represents an ideal product, which considers all the aspects to create a meaningful experience. It is primarily used in development of tourism, cultural and entertainment products, but in this thesis it will be adapted to a restaurant product. As can be seen in figure 2, the pyramid represents the elements of experience (individuality, authenticity, story, etc.), as well as the levels of customer's perception (motivation, physical, intellectual etc.) that can be used when developing all experience products.

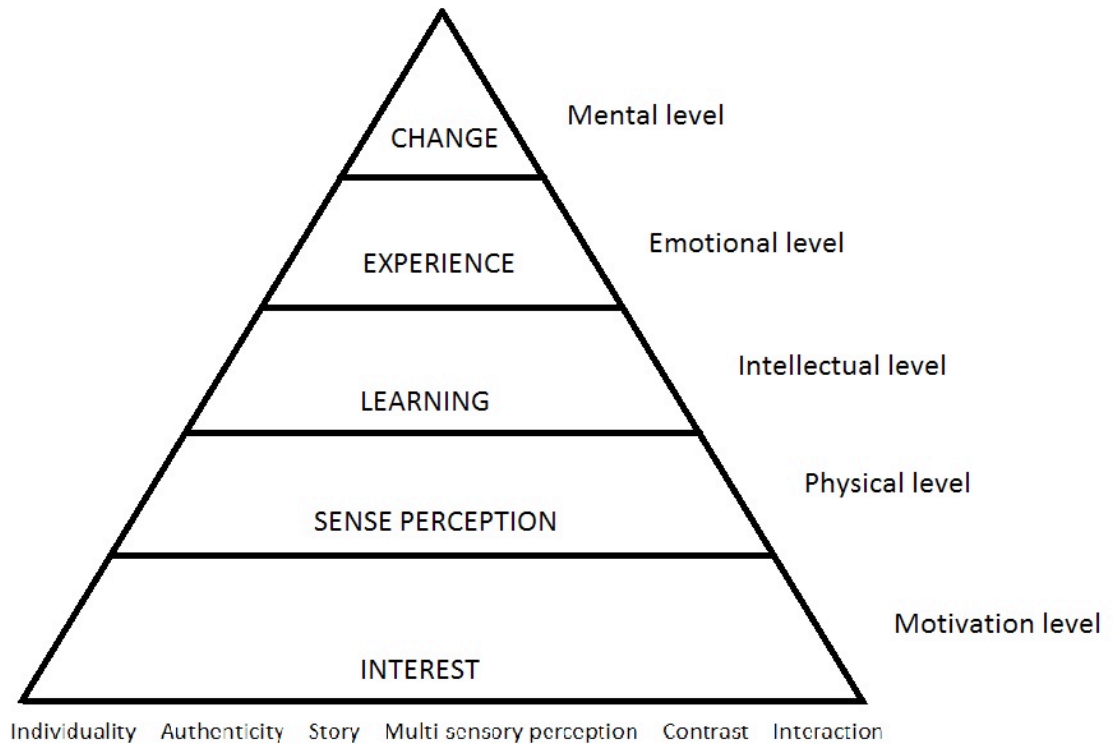


Figure 2: The Experience Pyramid (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 11)

### 2.2.1 Elements of Experience

There are six elements of experience, which embody the factors that add to the meaningfulness of a product or service.

Individuality, in other words uniqueness, means a product that cannot be found anywhere else. Individual products should be flexible and customizable for personal needs; even a variation in the service should be possible. The more individual a product, the more expensive it is. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 12)

Authenticity means a credible product. The authenticity is very much based on the local culture, what is acceptable in that area. It is also a very individual thing; each person perceives authenticity in his or her own way. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 12)

Story is a way of combining several elements of the products to produce a coherent story, a credible story. A good story includes facts and beliefs of the place that can be combined to a theme. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 13). As Pine and Gilmore state, a

theme is a very important part of the experience process and it should be visible in all stages of the experience.

With the help of multi-sensory perception an experience provider can strengthen the theme to be perceived with all five senses. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 13-14)

The product should be in contrast with a customer's everyday life. The product should be something different, new, exotic and out of ordinary. But the experience provider should also take into consideration that what is different for one might be common for another person. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 14)

The interaction should be excellent between the product and the customer, as well as communication between other customers, staff, environment and friends. (Tarssanen, & Kylänen 2009, 14)

### **2.2.2 Customer's Perception**

The customer's perception is divided into five different levels, starting from the motivational level and ending with the mental level. These levels represent the feeling customer's perceive while experiencing a certain product or service.

The motivational level is when the interest is evoked and the expectations of the product are created with the help of different marketing tools. This first level should include almost all of the elements of experience. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 15)

The physical level represents the sensory perception. One should feel comfortable with all senses. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 15)

The intellectual level is the stage of learning and demonstrates if one is satisfied or not. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 15-16)

The emotional level is very much dependent on the other levels. If the other levels have been good, customer will have a positive emotional experience. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 16)

The mental level represents a personal change in a person. If one has felt such a great experience, he or she will feel a permanent change in the physical state, state of mind or lifestyle. These changes might be a new hobby, new way of thinking or new resources within oneself. (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2009, 16)

### **2.3 Experience in relation to food**

Eating is a fundamental activity, and bases of life and society for human beings. Many aspects of a person's life evolve around food, especially since it is a basic need for survival. In the earlier days the food was prepared at home with ingredients and raw material gathered near the home, and the selection was relatively scarce. People ate what they could get their hands on and what was growing in their home region. Today, especially in the Western world, the accessibility for ingredients from all over the world is overwhelming and the fact is that people eat out more than they ever did before. (Jakobsen 2008, 13-15).

Maslow's hierarchy of need is a theory in psychology used to describe the stages of human motivation. This theory is mainly used in sociology, management training and in psychology, but can also be used in other contexts. These stages reflect the aspects that motivate people in life as well as in decision-making. In his paper "A Theory of Human Motivation" in 1943 Abraham Maslow used five terms; physiological, safety, love/belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization to describe the stages which human needs go through. Picture 3 represents an interpretation made later on to visualize the human needs described by Maslow. The picture is made up as a pyramid with the most essential aspects starting from the bottom up.

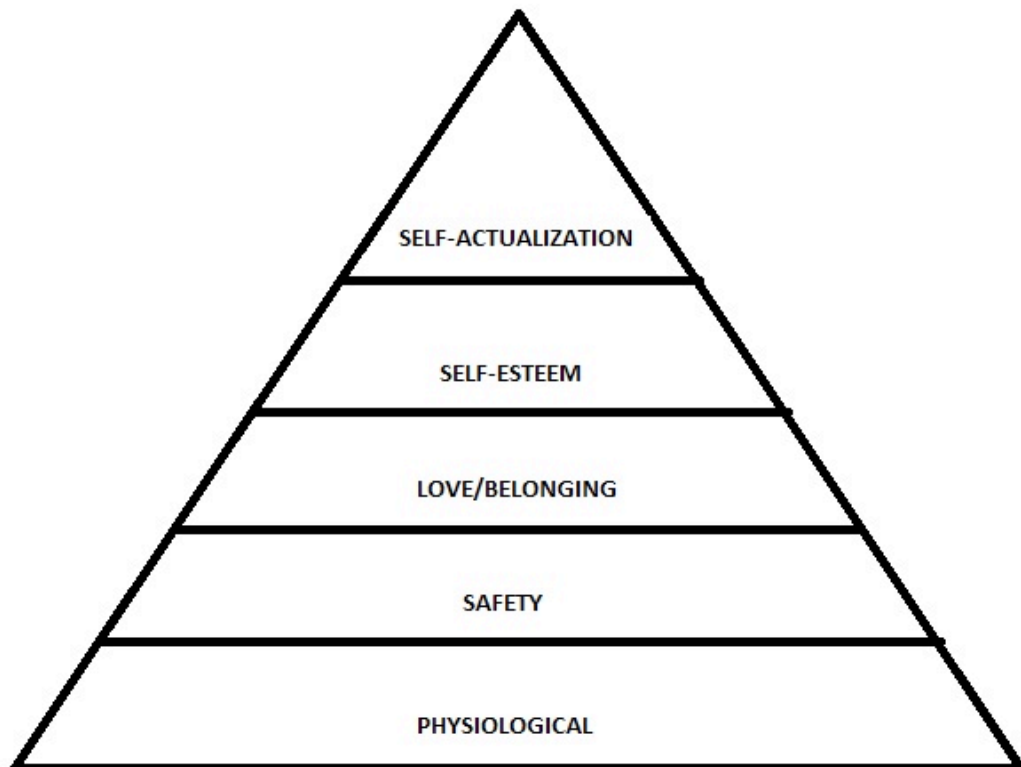
The first and foremost needs that motivate people are the basic physiological needs like breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, homeostasis and excretion. The physiological needs can be seen as compulsory requirement for human survival. Nowadays the moti-

vation to eat or drink usually has a deeper emotion to it, but these emotions reflect other stages of the hierarchy and not only the need of satisfying hunger. This “base of the pyramid” can be seen as aspects that are wanted when you have nothing else, for example a person who is starving and the only motivation in life is to satisfy hunger and filling the stomach. The second stage in the hierarchy is safety, which refers to a safe environment as well as the feeling of familiarity. When the basic need has been met a person starts thinking about the safety and the importance of it. The third stage is the need of love, to be near friends and family, or to be part of a group. This stage is not only about giving love, but also receiving it. The fourth stage is about the self-esteem as well as about respect by others. The last stage of the hierarchy self-actualization comes after all the other needs are met. Even if all the other needs are satisfied, humans still feel an urge to achieve something more. (Maslow 1943, 370-396).

All these so-called stages are dependent on each other, once the lowest need has been satisfied a human usually seeks to satisfy the next one. Despite the fact that this hierarchy of needs is mainly used in psychological content, it can as well be adopted to motivation in visiting restaurants. The basic requirement of a restaurant is to offer food and beverage for a customer. A customer usually expects to enter into a safe and comfortable environment when choosing a restaurant. People usually come to a restaurant with friends or family, or then with a business group, with whom they feel loved or part of. To be respected by other customers and staff members is part of the whole experience. Last and foremost, people visiting a restaurant usually expect or more precisely wish to experience something more, which is the top of the pyramid.

Nowadays these needs can still be seen as a basis for human motivation, but some aspects like safety can be perceived from a different angle. Most of the people like the feeling of safety, but lately more and more people are taking risks to experience something extraordinary. When all the needs are met people start pushing the limits of them. For example if one feels extreme safety in their environment, they start pushing the limits to constantly satisfy a higher need. Starting from the basic need and up, one always moves on when one need is fully satisfied.

Maslow's hierarchy of need has a certain relation to the Experience Pyramid described earlier in the chapter. The five levels of experience or the customer's perception in the Experience Pyramid have common denominators with Maslow's hierarchy. The physiological needs can be compared with the motivational level, the safety needs with the physical level, the love/belonging need and esteem with intellectual and emotional level and on top of the pyramid the need of self-actualization refers to the mental level.



**Figure 3: An interpretation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Nowadays people do not only want to satisfy their basic needs of eating but to experience something extraordinary. As Jakobsen (2008, 18) states “Eating is a combined body and mind experience”.

Establishing a theme is as important as anything when creating a memorable experience. When hearing the name Hard Rock Café for example one will immediately know what to expect of the place, they have built a strong and coherent theme that is connected to all the touch points of the restaurant. It is extremely important when creating

a theme that it is well conceived for customer to get a grasp on it. (Pine & Gilmore 1998). However, Gupta and Vajic (2000, 33) points out that several restaurants have tried to capitalize the so called “eatertainment” after theme restaurants such as Hard Rock Café, the Rainforest Café and Planet Hollywood succeeded so well in it, but many restaurant have failed shortly after the concept has worn off.

Getting a successful theme for the restaurant is not as simple as just coming up with a theme and all work is done. As Pine and Gilmore mention (1998, 102-103) it is vital that the theme is visible in all the elements of the restaurant, both front- and backstage.

Many Finnish bars and restaurants have succeeded well in making a strong theme for their establishments. Already in Helsinki there are quite a few theme restaurants with a strong Finnish theme such as Zetor, Harald, Lappi and Savotta. All these restaurants have traditional Finnish products on their menu; reindeer, salmon, Baltic Herring, etc. Helsinki also has a variety of gourmet restaurant with new innovative menus, some with pure Finnish products like Olo, Maku, Demo and Luomo (Visit Helsinki, 2013). Then there are bars with well-accomplished themes such as the Spanish bullfighting themed bar Los Cojones, the naval tattoo bar Navy Jerry’s, the Mexican bar Llamas with swings inside, Indian themed bar Bhangra or the Tikibar and Room Kokomo. Gupta and Vajic (2000, 36) points out that people are willing to pay more for a bottle of wine in the restaurant than in a alcohol shop for the simple reason that they are paying for the experience.



## 2.4 Culinary Tourism

Culinary tourism, also known as food tourism, tasting tourism, cuisine tourism, gourmet tourism, gastronomy tourism and gastronomic tourism is a mode of traveling where the main goal is to experience food and drinks of the host destination. Nowadays the food and drink experience is a relatively great part of the travel to a destination, no matter whether it is another town, city, country or continent, visiting local restaurants is usually an essential part of the travel. Increasingly tourists are starting to make travel decisions based on local food culture and culinary offerings.

Due to an increasing amount of travellers seeking for a gastronomic experience during their travel, the concept of culinary tourism was born. The first one to use the term culinary tourism was Lucy Long in 1998; she defines culinary tourism as following:

...is about food as a subject and medium, destination and vehicle, for tourism...individuals exploring foods new to them as well as using food to explore new cultures and ways of being...groups using food to “sell” their histories and to construct marketable and publicly attractive identities...individuals satisfying curiosity...experiencing of food in a mode that is out of the ordinary, that steps outside the normal routine to notice difference and power of food to represent and negotiate that difference. (Lucy Long 2008, 20).

Muñoz and Wood (2009, 270) define characteristics like local ingredients, preservation and cooking of traditional cooking methods, enjoyment of the end products and an authentic experience to be aspects that are important in culinary tourism; aspects that allows the heritage and culture of the place connect with the help of the cuisine.

The World Food Travel Association defines food tourism as “the pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable experiences, both near and far”. For them the word culinary tourism is to elitist and misleading, they prefer using the word food tourism to make the public get a clearer understanding that it is specifically the pursuit of food of any kind, not only high class restaurants or institutions. With “both near and far” they want to express that it does not necessary have to mean that a person travels to another

er country to experience the food, but that a person who travels to another part of his home town can also be defined as a food tourist.

Kari Kaufman, Director of Tourism at Experience Columbus defines culinary tourism in similar ways as the above mentioned; according to her culinary tourism is a search of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences, with a focus on search for and enjoyment of prepared food. Pointing out that this does not necessarily mean fancy restaurants with Michelin stars, but rather a search for authentic food that tastes good. (Kaufman, 2010)

## **2.5 Customisation**

As stated earlier in the thesis, Pine and Gilmore (1999, 81-94) have emphasised the importance of customisation and the danger of commoditization. Every individual have his or her own preferences and needs, one person even has a variety of needs depending on the situation. For example, during the week a person might have a fast business lunch with colleagues while the same person wants to enjoy a long lasting lunch with his wife during the weekend. Just one person will have multiple needs, depending on the purpose of visiting a restaurant, let alone every customer in a restaurant. Every customer might have a different purpose of visiting such as; business lunch/dinner, wedding anniversary, casual dinner, romantic dinner, national and international guests visiting, etc., which requires a lot of flexibility and customisation for the restaurant.

The importance with customisation is not to add more choice to the menu, rather help the customer to figure out what they want. Adding more dishes to the menu will only make it bigger, the waits longer, the service cycle more difficult, increase problems in the kitchen and overwhelm the customer. These are unfavourable aspects from a customer point of view. (Palmer, 2013).

## 2.6 Local and organic ingredients

Foreigners, as well as Finnish people, often have an incredibly blank picture of Finnish food and the Finnish food culture. Finns tend to be very humble with their food culture and the fact is that many Finns are not aware of the wide selection of ingredients of their country. Truthfully said, there are many vegetables and especially fruits that are impossible to grow in Finland. The climate is too cold, too dark and shifting for growing some products, which makes the selection scarcer. But on the other hand one can find unique, vitamin rich products that have difficulties to grow in other countries.

More increasingly nowadays the value of the ingredients in a restaurant has moved towards a more local perspective, especially in the Nordic countries chefs do not necessarily look for the best French or Italia ingredients, but instead at what can be found in their home country and area at a specific season. Despite the fact that Finland and other Nordic countries have long cold winters and short summers, there are several berries, root vegetables, fruits etc. that cannot be found anywhere else and that have a flavour unique for those countries. Moreover, ingredients suffer from being transported which means that the locally produced and local organic products maintain their freshness. (Visit Sweden 2013).

Every season in Finland has its unique raw materials for restaurants to work with. During the spring one can find for example morels, nettles, radish, wild vegetables, rhubarb, pike and bream. The summer brings with it early potatoes, strawberries, lettuce, onion, cucumber, tomato, peas, carrots, herbs, summer squash, blueberries, raspberries, blackcurrant and redcurrant. In the autumn cucumbers, tomatoes, pumpkins, fresh beans, leaks, potatoes, root vegetables, blueberries, lingonberries, cranberries, cloudberry, apples, plums and mushrooms grow, and the season for hunting game is in the autumn. Despite the cold winters some vegetables still grow during this period, one can find potatoes, root vegetables, cabbage, dry beans and peas, and sprouts. During the winter hunting is also common. (Ruokatieto Yhdistys Ry 2013). The same goes for fish; there are also seasons for different fish around the year. WWF has comprised a list of fish, which they recommend to be consumed, fish that should be bought with

caution and fish that should be avoided, helping both restaurants and consumer to know what fish actually is sustainably caught in Finland.

### **2.6.1 Scandinavian cuisine**

A group of Scandinavian chefs wrote a manifesto to support the Nordic cuisine and its products. Slowly, but surely the Nordic kitchen is becoming a movement just like any other great kitchen in the world. Chefs and food supporters from the Nordic countries are spreading the knowledge of Nordic recipes and ingredients to other continents.

The manifesto consists of ten points that the Nordic Cuisine aims to do:

1. To express the purity, freshness, simplicity and ethics we wish to associate with our region.
2. To reflect the changing of the seasons in the meals we make.
3. To base our cooking on ingredients and produce whose characteristics are particularly excellent in our climates, landscapes and waters.
4. To combine the demand for good taste with modern knowledge of health and well-being.
5. To promote Nordic products and the variety of Nordic producers – and to spread the word about their underlying cultures.
6. To promote animal welfare and a sound production process in our seas, on our farmland and in the wild.
7. To develop potentially new applications of traditional Nordic food products.
8. To combine the best in Nordic cookery and culinary traditions with impulses from abroad.
9. To combine local self-sufficiency with regional sharing of high-quality products.
10. To join forces with consumer representatives, other cooking craftsmen, agriculture, the fishing, food, retail and wholesale industries, researchers, teachers, politicians and authorities on this project for the benefit and advantage of everyone in the Nordic countries. (Claus Meyer, 2013)

Head chef and Finnish food ambassador Kim Palhus (2013) had a speech during the Food and Travel seminar at HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Science 1.11.2013 where he defines a few aspects that are right now “in” in the Finnish food market; everyday and tasty Finnish food, local and organic food, Asian food, beer and cider, authentic, tasty and fresh.

The Swedish newspaper in Finland HBL (Hufvudstadsbladet 14.11.2013) recently had an article about the New Nordic Cuisine getting ashore in New York. A whole festival dedicated to Nordic cuisine is being held over seas, with its cooking classes, workshops of all kind, etc. well-known Scandinavian chefs and food fanatics are holding courses on Nordic cuisine, to get people aware that the food in the Scandinavian countries is not only meatballs but also that there is more to it.

## **2.7 Service Design**

Service design is a fairly new approach of service. What makes this field quite unique is the fact that there are multiple definitions of the subject. Several authors and professionals in the field have stated their own definition of this field, all of which are considered equally correct. Stefan Moritz (2005) defines service design as something that innovates new services or improves already existing ones to make them more useful, usable, desirable for customer and efficient and effective for organisations. According to Moritz this is a new holistic, multi-disciplinary and integrative field. Birgit Mager (2009) says that the aim of service design is to ensure service interfaces are useful, usable and desirable for the customer and effective, efficient and distinctive for the supplier. In other words, from the customers' point of view it should make sense, be easy to use and that customers like using it, and from the service providers' point of view profitability and uniqueness are desired. In 2011 Joost Holthuis says in his presentation for TEDx Hamburg that delivering a good service requires the knowledge of the desirability of people, the viability of the business and the technical and organizational feasibility.

A more practical approach to service design is the one of 31 Volts Service Design, according to them service design is when you have two coffee shops next to each other that sell the exact same coffee, for the exact same price, service design is what makes you walk into one and not the other.

Another aspect that makes service design so unique is its usage of several highly interactive tools to explore, create, reflect and implement the best service possible. The

book *This is Service Design Thinking: Basics, Tools and Cases* (Stickhorn and Schneider) defines 25 tools that can be used in various different ways with several different combinations. Companies using service design in their business can choose which tools work best for their specific case. As many aspects of service design, also these tools can be used flexibly and with aspects of change. There is no right or wrong way of using them, the most important is to find a workable combination that can help the service provider to improve and change for better.

### **2.7.1 Five principles of service design thinking**

The service design has been divided into five core principles: (1) user centric, (2) co-creative, (3) sequencing, (4) evidencing and (5) holistic (Stickdorn, & Schneider 2011, 34-35)

1. User centric – the starting point of delivering good services is to realize the importance of the customer and customer participation. When delivering a service, the service provider often forgets that the soul purpose of the interaction is to satisfy the need of the customer at present and for the future. The service provider needs to put themselves into the customers' shoes and understand their individual experience of a service. Everyone has a different need and past knowledge, which affects the level of service needed. It is crucial to have a common language: the service user's language. (Stickdorn, & Schneider 2011, 36-37)
2. Co – creative – besides the customers also other stakeholders need to be involved in the service process. There are several stakeholders involved in creating a service, both front-stage and back-stage like managers, marketers, front-line staff and customers. The service design environment is very creative and generates a lot of ideas between stakeholders. A variety of methods and tools have been developed to gain insight from different user perspectives and for developing, prototyping and testing service concepts. With the help of co-creation the customers have a chance to impact on the result of the service, which might increase the loyalty of the customer. (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011, 38-39)

3. Sequencing – service designers divide the service process into separate touchpoints and interactions. These touchpoints can be human-to-human interaction, human to machine interaction and perhaps even machine-to-machine interaction. It visualizes services into actions. The service process should be looked at as a movie with its pre-service period, the actual service period and the post-service period. (Stickdorn, & Schneider 2011, 40-41)
4. Evidencing – making the service more tangible. Evidencing is like a souvenir from a holiday that reminds one of the good experiences, it can materialize itself in many different ways: bills, mail, emails, brochures, signs, souvenir or other products. But the evidencing has to be done in a desirable way without creating a bad memory of the service received. (Stickdorn, & Schneider 2011, 42-43)
5. Holistic – it is important to consider the whole picture and include the entire environment of a service. Even if a service is intangible, most of the time they take place in a physical environment with physical artefacts. Customers perceive the environment with all their senses; sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. The service provider should consider all the touchpoints separately and alternative customer journeys. (Stickdorn, & Schneider 2011, 44-45)

### **2.7.2 Customer journey map**

Service design uses several tools and methods in their designing process, to test and insure the best service delivery possible.

The customer journey map is a visualisation of the journey the customer is taking when experiencing a service. The map consists of various touchpoints, where the customer interacts with the service both through face-to-face contact as well as virtual interactions. The first step in making a customer journey map is to identify the touchpoints a customer is taking and after that the visual map can be made. The customer journey map should be seen from the customer's perspective, to get a picture on how the customer perceives the experience. (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011, 158-161)

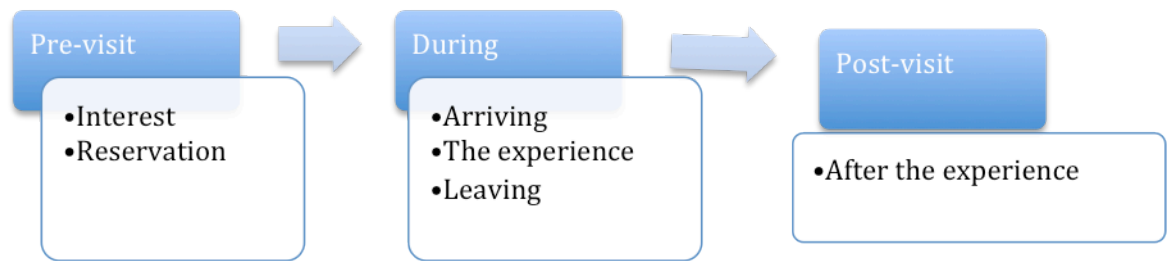


Figure 4: Interpretation of a Customer Journey Map (Stickdorn & Schneider 2011)



### **3 Company Profile of restaurant Havis**

As a case study the author will cooperate with her current workplace, a renowned fish restaurant in the centre of Helsinki; Restaurant Havis.

The restaurant is part of the Royal Restaurants Ltd and its subsidiary Oy Union Hotels Ab that make up Finland's largest private enterprise in the restaurant and hotel field. The restaurants of Royal Restaurants are divided into three different categories depending on their business group; A la Carte, Casual and Banquets. Currently the company owns 32 restaurants in 25 locations and two hotels, Hotel Haven and Hotel Fabian, but constantly growing with more restaurants and hotels. The company employs over 500 people in the Helsinki region. The enterprise offers a wide variety of options for each individual need when it comes to food and atmosphere. All of the restaurants have their own personal look and offers different type of food. (Royalravintolat 2013)

Restaurant Havis will be used as a cooperative restaurant for this thesis. Restaurant Havis was established in 2004 and it is said to be the best fish and seafood restaurant in Helsinki, which offers good service and a good value for money. The restaurant is located next to the Market Square and the inside Market Hall in the centre of Helsinki. The menu is based on Scandinavian seafood products, which is supported by a wide selection of wines. The service concept is: cosy and comfortably professional. The restaurant consists of three parts with three different atmospheres: Havis, Havis Kitchen and the Terrace. The classical Havis side faces the sea and the old inside market hall; with its linen cloth and silverware it is altogether a harmonic and peaceful environment that seats 54 guests. The modern Havis Kitchen part consists of an open kitchen with stronger colours and a more vibrant atmosphere, this side of the restaurant seats 32 guests. During the summer the restaurant also has a 40 seats garden terrace with a roof that offers the customers a summery garden atmosphere with flowers and calm colours. The restaurant does not only serve lunch and dinner, since it is the official restaurant of a hotel (Hotel Haven) it also serves breakfast every day of the year. Room service to the hotel is also part of the offerings. Besides this, restaurant Havis takes care of the two meeting rooms of the hotel; Haven one and Haven two. The restaurant is

open for breakfast Monday to Friday 07.00-10.00 and weekends 07.30-11.00, for lunch Monday to Friday 11.30-15.00, dinner Monday to Friday 15.00-23.00 and Saturdays 17.00-23.00. During the summer the restaurant also has lunch on Saturdays from 13.00 onwards and it is open during the evenings on Sundays. (Restaurant Havis 2013)

Restaurant Havis is comfortably located in the heart of Helsinki, next to the buzzing Market Square and Market Hall. The old part of the restaurant is located in a nearly two hundred years old building designed by the renowned German architect Carl Ludvig Engel and built by the Finnish sea captain Gustaf Wilhelm Sundman. This was C. L. Engel's first design job made for a private person, for G. W. Sundman himself. The Sundmans family were a sea-faring family from Sweden, who later on moved to Turku in Finland and from there to Helsinki in the 1750s. The four sons of the sea captain Olof Sundman were all famous seafarers, but one of the sons Gustaf Wilhelm was also a talented merchant. In 1820 he built an empire style trade house and storage for his merchandise, as well as a home for him and his family to Eteläranta 16 (where the restaurant is located nowadays). This house was conveniently located close to the new Southern harbour and the seaside. (Järvenpää & Rähä 2009)

The management of the Royal Restaurants have defined six core values that are important for the company: always a happy customer (1), continuous development (2), appreciation of people – respect for the individual (3), respect for traditions – strength of the units (4), success – economic and qualitative (5), and responsibility (6). The preliminary goal is to keep the customer satisfied and create a long lasting relationship with them. It is important to keep the quality up and deliver a good customer service, as well as keep the products competitive. The company believes that as long as all the members of the community develop individually, so will the whole community. As a company, Royal Restaurants appreciate the ability of engagement and gaining results in people, employees, customers and stakeholders. The people are the most important resource. Moreover, all of the units should be able to work independently and develop their function. The company appreciates traditions and the operational environment, which leads them in decision-making. They believe that economic success creates opportunities for qualitative success. The economic success gives the company freedom

to move around in the business and an ability to take risks, as well as give the opportunity for the committed staff to develop. Lastly, the company wants to operate in an ethically sustainable, fair and ecological way, which will give opportunities to succeed also in the future.

## 4 Methodology

This chapter introduces the methods used in analysing the thesis. The main method presented in this text is quantitative research, in the form of customer questionnaires. The thesis also includes qualitative research, in the form of observation and customer interaction.

Researchers often choose between a quantitative and a qualitative method in their research and occasionally a mix of these two research methods are used. The quantitative research method is objective in nature and concentrates to measure phenomena. This type of research usually involves collecting and analysing numerical data and applying statistical tests. (Veal 2011, 34) The qualitative method can provide the researcher with rich, in-depth knowledge from a variety of angles, and it often answers the question “how” and “why”. This method is usually associated with (social) constructivism, interpretivism, critical theory orientation and participatory paradigms. (Jennings in Dwyer et al. 2012).

The main method of data collection used in this thesis is the results obtained by customer questionnaire. The original aim was to use previously and continuously gained knowledge as a participant observer in the service process, but this method of collecting data was thought to be too scarce and to add value to the results a customer survey was conducted. Since the researcher has been an employee of the case restaurant for the past three years and is still working there, this will automatically bring some inside knowledge to the research. In other words, both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used in the thesis. The fact that the author has worked for the restaurant for quite some time gives the research the insight of the customer profile, what kind of people usually visit the place and overall knowledge on customer satisfaction. Qualitative techniques such as observational research will give the researcher a view on how people are behaving in the research area, but a deeper knowledge on what kind of people are using the product or service can be obtained by quantitative research.

In practise this means that accompanied with the check in the end of the dining experience the guest was handed a short questionnaire, mainly containing close-ended questions, more precisely 4-point scale questions and multiple-choice questions from which only one should be chosen. This method was mainly used to make the questionnaire fast and efficient, as well as increase the chance of people actually answering the questions. However, one open-ended question was added to give the guests a chance to freely give their opinion and openly answer about their restaurant visit. The aim was to get at least fifty completed and usable questionnaires. The questionnaire was made both in Finnish and English, for both the Finnish and foreign guests visiting the restaurant. The survey was targeted to the already existing guests to get the view from people who have experienced the customer journey and have the dining experience freshly in their memory.

Open-ended questions require more effort from the respondent, as well as from the analyst. These types of questions are usually used in long interview situation with a small amount of respondents. Then again close-ended questions are more often used in situations where there is a bigger amount of respondents. (Goodman et al, 2012)

According to Goodman et al (2012) a survey is like a short story, where the beginning should catch the readers' attention, the middle part is for the big ideas where the basic plot is introduced and in the end the loose ends are tied up and the survey ends.

Before conducting a survey it is important to know what you want to accomplish with it. Once the survey has reached the first customer it is not possible to make changes to maintain statistical validity. (Goodman et al, 2012). The questions for the questionnaire were conducted based on the literature review and the relevance for the study according to the author. The purpose of making a survey for this thesis is to find out where the restaurant is at the moment when it comes to delivering memorable experiences for the guests and which areas need further development towards a more experiential customer journey. The survey will help the researcher to disclose if the overall restaurant product is becoming standardized or does the restaurant still have some unique features that attract people to visit. Furthermore, the survey should reveal if there are

many repeated guests or if most of the people are first timers. Further it is important to know where the customers get the knowledge about the restaurant to in the future reach ideal customers better. The customers were also asked about their opinion about certain experiential and culinary aspects.

When done correctly a survey can give answers to the following questions about the overall user population:

- Is your user population homogeneous, or does it consist of a number of distinct groups?
- What do they want? Does the product provide it?
- What do they like about the product? What do they dislike?

(Goodman et al, 2012)

But a survey can also go wrong. If the researcher asks the wrong people the wrong questions these might lead to result that are inaccurate, inconclusive, or in the worst case deceptive. (Goodman et al, 2012).

## 5 Results from restaurant Havis

The questionnaire was handed-out and information collected from the customers during seven days between the 7.3. - 31.3.2014 focusing on the evenings and dinnertime in restaurant Havis. All questionnaires were personally handed-out by the author of the thesis during working hours. All together 76 answers were collected with the Finnish and English questionnaires. The majority of the answers were given in Finnish, which indicates that the majority of the respondents were of Finnish origin or been living in Finland for a longer period of time. Out of the 76 answers, 55 questionnaires were answered in Finnish and 21 questionnaires in English. Through observation and interaction with customers, other nationalities identified were American, Irish, French, British, Australian and German. The answers were analysed with the help of excel and the below drawn figures are made with this program.

### 5.1 Why customers chose Havis

Out of the 76 answered questionnaires, 66 respondents were able to chose one reason why they specifically chose restaurant Havis. Out of the 66 respondents choosing one option; 3% chose Havis because of the atmosphere in the restaurant, 41% came to Havis because of the food, 14% were motivated by the location and 42% had other motives to visit. In the category “other”, motivations were: invites by a friend, family member or a business partner, the Internet or a newspaper article. A few customers also chose the place because it is a Diners Club voucher restaurant or they had a Royal Restaurant gift card and a few customers got a recommendation from a friend. (Figure 1). On top of these other motives, 10 people (13% of all 76 respondents) chose Havis because of several of the options. Normally the motivations for these customers were a combination of atmosphere and food or food and location, which made food and location the two most popular options of all.

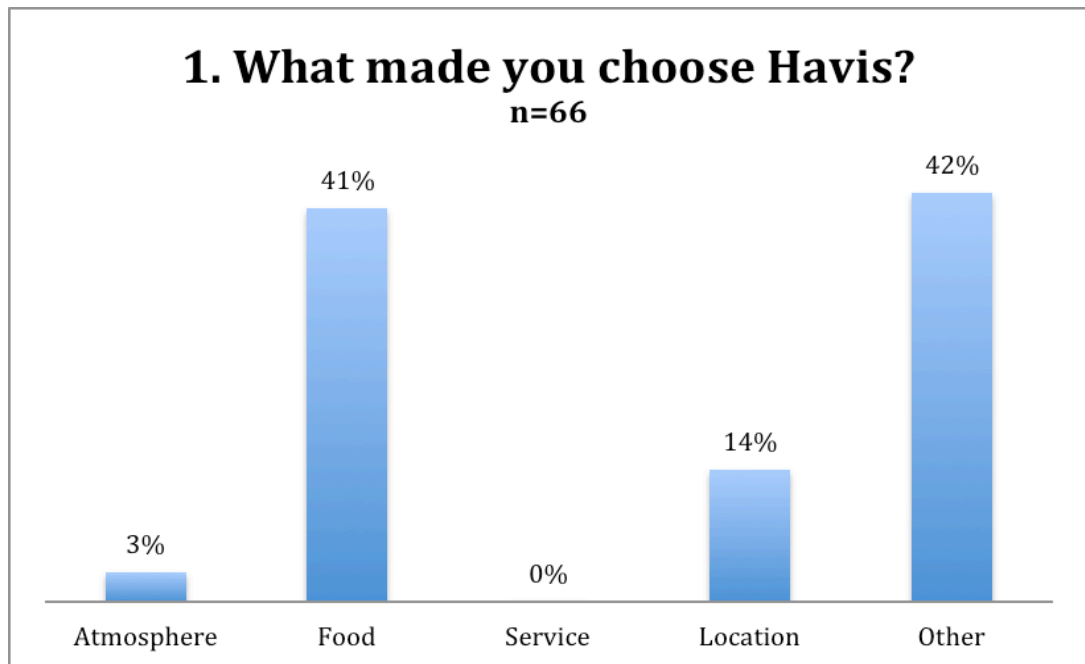


Figure 5: What made you choose Havis?

## 5.2 Background information of the respondents

The majority of the respondents (72%) were first time visitors to the restaurant, 16% had visited the restaurant 1-2 times before, 5% had visited 3-4 times, 3% had visited 5-6 times and 4% had been eating in the restaurant more than 6 times. (Figure 2).

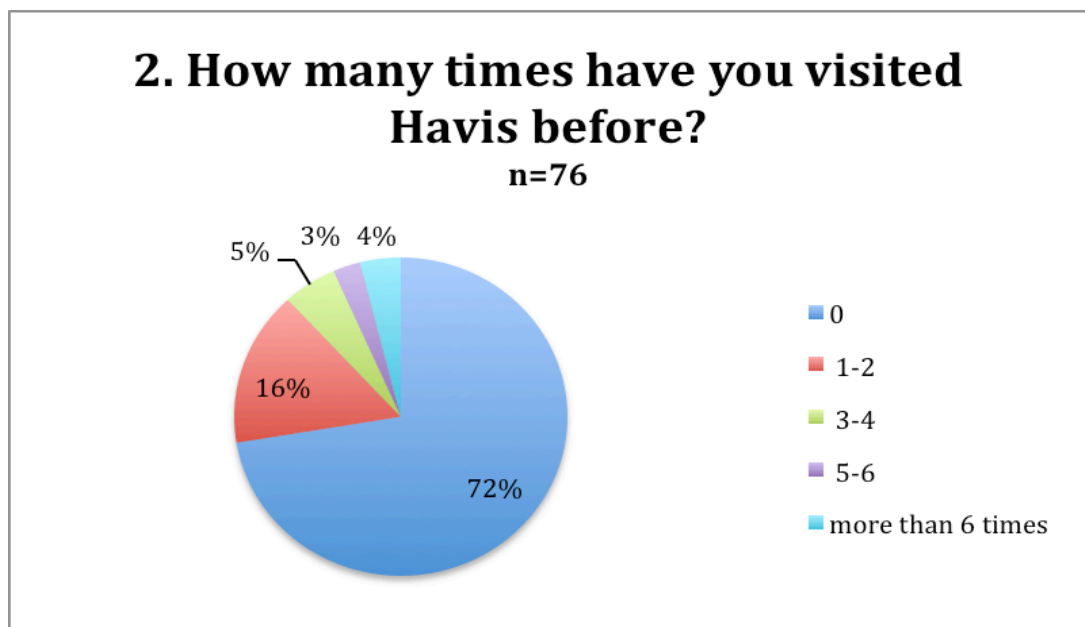


Figure 6: How many times have you visited Havis before?



The most common source of information for the respondents was the Internet, 43% answered that they got the information about the restaurant online. 32% heard about the restaurant from family or friends, 9% from their hotel and only 1% from the Tourist Info. Among the remaining 15% who chose “other” as their option, they got the information about the restaurant from a guidebook, advertisement, from their host bringing them to the restaurant or from another person, or they thought it to be a traditional Helsinki restaurant. Also a few people were familiar with the restaurant from before and did not need to get further information about it. (Figure 3)

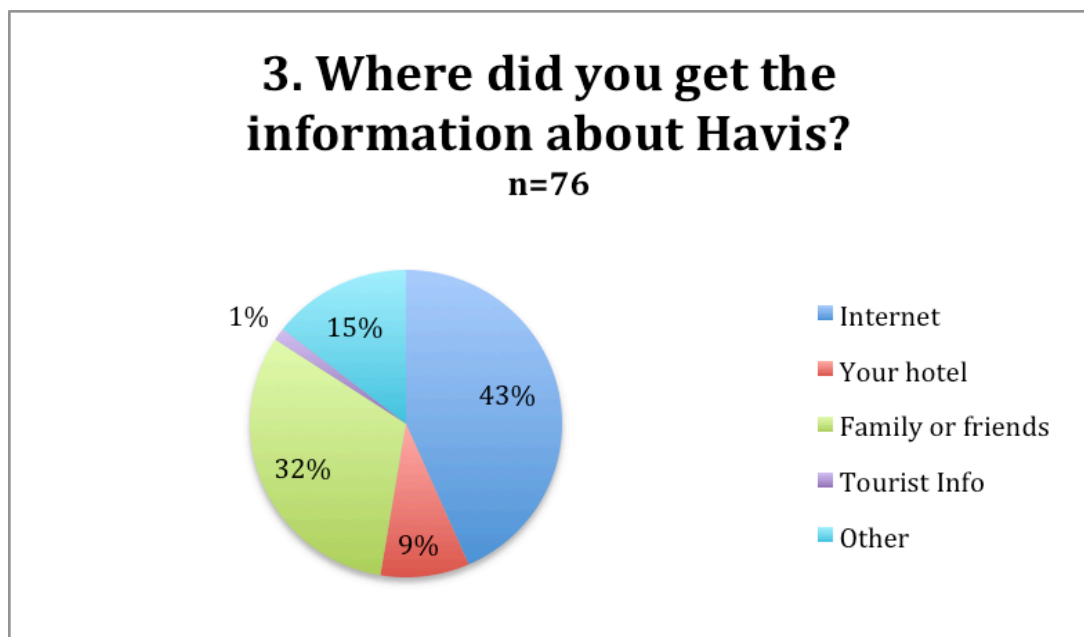


Figure 7: Where did you get the information about Havis?

The purpose of the visit for the majority of the respondents were casual dinner, 53% of the customers were at the restaurant to have a dinner outside of home. 33% visited the restaurant to celebrate an anniversary, 4% had a business dinner and 1% was at the restaurant on a lunch break. The remaining 9% who answered “other” said to be there for the reason of holiday or work in Helsinki or to celebrate the women’s day. (Figure 4).

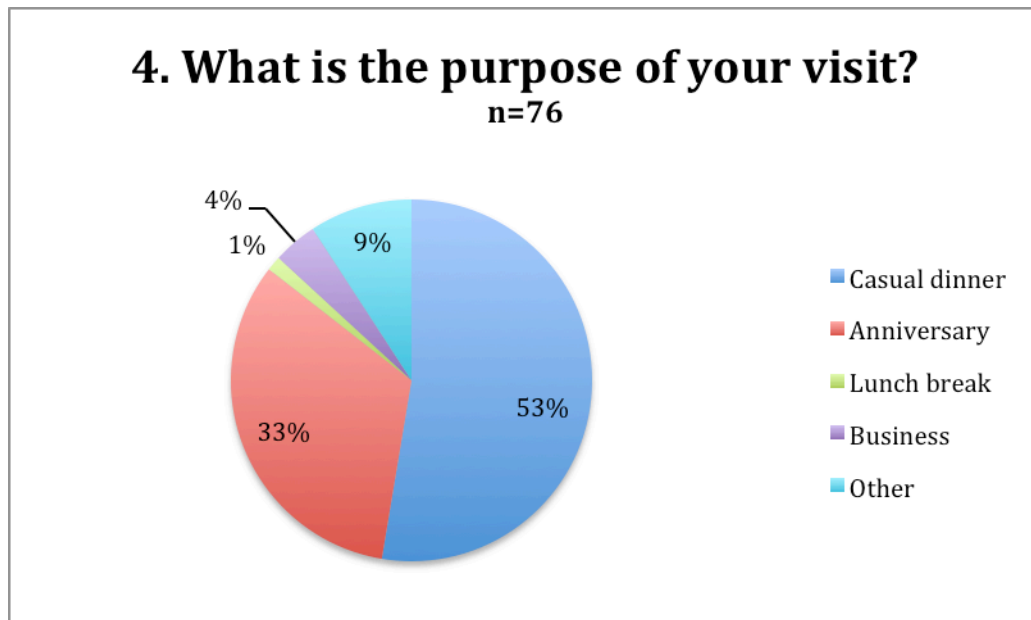


Figure 8: What is the purpose of your visit?

### 5.3 Experience in the restaurant

Most of the people responding to the questionnaire (58%) found the restaurant to be somewhat unique or very unique (40%). Only a small part (2%) thought that the restaurant is somewhat ordinary and no one thought it was ordinary. (Figure 5).

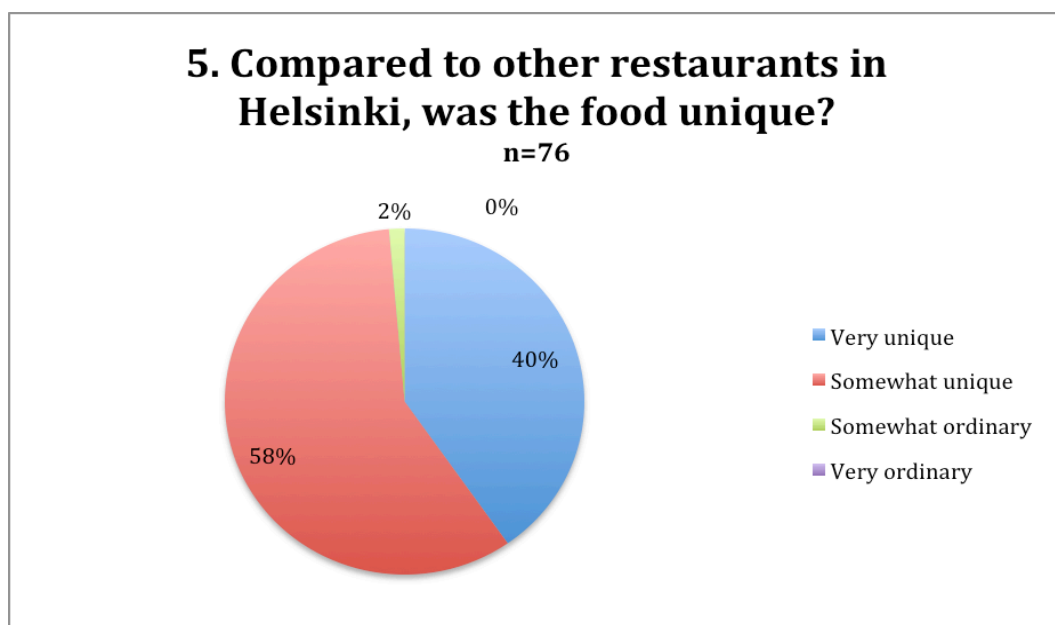


Figure 9: Compared to other restaurants in Helsinki, was the food unique?

The great majority (65%) of the respondents found the theme to be very clear in the restaurant and 34% found it to be somewhat clear. Only 1% found the theme to be unclear and only one thought it was very unclear. (Figure 6).

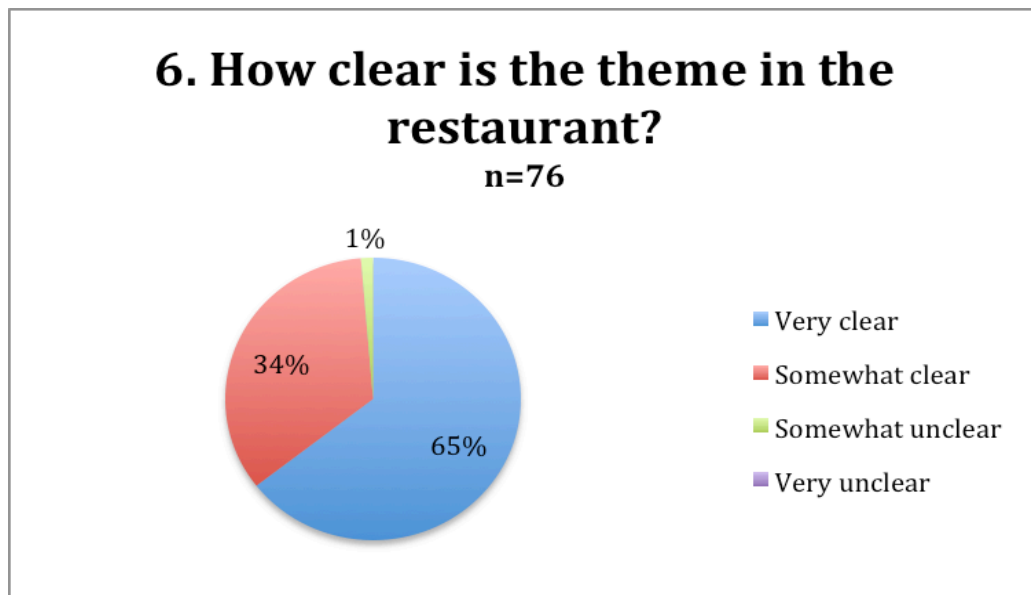


Figure 10: How clear is the theme in the restaurant?

The use of local Finnish ingredients was fairly important for the respondents, 36% found it very important and 53% found it somewhat important. Only 11% said it to be somewhat unimportant and 1% found it all together unimportant. (Figure 7).

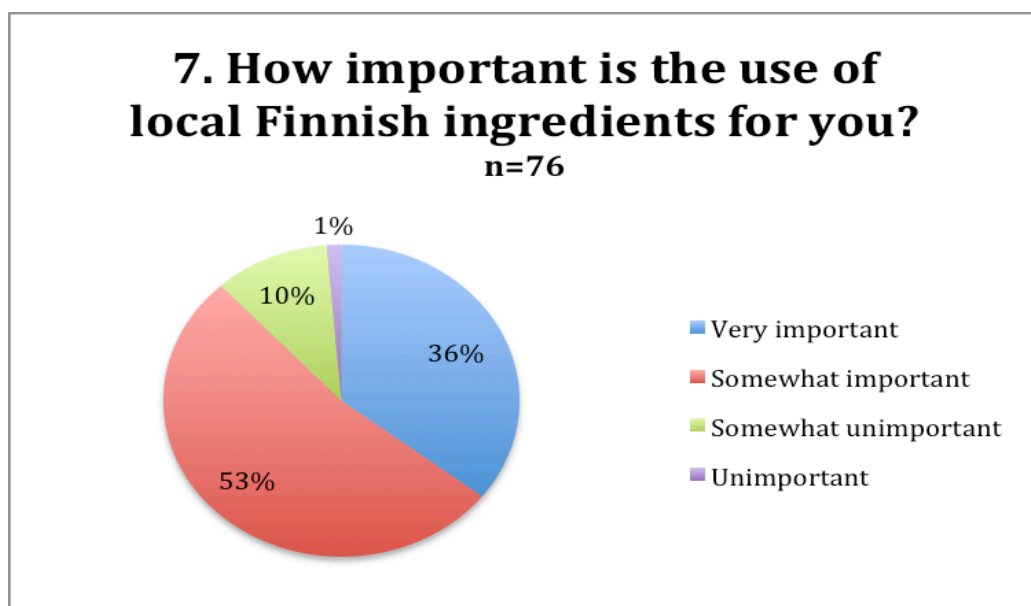


Figure 11: How important is the use of local Finnish ingredients for you?

62 out of 76 respondents were able to choose only one answer when asked for the most important aspect of food out of these four options: Finnish cooking, foreign flavours, trendy food and a unique food experience. The majority (60%) thought that a unique food experience is the most important aspect. The second most important aspect in the food was thought to be Finnish cooking (37%). A few customers (3%) also thought that trendy food is important and no one said that foreign flavour would matter. (Figure 8). Out of the excess 14 respondents (18% out of 76 respondents), 7 thought that a mix of Finnish cooking and unique food experience were equally important and the remaining 7 thought that a mix of two other options were equally important and one customer added their own opinion, which was “flavour”. All together the ascendent majority ticked the option “unique food experience”.

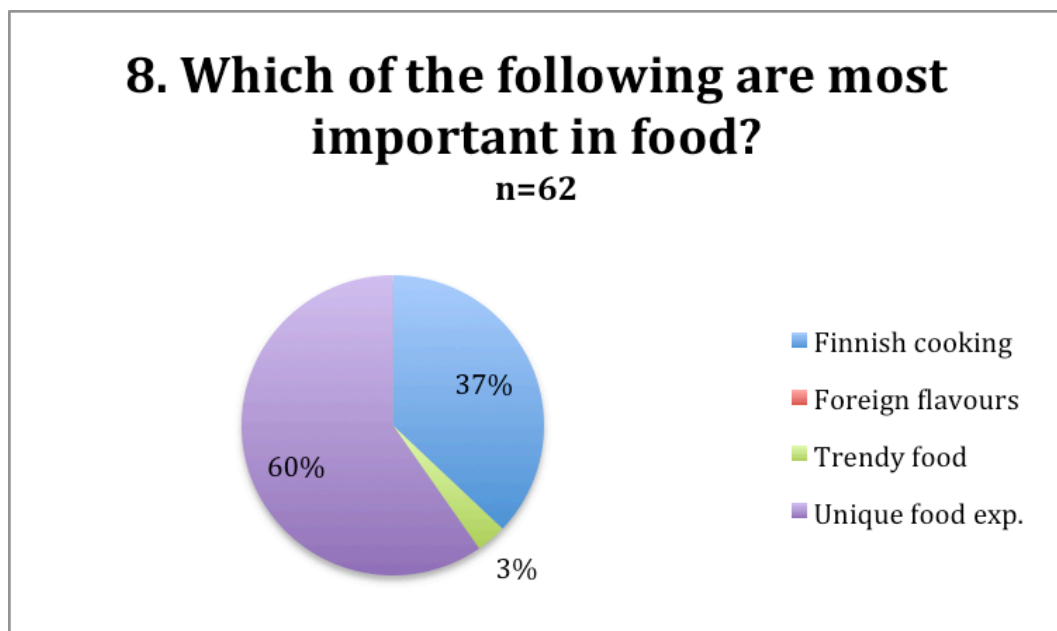


Figure 12: Which of the following are most important in food?

Only 8% of the respondents thought that music in the restaurant is very important and 32% thought it was somewhat important. The majority (38%) of the customers found music somewhat unimportant or altogether unimportant (22%). (Figure 9).

## 9. How important is music in the restaurant?

n=76

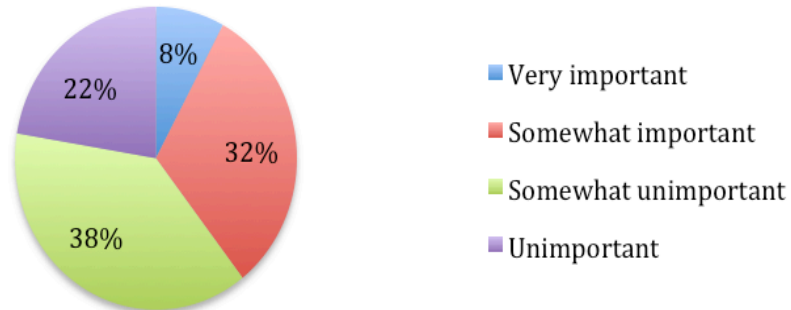


Figure 13: How important is music in the restaurant?

The vast majority of the respondents were very satisfied (71%) or somewhat satisfied (28%) with the service in the restaurant. Only one percent was somewhat unsatisfied and no one was very unsatisfied. (Figure 10).

## 10. Are you satisfied with the service you received?

n=76

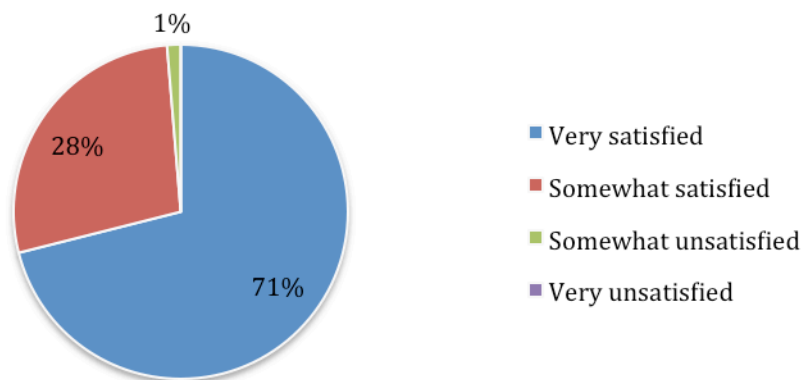


Figure 14: Are you satisfied with the service you received?

## 5.4 Sensory perception

The customers were asked if the restaurant experience satisfied all their senses, which senses and in what way. Only 18 respondents (24%) answered that the restaurant experience satisfied all their five senses. The majority of the respondents felt that they used the sight (93%) and taste (96%) sense. A great part also felt that they were able to use the smell (74%) sense during the dining. Less than half felt that they used their touch (38%) and hearing (41%) sense. One person did not answer the question at all, which might indicate either that this person did not have a sense experience or that the respondent did not understand the question.

Sight	Taste	Touch	Hearing	Smell
71	73	29	31	56
93%	96%	38%	41%	74%

N=76

Most of the respondent did not specify in this question what specific aspects made them feel each of the senses. Instead some respondents concluded their feelings in the open question, where they more precisely commented on their overall experience. 20 respondents out of 76 made a comment in what way they felt the sense they answered.

**Sight** – old building, the food, atmosphere, beautiful food, the kitchen, the paintings

**Taste** – spicy, the food, well combined food, delicious food

**Touch** – texture of the food

**Hearing** – music, the sound of food in the mouth, the company, presentation of the food, other people

**Smell** – the food, smoke, the kitchen, food and drinks

## 5.5 Open question

The open question “Overall experience and further comments” can be divided into three main categories: service, food and atmosphere.

	Service	Food	Atmosphere	Other
Positive	21	30	9	16
Negative	1	5	4	-
Total	22	35	13	16

Service, the majority of all open comments regarding the service in the restaurant were very positive. Out of the 22 open comments about service, 21 were positive. The customers were very satisfied with the professionalism and friendliness of the staff. Only one of the comments was slightly negative, one customer commented “the service, while pleasant was not very attentive”.

Food, in the open question, several people just commented with a few words their opinion about the food, like “good food”, “tasty food” or “excellent food”. There were 35 customers commenting on the food in the open question. Overall there was a lot of positive feedback about the food, most of the customers were very satisfied with the taste and said nothing negative. One customer commented that it was a “very good dinner, as a foreigner visitor to Finland”, another customer said that it was the best food experience of the year and a third customer pointed out that the quality of the food, taste and appearance were high quality. The Smoke fish menu, which is part of the menu that the restaurant is offering during the spring, got a lot of positive feedback. A few customers commented on the smoke tastes and smoked scrambled eggs in the open comments. In the open questions there were also a few negative comments about the food. Five out of 35 customers wrote some negative feedback. Three customers thought that the portions were too small and that they were expecting more food, one of them also said that the price was too high for what they received. Two customers thought that the food was slightly cold. On top of the five negative responses, two customers commented that the use and charging for bottled water is unnecessary and expensive especially in Finland where we have drinkable tap water.

Atmosphere, in the open questions 13 people commented on atmospheric aspects. 9 out of 13 answers were positive. Customers commented that the restaurant is cosy and that the atmosphere is very pleasant. Other positive comments were about the music

that it was not playing too loud and that the surrounding was homey Scandinavia. Negative comments in the open questions were concerning the lack of other people; one customer thought it was a shame that there were so few other customers. Another customer thought that the whole restaurant should be decorated in the same way and not consist of an old fashioned side at all. A third customer was wondering about the peculiar selection of music, because the restaurant had a schlager version of Nirvana's song "Rape Me".

Other comments, on top of comments from these three categories, customers wrote positive messages and thanked the staff for a great overall experience. Comments like "lovely dining experience", "great experience", smooth, functional and tasty and several people wrote thank you.

## **5.6 Restrictions**

There were some restrictions in collecting data. The leading limitation was language barriers, not all customers had the sufficient skills to answer the questionnaire in Finnish or English, which left out some segments of the clientele. For example, the questionnaire was not handed-out to many of the Russian customer because of the language barrier. This means that the opinion of a fairly big group of customers was not received. Another restriction was big groups of people; quite often there are big groups of people visiting the restaurant. A company or a person often invites these groups there and handing out questionnaires to them was not appropriate. A third restriction during the data collection was the busy nights. During weekends the restaurant usually have a larger number of customers, which restricted the handing-out of the questionnaire, since the author personally handed-out all the questionnaires, during busy nights it was more difficult to get answers from all the customers.

Furthermore, the 76 respondents who answered the questionnaire were a fairly good outtake of people to get a reliable research. But an even bigger outtake of people could have given a more detailed result, especially in the open question where customers freely could express their opinion.



## 6 Discussion

In this chapter the results from the customer questionnaires will be analysed and compared with the mentioned theories to find out if there is a gap between the results and the theory. Moreover, previous experience and observation are used in the analysing. In case of a gap between these two, development suggestions will be presented for the restaurant.

According to the customer questionnaires it seems like the case restaurant, Havis, is doing a fairly good work in satisfying their customers on multiply levels. Besides that, some valuable information was collected to find out what the customers find important in this type of restaurant.

### 6.1 Current situation in comparison with the theory

Comparing the results from the questionnaire and from observation with the Experience Pyramid shows that some elements of experience are present in the restaurant at the moment and some still need development. The Experience Pyramid mentioned six factors that add to the meaningfulness of a product or service; individuality, authenticity, story, multi-sensory, contrast and interaction. (Tarssanen and Kylänen, 2009)

Individuality, in Figure 5 in the previous chapter the customers of the restaurant were asked if they found the food of the restaurant unique and the majority found it somewhat unique or very unique. This indicates that to a certain extent the food is perceived as unique and different. Through observation it was made clear that the kitchen is most of the time quite flexible in changing dishes according to customers needs, which creates a certain individuality to the product. According to Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) individuality means that the product should be flexible and offer each customer their own personal preference. To certain limits this is applied to the food. The restaurant has set dishes on the menu, but in case of special dietary needs the dishes can be modified. When it comes to the atmosphere, one can say that it is also quite flexible already. The restaurant has two parts in the winter and three parts in the summer, from where the customer can choose their own favourite. They can stay on the modern kitchen

side, the traditional Havis side or during the summer they also have the option of sitting on the terrace.

Authenticity, the restaurant as a whole is traditionally Finnish with Nordic influences. The “slogan” of the restaurant is “One Havis, three styles. Specialising in seasonal Finnish and Scandinavian seafood”. The conclusion can be drawn that for the restaurant to be authentic, it should serve seasonal Finnish fish and Nordic seafood. At the moment, the restaurant is serving Finnish fish and Nordic seafood according to the availability from the supplier but the menu also consists of other dishes than only fish dishes. In other words, the restaurant is true to its slogan but to be an authentic fish restaurant other dishes than fish does not necessarily have to be served, because if the restaurant is said to be serving fish, the customers will be coming there to eat fish. Since the decoration of the restaurant is already in harmony with the fish theme, this adds to the authenticity.

Story, the so-called theme of the restaurant is supposed to be Finnish fish and seafood restaurant, so Finnish fish is in the centre of the concept. Through observation it has become clear that there are no story elements in the customer journey process. The restaurant is decorated with old pictures of the nearby Market Square and pictures from the old times, as well as boats and fish paintings. These are potential artefacts for stories, but they are not used in any way to create a story. As mentioned in the “company profile” chapter (chapter 3), the building has a long and interesting history, which could be used in creating a story. Another potential story element in the restaurant is the “catch of the day” in the menu. The “Catch of the day” is a daily/weekly changing fish dish; a story could easily be created around this dish. For example, the staff could explain the origin of the fish and how it ended up on their plate. At the moment, the only story element in use is when individual customers are asking the staff about the history and the staff members are answering according to their personal knowledge.

Multi-sensory, the customers were specifically asked about their sensory experience in the restaurant, which gave some disappointing results. Only 18 customers out of 76 felt that they were able to use all their senses in the restaurant. This question might have

been slightly challenging for customers, since they might not necessarily be able to put words on which senses they felt and they might have felt aspects of the experience unconsciously. According to Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) the sensory perception should be design the way that it strengthens the chosen theme. At least four out of the five senses are being fulfilled according to the fish theme. The customers are able to taste local Finnish fish, they can smell the fish and its components when they get the dish, they can touch the texture of the fish in their mouth and the restaurant is decorated with fish related artefacts. When looking at the results from the sensory question in the questionnaire, the customers that felt that they fulfilled all their senses explained that the music and the explanations from the staff also satisfied their hearing sense. Since the service staff is explaining each dish to the customer, this adds the hearing aspect to the experience and it is in accordance with the theme. Despite the fact that so few customers actually felt that all their senses where fulfilled, the restaurant presently has elements that fulfil them all. Perhaps the sensory element could be highlighted more for the customers to perceive them more strongly.

Contrast, especially in the open question it became quite clear that most of the customers enjoyed their time at the restaurant, which might indicate that they were able to relax and forget their every day life. Even if the restaurant is themed as a Finnish fish restaurant, it still brings contrast to both the Finnish customers as well as foreigners. The food and the atmosphere are out of the ordinary and doubtfully not many customers receive table service and explanation of their meal in their everyday life.

Interaction, in Figure 10 the customers were asked about the service in the restaurant and a great majority were very satisfied with the service, which indicates that the interaction between the staff and the customers inside the restaurant went very well. Through observation it was possible to see that most of the customers felt very relaxed with each other and with the help of good food and drinks, a pleasant atmosphere, other customers and friendliness of the staff, most of the customers perceived the experience positively. However, not all customers were comfortable with the interaction in the restaurant. For example, the one customer who perceived the service as “not very attentive” and also commented negatively on the surrounding did not have a posi-

tive interaction with the staff, nor with the environment. Another customer pointed out that the lack of other people was a shame. A service situation is every time unique and cannot be standardized, but to maintain an overall good service is important. When it comes to other customers in the restaurant, this is an aspect that the restaurant cannot really regulate. Every restaurant wishes to be full all the time, but in reality it is not like that.

Overall, restaurant Havis has several elements of meaningfulness and potential to create a memorable experience for the customers. Nevertheless, there is room for development to strengthen the elements. A common aspect that would strengthen all of the experience elements is strengthening the theme. Despite the fact that the majority of the customers (see Figure 6 in chapter 5) perceived the theme as very clear, the theme could be specified more closely and it could be more visible in all parts of the customer journey. One good way of strengthening the theme would be to add story elements to each stage of the restaurant experience and to strengthen the different sensory aspects.

The base in the Experience Pyramid's customer's perception is the motivational level and in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs the base is physiological needs. The questionnaire had a question concerning the motivation for choosing restaurant Havis (see Figure 1 in chapter 5). The biggest motivator to choose Havis was firstly food and secondly location. In other words the reason that in first place motivated customers to visit was the food. This creates the base of both "pyramids". The menu of restaurant Havis evoke the interest of the customers to visit and food also represents one of the physiological needs of humans. The second levels of both of the pyramids are related to safety issues. According to the answers from the questionnaire, none of the customers complained about safety issues, temperature inside the restaurant or other physical elements. When it comes to the physical environment it seems that the customers were satisfied and there was nothing in there that would have distracted their enjoyment or created insecurity. The third level of the Experience Pyramid's customer's perception is the intellectual level. According to Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) this is the level where people start forming opinions of the product and hopefully learn something new. As can be seen from the answers of the questionnaires the customers formed

some sort of opinion about the place and were able to put them into words. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs the third stage is love and belonging and fourth stage is the self-esteem, which relates to the fourth level of customer's perception with the emotional level. As explained earlier in the "interaction" part it seemed like most of the people felt comfortable with each other, with the service staff and the atmosphere. In other words, they felt belonging, respect of other etc. Emotionally they felt fulfilled and satisfied. When it comes to the last level of both pyramids, which are mental level and self-actualization, it becomes difficult. It seemed like the customers were enjoying their time at the restaurant, but did it create personal change in the people visiting?

When it comes to the five principles of service design as Figure 10 (in chapter 5) shows, that from the customers' point of view the service delivery is working well and smoothly. The five principles of service design are mainly focusing on what the service provider should do to create a successful service for the service user. Through observation it can be seen that the restaurant is very user centric and that the customer is in the centre. Both the kitchen and the service staff are flexible in serving the customer, to be able to give them the best service possible. One of the core values of the company is always a happy customer, which in reality is working relatively well. During the service process the customer is in contact with several members of the staff, they might start with making their reservation through the sales service, then on spot at the restaurant they interact with the frontline staff (service and kitchen staff) as well as possibly with other customers. As will be demonstrated later with a customer journey map, there are several touchpoints and interactions between the customer and the service provider. The fourth principle of service design thinking is evidencing, a way of making the service more tangible. At the moment the customer is getting a bill of their purchase and in case they reserve a table online, they receive a confirmation e-mail of their reservation. These aspects could be seen as evidencing, but they do not create a very desirable or memorable evidence of the restaurant experience. The last principle; holistic is partly described already in connection with the Experience Pyramid. Despite the fact that service is intangible, they still take place in a physical environment and the customer perceives it with all their senses (Stickdorn and Schneider, 2011). In other words, all the touchpoints and interactions should be considered separately without

loosing the whole picture. At the moment, there are several touchpoints and interaction in the service process but through observation it has become clear that they are not as carefully connected as they could be. More focus could be put on each touchpoint to create awareness of how customers end up in Havis.

The customer journey map is a good way of realizing when the customer actually interacts with the company. Figure 5 shows the customer journey map of restaurant Havis. As the results of the questionnaire (see Figure 3 in chapter 5) indicates, people searched for information about Havis online, from family and friends, from their hotel reception, advertisements, tourist information and some just walked by and saw the restaurant. The different reservation channels that the restaurant has are online reservation, through the company's sales service, on top of that some people might make the reservation straight by calling the restaurant or have their hotel reception to call or just walk by and come in. Once people arrive to the restaurant they are greeted and seated to their table. During the dinner itself there are several touchpoints between the customer and the service staff, as well as between the customer and the restaurant environment and food. This is a very important stage to create a relationship between the customer and the restaurant, as well as creating a memorable experience that they later on will remember. The post-visit stage from the restaurants part does not exist most of the time. After the visit the people might talk about their experience with family and friends, they might write feedback to different online channels and some customers even write feedback straight to the restaurant. But in some cases there is not much interaction with the restaurant after the visit itself.

PRE-VISIT		DURING			POST-VISIT
Interest	Reserving	Arriving	Dinner	Leaving	After the dinner
Web page	Online reservation	Welcoming/greeting	Taking the order	Paying the bill	Feedback?
Google	Sales service	Taking the jacket	Bringing the food and drinks	Giving the jacket	
Friends and family	Walking by	Seating the customer	Other customers	Saying goodbye	
Hotel reception	Hotel reserves				
Advertisements	Call to restaurant				
Tourist info					
Walking by					

Figure 1: Customer Journey Map for restaurant Havis

When it comes to local and organic products as Figure 7 (in chapter 5) indicates, customers perceive the use of local Finnish products as somewhat important or very important and Finnish cooking was also seen as a fairly important aspect in food. Currently the restaurant is focusing on Finnish fish, which indicates that they are using local Finnish fish. Lately the menu has also consisted of a lot of foreign flavours and ingredients, which according to the questionnaire is not very appreciated in food for the customers. It seems like in a restaurant like Havis the customer appreciate more local ingredients and seasonal products.

What came as a surprise in the results was that music is not perceived as a very important factor in the restaurant. Figure 9 shows that over half of the respondents think that music is somewhat unimportant or unimportant, only 8% found it important. Even if music is a part of a sensory experience and creates a pleasant atmosphere, the respondents of the questionnaire did not perceive it as very significant.

## **6.2 Development suggestions**

Both the questionnaires and, through observation and interaction with the customers, it became clear that a so-called theme menu, in this case the Smoke fish menu, was perceived very well by the customers. Several customers commented (both in written and verbally) positively on the menu, which indicates that this is a product that the restaurant should continue with and put more focus on. A frequently changing menu with different themes would be something that could attract more visitors and make people visit again.

Since the restaurant is promoting itself as a Finnish fish restaurant it is important to stress the use of local fish and frequently check the seasonality and availability of different fish. Like vegetables and berries, also different fish have their season. As Figure 7 (in chapter 5) shows, local ingredients are fairly important for the customers. In other words, a deeper knowledge on the origin of the products and, the use of locally produced and organic products could be stressed. As the Ruokatieto Yhdistys (2013) points out on their web page, every season in Finland has its unique raw material to

work with. This brings a great opportunity for chefs to design the menu according to the season and its products.

The restaurant is decorated with several items that could create a great story element for the place. The walls are decorated with old pictures, sea themed paintings and other fish related artefacts. In practise this means that the restaurant could have a small story inside the menu or already on the web page, to get customers into the mood and to familiarize them with the history of the restaurant. Other elements of story could also be added in the marketing of the place and perhaps even in the way the staff is dressed. So far several customers have been asking about the history of the building, the origin of the fish and other ingredients. In the future the restaurant could make it a habit to explain certain aspects of the food and atmosphere, without customers needing to ask themselves.

At the moment the restaurant is promoting itself as mainly a fish and seafood restaurant, but especially during lunch and also during dinner there are meat options. To be an authentic fish and seafood restaurant the restaurant does not necessarily have to serve other dishes than fish and seafood. Since the new menu will be consisting of even more other dished than only fish, it could be useful to modify the slogan and re-think in what way they really want to promote themselves. This brings us back to the importance of the theme and to make it as simple as possible for the customer to understand what kind of restaurant it is.

Overall the respondents of the questionnaire were very satisfied with the service they received in the restaurant and these did not leave much space for development, but in the end there is always room for development. In the case of Havis they could more carefully take into consideration the different interactions and touchpoints between the customer and the restaurant. There are several interactions between the customer before, during and after the visit, where the company has a great chance to influence the customer and give them a positive image of the company. When a positive image of the restaurant is created in the mind of the customer, they are more likely to visit again. As can be seen from the results of the questionnaire, currently 70% of the respondents



were first time visitors (see Figure 2 in chapter 5). First time visitors are good for a company, but it is also important to have a network of loyal customers.

While executing the survey at the restaurant it became clear that many customers are more than happy to share their opinion and give feedback about their experience at the restaurant. Currently the restaurant is receiving minimal amount of feedback from the customers and there is no easy feedback system for the customers. At the moment the feedback is received through online channels such as Tripadvisor and through occasional feedback from Royal Ravintola's feedback system. The restaurant could have its own channel where to collect feedback and in that way make it easier for the customer to give it. To receive constant feedback from the customers can be a useful way to continuously develop different aspects of the restaurant, which according to the customers are not working.

## 7 Conclusion

The research aimed to answer the following three questions,

- 1) How to create an experience based customer journey for customers in a Finnish fish restaurant?
- 2) Which aspects of the restaurant are important to consider in creating a memorable experience for customers?
- 3) What elements of experience are present in the restaurant and what elements do the customers find important?

With the help of the different theories used in this thesis and the results gained from the customer questionnaires and observation, the author was able to answer the research questions. In the previous chapter, where the theory was compared with the results, these questions were answered in more detail.

In conclusion, to create an experience based customer journey the restaurant need to carefully examine the different touchpoints between the customer and the company. With the help of these touchpoints the restaurant is able to see where the customer is in contact with the company and further see what aspects are important to consider in creating an experience based customer journey. Furthermore, the Experience Pyramid revealed which aspects should be taken into consideration in improving and analysing meaningfulness of a product. The importance of individuality, authenticity, story, multi-sensory perception, contrast and interaction was highlighted. Other aspects found important in the restaurant were elements concerning the food and its origin. The third research question was answered with the help of the customer questionnaire, as well as through observation and interaction with the customers. Currently several elements of experience are present in the restaurant, but there is nevertheless room for development. According to the customer questionnaire, the customers found the use of local Finnish ingredients important, as well as a unique restaurant experience. On the other hand, music was not perceived as very important. Presently the restaurant have a unique edge, the theme was perceived quite clear and the service was good, which are important experience elements.

In the future a comparison between the customer perception and staff perception could be done. Instead of just asking customers their opinion about the different experience aspects, also the opinion of professionals who have been working in restaurants for a longer time could be asked. This would give a broader view on the different elements of experience inside the restaurant, as well as activate both the customers and other stakeholders to consider what is working and what is not working. Staff members with years of experience in the field could have interesting opinions and personal experience to share. As the five principles of service design states it is important to have several stakeholders involved in creating the service.

Even if this research focuses on one restaurant, in the future it could be used as a template for similar research about experience elements and factors influencing the customer experience in other restaurants.

The thesis process was a long and challenging process, with both ups and downs. The idea of this thesis was first born in September 2013, when the collection of information started and the first ideas about the subject came up. During the rest of the year 2013 literature was collected and a deeper knowledge into the subject was discovered. During March 2014 data was collected in the case restaurant by handing out questionnaires and in May 2014 the ready thesis was presented and handed in.

This thesis brought a deep insight into the fields of restaurants and different elements of experience that are significant in creating a pleasant stay for customers. With the help of the customer questionnaires and interaction with the customers that these questionnaires brought to the author, a great insight was gained to the mind of the customers and their opinions. Through observation it is possible to gain a certain insight into the mind and behaviour of a customer, but in the end a deeper knowledge is obtained by questionnaires and further interaction.

Reliability and validity refers to the trustworthiness of the study. If a thesis is reliable, repetition of the research should produce similar results and for a thesis to be valid it

should accurately measure what it intended to do. (Veal 2011, 46). This study consists of a strong theoretical background, which intensifies the reliability of the thesis. The questionnaires enhanced the validity of the research, since they were directly asked from the customers of the restaurant, whose opinion the research was looking for. Nevertheless, the observation and interaction between the author and the customer, and comments made out of these are subjective from the author's point of view, which might affect the reliability.

Since this thesis was conducted for restaurant Havis, the ready thesis will be sent to the restaurant manager of restaurant Havis, who will go through the thesis and its development ideas

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## Attachments

### Attachment 1. Customer questionnaire in English and Finnish

#### Customer experience survey

The following questionnaire contains a few questions about the experience you had at restaurant Havis. It will take a maximum of 2 minutes to answer.

**1) What made you choose Havis?**

- ☐ Atmosphere ☐ Food  
☐ Service ☐ Location  
☐ Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

**2) How many times have you visited Havis before?**

- ☐ 0 ☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-4  
☐ 5-6 ☐ >6

**3) Where did you get the information about Havis?**

- ☐ Internet ☐ Your hotel  
☐ Family or friends ☐ Tourist Info  
☐ Other, from where? \_\_\_\_\_

**4) What is the purpose of your visit?**

- ☐ Casual dinner ☐ Anniversary  
☐ Lunch break ☐ Business  
☐ Other, what? \_\_\_\_\_

**5) Compared to other restaurants in Helsinki, was the food unique?**

- ☐ Very unique  
☐ Somewhat unique  
☐ Somewhat ordinary  
☐ Very ordinary

**6) How clear is the theme in the restaurant?**

- ☐ Very clear  
☐ Somewhat clear  
☐ Somewhat unclear  
☐ Very unclear

Turn →

#### Asiakaskysely

Tämä kysely sisältää muutaman kysymyksen teidän ravintolakokemuksestanne Haviksessa. Kyselyn vastaamiseen menee maksimissaan kaksi minuuttia.

**1) Miksi valitsit juuri Haviksen?**

- ☐ Tunnelma ☐ Ruoka  
☐ Palvelu ☐ Sijainti  
☐ Muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

**2) Montako kertaa olette olleet aikaisemmin Haviksessa?**

- ☐ 0 ☐ 1-2 ☐ 3-4  
☐ 5-6 ☐ >6

**3) Mistä saitte tietoa Haviksesta?**

- ☐ Internetistä ☐ Hotellistasi  
☐ Perhe/ystäviltä ☐ Turisti-info  
☐ Muu, mistä? \_\_\_\_\_

**4) Mikä on vierailunne tarkoitus?**

- ☐ Illanvietto ☐ Merkkipäivä  
☐ Työlounas ☐ Business  
☐ Muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

**5) Muihin helsinkiläisiin ravintoloihin verrattuna, onko ruokamme yksilöllistä?**

- ☐ Erittäin yksilöllinen  
☐ Jokseenkin yksilöllinen  
☐ Tavallinen  
☐ Erittäin tavallinen

**6) Onko ravintolassa selkeä teema?**

- ☐ Erittäin selkeä  
☐ Jokseenkin selkeä  
☐ Epäselkeä  
☐ Erittäin epäselkeä

Käännä →

**7) Onko lähiruoka Teille tärkeä?**

- ☐ Erittäin tärkeä
- ☐ Jokseenkin tärkeä
- ☐ Jokseenkin merkityksetön
- ☐ Merkityksetön

**8) Mikä näistä on Teille tärkeä ruokailussa?**

- ☐ Kotimaisuus
- ☐ Ulkomaalaiset vaikutteet
- ☐ Trendikkyys
- ☐ Yksilöllisyys

**9) Miten tärkeä musiikki on ravintolassa?**

- ☐ Erittäin tärkeä
- ☐ Jokseenkin tärkeä
- ☐ Jokseenkin merkityksetön
- ☐ Merkityksetön

**10) Oletteko tyytyväinen saamaanne asiakaspalveluun?**

- ☐ Erittäin tyytyväinen
- ☐ Jokseenkin tyytyväinen
- ☐ Jokseenkin tyytymätön
- ☐ Erittäin tyytymätön

**11) Tuntuiko teistä, että pystyitte käyttämään kaikkia aistejanne, mitkä ja miten?**

- ☐ Näkö \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Kuulo \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Maku \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Haju \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Tunto \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Kaikki aistit

**Kertokaa yleisesti kokemuksestanne:**

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Teen tämän kyselyn osana opinnäytetyötäni ammattikorkeakoulu HAAGA-HELIA:lle. Kaikki vastaukset käsitellään anonymisti.

**Kiitos mielipiteestänne!**

**7) How important is the use of local Finnish ingredients for You?**

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Somewhat unimportant
- ☐ Unimportant

**8) Which of the following are most important in food?**

- ☐ Finnish cooking
- ☐ Foreign flavours
- ☐ Trendy food
- ☐ Unique food experience

**9) How important is music in the restaurant?**

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Somewhat unimportant
- ☐ Unimportant

**10) Are you satisfied with the service you received?**

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat satisfied
- ☐ Somewhat unsatisfied
- ☐ Very unsatisfied

**11) Do you feel like the restaurant experience satisfied all your senses, which senses and in what way?**

- ☐ Sight \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Hearing \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Taste \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Smell \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Touch \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ All five

**Overall experience and further comment:**

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This questionnaire is part of a thesis made for HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences. All answers will be handled anonymously.

**Thank You for Your opinion!**