A service design approach for Tom Yum Thai Asian restaurant in Vaasa Finland

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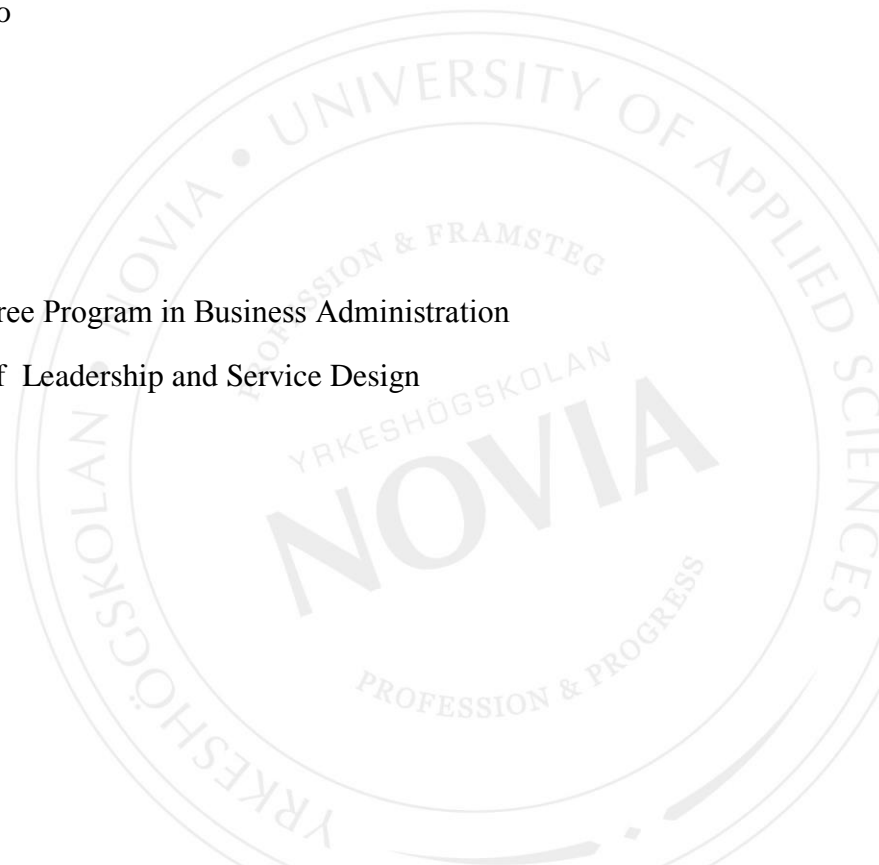
DEGREE THESIS

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Abstract

The purpose of this master's thesis was to conduct a service design approach to Tom Yum Thai restaurant in Vaasa. Restaurateurs are always trying different experiments to meet customer satisfaction and are still looking for many ways to attract more customers. The main objectives of this thesis were focused on understanding the operational service of the restaurant, to improve customer satisfaction, and creating a new service design in the restaurant.

In the theoretical framework, service design and design thinking have been explored and the double diamond model was used as a design tool. The commissioner was interviewed through email. The staff was interviewed by filling out the questionnaire. Lastly, customers were asked to fill out the online survey questionnaires. The service design methods and tools used were stakeholder map, personas, customer journey map, service blueprint, and business model canvas.

In conclusion, the methods used proved successful and it gave insights and deepened understanding of service design and design thinking in managing the restaurant. Based on the research result, developmental suggestions and improvements were given to Tom Yum Thai on how the company could improve customer experience and customer satisfaction.

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Language: English   Key words: service design, design thinking, marketing, customer experience, customer satisfaction, restaurant business

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1. **Introduction**

Thailand cuisine is the original peasant cuisine in South East. Archeologists discovered the metalworking cultures of central plain Thailand at least 3000 BC, the same in China and India. In that year, Thailand's peasant cuisine connected with early metal workers from Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Indonesia. As it spread from different parts of the world, the cuisine of Europe has influenced the cuisines from the southeast by successfully colonized them. The main crop is the rice that is grown in Thailand and other countries in the southeast. Curries are common, but the original concept is from India and substitute coconut milk from yogurt. Ginger, garlic, chili, cinnamon, cumin, coriander, star anise, cloves, nutmeg, mace, Thai basil, mint, lemongrass, and galangal are the common herbs and spices grow in tropical countries in the southeast. Lemon, lime, and citrus flavors are known and influential in adding flavors in southeast cuisines. (Asian Recipe, 1999.)

Fast-casual food is rising in Finland. Fast-casual is food that is fast, but fresh and well-made. Fast-casual restaurants emphasize the freshness and ethicality of their ingredients. This trend has spread widely around the globe and arrived in Finland in 2015. In 2016, it has kept growing in popularity. Already existing brands are now moving towards fast-casual food to challenge the traditional fast-food chains. Customers also want to know what is in their food. They want their food to be made on the spot with local, fresh, and good quality ingredients and for these, they are willing to pay more. This change in customers' preferences will force the traditional fast-food chains to change to keep up with the growing competition. (Sievänen 2016, 11-12.)

At present in Vaasa Finland, there are about 14 Asian restaurants in operation. However, Asian restaurants are doing their best to compete with other restaurants and make their food taste different. From the customer's point of view, they want a new interesting restaurant concept with a fusion of Finnish-Asian cuisine taste. Therefore, it is an interesting topic to find better ways to improve the Asian restaurant and as well as the customer's service satisfaction.

Tom Yum Thai restaurant

Tom Yum Thai restaurant located at Kauppapuistikko 18, 65100 Vaasa, Finland. It serves a buffet during lunch with Asian cuisine. The restaurant serves salads, fruits, sushi,

desserts, coffee, and tea during the lunch buffet. In the evening, the restaurant serves à la carte.

Figure 1. Tom Yum Thai restaurant in Vaasa

The commissioner

The commissioner of this thesis is Yu Xiaoling, the owner of Tom Yum Thai Restaurant located in Vaasa Finland. The work for this thesis will be done in collaboration with the owner and her staff which includes the chefs, kitchen workers, waiters and cashiers.

2. Problem area and aim of the thesis

There are many customers who would like to taste Asian cuisines in Finland and as we all know the restaurant industry is one of the competitive sectors in food business. Entrepreneurs always try different experiments in order to meet customer satisfaction and are still looking for ways to attract more customers. The thesis will focus mainly on the following objectives:

- To understand the operational service of the restaurant

- To improve customer satisfaction

- To create a new service design in the restaurant

2.1 Research questions

The scope of the research for the thesis is at Tom Yum Thai Restaurant in Vaasa Finland and the research targets are divided into two groups: Restaurant owner and staff; Customers including Finnish and different nationalities.

The main research questions were designed in the following based on the research objectives and targeting group.

What are the key successful factors in the restaurant and why it is important?

How can you improve the quality of services and products in the restaurant and customer satisfaction?

How could service design benefit marketing in the restaurant?

2.2 Project timeline

Below in Figure 2. is the timetable presented for the service design project for Tom Yum Thai restaurant focused on collecting insights and generating ideas by using the design methods and tools.

GANTT CHART	MONTH AND YEAR																	
	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21
THESIS DRAFT	X																	
ONLINE CUSTOMER SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE	X	X																
FIRST THESIS SEMINAR	X	X	X	X														
UPDATE FIRST THESIS DRAFT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
UPDATE RESEARCH METHOS & SERVICE DESIGN TOOLS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
FRAME OF REFERENCE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
STAKEHOLDER MAP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
PERSONAS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
BUSINESS MODEL CANVASS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
SWOT ANALYSIS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
BENCHMARKING	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
SERVICE BLUEPRINT	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
INTERVIEW	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
LITERATURE RESEARCH	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
SECOND THESIS SEMINAR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
UPDATED SECOND THESIS SEMINAR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
DRAFTS FOR THE THIRD SEMINAR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
DATA ANALYZED AND GATHER RESULTS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
CONCLUSION	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
UPDATED DRAFT AFTER THE THIRD THESIS SEMINAR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
FINAL THESIS SEMINAR	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Figure 2. The Gantt chart of the project

3.   Frame of reference

The frame of reference is a set of ideas, conditions, or assumptions that determine how something will be approached, perceived, or understand. (Social Engineer Inc, 2021.)

It is used to demonstrate the topics that are involved in this research. The frameworks of this project focus on the restaurant customer experience, customer satisfaction, boost the marketing strategies and restaurant business. The study aims to improve the restaurant service and create a new service design concept for the restaurant's success. Below is the frame of reference.
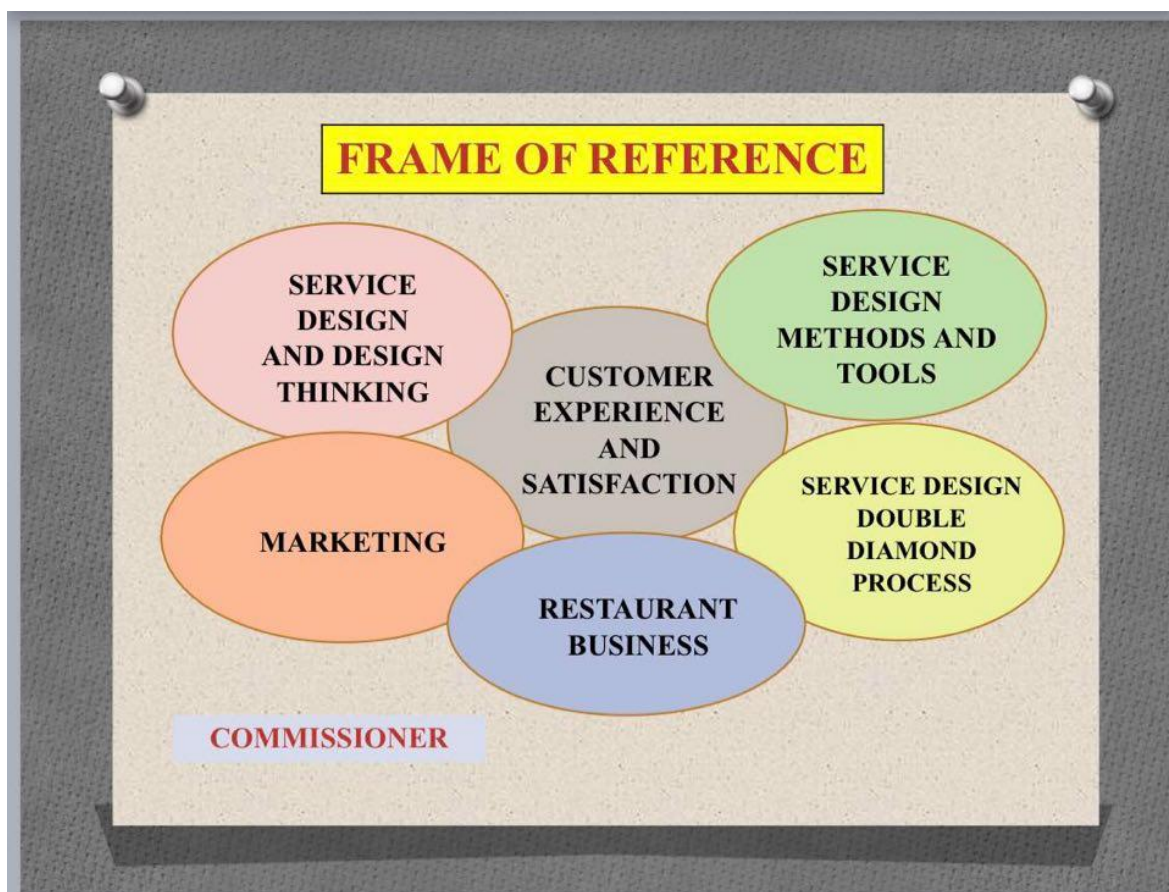
Figure 3. Frame of reference

In this project, Tom Yum Thai restaurant wants to improve the customer experience and customer satisfaction. The commissioner wanted to improve the products and services they offered to their loyal customers and wished to have more customers dine in their restaurant. As shown in Figure 3 above, the theories of this project will first start with design thinking. Next is to discuss the design thinking methodology process; the following are empathizing, defining, ideating, prototype, and testing. The researcher will further discuss the Double Diamond model process to understand a service provider to find

solutions to the project. Marketing is essential in this project because it researches, promotes, and sells products or services to your target market. Effective marketing strategies will provide a good relationship with the clients or customers and know the customers' needs, desires, goals, and expectations. Service design is also discussed in this project, focusing on the clients or customers and offers products or services that meet their needs. Service design and marketing work together for the success of the restaurant business. Lastly, service design will be discussed, including the theories, the double diamond process, the methods and tools used in this project.

4.   Double diamond process

Below is the double diamond design process showing the methods and tools used in the different stages of the design model in this research project. As can be seen from most of the methods and tools were used only once. It will also guide the researcher with all insights on the process to follow, give a good understanding of the customer's pain points, and give solutions.
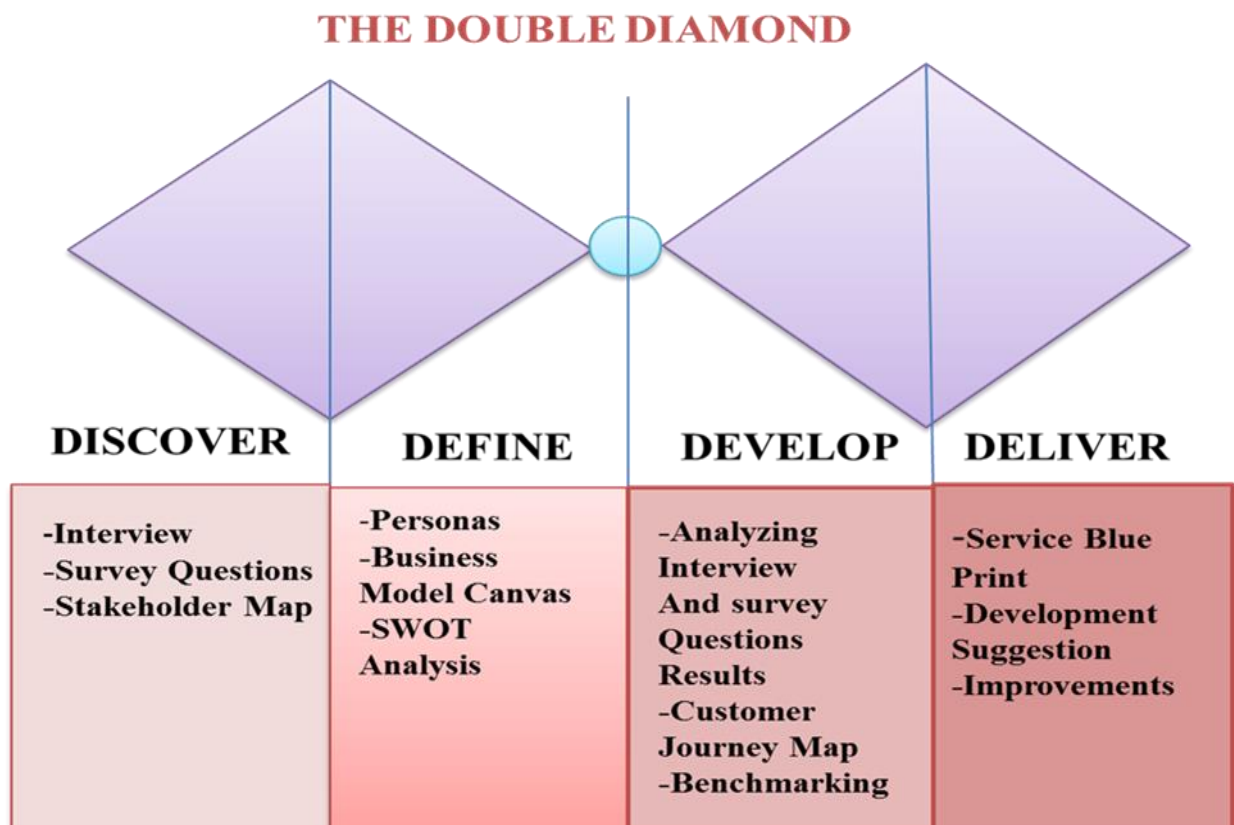

THE DOUBLE DIAMOND

DISCOVER	DEFINE	DEVELOP	DELIVER
-Interview -Survey Questions -Stakeholder Map	-Personas -Business Model Canvas -SWOT Analysis	-Analyzing Interview And survey Questions Results -Customer Journey Map -Benchmarking	-Service Blue Print -Development Suggestion -Improvements

Figure 4 . Double diamond service design model with methods and tools

Double Diamond is the name of a design process model developed by the British Design Council in 2005. Divided into four phases Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver is probably the most popular design process. The main feature of the Double Diamond is its emphasis on "divergent" and "convergent thinking," where first many ideas are created before refining and narrowing down to the best idea. (Lipiec, 2019.)

The following shows the four phases of the double diamond process.

Discover

The first diamond is to help people understand and identify the problem definition. The first phase in the double diamond is the discovery; during discovery, the researcher and the commissioner will mainly focus on the objectives and the problems that must be measured going forward and understand that there must be a solution and work towards the desired outcome. The tools used were stakeholder map, interview, and survey questionnaires. First, to help us understand and empathize with the restaurant's customers, we provide suitable communication with the customers and understand their feelings, needs, desires, and experiences. We can also focus on the correct problems in this phase of the process and understand the issues.

Define

This stage is to gather insights. After gathering insights from the stakeholders, customers, and the target group of personas, the second phase is to define. During this process, the researcher used the personas, business model canvas, and swot analysis. The researcher was able to determine problems and challenges.

Develop

The third phase is development; during this process, At this stage, solutions are created, prototyped, tested, and iterated. The researcher analyzed the interviews and surveyed questionnaires, customer journey map, and benchmarking. The customer journey map highlighted the pain points in one persona, Maria, experiencing the products and services during dining in the lunch buffet. In this process, the products and services are created, implemented, or designed, develop a new service system or products design, or enhance the existing services.

Deliver

The final stage where the resulting project (a product or service) was finalized, produced, and launched. The final phase is the delivery stage. The final handling of the thesis project, and the researcher will hand a copy of development recommendations to the commissioner. It involves using the service blueprint in the current service and making the service meet customer needs better. There are development suggestions and improvements for the services or products to be tested and released to the commissioner. The researcher hopes that this project can give beneficial, helpful, important, and relevant insights that improve the products and services of Tom Yum Thai Restaurant in Vaasa. The researcher will send the development recommendations to the commissioner.

5. Theoretical background

This chapter introduces the theoretical background of the project. It consists of the following; design thinking, service design approach, process, methods and tools, and marketing.

5.1 Design thinking

Design thinking is a conceptual structure for understanding problems and provides creative and innovative solutions that are human-centered. In solving problem design thinking, it starts with an end mind which focuses on giving answers to the problems. The design thinking methods have five stages: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. The design process is iterative that you can go through the process many times and start again with other useful, practical, attainable, realistic, and easy to implement solutions. (Park, 2018.)

Dam and Siang (2018) stated that design thinking is an iterative process in which a company or organization seeks to understand the user or customers, challenge assumptions, and redefine problems in an attempt to identify or look for alternative strategies or provide solutions based approach to solving problems. It explains that service design thinking helps the designer to develop an understanding of the users or customers to whom the service or products are being designed.

Design thinking is very useful for designers in work processes and help them to have a systematic solution approach and apply these human-centered techniques to solve problems in a creative and innovative way. According to Dam and Siang (2018), the following are the phases of design thinking.
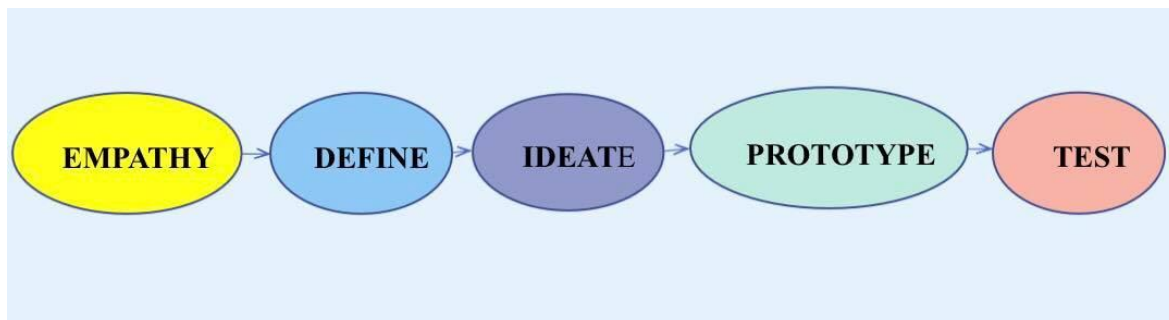
Figure 5. Five phases of design thinking

- Empathize- with your customers.

Empathy is an important element in design thinking and human-centered design. Empathy is the ability to see what we see to other people, feel what they feel, and experience the same. It is a level of understanding to identify someone's feelings than prioritizing your ideas, emotions and choose to understand the feelings of others. (Dam & Siang, 2018.)

Empathize is the first phase of the design thinking and the goal of the designer is to gain an empathetic understanding of the people you are designing for and the problem you are going or trying to solve. This means that the designer should relate and understand the user by gaining an emotional connection and understanding to their experiences and motivations. (Dam & Siang, 2018.)

In this project the researcher empathized with the customers by using interviews and survey questionnaires to get deeper insights in the needs, wants and possible improvements and suggestions that can help to increase the level of customers' experience and achieve customers' satisfaction.

- Define- your customers' needs, their problems, and insights.

The second phase of the design process is Define as a problem. Define means that the designer will define the user or customer problem that he or she wants to solve. After gathering all the findings from the empathize phase, and started putting all the ideas

together. The designer can define a clear problem statement that will guide throughout the design process and guide as a basis of all the pictures and potential solutions.

In this stage, the researcher applies using some of the service design tools such as personas, business model canvas, swot analysis, and customer journey map to define the problem area of this project. These tools gave the researcher in-depth ideas of the objectives of the customers, especially their needs, goals, challenges, and pain points.

- Ideate- by challenging assumptions and creating ideas for innovative solutions.

The third phase is Ideate or generating ideas through brainstorming. While brainstorming, the designers will develop new creative ideas for solutions and think outside the box. All opinions in this stage are accepted, and this time to come up with possible answers for the problem statement.

After the researcher gathered all the relevant data, defined the problem statement, set objectives, and empathized with the customers. The researcher can already identify a creative and innovative solution from using some of the service design tools and methods in this project.

- Prototype- to start creating solutions.

The fourth stage is the prototype or an experimental process to implement the ideas for the possible solutions from tangible to digital. It can be a sample, a simple paper model, a product, or digital. The prototyping stage aims to turn your ideas into something tangible to be tested on real users. For a customer-centric approach, getting feedback first and developing or implementing the products or services are essential. (Stevens, 2019.)

In this project, the researcher used some of the service design tools for prototyping, such as swot analysis, benchmarking, and service blueprint. In this stage, the researcher designed a new service concept for solutions and suggested improvements.

- Test- test solution.

The final stage of the Design Thinking process is the Test. The purpose of testing is to learn what works and what does not and then iterate. Start building; do not spend too long on one prototype and make it with the user in mind. (Chathurika, 2019.)

In this last phase of design thinking, the researcher could get feedback and suggestions for improvements to Tom Yum Thai Restaurant. In this project, development suggestions, improvements, and improved service blueprint were a prototype test to represent the service and the changes to make the service meet customer needs better.

Design thinking happens in the making, and it is the constant focus upon making, and the understanding that making gives is central to design thinking. Design thinking integrates analytical and skill-based approaches to innovation within a customer-centric framework. (Clatworthy, 2012.)

Our world is evolving in technology, and we become interconnected, and design thinking offers changes in a more human-centric manner or customer-centric holistic approach. As a process for innovation, empathy is essential with clients, users, and customers to create innovative designs. Designers approach users to understand their wants and needs and make their life easier, convenient, more enjoyable, and user-friendly products and services for them. Once we know the problems, we learn to face people's difficulties, understand their desires, and explain their behavior. To solve it, we need to have a better understanding of peoples' environment.

5.2   Service design

Service design refers to a combination of tangible and intangible products that require multi-disciplinary design and leadership to allow customers and participants to access them effectively and make use of them enjoyably. Service designers are used to creating service innovations (by the service organization or the market) to be either incremental (minor improvements) or radical. Services are designed in a touchpoint system where one element influences the other along the customer journey, and these touchpoints refer between service providers and their customers. It refers to an approach to creative problem solving based on a human-centered design process. (Gloppen, 2009.)

Service Design Thinking is a holistic, customer-centric approach to using design principles, tools, processes and an empathic understanding of customer needs to design services that deliver a discernible difference that customers perceive provides a positive value proposition and/or 'edge' over competing service offerings. (Schleibs, 2016.)

The suggested new core principles of service design thinking;

- Human-Centred- Consider the experience of all the people affected by the service.

- Collaborative- Stakeholders of various backgrounds and functions should be actively engaged in the service design process.

- Iterative- Service design is an exploratory, adaptive, and experimental approach, iterating toward implementation.

- Sequential- The service should be visualized and orchestrated as a sequence of interrelated actions.

- Real- Needs should be researched in reality, ideas prototyped in reality, and intangible values evidenced as physical or digital reality.

- Holistic- A holistic approach to design considers the entire user experience of both services in tangible or intangible, in every touchpoint.

(Stickdorn, Schneider, Hormess and Lawrence (2018, 24-27b.)

Restaurant industries need to have a well-implemented service design thinking to provide good quality of products or services for the satisfaction needs of all the users and customers. The service sector around the world continues to grow and provide new strategic implementations. Many entrepreneurs in the food business sectors such as restaurants, chains-restaurants, fast foods, catering industry, cafeterias, cafes, coffee shops, pubs, and wine bars are doing more collaborative ways to improve and redesign innovative processes. That is why service design thinking is critical in today's world because it allows us to develop and enhance skills to understand and adapt to a fast-changing environment and behavior.

Service design is a practical approach for creating and improving of offerings products and services made by organizations. It is a human-centered, collaborative, interdisciplinary, iterative approach which uses research. Orchestrate experience that meets the needs of the business, the user and other stakeholder. (Stickdorn et al., 2018a.)

5.3 Customer experience

The world is evolving in technology like the internet, smartphones, and mobile applications. A customer-centric approach has many changes to offer. The world is fast changes with high technology, and design thinking has many to provide services that focus on the user or customers' needs. Customers became connected with the internet. Customer experience is a customer journey with interactions with the organization and includes the interactions between customers and the business. Customer experience is explained in many ways, such as interactions with a customer inside or outside business premises and customer support service online. (Blackstock, 2021.)

Services consist of many contact points or touchpoints with the service providers and the customers. There are many examples of touchpoints like brochures, the internet, the environment in which a service is provided, and the service provider's employees to whom the customer is exposed. Each of these touchpoints can affect the overall customer experience. That is why empathize is the first phase of design thinking. Empathy is an essential element in design thinking and human-centered design.

As a process for innovation, empathy is essential with clients, users, and customers to create innovative designs. Designers approach users intending to understand their wants and needs, make their lives easier, convenient, more enjoyable, and user-friendly products and services for them once we know the problems and learning in facing difficulties of people and understanding their desires, needs, and wants to explain their behavior. To solve it, we need to have a better understanding of people's environment. (Fanguy, 2018.)

5.4 Customer satisfaction

According to Patel (2021), customer satisfaction may measures in many ways the overall experience of a user or a customer, the customers' feedback on how they are satisfied with the product or service. It also determines how happy the customers and attest that they meet or exceed the customers' expectations. Other companies can also base for repeat or loyal customers or use a survey and ratings. Customer satisfaction can help determine improving the products and services they offer. It is essential to track this factor and work on enhancing it, and it can make more customers.

Customer satisfaction also determines how products or services provided by the company meet customer's needs, wants, and expectations. Nowadays, most consumers spend more time relying on social media channels to shop, make inquiries, do business, and get the

latest news from their favorite brands. Social media plays an essential role in decision-making about the quality of service they will provide to the customers and achieve customer satisfaction.

In this project, the researcher used survey questionnaires and sent them to the customers via email and Facebook messenger. The restaurant owner should not assume that they know what the customer wants but instead learn to listen to them and have empathy. Using some tools such as CSAT or customer surveys helps gain a deeper understanding and detailed insights into what their customers want and get better services or products in the restaurant and meet or exceed customer expectations.

5.5   Marketing

Modern marketing is defined as being centrally concerned with identifying customers and initiating and maintaining relationships with them in many ways that would create a value both for customers and organizations. Study shows in recent research it includes developing theories of consumptions, to understand what influences consumers to buy, how customers make decisions, and the wider context including global marketing and social marketing. To develop strategies, marketing professionals turn to quantitative methods, such as surveys, and qualitative methods such as ethnography. (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011, 46.)

According to American Marketing Association (2017), marketing is a kind of activity for communicating, interacting, delivering processes, and exchanging offerings for products or services that has value for users, customers, clients, partners, and society. Marketing is essential to all businesses, organizations, and companies. Marketing also involved researching and promoting the selling and buying of products, services, or goods. In doing marketing research, all important stakeholders are involved making plans for their business on how they sell it, attract or convince it to all target market. It is difficult to promote the business without a proper research marketing planning which your short term and long term goals to achieve a successful business.

Marketing has a view of new service development that is shaped by problem-solving. Design professionals have an understanding of an iterative process that involves exploring possibilities and being open to serendipity and surprise. (Stickdorn and Schneider, 2011, 50-51.)

There are many service design tools to use that are both beneficial for service designers and marketers in creating ideas, suggestions, improvements and solutions. The researcher gave some examples for methods and tools that are beneficial for the restaurant business; these are stakeholder map, business model canvas, personas, customer journey map, swot analysis, benchmarking, service blueprint, and marketing mix model.

5.5.1   Marketing mix model

Marketers used the marketing mix model, a best practice tool for their marketing plan and each component will make up a successful marketing strategy.

Figure 6: Marketing mix model

In the late 1940s, Professor James Culliton developed the first marketing mix model, then later adapted by E. Jerome McCarthy, and finally popularised by Philip Kotler in the 1960s. The concept of the original 4Ps was later expanded upon in 1981 when Booms and Bitner adapted the model to suit the marketing of services and products better. Lastly, the Booms and Bitner model of the seven Ps (Product, Price, Promotion, Place, Physical Evidence, People, and Process) remains the most popular this day. (Silcox, 2018.)

According to Langford (2019), a marketing mix is a critical foundation for most modern marketing strategies and business activities. As customers' requirements, markets, and products quickly change, it is essential to revisit the 7P formula consistently. The following are more detailed about each aspect of the 7Ps of the marketing mix.

Product

The 7Ps begin with the product. It refers to a physical product, a service, an experience, or anything that can be sell. (Langford, 2019.)

Place

Place signifies where you choose to distribute or allow access to your product or service. It could refer from a warehouse or a high-street store to an e-commerce shop or cloud-based platform. It is the place in which the business resides, and it is accessible for your target markets. Let us consider the consumers where they will look for the products or spend most of their time, like magazines, price-comparison sites, supermarkets, online stores, regular brick-and-mortar stores. (Langford, 2019.)

Price

How much the price of the product or service? The price you set should reflect on the customer's perceived value of your product and should correlate with your budget. You know and decide the right price for your product, which is most likely to benefit both your business and your customer. (Langford, 2019)

Promotion

Promotion refers to advertising, marketing, and sales techniques. It also means traditional advertising via TV, radio, billboards, etc., or more modern methods, like ads within web content, ads on a podcast, email marketing, or push notifications. (Langford, 2019)

Physical Evidence

Physical evidence often takes two forms: proof that service or purchase took place and evidence or confirmation of your brand's existence. These are the examples; any services or products received count as physical evidence, as do the likes of your receipts, packaging, tracking information, invoices, brochures or PDFs, and so on. (Langford, 2019.)

People

People refer to employees or staff. Those people involved in selling a product or service, designing it, managing teams, representing customers, and the list goes on. The people element of the 7Ps affects anyone directly or indirectly involved in the business side of the

enterprise. Hiring and retaining the right people is imperative in both the long and short-term success of your business. (Langford, 2019.)

Process

The 7th ingredient in our marketing mix is the process that describes a series of actions in delivering the product or service to the customer. Examining the process means assessing aspects such as the sales funnel, your payment systems, distribution procedures, and managing customer relationships. (Langford, 2019)

5.5.2 Brand marketing

Brand marketing promotes tangible or intangible products or services to highlight the overall brand, image, identity, values, or logo. Brand marketing is vital in business for marketing, advertising, and creating value. The brand is the way to communicate with the customers and the products. (Harrington, 2020.)

When the focus also includes the company's own brand in addition to its customers, the perspective changes. For example, we are now thinking about how we could adapt the things we do in order to provide a better customer experience, which of these things are most important in terms of boosting the desired reputation, and what we could do to realize this in an original way. This leads to the creation of new services and operating models that also systematically reinforce the desired impression of the company and its brand. (Danielsson, 2018.)

According to Williams (2021), branding is one of the most important aspects of any business, large or small, retail or B2B. It is an effective brand strategy to give the business owners an increasingly competitive market. The brand of the company is your promise to your customer because it simply tells your audience or customers what they can expect of your products and services and they can immediately differentiate your offerings from the other competitors. It includes its identity, personality, product or service design, brand communication, company logo, trademarks, brand awareness, brand loyalty, and different branding. The foundation of your brand is your logo, website, packaging and promotional materials. All of these must integrate your logo and communicate your brand.

5.6   Restaurant business

According to The Staff of Entrepreneur Media, Inc. (2021), shifting demographics and changing lifestyles are driving the rise in food-service businesses. Many busy consumers do not have time to cook their food. They want the flavor of fresh bread without the hassle of baking. Customers want tasty, delicious, nutritious meals without dishes to wash. In fact, the rise in popularity of to-go operations underscores some clear trends in the food-service industry. More and more customers are demanding fast and convenience when it comes to buying their meals.

According to Sievänen (2016), many Finnish restaurants are owned by larger companies but there are also individual entrepreneurs in the business and most of the entire market consists of independent businesses and restaurants owned by large companies. It is considered in Finland a medium sized company if it employs between 50 and 249 people and has a revenue of 50 million euro or less while the large companies employ more than 250 people and have revenue exceeding millions of euros.

According to World Health Organization (2021), coronavirus disease or covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. It causes respiratory tract infections from mild to severe. It spreads through droplets of saliva or from the infected person who coughs or sneezes. It is essential to have proper respiratory protocols for health safety and prevention.

The Covid-19 pandemic situation most in the food sectors is affected when the government imposed restrictions on closing the restaurant. Restaurant owners faced financial problems and experience a negative impact on business operations. According to Helsinki Times, the Finnish provider of business and consumer information reported that 14 restaurants were declared bankrupt between 22 and 28 February 2021. Although the number is high in comparison to previous weeks, the number of bankruptcies in the first eight weeks of the year remains markedly lower than last year.
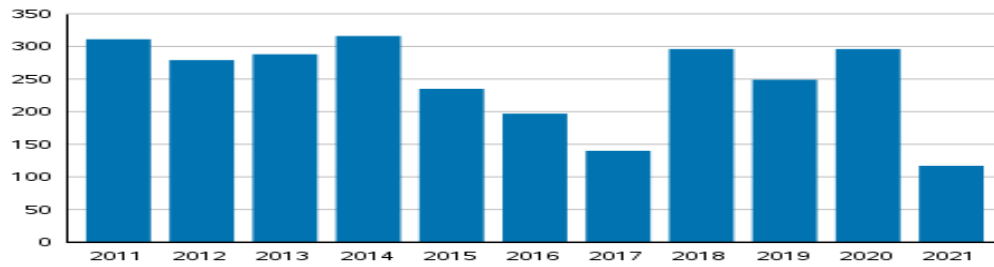
Figure 7. Bankruptcies initiated in January 2011–2021 (Statistics Finland 2021)

According to Statistics Finland (2021), 117 bankruptcies were filed in January 2021, which are 179 bankruptcies (60.5 per cent) less than in the corresponding period a year earlier. The total number of employees in companies that filed for bankruptcy was 706, which are 561 person-years (44.3 per cent) less than in the previous year.

According to Helsinki Times (2020), the Finnish government has outlined details of a €120 million support package for restaurants and food service workers who have lost income as a result of disruption stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The first part of the package concerns employees. Restaurants will soon be able to apply for €1000 per employee to cover the lost wages of each worker. Certain conditions will be attached to this support, although it is not yet clear what these are. Support can be granted to companies with a maximum of 800 employees.

According to Helsinki Times (2021), the Finnish government has earmarked roughly 50 million euros for compensating restaurants for the negative impacts of the pandemic and the measures adopted to manage it. The grounds for disbursing the compensation remain under consideration at the Ministry of Employment and the Economy.

6.   Research methods

Survey questionnaires, interviews and benchmarking are the research methods used to collect relevant data and valid information from the commissioner and customers. This is the best way to gather detailed information about this research topic and get a detailed answer from its objectives. Below are the following data collection methods and tools applied in this project.

Figure 8. Research methods used for the project

Interview questionnaires and survey questionnaires were use in this research process due to covid-19 pandemic. The researcher cannot do the face to face interview to the commissioner, staff and customers. The researcher made survey questionnaires from google docs and sent through emails and Facebook messenger. With a survey the researcher can find out for example customer preferences, opinions, behavior or information about the specific subject. The data from the survey method is easy to analyze and simple to manage both for the researcher and the respondents. Interview is a qualitative research technique. The researcher sends an interview questionnaire to the commissioner via email. To the staff, the researcher gives a letter asking for permission to conduct an interview and attached in the letter are the interview questionnaires due to the current health situation of pandemic; it is difficult to conduct a face to face interview. The researcher had a phone interview with one persona and conducted a phone interview for the customer journey experience. This tool is used to gather inputs data to the customers and commissioner.

6.1 Interviews

An in-depth interview is a qualitative research method involved in an unstructured, structure, or semi-structured. The interview discussion can be intensively conducted with a small number of respondents or participants. With this in-depth interview's researcher can learn more about the topic from different stakeholders and get relevant information or to understand different perspectives on a specific subject matter. (Stickdorn et al., 2018a.)

Interviews are different from questionnaires as they involve social interaction. Unlike questionnaires researchers need training in how to interview (which costs money). Interviews are mostly done face to face in order the researcher can observe the body language but it can also be done via email or by telephone. Researchers can ask different types of questions which in turn generate different types of data. For example, closed

questions provide people with a fixed set of responses, whereas open questions allow people to express what they think in their own words. (McLeod, 2014.)

The interviews of the commissioner and the customer were held on different dates. This method is chosen because it is an effective way to gather detailed information about the research topic and it is an efficient way that can be arranged via phone or email, as the best to do to the situation. The interview was semi-structured and lasted less than an hour due to limited time. Nevertheless, the researcher managed to deepen the knowledge about the commissioner and customer needs and insights.

Due to the current global health problem, the researcher started sending an email to the commissioner to send the interview questions via email and at the same time asking for a proposal to conduct research on the restaurant was accepted. The researcher also conducted a phone interview to one of the customer segments about her customer dining experience during buffet lunch.

When conducting this thesis project, there are many challenges because it happens during the corona outbreak. Then, the number of cases of Covid-19 in Vaasa is increasing, and the government-imposed restrictions on all restaurants to have only a takeaway service from March 14, 2020, until July 20, 2020. After that, the restaurant service was back to normal on July 21, 2020. For our health safety precaution, the researcher sent the interview questions to the commissioner via email on December 13, 2020.

The commissioner email interview questions are found in Appendix 1. The commissioner sent her answers on January 10, 2021 and stated that the hygiene is the number one key factors to have a successful restaurant business followed by the food taste, delicious foods, pricing balance of food quality and amount or enough quantity, good service, a good team with positive working team spirit and atmosphere, happy workers and happy customers. The commissioner stated that Facebook is the only marketing tool she used for promoting the business. And lastly the commissioner stated that as soon as corona Covid-19 pandemic situations calms down, we are improving sushi seems to be trendy for Finnish customers. At the moment, they must follow up the customer satisfaction because it is lacking and update the current menu are the following changes or improvements she wanted in the restaurant to achieve customer satisfaction.

The researcher also conducted a phone interview with Maria also, representing one of the personas, earlier on February 2, 2020. She was able to tell her customer journey and dining

experience in buffet lunch and highlighted all the pain points. Maria stated that the restaurant's website is accessible and easy to navigate. The restaurant location is easy to find and the parking area is accessible. When Maria entered the restaurant the staff smiled and greeted her. She also loved the ambiance in the restaurant because it is clean and pleasant. The restaurant is also spacious and the foods were delicious. These are the pain points she experienced during her customer journey in dining lunch buffet at Tom Yum Thai restaurant; when she dined for buffet lunch sometimes there is no soup, utensils and plates are not well organized. Maria cannot find the menu list on the website or on the Facebook page of the restaurant for the lunch buffet and also she cannot pay using mobile payment. The phone interview questions are found in Appendix 2.

The researcher conducted an interview with the staff in Tom Yum Thai restaurant by giving a letter to the staff and attached in the letter are the interview questionnaires on April 13, 2021. Due to the corona pandemic situation in Vaasa, the researcher got the answered paper in the interview on April 15, 2021. The restaurant is only open between 17-22. There are changes in the opening hours from March 29 to April 18, 2021 because of the restrictions imposed by the government. This time the restaurant caters only take-away service.

The staff interview questions are found in Appendix 3. The staff answered all the interview questions and put it in writing on a piece of paper and gave it to the researcher on April 15, 2021. The staff stated her perspectives to improve the quality of service and products in the restaurants, some improvements such as;

For the service

The staff tries to enhance the communication skills and solve problems, and sometimes, there are problems related to food missing and food packaging. The customers call the team back to ask about that and ask about how the workers deal with this. However, the staff always calls the boss and asks for solutions, leading to the delay in responding to customers' demands.

When the restaurant reopens the buffet lunch, the staff is supposed to change the menu every week, as there are many loyal customers, they come to have lunch every day. If the chef cooked the same menu every day, customers will feel bored and do not want to return.

Currently, the staff has just given snacks such as cookies, candies, and white shrimp chips to every purchase. The workers realized that competitors were doing this for a long time, so they think they can do such small actions as a thank you to their customers.

The staff is now wearing masks about the staff attitudes, but they always use ear-catchy voices and smile at our customers, show friendliness, and give them support when needed. The workers respect customers, try their best to provide them with the most memorable memories when having meals in the restaurant, and use all feedback to improve the services.

For the food

Ensure that all the meals are in hot temperature, not sloppy or overcooked, and use fresh ingredients.

Restaurant Atmosphere

The staff decorates the restaurant by using yellow tone light, creating a cozy and friendly, warm atmosphere, cleaning the floor every day, and inspecting hygiene issues.

The next question is about the Covid-19 pandemic affecting their working situation in the restaurant. The staff stated due to the spread of Covid-19, the team, were affected directly. Workers cannot operate, as usual, close in the morning and afternoon and open in the evening for takeaway service, and buffet lunch is closed. All the staff has lower income each month. However, all workers can still have the ability to earn a living and pay expenses. The team also needs to clean the restaurant with alcohol regularly. Wearing masks and washing hands are compulsory.

As the staff mentioned, the restaurant is only open for takeaway food service. Dining in the restaurant is not acceptable at this moment because of the restrictions. The team has to change the way of serving food and methods to approach as many customers as possible. The limitation from the government creates a barrier for the restaurant in increasing sales and revenues.

Lastly, the last question is about the changes the staff would like to suggest to overcome this Covid-19 pandemic. The team stated that they currently do their best to improve the restaurant's food, business, and services. They received almost takeaway orders, so that's a

good signal because they can still survive and profit from that (but not as high as usual). They also receive orders via phone call; customers can order directly and come to pick up their food at the point of time. The taste of food remains the same as usual, so the team can suggest giving customers extra gifts like snacks or notes of appreciation.

6.2 Survey questionnaires

In survey research, the instruments that are utilized can be either a questionnaire or an interview (either structured or unstructured). There are various types of surveys you can choose from. Basically, the types of surveys are broadly categorized into two: according to instrumentation and according to the span of time involved. The types of surveys according to instrumentation include the questionnaire and the interview. (Sincero, 2012.)

This method can gather information quickly and is not so costly. Surveys make use of questionnaires in order to get data and prove to be an effective technique to collect necessary information for the research topic. The researcher made survey questionnaires in Google docs, and the survey consisted of 20 questions and re-writes the study on January 20 and 21, 2019. It is all about the food products, services, ambiance and overall value of the restaurant. The researcher presented the survey questionnaires to the commissioner and sent to Facebook messenger and emails. The respondents are from Vaasa and they are connected through the Facebook network of the researcher. There are 14 respondents; 5 Finnish locals and 9 immigrants filled out the survey. The overall results in the survey will be found in appendix 4. Below is the brief explanation about the results and key insights collected from the survey.

Below in Figure 9, is the result of the food being served hot, fresh and prepared well. The result shows 64.3% agree, 21.4% strongly agree, 7.1% to both strongly disagree and neutral. This shows that the staff of the restaurant should check the right temperature of the hot food bar. It is also better to serve freshly baked bread and desserts, fresh vegetables, fruits and fresh meat not frozen because fresh is more delicious and healthy.
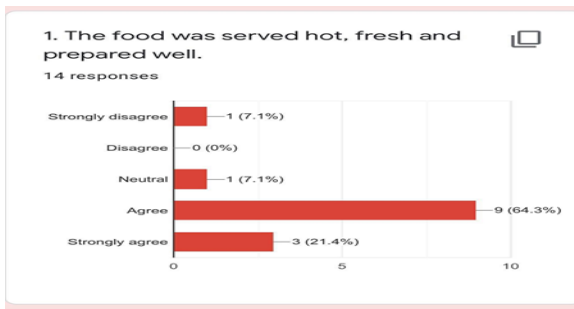
Figure 9. Responses on the food was served hot, fresh and prepared well

As shown in Figure 10, the result on the menu had an excellent selection of items, and it offers 72.5% agree, 14.3% strongly agree, 7.1% to both neutral and disagree. It shows that the chef cook must prepare more food menu choices and different food services. The restaurant can serve more flavors of sushi and the same with salads.
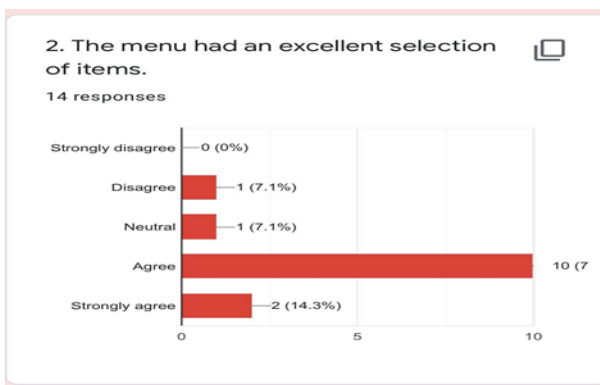

Figure 10. Responses on the menu had an excellent selection of items

Below in Figure 11, is the result on the quality of food was excellent and it shows that 55.1% agree, 28.6% strongly agree, 7.1% to both neutral and disagree. This shows that the quality of foods that were served must be improved and enhanced. The purchaser in the restaurant must prioritize fresh ingredients and high brand quality ingredients because fresh ingredients will provide a richer flavor and more nutrients. The staff in the restaurant must work on quality control
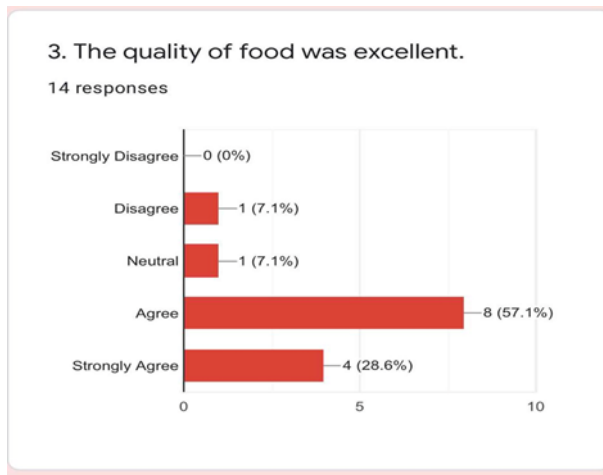
Figure 11. (Responses on the quality of food was excellent)

In Figure 12, the result on the food was very tasty and flavorful and it shows 57.1% agree, 28.6% strongly agree, 7.1% to both neutral and disagree. This shows that the chef must add more flavor, the food presentation is pleasant, smell delicious, colorful, attractive, tasteful, and palatable.
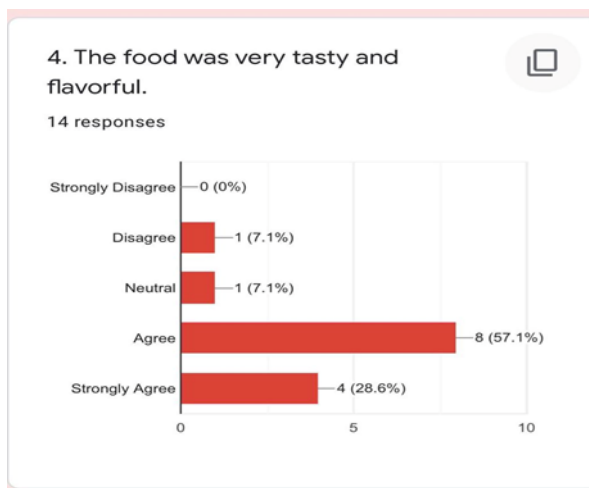
Figure 12. (Responses on the food was very tasty and flavorful)

As shown in Figure 13, below is the result about the food was a good value for the price and it shows 57.1% agree 28.6% strongly agree, 7.1% to both neutral and strongly disagree. This shows that Tom Yum Thai restaurants offer a good price to the customers. But if the restaurant owner wants to increase the price of a lunch buffet, the owner must enhance and improve the products and services for the customers.
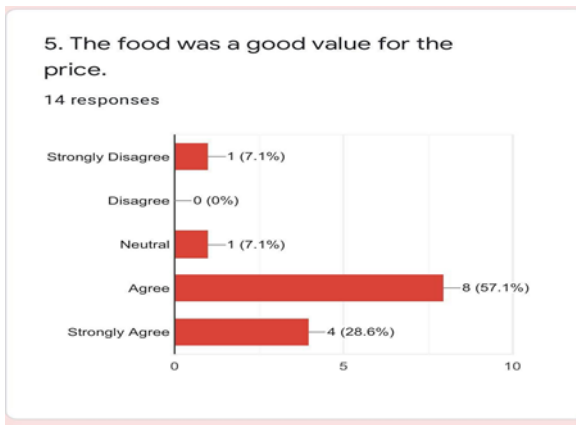
Figure 13. Responses on the food was a good value for the price

Below in Figure 14, is the result on the server and other staff was friendly, attentive and knowledgeable and it shows 50% agree, 28.6% strongly agree, 14.3% neutral and 7.1% disagree. This shows that the staff was friendly and polite to the customers and they are good servers.
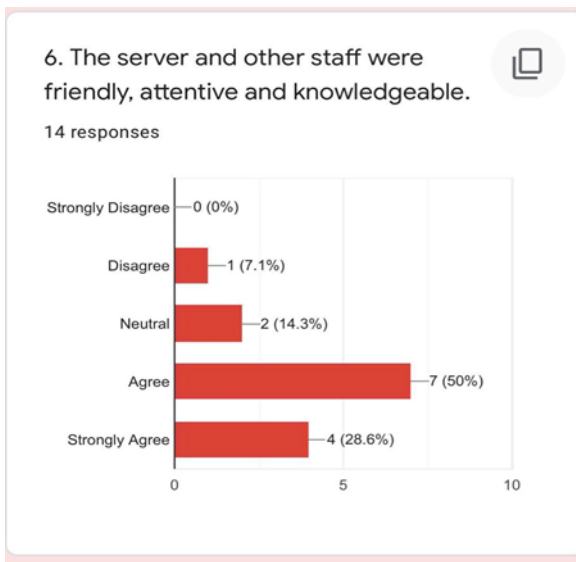

Figure 14. Responses on the server and other staff were friendly, attentive and knowledgeable

Below in Figure 15, the result on the cleanliness is impeccable and it shows 42.90% strongly agree, 35.7% agree, neutral 14.3% and 7.1 % agree. This shows that the restaurant is cleaned and has a pleasant ambiance.
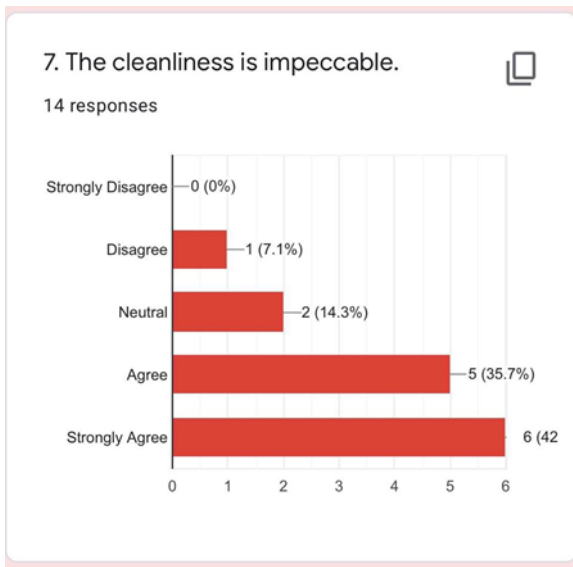
Figure 15. Responses on the cleanliness is impeccable

As shown in Figure 16, below is the result on the music and lighting is enjoyable and adjusted to appropriate level and it shows 21.4% strongly agree, 42% is agree, 21.4% is neutral and 14.3% disagree. This shows that the restaurant has good music to play and good lighting but only little improvement for example playing mellow music and adjusts the lighting during the long dark seasons.
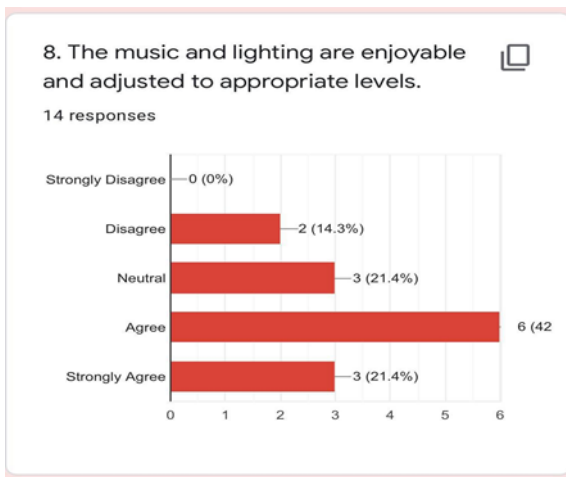
Figure 16. Responses on the music and lighting are enjoyable and adjusted to appropriate levels

Below in Figure 17, the result on the food is presented beautifully and it shows 64.3% agree, 28.6% agree, 7.1% both neutral and disagree. This shows that the restaurant presented well with palatability but there is a little improvement to make the food presentation more attractive especially serving more fresh salads and fruits and different sushi flavors to attract more customers.
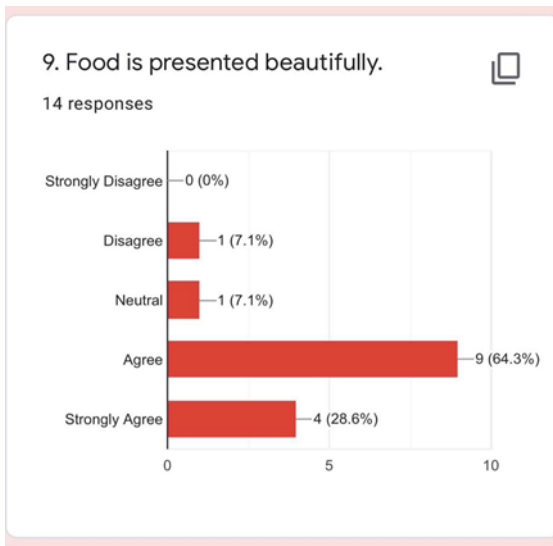
**Figure 17. Responses on food is presented beautifully**

In Figure 18, is the result about the portion size of food in a la carte and it shows 61.5% agree and 38.5% excellent. This shows that the restaurant served a big portion and the customers were satisfied.

**Figure 18. Responses on portion size of food in a la carte**

In Figure 19, is the result on the ease of ordering in a la carte and it shows 61.5% good, 30.8% excellent and 7.7% fair. This shows that the restaurant is very relaxed and at ease on taking orders from their customers.
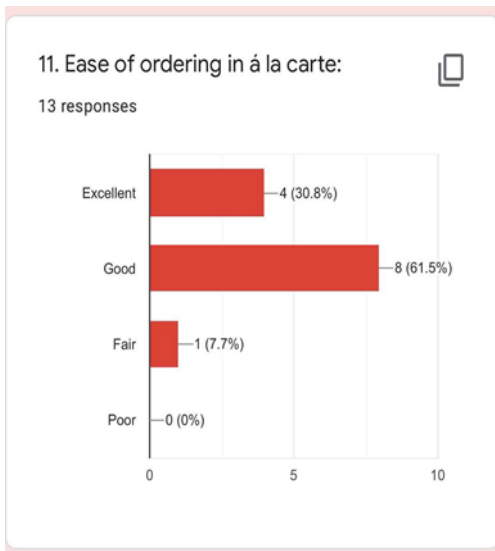
Figure 19. Responses on ease of ordering in a la carte

Below in Figure 20, is the result on the food service speed in a la carte and it shows 69.2% good and 30.8% excellent. This shows that the chef cooked fast and the waiter served the food on time and fast to the customers. The customers didn't wait long and they had good customer service during ala carte.
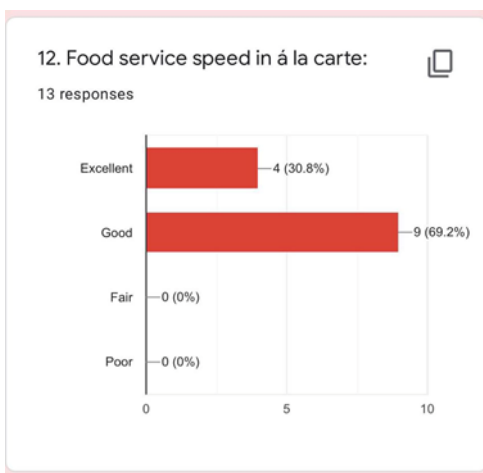

Figure 20. Responses on food service speed in a la carte

As shown in Figure 21, below is the result on the food temperature in a la carte and shows 61.5% good and 38.5% excellent. The result shows they serve the foods in a good temperature and still hot when they serve to the customers.
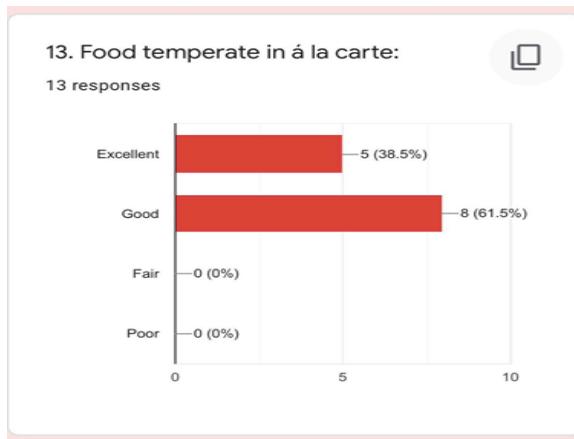
Figure 21. Responses on food temperate in a la carte

Below in Figure 22, is the result on taste of food and it shows both 46.0% both excellent and good. 7.7% fair, this shows that all foods served in the lunch buffet and a la carte are all delicious.
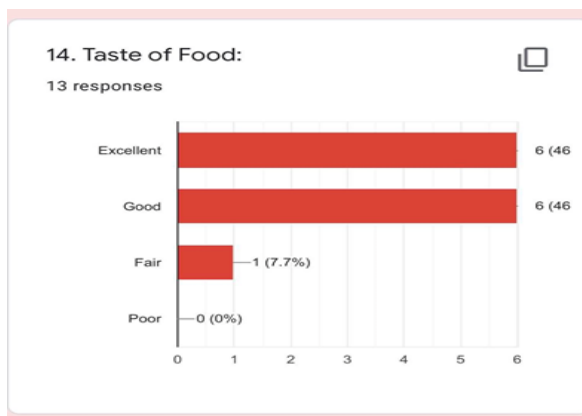

Figure 22. Responses on taste of food

Below in Figure 23, is the result on the quality of ingredients and it shows 71.4% good and 28.6% excellent. This shows that the restaurant used good quality ingredients and needed a little improvement for putting more fresh fruits and fresh vegetables.
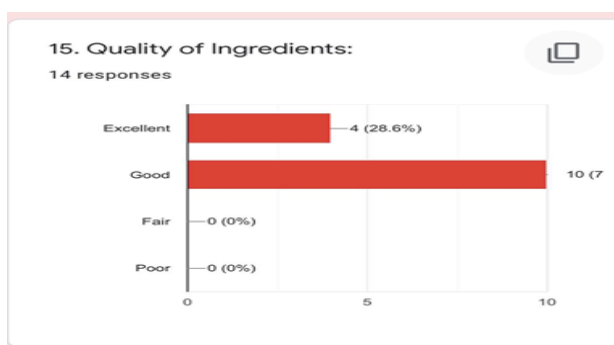

Figure 23. Responses on quality of ingredients

In Figure 24, is the result on the restaurant and restrooms cleanliness and it shows 50% excellent, 42.9% good and 7.1% fair. This shows that the restaurant restrooms are cleaned and have a pleasant smell.
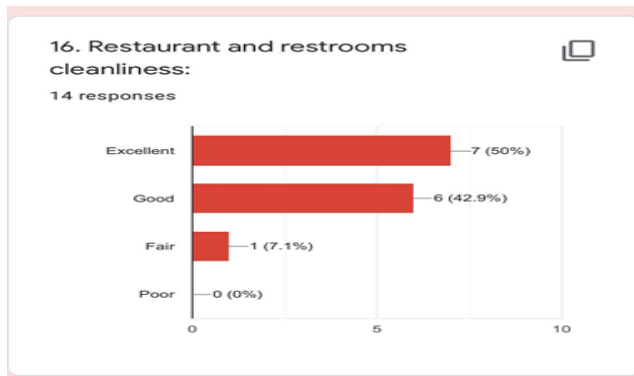

Figure 24. Responses on restaurant and restrooms cleanliness

As shown in Figure 25, below is the result on the overall value and it shows 70.0% good and 28.6% excellent. This shows the overall value of products and services the restaurant's offer to the customers experience is worthy and able to achieve customer satisfaction.
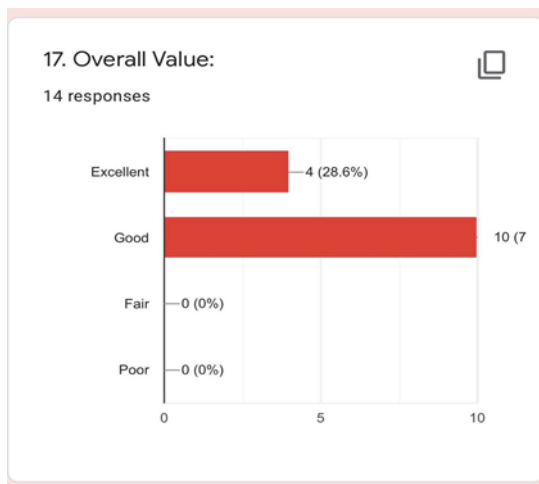
Figure 25. Responses on overall value

Below in Figure 26, is the result on the overall spacing, ambiance and comfort and it shows 50% good, 42.9% excellent and 7.1% fair. This shows that the restaurant needs little improvements for the spacing, ambiance and comfort for the customers.
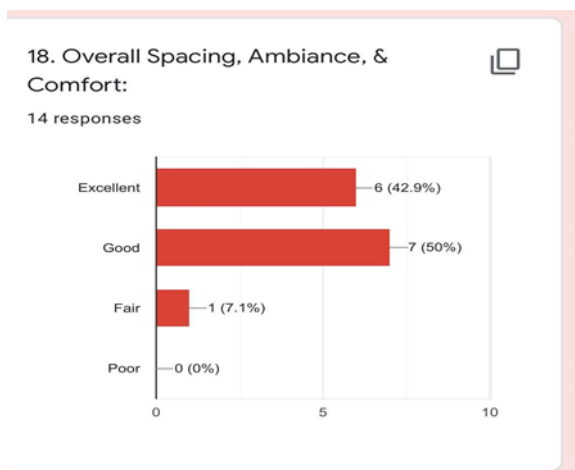
Figure 26. Responses on overall spacing, ambiance and comfort

In question number 19, see appendix 4. The result of the likes and dislikes of food and services the restaurant offers to their customers. There are only a total of six respondents in this survey question. One respondent answered there is nothing to change and the customer is satisfied with the restaurant quality of foods and services. One respondent answered that the variety of foods could be good, especially if I planned to eat most days of the week. Some servers are not approachable. The customer would like a different menu in a week to be excited to come back and dine again in the lunch buffet. In this case, if the servers are not approachable, there is a problem in communication. In Vaasa, most people speak English, Finnish and Swedish, and the researcher suggested that staff can say to the customers which language they will speak. The other respondent answered that it takes time to refill the food, but they have excellent customer service. The waiter or server must check which food is empty and immediately tell the chef cook to cook and refill right away. One respondent answered that the service is outstanding and he or she likes it because they serve fresh, tasty foods. The customer is satisfied with the quality of services and food the restaurant offered. And lastly, one respondent answered that he or she likes the restaurant's ambiance and is relaxing. The restaurant is pleasant and cozy to dine in. The customers are comfortable eating, and the restaurant is spotless.

In question number 20, see appendix 4. If the customer recommends Tom Yum Thai restaurant to their friends or relatives, 100% of the respondents recommend the restaurant to their friends and relatives. The 14 respondents wanted to recommend the restaurants and promote them because they are satisfied with the service quality and customer satisfaction.

In the last survey question, the researcher asks the respondents about additional ideas or feedback for improvements they would like to share about their customer experience in

dining at Tom Yum Thai Restaurant. Out of fourteen respondents, only nine responded. The nine respondents answered: delicious foods, friendly staff, friendly faces, and worth dining in the restaurant. And suggested the following, visible signage for reservation on the table, adding more food choices, improving the flow of service in the buffet, fast refilling the food, and changing the menu now and then in the buffet.

6.3   Benchmarking

Benchmarking allows you to focus on best practices from your competitors. It allows you to get detailed comparisons between companies. It allows for a partnering of information. Most companies are more than willing to discuss their success. Benchmarking allows you to improve your organization by using proven methods already established. You do not need to reinvent the wheel. Do some research and borrow someone else's proven practices and adapt them to work for your company. (Hollinger, 2015.)

The researcher used benchmarking as a research method to compare the restaurant to other restaurants. The purpose of the research was to collect and gather information for continuous improvements of the products and services, which best practices could benefit the restaurant. The researcher chose the restaurants, and the benchmarking results summarize at the end. Finally, the results were analyzed and put in the lists of the development suggestions and improvements.

Benchmarking is a good tool for learning how the products and services have been offered, rendered, upgraded and similar problems solved in other similar locations. It gives an overview for the operational environment and similar context. Benchmarking is used to create knowledge and best practices from the field of restaurants in different cities in Finland. The restaurants to be benchmarked and observed in this project are from Vaasa, and Tampere; the restaurant will be named as Restaurant A and Restaurant B, this is because of the confidentiality of their business. The researcher did the benchmarking and visited the two Asian restaurants in different locations that have similar products and services. The researcher used online benchmarking through the restaurant's own website, social media accounts for example Instagram and Facebook.

6.3.1   Benchmarking restaurant A (Vaasa)

Restaurant A is located in Vaasa, Finland. The owners of the restaurant are Vietnamese. It is an Asian restaurant located in Vaasa city center. It serves buffet during lunch with Asian cuisines. The restaurant also serves salads, soups, fruits, sushi, hot foods, desserts, coffee, water, juice, and tea during the lunch buffet. The restaurant serves take-away and à la carte in the evening. The restaurant is accessible to all customers and easy to find a parking area. It is spacious and a simple interior. It is a child friendly, family friendly and group friendly restaurant. The tables and chairs are not crowded and everyone can enjoy dining. Not so much decorations like plants and the lights are not so good, a little bit darker. The food bar, salad bar and dessert tables were placed in one area and customers have a space to get their food. The restaurant is using only Facebook in promoting their products and business. In restaurant A Facebook page, they posted their food photos and videos but not every day, you can also see the customer reviews and I cannot see a menu list for the lunch buffet that they offer every day. When you go to their Facebook page, a message button will appear and it says;

What kind of food do you serve?

Can I see a menu?

Where are you located?

Do you deliver?

The food has a diverse selection and several good options at buffet that caters to a wide demographic. They also serve warm and cold drinks in the buffet. They only serve cookies for desserts. In regards to social media channels, the restaurant does not have a website and only uses the Wolt food delivery app.

The researcher visited restaurant A on December 23, 2020 and observed her customer experience in dining buffet lunch. The staff is friendly and smiling. The food was presented very attractive, delicious and many varieties or selections to choose from the hot foods, sushi and fresh salads and fruits. They have 15 hot foods served and 13 kinds of sushi. The restaurant served buffet from 11:00 o'clock in the morning until 18:00 o'clock in the evening. The prices of their buffet during weekdays are 10,50 euros and on weekends are 12,50 euros. The restaurant provides information health precautions for

coronavirus pandemic by providing a hand sanitizer, handwashing area and social distancing.

6.3.2 Benchmarking restaurant B (Tampere)

Restaurant B is an Asian fusion restaurant which offers a variety of Japanese, Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese cuisines. The location is near schools and universities. The owners of the restaurant are Chinese. The restaurant serves a buffet of Asian cuisine, salads, fruits, sushi, soup, hot foods, coffee, tea, cold juice, soft drinks, and water during lunch. The restaurant also serves desserts like two flavor ice creams, cakes, cookies, and candies during the lunch buffet. The restaurant serves take-away and à la carte. The restaurant is very clean, organized and accessible to all target markets. The restaurant space is big and can accommodate eighty persons. It is spacious, cozy and has a beautiful interior design. It has nice music and lights and green plants. It is a child friendly, family friendly and group friendly restaurant. The tables and chairs are not crowded and everyone can enjoy dining. The food bar, salad bar and dessert tables were placed in one area and customers have a space to get their food. The food bar, salad bar and dessert tables were placed in one area and customers have a space to get their foods. The food has a diverse selection and several good options at buffet that caters to a wide demographic. They served a big selection of different sushi, other hot foods as well as salads, fruits and drinks included in the buffet lunch. In regards to social media channels, the restaurant has a website and social media account, Facebook, for promoting their products. In marketing their products to boost sales the restaurant is also using the digital platforms for food delivery such as Wolt and Foodora. The restaurant website had some information about their services, products and contact information. Only a few pictures of foods and the list of menus do not have pictures of foods and everything is written in English. You can also send a message using the website and inform customers that they do not process reservation service online. If the customers want to have a reservation, they must call and provide the restaurant telephone number.

The researcher visited restaurant B on February 6, 2021 and observed her customer experience in dining buffet lunch. The restaurant is very spacious and I like the way they organize their hot food table bar, sushi bar, salad bar, soup table, desserts and drinks table. The waitress immediately served water and put it on the table. The staff is friendly and smiling. The food was presented very attractive, delicious and many varieties or selections to choose from the hot foods, sushi and fresh salads and fruits. They have 15 hot foods

served and 15 kinds of sushi. The restaurant served buffet from 10:30 o'clock in the morning until 21:00 o'clock in the evening. The prices of their buffet during weekdays are 11,90 euros and on weekends are 13,90 euros. The restaurant provides information about health precautions for coronavirus pandemic by providing a hand sanitizer, handwashing area and social distancing.

6.3.3 Summary of the benchmarking

To analyze all the data the researcher collected during the research phase, the idea is to compare the existing processes, services and products of business to competitors for improvements. Below is the table based on the research findings and suggested possible development areas will help communicate innovative ideas and improvements strategies.

Table 1. Summary of the benchmarking

	TOM YUM THAI RESTAURANT (VAASA)	RESTAURANT A (VAASA)	RESTAURANT B (TAMPERE)
OPENING HOURS FOR BUFFET LUNCH	11:00 A.M. - 14:00 P.M	11:00 A.M. - 18:00 P.M	10:30 A.M - 21:00 P.M
PRICE	10,00 EURO	10,50 EURO	13,90 EURO
PARKING AREA	Accessible	Accesible	Accesible
SPACE	Big 50 Chairs	Big More than 50 chairs	Big More than 50 chairs
AMBIANCE	Pleasant, clean and organize	Pleasant, clean and organize	Pleasant, clean and organize
FOOD	Salads, soup, rice, hot foods, sushi, desserts, coffee, tea, juice, water fruits and candies	Salads, soup,fruits, rice, sushi, hot foods, coffee, tea, juice, and water	Salads, fruits, sushi, soup, hot foods, coffee, tea, juice, water, softdrinks, desserts like cakes and ice cream
FOOD DELIVERY MOBILE APPLICATION	Wolt	Wolt	Wolt and Foodora
WEBSITE	Yes	None	Yes
LANGUAGES	Finnish and English	Finnish, Swedish and English	Finnish and English
SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS	Facebook	Facebook	Facebook
PAYMENT PROCESS	Cash, Visa, Visa Electron, Master card, and Lunch coupons	Cash, Visa, Visa Electron, and Master card,	Cash, Visa, Visa Electron, and Mastercard

7.   Service design process and outcomes

There are different methods and tools used to gather the necessary information and helping to collect relevant data that needed for the customer needs and meet the service satisfaction. Stakeholder map, personas, customer journey, service blueprint, and business model canvas are tools and methods because they give valuable information that would help the commissioner provide knowledge and understanding on the benefits of service design on the restaurant to achieve the goals of this project.

Qualitative methods were used also to gain insights and they are a good tool for gathering a deeper understanding for the customer needs and wants on the products and services that need to improve on the restaurant and suggest some improvements and recommendations. The covid-19 pandemic influenced this project work and its processes, there are many restrictions and cannot have a face to face interview. The researcher conducted an online survey questionnaire for the customers. The researcher was also able to send questionnaires in the commissioner's email and had a phone interview with one of the customer segments about her customer dining experience during buffet lunch.

The researcher chose several service design methods and tools to collect data and gather information such as stakeholder map, personas, customer journey map, business model canvas, service blueprint, and swot analysis to get the result of the research topic. Below are the service design methods and tools used in this project to gather data and results. Below are the methods and tools used in this project.

7.1   Stakeholder map

A stakeholder map is a tool for visualization or representing different groups that are involved or engage with a service. By representing staff, customers, partner organizations and other stakeholders in this way, the interplay between these various groups can be charted and analyzed. (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011, 150.)

The overview provided by stakeholder maps is a good way to highlight the issues concerning each stakeholder group. These groups can then be clustered together by their shared interests, allowing the service provider to deploy their resources more effectively when responding to problems and expanding their service. (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011, 150-151.)
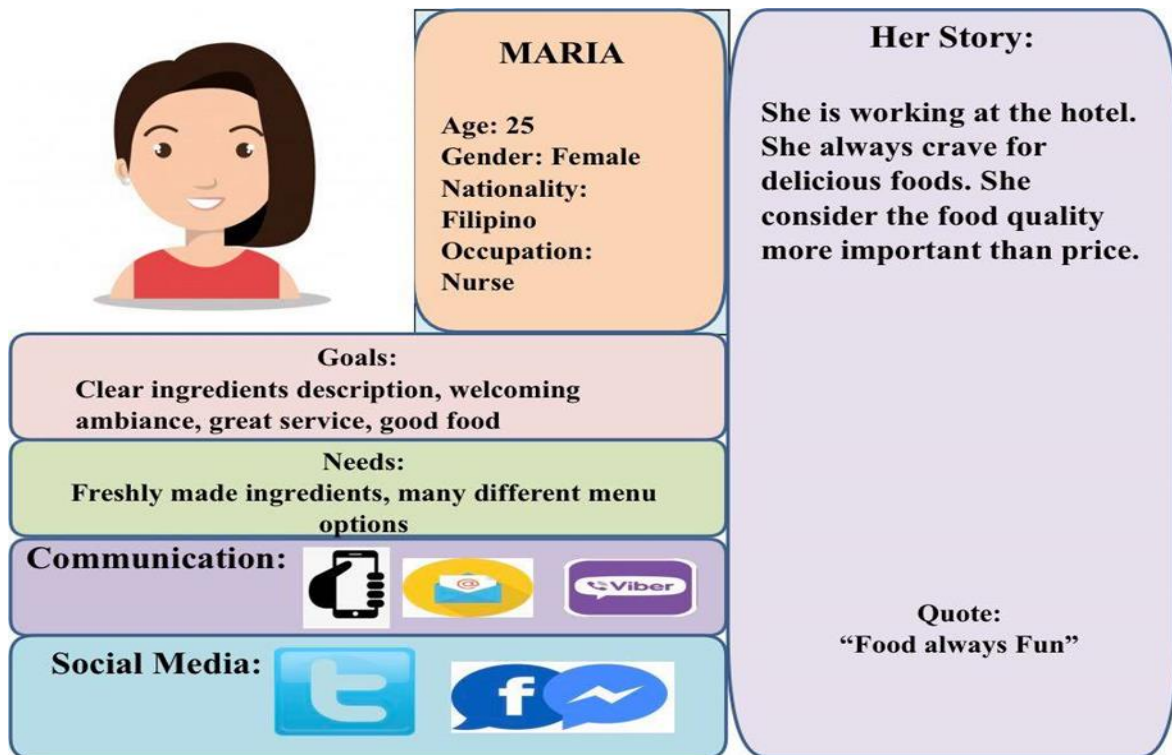
Stakeholder mapping is essential for the success of the project. It helps the project planners get insights, enabling them to deliver a project that would satisfy all the important people involved. This process is suitable for visualization of laying out all the stakeholders. It is beneficial to get a visual representation of all the people applied to influence the project and how they are connected and related to each other.

The stakeholder Map (Figure 27) for Tom Yum Thai Restaurant was created to gain a better understanding of all different people and groups that can be affected when there are changes made in the products and services.

Figure 27. Stakeholder map

The core stakeholders for the restaurant are for example the customers, employees and owner. The direct stakeholders are the space or rental owner, banks, Finnvera, financing firms, service designers, trainers, suppliers, marketers, distributors, competitors, supermarkets, restaurant equipment and maintenance personnel, food market fair, interior designer, maintenance for I.T website and apps. While the stakeholder that are indirectly affected by the restaurant are for example shop nearby, café nearby, transport, police authority, schools, city workers, other restaurants, business establishments offices, event organizers, private sectors, universities, food bloggers, food vloggers, fair trade, community, government, municipality, organizations, associations, press or media, health, sanitation, environment and food agencies. If more people started spending more time to dine in Tom Yum Thai restaurant instead of going to other restaurants, shops and cafes so there are negative effects to the revenue of those other restaurants, shops and cafés. On the other hand, if there were more customers to dine in Tom Yum Thai restaurant and not so much operating cost they can prefer to enhance their products and services in a costly budget.

7.2 Personas

Personas are a tool to represent the different customer groups that have risen from the research. Personas are a good tool for visualizing the users, what they want and how the user groups differ from each other. Personas should represent a real person in the sense that typically a persona card is made with a photo, name, age, and other information describing the customer (Stickdorn et al., 2018, 41-43b.)

Personas are profile information of a stakeholder and they are a representation of imaginary examples of the user or other stakeholder. The researcher used two target groups from personas in this research. This process is important for the success of a product or service because they can apply it in an early stage in decision making for example product development, create a new product or service, improve existing product or service and product redesign. This method creates more empathy and understanding about the customer using the products or services.

Below in Figure 28, are the personas of two customer groups that were chosen from the research. The two target groups were focused mainly on Asian and Finnish customers. Personas were made to represent the two target groups that were chosen for this research project; Asian and Finnish customers. The purpose for this is to compare and see the different needs of these two target groups and to be able to empathize the customers' needs and goals.

JAAKKO

Age: 35
Gender: Male
Nationality: Finnish
Occupation: Bank Employee

His Story:

He is working in the bank and he always look for a great place to dine during lunch and budget his money. He wanted that the restaurant is near to his working place. He enjoys dining out with friends and colleagues. He considers having a good ambiance and service important factors for a great dining experience.

Goals:
Affordable menu, order quick meal, welcoming ambiance and delicious foods

Needs:
Easy to read menu, many variety of food to choose, prices and ingredients displayed

Communication:

Social Media:

Quote:
"Good Food, Good Company and Good Times."

Picture 28. Personas for the two customer segments

7.3   Customer journey map

Customer journey maps are used to visualize the customer experience. They can be used to describe either the current customer journey or a future customer journey with the planned changes to the service. (Stickdorn et al., 2018, 129b.)

A customer journey map (Figure 29) used to describe the customer experience of the current services and products offered by Tom Yum Thai Restaurant in Vaasa. One of the Personas, Maria, was chosen for the customer journey map. She highlights many of the pain points of customers and is able to provide information in answering the survey questionnaires and phone interview regarding her customer journey experience in the restaurant. It was used to visualize the process of the customer in dining during the lunch buffet.

Customer journey maps highlight the things customers need to do before, during and after their visit to the restaurant. It also gives information on how the customer feels during the process. A customer journey map will be built to show a customer's view of visiting the restaurant. The customer journey map will be done during lunch buffet hours.

Stages of Journey	Motivation	Searches of Restaurant Website	Arrive at car Park	Enter the Restaurant	Ambiance	Look for a Table and Chair	Pay	Get Food	FEEDBACK
Activities	Wants to take buffet lunch	user open website on personal phone and logs into site	The parking is accessible	Staff smiled and greeted me. They are friendly	Clean and organize music and lights are enjoyable	Spacious	Process for Payment	Serving of Foods	Finding a feedback and suggestion box
Experiences	Very excited to dine	I cannot find the list menu for luch buffet	Very glad I got a parking space for my car	Happy to be greeted	confused with the utensils and plates	Easy to find a table and chair	Frustrated to find other online payment options only cash and atm cards	Sad there is no hot soup and always same menu/ foods	Satisfied with the food and service
Customer Expectations	Easy to find the place	Update the website and social media pages for the menu lists for lunch buffet	Easy to Park	Very friendly, approachable and welcoming atmosphere	Provide a well organize utensils arrangemnet	Provide a place for Child-friendly, Family-friendly, Group-friendly	Provide more payment system	provide more selection of foods	Recommend the restaurant to his colleagues

Figure 29. Customer journey map

7.4 Service blueprint

Service blueprints are a way to specify and detail each individual aspect of a service. This usually involves creating visual schematic incorporating the perspectives of the user, the service provider, and other relevant parties that may be involved, detailing everything from the points of customer contact to behind-the-scenes processes. (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011, 204.)

The service blueprint was made based on the data gathered from the customer journey, results from the survey questionnaires, interviews of the commissioner and customer. The service blueprint shows the processes regarding a customer experience dining during lunch buffet. The service blueprint in Figure 30 is based on the customer dining experience during the lunch buffet.

The service blueprint is an excellent tool to get a detailed view of all aspects of service. It visualizes all the experience steps and includes the points of view of the customer, the service provider, and other essential support processes. The researcher will make one service blueprint for the chosen customer segment and include the development possibilities' pain points.
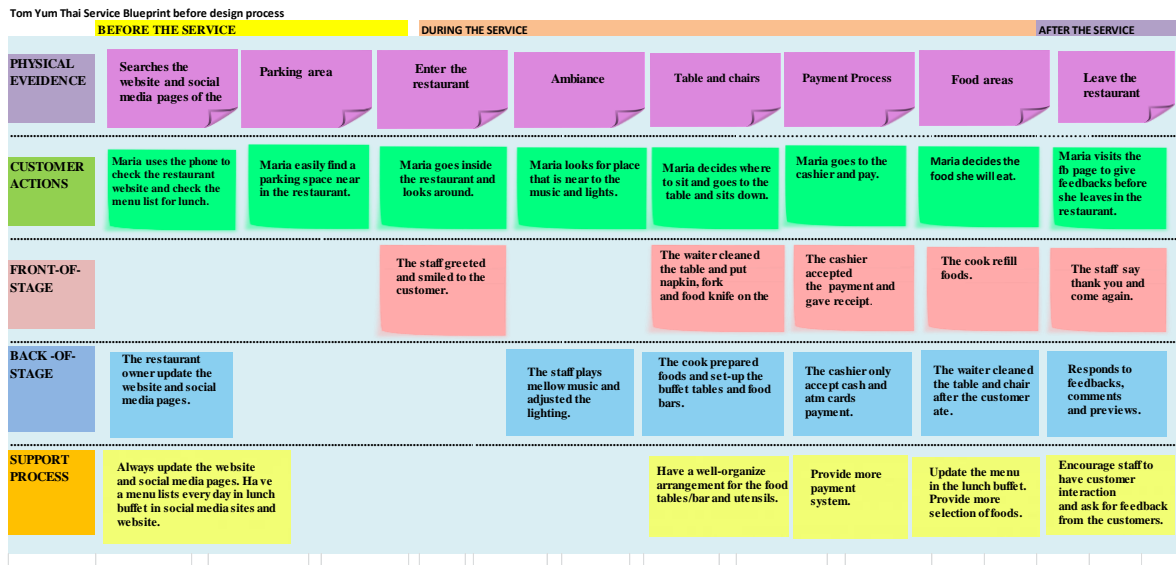
Figure 30 . Service blueprint for lunch buffet before design process

7.5 Business model canvas

A business model canvas is a valuable strategic management tool template to describe, analyze, design, or develop new business models. It was developed and popularized by the book business model generation. The canvas can be used in almost any sector, and can benefit service providers in a number of ways. Its key benefits will bring clarity to an organization's core aims whilst vide an up-to-date "snapshots" of any organization attempting to implement the results of a service design project. (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011, 212-213.)

These are the nine sections in the model; value propositions, customer segments, customer relationships, channels, key activities, key resources, key partners, revenue streams and cost structure. This tool gives information from the staff, business owners and potential customers.

The business model canvas (Figure 31) describes the business model canvas of Tom Yum Thai Restaurant. Most restaurants get their monetary resources from the banks, entrepreneurs, restaurateurs, loan money in the bank to start a business. They partner with food suppliers, food distributors, food retailers, supermarkets, local farmers and Asian supermarkets for their fresh ingredients and raw materials. The revenue streams in restaurants that they offer to customers are buffet, ala carte, catering, function and events, customer loyalty card, discount fees to children and senior, product sales and selling foods and beverages.

This tool will give a deeper understanding of the commissioner's business model. Business model canvas is a tool for developing new or to create existing business models. A customer model canvas will be used to develop the services further in accordance with the restaurant's current strategy. These are the nine sections in the model; value propositions, customer segments, customer relationships, channels, key activities, key resources, key partners, revenue streams and cost structure. This tool gives information from the staff, business owners and potential customers.

THE BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS	DESIGN FOR: TOMYUM THAI RESTAURANT	DESIGN BY: IMEE THERESE BISNAR-INGCO		
KEY PARTNERS	**KEY ACTIVITIES**	**VALUE PROPOSITIONS**	**CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS**	**CUSTOMER SEGMENTS**
Food Suppliers Food Distributors Food Retailers Supermarkets Asian shops	Service Development Product Development Employment-local community Update website Cooking and Baking with fresh ingredients Update social media page Food Delivery App Digital Payments	Food services Buffet Lunch Ala Carte Catering Accessible location Accessible use of parking Accessible use of WC Cash and Digital Payment system Food Authenticity Different food combinations Comfortable Tables and Chairs Consistent quality menu item	Build good relationships between customers and staff Build Brand Suggestions are welcomed Complaint system will be efficient and effective Surveys will be conduct for feedbacks about staff performance and quality of foods. Customer friendly Customer Loyalty cards Discount fees for children and seniors	Families Couples Business Diners Employees Children Students Young Adults Adults Elderly Finnish/Locals Immigrants Tourists
	KEY RESOURCES		**CHANNELS**	
	Banks Financial Resouces for renovation and maintenance Chefs Restaurant staff Finnvera Financing Firms		Website Social Networks & Social Media Word-of-mouth Advertising Community networks Wolt & Foodora for food delivery RESQ platform	
COST STRUCTURE			**REVENUE STREAMS**	
Food ingredients Staff Salaries Kitchen Equipments and supplies Power/Electricity Consumption Internet/Wi-fi Tables and Chairs Renovation for the Building Other Furniture Accountant and Bookkeeper Taxes Building costs and rental			Buffet Price Ala carte price Catering price Function and events price Customer Loyalty cards Discount fees for children and Seniors Product Sales Selling foods and beverages Take-away foods	

Figure 31. Business model canvas

8. **Swot analysis**

The analysis was conducted after the research phase of this project. This research project started on December 15, 2019 and due to limited time frame and the continuation of the restrictions imposed by the government due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher analyses by using swot analysis.

Swot analysis involves the collection and portrayal of information about internal and external factors which have, or may have, an impact on business. SWOT is a framework that allows managers to synthesize insights obtained from an internal analysis of the company's strengths and weaknesses with those from an analysis of external opportunities and threats. (Jurevicius, 2013.)

Swot analysis is used to identify through its four analysis categories; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that the current service may have from the target group perspective. It is simple to do and practical to use for business or personal situational analysis. It is clear to understand, focuses on the key internal and external factors affecting the company, helps to identify future goals; and initiate further analysis.
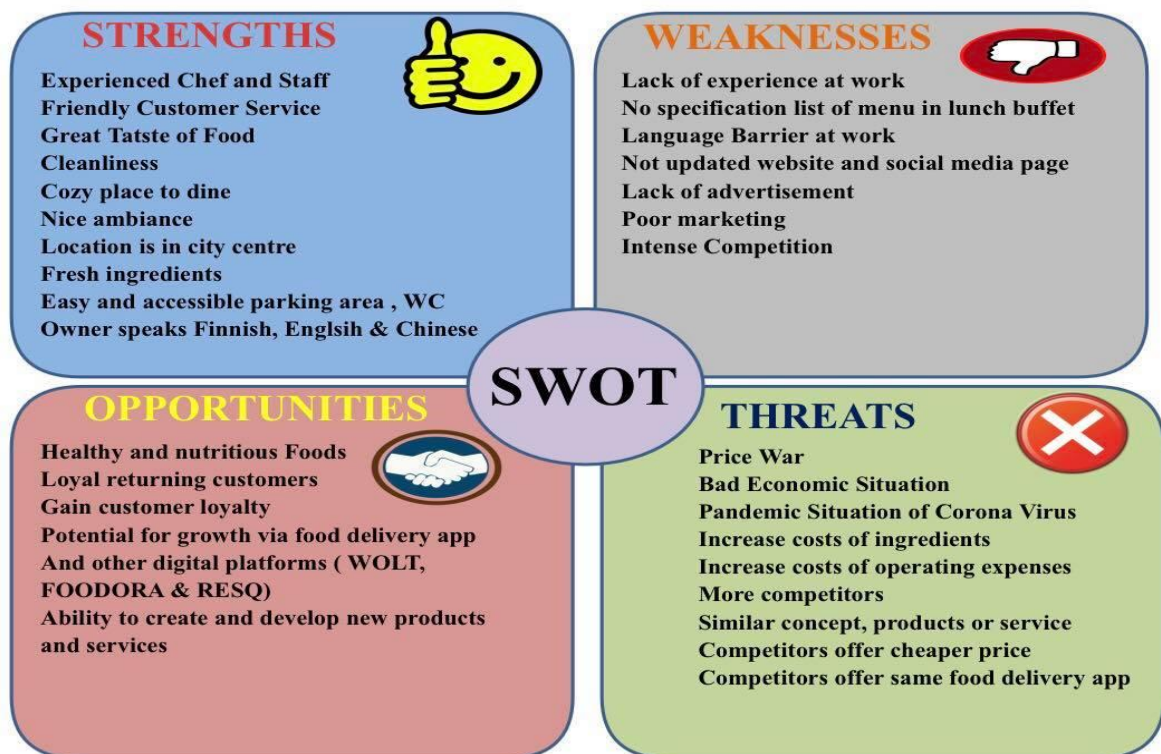
STRENGTHS

Experienced Chef and Staff
Friendly Customer Service
Great Tatste of Food
Cleanliness
Cozy place to dine
Nice ambiance
Location is in city centre
Fresh ingredients
Easy and accessible parking area , WC
Owner speaks Finnish, Englsih & Chinese

WEAKNESSES

Lack of experience at work
No specification list of menu in lunch buffet
Language Barrier at work
Not updated website and social media page
Lack of advertisement
Poor marketing
Intense Competition

SWOT

OPPORTUNITIES

Healthy and nutritious Foods
Loyal returning customers
Gain customer loyalty
Potential for growth via food delivery app
And other digital platforms (WOLT,
FOODORA & RESQ)
Ability to create and develop new products
and services

THREATS

Price War
Bad Economic Situation
Pandemic Situation of Corona Virus
Increase costs of ingredients
Increase costs of operating expenses
More competitors
Similar concept, products or service
Competitors offer cheaper price
Competitors offer same food delivery app

Figure 32. SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis shown above in Figure 32 was created based on the data gathered from the results of the service design methods and tools used in the research project for example, marketing mix model, benchmarking, survey questionnaires, telephone and email interviews. The strength area shows that the restaurant are doing well as observed from the benchmarking and commended by the interviews. While the weaknesses area shows to add more improvements and add value to customers' experience and satisfaction Opportunities will give a positive impact to gain more customers and will open a new creation or development for products and services. Threats are the negative things that may affect the restaurant that we are currently facing the pandemic health problem and would bring a bad effect to the economy. The owner must give attention to find solutions on facing all this threats in the business.

In this time of Covid-19 pandemic customers are not allowed to dine in the restaurant, most of them order food via online and they also process the payment online. The easy solution to implement and helpful to the commissioner is to provide more food delivery mobile applications and other digital platforms such as for payment. This is neither costly and it does not take time to have these digital platforms for food delivery and payment systems. Due to the restrictions imposed by the state to food business sectors,, the ability to create and develop new products and services take time because of the restrictions, they face many challenges like the short hours to operate the business and the less number of employees to work in the restaurant.

9. Results of the thesis project

This chapter presents the findings of the thesis and the recommendations for the commissioner. Based on the data gathered and collected insights from the service design methods and tools applied for example benchmarking, improved service blueprint and marketing mix tool.

9.1 Areas of Improvements for Tom Yum Thai restaurant

Below in Table 2. These are the suggested improvements from the results from the benchmarking. There are five main areas to consider for improvements, and the following areas are food, website, marketing tools, service, and payment process.

Table 2. Areas of improvement as highlight from benchmarking

FOOD	1. Add more choices for (hot foods, sushi and salads) 2. Add more varieties and selection of foods (hot foods, sushi and salads) 3. Put names to all foods or menu to be serve during the buffet lunch 4. Always serve hot soup during buffet 5. Add more fresh salads and fresh fruits 6. Have a deliciousfreshly baked bread, cookies or cakes 7. Add one or two authentic dishes 8. Make a fusion asian and finnish dish 9. Enhance the food quality, food presentation, food palatability, food flavor and attraction.
WEBSITE	1. Make the webiste more attractive by putting more pictures and video clips about the menu 2. Have a reminder for the new restaurant system in dealing with corona virus pandemic (COVID-19) 3. Utilize the website for ordering provided with a chat button 4. Provide all the menu lists for buffet lunch every day and ala carte with pictures and lists of ingredients 5. Add all the social media links in the website 6. Languange buttons for finnish, swedish and english 7. Add feedback or send message button for the customers 8. Always update the website and inform customers if there is changes.
MARKETING TOOLS	1. Add more social media channels or networks aside from Facebook, have Instagram, and yout tube accounts. 2. Add delivery apps for example wolt and foodora. 3. Add RESQ app this would help for the buffet lunch foods that are left. 4. All social media accounts must be updated especially providing the menu list for buffet lunch everyday.
SERVICE	1. Staff should be friendly, polite and always smile. 2. Waiter or waitress must serve water on the table. 3. Refilling of foods and drinks must be fast. 4. Staff able to speak the three languanges (Finnish, Swedish and English)
PAYMENT PROCESS	1. Add more digital payments and mobile payments like Easybreak, Smartum, Epassi, Edenred and mobile pay

9.2   Marketing mix model for Tom Yum Thai restaurant

The development of marketing strategies is essential in doing service design. The company must use and evaluate the business activities from time to time. Increase sales and revenues, grow brand marketing, increase market share, create, develop, or launch a new product or service, improve the return on investment, attract new customers, grow customer loyalty, and enter new markets. Below Table 3, is the marketing mix model the researcher made for the Tom Yum Thai Restaurant and it is a useful tool for the management to create a marketing plan and develop new ideas for their products and services to implement the 7 Ps on making decision making strategy.

Table 3. Tom Yum Thai marketing mix model

PRODUCT	PROCESS	PLACE	PRICE	PROMOTION	PHYSICAL EVIDENCE	PEOPLE
Develop or create a product or service	Applying suitable service design methods and tools	Rent or Own	It should be affordable to all target market	Advertisement	Creative	Right People
Food presentation		Area Population		Word-of-mouth	Attractive	Skilled and Knowledgeable staff
Quality of Food and service	Applying research marketing tools	Competition in the market	Offer special prices	Sale promotion	Decorations	
Ingredients make taste		Near in shopping centers		Online marketing	Dining room	Well-trained staff
Chef should maintain the same taste using same ingredients	Restaurant opening hours			Digital Marketing	Table design	Friendly staff
	Food serving time	Customers access		Branding	Food and salad bar design	Smiling staff
		Parking Space		Social Media Channels/networks		
Different type and variety of serve food menu	Time management	Demographics			Menu cards	Polite and respectful staff
	Overall operations and informatons	Accessibility		Press/Media	Utensils designs	
Food Flavor and attraction				TV, radio, magazines, newspapers	Staff Uniforms	Well-groomed staff
Food Palatability	Food system on delivering food and giving service	Food Traffic			Ambiance	
					Interior design	
	Process on payment				Light Quality	
	Process on preparing and cooking food				Noise level	
	Process on buying the ingredients				Space	
					Smell	

See chapter 10. Of the recommendation table where the result of the Marketing Mix model the 7Ps gathered and analyzed as a recommendation for development.

9.3   Improved service blueprint of Tom Yum Thai restaurant
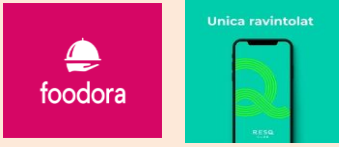
Tom Yum Thai Service Blueprint after design process

	BEFORE THE SERVICE		DURING THE SERVICE					AFTER THE SERVICE	
PHYSICAL EVIEDENCE	Searches the website and social media pages of the restaurant	Parking area	Enter the restaurant	Ambiance	Table and chairs	Payment Process	Food areas	Leave the restaurant	Improvements
CUSTOMER ACTIONS	Customer uses the phone to check the restaurant website and check the menu	Customer easily find a parking space near in the restaurant.	Customer goes inside the restaurant and looks around.	Customer looks for place that is near to the music and lights.	Customer decides where to sit and goes to the table and sits down.	Customer goes to the cashier and pay.	Customer decides the food she will eat.	Customer visits the fb page to give feedback before leaving the	Follow the restaurant social media networks like facebook & instagram
FRONT-OF-STAGE			The staff greeted and smiled to the customer.		The waiter cleaned the table and put napkin, fork and food	The cashier accepted the payment and gave receipt.	The cook refill foods.	The staff say thank you and come again.	Blog stories in Facebook & Instagram
BACK-OF-STAGE	The restaurant owner update the website and social media pages.			The staff plays mellow music and adjusted the lighting.	The cook prepared foods and set-up the buffet tables and	The cashier only accept cash and atm cards payment.	The waiter cleaned the table and chair after the customer ate.	Responds to feedbacks, comments and previews.	Provide a CSAT score to give to customers
SUPPORT PROCESS	Always update the website and social media pages. Have a menu lists every day in lunch buffet in social media sites and website.				Have a well-organize arrangement for the food tables/bar and utensils.	Provide more payment system.	Update the menu in the lunch buffet. Provide more selection of foods.	Encourage staff to have customer interaction and ask for feedback from the customers.	Build more networks & digital channels for marketing and ads
PROBLEMS/ CHALLENGES	Website Covid-19 advisories in health & safety		Wear mask, provide hand sanitizer and hand washing area		Social distancing of table and chairs	Provide cashless payment system			

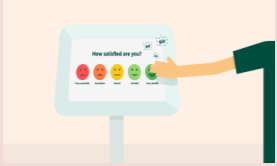**Figure 33. Service blueprint for lunch buffet after design process**

In this project above in Figure 33, the researcher suggested an improved service blueprint after design process because during this time of pandemic there are many restrictions that the government imposed due to the limited number of customers to dine in restaurant and many health safety protocols to follow like wearing a masks, washing hands or putting hand sanitizer and social distancing. Those are the following challenges and problems arose in these times of Covid-19 pandemic situation. The researcher also suggested possible recommendations on improvements after the service have been done with the customer's journey experience and the actions taken from employees. These are the following suggestions of improvements; follow the restaurant social media networks like Facebook and Instagram, blog stories in Facebook and Instagram, provide a CSAT or customer satisfaction score to give to customers, build more networks and digital channels for marketing and ads, and provide a cashless payment system.

10.   Development recommendations

Based on this thesis project these are the main areas to consider for the suggested improvement for Tom Yum Thai Restaurant.

These are the following suggested improvements for the Tom Yum Thai restaurant website to develop and maintain accessible and user-friendly landing pages; this would help visitors navigate the content they want to access. The food menu must be updated, especially the list menu in buffet lunch. Language buttons for the three languages (Finnish, Swedish, and English) should have on the website. The website colors used should contrast well, and the text is readable. Adding more attractive pictures and videos of the food menu will attract more customers to visit the website. Those customers who will ask queries and give comments to the restaurant service, adding the contact us form, feedback form, a chatbox, and the restaurant website should link to all social media platforms to provide the best customer service. The restaurant is only using Facebook for the social media channel, and the researcher suggested having more social media pages and adding more mobile applications. It is also essential to add more attractive pictures and videos of the food menu in all social media channels for boosting and marketing the restaurant for those customers who spend time more on their smartphones. Food product improvements must add new flavors of sushi and more food choices in salads and hot foods. For the Finnish, Swedish, and English speakers customers, the menu is written in the three languages. For food services improvement, a change in the menu now and then, fast and good timing to refill food and drinks in the buffet, and updating the menu list on the website and social media channels. Staff can speak Finnish, Swedish, and English to have effective communication. Good detail and structured restaurant website give easy access to navigate, read, and understand clearly. The soup and bread bar, salad bar, sushi bar, hot food bar, desserts table, drinks, and desserts bar are well arranged, and customers have more space to move around in the restaurant. Kitchen and buffet utensils should be organized appropriately in the restaurant because it is easy for them to see the things they need for work. These are the following suggested improvements that provide contactless and cashless service for the customers during the pandemic. The restaurant can add more food delivery applications and add more digital or mobile payments. Lastly, customer experience and customer satisfaction improvement process have a follow-up survey tool on the website or in the restaurant.

MAIN AREAS	DEVELOPMENT SUGGESTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS
WEBSITE	Accessibilty and user friendly
	Languange buttons for three languanges (Finnish, Swedish and English)
	The content must always be updated especially the lunch buffet menu
	The website colors used should contrast well and the text are readable
	Add more attractive pictures and videos of food menu
	Add contact us form and add feedback form
	Add chatbox
	Add all the social media links
	Covid-19 Advisories in the website
SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS	Add more social media platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Youtube and Twitter
	Add more mobile applications for chats and calls such as Viber, WhatsApp, and Skype
	Add more attractive pictures and videos of food menu
	Always update the lunch buffet menu in all social media platfroms
FOOD TomYum Thai Salad, Sushi & Hot Food Bar	Add more food choices (salads, sushi and hot foods).
	Try to change menu in lunch buffet every now and then
	Fast and good timing to refill food and drinks.
	Update new menu
	Improving and adding new flavors of sushi which is the trend now.
	Tom Yum Thai Sushi
LANGUANGE FI SE EN	Websitethree Languange buttons (Finnish, Swedish & English)
	All menu for lunch buffet written with Finnish, Swedish & English
	Staff can speak Finnish, Swedish and English.
ORGANIZATION	Website should be well detail and organize structure that customers can easily navigate, read and understand clearly.
	Soup and Bread Bar, Salad bar, Sushi bar , Hot Food bar, Drinks and Desserts Bar should be well organize and customers have more space to move in one place to other.
	Kitchen Utensils and Buffet utensils should be properly organized.

MAIN AREAS	DEVELOPMENT SUGGESTIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS
FOOD DELIVERY MOBILE APPLICATION	Add more food delivery mobile application such as Foodora & ResQ
PAYMENT PROCESS	Add cashless or mobile payment system such as mobile pay, wi-fi scanner, easybreak, smartum, Epassi, Edenred and other QR code scan mobile payment
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IMPROVEMENT PROCESS	Follow-Up Customer Satisfaction with CSAT survey tool in website or in restaurant. Capture more customer feedback and reviews. Deliver a better customer experience. Have a friendly interactions

Figure 34. The recommendations of development

The commissioner gave feedback on the recommendations of development and stated that everything is well written. From the commissioner's point of view, all suggested improvements are to implement, but one problem is the language because the chef speaks Chinese, and it is good to hire a kitchen worker who speaks Chinese to communicate with the chef. But it is more costly to hire more staff than it will make much more expensive for a small restaurant. Otherwise, it is possible to us to implement for all other areas little by little. Presenting the recommendation development to the commissioner is essential to plan, discuss, analyze, and implement the service concept by analyzing which new service is easy, difficult, costly or expensive, helpful or not, to implement. It is also vital to discuss that the design thinking process is iterative. It does not matter if the implementation will be a failure or a success. The important is to learn from the mistakes and try another service process.

11.   Conclusion

This study provides a good outcome on service design approach to Tom Yum Thai Restaurant that they achieved the main objectives on understanding the operational service of the restaurant, improving customer satisfaction and creating a new service design in the restaurant. The theoretical framework gives ideas and a deeper understanding of service design and design thinking to the commissioner. The idea of service design is to improve the level of service within the restaurant and to meet customers' expectations. The customers are placed in the center and their needs, wants, desires, goals and expectations should always be considered when creating or improving a service in a holistic service experience. Developing an understanding and empathy to the customers are important.

In this project, Tom Yum Thai restaurant wanted to improve the customer experience and satisfaction of their customers on dining buffet lunch. The commissioner also wanted to improve the products and services to all target customers. In collecting data the research methods were used such as interviews, survey questionnaires and benchmarking.

The double diamond process model was used as a design tool and the researcher conducted the following service design methods and tools such as stakeholder map, personas, customer journey map, business model canvas, service blueprint, and swot analysis, the restaurant will have a best solution to improve their products and services. The tools used in the project are common but there are many service design methods and tools can be used when going through the service design process. These are depending on the project and its nature, and therefore all are not applicable for all projects. It is not necessary to use all the tools for service designers but it is vital to know how to apply the correct tools needed for the project.

The thesis project used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The interviews, survey, and benchmarking determined that Tom Yum Thai restaurant's customer satisfaction and service quality is outstanding. The service design methods and tools gave insights and deepened understanding of the commissioner of the customers' pain points and gave ideas towards suggested improvements and solutions. The research questions were answered, concerning the key factors in the restaurant, how to improve the quality of services, products, customer satisfaction, and how could service design benefit marketing in the restaurant by the findings gathered based on the results from the service design methods and tools applied from the areas on improvements from benchmarking, improved service blueprint and marketing mix model.

During this time of Covid-19 pandemic, it is not easy to conduct research in food sectors industries because restaurants are really affected due to the imposed restrictions of the state but since there are many ways now to continue this project through the use of technology, smartphones and the internet. The researcher was able to achieve the goals to understand the operational services of Tom Yum Thai restaurant and provide marketing strategies, developmental recommendations and suggested improvements to the commissioner on this project. Lastly, the most important thing is to learn the objectives of the service design in conducting this project in a human-centered approach to meet and understand the customer's needs, wants, desires, expectations, and satisfaction.

12.   Future research

This project finished within a limited time, and there are still many areas to be discussed further. All the subjects are relevant to service design and design thinking in operating a restaurant service in times of Covid-19 pandemic. During this time, customers have had a great time thinking of alternatives to eat in restaurants or develop new skills in cooking and saving money. Buffet-style restaurants or restaurants offering buffet food services are the most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic restriction. The researcher can also use the four iterative steps of exploration, creation, reflection, and implementation as a fundamental approach to structure, such as complex design processes or using various other frameworks to more than four steps and designing in detail and designing holistically. Then as we face challenges and obstacles in Covid-19, we cannot do all the methods and tools in service design. Then, we make decisions according to our time, budget, resources, and stakeholders' views. Restaurant owners may wish to think about what kind will come or dine into their establishments as the state will begin to lift the restrictions.

We have a new system in dining buffet lunch. Changes of seat and table arrangements of two meters distance away, staff and servers wearing protective clothing such as face shield and face mask may have a severe impact on customers' perception of the dining experience and lead to changes to customers' behavior.

Further research suggested that future researchers can expand this study as a form of ethnographic studies with the actual participation and behavior being used to understand consumer behavior after the Covid-19 Pandemic better. Further, exploring the synthesis of

service design and design thinking by using innovative and creative service design methods may contribute to the future of service design.

13. Discussion

In conducting this research, I started writing the thesis draft on December 15, 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic. I went to the University Library in Vaasa to borrow books during my free time and day off from work. But unfortunately, there is a sudden change when the coronavirus spread globally and the government imposed restrictions for lockdown and closing of universities, libraries, restaurants and other establishments. These were the times it was difficult for me that the project would finish on time. I was also saddened by this time because I was laid off from work and got pregnant during the time of Covid-19 pandemic. I am attending the class online, doing projects online and mostly staying at home. This situation was frustrating because I had limited time to do the research. It is difficult to do some research methods when the restaurant was closed and I could not conduct a face to face interview. It is really frustrating and exhausting at this time. The Covid-19 taught me to learn some alternatives to continue conducting my research, and I selected research methods that can do via mobile phones and email. I also selected some service design methods and tools that are suitable to use in order to get the right results, gather all relevant information, data and findings to be able to achieve the objectives in the research project. I had several setbacks due to personal circumstances. During these difficult times I was not able to continue writing my thesis because I was very worried and stressed thinking of my baby. When everything went well I started to continue writing the thesis and stay optimistic that I will finish the thesis. My student journey was not easy before the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak; I woke up early to catch the first trip bus going to Turku at three o'clock in the morning because I lived in Vaasa. When the government imposed restrictions because of Covid-19 pandemic, I attended class online and did not go to university because of the ongoing restrictions.

During this research, the key learning points were service design and design thinking process. I learn many things in conducting a service design research study at Tom Yum Thai restaurant. I was able to define the problem and able to identify the main objectives. I learn a different service design approach model, but I use a double diamond model in my project. I choose the suitable tools during the Covid-19 pandemic without physical contact due to the government's restrictions on March 14, 2020, until July 20, 2020, and on March

3, 2021, to April 18, 2021. The research project is well executed according to the objectives and got all the necessary information from the commissioner, staff, and customers. By learning and using a service design model or process, will serve as a guide or steps to be done as a user-centered, co-creative, sequencing, evidencing, and holistic approach. In this journey, the researcher was able to learn and apply empathy.

I was very happy that I enrolled in this programme without knowledge of what service design is. I do not have any single idea about service design. But during my studies I gained knowledge and learned many things that I can apply in the work and future business. I am also happy with the outcome of this project. I was able to reach a deep understanding of the customers in Tom Yum Thai restaurant and to come up with improvement suggestions and recommendations that are easy for the restaurant to execute and implement.

Lastly, I would like to express deepest gratitude to the commissioner, for the support in conducting research to her restaurant. A special thanks to all my professors and my supervisor, for the guidance, encouragement, constructive comments, suggestions and support during the completion of the thesis.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions for the commissioner

1. What are the key factors to have a successful restaurant business?

2. What are the marketing tools you use to promote your business?

3. What changes or improvements you want in your business in order to achieve customer satisfaction?

Appendix 2. Phone interview questions for the customers

1. Is the restaurant website is easy to access and are you able to check the menu lists every day?

2. Can you find a parking area near in the restaurant?

3. What can you say about your customer journey experience in dining during lunch buffet and considering the overall products and services (the staff, ambiance, the foods and food areas, and payment system? Can you tell us about your feedbacks, suggestions and comments.

Appendix 3. Interview questions for the staff

1. How can you improve the quality of services and products in the restaurant to achieve customer satisfaction?

2. How does Covid-19 pandemic affect your working situation in the restaurant?

3. What are the changes you would like to suggest in the restaurant to overcome this Covid-19 Pandemic?

Appendix 4. Survey questions for the customers and results
Customers' Experiences towards Tom Yum Thai Restaurant Survey Questions

Customers' Experiences towards TomYum Thai Restaurant

Hello! My name is Imee Therese Bisnar-Ingco, a MBA student major in Leadership and Service Design in the collaboration of two universities at Novia University Applied Sciences and Turku University Applied Sciences. At this moment, I am writing my master thesis with the topic of Service Design Approach at TomYum Thai Restaurant. This survey is to find out customers' experiences in the restaurant. I am very thankful if you spent 3-5 minutes to fill in the survey. The survey information is extremely important for my thesis writing. Finally, thank you for your support.
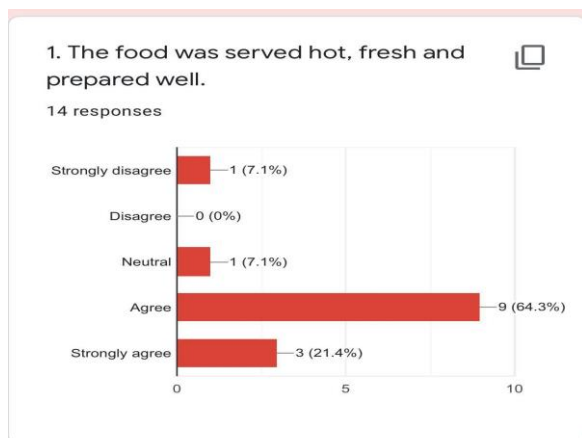

1. The food was served hot, fresh and prepared well.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
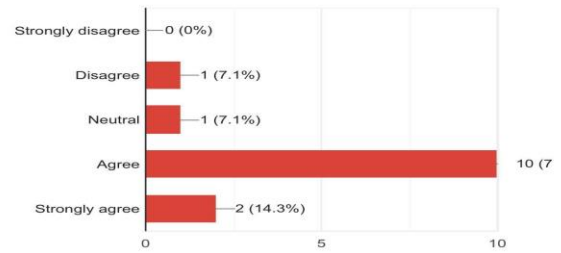- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

1. The food was served hot, fresh and prepared well.

14 responses

Strongly disagree	1 (7.1%)
Disagree	0 (0%)
Neutral	1 (7.1%)
Agree	9 (64.3%)
Strongly agree	3 (21.4%)

2. The menu had an excellent selection of items.

- [ ] Strongly disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly agree

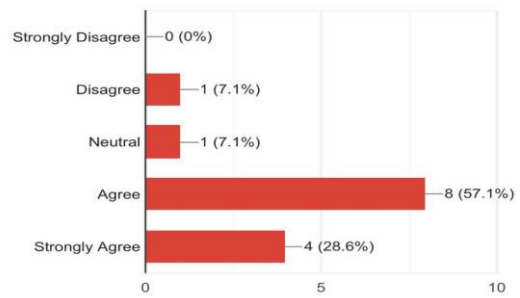### 2. The menu had an excellent selection of items.

14 responses

Strongly disagree — 0 (0%)
Disagree — 1 (7.1%)
Neutral — 1 (7.1%)
Agree — 10 (7
Strongly agree — 2 (14.3%)

3. The quality of food was

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

3. The quality of food was excellent.

14 responses

Strongly Disagree — 0 (0%)
Disagree — 1 (7.1%)
Neutral — 1 (7.1%)
Agree — 8 (57.1%)
Strongly Agree — 4 (28.6%)

4. The food was very tasty and

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

4. The food was very tasty and flavorful.

14 responses

Strongly Disagree — 0 (0%)
Disagree — 1 (7.1%)
Neutral — 1 (7.1%)
Agree — 8 (57.1%)
Strongly Agree — 4 (28.6%)
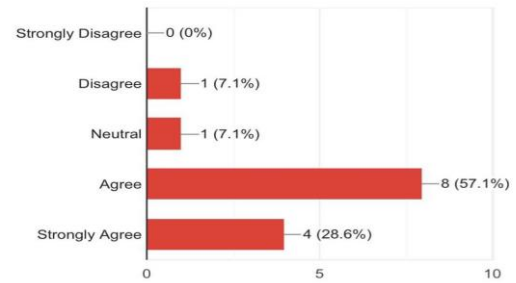
5. The food was a good value for the

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

5. The food was a good value for the price.

14 responses
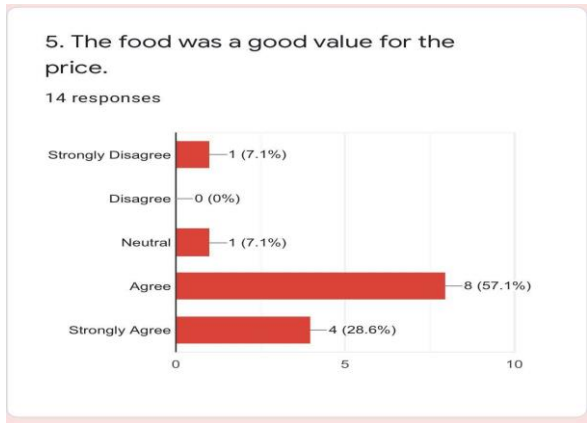
6. The server and other staff were friendly, attentive and knowledgeable.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

6. The server and other staff were friendly, attentive and knowledgeable.

14 responses
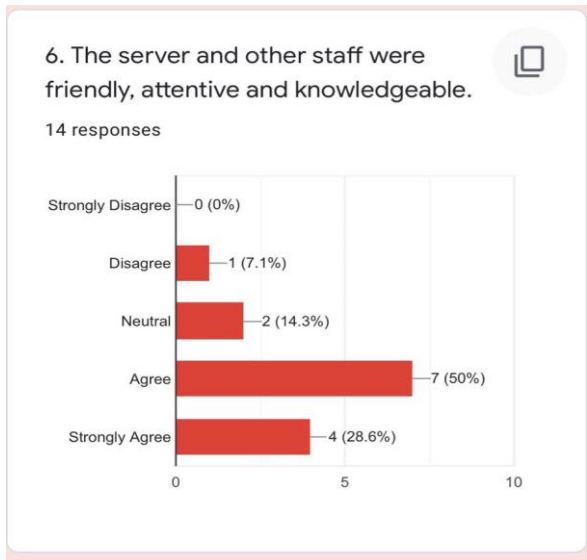
7. The cleanliness is

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

7. The cleanliness is impeccable.

14 responses
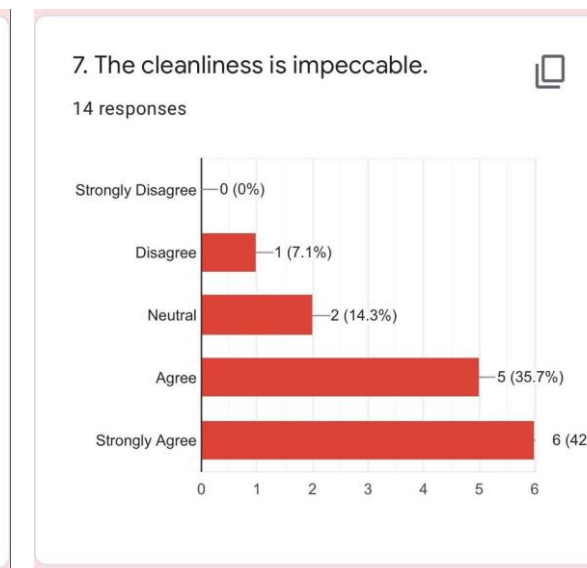
8. The music and lighting are enjoyable and adjusted to appropriate levels.

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

8. The music and lighting are enjoyable and adjusted to appropriate levels.
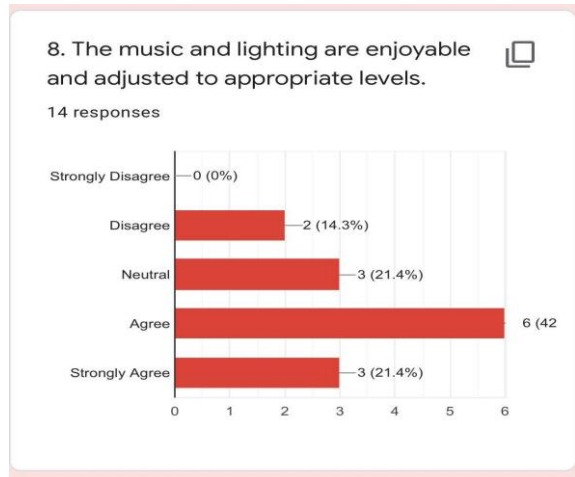
14 responses

Response	Count
Strongly Disagree	0 (0%)
Disagree	2 (14.3%)
Neutral	3 (21.4%)
Agree	6 (42
Strongly Agree	3 (21.4%)

9. Food is presented *

- [ ] Strongly Disagree
- [ ] Disagree
- [ ] Neutral
- [ ] Agree
- [ ] Strongly Agree

9. Food is presented beautifully.

14 responses

Response	Count
Strongly Disagree	0 (0%)
Disagree	1 (7.1%)
Neutral	1 (7.1%)
Agree	9 (64.3%)
Strongly Agree	4 (28.6%)
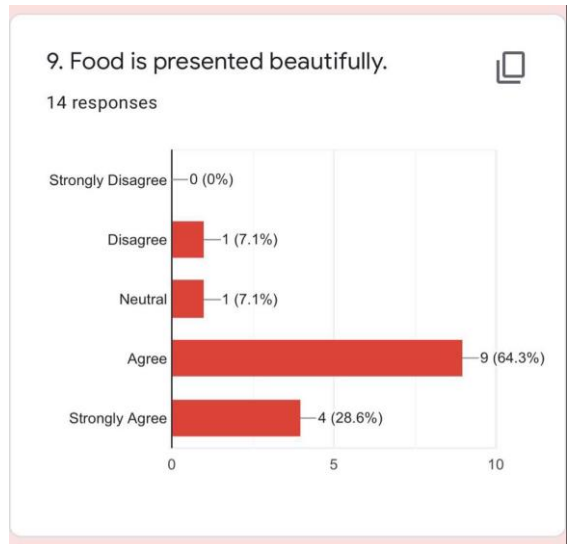
10. Portion size of food in á la

- [ ] Excellent
- [ ] Good
- [ ] Fair
- [ ] Poor

10. Portion size of food in á la carte:

13 responses

Response	Count
Excellent	5 (38.5%)
Good	8 (61.5%)
Fair	0 (0%)
Poor	0 (0%)
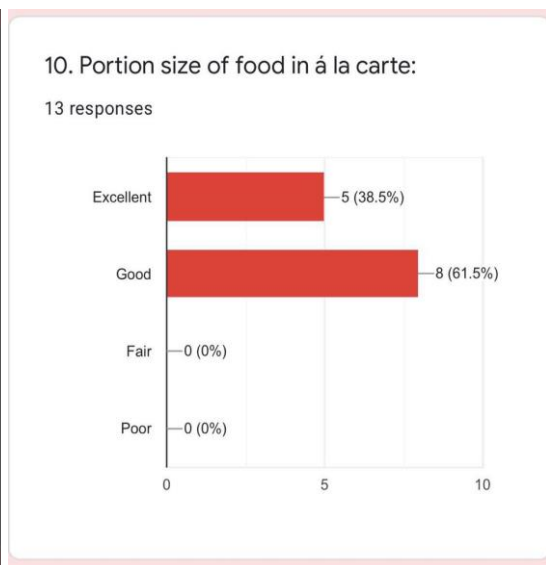
11. Ease of ordering in á la

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

11. Ease of ordering in á la carte:

13 responses

Excellent	4 (30.8%)
Good	8 (61.5%)
Fair	1 (7.7%)
Poor	0 (0%)
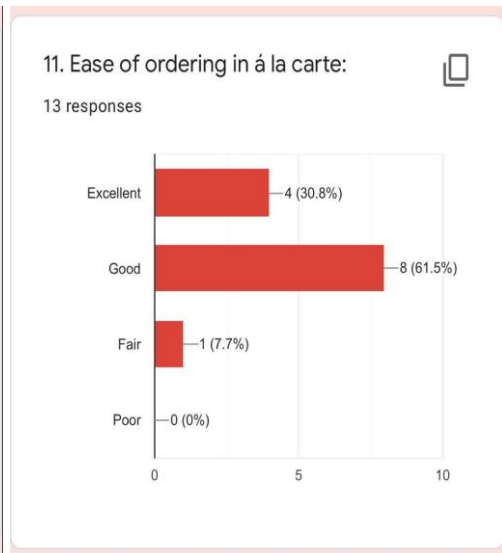
12. Food service speed in á la

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

12. Food service speed in á la carte:

13 responses

Excellent	4 (30.8%)
Good	9 (69.2%)
Fair	0 (0%)
Poor	0 (0%)
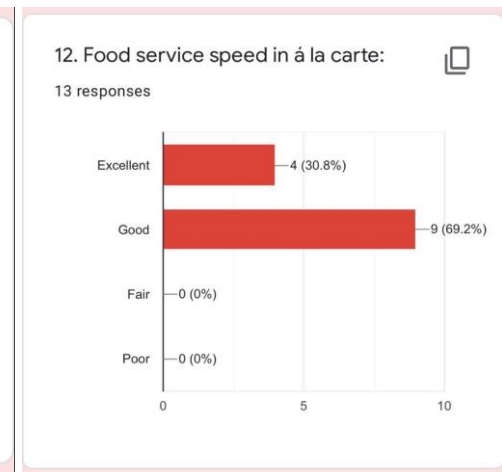
13. Food temperate in á la

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

13. Food temperate in á la carte:

13 responses

Excellent	5 (38.5%)
Good	8 (61.5%)
Fair	0 (0%)
Poor	0 (0%)
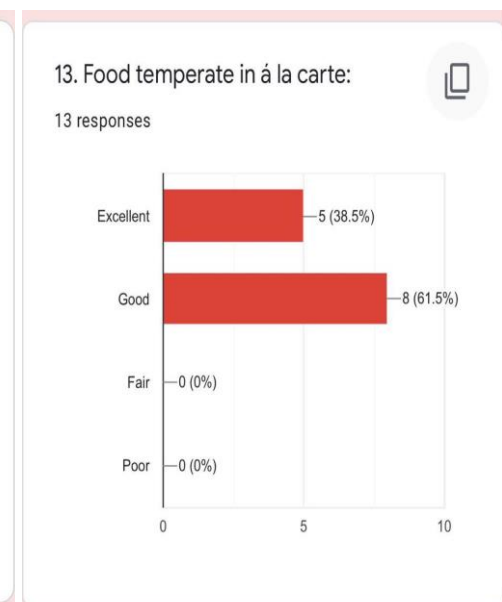
14. Taste of

☐ Excellent

☐ Good

☐ Fair

☐ Poor

14. Taste of Food:

13 responses

Excellent	6 (46
Good	6 (46
Fair	1 (7.7%)
Poor	0 (0%)
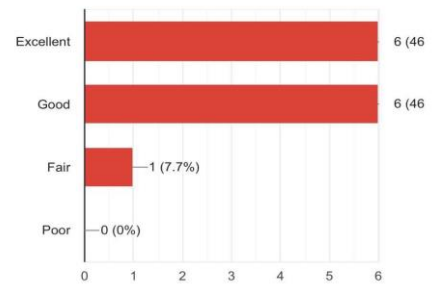
15. Quality of

☐ Excellent

☐ Good

☐ Fair

☐ Poor

15. Quality of Ingredients:

14 responses

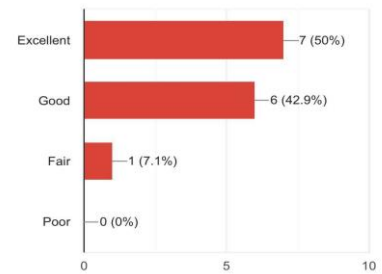|	
Excellent	4 (28.6%)
Good	10 (7
Fair	0 (0%)
Poor	0 (0%)
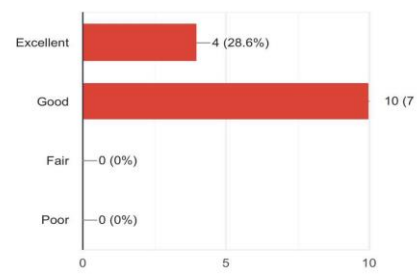
16. Restaurant and restrooms

☐ Excellent

☐ Good

☐ Fair

☐ Poor

16. Restaurant and restrooms cleanliness:

14 responses

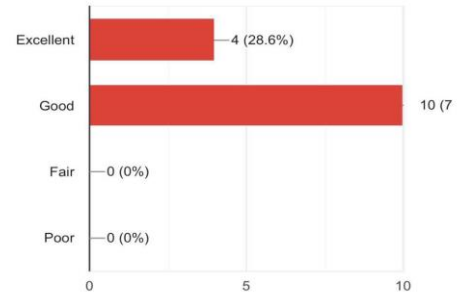|	
Excellent	7 (50%)
Good	6 (42.9%)
Fair	1 (7.1%)
Poor	0 (0%)

17. Overall

- [ ] Excellent
- [ ] Good
- [ ] Fair
- [ ] Poor

17. Overall Value:

14 responses

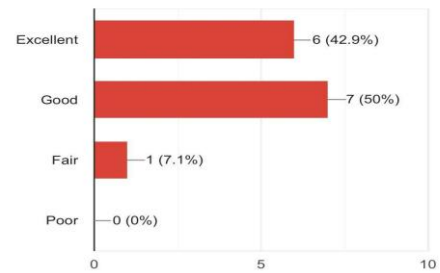|	
Excellent	4 (28.6%)
Good	10 (7
Fair	0 (0%)
Poor	0 (0%)

18. Overall Spacing, Ambiance, &

- [ ] Excellent
- [ ] Good
- [ ] Fair
- [ ] Poor

18. Overall Spacing, Ambiance, & Comfort:

14 responses

Excellent	6 (42.9%)
Good	7 (50%)
Fair	1 (7.1%)
Poor	0 (0%)

19. What did you like and dislike about the food and services?

Long answer text

19. What did you like and dislike about the food and services?

6 responses

Nothing

I like that the food taste good

Variety of foods could be good especially if I planned to eat most days of the week. Some servers are not approachable

Takes time to refill the food.
Great customer service.

About the services is very good and the food i like it very beause they serve fresh tasty.

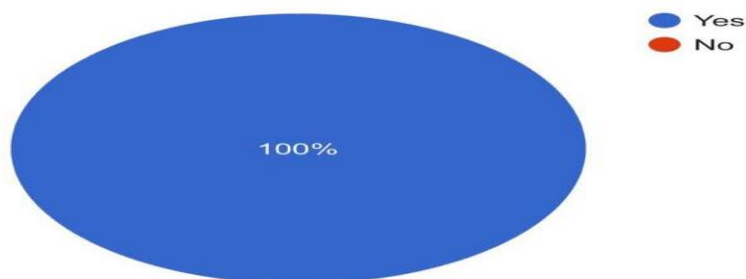I like the ambiance of the Restaurant. It's relaxing

20. Would you recommend the restaurant to a friend or relatives?

○ Yes

○ No

20. Would you recommend the restaurant to a friend or relatives?

14 responses

- Yes
- No

100%

:::

Please add any ideas or feedbacks for improvement you would like to share about your experience in dining at TomYum Thai restaurant.

Long answer text

Please add any ideas or feedbacks for improvement you would like to share about your experience in dining at TomYum Thai restaurant.

7 responses

Food are delicious and friendly staff also

Just keep going

To put a visible signage when there's an exclusive reservation so other customers won't get confused.

Add more food choices

Try to change menu every now and then in the buffet

Could improve the flow of service and good timing in refilling foods and drinks

Fast refill of the food.

Please add any ideas or feedbacks for improvement you would like to share about your experience in dining at TomYum Thai restaurant.

2 responses

It is worth it to eat in this restaurant.

Friendly faces from workers even how busy the restaurant life is.