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Degree Programme in International Business / International Trade

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Quality Measurements of Tourism Service for Restaurants

Bachelor's Thesis 2015

ABSTRACT

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43 pages + 3 pages of appendices

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Commissioned by

Kymenlaakson University of Applied Sciences

November 2015

Keywords

Service quality, SERVQUAL model, tourism, restaurant

In modern tourism activities, food has become a major tourism resource, the relationship between food and tourism is very close. Especially now, the prosperity of catering industry has met the development conditions of tourism industry to a great extent. The importance of catering industry to tourism cannot be ignored. The measurement of service quality is a vital procedure for the long-term operation of any restaurant.

The research objective is to check how well model SERVQUAL works for restaurants, although the model has been treated as an effective tool for assess service quality. It was designed to examine the service quality in a tourist restaurant in Kouvola.

The research method was action research. The main application of SERVQUAL model is accustomed to assessing the service quality by measuring gaps between customers' expectation and perception in the way of questionnaire. SPSS was used to process the data. A new version was presented to SERVQUAL model.

The survey result shows the expectations from customers are higher than perceptions, which indicates a gap level existing. It would help organizations to identify the strength and weakness of service quality in their business. The result also proved the SERVQUAL model is a good tool for measuring service quality, still there some limitations exist relating to scale and dimensions, which needs to be noticed.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, Finnish restaurants have altered in many ways. With increasing immigration, and tourists from all over the world, ethnic restaurants have appeared, and trendy restaurants have increased vastly in numbers, especially in big towns (Otava 2005). The topic about food has attracted plenty of people, its popularity also has been reflected in many aspects. Restaurant, as an important sector in tourism, it is known that a good restaurant can increase tourists' interest to enjoy the trip and also make them more satisfied in the whole trip.

From the data shows, food service accounted for over 20 percent of service revenue, and still growing with a rate of more than 3 percent annual. It seems the global economy is becoming a service oriented economy. Therefore, measuring the service quality in catering area has been treated as an essential part to service management (Chang and Tzeng 2011). All of the strategies taken by the company are mainly for getting more profit and creating a better image for themselves. Customer satisfaction and service quality can influence to all the companies, whatever in the tangible or intangible aspect, small or big area, catering or tourism yields. Most organizations have noticed they would be benefit a lot if they can implement service quality well. Also a series measurements have been taken like conducting in detail, accessing and managing service quality in a better way, in order to attracting more customers and satisfying them (Sanap and Nashik 2014).

Several researches have been done which mainly focus on the customer satisfaction since there was a customer service revolution about twenty years ago. The core question to the business researchers, consultants and other corporations is how to please customers. They worked together and talked about what kind of characteristics of firms are more popular among the customers. Meanwhile they also thought about to develop a proper instrument for knowing the customer satisfaction, from the customers' feedback, then taking measures for improving the whole service quality (CSSP 2007). Nowadays, the company has realized that except to providing the customers with discount, quality products and reasonable price, they also need to meet the customers' needs as well as making them satisfied for attracting them. Therefore, they started to change and remodel their strategies. The service organization and manufacturing area are giving more attention to the part of customer satisfaction, causing

from the research it shows both the customer loyalty and profitability are closely related to the customer satisfaction (Wolemonwu n.d.). The measurement of service quality has drawn a widely public attention. Service quality plays a critical role in determining customer satisfaction. According to this, this study will explain why the service quality and customer satisfaction play such an important role in marketing. Furthermore, the case of measuring the quality service will be discussed in detail.

1.1 Research problem

The research problem is that the restaurant owner knows service quality, but they have never measure it before, also no knowledge about the tool of measuring service quality.

As an important sector in tourism, the significance of catering area can never be ignored. Tourists would be willing to come back again and also encourage others to come here if they got a satisfied experience in restaurant. With trade activities growing, it is obvious that the restaurants' quality and value standards play an important role in business. Nowadays if the restaurant cannot provide their customers with good quality and value standards, it would be taken place by other competing restaurant, also the customers are not supposed to back again (Stevens, Knutson and Patton 1995). Service quality is one of important criteria factor for repurchase intention, the level of quality has become the core competitiveness between enterprises. In the modern intense competition, seeking rapidly and healthy development in the fierce competition, which are common questions that every enterprise needs to consider. Hence, it is necessary for the Mei Lok restaurant leaders to survey and discuss, getting know what customers really wants and what they are thinking about.

1.2 Research objective

The objective of research is to check how well model SERVQUAL works for restaurants. Moreover, the aim of this study is to improve the quality measurement of restaurants in Kymenlaakso region. It is well known that high quality catering services can attract customers, retain customers, also increasing other items. Quality of catering services not only directly relates to the restaurant's profitability, but also restaurant's reputation and image.

In 1985, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry put forward a model which named SERVQUAL. The SERVQUAL has the ability to evaluate the service quality and find the current service problem. Once it was proposed, a series of research about developing and promoting the technology were published, such as its advantages and disadvantages. In these years, the application of SERVQUAL technology become more and more widely. It was applied to the IT industry, service industry, education area and hospitality fields. The function of this technology is also gradually embodied (Buttle 1995).

The present study focuses on Chinese restaurant Mei Lok as an example. The Chinese restaurant Mei Lok is a typical one, with a good geographical location in centre and special food. After the data collection and data analysis, the corresponding countermeasures would be putting forward for improving the service quality, most important it can be checked whether the model SERVQUAL works well.

1.3 Research question

The research question is that “how to improve the quality of tourist restaurants?”

Sub question: “How to measure the quality of a tourist restaurant?”

Measuring the service quality has become an essential research topic, because it relates to the profitability, cost, customer satisfaction and loyalty. The elements of tangible and intangible consists of the dining experience. Because it can be seen and touched, the tangible elements are always easily to be improved. However, the part of intangible restaurant service are tough to be treated, also it requires more attention. It has been noticed by researchers that the restaurant who can deliver high quality service will get success in business, also it has ability to provide financial viability in long-term (Keiser 1988). Hence, producing high-quality products is essential for every company to survive, grow and success. It is necessary to know how to measure properly and provide the excellent service to customer as a manager.

There are many factors that can influence the customers’ judgment to the restaurant service, like food taste, the environment of dinning, and services from employees. Hence, how to measure the quality and manage the quality, then to improve the quality for satisfying the customers becomes a vital step. The research was supposed to

find the properly way to assess the service of quality, whether the restaurant performance satisfies the customers.

1.4 Research methodology

The research method is action research, including a questionnaire. The first step it required to get know more about the restaurant in Kouvola, such as type, menu, any special. For measuring the quality, a questionnaire survey was drafted in Chinese restaurant Mei Lok. Before doing the research, a brief review of the service quality, customer satisfaction, SERVQUAL model and the relationship with each other would be presented. The questionnaires would be distributed in the Mei Lok. There were several questions about the services of the Chinese restaurant Mei Lok, which were listed in the questionnaires. The questionnaire would be based on SERVQUAL model, according to the aspects of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles to set questions. Each level was divided into a number of questions, about the restaurant food, taste, service, price, and environment. After data collection from questionnaires, the data was analyzed with the help of SPSS. With the gap analysis, if the service gap shows a significant relationship with business performance, it proves it is a good tool to measure the service quality, the conclusion would be derived.

2 QUALITY MEASUREMENT IN TOURIST RESTAURANT SERVICE

2.1 Overview of the tourism

Stephen (1995) mentioned tourism is the set of activities by a person who comes to other place for traveling within in a year, the purpose of its trip is for an exercise of an activity, getting more than for remunerating from the new place. There are also many various descriptions about tourism, in order not to be messed about the definition of tourism, the UNWTO made a unity. They defined that tourism is the people who are going for relax, leisure, business also other purpose, the place usually will be a new environment to them for activities, the time of a trip should not be more than one year (Ugurlu 2010). The economy, natural environment, population of the destination, traffic and also the tourist themselves all of them were influenced apparently by the tourism. In ordering to demanding these impacts, there are wide and multiple of new goods produced, which acquired by the customers (UNWTO 2005). Tourism is not limited only to activities in the catering, or transportation, however, its management closely connected to the various areas.

With the expectations, the international tourism keeps growing. The growing tourism also stimulates the growth of the economic, helps to creating much job title, and gives a big support to the destination's GDP and the balance of payments. Especially in European destinations, it is encouraged to see many positive effectives, the tourism sector promotes the economic recovery to a great extent (UNWTO 2013). In EU, the tourism has become the third largest social economic activity, which also plays a vital role in economic growth and job employment. As the figure 1 shows below, from 1980 to 2012 the international tourist arrivals have increased a lot, which the number from 278 million turn to 1035 million. Despite by the influence of economic crisis, the number of international tourists remains in increasing. It has been predicted that from now to 2030, the tourists are supposed to grow by 3.3% a year on average. It indicated that the Europe remains to be one of the most popular tourist destinations to visitors (UNWTO 2014).

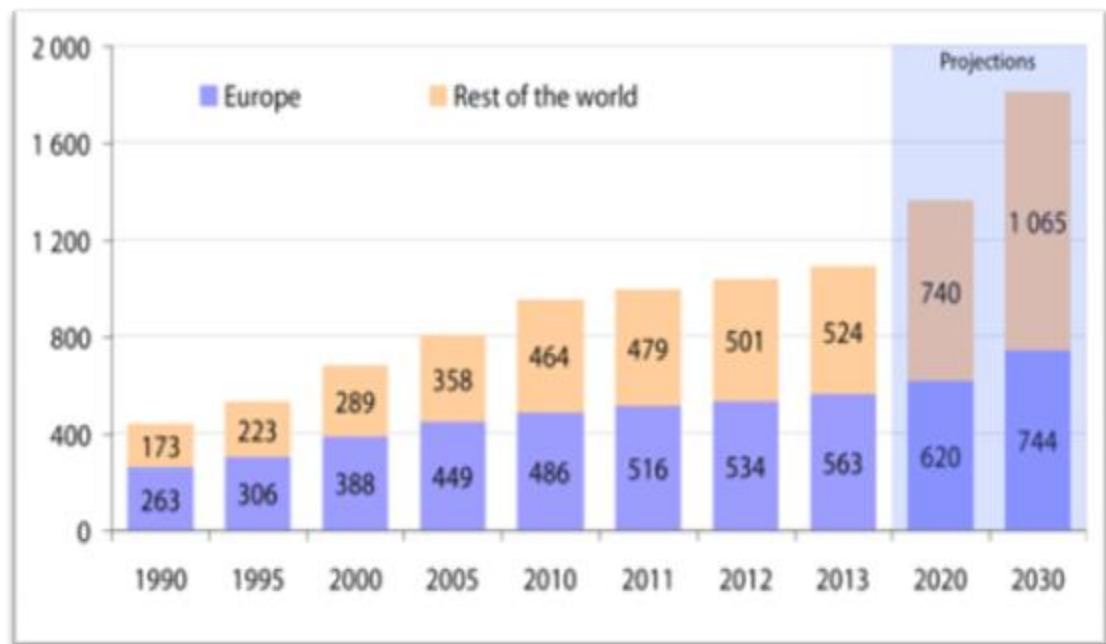


Figure 1 International tourist arrivals (UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2014)

2.2 Tourism in Finland-key facts and figures

2.2.1 Finnish Tourism year 2012-2013

From the table 1, it shows that the number of international tourists is growing in coming to Finland from 2011. The data shows that in 2012, Finland received 7.6 million international tourists. Comparing with 2011, there are 5 percent for growth, about 400,000 visitors. The function of these tourists cannot be ignored. It shows that the international tourists made a great contribution to Finland's economic, almost EUR 2.3 billion was bought to Finland by them, more than 3 percentage in the last year. As it shows, the biggest group of tourist is from Russia accounting for half of the total, about 3.578 million, it also raised about 10 percent than previous year. Estonia ranks in the second place, which increased about 7 percent, 758 million. The tourists from Estonia have exceeded the Sweden during 2011 to 2012. Meanwhile, the other foreign tourists like from Germany, Great Britain, Japan and France decreased respectively (Statistics Finland 2014).

Country of residence	Year					
	2008 (1000 pass.)	2009 (1000 pass.)	2010 (1000 pass.)	2011 (1000 pass.)	2012 (1000 pass.)	Change 2011- 2012, per cent (%)
All visitors	6 072	5 695	6 182	7 260	7 636	5
Russia	2 331	2 192	2 561	3 261	3 578	10
Estonia	522	583	561	708	758	7
Sweden	765	753	712	681	702	3
Germany	376	332	363	399	342	-14
Great Britain	316	267	263	278	273	-2
Norway	187	160	195	216	235	9
United States	114	104	89	121	174	44
Japan	105	142	109	150	143	-5
France	120	94	132	145	127	-12

Table 1 Foreign passengers visiting Finland in 2008-2012(Statistics Finland 2014).

2.2.2 Foreign overnights in Finland

According to the accommodation statistics, from January to June 2014, there are totally 739,000 nights spent in Finland from Russians which recorded by the accommodation establishments. The data shows the largest visitors group still from the Russians. Even though, comparing with the previous year the number of Russians tourists stays is declining, about decreased by 10.4 percent. The second biggest of foreign tourist stays from the Germany. The recorded number is nearly 236,000, from the last year it was 1.9 percent declined. With the 215,000 overnights stays in Finland, the Swedish visitors were in the third place. Comparing the previous data, the number of Swedish increased in this year, about 2.7 percent higher. The highest increasing for overnights tourists is from the United States, accounting for 12 percent almost, the data is about 95,000 totally according to recording. Then it is the Estonia, 5 percent around. All of these tourists led the promotion of related yields in Finland, accelerating the development of economic, as figure 2 shows in below (Statistics Finland 2014).

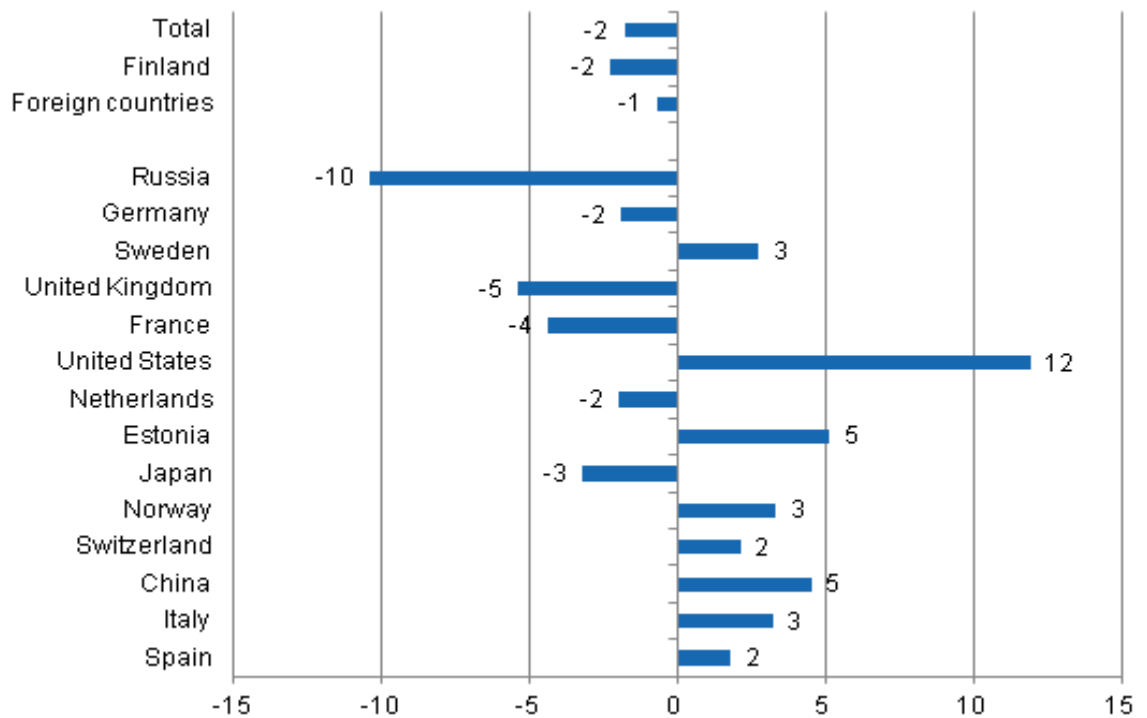


Figure 2 Change in overnight stays in January-June 2014/2013% (Statistic Finland, 2014).

2.3 Definition and Importance of customer satisfaction

Claes (2007, 66) believes that the customer satisfaction is an intangible asset. The value of the customer asset is determined by how satisfied customers are, the likelihood of doing future business with them, interest rates, and the profit margin.

From 1950 until now, the interest and importance for studying consumer satisfaction has become more and more universal, the consumer satisfaction has been put in a central position in service department. Causing the profits are usually brought by satisfying customers' wants and needs that is why the customer satisfaction is always put in a core place in marketing. People usually treat customer satisfaction as a vital output because it related to the whole process for consuming and purchasing. What is more, it also leads the customers' post purchase intention such as customers' attitude, the appraisal to the products and also the reliability of brand. About in the early 1970s, it starts to be as a legitimate field of inquiry (Kucukosmanoglu and Sensoy 2010).

It seems everyone is clearly about the customer satisfaction, but it is hard when comes to give a specific definition. This is a quote by Oliver. He offers his own formal definition (1997, 13) it is a good way to know the exactly fulfillment from customers by

getting the customers' satisfaction. It helps to judge that the quality of product or the feature of service, whether it performs a pleasurable level while delivering the service-related consumption. Gerson, Richard and Brenda (1993) defined it is the customers' expectations are being met or surpassed from the perception. The simplest example to show is like someone bought a product, it is supposed to work well. If it exactly does, that is satisfaction. In other words a customer is satisfied whenever his or her needs, real or perceived, are met or exceeded.

People usually do not often talk about economic profit and customer satisfaction in the same sentence, but still the relationship is too evident. Björn and Finn (2002) in their recently research found that a strongly dissatisfied customer, a terrorist, may cause equally strong negative effects. Claes shows (2007, 17) that in a competitive market, satisfied customers are more likely to come back for more, while dissatisfied customers are less likely to do so. When customers do not return, potential transactions go up in smoke, leading to excess inventories unused service capacity. Layoffs and unemployment follow, bringing about a plunge in discretionary income and consumer spending. It is exactly that company is influenced by the customer satisfaction. A happy and satisfied customer will acknowledge the good service from the company. They are also willing to pay more and come back again. What is more, they will make good advertisements to their friends and relatives, then it starts a good circulation. Customer satisfaction is largely made of the goods quality as well as the service. It reflects which company works well on the explicit and implied promises to their customers (Jay, et. al. 1998).

Satisfaction is a good way to know the responses from customers about the products' fulfillment. It helps to judge that the quality of product or the feature of service, whether perform a pleasurable level during the delivering the service-related fulfillment. As for marketers and business owners, they believe that customer satisfaction provides them more strength. They can profit a lot by making use of customer satisfaction, which can be used for managing and improving their business. A survey shows that with the 200 senior marketing managers, accounting for 71 percent responded that they approved that customer satisfaction is really helpful in managing and organizing their business. Here are some explanations why it is so important Beard (2014):

First, it decides whether the customers will purchase and back in a second time, which being called consumer purchase intentions and loyalty. Next, it is a key feature for differentiation. In such a competitive marketplace, customers as the main chasing goal for competition, it is obvious that the customer satisfaction is considered as the main factor for success. By getting know the customer satisfaction, you can hold a deep insight to the service of product which will help to find the problem and improve it. Finally, it reduces the costs, like advertisement fees, compensatory damages fees. While customers are in satisfaction, it means customers are happy and are willing to increase the positive words to the product. From the point of the business owner, they do not need to cost more for other unnecessary fees, which means a profit again.

2.4 Overview of service quality

Christian (2007, 122) support that quality is what customer perceive. It can not be determined by management alone, it has to be based on customer needs, wishes and expectations. Moreover, quality is not what is planned in objective measures, instead it is how customers subjectively perceive what is delivered. The definition about service by Valarie, Mary and Dwayne (2006, 4) is that service are deeds, process, and performances. Similarly, the core offerings of hospitals, hotels, banks, and utilities comprise primarily deeds and actions performed for customers.

Interest in service quality emerged in the late 1970s. Ever since, the topic has attracted substantial attention among researchers and practitioners. In service quality literature it is noted that the quality of a particular product or service is whatever the customer perceives it to be (Christian 2007, 73). The basis for the perception of service quality lies in the congruence of expectations and realizations of the quality of the service's substance (technical quality), and in the delivery process before, during and after the service (functional quality) (Jay, et al.1998).

From the general understanding, the quality of service should meet the customers basic demanding also satisfying them in a deep level as a good service. In the whole process, customers are always put in a dominate place. It means managers should put more attention to them, causing the service mainly decided by the customers. As long as the customers enter in the restaurant, the first impression from restaurant will be judged by them, the whole service from there. However, it does not mean the service manager always needs to follow the customers' requirements even though it is unrea-

sonable sometimes. As for providing better service to customers, the owners need to detect and know more about customers needs, whatever in verbalized or non-verbalized (Bo 1998).

Service quality is also emphasized by Kumar et al (2008) that it involves in the whole process, not only just for the product itself, but also to the service performing and delivering. Therefore, the role of employees and the managers, the way they deliver the product, which are essential to the final products and service. A successful firm usually performs well during the service of customers. While in the restaurant, the perception of the service quality comprised the customers' feeling of dining experience and the expected to the service in their mind.

2.5 Importance of service quality

When you begin to combine all the factors related to the cost of poor customer service and the cost of poor quality, you will realize how important it is to provide the best of both. The quality of customer service is the key differentiator between good, bad and indifferent companies. It can be checked in five key areas (Gerson, Richard and Brenda 1993):

- Price-Higher quality and better services allows you to charge more for your goods and services.
- Profitability-True quality, which is preventing errors by doing it right the first time. The result, especially when combined with higher prices, is increased profitability.
- Market share-higher quality means greater market share, people are willing to pay the price simply because they know they are getting quality and value for their money.
- Cost-Improved quality decreases production costs because you are only doing something once.
- Marketing and Advertising-First, you will be selling more, so your effective cost per sale will decrease. The second is that your word-of-mouth marketing and referral business will increase, thereby lowering your external advertising costs.

2.6 Relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction

The connection between quality of service and customer satisfaction is closely and is also treated as a vital one. Put in simply words, the simplest way to narrate their relationship is to consider how one affects another. It is evident that a high service quality makes a high customer satisfaction, while the bad one results in a negative result. What is more, the relationship usually close to our life, connects to everyone, both the manager and the customer. If the relationship performs well, it can derive the company into a good circle, meanwhile making the customers coming back again which increase the business in long-term (WiseGeek n.d.). As the front lines of the business, the customer satisfaction usually makes a great impact to the bottom line. The influence can be positively and negatively, which is depended on quality of customer service (Natalie n.d.).

It is true that service quality and customer satisfaction have some same features in common, but when comes to the definition area, the area between customers' satisfaction and service quality are totally different. The customer satisfaction is usually put in a wider circumscription, while the service quality mainly focuses on the service dimensions. According to the above view, the service quality is usually recognized as a part of customer satisfaction. Figure 3 graphically illustrates the relationships between the two concepts. The view supported by Valarie, Mary and Dwayne (2006, 106-107).

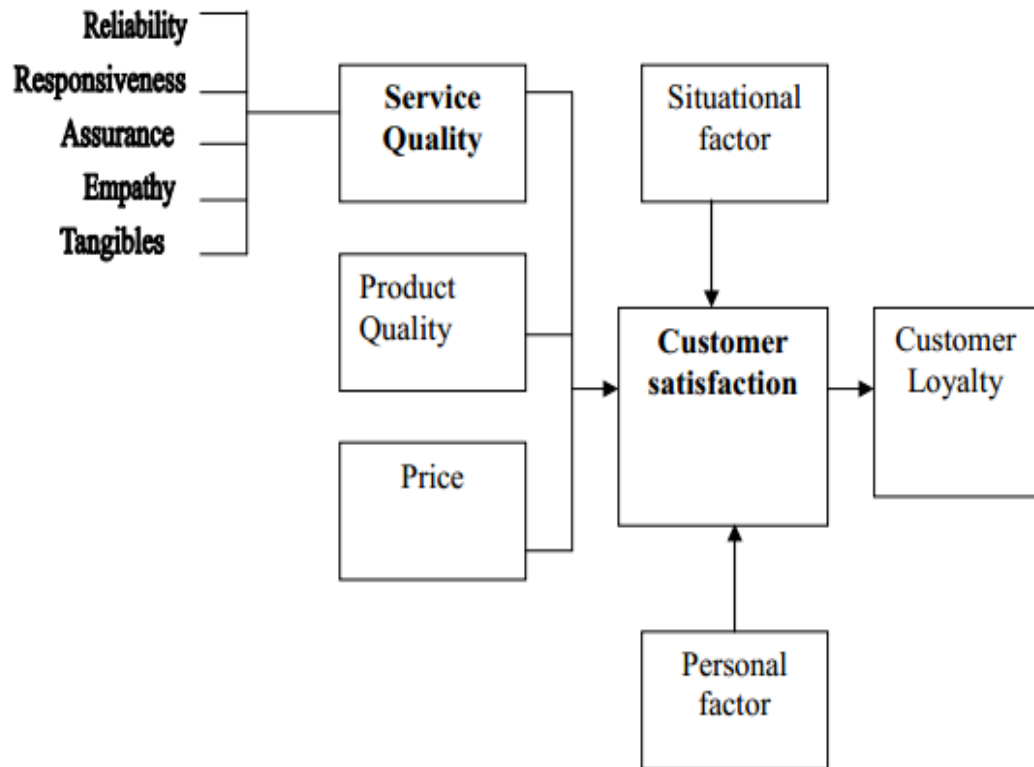


Figure 3 Customer perceptions of quality and customer satisfaction

2.7 SERVQUAL model

SERVQUAL model is used to evaluate the service quality in service area and also in other business yield with the feature of a multi-item scale. Originally developed from the GAP model, SERVQUAL took shape and was developed during the 80's by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry. The model is mainly focused on five dimensions of service quality, which has been mentioned in above (responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy and tangible). The adapted dimensions were also taken the customers aspect into consideration. It is an instrument for measuring how customers perceive the quality of service. This instrument is based on the five determinants above and on a comparison between customers' expectations of how the service should be performed and their experiences of how the service is rendered. It is supported by Christian (2007, 84). Simply put, the SERVQUAL scale aims to compare customers' expectations and their perceptions of actual performance and is used to measure a specific long-term attitude at a single point in time (Lam and Woo 1997).

The SERVQUAL methodology evaluates and helps to determine the following (Alexandria and Adrienne 2001): It provides managers a chance to access the customers'

real attitude about their service, whether it is performed well or not. The customers' perceptions represent the customers real feeling which also indicates the current service quality. While the expectations from customers shows there is even more space for improving service. Meanwhile, the importance of each dimension helps to identify which part should be put in the first place while for service enhancing. It also leads the providers into right directions for resource allocation and defining action-planning priorities. Most important, the measurements for improving targeted to the result of customers' expectations and perceptions, it can be more effective. The result starts from the different point which assists to make a prioritization.

2.8 SERVQUAL model of service quality dimension

In recent decades, there were many models that have been developed for measuring service quality. The most used and famous model named SERVQUAL was suggested by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1985. At first, they suggested ten dimensions for service quality but after some initial study in 1988, it was reduced to five dimensions as a service quality model. The SERVQUAL model was based on difference between perception and expectation of quality of service through five dimensions (Feiz, Baharun and Ghotbabadi 2012).

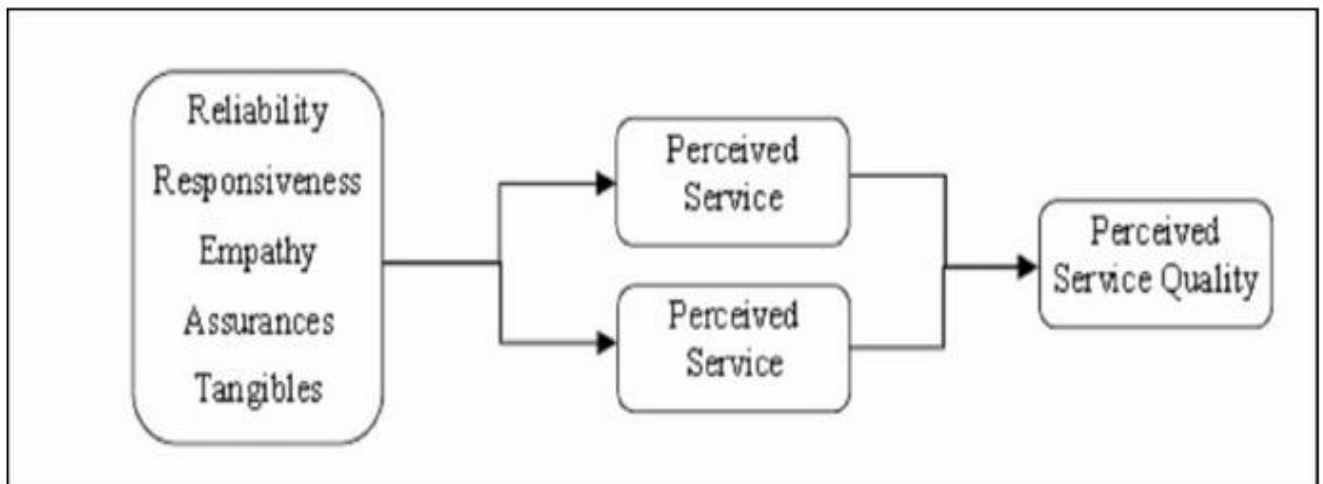


Figure 4 SERVQUAL model by Parasuraman et al 1985 cited in Feiz, Ba harun and Ghoba badi 2012

The SERVQUAL model is also called GAP model. Since it was putting forward, it is widely used by organization for analyzing its service quality whether it meets the customers demanding. From the gap analysis, it allows the organization to know the rela-

tive importance of service attributes from the customers' perception, which provides a prioritization to managers. The main gap analysis refers to the five aspects which are RATER, including Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, and Responsiveness. (MBA BRIEF n.d.). The five dimensions defined by Chris (2008) as follows:

- Reliability: Keep your words. It refers to how company performs and conducts to their customers for the promised service.
- Assurance: It mainly focuses on the employees. The skilled employees are able to work well, most important, it can make the customers become more comfortable and gain the approval from the customers.
- Tangibles: The first impression is important that is the meaning from tangible dimensions. Good impressions which will increase the chance of customers come back again.
- Empathy: It refers to the individual attention from company, which making their customers are more valued.
- Responsiveness: It means provide their customers in a quickly, rapidly, instantly service with good quality.

In terms of restaurant studies, The SERVQUAL technology was adapted by Bojanic and Rose in 1994 with a various clientele and a diverse menu in a chain restaurant which including international items. For measuring the restaurant service quality, in 1995 Stevens, Knutson and Patton made a measurement which being named DINESERV. The tool was mainly adapted from SERVQUAL to evaluate the customers' perceptions of service quality in restaurant. It also proved the DINESERV as a trusted and good tool for measuring the service quality from customers' view (Markovic, Raspor and Segaric 2010).

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE THROUGH INTERVENTION THEORY

3.1 Action research method

In this study, the objective is to check how well the SERVQUAL works, the model which has been extensively applied. The results from questionnaires has ability to examine whether the model is effective for measuring service quality and suitable to different restaurants. With the research question how to improve the service quality in tourist restaurant, the study also assesses the level of expectations and perceptions regarding Mei Lok restaurant. The results will provide the direction to improve the service quality.

The difference between action research and other methods is action research aims to deal with the practical situations. It is not for experimental studies, academic research, but for what the people real concerns in their daily life, handling the real problem also for the further goals of social science meanwhile. That is the reason why the action research is chosen (O'Brien 1998).

Action research origins in late 1940, as an initial definition of action research, the broad statement as following: addressing organizational problems by the application of social science. With the development, a deep one came up by Bill, Gautam and Taposhp (2006, 66) action research is problem-solving research involving a close collaboration between academic and managerial staff. It seeks to contribute to organizational effectiveness and to the development of management theory. Simply, the whole producer follows the researcher. The research can check the work while in the process whether it follows the instruction, whether it produces a satisfied outcome, it can be changed as the research wants to be.

Doing any kind of research, the same as action research, is a systematic process. Because action research involves researcher thinking about reflecting on research work, it also becomes a kind of self-reflective practices. Researchers use the learning arising from research reflection to inform new practices, and this in turn generates new action and reflection. Consequently, the methodology of action research is understood as cyclical and transformational (McDonnell and McNiff 2014, 36).

The researchers who have studied various aspects of action research for a long time, they noticed that there are many similarities, also several model has been put forward for a better understanding. The action research is characterized as being (NSW Department of Education and Training 2010):

- integrated: Mainly for daily practical situation.
- reflective: There is always a convert between plan implementation and reflection during the process.
- Flexible: The whole process depends on the researcher, the research method, data and all of them can be changed for a better outcome.
- relevant: meets the needs of company and/or their customers;
- cyclical: The whole process including several cycles which mainly for a deeper insight and more meaningful results.
- focused: Improving for a single situation.
- collaborative: The spirit of cooperation is encouraged.
- planned: One question would be answered for a planned process
- learning: Meanwhile creation of new knowledge by practice.



Figure 5 Action research cycle from NSW Department of Education and Training 2010.

The advantage from action research is that the way for solving problem can be found from the research process. It has the ability to make a positive impact on the results also it can share the research data with audience (Julienne 2000). Action research also helps the owners in the sales practice, as follows (McDonnell and McNiff 2014, 71):

- action research and work-based learning;
- self-evaluation for improving practice;
- professional development and arrayal.

The survey of this research will identify the restaurant's strengths and weaknesses, which will be explored in a moment. It will also help the leadership to learn what their customers exactly thinking and demanding, and be able to improve themselves, make a better strategy to meet customers preference, which means satisfy customers meanwhile also profits and success for its business in a long term.

The process of action research also follows figure 5. After identifying the research question and research purpose, the target organization would be choice. There also needed a literature related to the measuring the service quality, more specifically within the questionnaire based on SERVQUAL model in further. The first intervention is observing, to compare the character of restaurant in Kouvola, finding the target restaurant. The purpose for introducing Chinese food is to let the people know more about Chinese food as well as the target restaurant. When comes to the second intervention, there would be a questionnaire conducted for collecting the data. When comes to the stage of analyzing the data, there would another reflection in here, finding the new problem and giving the suggestions also checking whether the SERVQUAL model works well. In summary, the action cycle was completed in this research process to measure the service quality in the Mei Lok restaurant.

3.2 The character of restaurant in Kouvola

Kouvola is the Finland's tenth largest city. It is a pleasant city of about 88,000 inhabitants in Kymenlaakso, Southeast Finland. This green and pleasant area of 88,000 inhabitants attracts people because of the diverse range of opportunities it offers. The Kymi River winding through the region provides the local population and tourists with a setting for recreation, serves local forest industry companies and provides a unique landscape. The key element in all of this is the fantastic nature in the area:

there are over 450 lakes here, as well as the Repovesi National Park which was just voted the best hiking destination in the land. As the level of service keeps improving, visitors are exploring the Kouvola Region like never before (Kouvola 2013). All of the things boost the tourism of the Finland.

In Kouvola, the growth of restaurants was accelerating. With the good economic condition, development of tourism, various types of restaurants have been found in here. According to the category, it is including the French cuisine, Italian cuisine, American cuisine, Asian cuisine, Mexican cuisine local cuisine and other ethnic cuisine, also pizza, fast food in there. Most of restaurant has its own special in there. Here are some examples in table 2:

	Name of the restaurant	Location	Characteristic
1	Fransmanni	Hovioikeudenkatu	French cuisine, special wine tasting, red and white wines will be introduced.
2	Hua-Hin Tai	Salpausselankatu	Tai food, with a small souvenir shop selling silk and chopsticks.
3	Mei-Lok	Hansa	Traditional Chinese food
4	Nevile	Salpausselankatu	Arrange parties, meetings and seminars, bar for 18 and cabinet for 36.
5	Orilampi	Voikoskentie	Beauty of the nature while cruising on the lake, Repovesi, equipment for all hobbies, accommodation also is arranged
6	Rosso	Kauppalankatu	Italian cuisine, salad buffet.
7	Suryah	Hansa	Nepal food, discount on students and taking away
8	Ravintola Ole	Kouvolantatu	Spanish food, steak
9	Three wings	Torikatu	America style, also arranging for parties and family gathering and social gathering.

Table 2 Characteristic of some restaurants in Kouvola

Once entered in Kouvola, it can be noticed that the choices for diners in Kouvola are really extensive. Whether it is for something traditional or something special, the local cuisine or something else, dinning in the elegant surroundings of manor houses or grab nourishing and run, it is supposed to find something suitable among the restau-

rants in Kouvola. The truth is that Kouvola is neither very big city nor many tourists in here, with so many competitive in there, satisfying the customers seems more important.

As figure 5 shows, there are so many full-service restaurants available in here. The reason for choosing Mei Lok as a target restaurant as follows: Most of all, it offers a prime location. Restaurant Mei Lok is just located in the center of Kouvola at Shopping Centre Hansa. It is a place full of life and events, which offers the best selection of cafeterias and restaurants in the area. It attracts a great number of visitors from all over the world, so it is easy to get data from here. On the other hand, the owner was willing to take part in this item for getting known about customers' real thinking and improving service quality.

3.3 A brief introduction about Chinese food

Chinese food is popular in the world. It is famous in its color, flavor, shape and taste. Nowadays there is a new TV show called a bite of China, which is a food documentary, to get know more about Chinese food and culture, also attracted a lot of people's attention.

The development of Chinese cuisine also indicates the long history in China, which has more than five thousand years. The cuisine from the single one turns to the diversity, from simple to complex. In China, the cuisine is not just from a simple taste, it is a combination with taste, color, shape and fragrance (Travel China Guide n.d.).

Stemming from the weather, geographical position, and ethnicity, different areas have their own specialties and characteristics. Generally, it is divided into eight regional cuisines, including the Zhejiang cuisine, Cantonese cuisine and so on. The methods of cooking usually are boiling, stewing, frying, braising and steaming. While in the cooking, the color, flavor and aroma share the equal relevance to the every dish. It is also necessary to arrange a variety of plates after cooking so that it can make people pleasure to view, smell and savor in the final. The facility of partake of these delicious food is chopsticks; it symbols gentleness and benevolence in ancient. It is an art in itself to use two slim sticks to pick up grains of rice and little pieces of meat and vegetable.

It needs to be mentioned that one of the features of Chinese cuisine is that good cuisine has the effect of prolonging life, keeping beauty and promoting energy. From the above features, it is proud to say that Chinese cuisine is exquisite, delicious. With the combination of taste and function, that is why the Chinese food is always popular in the world. There are some traditional Chinese food listed in figure 6.



Figure 6 Traditional Chinese good from travel in China guide

3.4 Questionnaire for survey research

In order to know our customer's current level of satisfaction and to recognize when changes in their opinion do occur, it is necessary to have a measure which can assess customer attitudes. Customer satisfaction questionnaires can be used in both non-manufacturing and manufacturing fields. The use of customer satisfaction questionnaires offers companies another approach in the assessment of the quality of their

goods. It focuses an organization's attention on the customers and on how they perceive the organization's products and services (Hayes 2008, 7).

Design of the questionnaire and improved questionnaire can be split into three elements (Burgess 2001).

- According to the research objective and research question determine what kind of survey questions need to be designed.
- Making the whole structure of questions and answers looks neatly and ordered. The words of question should be accurate and organized, avoiding the negatives, confused questions.
- The computer should be helpful to construct the whole design, which can make the questionnaire more professional.

The purpose of designing customer service questionnaire is for providing a deep understanding between the markets and customers. These organizations which get more knowledge of customers' perceptions and attitudes to their own business will be more beneficial. Meanwhile the organization will get a new sight to identify their own business, also customers' demanding (Hayes 2008, 2).

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4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE THROUGH QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire survey based on SERVQUAL model was conducted in November in Chinese restaurant Mei Lok. The main purpose behind the survey was to gain information about the customers' real thinking about the Mei Lok restaurants. The study was undertaken from the customers who have been experienced in the restaurant before. There were 20 questions and 40 customers were assigned to fill in the form totally. The details how the survey was conducted and the information about aim restaurant were described in the next part.

4.1 The character of Mei Lok restaurant

4.1.1 Introduction to Mei Lok Restaurant Design

Mei Lok is one of an authentic Chinese restaurant in Kouvola. It opened in 1989, which has more than 15 years since it was established. Now the restaurant has become one of the most popular restaurants in Kouvola, which is well-known for its authentic Chinese taste and high quality. In the modern society, it is not just about what or where you eat, but also the feeling and the atmosphere that is suffered, a great meal depends as much on the setting as on the food.

Mei Lok presents traditional Chinese cuisine influenced by learned western eating lifestyle. The restaurant is special, modern, stylish and casual. The atmosphere and approach are both welcoming and relaxed. It has a distinctive Chinese appearance; the warm and inviting decoration is simple yet stylish, where you can see the traditional artworks inside, the most typical one is the god of wealth. The god of wealth is the most widely worshipped god in China, which means bring the wealth also. Simple and uncluttered with beautiful detail inside, the dining room provides guests to relax in warm surroundings, with wallpaper from China, also traditional music which creates a unique contemporary, feels like being in the China.



4.1.2 Food Item in Mei Lok

As an authentic Chinese restaurant, the restaurant provides with quality Chinese food with superb dinning atmosphere, also the price is acceptable. The food type in here is various for demanding different appetite and different customers. The food in here are different between adults and children, a meal for child is specially designed. The food includes the vegetarian, meat dishes, sea food dishes and mixed dishes which are full of Chinese stylish. The food in here is nutrient and healthy which follows the Chinese foods' principle. There are some food listed in figure 7.



Figure 7 Food from Mei Lok

4.2 Questionnaires in Mei Lok

4.2.1 Design and Procedure

According to the research question, the literature part about the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, service quality is a measure of how well organizations manage their process and whether they meet customer expectations. Understanding the customers' expectations plays an important role in improving the service quality and academic. As it mentioned, the SERVQUAL tool is used to assessing the service quality. The five dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) would be used to assessing the service quality, which by measuring the customers' expectation and perception for getting a gap. The

SERVQUAL approach is the most common method for measuring service quality. It measures what the customer expects from the organization in relation to these dimensions against what the customer perceives the organization performs along these dimensions. It also identifies and understands where service gaps exist within the organization and between the organization (Zarei and Safdari 2007).

The part of SERVQUAL questionnaires was for data collection, there were 15 questions listed according to five service quality dimensions (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy). There are 5 point semantic differential scales provided by the answers in the two columns. The 1-5 represents the different extent, 1 means the strong disagree until 5 means to the strongly agree. The two elements of expectation and perception consists the first part (Wisniewski & Donnelly 1996). The part of E is designed to measure the customers' general expectation while the part of P is what customers' perceptions, those who have experienced in Mei Lok restaurant. All the questions are the same in both cases. There is only one score for each question, no others attached again.

Apart from part 1, there is another part designed for measuring the importance of each dimension. It was indicated by the SERVQUAL developer's research that each dimension is not same, each of them plays a different role, customers could not be hold the same regard to them. Therefore, it is necessary to do this part for getting the each weight of them. There were 5 questions designed for each dimension by allocating a total of 100 points (Parasuraman, Berry, & Zeithaml, 1991). This part information would help to understand which dimension is the most important to customer, giving an instruction to managers which one should be in prioritization.

The language of questionnaire was in English, because there are local people and tourists from different countries, such as Russia, China, German or other countries. Thus English would be an idea choice.

The collected data would be processed by SPSS, it is a good software for analyzing the data. According to the two parts' scores from the customers, by subtracting the E score from the P score, there is supposed to get a gap score which is stated as Q in this research. When the service quality exceeds the customers' expectation, there would get a positive Q. Conversely, a negative Q means the level of service quality is under the customers' expectation while the zero is equal to customer expectations

(Wisniewski & Donnelly 1996). The difference between expected and perceived services is the key to assessment of service quality.

4.2.2 Participants

The work was conducted in the Mei Lok restaurant. The participants would be the customer who was willing to do the questionnaire. Forty-two questionnaires were distributed, customers who were eating at the Mei Lok would be choice. All but two of the returned questionnaire was unusable, so totally 40 are available. Figure 7 shows the figure of male and female who did the questionnaire survey. The respondents comprised just a few more men than women. 55 percent of respondents were male, and 45 percent of respondents were female. The figure 8 shows the detail.

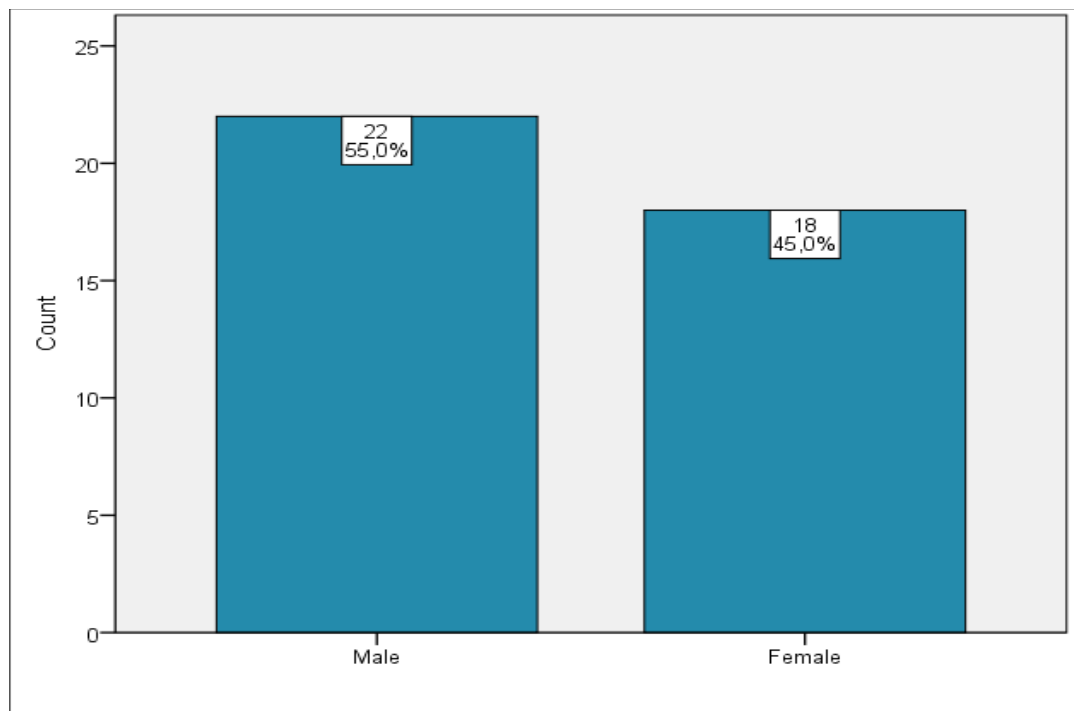


Figure 8 The number of male and female in research.

5 PRESENTATION AND DISSCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 SERVQUAL sample gap analysis

All the service quality gaps were demonstrated from figure 9 to figure 14. The figure 9 presents the results of SERVQUAL dimension importance score. According to the score ranks, it can be seen than a large proportion of respondents choose the Tangibles (23.1) as the most important factor while the reliability (21.9) and responsiveness (19.4) were ranked to the second and the third. On the other hand, the empathy is treated as the least important factor accounting for 16.4, meanwhile the assurance (18.8) is in the forth. The results shows which part is the most vital to customers, it will be more easily for organizations to enhance the service quality if they know more about the important areas for customer satisfaction.

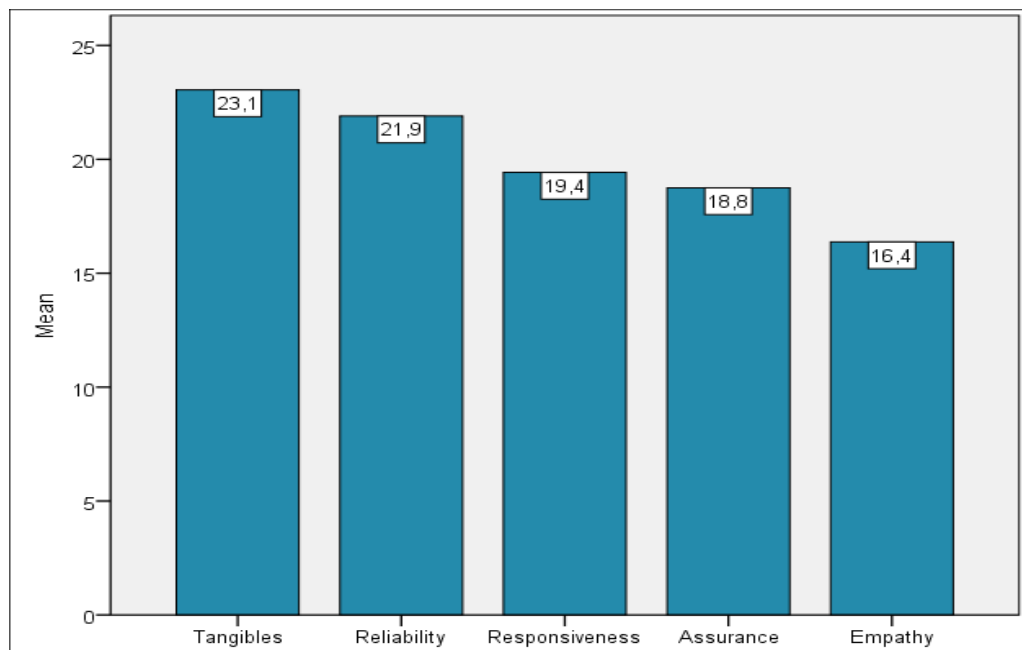


Figure 9 The results of SERVQUAL dimension importance score

Figure 10 shows the tangibility dimension of service quality result. It was comprised of the first three questions which assess the tangible appearance aspects (equipment, physical facility and employees). It can be found that in the three part of the tangibility dimension of the service quality, about the employees appearing part the score from customers' perception exceed their expectation (gap score-P-E=0.1). It means customers satisfy in this sector. When looking at the rest part of the tangibility dimension of the service quality, the expectations of the equipment exceed their per-

ception (gap score-P-E=-0.3) both in question 1 to 2. As the most important dimension from figure 9, there still need to be taken some measures. Organizations can focus more on the equipment, better environment and visual appearing, providing a better environment and atmosphere for attracting customers.

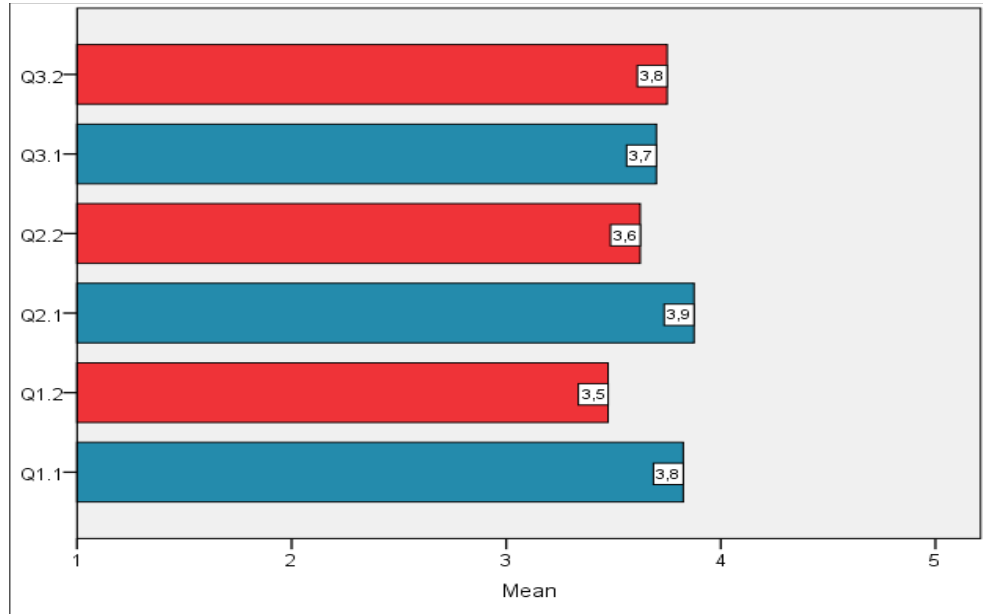


Figure 10 Mean scores from the tangibility questions

The figure 11 shows the service quality results from the dimension of reliability questions. The data shows the expectation from customers are really high in this part, but unfortunately the perceptions are really low. The average gap of this dimension is -1.0, the second largest gap score. It is the second important dimension among the SERVQUAL dimensions, which indicates there is a big improvement can be done. The owner should be more serious about the reliability service to the customers causing the experience from the customer shows a negative gap. The staff might be supposed to be equipped to handle any problem the customers have.

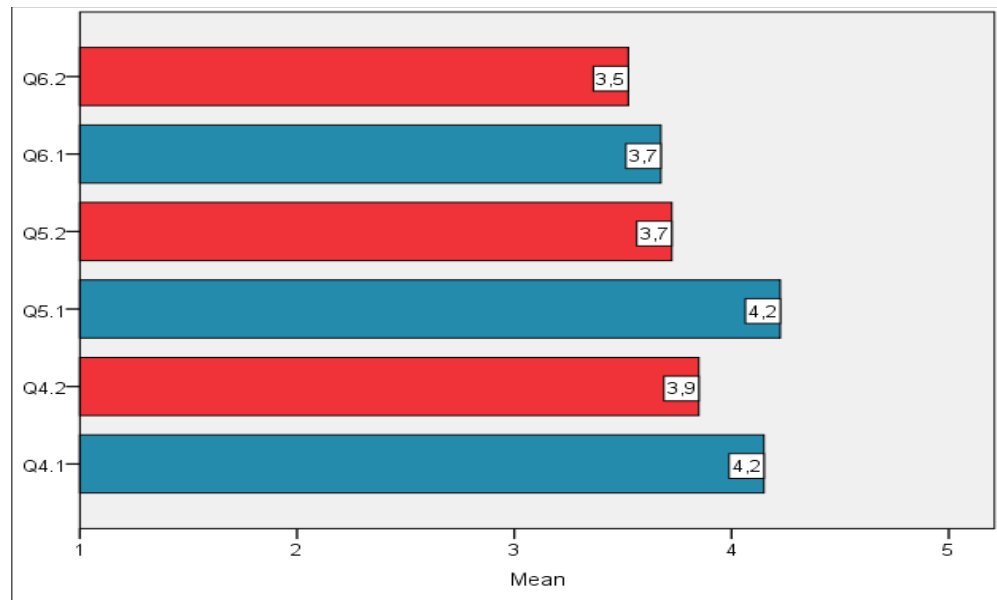


Figure 11 Mean scores from the reliability questions.

The mean scores from the responsiveness questions are illustrated in figure 10. The questions include the prompting service to customers, willing to help customers and telling customers exactly when services will be performed. From the mean scores, it indicates a negative result in here. In this part, maybe the organization should be more responsive especially employees.

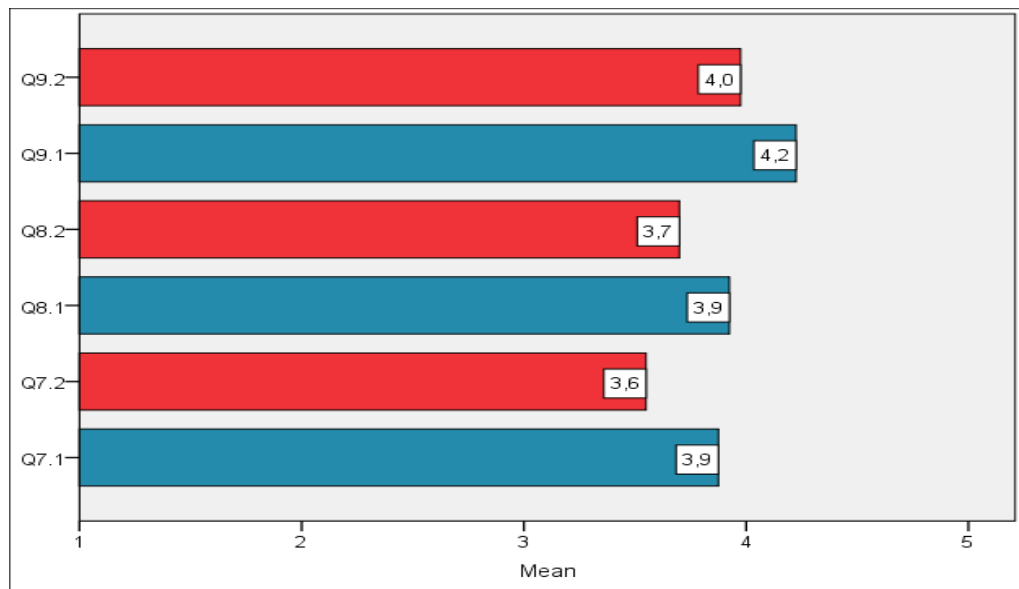


Figure 12 The mean scores from the response questions.

The assurance of dimension of the SERVQUAL customer expectations and perception tool are comprised of the question 10.1 until question 12.2. The part made up the

feeling of security in the restaurant, the confidence from the employees and the knowledge to answer customers' question. From the figure 13 shows, it receives the gap score -0.9, the third biggest gap score among the five dimensions.

Moreover, although the expectations and perceptions score from the assurance part is the highest than any else, the gap score still exists. Employee should be more trained, like the awareness about their job, the knowledge about the restaurant also behavior.

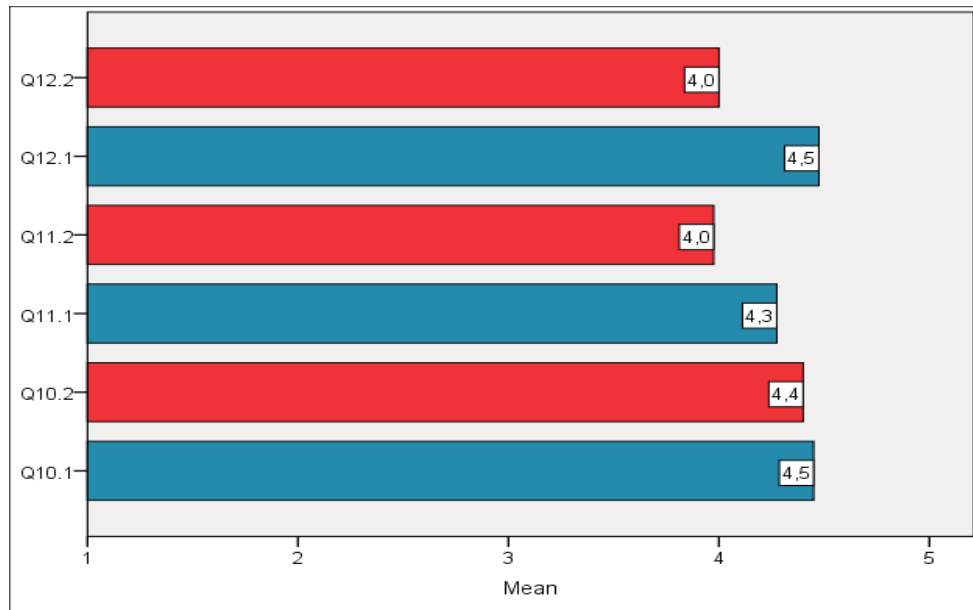


Figure 13 Mean scores from the assurance questions

From the figure 14, this part is comprised of the individual attention to customer, operating hours convenient to all their customers and having their best interests at heart three factors. The average of gap score in here is -1.1, the highest gap score among the five dimensions, but the least important dimension among the SERVQUAL dimension, the result shows the the organization might be show more empathy especially to individual customers sometimes, like some foreigners who are not familiar the everything, sometimes the willingness to help them seems more considerate.

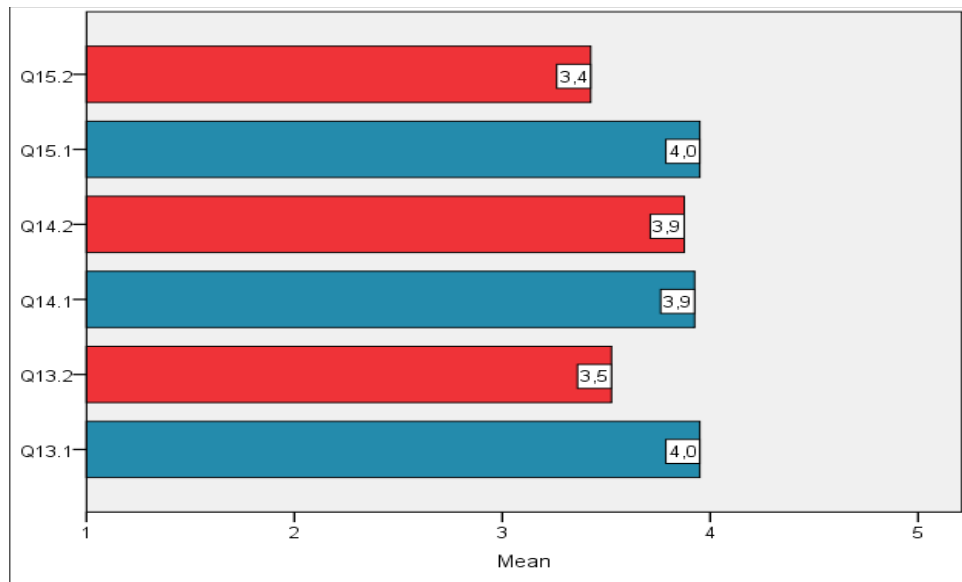


Figure 14 Mean scores from the empathy questions

5.2 Discussions and implications of the study

As it shows from above, there is a significant difference between scores that customers give to express the expectation and perceptions, especially the scores of expectation are really high. It revealed that SERVQUAL model is statistically significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. It can let organizations assess service quality from the customers' perceptions.

SERVQUAL data was analyzed item-by-item, dimension by dimension. Each dimension represents the different aspect of restaurant. After the data processed, it comes to a gap score, if it is a negative result, the result indicates that the service of the company served is below the passenger's expectations. Combined the most important dimension with the largest gap score, it allows managers to focus on the problem. The weakness of service quality also can be found by the gap score and tackled.

Besides the advantages showed in above, there were also some disadvantages found while doing the research to SERVQUAL model. Although it is the most common model used by researchers, the questions from SERVQUAL's five dimensions seems are not suitable for utilizing in everywhere. Another problem is the number of questions from the dimensions. The quantity of the question and the same form of question caused respondents were impatient and confusion sometimes.

In the development of research, a series of criticisms about the SERVQUAL model was put forward by the researchers. First, from the formula of P-E, actually there is no exact evident to prove it in evaluating the service quality. Meanwhile, the model mainly aims to the service delivery during the whole process, not just for the outcomes. What is more, about the five dimensions, they are not very prevalent. There is no priority between these items sometimes it might be unreasonable (Buttle 1995).

The meaning of using SERVQUAL model is still debatable. The debate most relates to whether it is a good choice for measuring the service quality. Causing the definition of service quality is inclusive, the measurement also becomes more complex, so it is hard to determine which model is the best one. Choosing a suitable model for assessing the service quality, it is mainly depended on what kind of objective is supposed to achieve in there, it is up to the researcher themselves. If the mainly purpose for the research is to understand the perceptions of target customers and providing a measurement to the target organization for service improvement, the SERVQUAL model should be a useful one.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is well known that service quality is a good tool for organizations to find and analyze information about customers' demanding and perceptions about the service. With the features of intangibility and inseparability, it seems more difficult to evaluate service quality in restaurant compared with goods quality. It is not just outcomes but also on the process of service delivery. It is necessary for organizations to identify the problem in service and make corresponding issues to improve.

It is important to note that with long-standing its growing popularity and widespread application, SERVQUAL model plays a significant role in measuring service quality. There are many models suggested by researchers, each model has its own advantages and disadvantages, SERVQUAL model is no exception. Although SERVQUAL might be some criticisms, it is still a useful tool to measure the service quality by the form of five dimensions.

The main objective addressed in this study is to check whether the SERVQUAL model works well in the restaurant. From the research analysis and results, it can be seen the research question has been answered, the objective of this study was apparently met. The advantage and disadvantage of SERVQUAL model were both presented after research. The SERVQUAL scale provides managers with useful insight about how well actual service performance has been performed. Thus, it is help to judge whether customers' expectation has been met, exceeded or falls.

There are different types restaurant, each restaurant has its own structure and way to delivery service quality, it should be taken the restaurant's situation into consideration while using the SERVQUAL model. The research result also provides a deep insight about the service quality which was provided by Mei Lok. When comes to improve the service quality, it is necessary for organization to look at bridging the gaps from the SERVQUAL model shows. It would be efficient to act according to the situation. At least the organization can get direction from 5 dimensions to make measures.

The gape score shows the level of customers' satisfaction by SERVQUAL model, which indicates the level of service quality. It is a useful technique that can be used to analyze the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality. To enhance the service quality, the restaurant should understand customers' demanding,

thinking and expectations as to attract customers. Next, they should know how to deliver the service properly, keeping customer loyalty. As for employees, they should be more trained, in terms of communication and decision skills providing a better service to meet different consumers.

The further research, could consider larger samples for more accurate, it might be limited in a small sample. It would be better to prepare the both types questionnaire in Finnish and English, because it is unavoidable to meet some customers who are not good at English. Future research could try to use other study methodologies to analyze the service quality, getting a wider analysis. May be it is better just measure the perception of service quality than both of perception and expectation, causing the perception also can reflect the customers' real feelings.

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Appendix 1 Expectations and Perceptions questionnaire in Mei Lok

Hi, I am a student with kyamk, I need your help to answer some questions about the service quality for my bachelor's project. There are few questions and can take very few minutes of your time.

This survey deals with your opinions of Mei Lok restaurant. What you are supposed to do is to mark the score to show your expectation and perception. The expectation means which you think restaurant should possess the following features, The Perceptions means the real feeling to the particular Mei Lok restaurant. Mark your answer with the number 1-5 put in the __. The number 1 means strongly disagree until number 5 means to strongly agree. It will be a highly appreciate your participation Thank you.

Strongly Disagree

Disagree

Neutral

Agree

Strongly Agree

Gender: ☐ Male

☐ Female

Nationality:

Questions from Tangibles

1. The restaurant looks good and the equipments are modern. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

2. The physical facilities provides by the restaurant seems more appealing. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

3. The employees are in a neat suit and make you comfortable. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

Questions from Reliability

4. The restaurant does what they promised before, always keeping their words. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

5. The restaurant is willing to help customers if you have a problem. Expectation: _____. Perceptions: _____

6. The restaurant focus on error records avoiding to happening again. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

Questions from Responsiveness

7. The restaurant is supposed to provide the right and timely information to customers. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

8. The service provides by the restaurant is fast and instant. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

9. The employees in here are always happy to help customers. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

Questions from Assurance

10. The environment in the restaurant is safe. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

11. The employees' behavior in there is confident and skilled. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

12. The employees are knowledgeable in here and prepared to provide good service. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

Questions from Empathy

13. The restaurant provides customers with individual attention. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

14. The restaurant uses operating hours for make a convenient to their customers. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

15. The restaurant knows well about the customers special interests. Expectation: _____ Perceptions: _____

Appendix 2 The importance of five dimensions questionnaire

In this part we are interested in allocating 100 points among the five dimensions which one is the most important to you. Making sure the total points among the 5 questions are worthy 100. Thanks for your participation.

1. The feeling of the restaurant design and its physical equipments is pretty good. The personnel looking and the way of communication from employees.
_____ points
2. The restaurant has the ability to perform the service what they promised before to you.
_____ points
3. The restaurant provides you fast, instant and effective service.
_____ points
4. The employees in here are knowledgeable and confident to provide service. It can be trusted and reliable.
_____ points
5. The restaurant provides individual attention to customers and special caring to them.
_____ points