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A MARKET RESEARCH STUDY FOR ESTABLISHING AN AFRICAN RESTAURANT IN VAASA

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli selvittää vaasalaisten kiinnostuksen taso afrikkalaista ravintolaa kohtaan. Tämä tehtiin tutkimalla Vaasassa asuvien suomalaisten mielipiteitä afrikkalaisesta ruoasta yleensä ja länsiafrikkalaisesta ruoasta erityisesti. Myös heidän ostokäyttäytymistään tutkittiin. Tutkimuksen keskeinen tavoite oli selvittää onko Vaasassa mahdollista avata afrikkalainen ravintola.

Tutkimus toteutettiin kvantitatiivisen tutkimusmenetelmän avulla, tutkimuskohteena syntyperältään suomalaiset Vaasassa asuvat ihmiset. Kyselylomake luotiin seuraamalla yleisen markkinatutkimuksen ideaa. Kyselylomake sisälsi kysymyksiä länsiafrikkalaisesta ruoasta, yleisestä ravintolan liiketoimintaympäristöstä, kuluttajien ostokäyttäytymisestä ja vaikuttajista, sekä tärkeimpänä kulttuurista.

Analyysin tuloksista käy ilmi, että Vaasassa asuvat suomalaiset ovat pääosin kiinnostuneita länsiafrikkalaisesta ruoasta ja olisivat valmiita maksamaan siitä. Tuloksista voi nähdä kulttuurin muutoksen suomalaisten innostuneisuudessa afrikkalaista ruokaa kohtaan. Heillä on kuitenkin enemmän tietoa itä- ja pohjoisafrikkalaisista ruoista kuin länsiafrikkalaisista ruoista. Johtopäätöksenä voidaan sanoa, että monipuolinen afrikkalainen ravintola, joka tarjoaisi itä-, länsi- ja pohjoisafrikkalaisia ruokia, olisi Vaasassa asuville suomalaisille sopivin vaihtoehto.

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this research was to ascertain the level of interest in a West-African Restaurant in Vaasa. This was done by studying the overall mindset of Finns living in Vaasa toward African food in general and West African food in particular. Their buying behavior was also examined. Ultimately, the goal was to determine whether there was an opportunity in Vaasa for the establishment of an African restaurant.

The research was carried out within a population of native Finnish people living in Vaasa through using a quantitative research method. A questionnaire was created following the overall idea of a market research. It used the main theories of West African cuisine, the general restaurant business environment and consumer buying behavior and its influencers, most importantly culture.

From the analysis of the results, it was revealed that Finnish people in Vaasa are for the most part interested in West African food and would be willing to pay to enjoy it. A change in culture could be noted from the interest of Finns who showed eagerness toward African food. They however had more knowledge about East and North African dishes, which led to the conclusion that an all-round African restaurant incorporating East, West and North African cuisines could be more suitable for Finns in Vaasa.

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"Restaurants are businesses that require a creative flair and passion; a good concept is often what separates success from failure" (Davis et.al. 2008, pg. 118). At times the concept of a restaurant becomes apparent after a feasibility study is conducted, but many times the future restaurateur already has a general notion of what they want to achieve. A good restaurateur has to constantly observe the pulse of the market and plan ahead, making indispensable decisions as they do (Davis et.al. 2008).

When deciding on which concept to choose, there are three primary categories to consider. The first is that of restaurants that rely on low margins but a high volume of sales. The second is that of mid-scale restaurants which offer a full meal but at fairly low prices and the last category comprises prosperous restaurants, such as Michelin star restaurants, which rely mainly on high margins (Davis et.al. 2008).

 Another yet important factor to consider is that a restaurant can be a themed restaurant with food from a particular ethnicity such as Chinese, Japanese, Greek, French, Indian and Thai, among others. Taking advantage of gaps in the market is always a good place to start. If a certain area has a large number of Chinese restaurants, it may be a good idea to think of either changing locations if one's idea is the same, or to go with a completely new theme (Davis et.al. 2008).

1.1 Background of the study

Vaasa is a city in the Ostrobothnia region of Finland populated by many ethnic restaurants from different parts of the world. It is common to find restaurants from China, Thailand, Vietnam, India and Japan. There are also cuisines such as Tex-Mex, Balkan, Greek and Italian. In spite of the relatively high African population in Vaasa however, there are no African restaurants to satisfy African tastes and

even create an alternative to other people from other continents including the native Finns.

African food is undoubtedly very varied and probably most popular and known on the African continent itself. Just as any particular ethnic group of people wants to eat food they are familiar with, Africans are also on a constant search for what they know and will go to arm's length to find a place that serves their interests. It should be understood here also that African food is not only eaten or enjoyed by Africans but also by people from different parts of the world.

Given that the part of the world in focus is Vaasa in Finland, it is pertinent to research and discover how people in Vaasa feel toward African food; West- African food in particular.

When testing a new concept, the basic idea should be presented to potential customers and their comments encouraged. This can be done sometimes through formal market research, while it may in other cases be possible through informal discussions with potential customers (Blythe 2012, pg. 58). Because there are no African restaurants in Vaasa, it is important to carry out a market research in order to ascertain whether or not opening one in this area is a possibility considering the fact that the dynamics may be different from city to city. Marketing research is defined as the process of designing, gathering, analyzing and reporting information that may be used to solve a specific marketing problem (Burns & Bush 2001; pg. 7). It can also be defined as a group of methods and techniques to provide relevant information that can support analysis and decisions to do with the creation and management of marketing communications (Nair 2009; pg. 2). This research work will be exploratory in nature and opts to find out information that could be relevant for preparing a marketing plan and devising a marketing strategy for a supposed African restaurant in Vaasa.

It should be noted, however, that opening and operating a restaurant that serves a very specific location can seem easy due to the focus involved but at the same

time, this can be very challenging when the customers are very diverse in terms of tastes and preferences. According to Jobber and Fahy (2003), the behaviors and expectations of buyers (customers) is a very important factor which is a determinant of what type of product to sell, where to sell it, how much to charge for it and also about how communication about the product should be carried out. Therefore, issues such as product and product categories, proper channel selections, the right communication channels and the best price at which customers will be willing to buy a specific product should be researched into since this creates a clearer view with regards to what the potential customer seeks to get. Finding a good mix is one first step to attaining success in business operations.

The goal of this thesis is to find out whether or not it is possible for a successful African restaurant to be established in Vaasa.

In order to do that, one has to determine whether or not there is a market. In other words, one has to see whether or not the Finnish population is interested in and is willing to buy African food. Discovering the current standpoint of the Finnish people in Vaasa towards African food, or even the tastes that characterize it should help to identify if the people are interested in African cuisine and if so who those people are.

In short, this thesis aims to explore the possible existence of a target market for an African restaurant, through first measuring the level of interest in it and then providing a definition of the ones interested in it.

1.2 Research problem and questions

The research problem of this study is to investigate the Finnish population in Vaasa in relation to West African food and whether or not it is possible to establish an African restaurant successfully in Vaasa

The thesis, thus, seeks to answer a set of questions:

- Do Finnish people in Vaasa know about West-African food?
- Are Finnish people open to trying West African food?
- Is there an interest in an African restaurant in Vaasa?
- What would a possible segment be for an African restaurant?

Answering the afore mentioned questions will provide insight on the mindset of the Finnish people toward African food and shed light on the possibility of a West African restaurant in Vaasa being an idea to be further investigated through a feasibility study.

1.3 Research Methodology

Research connotes a thorough, objective and systematic investigation of a subject or problem in order to uncover relevant information (Nair 2009, pg. 2).

The research topic in question is "A Market Research Study for an African restaurant in Vaasa".

Quantitative research will be used to question Finnish people in Vaasa on their perceptions about African dishes and also their forecasted dispositions toward going to an African restaurant.

The study is limited to the population of Vaasa, focusing only on Finnish people. It can, therefore, not be generalized to fit all of Finland.

1.4 Structure of the study

The study is structured in a simple way with ten chapters.

The first chapter introduces the study, through its background, its aims and questions, as well as its limitations and structure.

The second chapter presents an exposé of market research and marketing research, differentiates them and clarifies the ways in which both of these are used in the study.

West-African food is explored in detail in the third chapter, concerning its history and development in the present day. A few staple dishes that characterize West-African cuisine are introduced and explained.

In the fourth chapter, the business environment elements are explained so as to show the elements that will be the reference points of the analysis of the result of the study. Such elements include the market analysis, pest analysis, segmentation, positioning, and an analysis of the competitive environment and consumer behavior.

Consumer behavior is explored in the fifth chapter, in terms of its influencers whereas the sixth chapter presents the research methods that will be used, the reasons for which they are chosen and their adequacy for the purpose of the research. The process through which the research itself is conducted will also be explained-that is what questions are asked in the research and information concerning the respondents and how they are reached.

The seventh chapter is the one in which one finds the results of the research, followed with the eighth chapter which analyzes the results.

In the ninth chapter more discussion goes one to go a little more in depth in the results and their implication and relation to the elements of the literature review. Finally, there is the tenth chapter, with conclusion and recommendations for further research.

2 MARKET AND MARKETING RESEARCH

Market research and marketing research are often mixed up and can be difficult to differentiate. Simply put, market research refers to investigations intended to improve knowledge about customers and competitors. Marketing research is more about gathering information for the purpose of improving the organization's effectiveness (Blythe 2014).

2.1 Market Research

Market research is a manner of investigating and answering questions concerned with human behavior. The tools that a market researcher employs are of different natures, that is exploratory, descriptive and experimental (Hamersveld, M. 2008, pg. 37).

Market research is essential to the success of any business. It is important to carry out a market research on whatever one is trying to sell. Popular types of market research include surveys, questionnaires and interviews. (Gerson and Shotwell, 1991). "Market research enables a business owner to know what they could and should be selling, what customers are willing to pay, how they should best market their products and services, how to package and deliver them and how to differentiate their company from the competition" (Wenzel 2012, pg. 1).

2.2 Marketing Research

Marketing research is the process of designing, gathering, analyzing and reporting information that may be used to solve a specific marketing problem (Burns & Bush 2001, pg. 7). It has been defined by the American Marketing Association (AMA) as "the function that links the consumer, customer and public to the marketer through information- information used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems, to generate, refine, and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a

process (Burns & Bush 2001). Information is essential to determining customers' needs and to set up effective marketing strategies (Schmidt & Hollensen 2006).

This is the point where marketing research becomes necessary. The role of marketing research is to identify the information needed and provide managers with valid, up-to-date information about what will be useful in making marketing decisions (Schmidt & Hollensen 2006).

Market research is a good tool that can provide marketers with insights into customer motivations, purchase behavior and satisfaction. It can also aid in assessing market potential and measure the effectiveness of pricing, product, distribution and promotion activities (Kotler, Armstrong, Harris and Piercy 2013).

2.3 The Market Research Process

The market research process is an efficient methodology for informing business decisions. It can be divided into six main steps:

1. Defining the objective and problem
2. Determining research design
3. Designing and preparing the research instrument
4. Sampling and data collection
5. Analyzing data
6. Visualizing and communicating results

(Mymarketresearchmethods.com).

A simpler and more comprehensive model is explained by authors Kotler et.al, which is comprised of first defining the problem and research objectives, then developing the research plan and gathering secondary and primary data. After this comes the implementation of the research plan and finally interpreting and reporting the findings (Kotler et.al. 2013).

There are several types of marketing research which are customer research, advertising research, product research, distribution research, sales research and marketing environment. Marketing environment is completed through the use of the PEST analysis, which is one of the tools that aids in investigating a market in market research (Blythe 2014) Customer research; a type of marketing research is occasionally made reference to as market research. Its main concern is to examine customer motivation and behavior as well as a few other variables (Blythe 2014, pg. 157). These elements of marketing research come together with the purpose of market research to study issues pertaining to human behavior (Hamersveld, M. 2008, pg. 37).

3 WEST AFRICAN FOOD AND CUISINE

Sub-Saharan cuisine is not rich, neither is it complex. This could be a result of the land having always suffered from a difficult climate and a scarcity of natural resources. In addition to food being scarce, the available protein rich elements are largely insufficient for the population. West African cuisine is the most defined in terms of flavor and it has been greatly shaped by food products that were introduced after the discovery of the New World (Rozin 1992). These are notably cassava, maize, chilies, peanuts, pumpkins, tomatoes and peanuts (Kittler and Sucher 2000, Rozin 1992). The peanut, which also commonly referred to as groundnut serves not only as flavoring but also as an invaluable source of protein (Rozin 1992).

3.1 Traditional food habits and history

The available knowledge about West-African food habits before the nineteenth century is incomplete. Most of it is based on the records of North African, European, and American traders and a large majority of those considered local cuisine to be unhealthy. During the slave era most West-Africans lived in preliterate and horticulturally based tribal groups. They also depended heavily on locally grown foods (Kittler and Sucher 2000).

Staple foods varied greatly from locality to locality. In Nigeria, yams were popular where they were customarily boiled and pounded into a paste called *fufu*. Cassava, which is usually roasted and ground into a special type of flour called *gari*, and plantains were the dietary base of the more southern regions such as the Congo and Angola. Because of the dryness and arid nature of the savanna region of West Africa bordering the Sahara desert, cultivation was not an option. This explains why most tribes are pastoral, herding camels, sheep, goats and cattle. In northern localities, these animals were consumed and in other regions, local fish and game were eaten. Chickens were raised as well, although in many tribes the

eggs were regularly traded instead of eaten, and the chicken itself was reserved to be offered as a special dish for guests (Kittler & Sucher 2000, pg. 175).

The most well defined cuisine in terms of flavor is the West African cuisine, though most of it has been largely shaped by food products introduced after the discovery of the New World, most prominently corn, tomatoes, peppers and peanuts (Rozin 1992, pg. 78). The cuisines in West Africa were widely similar. Most foods were boiled or fried, and small dollops were dipped in a sauce and eaten by hand. Palm oil was the essential oil used in cooking and it gave many dishes a red tinge. In addition to palm oil, other oils, namely peanut oil, shea oil and occasionally coconut oil were utilized in some regions. As seasoning, tomatoes, hot chili peppers, garlic, dried shrimp and onions were commonly added. Most dishes were preferred spicy, thick and of mucilaginous consistency (Kittler & Sucher 2000, Rozin 1992). When cooking soups and stews, long, slow cooking is the most characteristic technique, and different elements of thickening are used, such as okra.

Speaking of vegetables and legumes, those were very popular in West Africa. Peanuts were especially valued and eaten boiled, raw, roasted or ground into meal, flour or paste. Nuts and various seeds were also utilized to thicken and flavor sauces. When meat was unavailable, black eyed peas were eaten as a substitute and combined often with starchy foods such as rice, yams or corn (WestAfricaCooks.com).

3.2 West-African cuisine today

West African cuisine today is still very similar to that of the past. Fish is favored, but meat consumption remains minimal. Elizabeth Rozin defines West African cuisine as follows: "the basic flavor principle of West African cuisine is the combination of tomatoes, peanuts and chili peppers (frequently in staggering amounts). Onions, sweet peppers, garlic and dried shrimp are used for variations in flavor" (Rozin 1992, pg. 78). Chicken remains a prestigious meat. This has resulted in a generally vege-

tarian nutritional provision being created, based on regional comestibles like beans, yams and cassava (Kittler and Sucher 2000).

A typical West African meal today is comprised starchy items, meat, spices and flavors. As mentioned earlier the types of foodstuff eaten throughout this region of Africa is wide. The main components are fufu, foutou, banku, kenkey, couscous, tô and gari. Fufu is often made from starchy root vegetables such as yams, cocoyams, or cassava, but also from cereal grains like millet, sorghum or plantains. The staple grain or starch differs from one region to another as well as from one ethnic group to another, even though corn has gained significant ground as it is cheap, expands to greater volumes and creates a beautiful white final product that is greatly desired. Banku and Kenkey are maize dough staples, and Gari is made from dried, grated cassavas. Not uncommon to this region are also rice dishes which are also widely consumed (WestAfricaCooks.com).

3.3 Sample Dishes in West Africa.

Rice and beans

This dish is called by different names in different countries; for example "Waakye" in Ghana and "Atasi" in Benin Republic. It is made by boiling beans and rice together and depending on individual preferences, some people may choose to add tomatoes, chili, fish, prawns or meat. This dish is nutritionally rich and has been hailed by the United Nations as a combination that can help stamp out malnutrition from the world (African Foods.com).

Jollof rice

Jollof rice is one of the most popular rice dishes in West Africa with its origins among the Wolof people in Senegal and Gambia (congocookbook.com). Most West African countries have their own version, however, and this dish is often served at parties (Food.com). The most common basic ingredients of Jollof rice are rice, tomatoes, tomato paste, onion, salt and red pepper. On top of those various vegetables, meats, fishes or spices can be added to enrich the meal (congocookbook.com)

Aloko

Aloko, is a dish from Cote d'Ivoire which consists mainly of plantains which are sliced horizontally and fried in palm oil along with onions, tomatoes and chili peppers. This is customarily served with grilled fish, but can be added as a side dish to other dishes such as rice and beans (congocookbook.com).

Fufu

"Fufu is to western and central Africa cooking what mashed potatoes are to traditional European-American cooking" (congocookbook.com). Staples like Fufu can be found all over sub-Saharan Africa. In essence, Fufu is a starchy side dish for stews and other saucy dishes. To make this dish one has to boil, pound and stir vigorously until the Fufu is thick and smooth. The technique to eat Fufu is to use one's dominant hand to pull off a bite-sized piece of the Fufu and dip it into whatever sauce it is served with and then savor it (congocookbook.com).

Banku and Kenkey

Banku and Kenkey are two dishes that are similar to Fufu, which are specially popular in Ghana. They are both mainly constituting of ground corn, but Banku can also be made of a mixture of corn and cassava. The corn and cassava must be fermented before they are dried and ground and finally cooked. Banku is completely cooked in a pot, whereby Kenkey is partly cooked and then transferred to banana leaves or corn husks and steamed. These can both be served with any sauce, stew, or soup, accompanied with meat or fried fish (congocookbook.com).

Okro stew

Okro stew is a stew that is cooked with Okro as the main ingredient. It is one of the most famous dishes in Africa and many variations of it can be found in various cuisines such as Nigerian, Liberian, Ghanaian and many others. It is often served with rice or Fufu and can be made with any meat or fish or a combination of both. One of its main ingredients is the red palm oil, which often gives the stew its trademark taste (Kadirecipes.com)

Egusi Soup

This soup is a soup that is thickened with the flour obtained by grinding seeds of a species called Cucurbitaceae (gourds, melons, pumpkins). Most soups that are thickened using this flour or made solely on the basis of this flour are referred to as Egusi soups. As a substitute for this flour, ground sesame seeds can be very suitable (congocookbook.com).

4 THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

On Business Dictionary.com, the business environment is described as being "the combination of internal and external factors that influence a company's operating situation. The business environment can include factors such as: clients and suppliers; its competition and owners; improvements in technology; laws and government activities; and market, social and economic trends". (www.businessdictionary.com).

4.1 Market Analysis

Marketing scholars generally agree that market information is central to an effective management of a company. This means that managers must identify current and rising customer needs and learn about the marketing activities necessary to fulfilling this need. It is also important that managers gather information about the strategies that their direct competitors are expected to pursue in given markets (Kuada, 2008).

Whether it is because one is starting a new business or to review an existing one, a market analysis is important to carry out at least once a year. The market to focus on is the potential market and not the one that is already reached (Berry, 2005).

4.2 Market Segmentation and Target Market Selection

The concepts of market segmentation and target market selection are nowadays called "niche marketing". The idea behind this is that companies make the choice to compete on a small scale, in order to be the big fish in the small pond. Segmentation is the process whereby companies identify differentiating characteristics between customers. This is an important aspect of market planning. Target market selection happens after the markets have been segmented and grouped into different categories (Gerson and Shotwell, 1991; Davis et.al, 2008).

Another definition of market segmentation offered is that it is "the identification of individuals or organizations with similar characteristics that have significant implications for the determination of marketing strategy" (Jobber & Fahy 2004).

The fundamental aim of segmentation is to understand the need for a product or service and forecast reaction to and/or demand for products and services (Drummond, Ensor, Ashwood 2001, pg. 11). Once the different segments in a company's market are identified, each one may require a different and customized marketing mix.

In the food service industry, the criteria used to identify market segments are Geographic, Age group, Socio-economic classification, Income and Family life cycle (Davis et.al, 2008).

Once the segments of an organization's market have been identified and defined, the company must evaluate its segments and determine their attractiveness (Jobber & Fahy, 2003; Kotler, 2013). A company should choose its target segment or segments based on its attractiveness, and the ability the company has to compete in that segment (Kotler et.al. 2013; Jobber & Fahy 2003). Companies that have limited funds generally limit their target segment or niche to one. In this manner they are able to serve their customer segments in special ways that major competitors tend to overlook. (Kotler et.al. 2013, pg. 52). It is important that companies understand that they cannot please everybody and choose who they want to concentrate on (Blythe 2014, pg. 197).

Also of importance is the company staying focused must be stressed here. It is possible that a segment seems appealing and attractive, but does not fit the company. If entering a segment is not consistent with a company's long term aims, as Drummond et.al put it, "no matter how tempting, entering the segment should be resisted" (Drummond et.al 2001, pg. 178).

4.3 Positioning

After a company has made a decision on which market segment or segments to enter, it must determine how to differentiate its market offering to the different segments (Kotler et.al 2013). In addition, the company must define a clear position for their product in the market and thus create and maintain a singular place in the market themselves and their product (Jobber and Fahy 2003).

This process of picking out a distinctive place for themselves and setting themselves up as leaders to their target market is referred to as positioning. "Positioning is arranging for a product to occupy a clear, distinctive and desirable marketplace relative to competing products in the minds of target consumers" (Kotler et.al 2013). Jobber and Fahy (2003) offer four keys that should guarantee successful positioning. These are clarity, consistency, credibility and competitiveness.

4.4 PEST Analysis

As it stands, current products and ways of operating are quickly being uprooted by both competitors' activities and the alterations in customer needs. These changes are affected by Political, Economic, Social and Technological factors. These factors comprise the components of the PEST analysis, which is an analytical framework that can be utilized to study the business ambiance (Drummond et. al 2001, pg. 7). This tool makes it possible for the one using it to see the bigger picture when deciding how they want to proceed with their restaurant. Looking closely at the components listed above enables businesses to better understand the environment in which they operate and in that way get a better understanding of their own business (Davis et.al 2008).

Political issues cover the dimensions of governmental, party political and legislative issues (Clarke and Chen 2007, pg. 107). The political environment determines how business is conducted (Jobber and Fahy 2003, pg. 35). Political influences affect businesses in two major ways. The first is that political parties have policies that are usually included in legislation and without doubt those have to be fol-

lowed. Secondly, the political party that is in control sets the general tone of behavior in the country as a unit, especially in government departments. The government can control business through areas such as patent legislation, taxation, safety regulations, contract law, consumer protection legislation and control of opening hours (Blythe, 2014).

Essentially, the economic environment regards the level of demand in the economy (Blythe 2014, pg. 31). It can affect the success of companies through its effect on supply and demand, meaning that companies must select the economic influencers that are pertinent to their business and closely observe them. Three major economic influencers on the marketing environment of companies are the economic growth and unemployment; the development and implications of the single European market; and the economic changes that are accompanying the transition to market economies of Eastern bloc countries (Jobber and Fahy 2003, pg. 27).

Economic factors can have a dramatic effect on consumer spending and buying behavior. Most national economies follow the "boom-and-bust" economic cycle, which signifies that every seven or eight years the economy enters a recession, for three or more months, whereby goods and services shrink and unemployment rises. During this time, there is a high likeliness that consumers postpone major purchases (Blythe 2014). Consumers have nowadays taken on a frugal approach to their lifestyles, going back to the basic needs, and they are more financially cautious in the way that they spend (Kotler et.al 2013, pg. 88).

Economic elements must be perceived from a broader perspective than the company's domestic economy (Drummond 2001, pg. 23). In other words, "marketers must pay close attention to major trends and consumer spending patterns, both across and within their world markets" (Kotler et.al 2013, pg. 86).

The socio-cultural environment is composed of four social forces which in particular have an impact on marketing. They are changes in the demographic profile of the population; cultural differences within and between nations; social responsi-

bility and marketing ethics; and the influence of the consumer movement (Jobber and Fahy 2003, pg. 29).

The area of demographic forces has to do with changes in population and the population's structure. Three major forces are age, income distribution and ethnicity (Blythe 2014, pg. 33). Other important areas, like the social/cultural values and beliefs play a pivotal role in changes in consumer behavior, are harder to forecast and can be exposed to more dramatic adjustments (Drummond 2001, pg. 23).

Cultural factors have a powerful effect on how people think and how they consume, therefore marketers show earnest interest in the cultural environment. The cultural environment consists of institutions and other forces that affect a society's basic values, perceptions, preferences and behaviors (Kotler et.al. 2013, pg 95). These include language, religious beliefs, customary ways of working, gender roles, purchasing behavior and gift-giving behavior among others. Figure 2 below illustrates the elements that cause the formation of a consistent society with identifiable characteristics which in turn forms the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of those in that society. Social behavior and cultural attitudes play a huge role in determining consumer behavior (Kotler et.al 2013).

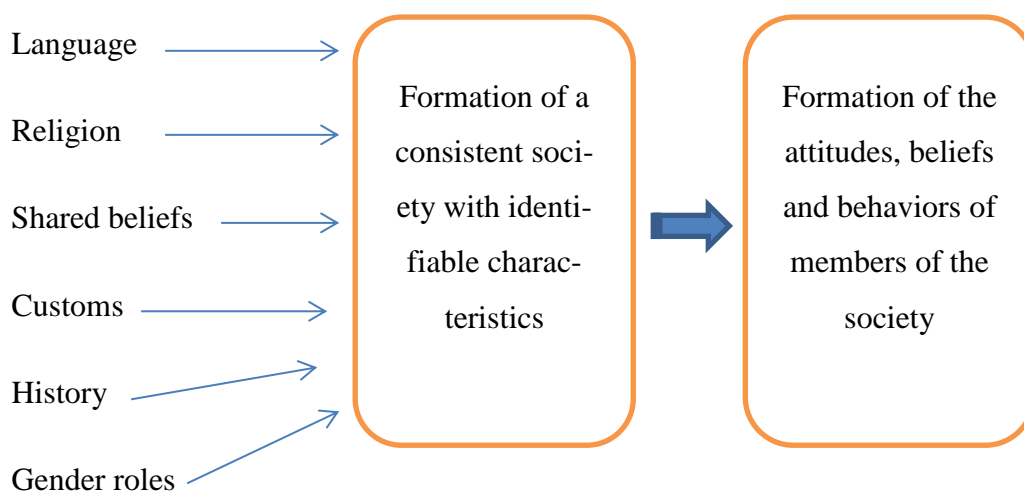| Language | | Formation of a consistent society with identifiable characteristics | | Formation of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of members of the society |
Religion				
Shared beliefs				
Customs				
History				
Gender roles				

Figure 1. Effects of Culture (Blythe 2014, pg 36)

Socio-cultural issues are ascertainable in several ways, affecting both the internal and external environments of the organization. For example, "a company operating in Thailand will need to consider the role of Buddhism in Thai life, including the fact that most Thai men spend several years as monks at some point in their lives. This would be a surprising entry on the CV of a Western employee, but would be normal in Thailand, and indeed regarded as commendable" (Blythe 2014, pg. 36).

People in a certain society have many beliefs and values. Their core beliefs and values are highly persistent and shape specific attitudes and behavior observed in everyday life (Blythe 2014, pg. 37). It is important to mention that culture is learned and not inherited (Hofstede 1991) as it is a set of beliefs that we develop from infancy and all through our lives. Some of those beliefs become fixed and engrained in us while others can be altered (Clark & Chen2007). This phenomenon is a result of socialization; culture comes from one's social environment and not from one's genes (Hofstede 1991).

In spite of the persistent nature of core values, cultural changes do take place. This can be noticed in the way popular music groups, film personalities, and other celebrities have affected young people's hairstyling and clothing standards and norms (Kotler et.al. 2013, pg. 95). As Blythe puts it, an aspect of culture that evolves over time is the alteration in lifestyle expectations. It is important for marketers to be able to predict cultural shifts in order to identify new opportunities or threats. The major cultural values of a society are expressed in how people perceive themselves and others, as well as in their perspective of organizations, society, nature and the universe (Kotler et.al 2013, pg. 95).

These elements of the socio-cultural environment, do not stand alone, on the contrary, "culture and demographic change are interrelated. Culture dictates the aspirations of the population, which in turn dictate some of the changes in income, education and lifestyle. Movement of population also influences culture, as new influences are brought in by immigrant groups" (Blythe 2014, pg. 38). An exam-

ple in the UK is the influence of Indian immigration on British eating habits, or the similar effect in the Netherlands of Indonesian immigration.

The technological environment is maybe the most dramatic force presently shaping our destiny (Kotler et.al.2013, pg. 91). Both people's lives and companies' fortunes can be affected significantly by technology. Technological change goes beyond the visible changes that have been seen over recent years as a result of communications and electronic technology (Blythe 2014, pg. 50). Technology has had both positive and negative contributions to the world. The way we behave towards it essentially depends on whether we are more impressed by its positive contributions or its negative additions to our society (Kotler et.al.2013, pg. 91).

A technological change can transform an industry; many technological breakthroughs have altered the rules of the competitive game. (Blythe 2014, pg. 50; Jobber and Fahy 2003, pg. 38). Technology is an important factor in the hospitality industry as well, as said by Zongqing (2004), "the technological environment has been a particularly significant area within the development of hospitality as many have seen the industry to be at the forefront of technology, both in terms of development but also in terms of implementation (Zongqing 2004). When one takes a look at the restaurant industry, one can see how important information technology has become and continues to be. Practically every aspect of food is affected by technology, especially regarding the need to analyze data (Information Space).

To conclude the discussion on the macro environmental analysis, the main role of the PEST analysis is to identify the key factors that are likely to spark change in the environment (Drummond et.al.2001, pg. 23).

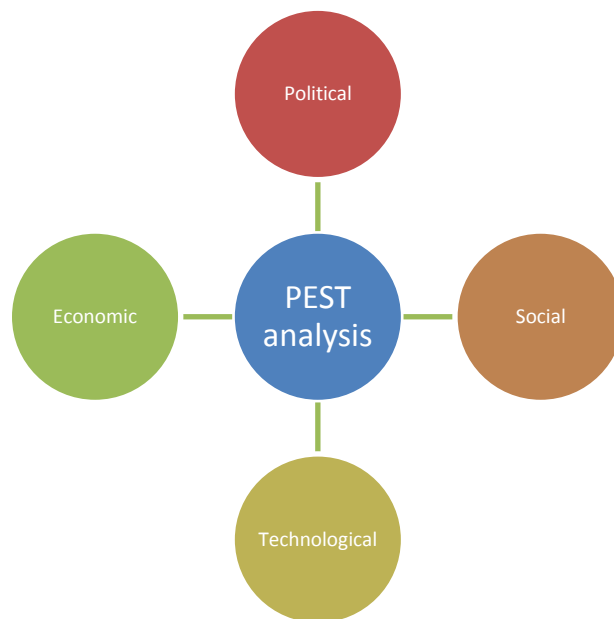The following figure depicts the components of the PEST analysis.

Figure 2. PEST analysis (Kotler et.al 2013).

4.5 Marketing Mix- the Service Mix (7 P's).

The marketing mix is "a framework for the tactical management of the customer relationship, including the product, place, price and promotion (the 4 Ps); in the case of services, three other elements to be taken into account are the process, people and physical evidence" (Jobber and Fahy 2001, pg. 330).

The restaurant industry is clearly a service one which operates very differently from mainstream product businesses. According to Blythe, there is not a complete acceptance as to the difference between physical products and that of service products. However, he is of the opinion that the dynamics involved in marketing a physical product is different from marketing a service product which is intangible in nature and requires the buyer or consumer in the whole process of the purchase and use. It is therefore very relevant that the distinction between a tangible product and a service product be made (Blythe 2014, pg 13).

The most suitable marketing mix for a restaurant in this case will be more rewarding if it is extended to include the other elements known as the service mix. These

are the *people, physical evidence* and the *process*. These are not separate elements on their own but are used together with the traditional four Ps which are the *product*, *place, price* and *promotion.* The reason for the addition of the three Ps is due to the fact that services are purchased and consumed at the same time. Service products are also inseparable from the consumer (the consumer is involved in the process of service delivery from start to finish). The people are very important in the service delivery process because they are the providers of the service which means that they should be well trained towards ensuring that the best experience is what the customer ends up getting. Because a service product is intangible in nature, it is very important that certain features and elements are used to reinforce the presence of the service and this is where the physical evidence comes in handy. It creates some kind of perception about the product in the mind of the potential customer and it can communicate such attributes as quality and prestige. In the case of a restaurant, elements such as the restaurant building, the type of furniture available, certifications obtained, how the food is showcased and so on can be strong determining factors to the success it may achieve (Blythe 2014, pg 13).

The last but not least element in a service mix is process. The process involved in serving a customer can have a lasting impact that completes his perception with the actual. This means that issues such as time and involvement can be a critical factor for a customer to be satisfied or otherwise. It is therefore important that a service provider, such as a restaurant, makes a critical effort to ensure that potential customers are researched into very well in order to provide a wowing effect and not just satisfaction (moving beyond satisfaction to delighting them). (Blythe 2014,pg 14; Blythe 2012, pg 50).

Product refers here to the service offering. In spite of service product's intangible nature, there are some physical characteristics that customers will consider in their purchase. The product has to be attractive and easily accessible; it is essentially destined to meet people's needs (Krishna et.al. 2010; Blythe 2012, pg. 50).

Price is the total cost of purchase to the customer. It goes beyond the money the company receives and incorporates other costs that the customer has to pay, such as the cost of transport to a location, learning to use a product and so on (Blythe 2012)

Promotion is the sub-group of the marketing mix elements that the marketer utilizes to sell the offer to the customer (Blythe 2012, pg. 50). In it are found all the communication aspects of marketing such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion and personal selling. In many ways, it is the way of meeting the customer's information needs (Blythe 2014, pg. 14).

Place refers to the distribution channel of the service. It answers the question of how the product or service reaches the customer (Krishna et.al. 2010, pg. 84) It is in essence the location where the exchange happens- that can be the retail store, through the mail, or in cyberspace. Considerations in thinking of this aspect are distribution and convenient location for customers (Blythe 2012, pg. 50).

People are very crucial to successful marketing, especially in service industries. People are the front line personnel that deliver the service to the customer (Blythe 2012, pg. 50). In addition to the obvious purchase of a meal by customers in a restaurant, customers also buy the skill the chef has displayed in the preparation and presentation of the food, the waiters' service in delivering the dish, and also the quality of the person in charge of dish- washing in making sure that the cutlery and crockery is immaculate (Blythe 2014, pg. 14).

Process indicates the combination of activities that lead to the delivery of the product benefits. In the service industry, the process of delivery has a big influence on the benefits obtained. A self-service restaurant differs in its process from an à la carte restaurant. (Blythe 2014, pg. 14).

Physical Evidence is the tangible aspects of the service delivery. When taking the case of a restaurant, the decoration, the food, tablecloths and menus in a restaurant

are all evidence of the service being delivered. From the point of view of a customer, physical evidence is very useful in determining the expected quality of service provision (Blythe 2012, pg. 50).

When a company succeeds in a balanced mixture of these 7 P's, they have a higher chance of achieving competitive advantage, which every company finds essential to achieve (Blythe 2014).

5   CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR

Consumer behavior is made up of all the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming and disposing of products and services (Blythe 2014). Consumer buying behavior has to do with the end customer, who is the individual who buys products and services for personal consumption (Drummond et.al 2001). For successful marketing, or for a supplier to make themselves stand out over all their competitors, understanding the thought processes of people when they go about their purchasing behavior is vital, as it helps them determine what would sway them one way or another (Blythe 2014).

Individuals do not only buy when they have a practical need for a product at a given moment, they also buy because of their social, psychological and cultural needs, which are needs that go beyond the simple physical needs for food, shelter and warmth (Blythe 2014).

5.1 Influences on Consumer Behavior

Not all decisions follow the same decision-making process, and nor do they all involve the same buying center or utilize identical criteria (Jobber and Fahy 2000,pg 58).Understanding the sources of influence on consumer buyer behavior provides a way of understanding the influences that affect consumer's purchasing decisions. These influences can be divided into four main categories and there are slight nuances according to various authors on what those categories are. Drummond et.al. state that they are social, personal, psychological and situational (Drummond et.al. 2001, pg. 46). However, other authors mention that a buyer's purchase decision is affected by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors (Sherlekar et.al, 2010). One can observe that in the theory presented by Drummond and co-authors, they include cultural influence under the social, so the difference aims to magnify the cultural impact on decision. Also, the situational aspect is omitted from the second selection of influencing factors. Because of the nature of the thesis which emphasizes the cultural aspect, the latter group of fac-

tors will be selected as a means of understanding buying behavior. (Drummond et.al, 2001).

Culture refers to the traditions, values and basic attitudes of the society within which an individual lives. This deeply affects buyer behavior in that it shapes the pattern of consumption and pattern of decision-making (Sherlekar et.al, 2010). Cultural norms form the codes that guide behavior. Within a culture, there are four main subcultures, based on religion, nationality, geographic location and racial groups (Sherlekar et.al 2010, Jobber and Fahy, 2000). A very notable phenomenon in the past three decades has been the increased internationalization of cultures. This has led to the spread of previously culturally specific products and services. An example is the Japanese sushi, Korean barbeque and Cajun food which can now be found all over the world (Jobber and Fahy, 2000).

Within a society one can find social classes. Social classes are divisions in society which are hierarchically ordered and whose members share similar values, interests and behavior. There are three clear classes; upper, middle and lower. Upper class consumers are rational and desire products and brands that reflect their social standing. Middle class consumers are cautious in their purchases, comparing prices and reading advertisements before they buy. Lower class consumers always purchase on impulse. An example in reference to choice of dining place is as follows: a family from a higher class may wish to eat in a five-star hotel. A middle class family might base their choice on service and food quality while a low class family may opt for a cost-effective restaurant. (Sherlekar et.al, 2010).

Social factors which primarily affect decision making are reference groups and family. Reference groups are groups of people that influence the attitude or behavior of a person. (Jobber and Fahy, 2000) These can be formal (members of a professional association or society) or informal clusters (social, friends, etc.) (Drummond et.al. 2001). Individuals tend to make purchase decisions that are in line with the norm of their reference group. In general, when one member of this group is satisfied with a product, he or she begins to promote it to the other mem-

bers of the group and thus influences their decisions (Sherlekar et.al, 2010). Family influences a person's attitude the most. Even if a person is not in direct contact with their family, the family can have a strong effect on their unconscious behavior. A person's behavior is also greatly influenced by their spouse or children (Sherlekar et.al, 2010).

The personal characteristics of a buyer such as age, life cycle stage, occupation, economic circumstances, lifestyle, personality and self-concept all affect the decision making process. These factors are commonly used in the segmentation process of consumers (Sherlekar et.al, 2010; Drummond et.al. 2001).

Psychological influential factors are motivation, perception, learning as well as beliefs and attitude. Individuals are often motivated by a need and purchase power to act, in this case this refers to making a purchase. The purchase they make is affected by their perception of the situation. The perception encompasses how they see, hear, feel, touch, smell and sense a stimulus and how they dispose themselves to gain meaning from the experience. Our senses detect the color, shape, sound, taste and smell of the stimulus and our actions are governed by our perception of these. Perception has been defined by social psychologists as being the "complex process" by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world (Sherlekar et.al. 2010).

Learning refers to how an individual changes based on their experiences. An individual can learn due to being conditioned by their experience (having had a good experience) to learn whatever action brought about that good experience. (Drummond et.al, 2001). When an individual forms an attitude and belief about a product it effectively creates a position for the product or brand, whether positive or negative. Attitudes are also the result of experiences.

To summarize, the behavior of consumers is affected by the complex mix of cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Understanding these factors enables and aids the marketer to identify the prospective buyer.
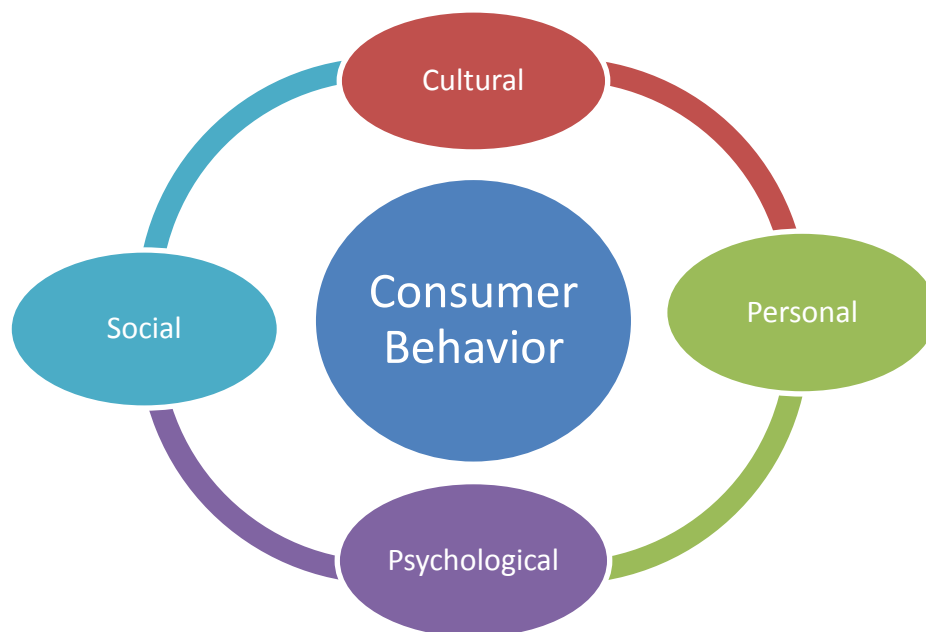
Figure 3. Influences on Consumer Behavior.

5.2 The Decision-Making Process

The purchase is only the visible part of a more complex decision making process put in place by the consumer for every product he or she purchases.

In 1968 Engel, Kollat and Blackwell suggested a model of the decision making process that has five stages: recognizing the need, information search, evaluation of the possibilities that meet that need and the decision and action of buying followed by the post purchase evaluation (Perreau, F. 2014).

The need recognition or problem awareness is the starting point of the buying decision. The need may be activated by internal or external factors, and its intensity affects the speed with which a person will try to fulfil it (Sherlekar, S.A; Prasad, K.; Nirmala, V. and Salvadore, S.J, 2010).

Once the need is aroused, it can be satisfied right away when the desired product meeting that need is not only known, but also easily available. However, when it is unclear what type or brand of the product can procure the best possible satisfac-

tion, the buyer finds him or herself in a position where they need to search for information. The information sought for typically relates to the brand, location and way of obtaining the product. Friends, family, neighbors, opinion leaders and acquaintances are examples of sources consumers can consult in their search (Sherlekar et.al.,2010). The goal of the information search is to build up an array of brands that may provide a solution to the problem (Jobber and Fahy, 2003, pg. 53).

After the consumer has acquired an array of information, the critical stage in the buying process begins, which is the evaluation of alternatives. The product is generally viewed as a group of attributes, some more important to the consumer than others. First the different options for solutions are narrowed down and then those options remaining are thoroughly examined, with their respective attractive attributes being measured (Sherlekar et.al, 2010).

During the process of evaluating the alternatives, the consumer forms opinions and preferences about different brands or possible solutions. This in turns affects their intention to buy. Situational factors, for example prices are also considered and perceived risk can greatly affect the purchase as well. Consumers are aware of the higher risk involved with highly priced products, as well as the performance risk involved with sophisticated products. They may also be more trusting toward national brands in order to reduce risks and problems of service once the sale is completed (Sherlekar et.al, 2010).

The post purchase experience and behavior are what follow the purchase. This is the stage at which the consumer decides whether or not they are satisfied with the results they are getting. Cognitive dissonance occurs when the consumer is not as satisfied with the product as expected. If, however, the satisfaction after trying a product is equal to the expected satisfaction, that creates brand preference (Sherlekar et.al, 2010).
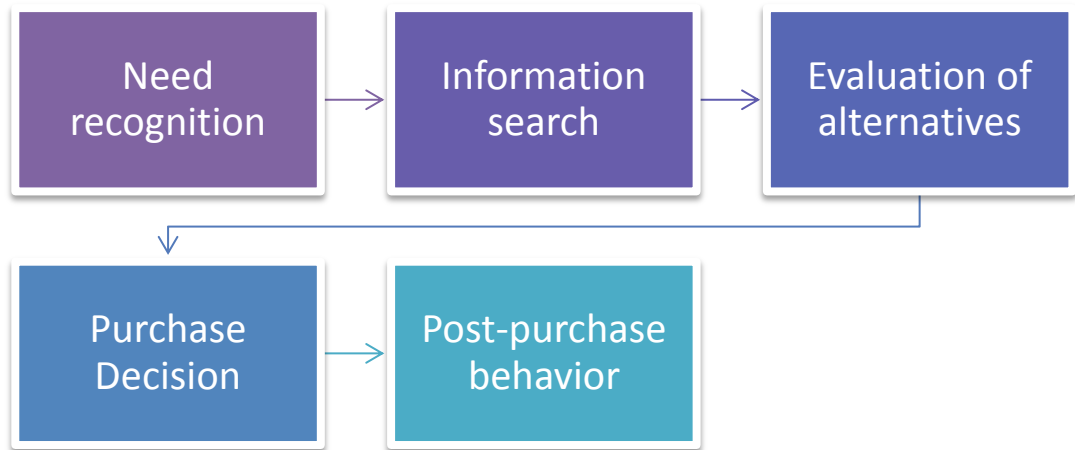
Figure 4. The Decision Making Process.

6 METHODOLOGY

Jerome Clayton Glenn defined research as being "human activity based on intellectual application in the investigation of matter" and also a whole collection of information on a certain topic. He continued in stating that the primary purpose for applied research is discovering, interpreting and the development of methods and systems for the advancement of human knowledge. Basic research is exploratory and often fueled by the researcher's curiosity, interest and intuition (Glenn 2010, pg. 1).

6.1 The Research Methodology

Research methods in most social sciences are dichotomized into two different types which are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research like any research seeks to explain a phenomenon, through the use of numerical data. It is also characterized by the fact that it analyses results using mathematically based methods. This method was chosen for this research because it provides a means for numerical data to be obtained and analyzed. It may appear that studying peoples' attitude to something is not possible through quantitative data, since the data to be looked at is not available in numerical form. However, a questionnaire can be devised that can lead to producing that numerical /quantitative data, which is what was done in this research (Muijs, D.; 2004, pg. 1-2). The quantitative research method relies on numerical information to bring forth conclusions and to test hypotheses. It is also characterized with giving results that can be objectively generalized (Altinay, L. Paraskevas, A.; 2008, pg. 75).

6.2 Research Implementation Process

The research was conducted by sharing questionnaires electronically and in printed form. The electronic data collection was from the 5th to 30th May 2015. Physical copies of the questionnaire were distributed for a bit over that period of time, making the whole data collection period round up to 1.5 months. The research

sample was composed of genetically Finnish people living in the city of Vaasa. The online questionnaires were sent out to students from all degree programmes in Vaasa University of Applied Sciences and were also shared on Facebook by three individuals who urged their friends who fit the criteria of the sample to answer it. The printed questionnaires were distributed to random people all around the city from church settings to offices. Some of the questionnaires were given in batches to individuals who in turn distributed it in their workplaces or family /friend circles. In total 170 responses were received, of which 122 were from the online questionnaire and 48 from the printed copies. The participants were people with various occupations in society, and from different walks of life, in order to have a more varied information base and maximize the validity and reliability of the study.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections, each one aimed at obtaining specific answers. The foundation for the questions came from the theories explored in the theoretical framework. The first section collected basic information about the respondents and the people they spend the most time with. The second part looked into their general restaurant behavior. Following that was the third section which sought to uncover the extent of the respondent's knowledge and attitude toward African food. The last part of the questionnaire contained questions regarding the respondent's attitude towards a possible African restaurant.

6.3 Reliability and Validity of the Research

Muijs describes validity as a concept that seeks to ascertain whether or not one is measuring what one wants to measure (Muijs, D.; 2004 pg. 65). Basically, proving validity shows that the right variables have been used to measure the specific object of measurement. Reliability proves the accuracy and quality level of the measurement means used for the research (Muijs, D.; 2004 pg. 75)

In this research, the variables used are the questions posed in the questionnaire, which are founded on the theories presented in the literature review. These questions are specifically phrased in order to obtain all the information necessary to answer the research questions. This provides a solid nature to the validity of the research because it's not possible to not receive the answers to the questions posed. Nevertheless, there is a possibility that some variables could have been even more accurately chosen. Because of time restraints, some cross-tabulations and correlations that could have been made in SPSS to enrich and solidify the analysis of the research findings were missed. These issues have, however, helped to create suggestions for further research and have not affected the reliability of the results that were presented as each analysis is presented with a backing result.

7   RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the questionnaire will be presented. They will be presented in four parts, namely the respondents' background, general restaurant behavior, African food awareness, and African restaurant attitude.

7.1 Respondents' Basic Information

Of the 170 respondents who answered the questionnaire, the gender distribution was 40 % male and 60% female. They were all divided into four age groups and the largest numbers of respondents were in the 20 to 40 year gap. In terms of occupation 90% of the respondents were students and employees.
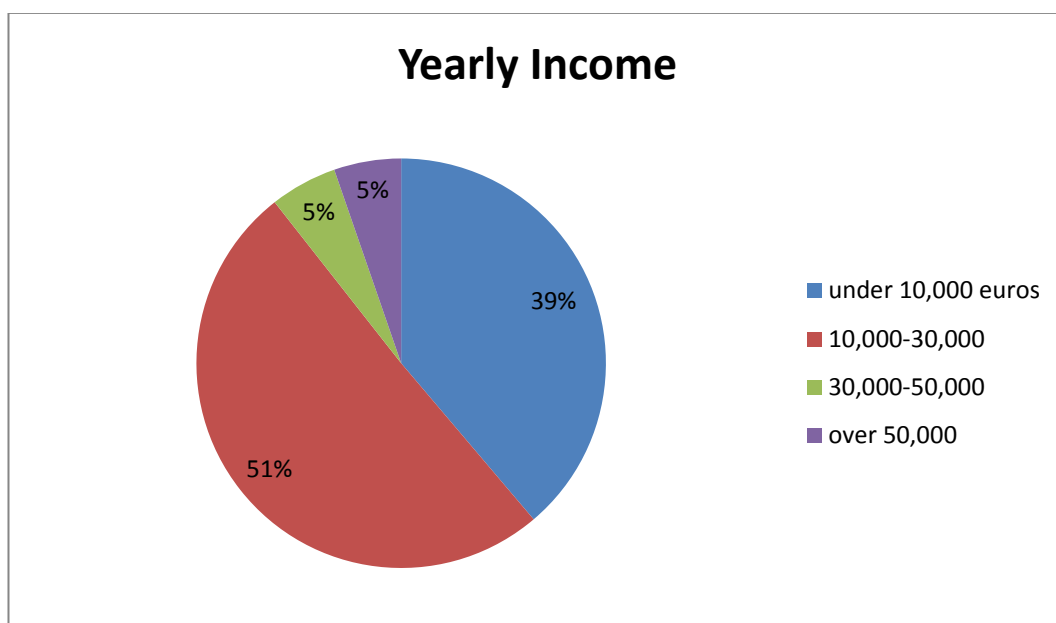
Figure 5. Yearly income.

The graph above depicts the ranges of income of the respondents. As is shown, 50% earned between 10,000 – 30,000 euros, followed by the second highest percentage of people, 39%, earning less than 10,000.
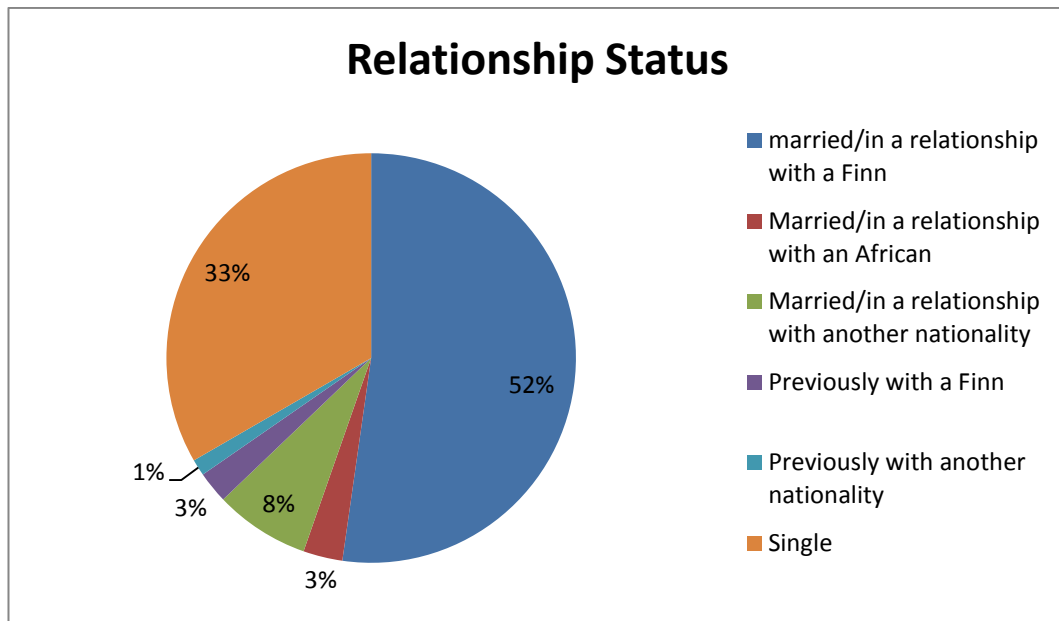
Figure 6. Relationship Status.

Of the six different relationship situations that there were, the highest number of people were married or in a relationship with a Finn with 52% and single with 33%. This question was answered by 159 of the 170 respondents.

7.2 Respondents' Restaurant Behavior

Figure 8 depicts the results of the question on the frequency of eating out of the respondents. Over half (65%) of the respondents ate out twice a week or twice a month. In other words, they did so two to eight times a month, which is relatively regular. Counted together, the number of people who ate out every two months or rarely was summed up to 36%.

Figure 7. Frequency of Eating Out.

When it came to the importance of different factors when choosing a restaurant, the variables were restaurant concept, dining environment, food quality, service quality, price and convenience of location. These factors were chosen based on the 7 p's of marketing. The following is a detailed exposé of the importance level of each of the variables.
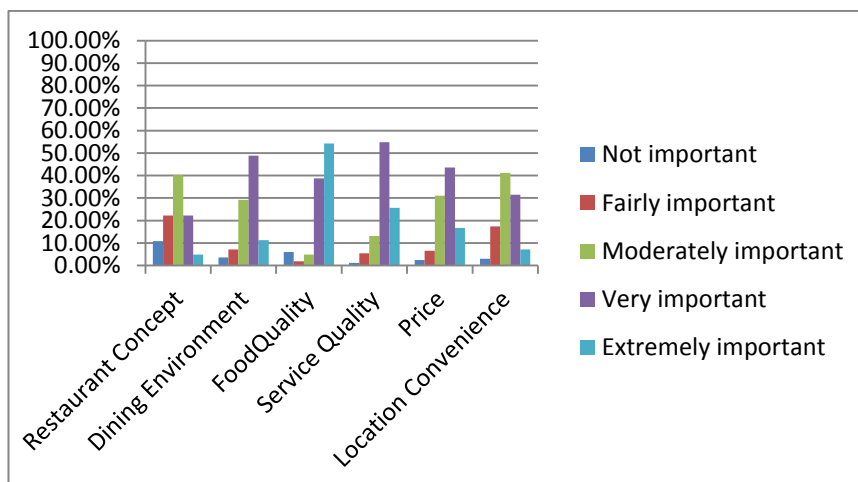
Figure 8. Restaurant Factors.

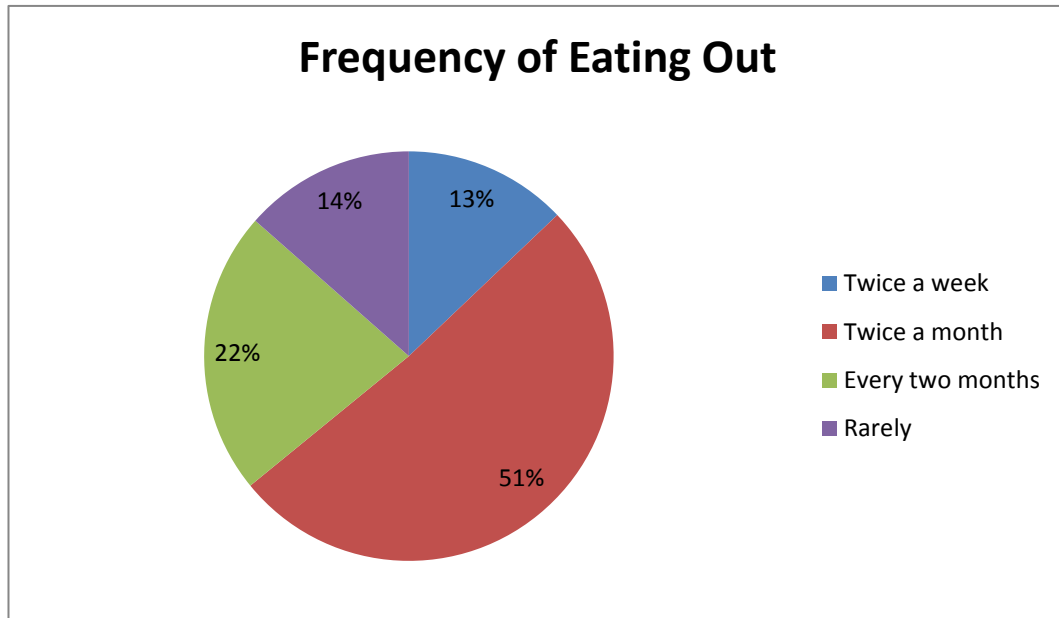As is shown in the graph in Figure 9, various factors had different importance levels. Those that were considered very important and extremely important were food quality, service quality and price. Food quality was rated very important or extremely important by 93% of the respondents, service quality was of the same category by 81% and 61% thought price was of the same category.

To summarize the highest important levels of each factor, restaurant concept and convenience of location were considered moderately important, dining environment, service quality and price were very important and food quality was extremely important.
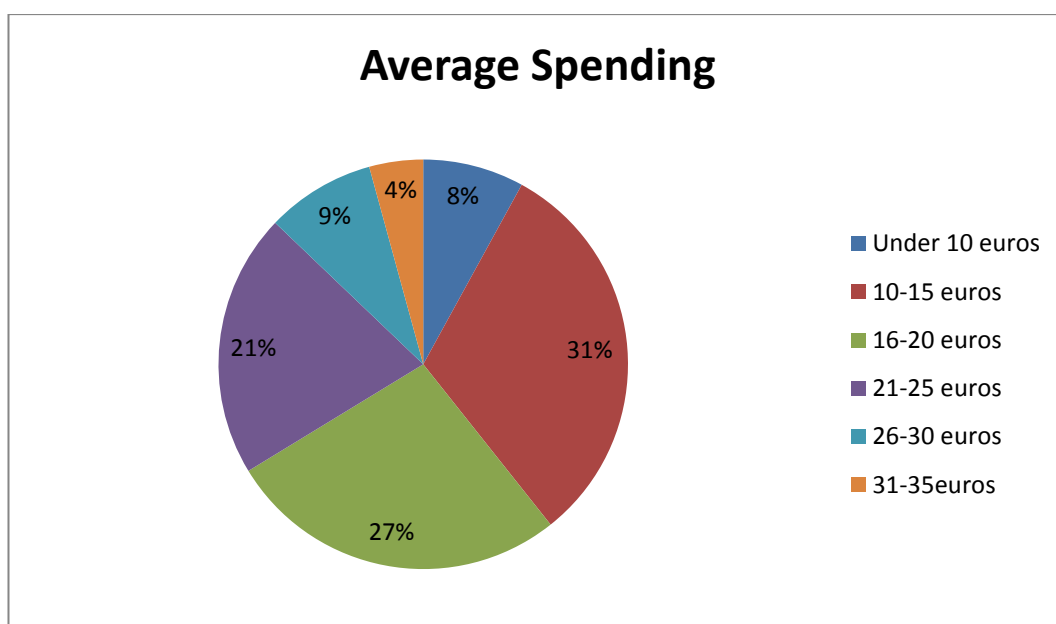
Figure 9. Average Spending.

The highest percentages when it came to the average spending of the respondents when they ate out were between the ranges of 10-15, 16-20 and 21-25 euros. Respondents who spent between 10-25 euros made up 80% of the total respondents. The percentages decreased considerably with higher amounts of money: 8% spend

26-30 euros, 4% spend 31-35 euros and 4% spend over 35 euros. Very few were also willing to pay less than 10 euros.

7.3 Respondents' Awareness of and Attitude towards African Food

The questions in this section sought to assess the general level of familiarity of the respondents to African and West African food and also to determine their general disposition toward trying West African dishes.

The graph below shows various statements about familiarity to African food in general and the percentage of people that selected each one. One can see that 47%, almost half of the respondents had tasted African food and like it. The other half was either completely unaware of African dishes or had heard of some but never tried any.

Figure 10. African Food Familiarity.

The West-African dishes that were presented in the earlier chapter of this paper were presented to the respondents and their familiarity to those dishes was assessed.

Rice and beans – 33% were not familiar with it, 45% were a little familiar with it and 22% were very familiar with it.

Jollof rice – 85% were not familiar with it, 11% were a little familiar and 5% were very familiar with it.

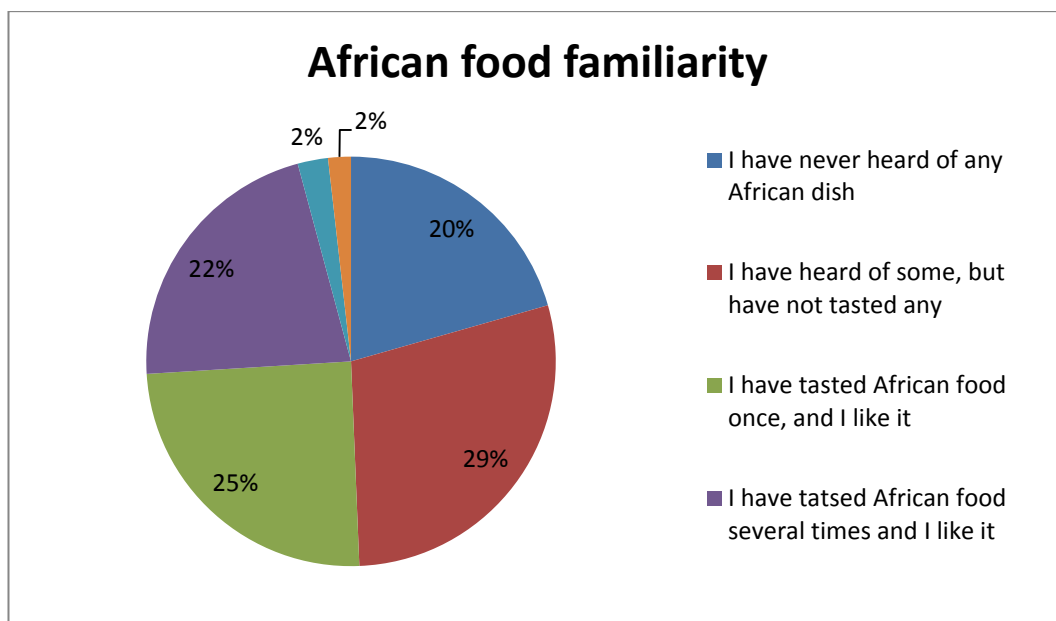**Aloko** – 98% were not familiar with it, 1% was a little familiar with it and 1% was very familiar with it.

Fufu – 80% were not familiar with it, 16% were a little familiar with it, 4% were very familiar with it.

Banku – 92% were not familiar with it, 5% were a little familiar with it, 3% were very familiar with it.

Kenkey – 95% were not familiar with it, 4% were a little familiar with it and 1% was very familiar with it.

Okro Stew – 88% were not familiar with it, 10% were a little familiar with it and 2% were very familiar with it.

Egusi Soup – 92% were not familiar with it, 5% were a little familiar with it and 4% were very familiar with it.

The level of unfamiliarity to most of these West-African dishes is very high, ranging between 80 to 100%. The only exception to this was Rice and Beans, which 67% of the respondents were generally familiar with.

The respondents who had tasted African food were asked to specify which part of Africa they had tasted food from. 24% did not answer this question, meaning that the following percentages are out of 129 people. 45% had tasted food from North Africa, 19% had tasted from East Africa, 16% had tasted from West Africa, 12% had tasted from South Africa and 7% had tasted food from Central Africa. The

low percentage of tastes from West Africa supports the results from the previous question. The part of Africa most people had tasted food from was North Africa.

To the question about the attractiveness level of African food, 55% of the respondents found it extremely attractive or very attractive, and less than half found it slightly attractive or completely unattractive.

Attractiveness of African Food

Extremely Attractive — 20%
Very Attractive — 35%
Slightly Attractive — 37%
Not Attractive at all — 8%
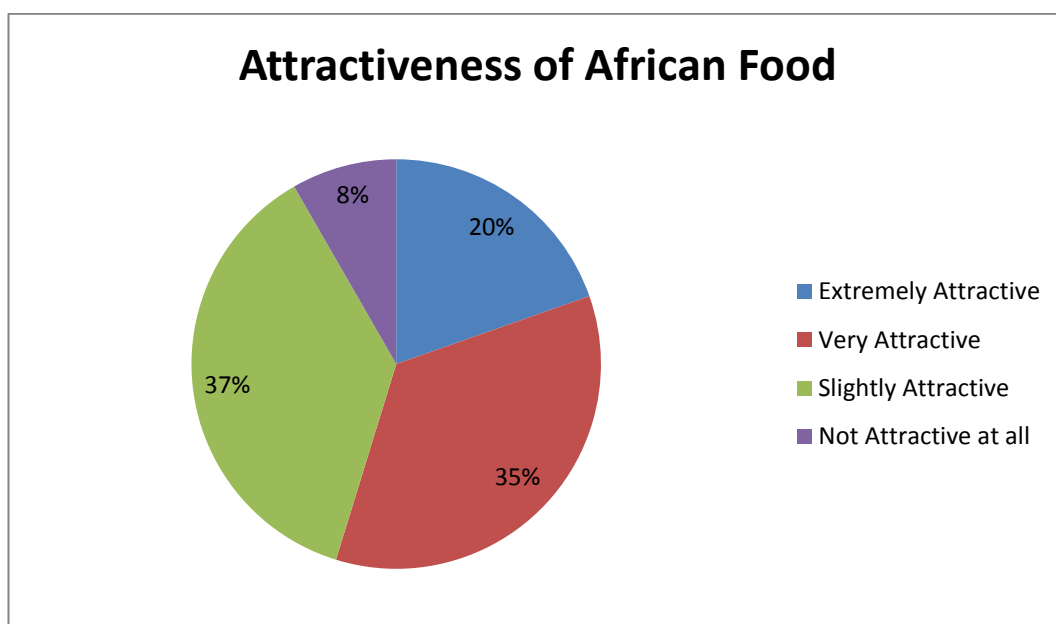
Figure 11. Attractiveness of African Food.

2% of the respondents found the statement "I am interested in trying African food" to be untrue. 9% said it was slightly true, 15% said it was quite true, 31% said it was true and 43% said it was very true. 89% therefore found it quite accurate to very accurate that they were interested in trying African food.

7.4 Respondents' Attitude towards an African Restaurant

The Finns' reaction the concept of an African restaurant was for the majority very positive or somewhat positive according to 66% of the respondents. 30% were neutral to the concept, 4% were of somewhat negative disposition and one person was of very negative disposition. Two people did not answer this question.

The concept was judged to be extremely attractive by 17% of the respondents, very or slightly attractive by 76% and not attractive at all by 7%.

Next was a poll of the attendance frequency to other ethnic restaurants. 19% often attended ethnic restaurants, 45% were more moderate in their attendance, 32% rarely attended them and 4% did not go to ethnic restaurants at all. Generally, the respondents were not completely oblivious to foreign food.

The respondents were then asked about the likeliness of them visiting an African restaurant would it exist today in Vaasa. 79% said it would be extremely likely, very likely or moderately likely that they do so. 18% thought it would be slightly likely and 2% thought it was not likely at all.

When asked about what could be possible motivators for them to go to an African restaurant, 23% said it would be through recommendation, 27% said they'd go because of personal interest, 37% said they would go purely out of curiosity and 12% said they would go because of an existing positive perception.
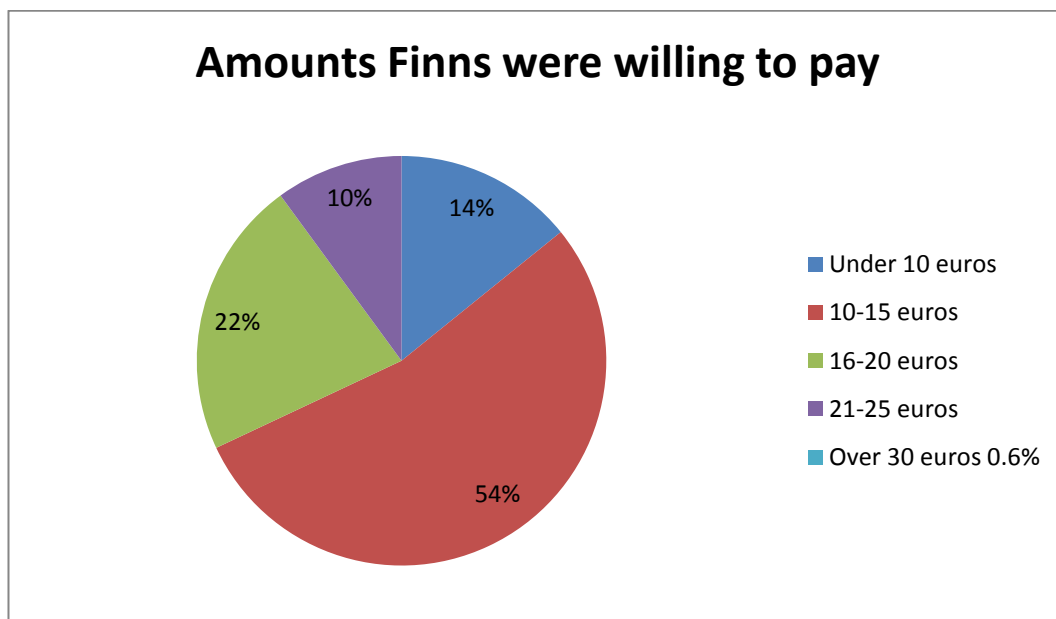
Figure 12. Amounts respondents were willing to pay.

The last question in this section sought to identify how much people would be willing to spend in an African restaurant. 14% opted to pay less than 10 euros, whereas 76% were willing to pay between 10-20 euros. 10% were willing to spend 21-25 euros and just one person was willing to spend over 30 euros. Altogether, 86% of the respondents were willing to really invest in the African meal experience.

8   ANALYSIS

In order to analyze the results properly in light of the purpose of the study, they are analyzed and examined according to the four research questions mentioned at the beginning of the study.

- Do Finns in Vaasa know about West African Food?

Based on the results presented from the familiarity section of the questionnaire, the cumulative percentage of the statements that expressed different levels of familiarity to African food, can be summed up to 51%.

Furthermore, the percentage of respondents who had tasted food from the different parts of Africa strengthens the notion that Finns in Vaasa are familiar with African food. Given that not all 170 respondents answered that question and of the 129 who did, all had tasted food from some part of Africa, one can come to the conclusion that 76% of the respondents had tried food from a certain part of Africa. This percentage, when joined to the percentage of the different statements of familiarity points to the obvious fact that Finns in Vaasa are quite familiar with food from the African continent.

Nonetheless, when one takes a closer look at the knowledge of food from West Africa specifically, the level of familiarity decreases significantly. Finns that had tasted food from West Africa added up to a percentage of 16%, which is very low compared to the level of familiarity to North African food which was 45%.

To further buttress this observation, the various West African dishes that were presented to the respondents were generally unknown to them, as is depicted in the percentages of lack of familiarity for six of the dishes which were in the range of 85% - 98%. The highest percentage of familiarity was 16% for the Fufu dish. These results prove an evident unfamiliarity to the West African cuisine among Finnish nationals living in Vaasa.

- Are the Finns in Vaasa open to trying African food?

The cumulative percentage of those who found African food very attractive and extremely attractive can be summed up to 55%. If one would add to that the percentage of people who found it slightly attractive, one would get a percentage of 92%. However, it is advisable to dwell only on the sure statements about African food's attractiveness as the percentages they offer are indisputable; therefore we maintain the 55% who found African food to sound attractive. 8% of the respondents thought African food is unattractive. If one would add that percentage to that of those who found it slightly attractive, one would get a cumulative percentage of 45%, which is still less than that of those who found it attractive.

When it came to measuring interest and willingness to try African food, 15% thought it was slightly true, 31% thought it was true and the largest percentage, 43% thought it was very true. Adding those percentages gives the sum of 89%. That would mean that 89% of the respondents would be willing to try African food as opposed to the meagre 11% that would not consider themselves willing or only slightly so. This percentage shows that the Finns are not so reluctant to try something they are not 100% familiar with. In fact, as is seen from the possible motivators to go to an African restaurant, curiosity is the highest motivator.

-Is there an interest in an African restaurant in Vaasa?

In order to determine whether or not there is an interest in an African restaurant in Vaasa or not, one can start by looking at the general attitude toward that notion.

Using cumulative percentages of the measuring variables that point in the same direction, a clear picture can be painted.

Finnish people had different initial reactions to the concept of an African restaurant. Those whose reaction was somewhat positive and very positive added up to make the percentage of 65%. Those who were neutral made up 30% and those who were somewhat negative and very negative added up to 4%

57% of the respondents found the concept to be attractive, 37% found it slightly attractive and 7% found it completely unattractive. The percentage of people moderately likely, very likely and extremely likely to visit an African restaurant would one exist in Vaasa added up to 79% and those only slightly likely to visit it or not visit it at all added up to 21%. One can notice from these numbers that the percentages of variables that point to the appealing nature of an African Restaurant are quite high in each case and quite greatly surpass the percentages of variables of a more negative disposition.

Though these numbers show a clear interest in an African restaurant and a generally positive attitude towards the idea, it is good to look deeper at the meaning of this. When one does a cross analysis between the amount of money people spend when they go out normally to restaurants and the amount they were willing to pay for an African meal, one can see an interesting occurrence. Of the 51 people who said they spent between 10-15 euros typically, 38 said they would spend the same amount for an African meal and three were willing to pay even more than they normally do. Out of the 44 who normally spend 16-20 euros, 17 were willing to pay the same amount for an African dish and 25 were willing to pay 10-15 euros. Only two of them would have paid lower than 10 euros. All in all, 52% of those who spend between 10 – 20 euros were willing to spend the same amount on African food. These numbers show that people are generally ready to invest in African food just like they do in the food they usually eat. As is also shown in the presentation of results, 54% of the respondents were willing to pay 10-15 euros for it. This willingness is a clear indicator of interest to go to a place where they can pay for African dishes, which would rightfully be an African restaurant.

- What would a possible segment be?

Now that it has been established that there is an interest in African food and in an African restaurant, one can attempt to paint a general picture of what characterizes

the target market of such an establishment. It was stated under the target market subtitle of this thesis that the various criteria used in segmenting a market were geographic, age group, socio-economic classification, income and family life cycle.

 If we take a look at the respondents who were willing to pay 10-20 euros for an African meal and who in actuality do spend that same amount of money as part of their normal eating out behavior, we can see that some general linking points are visible. Based on the analysis of several cross tabulations, one can deduct that the target market can be chosen based on income and geographical location. As mentioned before, most of the respondents who averagely spend 10-20 euros were the most willing to pay similar prices at an African restaurant. Their general profile is that they are students or employees who earn up to 30,000 euros and go out to eat twice a month.

9   DISCUSSION

The underlying element of interest in the drafting of this thesis was consumer buying behavior and its influencers. Several factors were discussed as being very influential on consumer behavior such as the economic environment and the socio-cultural environment. When talking about consumer behavior, it has been show that individuals do not only purchase when they need a product, but also for other needs, such as social and cultural needs. Culture was further examined as a strong influencer of buying behavior.

From the results of the research, one can see that of those who were willing to pay for the African meal experience, single people and people in relationship with Finns were the highest number of respondents. This goes to show that relationship status, relationship nationality or family situation is not necessarily the strongest determinant of what pushes Finns in their restaurant behavior. It should however not be overlooked that Finns who had been in a relationship with people of other nationalities were all 100% willing to invest in an African meal experience- perhaps because their contact with other cultures affected them and opened their minds.

Kotler et.al. mention that despite the strong nature of core values, cultural changes do occur. It is stated that it is important for marketers to be able to predict cultural shifts in order to identify new opportunities or threats. It is an exciting thought to consider that a cultural shift may be occurring in Vaasa in favor of African culture and African food. The movement of population influences culture through the new influences brought on by immigrant groups and there is a strong possibility that the international presence in Vaasa has subtle but sure effects on the local population.

An interesting discovery was that Finns are considerably knowledgeable about East and North African food. One could suggest that in the eventuality of the creation of an African Restaurant, the business idea of such a restaurant be one that

encompasses these aspects of Africa as well. In other words, a restaurant serving East, North and West African food could be better marketed than a restaurant selling only West African food. After all, the willingness to try African food in general is quite high and can be made great use of.

Additionally, the concept of a restaurant was mostly considered moderately important. This demonstrates that the final affecting factor of a Finnish consumer's experience at a restaurant would not rest so much on the concept behind it. The factors that were most important were food and service quality. Thus the actual product and service of the African restaurant are very important and if marketing were done for such a restaurant, it should not be too centered on the concept.

10 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of the research was to investigate Finnish people's awareness level of African food and West African food in Vaasa. The general attitude toward the idea of an African restaurant was also probed. In order to accomplish that goal, the relevant sample was questioned on various issues and their responses were analyzed. The study shows that there is cultural, psychological and social openness to African food in Vaasa. The idea of the cultural environment of Vaasa changing proves to be a good foundation for believing there is an opportunity because it is something that is still happening. This means that there is a probability that if this research is done in ten years, with Vaasa remaining an international city with so many immigrant groups' influences, the results may be even more favorable to an African restaurant than they are now.

It was stated under the heading of consumer behavior that "when an individual forms an attitude and belief about a product it effectively creates a position for the product or brand". The research has shown that the attitude of Finns in Vaasa toward West African food is generally positive and inquisitive, and even more so toward African food as a whole. The afore mentioned statement can then be the foundation to the conclusion that a position has been or is being effectively created for West African and African cuisine in Vaasa.

As well as showing that there is an opportunity for a West African restaurant, the study brings out that it would be much more beneficial for West, East and North African cuisines to collaborate to create the overall African meal experience that it seems the Finns truly need.

With the foundation of this research, several suggestions for further studies have emerged and evolved, as follows.

- Ascertaining if there is a cultural shift in Vaasa.

- What type of restaurant would be best suiting to Vaasa dwellers? We know what they are willing to pay, how can that be capitalized on?

-Which dishes from East, West and North African cuisine work well together and can be combined on a menu?

- Deeper segmenting and target marketing research.

- Could age be a segmenting variable in addition to income?

- Create a business plan for an African restaurant.

- Similar market research with more exact numbers that entrepreneurs can base themselves on.

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APPENDIX 1. Picture of West African dishes

1. Rice and Beans

2. Jollof Rice

3. Aloko

4. Fufu

5. Banku

6. Kenkey

7. Okro Stew

8. Egusi Soup

APPENDIX 2. Questionnaires. – English Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire pertains to a research conducted by Eleos Zannou, Restaurant Management student from VAMK. It is a market research that aims to uncover the level of interest from the Finnish population in Vaasa toward West African food and their disposition toward the prospect of an African Restaurant in this city. The answers you provide will be analyzed and will serve to ascertain whether or not there is a possible market for an African Restaurant in Vaasa. Your answers are also completely anonymous.

NOTICE!! : This only concerns Finns living in Vaasa

Basic Information

1. 1. Gender :   Male ☐   Female ☐
2. Age: _____
3. What is your occupation?
   Employee ☐ middle manager ☐ top manager ☐ student ☐ unemployed ☐

4. What is your yearly income?
   Under 10000€ ☐   10000€-30000€ ☐   30000€-50000€ ☐   over 50000€ ☐

5. Which statement best describes your relationship status?

   ☐ I am married/in a relationship with   ☐ a Finn ☐ an African ☐ another Nationality
   ☐ I have been married/in a relationship with ☐ a Finn ☐ an African ☐ another Nationality
   ☐ I am single

6. Do you have African friends or relatives?

	Friends	Relatives
None		
Few		
Many		

7. How much time do you spend with the following groups of people?

	Not at all	Very little	Average	Much	Very much
Work colleagues					
Family					
Friends					

Restaurant Behavior

8. What statement below would reflect your mindset when deciding to visit a restaurant?

☐ I go to restaurants with high brand popularity
☐ I compare different restaurant prices before going to a restaurant
☐ I go to restaurants impulsively

9. How often do you eat in a restaurant?
Twice a week ☐ Twice a month ☐ Every two months ☐ Rarely ☐

10. How important are the following factors to you when choosing a restaurant?

	Not important	fairly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely Important
Restaurant concept					
Dining Environment					
Food quality					
Service quality					
Price					
Convenience of location					

11. How much do you spend averagely in a restaurant (per person)?
less than 10€ ☐   10-15€ ☐   16-20€ ☐   21-25€ ☐   26-30€ ☐   31-35€ ☐   ☐
over 35€

African food awareness and attitude

12. Which statement below best describes your familiarity with African food?

☐ I have never heard of any African dish

☐ I have heard of some African dishes but I have not tasted any

☐ I have tasted African food once, and I like it

☐ I have tasted African food once, but I don't like it

☐ I have tasted African food several times, and I like it

☐ I have tasted African food several times, but I don't like it

☐ I often eat African food

13. How familiar do the following dishes sound to you?

	Not familiar	A little familiar	Very familiar
Rice and beans (waakye)			
Jollof Rice			
Aloko			
Fufu (foufou)			
Banku			
Kenkey			
Okro stew			
Egusi soup			

14. Which part of Africa have you tasted food from? (State the country (ies) if you are not sure what part they belong to).

North Africa ☐   West Africa ☐   Central Africa ☐   East Africa ☐   South Africa ☐

Country (ies): _____

15. How attractive would you say African food sounds to you?

Extremely attractive ☐   Very attractive ☐   Slightly attractive ☐   Not attractive at all ☐

16. How willing would you be to try West African food? Rate on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being not true and 5 being very true.

	1	2	3	4	5
I am interested in trying African food					

African Restaurant attitude

17. What is your first reaction to the concept of an African restaurant?
Very positive ☐ Somewhat positive ☐ Neutral ☐ Somewhat negative ☐ Very negative ☐

18. How attractive would you say this concept sounds to you?
Extremely attractive ☐ Very attractive ☐ Slightly attractive ☐ Not attractive at all ☐

19. How often do you go to other ethnic restaurants, i.e Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese?
Very often ☐ Moderately often ☐ Rarely ☐ Not at all ☐

20. If an African restaurant would exist today in Vaasa, how likely would you be to visit it?
Extremely likely ☐ Very likely ☐ Moderately likely ☐ Slightly likely ☐ Not likely at all ☐

21. What would motivate you to go to an African restaurant?
Recommendation ☐ Personal interest ☐ Curiosity ☐ Existing positive perception ☐

22. How much would you be willing to pay for a meal [portion] in an African restaurant?

less than 10€ ☐ 10-15€ ☐ 16-20€ ☐ 21-25€ ☐ 26-30€ ☐ over 30€ ☐

Finnish Questionnaire

KYSELY

Tämän kyselyn on laatinut Vaasan Ammattikorkeakoulun Restonomi-opiskelija Eleos Zannou. Hänen opinnäytetyönsä on markkinatutkimus Vaasan alueella elävien suomalaisten suhtautumisesta länsiafrikkalaiseen ruokaan ja heidän mielipiteistään mahdollisesta afrikkalaisesta ravintolasta Vaasassa. Vastauksenne tullaan analysoimaan silmällä pitäen afrikkalaisen ravintolan mahdollisesta perustamisesta ja menestymisestä Vaasassa. Vastauksenne käsitellään täysin anonyymisti.

HUOM!!: Kysely koskee VAIN Vaasassa asuvia suomalaisia

Perustiedot

1. Sukupuoli: Mies/Nainen
2. Ikä:_____
3. Miehitys työpaikalla?
☐ Työntekijä ☐ Keskitason-esimies ☐ Johtaja ☐ Opiskelija ☐ Työtön

4. Keskimääräinen vuosiansio?

Alle 10000€ ☐   10000€-30000€ ☐ 30000€-50000€ ☐ over 50000€ ☐

5. Mikä alla olevista vaihtoehdoista kuvaa parhaiten siviilisäätyäsi

☐ Naimisissa/seurustelusuhteessa   ☐ suomalaisen kanssa ☐ afrikkalaisen
kanssa ☐ Muu
☐ Olen ollut naimisissa/ olen seurustellut ☐ suomalaisen kanssa ☐ afrikkalaisen
kanssa ☐ Muu
☐ Sinkku

6. Onko sinulla afrikkalaisia ystäviä tai sukulaisia?

	Ystäviä	Sukulaisia
Ei		
Muutama		
Monta		

7. Kuinka paljon aikaa vietät seuraavien ihmisten kanssa?

	En yhtään	Hyvin vähän	Keskiverto	Paljon	Todella paljon
Työkaverit					
Perhe					
Ystävät					

Ravintola käyttäytyminen

8. Mikä ilmaisu kuvaa parhaiten tapaasi valita ravintola?

☐ Käyn ravintoloissa joiden brändi on tunnettu
☐ Vertailen eri ravintoloiden hintoja ennen ravintolan valitsemista
☐ Valitsen ravintolan impulsiivisesti

9. Kuinka usein syöt ravintolassa ?

Kaksi kertaa viikossa ☐ Kaksi kertaa kuukaudessa ☐ Parin kuukauden välein ☐
☐ Harvemmin

10. Kuinka tärkeitä seuraavat tekijät ovat sinulle valitessasi raintolaa

	Ei tärkeä	Jonkin verran tärkeä	Kohtalaisen tärkeä	Hyvin tärkeä	Äärimmäisen tärkeä
Ravintolan konsepti					
Ruokasalin ympäristö					
Ruoan laatu					
Palvelun laatu					

Hinta					
Sijainnin sopivuus					

11. Kuinka paljon kulutat keskimäärin ravintolassa (per henkilö)?

Vähemmän kuin 10€ ☐ 10-15€ ☐ 16-20€ ☐ 21-25€ ☐ 26-30€
☐31-35€ ☐ yli 35€

Tietoisuus ja asenne afrikkalaista ruokaa kohtaan

12. Mikä alla olevista ilmaisuista kuvaa parhaiten perehtyneisyyttäsi afrikkalaiseen ruokaan?

☐ En ole koskaan kuullut yhdestäkään afrikkalaisesta ruoasta

☐ Olen kuullut afrikkalaisista ruoista mutta en ole maistanut yhtäkään

☐ Olen kerran maistanut afrikkalaista ruokaa ja pidän siitä

☐ Olen kerran maistanut afrikkalaista ruokaa mutta en pidä siitä

☐ Olen maistanut afrikkalaista ruokaa monta kertaa ja pidän siitä

☐ Olen maistanut afrikkalaista ruokaa monta kertaa mutta en pidä siitä

☐ Syön usein afrikkalaista ruokaa

13. Kuinka tutuilta alla olevat ruoat kuulostavat?

	Ei ollenkaan tutuilta	Melko tutuilta	Hyvin tutuilta
Rice and beans (waakye)			
Jollof Rice			
Aloko			
Fufu (foufou)			
Banku			
Kenkey			
Okro stew			
Egusi soup			

14. Minkä Afrikan alueen/maiden ruokaa olet maistanut?

Pohjois Afrikka ☐   Länsi Afrikka ☐   Keski Afrikka ☐   Itä Afrikka ☐   Etelä Afrik- ☐
ka

15. Kuinka houkuttelevalta afrikkalainen ruoka kuulostaa mielestäsi?
Erittäin houkuttelevalta ☐ Hyvin houkuttelevalta ☐ Hieman houkuttelevalta ☐
Ei yhtään houkuttelevalta ☐

16. Kuinka halukas olisit maistamaan (taste)/ kokeilemaan (try) länsiafrikkalaista
ruokaa? Vastaa asteikolla 1-5, jossa 1 tarkoittaa täysin eri mieltä ja 5 täysin sa-
maa mieltä**.**

	1	2	3	4	5
Olen kiinnostunut maista- maan/kokeilemaan afrikkalaista ruokaa					

Asenne afrikkalaista ravintolaan kohtaan

17. Mikä on ensimmäinen reaktiosi afrikkalaisesta ravintolasta?

☐ Hyvin positiivinen ☐ Melko positiivinen ☐ Neutraali ☐ Melko negatiivinen ☐ Hyvin
negatiivinen

18. Kuinka houkuttelevalta tämä konsepti kuulostaa sinusta?

Erittäin houkuttelevalta ☐ Hyvin houkuttelevalta ☐ Hieman houkuttelevalta ☐

Ei ollenkaan houkuttelevalta ☐

19. Kuinka usein käyt etnisissä ravintoloissa, esim. kiinalaisessa, thaimaalaisessa,
vietnamilaisessa?

Hyvin usein ☐ Melko usein ☐ Harvoin ☐ En koskaan ☐

20. Jos Vaasassa olisi afrikkalainen ravintola, kuinka todennäköisesti kävisit siellä?

Erittäin todennäköisesti ☐ Hyvin todennäköisesti ☐ Melko todennäköisesti ☐ Ehkä ☐
En kävisi ☐

21. Mikä saisi sinut käymään afrikkalaisessa ravintolassa?

Suosittelu ☐ Henkilökohtainen kiinnostus ☐ Uteliaisuus ☐ Olemassa oleva
positiivinen käsitys ☐

22. Kuinka paljon olisit valmis maksamaan annoksesta afrikkalaisessa ravintolassa?

Vähemmän kuin 10€ ☐ 10-15€ ☐ 16-20€ ☐ 21-25€ ☐ 26-30€ ☐ yli 30€ ☐