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Bachelor Thesis

Beyond the Plate

A qualitative study on atmospheres impact on customer experiences in the Swedish restaurant industry.



Author: Sarah Wahlund & Victor Eskilsson

Supervisor: Sandhya Goolaub

Examiner: Christine Tidåsen

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Abstract

This thesis was conducted to get a better understanding on how the atmosphere impacts a restaurant experience in Sweden. To investigate which factors influence a restaurant's atmosphere, the customer journey model and FAMM-model will be utilized. A qualitative research method was used, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews where 14 customer interviews and 2 expert interviews were conducted. The authors started out with an deductive approach that was combined with an inductive to create an abductive approach. The authors found that atmosphere has a significant impact on customers' restaurant experiences where the senses play a crucial role in creating a good experience. However, the findings are dependent on the restaurant's setting and personal perspectives from the customer. The research shows that customers priorities differently when it comes to the different periods of the customers atmospheric experience journey. Where the before and under the service factors have different impacts depending on and prioritization. The authors can therefore see that it is important for customers that the restaurants communicate their atmosphere, both before and during the service period to create more satisfied customers. The authors can imply that the discovery provides a way for restaurants to become more competitive and create a more satisfying atmosphere for their customers. This thesis provides an opening for further research on atmosphere impact on customer experience.

List of abbreviations

CX: Customer experience

WOM: Word of mouth

ATMO-Journey Model: Atmosphere journey model

FAMM-Model: Five aspects of a meal

SM-Model: Sensory marketing model

Key words

Consumer experience, Atmosphere, FAMM-model, Customer Journey
Canva,



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Linneus University

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Sarah Wahlund

Victor Eskilsson



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1 Introduction

In this initial chapter, the authors provide an overview of the central themes that will be examined in the following sections. Following this introduction, the chapter will explicate the problem at hand and its relevance to both academic researchers and practitioners in management. Additionally, the authors will identify gaps in the existing literature on customer experience and restaurant atmosphere. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a presentation of the research questions, the overarching purpose of the thesis, and the scope of the research about restaurant atmosphere.

1.1 Background

The restaurant industry has for centuries been a place to meet and socialize for people. The fast-growing economy has made it more affordable, new social classes can enjoy restaurants and changed the way customers experience food. New aspects of customer needs have been established in a dining experience. Dining at a restaurant has become a fashionable lifestyle and customers' experience and satisfaction have become an important part of the business (Gustafsson et al., 2006).

Strandberg (2023) Argues that the restaurant industry is an important provider for work in Sweden providing over 200 000 work opportunities. According to SVT and Darvishi Gaziani, (2023) The restaurant industry is also the industry that has the toughest competition and margins. There was an increase of bankruptcy from 29% 2022 to 48% 2023. According to a report by SCB (2022), the Swedish restaurant market size was valued at 159 billion SEK in 2022, a growth of over 54% since the year prior. The report attributes this growth to the increasing demand for dining-out experiences, the rising popularity of dining out and the changing food preferences of consumers.

Customer experience (CX) has emerged as a crucial factor in business success, as it can significantly impact customer loyalty, retention, and revenue (Schmitt, 2018; Verhoef et al. 2015). It refers to the overall interaction between a customer and a business across all touchpoints and channels, including every aspect of a customer's interaction with a company, from the first encounter with a product or service to ongoing engagement and support (Mühlbacher et al., 2016). Studies have shown that companies that prioritize customer experience tend to have higher customer satisfaction rates and are more likely to retain customers in the long term (Rust and Huang, 2014). In addition, a positive customer experience can lead to increased revenue, as customers are more likely to recommend a company to others, make repeat purchases and interactions (Verhoef et al., 2015).



Several factors contribute to a positive customer experience including, easy-to-use products or services, prompt and efficient customer service, personalization and tailored experiences, consistent and reliable delivery of products or services, clear and transparent communication, and a positive brand reputation and values (Mühlbacher et al., 2016); Verhoef et al., 2015).

Creating a positive customer experience requires a customer-centric approach that puts the customer's needs and preferences at the center of all business decisions. This involves gathering and analysing customer feedback, using data to understand customer behaviour and preferences, and continually improving processes and products to meet customer needs (Schmitt, 2018). Research by Anderson and Sin (2020) has also shown that restaurant atmosphere increases the customer satisfaction and affects their purchasing decisions by 20%.

An industry that relies heavily on Customer experience is the restaurant industry as it is how the customer perceives its dining experience determine how they perceive the restaurant and the quality of the service (Bharwani and Jauhari 2013). The restaurant industry continues to face challenges in providing a positive customer experience, which is crucial for attracting and retaining customers. As noted in studies by Puccinelli et al, (2009) and Canny (2014) customers' emotional experiences during dining can significantly impact their overall satisfaction and loyalty to a restaurant. A positive experience can lead to repeat business and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, while a negative experience can result in customer defection and negative reviews on social media.

One challenge in providing a positive customer experience is meeting the changing expectations of consumers, who increasingly value experiences over just the food. As noted in a study by Deloitte (2020), consumers now expect personalized experiences, such as tailored recommendations and offers based on their preferences, and they want to feel connected to the restaurant's brand and values. Meeting these expectations can be difficult, especially for smaller restaurants that may not have the resources for extensive data analysis or personalized marketing. When customers enter a restaurant, they immediately begin to form impressions based on the atmosphere. A well-designed and inviting atmosphere can make customers feel comfortable and relaxed, which can positively influence their perception of the food (Bujisic, Hutchinson and Parsa, 2014). Restaurants are more than just places to eat; they are also social spaces where customers can relax, socialize, and enjoy the atmosphere. Restaurant atmosphere, defined as the physical and emotional characteristics of a restaurant that influence the customer's dining experience, has become an important factor for both customers and restaurant owners (Tsaor and Lo, 2020).

Research has shown that customer experience is influenced by various factors, including the quality of service, the food quality and taste, the restaurant's ambiance, and the overall atmosphere. According to a study by



Park et al. (2019) the atmosphere of a restaurant is a crucial factor in customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. The study found that customers who reported higher levels of satisfaction with the restaurant's atmosphere were more likely to revisit the restaurant and recommend it to others.

The behaviour of the staff can also impact the atmosphere of a restaurant. Friendly and attentive staff can create a warm and welcoming environment that enhances the overall dining experience. Conversely, rude or inattentive staff can create a negative atmosphere that detracts from the enjoyment of the food (Bujisic et al, 2014).

Factors that influence the atmosphere are the restaurant's decor, lighting, and music which are all carefully chosen to create a specific atmosphere and enhance the dining experience (Bufquin, DiPietro and Partlow, 2016). A study by Kim et al (2017) found that the restaurant's ambiance significantly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study showed that customers who were satisfied with the restaurant's atmosphere were more likely to have a positive dining experience and return to a restaurant.

Recent research has consistently demonstrated the impact of restaurant atmosphere on customer perceptions. For instance, a study by Yeung et al. (2021) found that background music can influence customers' emotional responses and behavioural intentions. Noise levels above 70 decibels can significantly decrease customer satisfaction levels in restaurants. Similarly, a study by Heung and Gu (2012) showed that the lighting and temperature of a restaurant can affect customers' satisfaction levels. Inappropriate lighting can negatively impact the dining experience, leading to decreased customer satisfaction and reduced revenue for the restaurant. According to a study by Vanhatalo, Liedes and Pennanen (2022), lighting can affect customers' perceptions of food quality, with dim lighting leading to lower perceptions of food quality.

Specifically, the impact of music, lighting, and decor, plays a crucial role in shaping customers' perceptions of their dining experience. For example, a dimly lit restaurant with soft music and comfortable seating may create a romantic and intimate atmosphere that is ideal for a special occasion. This atmosphere may enhance the enjoyment of a fine dining experience, as customers are more likely to savour and appreciate each course (Canny, 2014). On the other hand, a brightly lit restaurant with loud music and an energetic vibe may be more appropriate for a casual dining experience. This type of atmosphere may encourage customers to socialize and enjoy themselves, leading to a more relaxed and informal dining experience (Bujisic et al, 2014).

Furthermore, research by Larson and Story (2009) demonstrated that the scent in a restaurant can influence customers' evaluations of the food and the overall dining experience. Similarly, a study by Giang and Tuan (2022)



showed that the colour and shape of tableware can affect customers' perceptions of the food's taste and quality. Furthermore, a lack of cleanliness and hygiene can also negatively impact the dining experience. According to a study by Sanjeev Kumar and Deepali Bhatnagar (2017), cleanliness is a significant factor that affects customers' decisions to return to a restaurant.

Casual dining restaurants are a popular segment of the restaurant industry that caters to a wide range of customers. Casual dining restaurants offer customers a comfortable and welcoming environment, affordable pricing, and a variety of menu options that cater to changing consumer preferences and dining trends. The sector's growth and expansion can be attributed to its ability to adapt to the changing needs of consumers and offer them a unique dining experience. In recent years, the casual dining sector has experienced significant growth and expansion, thanks to its ability to adapt to changing consumer preferences and dining trends (National Restaurant Association, 2018).

Lovelock and Patterson (2015) argue that the casual dining sector also benefits from the changing lifestyles and preferences of consumers. Busy schedules and the need for convenience have led to a rise in demand for quick and easy meals that are also healthy and affordable. This trend has led to the growth of fast-casual dining, which combines the convenience and speed of fast food with the quality and freshness of traditional dining. According to a report by Technomic (2020), fast-casual dining was one of the fastest-growing segments of the restaurant industry, with a projected growth rate of 8.3% in 2020.

Lovelock et al, (2015) Casual dining restaurants are known for their warm and inviting ambiance, which is carefully designed to create a comfortable and welcoming environment for customers. The décor, lighting, and music are all carefully chosen to set the mood and enhance the dining experience. A study by Park et al. (2019) found that the atmosphere of a restaurant is a crucial factor in customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Customers who reported higher levels of satisfaction with the restaurant's atmosphere were more likely to revisit the restaurant and recommend it to others.

This research paper will investigate how the atmosphere of a casual dining restaurant is a crucial factor in shaping customers' perceptions of their dining experience and how restaurant owners must pay close attention to the ambiance of their establishments to enhance their customers' experience.



1.2 Problem discussion

Despite its importance, the concept of restaurant atmosphere remains vague and elusive, with few studies offering a clear definition or framework for understanding its complex and dynamic nature (Bufquin Et al, 2016). One of the challenges in defining a restaurant atmosphere is its subjective and context-dependent nature. What one person considers to be a cozy and intimate atmosphere may be perceived as noisy and crowded by another. Additionally, different types of restaurants, such as fine dining establishments versus fast food chains, may have vastly different atmospheres that reflect their respective culinary styles, service standards, and target audiences (Wen, Leung and Pongtornphurt, 2020). Thus, understanding restaurant atmosphere requires a nuanced and multidimensional approach that accounts for the interplay of various factors and stakeholders involved. Another issue in studying restaurant atmosphere is the lack of a standardized measurement tool. While some researchers have attempted to develop scales or questionnaires to assess customers' perceptions of restaurant atmosphere, these instruments often suffer from methodological limitations such as low reliability or validity (Kim, Whaley and Choi, 2022). Furthermore, they tend to focus on a limited set of dimensions, such as music or lighting, rather than capturing the holistic and dynamic nature of the atmosphere as a whole.

The concept of restaurant atmosphere presents several theoretical challenges that need to be addressed to advance the understanding and application of atmosphere in practice. One of the main theoretical problems is the lack of a unified and agreed-upon definition of atmosphere in the restaurant context. There is no clear consensus on the specific components or dimensions that make up a restaurant atmosphere. This can result in a lack of clarity for restaurant managers who seek to create a certain atmosphere in their establishment (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001).

Furthermore, the impact of restaurant atmosphere on customer behaviour and experience is complex and multifaceted. While it is generally accepted that atmosphere can influence customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hultén, 2011), there is ongoing debate over the extent to which atmosphere can directly affect consumer behaviour and decision-making (Turley and Milliman, 2000). Some researchers argue that atmosphere can significantly impact consumer behaviour, including the likelihood of repeat visits and willingness to pay premium prices (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009), while others suggest that the influence of atmosphere on behaviour is more limited and indirect (Wakefield and Blodgett, 2016).



Moreover, the role of individual differences in perception and response to restaurant atmosphere is another theoretical challenge. Research has shown that individual factors such as personality traits, cultural background, and personal preferences can influence the way customers perceive and respond to restaurant atmospheres (Spangenberg, Crowley and Henderson 1996), (Kim, Li Wen and Doh, 2009). This highlights the importance of understanding individual differences and catering to the diverse needs and preferences of customers when creating a restaurant atmosphere.

This shows that the atmosphere within restaurants is not heavily researched upon. The gap within the research is how the atmosphere affects the consumer before, during and after a visit all together. There is mainly previous research that is only looking into one aspect such as the e.g sounds' effect on the atmosphere from a customer's point of view. However, several aspects linked with one another are still not heavily researched upon and deemed to have a knowledge gap. This thesis intends to research how the atmosphere can influence the consumer journey linking together several different aspects into the whole impression of the perceived atmosphere from a customer's standpoint.

Restaurants face intense competition in today's saturated market, with customers increasingly demanding not only high-quality food but also a memorable and enjoyable dining experience Khan and Shaikh, (2011). The effective implementation of CX strategies remains a significant managerial challenge for many organizations, due to the difficulty of integrating CX initiatives into broader business operations and culture.

One of the primary challenges is the lack of a clear understanding of the CX concept, resulting in inconsistent usage and application of CX across organizations. Organizations must have a common definition of CX, its components, and its dimensions, to ensure effective implementation of CX initiatives (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Research has shown that many companies struggle to operationalize CX. Often due to a lack of clear goals and metrics for measuring success (Verhoef et al, 2015). This issue can be addressed by implementing a structured and systematic approach to CX management, which involves setting clear CX goals, aligning CX initiatives with broader business objectives, and continuously monitoring and measuring CX performance (Schmitt, 2018).

Atmosphere encompasses a range of physical and social cues that shape customers' perceptions and emotions (Lee, 2014). However, creating and maintaining a favourable atmosphere is not as easy as it seems. Restaurant managers must navigate various challenges to achieve a balance between running a profitable business and the customers' needs. One major challenge in managing restaurant atmosphere is the need to appeal to diverse customer segments with different preferences and expectations. For instance, younger customers may prefer a vibrant and energetic atmosphere with loud music and dynamic lighting, while older customers may prefer a more subdued and



classic ambiance with soft lighting and comfortable seating (Wen et al 2020). Restaurant managers must therefore understand their target audience and design an atmosphere that aligns with their brand identity and customer profile.

Another issue in managing restaurant atmosphere is the need to maintain consistency and coherence over time. While occasional changes in decor or music can refresh the atmosphere and attract new customers, frequent and drastic changes may confuse or alienate existing customers who have grown accustomed to a certain atmosphere (Hultén and Vanyushyn, 2019).

Additionally, frontline employees play a crucial role in delivering a positive CX and atmosphere, but they may not fully understand how to do so or have the necessary resources and support (Rawson et al, 2013). This can be addressed by providing employees with the necessary training, tools, and incentives to prioritize customer satisfaction.

In summary, effective implementation of CX strategies requires a clear understanding of the atmosphere impact on CX. Enhancing a restaurant's atmosphere is a crucial managerial challenge that can significantly impact CX and customer loyalty, but also entails various trade-offs and complexities. To create and manage an atmosphere efficiently and effectively restaurant managers need to understand their customer profile. They also need to evaluate each enhancement and change to not impact the atmosphere and ensure growth.

The customer journey explained by Torres (2022) is a concept that can provide frameworks that help service managers understand the customer's experience through a journey with a company. The customer journeys are usually considered in an indoor environment and a way to understand different aspects that affect the experience. Tueanrat, Alamanos and Papagiannidis (2021) explained that the customer Journey is mainly focusing on the purchase phase than the experience. The FAMM- model was developed by (Edward and Gustafsson 2008) and explains how the atmosphere impacts the restaurant experience during the service period. Therefore, it is a lack of research to understand the holistic view of a customer's atmospheric experience.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how Swedish consumers' ideal restaurant atmosphere influences their customer's experience, and how the atmosphere affects their casual dining experience. Further to identify factors that affect customers and their expectations of a restaurant's atmosphere. Combining the models FAMM-model and Customer journey Canva to create a holistic view of customer experience of the atmosphere.



1.4 Research question

RQ1: How does the restaurant atmosphere influence Swedish customers' dining experience?

1.5 Delimitations

This thesis is conducted on consumers within Sweden and will therefore not take into account people from outside of Sweden. The topic is applicable at other segments and will be taken into account when conducting this research. This thesis is conducted by looking into consumers' ideal restaurant atmospherics and how it affects their satisfaction when encountering a new restaurant. It will further investigate the factors that affect the atmosphere and research the relationship between atmosphere and customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, the researcher will only look into consumers that regularly visit different restaurants in order for them to have a better understanding of the concepts touched upon. This thesis will investigate the B2C perspective to get a comprehensive view of the atmosphere's impact on restaurants. This thesis's main perspective is the customer view. However to get an overview of its impact the restaurant management could be studied through the FAMM-model. However, restaurant managers inputs will be mentioned to get a better and deeper understanding on the research topic.

This thesis will use the FAMM-model created by (Edward and Gustafsson 2008) and Customer journey mapping (Torres, 2022) to explore how the atmosphere affects the customer experience.

The customer journey map will mostly be used to look at the customer before the service period. The research will not use the deeper version of service period and after service period because of its non-relevance to the atmosphere. It will be replaced with the FAMM-model's aspects. The research will not go deeper into the management control aspect than getting the views of experts to get an understanding of the logistics. Therefore, will it be limited to its usual extent.



2 Literature review

This chapter will include peer reviewed sources to build a foundation for the thesis. The chapter will involve how the atmosphere setting in a restaurant impacts the consumer experience with the models FAMM-model and Customer journey mapping. The theories are connected to the questions and research purpose. At the end of this chapter a summary will be presented with the framework and previous literature.

2.1 Customer experience

Customer experience has become an important and important topic for business. According to Godovykh and Tasci (2020) 85% of the business management is based on the customer's experience. They explain that the main component of experience is cognitive, affective, sensory and cognitive responses. Where the components can be described by the spectrum as negative or positive. These aspects have an impact on the customers' journeys and influence their experiences.

Krishna (2013) explains that a lot of restaurants use the sensory aspect to create an overall experience. The sensory aspects that affect the consumers are the vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell. Echeverri and Edvardsson (2002) explain the importance of understanding the connection with design and ethics in the service sector. The environment in the sector has a significant effect on the experience and is the key for good communication with the consumer.

Mathayomchan and Taecharungroj (2020) explains that the restaurant experience is often explained by the big four restaurant experiences where the food, service, atmosphere and value create the customer experience. The atmosphere attributes refer to the restaurant's physical environment that is created by the sensory setting, which is the comfort, layout, interior design, music, scent, lighting and facilities. Previous research shows that a restaurant's atmosphere has a significant impact on the customer experience. Hultén (2010) describes the component atmospherics as the sensory impression of the consumer's perception of the environment and goods. The senses further have an impact on consumers' emotions and feelings. This creates a perception of the surroundings being essentials and creates a mental image for the consumers. Hultén (2010) further describes that the mind, senses, mental flows, processes and the psychological reactions create the brand experience. The sensory sensations combined creates a good customer experience. Therefore, the virtual setting and service of a restaurant impact each other and create an experience.

Krishna (2013) explains that the senses influence how a company is perceived. Singh et al. (2021) argues that the physical environment has an impact on consumers' willingness to purchase. According to Singh et al.



(2021) the environment increases the effect on consumer satisfaction of the experience. The environment is the first impression of a restaurant for consumers and is therefore important (Erkman and Hancer, 2018). The emotions toward the settings can give a boost to purchase depending on the consumer's mental image of the surroundings. The environment supports the consumer behavioral intentions and the brand experience (Krishna, 2013)

Hultén (2010) describes those atmospherics have different sensory impressions that are impacting the consumer's perception and behavior towards goods and services. The scenes have a more significant impact on consumer emotions and feelings, where the surroundings are essential. The experience creates a mental image of the future service process for customers. Hultén (2010) uses the SM model (Figure 1) to explain the phenomenon of creating an image of a company through senses. Where the mind, senses, mental flows, processes and psychological reactions take place to create a customer experience. When the sensory sensation combines, a context creates experience and equity. This model shows the effect when the service and the virtual setting affect each other. Solomon (2020) describes that even the colors can impact the feelings and appetite of the customer. Therefore, it is important that visual communication that the customer meets stimulates their feelings both when it comes to marketing and presentation of the product.

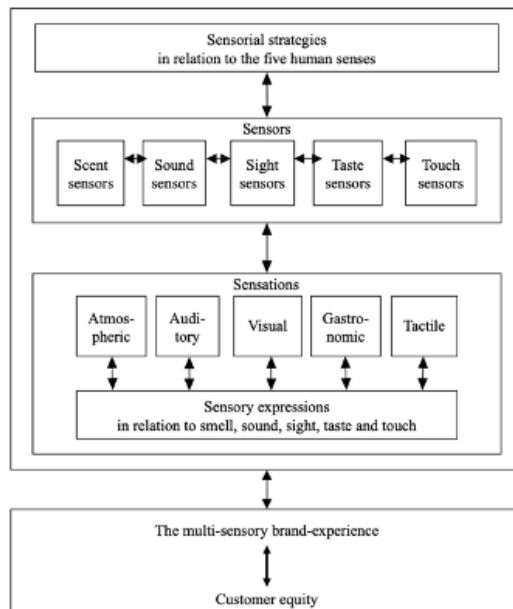


Figure 1: SM model (Hultén, 2010)

Krishna (2013) defines sensory marketing as "marketing that engages the consumer's senses and affects their perception, judgment and behavior". Therefore, the senses and the ability can have a significant impact on the customer experience. Krishna (2013) describes how restaurants use multiple senses to create an experience. The sight, hearing, taste and smell will impact



the customers experience of the product and greatly impact the customers buying process. An example of this is sound associated with a particular product or experience having a greater chance to attract customers. Solomon (2020) explains that sound has a big impact on the restaurants identity and will impact how the customer experiences the product. Krishna (2013) explains that humans have a limited ability to perceive sound and therefore can be hard to perceive in a messy environment. Lights are a part of the senses sight and Palmer (2010) states that if not the basic part as hearing and lighting are satisfy the overall experience will be destroyed. Fabio et al. (2015) explains that lighting is a physiological part that stimulates and affects how an environment is experienced. Lights should be an important part when designing an environment because of its effect on a human. When creating an environment is the interior design an important factor when designing a setting (Mnea and Zairil, 2023). Krishna (2013) explains that vision is an important part of an experience. Mnea and Zairil (2023) explains that the interior design is contributing to the setting's atmosphere. Jalil, Yunus and Said (2012) explain that the interior design involves the colors. Colors affect how consumers are perceiving the physical environment. Smell is a sense that depends on the person's perception and is a complex sense. However, it can impact the whole sensory experience (Krishna, 2013). Customers tend to associate the different senses with different situations and environments. It can create a perception of the environment and product quality. Therefore is it important to understand which senses can contribute to the surroundings. Dörtyol (2021) explains the need for customers to smell as an important part of the customer journey. Where smell stimulates and creates a perception of an environment. However it is a sensitive part where it can create memories and be a factor that evaluates the product and the decision making.

Singh et al. (2021) describe that the physical environment impacts the customer's willingness to purchase and impacts their judgment of the quality. Further, the environment is a way of increasing customer satisfaction and affecting emotions. Erkman and Hancer (2018) states that the environment of the setting is the first impression of an experience in a restaurant. Where the emotions towards the settings impacts the purchase depending on the consumer's mental image. The atmosphere can support customer satisfaction and affect behavioral intentions through the different senses that are experienced in the setting. The FAMM-model explains how the restaurant atmosphere affects the customers' senses (Meiselman, 2008). It's the explanation of how the customer experience is related to the sense.

2.2 FAMM - Model

The five-aspect meal model (FAMM-model) was created as a description of the evolution of the Michelin Guide (Edward and Gustafsson 2008). The model illustrates the wholeness of factors that impact a customer when entering a restaurant. It starts with the customer entering the room and later



meets the aspect of meeting, product, and management control in their customer journey. These aspects create the atmosphere in the restaurant (Gustafsson *et al.*, 2006).

Jönsson and Knutsson (2009) believes that the model is relevant in the restaurant industry due to the model bringing up all the aspects a customer can be influenced by in a restaurant setting. Further, it is the management control system that ties together all the aspects and guides customers through their experience of the atmosphere. The environment's situation has a significant impact on consumers' buying process and needs to be considered by the business. Jönsson and Knutsson (2009) believe that the model needs to be suited into today's market. Where that the managing control should create strategies as well as creating awareness of the atmospheres effect on the costumer.

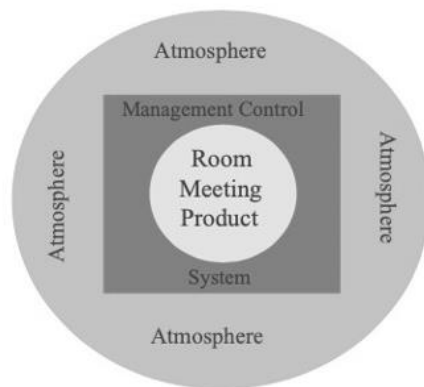


Figure 2: Five aspects of a meal model. Source: Edward and Gustafsson (2008)

The model illustrates the five steps that the customer encounters when creating an image of the restaurant. Gustafsson *et al.* (2006) explain the aspects that create the atmosphere in a restaurant. It starts with the room where a meal is often consumed. To further work with it on a professional level the architecture, textiles, design and art should be considered when creating the servicescapes. Edward and Gustafsson (2008) further describe the servicescape as where the customer and servant interact. This shows that restaurants should professionally work to create a pleasant environment for the consumer.

2.2.1 The room

Jönsson and Knutsson (2009) argues that the room is the first aspect the customer will touch upon. Further, a meal will always be served in a service encounter, meaning that the surrounding will impact the meal. Researchers can see the sensory aspects such as the sight, hearing, smell and touch affect how a room is experienced (Gustafsson *et al.* 2006). Gustafsson *et al.* (2006)



explain that the sight appears through the components color, lighting, size, shape and texture. Further, Solomon (2020) explains that the visual aspects can have an impact on how customers create feelings towards appetite and experience.

Managers that do not consider the room as an important part of building a restaurant business, will be putting a meal on the plate without understanding the influences that affect the food experience (Gustafsson et al. 2006).

2.2.2 The meeting

The second aspect is the meeting that regards the meeting with staff, customers and the interaction between customers (Gustafsson et al. 2006).

The first impression of the meeting will be important for the customer experience (Jönsson and Knutsson 2009). The interaction is therefore important for restaurants and should be a priority when educating employees. Restaurants need to understand the social psychology with emotions, interactions and etiquette rules that form in the atmosphere. The difficult task is to create a personal service by handling the customers depending on their personal needs and create a good customer experience. Gustafsson et al. (2006) explain that the waiter has the power and authority in the situation because they have more knowledge about the situation. Therefore, the waiters' behavior has an impact on how the dining experience is perceived by the customer. Further, handling customers that have different cultures, social preferences and have different experiences in a setting could be seen as a critical aspect for the restaurant. Another aspect that is important is other customers at the restaurant. It is something the restaurant can manage by target groups. Therefore, the manager should consider what their target groups need, if the staff have the competence, if they need more training and who should make it happen.

2.2.3 The product

The third aspect is the product that is provided at the restaurant (Gustafsson et al. 2006). Jönsson and Knutsson (2009) explain that the product is when the customer gets seated at a table and receives the food. It is the knowledge of food, where the art of cooking is an essential part of the experience. Researchers describe it as the moment of truth where the result is affected by whether the customer's senses are satisfied or not (Edward and Gustafsson (2008). The craftsmanship and chemistry help the restaurant to target their audience with taste and vision. Further the taste is a big part of the senses for a restaurant to consider and the various flavors and combinations of a dish. Solomon (2020) explains that it is the scientific part of the food industry and is called gastronomy. Chefs and writers that possess the knowledge can



advise the customer with recommendations of both drinks and food. This makes it easier to create an experience that the guest can be satisfied with (Gustafsson et al. 2006). Restaurants can then create a wholeness in the product that is served (Edward and Gustafsson, 2008). Gustafsson et al. (2006) explain that the chef should consider a theme and concept that matches with the product.

2.2.4 The management control system

The fourth aspect is the management control system where economics, laws, logistics and leadership play a part in creating a meal. All the administrations of running the restaurant affect the experience. It is important to have different kinds of knowledge at a restaurant, both academic and practical in order to be able to create productive knowledge (Gustafsson et al. 2006). Jönsson and Knutsson (2009) argues that the management control system is one of the most important aspects. It has a significant impact and involves marketing, statistics and handling the whole work at the restaurant. Edward and Gustafsson (2008) explain that the management control system is the part the customer does not interact with, but it has an enormous effect on their experience. Gustafsson et al. (2006) explain that the management can create irritation and disappointment from the customer if the logistics does not work. The backstage work affects the other aspects in the model. Where the customer sees the failure in the product, meeting and room. The manager should consider the business perspectives, the laws that affect their restaurant. They therefore need to provide the knowledge and education in the aspects of the model. These can affect the quality and price and therefore the customer's experience.

2.2.5 The atmosphere

The aspects mentioned above creates the fifth aspect, the atmosphere (Gustafsson et al. 2006). Edward and Gustafsson (2008) explain it as the entire meal experience and the sum of all aspects where the overall aspects are influencing and creating the atmosphere. Jönsson and Knutsson (2009) believe it is a five-cylinder motor that creates a memorable experience. However, Gustafsson et al. (2006) explain that there are two categories: senses and environment that creates the atmosphere at a restaurant where the sense is the subjective personal experience and creates the experience of the product. The environment is the room where the product is presented and where the 5 senses affect the meal experience. However, all of these aspects are affected by the situation's culture and social context that the customers are in. The consumer's past experiences and preferences do affect the consumer experience of restaurants. Gustafsson et al. (2006) explain that the FAMM-model gives restaurants a tool for managing and understanding the



aspects that affect the customer experience. Although a disadvantage when using the model is the application. It is not easy to apply to all restaurants and it requires knowledge. However, by having the model in mind, it can create opportunities to improve.

Meiselman (2008) explains that the FAMM-model shows that customers have expectations of the interior design and atmosphere where it is different depending on the type of restaurant and their concept. It was found that creating an Italian interior design made customers more likely to choose pasta because of the atmosphere. The customer journey model is another model that is used to explain the customer experience and the effect of the atmosphere. Tueanrat, Alamanos and Papagiannidis (2021) explain that the Customer journey model helps companies to design their touchpoints that affect the perceived atmosphere. The customer journey model brings up cognitive awareness in detail and earlier stages, which gives a wider aspect on how the customers are affected by the company's atmosphere.

2.3 Customer Journey

Customer Journeys is a common concept that is used in today's businesses (Torres, 2022). According to Torres (2022) the concept can provide frameworks that provide different management and modeling. The customer journeys are usually considered in an indoor environment and a way to understand different aspects that affect the experience. The model is an extension to the customer experience and contributes with aspects that affect the consumers through different touchpoints. These touchpoints can be both physical or virtual and allows companies to formalize and visualize the consumer's contact with the business. The model can be visualized by mapping the store's atmosphere or explaining step by step the consumer buying process. The model involves brand awareness that is built in the early stage of the journey (Tueanrat, Alamanos and Papagiannidis, 2021). The early stage has an impact on how the customer will experience the atmosphere. By creating a well-designed atmosphere it can help the consumers through their purchase and service period. All the touch points within the perspective of the atmosphere have an effect on the consumer. Therefore, the atmosphere aspect in the customer journey model is an important part of the customer experience.

The Customer journey mapping has been illustrated in different ways over the last century. Hosiaislouma (2018) has illustrated the model as a Canva (Figure 3). Where it is divided into pre-service, service period and post-service. These steps form the customer experiences with a company. This creates expectations, experiences and satisfaction/dissatisfaction by the consumers. The pre-service stage is when the customer builds up expectations on the experience where advertising, social media, word of mouth and past experience play a crucial role in the customer's experience. This could have a big influence on the service period where the customer has



already created an image of the company. The service period is the actual experience step by step, from the moment the customer enters the room until leaving. The post service period is when the customer has made up their mind of the experience and expressed it.

Tueanrat, Alamanos and Papagiannidis (2021) explain that the customer journey has different touchpoints that affect the customer. One touchpoint is the atmosphere, which is affected from the pre-service till the actual post-service period.

Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) explains that atmosphere is one of the elements that affect the touchpoints in the customer journey. The indoor experience can be explained by the sensory factors and all the visual aspects. Further explained is that the atmosphere is important depending on the consumer's own preferences. Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) additionally mention that the atmosphere has an impact in the pre- and post-experiences by the digital environment. The digital atmosphere highlights the colors, graphics, music, layout and design while the physical environment has the sensory aspects layout, colors, lightning, music and other customers.

Slåtten et al. (2009) describe that the physical design encourages people to stay at the restaurant, attracts customers and creates attention. The layout and interior design influence the customers emotions through senses and creates a customer experience. Stickdorn and Zehrer (2009) illustrate the customer journey mapping by dividing it into different parts towards purchase. The customers perceive the aspects differently and can therefore create different experiences on the perception of the surroundings.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) explain that the touchpoints can either be partner-owned, customer-owned and or social/external. This customer journey model is a tool to identify the key points that influence the consumers experience by looking into; before the service period, the service period and the experience of the brand. The key points will then affect the perceived experience.

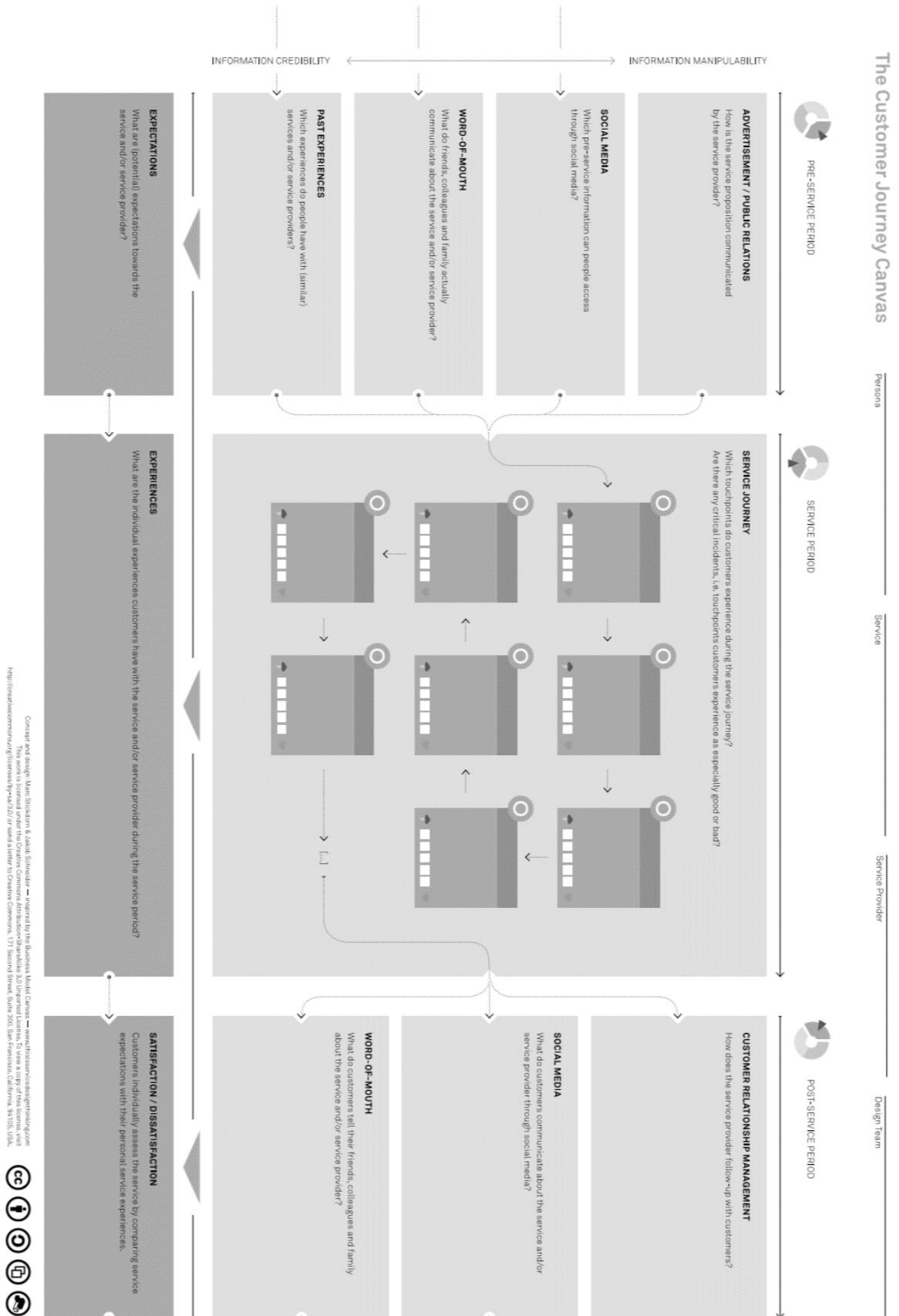
The model needs to be adapted to the situation and be analyzed by the different touchpoints (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). They explain the different touch points as:

1. Partner- owned touchpoints are the points when customers interact with the company that are managed by the firm. It could be the design, marketing and the communication channels.
2. Customer-owned touchpoints are the customers' actions and desires. The firm does not have control over these touchpoints.
3. Social/external touchpoints are the points of the surroundings that affect the customer which is the pre-service, service period and post-service. These expectations affect the consumer's overall experience. To illustrate the different parts of the service period it is divided into horizontal and vertical effects where the horizontal is the customer



journey and when the consumer enters and leaves a surrounding. The vertical effects are the different areas such as design, service or environment impacts the horizontal step.

The model is a way of explaining the experience and how the different aspects affect the journey. It creates different touch points that a company can work with in order to build a better customer experience as a whole (Lemon and Verhoef 2016).



Concept and design: Marc Schödlern & Jakob Strömmer — inspired by the Business Model Canvas — www.businessmodelcanvas.com
<https://www.hosiaislucuma.com/> (license by Creative Commons) or send a letter to Creative Commons, 17 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.



Figure 3: The Customer Journey Canvas. Sours: (Hosiaislucuma, 2018)

2.4 Conceptual Framework: Atmosphere Journey model

The Atmosphere Journey model (ATMO-journey model) was created through lack of research about the holistic view of customers' experience of the atmosphere. The theoretical studies show that there are different aspects that affect the customer experience of a restaurant's atmosphere. The models the five aspects of a meal (Edward and Gustafsson 2008) and Customer experience journey (Hosiaislouma, 2018) researches the different aspects of the customer experience. Both models bring up aspects of the atmosphere and how it affects the consumers. However the models are limited and hard for business to use (Stein and Ramaseshan , 2016). Therefore, do the researchers believe that the models are completing each other and should be used as one (Figure 4). To get a deeper understanding of costumer's perception was the SM-model (Hülten 2010) used to explain the sense that impacts. It creates a more holistic view of customers' experience and can give a deeper understanding of the atmosphere's impact.

According to Meiselman (2008) the customer enters a restaurant with expectations on the atmosphere. To understand the process of how it can be influenced, the researchers chose to divide the model into before service, service period and after service to explain how the atmosphere experience is created. It gives the model a better understanding of the customer's whole atmosphere journey and is taken from the customer experience journey (Hosiaislouma, 2018).

The ATMO-Journey model

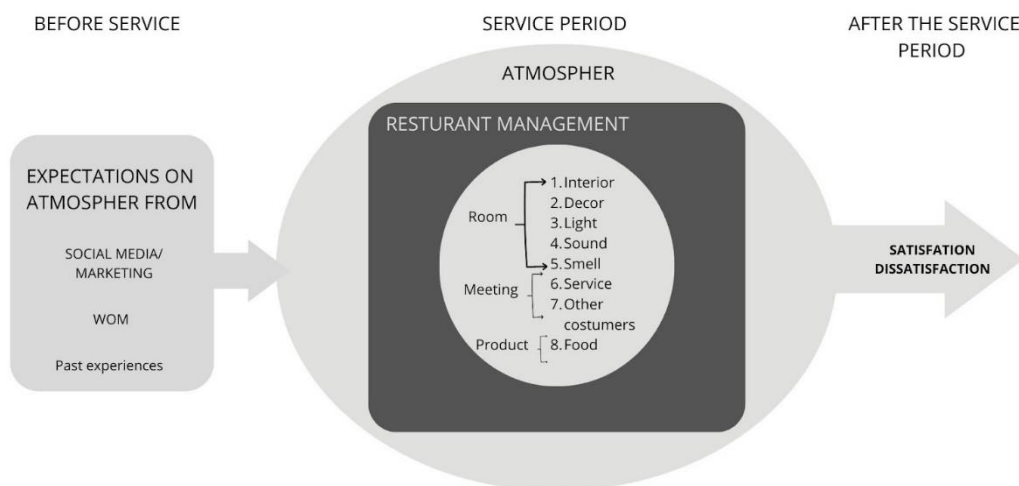


Figure 4: The ATMO-jorney model (Developed by the authors of this thesis)



The before service describes the expectations the customer has by social media, word of mouth and past experiences. This part is taken from the Customer Journey Canva that's illustrated by Hosiaislouma (2018). The arrow demonstrates that the before service period needs to be experienced by the customer in advance of experiencing the service period.

The service period for the atmosphere is illustrated by the FAMM-model's steps for entering a restaurant where the aspects room, meeting, product and restaurant management helps create the atmosphere. This part is taken from the FAMM-model that is illustrated by Edward and Gustafsson (2008). It's under the service period because it's the journey of the atmosphere under a restaurant visit. It illustrates all the aspects that the customer experiences and impacts the atmosphere. To get a deeper understanding was the sense from the SM-model used to explain the aspects (Hülten 2010). The restaurant management in this rapport is demonstrating the logistics that the restaurant impacts but is experienced by the customer. The room, meeting and product experience is depending on how the restaurant management is. Meiselman (2008) explains that the concept of the restaurant influences how the customer perceives the atmosphere in the service period.

The after-service period is the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of the atmosphere and is only customer owned. This part is taken from the Customer journey canva (Hosiaislouma, 2018) and describes that an experience creates a satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In this model demonstrated by an arrow that describes that the before service and service period creates a satisfied or not satisfied atmosphere experience. This model will be used to understand how the atmosphere influences customers' dining experience. That will look into which touch points that influence the customer the most.



3 Method

This chapter introduces various approaches and techniques for conducting qualitative business research, along with an explanation of why specific strategies have been utilized in this thesis to create reliable research within the restaurant atmosphere. The data collection methods employed are outlined, including the process of operationalization, the criteria for selecting the sample, and the methods used for data analysis. Additionally, this chapter discusses the research's quality, sustainable and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach

The researchers have chosen a qualitative research approach to investigate how the restaurant atmosphere impacts the CX. A qualitative research approach can be defined as data collected by any data collection technique e.g. Interviews or data analysis that generate or use non-numerical data (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2019). Saunders et al. (2019) suggest that the research approach adopted in a study depends on the source of the theories. A deductive approach involves developing hypotheses from existing literature and theories, while an inductive approach derives theories from observations and builds on them through further research. Dubois and Gadde (2002) argue a mix of both deductive and inductive approach is called abductive. An abductive approach is helpful to prevent weaknesses in deductive and inductive approaches.

In this thesis, a deductive approach was initially used to gather research and theories on the phenomenon of atmosphere effect on restaurants. Analyzing the theories, the researchers came to the conclusion that an abductive approach was needed for a more accurate research result. Therefore, a conceptual framework was designed from the theories, FAMM-model (Edward and Gustafsson, 2008) and Customer experience journey (Hosiaislouma, 2018) to create a more accurate approach and to develop research questions with the help of the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework has its focus on the atmosphere and its effect on the restaurant experience, called the ATMO-Journey model (Figure 4). The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews to explore the research questions. semi structured interviews were chosen in order to be able to ask follow up questions that could lead to new insight within the research topic. Further semi-structured interviews were chosen for the researchers to have a guide to follow and keep the interview on the topic. Although a deductive approach is typically associated with quantitative research (Saunders et al., 2019). This thesis aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how consumers experience restaurant atmosphere when eating out. Therefore, an inductive approach was applied to the theory process and analysis stage.



3.2 Research Design

According to Saunders et al. (2019), research strategy refers to the comprehensive plan outlining how the research aims to address the research questions. The authors further explain that research strategy involves determining the method of data collection and analysis. Bell et al. (2019) highlights the differences between quantitative and qualitative data, with the former focusing on numerical data and often being conducted deductively, while the latter emphasizes words and images and is usually conducted inductively, exploring the relationship between research and theory. In the following topic the authors will show the model that will be used through the research and demonstrate their research guidelines.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Design

Saunders et al. (2019) explains quantitative research as numeric and qualitative research as non-numeric. The selection of either approach depends on the research question and the thesis philosophy. While a quantitative research design is commonly linked to a positivist philosophy, it can also be associated with realism and pragmatism. On the other hand, a qualitative research design, according to Saunders et al. (2019), is more closely aligned with an interpretive philosophy since its objective is to understand a phenomenon, rather than testing an existing hypothesis.

This research project adopts an interpretive philosophy, seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the atmosphere linked to the customer experience. As the research began with a deductive approach but transitioned with an inductive approach. A qualitative design is deemed more appropriate since the approaches are combined and will investigate the experiences. Further the authors want to understand how atmosphere impacts CX so a qualitative approach was deemed to be best suited. A Qualitative approach enables an more comprehensive understanding of consumers' thought processes.

3.2.2 Research Design Purpose

Saunders et al. (2019) suggest that research projects can have different design purposes. An exploratory design aims to gain insight into a phenomenon while an explanatory design focuses on examining the relationships between the different factors in the atmosphere. Given that the authors aim to explore the connections between factors in the atmosphere and gain a deeper understanding how the atmosphere is affecting the customer experience, particularly how their evaluations of different atmospheres influence the customer experience, an explanatory design is deemed to be the most appropriate.



3.3 Research Strategy

Saunders et al. (2019) classify five distinct qualitative research strategies: case study research, narrative inquiry, ethnography, action research, and grounded theory. This research will utilize qualitative strategies with abductive approach as a research strategy made with a time horizon.

3.3.1 Time Horizon

In this study, a cross-sectional design was employed due to time constraints. Saunders et al. (2019) states that cross-sectional studies are commonly used in combination with qualitative research and can also be useful when conducting qualitative interviews over a short period of time. Therefore, given the time constraints of this particular research project, a cross-sectional design was deemed the most appropriate approach. Saunders et al. (2019) argues researchers could reconnect with the participants to collect additional data. While reconnecting with participants might have provided additional data by giving them more time to reflect on their responses, the authors felt that this would not substantially change the findings. As such, a cross-sectional design were considered to be the best option. The interviews with the participants are written as P1, P2 and P3 etc. The managers were Zegel manager 1 and Kallskänken manager 2 (See table 1).

	WED 10 MAy	THU 11 May	TUE 16 May	WED 17 May
8:00			Manager 1	
9:00	P1	P7		
10:30	P2	P8		
11:30				
12:00				
12:30		P9		
13:00	P3	P10		Manager 2
13:30		P11		
14:00		P12		
14:30	P4	P13		
16:30	P5	p14		
18:30	P6			

Table 1: The researchers interview schedule (Week 19-20)



3.4 Types of data

Saunders et al. (2019) argues that in order to ensure a comprehensive and high-quality analysis, both primary and secondary sources should be utilized. In this thesis, secondary data was collected through prior research such as sources containing theories and research: Further, primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic. By incorporating both primary and secondary sources, the authors were able to broaden the understanding of the research topic. This approach is consistent with best practices in research methodology, as it helps to ensure that the research is well-informed, well-supported, and credible (Saunders et al. 2019).

3.4.1 Primary Data

Saunders et al. (2019) suggest that there are various methods for collecting primary data, with semi-structured interviews being particularly appropriate for an explanatory research design. Primary data, as defined by Saunders et al. (2019), is data gathered specifically for a particular research project. In the context of addressing a research gap, primary data needs to be collected where there is a lack of existing research that directly relates to the research question at hand. The researchers have used semi-structured interviews to collect primary data to gain a deeper understanding of the research model (Figure 4).

3.4.2 Secondary Sources

Saunders et al. (2019) indicate that various types of secondary sources can be used within a research project. Secondary sources could include surveys and documented sources. Within these types of sources, there are different formats available, such as text, audio, and visual or audio-visual data. In this thesis, secondary sources are used to gain a broader understanding of the research topic and to strengthen and analyze the patterns and themes identified in the collected primary data. The advantage of utilizing secondary sources, as described by Saunders et al. (2019), is that they can provide context and opportunities for comparison to the researcher's own data. Moreover, analyzing the secondary sources from different perspectives can be useful for the comparison to the primary sources conducted by the researchers. However, according to Saunders et al. (2019), secondary sources have limitations, particularly with regards to data quality. The authors of this thesis have mitigated this risk by using tools such as Ulrichsweb and Cabells Predatory reports to assess the quality of secondary sources. By using these, the authors made sure that the articles used were peer reviewed and therefore are considered reliable. When collecting secondary sources, search words such as Consumer experience, Atmosphere, FAMM-model, Customer Journey Canva and Consumer experience were used. The authors developed these search words from past knowledge in the field. Additionally, the theory chapter of the thesis is mostly based only on academic literature that is no



older than ten years to make sure that the data is still reliable and valid. Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007) explains that the customer experience is a fast-growing topic for business, something that grows quickly amongst scholars. Therefore, this thesis used literature that's not older than 15 years and seems relevant to the research topic.

3.5 Research methods

Saunders et al. (2019) argue that in a qualitative case study design, semi-structured interviews are a suitable option when gathering data on the relationships between variables and patterns. Bell et al. (2019) suggest that semi-structured interviews are associated with qualitative research. According to Saunders et al. (2019), semi-structured interviews start with themes derived from previous literature and create beliefs of what might emerge. Depending on the adopted research philosophy, these themes may change during or between interviews based on the patterns discovered in participants' responses, particularly in an interpretative approach.

3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

As previously mentioned, the authors utilized semi-structured interviews as a primary method for collecting data. According to Bell et al. (2019), this method is suitable for qualitative research, explanatory research design, and case study research strategy which will be used in this study. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are deemed the most suitable method for collecting high-quality, non-numerical data to form patterns that align with the research question. The interviews were conducted one-to-one, in person in order for the researchers to better get a picture over the participants e.g. body language and what the participants actually meant. However, some interviews were conducted over Zoom in order to facilitate the participants. The authors chose semi-structured interviews as they believed this method would yield results based on how consumers responded and deliberated, rather than simply what they answered.

3.5.2 Collection of Data

To conduct the interviews, the researchers developed an interview guide with a thematic approach (See Appendix 2) that included follow-up questions based on the participants' responses. Further a second interview guide for the restaurant managers (See Appendix 7) was created, to get a manager's opinion on the atmosphere. The interview guide was sent to participants the day before the interview to aid preparation. However, the researcher made sure that the participant understood that reading it beforehand was optional. To understand how consumers experience the atmosphere in restaurants, the researchers showed pictures of three different restaurant's marketing. The pictures used were from the restaurants Zegel (See Appendix 4), Kallskänken (See Appendix 5) and Bryggan (See Appendix 6). Additionally, the researchers interviewed two industry experts, who are managers or owners of the restaurants mentioned in order to better understand how they work with their atmosphere within the restaurants (see Appendix 3). Due to the time



constraints and difficulties in space in their schedule, Bryggan was not available for an interview. However, we used them as an example of a restaurant atmosphere because of their popularity as a casual dining restaurant.

During the interviews, one researcher conducted the interviews while the other took notes for later analysis and identified key moments. Depending on the participants' relationship with the authors were the interviews conducted by the author with the most neutral relationship. To make sure the data was reliable and not affected by the relationship between the authors and the participant.

The interviews were recorded using a mobile phone and transcribed with the help of Microsoft Word's transcribing tool. However, the tool's accuracy was insufficient, and manual editing was necessary to ensure accurate transcription. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, the primary language of all participants, to prevent any language barriers from hindering their responses. A translated interview guide in English (see Appendix 1)

3.6 Operationalization

W. James Potter (2013) explains operationalization as a tool to differentiate the objectives with the aim. The operationalization creates a structure of the research process and helps the researcher to answer the research questions. The research aim is to understand the variables of the atmosphere that affect the customer in a restaurant. To understand the connection and reason why questions were asked an operationalization table was made in order to visualize the research structure. An operationalization table where created for both customer and expert interviews to understand the background of both types of interviews. Tabel 2 demonstrates the customers interview with reasoning and literature. Table 3 demonstrates the expert interviews with the restaurants with the reading and literature behind.

3.6.1 Table 2. Operationalization table Customer interview

Concepts	Interview Questions	Reasoning	Source
Participant Profile	56	These questions were asked to better understand the participant and position them into different categories	Question 56: Is based on Saunders et al. (2019) to get contextual data from the participants. Was used to understand if



		such as age and gender.	they are actively going to restaurants.
Restaurant atmosphere exposure	1-5	These questions were asked in order to find out how and in what way participants have experienced restaurant atmosphere before.	Question 1-2: Is based on the SM-model by Hultén (2010) and the FAMM- model by Edward and Gustafsson (2008). Question 3: General understanding of customers perceptions contributing to a mental image (Hultén, 2010) Question 4: The before service factors, based on The Customer journey Canva (Hosiaislouma, 2018). Question 5: The touchpoints impact on satisfaction in The Customer journey canva (Hosiaislouma, 2018).
General thoughts of the ATMO model.	6-14	Questions were asked to find out what customers' general thoughts were about different aspects of the atmosphere.	Question 6-14: Based on the SM-model by Hultén (2010), the FAMM- model by Edward and Gustafsson (2008) and Customer journey Canva (Hosiaislouma, 2018).
Attitude towards	15-17, 27-29, 39-41	These questions were asked in order	Question 15-17, 27-29, 39-41: Based on



Restaurant atmosphere before service		to find what attitudes consumers have towards the atmosphere before service encounters.	Customer journey Canva (Hosiaislouma, 2018) and the before service period with WOM.
Attitude towards Restaurant atmosphere during service	18-24, 30-36, 42-48	These questions were asked to find out what consumers think about the different aspects of the atmosphere during their dining experience.	Question 18-24, 30-36, 42-48: Based on the SM-model by Hultén (2010), the FAMM-model by Edward and Gustafsson (2008) and Customer journey Canva (Hosiaislouma, 2018).
Attitude towards Restaurant after service	25-26, 37-38, 49-50,	These questions were asked in order to find out how customers evaluate their dining experience in the aspect of atmosphere	Question 25-26, 37-38, 49-50: Based on the Customer journey canva (Hosiaislouma, 2018) with focus on the after-service period.
Closing questions	51-53	This question was asked in order to see the attitudes toward the different atmospheres.	Question 51-53: Based on the SM-model by Hultén (2010), the FAMM-model by Edward and Gustafsson (2008) and Customer journey canva (Hosiaislouma, 2018). Used to understand the most important factors.

3.6.2 Table 3. Operationalization table manager interviews

Concepts	Interview Questions	Reasoning	Source
Participant Profile	18	These questions were asked to	Question 16: Is based on Saunders et al.



		better understand the participant and position they have at the restaurant.	(2019) to get contextual data from the participants. Was used to understand the restaurants better.
Restaurant atmosphere exposure	1-3	These questions were asked in order to find out how restaurants see the impact of atmosphere.	Question 1: If our participants are relevant. Questions 2-3: Based on the SM-model by Hultén (2010), the FAMM- model by Edward and Gustafsson (2008) and Customer journey Canva (Hosiaisluoma, 2018).
Restaurant view on atmosphere before service	4-5	Questions were asked to find out what restaurants wants to convey before the service encounter	Questions 4-5: Based on Customer journey Canva (Hosiaisluoma, 2018) and the before service period with WOM.
Restaurants view on atmosphere during the dining experience	6-14	These questions were asked in order to find what restaurants want to convey during the service encounter in an atmospheric way.	Questions 6-14: Based on the SM-model by Hultén (2010), the FAMM-model by Edward and Gustafsson (2008) and Customer journey Canva (Hosiaisluoma, 2018).
Ending Questions	15-17	These questions were asked to find out what restaurants think about the atmosphere and how they work with it.	Question 15-16: Based on the SM-model by Hultén (2010), the FAMM-model by Edward and Gustafsson (2008) and Customer journey Canva (Hosiaisluoma, 2018).



			Question 17: Based on Hultén (2010), Krishna (2013), Singh et al. (2021) and Erkman and Hancer (2018)
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The table was created in order to understand the reasoning behind why the questions were asked. The first and second op table was created due to different questions and to find out the reasoning behind the questions asked. The questions were formed from the literature review and the ATMO-journey model (Figure 4) to be able to gather relevant data that is connected to the research. The operationalization table visualizes the intention of the questions and describes its relevance. Except the questions asked to collect participant information that gave the researchers an overview of who was interviewed and how it can affect the data.

3.7 Selection of Sample

Saunders et al. (2019) distinguish between probability and non-probability sampling, where the probability involves selecting participants randomly and is typically used in experiments and surveys, while the non-probability does not ensure equal probability for all potential participants and may be used in online questionnaires where the researcher has limited control over who responds.

Data saturation occurs when no new information emerges from interviews, and is considered by Saunders et al. (2019) and Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann (2009) to be a criterion for determining the appropriate sample size. Therefore, a minimum sample size could be hard to determine beforehand. Therefore, the researcher will have interviews until no new findings occur within the interviews. To accommodate time and convenience constraints, a purposive sampling approach was used to select participants who were likely to provide insights on how restaurant atmosphere affects their customer experience. The authors further used a purposive sampling in order to choose participants that represented the population being studied.

3.7.1 Purposive Sampling

According to Saunder et al. (2019) and Bell et al. (2019) purposive sampling involves the authors' judgment in selecting appropriate participants. It especially suits small studies when informative participants are desired. Within purposive sampling, criterion sampling involves selecting people or cases based on specific criteria that must be met.



To ensure that only eligible participants were selected, a purposive criterion sampling method was applied. This allowed the authors to select participants who met specific criteria related to how the atmosphere affected the casual dining restaurants. Without this approach, the authors might have included participants who were not relevant to the thesis, such as those who did not eat at casual dining restaurants or had no experience eating out.

3.7.2 Participant Criteria

Bell et al. (2019) explains the importance of creating participant criteria's to make sure the participants are a good representation of the populations and contribute to the research topic. The participants have to fulfill the criteria's set in order to be chosen. The criteria for the customer interviewees. The age gap was chosen to be between 20-30 years old since consumers from different ages might have different criterions when it comes to dining out casually which might impact the analysis. Therefore, the authors choose an age restriction to be able for the research to have comparable results. Due to the topic being the Swedish market, one of the main criteria's is that participants need to have Swedish citizenship. Another criteria is that they need to visit restaurants regularly at least once a month. This is to make sure the participants have experienced different atmospheres. Participants had to have experiences from more than one restaurant so that they could see differences in their experiences.

- Swedish citizens, one of the criteria due to it is researched in Sweden.
- Visits restaurants at least once a month,
- Have visited at least one of the restaurants included in the OP table.
- Age between 20-30.
- Eaten at multiple restaurants

Later on, expert interviews were conducted in order to broaden the research topic and understand how restaurants work in order to mitigate the problems. The participants from restaurants further had criteria that needed to be met in order for them to be considered within this thesis. One of the criteria's when choosing who to interview at a restaurant the authors set a criteria that the participant had to be in a management role or the owner. The criteria's for the expert interviews were constructed to make sure to get interviews that could contribute towards the thesis. Restaurants in Kalmar were chosen in order for the interviews to be as sustainable as possible and exclude unnecessary traveling. Further, the expert participants were chosen based on a criteria that they worked within a management position and had the authority to decide over how the restaurant works with the environment.

The criteria for the restaurant interviews:

- Casual dining restaurant in Kalmar
- Works with the management control or the owner



The criteria's for the expert interviews were constructed to make sure to get valuable data. Restaurants in Kalmar were chosen in order for the interviews to be as sustainable as possible and exclude unnecessary traveling. Further, the expert participants were chosen based on a criteria that they worked within a management position and had the authority to decide over how the restaurant works with the environment.

3.7.3 Table of Cases

Participant	Gender	Age	Date	Place	Interview Type	Interview Guide	Interviewer	Interview Length Average
1-14	8 Males 6 Females	22-29	10/5-2023 11/5-2022	Linnaeus university group room or Zoom	Consumer Interview	1	Victor Eskilsson or Sarah Wahlund	25 min

Participant	Date	Place	Interview Type	Interview Guide	Interviewer	Interview Length Average
Expert 1 Expert 2	16/5-2023 Or 17/5-2023	At the experts offices	Managers interview	2	Victor Eskilsson or Sarah Wahlund	15 min

Table 4: Table of cases

3.8 Data Analysis

The choice of qualitative data analysis methods depends on the specific research project, as different approaches can be used to uncover patterns and draw conclusions from a dataset. In the context of this thesis, the data analyzed will consist of transcribed verbal conversations presented in text format. Secondary sources will be used to help analyze the data. According to Saunders et al. (2019) and Bell et al. (2019), there are several methods available for analyzing qualitative data. This thesis found the thematic analysis to be most suitable. The data was analyzed by fragmenting the data and later on coding it into thematic categories. This process allowed a



comprehensive examination of the dataset and capturing the underlying themes.

3.8.1 Thematic Analysis

During the research, a thematic approach was employed to assist when coding the interviews and identify any underlying themes or patterns. The identified themes were then matched and discussed with relevant theories and prior research brought up in the literature review. According to Saunders et al. (2019), a thematic analysis can be used to identify patterns and themes in qualitative data through coding.

In a thematic approach there are 6 stages the authors use to analyze the empirical data (Braun *et al.* 2019). The first state is getting familiar with the collected data. The authors transcribed and read through the data from the interviews. The second step is to generate the initial code where the authors looked for different codes about atmosphere in the transcripts. Third step is searching for themes where the authors used the ATMO-model for themes. The fourth step is for looking for potential themes to analyze where the authors tried to sift through what were important in the collected data for this thesis. The fifth step is naming themes of the data and creating the structure of the analysis. The authors used the ATMO-model to name themes such as: Before service, During service and Atmosphere evaluation. The sixth step was to combined the theoretical findings together with the empirical findings to create a conclusion.

3.8.2 Coding the Data

Once the data was transcribed, the authors fragmented the responses into quotes from each participant, then grouped them together based on similarities in their answers. This helped to compare and identify patterns or themes in the data, following Bell et al.'s (2019) guidelines for thematic analysis. By coding and separating the data, the authors gained a better understanding of each participant's viewpoint. Afterwards, the empirical findings were analyzed and compared to the existing literature within the analysis to determine how the atmosphere impacts customer experience.

3.9 Quality of Research

This topic will address the issues of reliability and validity, which are important measures of data quality in qualitative research, as highlighted by Saunders et al. (2019). Additionally, the topic will cover ethical and sustainable considerations. The ethical considerations will outline the rights of the participants, while the sustainable considerations will focus on the measures the researcher took to minimize their environmental impact.



3.9.1 Reliability

Saunders et al. (2019) suggests that credibility, dependability, and transferability can be utilized in evaluating the quality of data. Dependability, in particular, addresses the issue of reliability by ensuring that similar results can be obtained if the research were conducted with the same methods, participants, and context. However, there are various circumstances that could affect reliability, such as researcher and participant errors and biases. To maintain a high level of reliability, the researchers divided the responsibility of conducting interviews and ensured that questions were asked in the same manner to avoid misinterpretation by participants and to minimize errors and biases. Further the researchers prioritized the safety and mental state of the participants in order to collect answers that were seen as reliable and unbiased. Further, reliability can be both internal and external. The internal reliability can be mitigated by the split responsibility of conducting interviews while the external reliability can be mitigated by considering potential threats to external reliability, as identified by Saunders et al. (2019).

3.9.2 Validity

Saunders et al. (2019) argues that the validity of research can be assessed by measuring its credibility and transferability. Credibility focuses on internal validity and aims to ensure that the research is measuring what it intends to measure. A pilot study was conducted in order to make sure that the questions asked were measuring what was intended to and an operationalization table was created to ensure that the questions asked are aligned with the research theme. On the other hand, Saunders et al. (2019) argues that transferability concerns external validity and aims to determine whether the research results can be applied to a wider population. A comprehensive description of the research design, context, questions, interpretations, and findings should be provided to allow readers to judge the transferability of the research. However, applying qualitative research to other settings may be challenging due to a smaller participant sample, the researchers will strive for transparency by providing a complete description of all aspects. Purposive sampling will be used to choose participants that have eaten at casual dining restaurants once a month and remember their experiences. To further ensure the validity, a criteria for the participants were to have eaten out at different restaurants to make sure that the participant had been exposed to different restaurant atmospheres.



3.10 Ethical and sustainable considerations

3.10.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are an essential aspect to consider when conducting research. Saunders et al. (2019) have compiled a list of ethical considerations that researchers should follow in order to ensure the integrity of the thesis. In this study, particular attention was paid to upholding the ethical considerations outlined in Saunders et al. (2019) list.

The authors made sure to present their questions, findings, and discussion in an impartial and truthful manner, without any deception or misrepresentation. Even if the results did not match their initial expectations. To create a safe and neutral environment during interviews, Saunders et al. (2019) recommendation on avoiding pressuring participants for answers or asking questions in a way that could cause harm was applied.

Additionally, the authors respected the dignity of participants, those affected by the research throughout the process. Before conducting interviews, participants were informed of the questions asked beforehand and were further free to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were also assured that their answers would remain anonymous and were informed of how their responses would be used. The authors ensured that they did not exceed these boundaries without obtaining new consent from the participants. The anonymity of both participants and their responses was maintained throughout the research process and beyond.

3.10.2 Sustainable considerations

During the thesis, the goal was to be sustainable from economic, social, and environmental aspects, as outlined by Elkington (1994). To ensure the research was conducted sustainably from a social perspective, all practices, discussions, and questions were formed in consideration of people, without causing any negative effects in the pursuit of knowledge.

Regarding the social perspective, all parties involved, such as researchers and participants, were treated with mutual respect. The authors worked in a comfortable space, where everyone felt free to discuss obstacles openly. Additionally, the authors contributed equally to the work, with each chapter written together. The contribution of each author can be found in the appendix with a detailed description. (See Appendix 7)

From an environmental point of view, the research was managed in the most eco-friendly way possible. Interviews were conducted either online through Zoom to minimize carbon emissions caused by travel or held in person where the location was selected based on criteria such as ease of access and



environmentally friendly options. To conserve resources, notes were primarily taken digitally, and any paper used was recycled.

This thesis supports economic growth by providing retailers with an understanding of how to allocate resources to develop their atmosphere. The research was conducted in a way that did not harm restaurants or their customers, but rather provide restaurant owners and managers with insights on how to position themselves effectively to their target audience with the available resources.



4 Empirical findings

4.1 Atmosphere before service period

In this section, questions were asked about how customers experience the atmosphere before the service encounter. Social media marketing from three different restaurants were shown to the participant then questions were asked to understand how they perceived the atmosphere.

The majority of the participants stated that they feel positive about restaurants trying to communicate their atmosphere to them before a visit. Participant 13 stated that *“I think it is a perfect way for restaurants to market themselves with the atmosphere. It creates and gives the customer expectations. A perfect way of luring the customers to the restaurant”*. In line with this, participant 5 argues that it is important that the restaurant sends out the right image of how it will be experienced in reality. However, if they feel that the atmosphere of the restaurant marketing does not meet their preconceptions it has a negative effect.

Otherwise, they feel that the marketing has a negative impact on their experience of the atmosphere. When looking at pictures from Zegel, the majority of the participants felt that the atmosphere was casual and hard to define. Majority of the participants felt that Kallskänkens marketing made them feel welcomed and believe that they will have a good service. Participant 2 stated that *“the staff and the people in the pictures give me the expectation that I will get good service at Kallskänken”*. When looking at marketing from Brygga, the majority of the participants said that they would expect a high-quality service and food. Participant 5 argued that *“I have big expectations on Bryggan when looking at the pictures, it feels like it is professional food that is going to be served”*. The majority of the participants believed that food was the most important factor when choosing a restaurant, followed by the interior. Further participants also believed that the light had an impact on the restaurant's atmosphere. Participant 5 said *“With my food and drinks interest the food always comes first. But then the atmosphere is the second most important, where the sound influences me”*

When asking questions about the three chosen restaurants' atmosphere before service, the participants were questioned about their expectations on the restaurant's atmosphere through their social media posts. The data show that the majority of the participants got expectations on the quality, service, interior and the product. All of the participants had positive expectations on all of the restaurants. Participant 5 explained expectations on Zegel as a *“serious place, a lot of people and nice food”*. However, participant 2 argued that *“I'm expecting a regular lunch, nothing too bad or too good”*. The expectations the participants had on Kallskänken were generally about the staff. Participants 13 argued that *“The staff and people in the pictures give me the expectation that I will get good service at Kallskänken”*. In line with



this, participant 14 states that *“It feels really welcoming and nice staff”*. The data show that the majority of the participants expectations on Bryggan were generally the interior/decor and the food quality. When looking into the expectations of the atmosphere, participant 14 argues that *“I get a Mediterranean feeling of the place”*. Participant 5 expresses that *“I have big expectations on the restaurant when looking at the pictures, it feels like it is professional food that is going to be served in a nice setting”*. When discussing Kallskänken, participant 9 expresses *“The first time I saw the restaurant I thought it was a café, because of its interior and place”*. When discussing Bryggan, participant 10 stated that *“I will expect high quality when I look at the pictures”*.

Word of mouth was not focused on when interviewing the participants, however some participants believed word of mouth (WOM) was the most important factor when choosing a restaurant. WOM made some participants feel more secure when given a recommendation from family or friends. Further WOM combined with marketing through social media helped build expectations on the restaurants. Participant 9 argued that *“mostly WOM and the hygiene at the restaurant influences when I choose a restaurant”*. In line with this, participant 2 stated that *“it is important that there are recommendations when I choose a restaurant”*. This is similar to what participant 12 stated *“I have a broad network that I trust so I get tips from there.”*

4.2 Atmosphere during service period

Further, questions were asked regarding how the customer experienced the atmosphere during the service period. In the service period the consumer encounters factors such as the room, meeting and the product when experiencing a restaurant atmosphere. To further understand the logistics and the background of the aspect’s expert interviews were conducted with restaurant managers.

4.2.1 The room

To find out how different aspects of the room in the restaurant impacted the customer atmosphere, in order to understand how different aspects, affect the restaurant atmosphere, participants were asked questions regarding the aspects of sound, lighting and decor/interior. The data show that the smell was not an important part for the customers when looking at the atmosphere. When none of the participants mentioned smell when describing the atmosphere.

Sound

According to the data collected the majority of participants believed that sound is one of the most important parts of the atmosphere. The data show that the sound can have an impact on the experience. Participant 9 explained that it can impact if they choose a restaurant and stated *“The sound is a*



primary factor to how I chose a restaurant". Participant 14 described the trend of having loud music and dimmed lights at restaurants and expressed *"I don't like the trend when it's loud music and dimmed lights, it's not the reason why I want to go out and eat"*. Participant 2 explained that the light can impact the other aspects when dining and said *"If it is high music, it can impact how you enjoy your meal and in the same way with if it smells bad"*. Participant 5 described how loud music can generate more sound by making it hard to speak and said *"When its high music and the service staff need to yell to the customers it creates a high sound level and negative experience"*. However, participant 10 argues that the sound has an effect on the atmosphere depending on the situation *"The sound and lighting have an impact according to me depending on the situation I'm dining in. If we are two people it is nice with a lot of sound, otherwise I would prefer a calmer situation"*. However, Participant 6 explains the pros and cons of dining in a loud environment. They argued *"If it is too loud and becomes a noisy environment, I do not like it. But you do not want it to be totally quiet, right?"*. The data shows that the majority of participants believe that sound and lighting can as a combination be a critical point. Participant 14 stated *"The sound and light can be a critical point for me and lead to an exit"*.

When asking questions about the three chosen restaurants the data showed that the majority of participants reacted to sound differently. It was a differentiation between the restaurants and depending on the time of day. Participant 10 explains that *"depending on what time you come its different sound levels at Kallskänken"*. Participant 6 explains that depending on the time the atmosphere changes and states when discussing Bryggan that *"it is very cozy, but very noisy it is probably because I only been there on the lunch rush"*. In line with what Participant 5 explains that the sound level is high at Zegel is due to the people in the room and states *"It is a high sound level when there are a lot of people in the room"*. Participant 2 describes that the three restaurants should use more fabric to create a better sound atmosphere and states that *"the lunch restaurants that you have shown do not have a lot of fabric and it creates a high sound level at the restaurant"*. The data shows that the majority of participants think sound and lighting together creates the atmosphere.

Lighting

Lighting is deemed to be the second most important according to participants when setting at the restaurant was the atmosphere according to the majority of participants. Lighting is according to participant 8 *"the first thing I notice is (...) cozy lights"*. The majority of the participants explain that lighting can affect other aspects of their dining experience, or example the taste of the food. Participant 14 explains that it affects the dining experience and states *"i do not like when it is too dark when I am dining, it affects my experience"*. Participant 8 explained that it can impact how they enjoy the food and argued *"if the lighting is really bad, I feel it is hard to enjoy the food"*.



When asking questions about the three chosen restaurants, the data showed that the majority of the participants did not react to the lighting at the three restaurants. Participant 5 described Zegel as *“it feels like a nice lunch restaurant, I like the daylight at the restaurant. But by looking at the pictures it feels like there are not a lot of strong lights in the evening. Therefore, I can imagine that it is pretty dark at night”*. Participant 6 states about Kallskänken that *“it is not strong lights so it creates a cozy atmosphere”*. Participant 2 explained Bryggans lighting as *“It is wonderful lighting, love when the daylight reflects with the sea into the restaurant”*.

Interior/decor

According to the majority of the participants, interior and decor is the second most important factor that impacts the participants when choosing a restaurant. However, when the participants are in the service period it was only two participants that reacted to the interior. Participant 13 explained *“the interior design has definitely an impact on the atmosphere, it is one of the factors that contributes. From furniture’s to colors will create the restaurant’s environment”*. Participant 2 described that it contributes to the vibe at the restaurant and expressed *“the interior and decor needs to fit their vibe, it creates the environments for the customers”*. Participant 5 explained why it should be important for the restaurants and argued *“I think the interior is really important because it should demonstrate the restaurant and what the restaurant wants to achieve. They need to think about how the interior and decor effect. For example, if you have a white table cloth it sends out quality. Then the customer will expect quality and as a restaurant you need to meet the expectations”*. The majority of the participants explain that the interior/decor contributes to their expectations of quality and the whole concept. Participant 9 expressed *“I think it is important that the interior and decorations look good both inside and outside the restaurant. It should create a picture of how the experience will be. I think that the interior is contributing to the concept the restaurant wants”*. Participant 5 states that *“the interior affects how you experience the atmosphere. If the interior does not match the expectations of the food, it creates a disappointment in my opinion”*.

When asking questions about the three chosen restaurants' interior/decor the data showed that the majority of the participants were generally satisfied with the interior/decor at the restaurants. Participant 5 explains Zegels interior design as *“clean style with wooden table, it feels natural and easy to navigate because of the interior. It feels like a casual lunch restaurant”*. Participant 10 explains Kallskänkens interior and decor as *“It feels like young and they create a good atmosphere with new meeting old”*. Participant 2 explains how it contributes to the atmosphere as *“I think it contributes to their vibe at the restaurant”*. Participant 5 argues that *“Bryggan is in a shopping mall, I feel that they should create a better concept and make a separation from the shopping mall. It would create a better entrance and sound level”*. Participant 9 explained that their first interaction with the interior design at Bryggan was *“the first time I saw the restaurant I thought*



it was a café, because of its interior and place". Participant 14 explained that Bryggans interior and decor felt as *"I experienced the opposite of what I said before, now it feels like an alpine cabin. It's cozy but not what i expected"*. Participant 12 also explained that Bryggan *"feels like a shopping center or a warehouse"*.

4.2.2 Meeting

Other Customers

The data collected shows that the majority of the participants prioritize the meeting when it comes to evaluating the atmosphere. One factor that the majority felt had a specific impact was other customers at the restaurant. Some participants explain that they want to feel similarities and a part of the larger group when visiting a restaurant. Participant 11 explains that *"It is important that the customer has the same interests as me, so I can feel included in the environment"*. Participant 3 stated *"The first thing I notice when I come into a restaurant is if I fit into the crowd"*. Participant 10 expressed *"when I come to a restaurant, I look at what kind of people that are dining"*. The majority of the participants felt that other customers impacted them depending on how they behave. Participant 13 expressed *"I see other customers as extras in my movie. They should only be in the background and when they are interrupting my movie, they are a part of the scene not an extra"*. Participant 2 argue *"there are both positive and negative aspects of how other customers affect my dining experience. If they are really loud and messy it is not nice. But when you visit a restaurant, I expect people chatting in the background"*. Participant 4 explained *"me and my friends visited a restaurant that was supposed to be more fine dining and the table behind us was really drunk and loud. This was really uncomfortable"*.

When asking questions about the three restaurants' meeting, the majority of the participants explained how the other guests made them feel during their experience. Participant 9 said about Zegel *"It's a lot of workers, university staff and some students this makes it a formal situation, where it sometimes does not feel so welcoming"*.

4.2.3 Service

One aspect highlighted by the participants was the service while at the restaurant. One participant argues that it sets the tone and atmosphere of the whole restaurant. Participant 5 expressed *"extremely it sets the rules of how the staff should interact with the consumers and it should be in the same way they want us to experience the restaurant"*. However, majority participants also stated that the service was one of the most important factors when choosing a restaurant participant 13 expressed *"Interior and service are the most important for me, but if i need to choose I would say service"*. Participant 10 expressed *"I think that the service and the visuals are the things that impact me the most"*. Data also showed that the majority thought that depending on how the staff behaves it will impact their experience of the



atmosphere. For example, participant 6 explains *“me as a customer likes when the service staff treats me as a friend and it impacts the whole vibe of the restaurant.”*

When asking questions about the three restaurants' service, Zegel stood out when it came to service. Participant 4 spoke about Zegel *“it feels very welcoming every time I go there especially when everyone says hi even the chefs”*. In line with that, participant 9 expressed *“nice food with nice staff”*. However, participant 6 said *“when I was there last time the server seemed like they didn't care and wanted to go home so it impacted me negatively”*. The data on Kallskänken and Bryggan shows that the participants thought that the service was good and did not have any expectations. Participants 11 stated *“I don't have any expectations on service on Bryggan as there is a lot of self-services involved”*. Participant 12 expressed about Kallsänken *“Service was friendly and good”*.

4.2.4 The product

When choosing a restaurant, the food is the most important factor that impacts the customer according to the participants. However, when you sit at a restaurant the data show that food is the least thing that influences the majority of the participants. Participant 5 explains that the food and drinks is the most important part of the atmosphere and states *“with my food and drinks interest the food always comes first. But then the atmosphere is the second most important, where the sound influences me”*. The participant 13 explains that *“the environment helps the customer to enjoy the food”*. Participant 10 explains that the environment can save the food experience and states *“it has happened that the food was terrible but the environment enhanced”*.

When asking questions about the three restaurants' food, the data show that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the food. They also thought that the food matches the chosen restaurant's environment. Participant 6 and explained Zegels food as *“I think the food matches the atmosphere and it tasted really good from what I remember”*. In line with that, participant 9 expressed *“Absolutely, I would say that the plate describes the interior and it was really nice food”*. Participant 10 explained Kallskänkens food as *“Yes, I think that the food and the environment have the same theme of colors and its symbols craft made”*. Participant 6 expressed about Kallsänkens food *“the food contributes to how you experience the atmosphere, you have the pizza sign and then it's in a nice environment. I definitely pay more to sit there instead of a normal pizza place and eat and enjoy good quality”*. Participant 14 explained Bryggan and their food as *“it is good quality and a regular lunch, I think it matches the environment”*. Where participant 10 feels the opposite *“I would say that the terrasse and the food matches but not the interior inside the restaurant”*.



4.2.5 The restaurant Management (Restaurant manager interviews)

Two manager interviews were conducted with restaurant managers from Zegel and Kallskänken to understand how restaurants work with atmosphere. The data described the restaurant's target groups to understand who the restaurant is marketing and encounters with. Zegel expressed *“our target group is everyone! But mostly business, students and people that want to grab lunch”*. Kallskänken expressed that their target group *“it is hard to explain our target group because it is everyone, but if I sum it up 20-65 years old”*. According to the experts, the interaction with the customer is the most important part when it comes to the restaurant. Zegel argued *“it is the treatment an interaction between customers and staff, everybody should get a welcoming”*. Kallskänken expressed *“the personal interaction with the customers and that we have good quality on the food”*.

Atmosphere before service

The before service is the part that restaurants can affect and manage. Therefore, the communication that they send out is extremely important according to Zegel and Kallskänken. Zegel explains how atmosphere influences their marketing and expressed *“right now we are not actively marketing our restaurant or the atmosphere. But now with the renovations it will be important so we can attract new customers”*. Kallskänken expressed *“it is important for us, it sends our message of familiarity and that the restaurant is personal. We don't want the customers to feel that our restaurant is a chain”*. The restaurant's managers describe how they want their customers to perceive the atmosphere through their social media. Zegel stated *“it's much easier to market our summer restaurant and take nice pictures there. But we want people to feel welcome and that it's a fresh and nice environment”*. In line with Zegel states Kallskänken *“it should be personal, feel alive and they should understand that the restaurant is a local business with craftsmanship”*. The data from the restaurant managers show that it is important that customers talk about the restaurant atmosphere. The managers explained how they want customers to talk about their restaurants where Zegel stated *“it should feel like a community and relaxing to be dining at our restaurant”*. Kallskänken explained *“that it is homely, personal and calm. People should want to come and enjoy a meal with the atmosphere”*.

Atmosphere during service period

During the service period are their different aspects the restaurant management can prevent. The aspect that is discussed in this thesis is the room, meeting and product.

The Room

The data gave the restaurant managers a view of how they think their room is experienced. Zegel explained about their room that it was *“natural and industrial! Messy in a good way”*. Kallskänken explained there's as



industrial, personal and messy in a good way". When the restaurant managers were describing their interior and decor Zegel expressed *"its industrial design that is rusty and a lot of steel"* Kallskänken expressed their interior and decor as *" industrial, with both new and old interior and decor"*.

The restaurant managers explain how they experience the sound in their restaurants. Zegel expressed *"It depends on the time you visit us, but at lunch it can have a high sound level. But it should be at a lunch restaurant"*. Kallskänken explained *"we are well aware of the high sound levels in the restaurant. It's something we are working on right now to create a better atmosphere"*. The restaurant managers expressed how they experienced the lighting of their restaurants. Zegel expressed *"we have a wonderful lighting because of the big windows that gives nice day light"*. Kallskänken described their lighting as *"the lighting is wonderful in the restaurant, maybe a bit dark by the bar"*.

The meeting

The meeting is an important part of the atmosphere under the service period according to the participants. The restaurants describe how the service can influence their atmosphere. Zegel argued *"It definitely has an impact on the atmosphere. We have chosen to have the chefs visible for the customers so they can chat with the chefs. It creates happy customers and is a mood booster"*. As in line with what Kallskänken expressed *"100% it can impact the environment, it is important that the customers feel safe and welcomed to the restaurant. They should feel taken care of, but customers want different services so it needs to be customized"*. The data gave the result of how the customer affects the atmosphere in their restaurants according to them. Zegel stated *"I would say the sound and the environment that customers create"* and Kallskänken argued *"A lot! They create the vibe in the restaurant and can impact each other"*.

The product

The product is an important part of the atmosphere according to the participants. The managers describe their concept and if they think it matches with their environment. Zegel argued *"we would explain that we want to be "Håll käften gott" and has an asian fusion restaurant that loves coriander"* about their concept. Kallskänken explained *"the restaurant serves a lot of organic food and has both lunch and dinner. We have pizza, salad, buffet and catering"*. The experts gave the data about if they thought the food matches the atmosphere. Zegel explained *"not really, but a bit with the industrial design. Right now, we are in the renovation process and hope that customers will feel that it matches"* and Kallskänken argued *"yes, the atmosphere and food are both sprawling in the concept, a little bit of everything"*.



Atmosphere

The managers explained why the atmosphere is important for restaurants. Zegel argued *“It can really affect the whole experience and therefore you need to understand the connection”*. Kallskänken expressed *“it is really important, according to me customers choose depending on the atmosphere. “therefore, it's important to be competitive and be unique on the market”*. The data show how they think it can generate more customers to their restaurants. Zegel argued *“This spreads the word and therefore we need to make sure they do it”* this is in line with Kallskänken expressed *“we believe that the atmosphere makes it easier to like the product and attract new customers to the restaurant”*.

4.3 Atmosphere evaluation

To understand the customer's evaluation stage of the restaurant atmosphere, where questions formed to investigate if the expectations were met in before and service period. This to see what impacted their experience and how they evaluated a restaurant depending on the atmosphere experience.

The data shows that some of the participants want a concept where the different aspects create a holistic experience. Participant 8 explains this matter as *“it needs to fit together and give a wholeness”*. The majority of the participants expresses that when the expectations are not met, they leave the restaurant with a negative experience. Participant 5 explains the experience of a newly opened restaurant years ago in Kalmar. It did not meet the expectations the restaurant communicated, and expressed *“I expected it to be Kalmar finest restaurant and when I arrived, I walked into something that felt like a school cafeteria and it made me so confused”*. In line with participant 5 expresses participant 6 how it can impact the experience and explains *“(…) I have heard good things about restaurants and it looks nice from the outside but then it's not a nice experience when I try it and it makes me not want to go back”*.

Data from the questions of the three restaurants shows how the majority of the participants evaluate their expectations and experiences of a restaurant atmosphere. Participant 14 evaluated Kallskänkens as *“no my expectations didn't get satisfied because of the staff's low interest in me and my company”*. Participant 2 describes that Kallskänkens atmosphere as *“(…) feels tight and I would take away some tables to make it more roomy”*. Data showed that the majority of the participants took the restaurant's marketing in consideration when evaluating the restaurant's atmosphere. Participant 9 explained *“Kallskänken gives different expectations on their social media versus the reality”*. However, the data shows that the majority of the participants were satisfied with their experiences after their visits at the chosen restaurants. Participant 11 explained their satisfaction of Brygga as *“yes it met my expectations, the food was nice and the atmosphere was as I expected”*.



5 Analysis

This chapter the empirical findings will be analyzed to find patterns and link them together with each other and link them with secondary sources presented in the literature review. Findings will be analyzed from the perspective of the ATMO-model presented in the literature review.

5.1 Atmosphere before service period

The authors can see from the empirical data that the theories of the pre-service period and the customer journey Canva by (Hosiaislouma, 2018). Hosiaislouma, (2018) demonstrates that under the pre-service are expectations created on the future journey of the company's atmosphere. It is built up by advertising, social media, word of mouth and past experience. The data show that it matches the theoretical approaches and is a critical point for the atmosphere.

The data showed that when deciding which restaurant the participants wanted to eat they use WOM and social media to evaluate their choices. The participants developed their expectations of the atmosphere based on what they experienced on social media and what their friends and family told them about the atmosphere. This can be linked with what Tuenart et al (2021) writes about in the early stages of the customer journey the customer builds brand awareness and expectations of the atmosphere.

Krishna (2013) writes that sensory marketing can engage the customer's senses and impact their judgment and behavior in the pre service period. Patterns became clear when participants were shown social media marketing from three different restaurants. The authors can see from the data that the participants had expectations on quality, service, interior and the product. The participants talked about how the people in the pictures made them feel welcomed and expected good service. The majority of the participants developed higher expectations of the atmosphere the more professional the pictures looked. This aligns with what Stein et al (2016) writes about how colors, graphics and layout in the digital atmosphere build expectations.

The experts explain that the before service period is an important part for them to communicate the atmosphere and attract new customers. They explain that customers should want to interact with their atmosphere because of the atmosphere showed in their social media and by WOM. They explained that it is an important part that customers talk about their restaurant atmosphere in a good way. To create recommendations and buzz about their restaurant. Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) explain that atmosphere has an impact in the pre- and post-experiences by the digital environment that's created. The digital environment is influenced by the sensory aspect's layout, colors, lightning, music and other customers.



5.2 Atmosphere during service

Singh et al. (2021) explains how the physical environment impacts customers' willingness to purchase and their judgment of quality. The authors used the ATMO model that's based on the FAMM model by Edward and Gustafsson (2008) to explain the service process. Edward et al. (2008) explains that the model creates a wholeness of the atmosphere with the different aspects. When analyzing the data, the authors could see that the factors Edward et al. (2008) explains created a wholeness and influenced each other. However, some factors are more crucial than others according to the data and are affected by individual perspectives. The authors identify that the FAMM-model had limitations in understanding the sensory that impact a customer experience. To get a deeper understanding was different sensory aspects by the SM-model (Hultén, 2010) applied to the theoretical framework.

When looking at the data with the FAMM model the authors could see that the atmosphere was more complex and should include: sound, light, interior/decor when describing the room. Hultén (2010) describes the atmosphere having different sensory impressions that impacts the customers perception of an environment. Hultén (2010) says that sound, scent, sight, taste and touch create emotions around the atmosphere. The authors can see from the data collected that the psychological reaction influences the customer experience of the atmosphere. The empirical findings did not give any indication that smell has an impact on their atmosphere journey. However, do the literature show that smell is an important factor in the customer journey and can have significant impact on the customer (Dörtyol,2021)

The researchers could see that the sense of sound is the most important part of the atmosphere. The data show that sound has a significant impact on the participants' experience of the restaurant atmosphere. Solomon (2020) explains that sound can have a big impact on how customers perceive restaurants. It can impact how the customer enjoys the product. The data shows that sound in a restaurant can impact how they enjoy their dining experience. It can be a crucial touchpoint for restaurants. However, the sound levels depend on time and the activity in the room. The data shows that the customers want the restaurants to be more aware of the sense sound because of its impact on the experience. Krishna (2013) states that sound is important because it can attract customers. It can create a more enjoyable experience. One participant explains that the situation the customer is dining in sets expectations of how the sound should be experienced. The researchers can see that this is one factor that sets the limitations of the customer experience of the sound. The data shows that customers are dining in different situations that creates different expectations on what they want to experience. Krishna (2013) explains that sound can change a person's perception of an experience. Participant 14 described the trend with dimmed lights and loud



music. It's not why the participants go out and eat. Therefore, it can be a crucial factor that can create a judgment and a non-satisfaction. The data show that loud music and surroundings generate more sound and influence the experience of the atmosphere. It can create negative experiences when it affects the whole perception of the atmosphere. Krishna (2013) explains that humans have a limited ability to perceive sound. Therefore, by analyzing the data can the physiological factor explain why a human reacts to a messy environment that the participants explain.

According to the data, lighting in the room is the second most important factor when the customers are sitting at the restaurant. According to participant 8 is it the first thing they notice when entering a room, the lighting. Palmer (2010) Explains that if not the basics hearing and lighting is satisfied for a customer it can affect the whole experience. The data shows that lighting is something the majority participants notice and affect their perception of the atmosphere. According to some of the participants could it effect how they enjoyed their food. The authors can see by analyzing the data that the sound and lighting have a relationship according to the majority of the participants. It is often described together and impacting each other and impacting the experience. Fabio et al. (2015) explains why this is so important when dining and that lighting is a physiological part that needs to be stimulated. Therefore, restaurants need to think of lighting when designing their atmosphere. The data shows by looking into lights that it's important to have good and natural lighting at the restaurants, so the customer's physiological parts get stimulated.

The mangers explain that they love their lights and that the daylight impacts a lot in their restaurants. Majority of the participants acknowledged the daylight as something that contributed to a positive atmosphere at their restaurants. Lighting is affecting the majority of the participants' experience of the atmosphere when they are dining at the restaurants. However, according to the participants, it is the second most important part when it comes to choosing a restaurant.

Krishna (2013) explains about the sight as one of the senses a customer get impact by when entering room. Mnea and Zairil (2023) describe that the interior design is a part of creating the atmosphere of a setting. According to Jalil, Yunus and Said (2012) it is the colors that create the physical environment. The data shows that the majority of the participants think interior is an important part of the atmosphere. The majority of the participants talked about the colors and interiors when describing the room. The data indicates that the participants thought it was a way for the restaurant to demonstrate what the restaurant wanted to achieve. It should be a priority for the restaurants when managing according to the majority of participants. The interior design affected the expectations on the atmosphere according to the majority of the participants. It shows that the interior design is a part of the wholeness of creating an atmosphere for a restaurant and according to the



data it is important that the interior matches the expectations. The restaurant data shows that the experts know that the interior impacts the vibe of their restaurant and contributes to the atmosphere. According to Gustafsson et al. (2006) will restaurants that do not understand the importance of the room, will be putting a meal on a plate but not understand what aspects that influences the experience of the food.

The aspect meeting is the interaction with the staff and other customers that a customer experiences when entering an atmosphere (Gustafsson et al. 2006). The data show that the participants prioritize it when it comes to evaluating the atmosphere. Both the staff and other customers impact how and if a customer likes the atmosphere according to the majority. When it comes to other customers could it impact if the customer wanted to integrate with the atmosphere. Some of the participants did not want to go to some restaurants if they didn't feel welcome and could identify with the people in the room. The majority thought it created the atmosphere and vibe of the restaurant. However, data showed that other customers can have both a positive and negative effect on customers' perception of the atmosphere created by the meeting. Gustafsson et al. (2006) explains that it's hard for restaurants to manage problems with how customers experience other customers. It creates emotions and reactions between the customers that can interfere with the atmosphere. This can be a factor why customers react to the meeting differently. The majority of the participants thought that the sound from the other customers impacted how they experienced the atmosphere and if it led to satisfaction. For some participants was it important that they felt that they belong in the restaurant's atmosphere, this could be affected by both other customer and the service.

The meeting involves the interaction between the staff and customers. According to the majority, service is a highlighted part when it comes to atmosphere. It sets the tone for the restaurant and the whole experience of the atmosphere according to some participants. Service should describe the restaurant's atmosphere and be communicated by the staff according to the data. Jönsson and Knutsson (2009) explains that the service is the first impression of a meeting and is important for the customer experience. Although the data showed that some participants contradictory opinion about of meeting. Were other customer impacted the first impression more then the staff at the restaurant.

It's the social psychology, emotions, interactions and etiquette rules that creates the atmosphere. The data shows that the majority thought depending on how the staff behave can it impact how a customer experiences the atmosphere. The majority of the participants thought that it's important to send out the right vibe of the atmosphere in the before service period otherwise it can lead to a disappointment in the service period. The waiter in this scenario has an important role of communicating and has the power of impacting the atmosphere (Gustafsson et al. 2006). It requires competence



and knowledge about cultures, social preferences and how to create individual service. From the data could the researchers see that restaurants think that the service is extremely important. From the restaurant perspective is it important that the customer feels welcomed and that the service could be customized. It showed that the restaurants thought that it contributed to making a good atmosphere. Because the meeting is when restaurants communicate the atmosphere to the customer. The experts use the staff to ensure that the customer feels safe and included in their atmosphere.

The researchers can see that the data shows that service contributes to communicating restaurants' atmosphere under the service period. When service is provided is the aspect product next in the customer's experiences (Gustafsson et al. 2006). It's when the customer has been seated and the knowledge about food chemistry and art impacts the experience (Jönsson and Knutsson, 2009). However, the research data show that the majority of the participants do not think that it is the most important part that impacts them when sitting at a restaurant. Although the data show that the majority think it impact when the participants are choosing a restaurant. The researchers can see that food is impacting before service by being the reason for the restaurant choice from the data. Edward and Gustafsson (2008) states that food is a part of making a wholeness in the experience.

Solmon (2020) explains that the sense, taste is interacting with the scientific part, called gastronomy. The food is introduced by the service and creates an experience that needs to collide (Gustafsson et al. 2006). The data shows that the atmosphere impacts the food's taste when dining. Some of the participants thought that the environment can save the food if it doesn't satisfy the customers' expectations on taste.

Data shows that the food impacts the atmosphere when it's not matching. It gives a clear view that food and the environment is important to combined when creating an atmosphere. Some of the participants thought that it creates the concept of the restaurant. It can make costumers stay and enjoy the food more. However, when it has a negative impact can it create confusion. Participant 10 had an expectation that the food, but did not match one part of the restaurant's environment which made unclear about their food concept. Gustafsson et al. (2006) explains that there are the chefs and staff's duty to communicate the concept of the product. The researchers can see that food is the most important part of choosing a restaurant. However, when it comes to the service period there are other factors that influence the participants more. The manager 1 explains that they think that a good atmosphere makes it easier for the customers to enjoy the food and also attracts more customers.



5.3 Atmosphere evaluation

In a restaurant setting the customer experience is explained by food, service, atmosphere and value (Mathayomchan and Taecharungroj, 2020). The atmosphere is a sensory setting where comfort, layout, interior design, music, scent, lighting and facilities creates a wholeness. This research shows data from the ATMO-journey model a holistic view of the customer atmosphere journey.

The data show that the atmosphere interferes with the customer in the before service period and can have an impact on their physical experience of the service period. The data indicated that the room, meeting and product interfered with each other and that customers had expectations on these in the before service period. The data show that when the expectations did not meet the atmosphere in the service period it created confusion. The participants reacted when the atmosphere was visualized in one way in the service period and was different from the real experience. This created dissatisfaction in the whole atmosphere evaluation. The data showed a variation of positive and negative aspects that affected the service period. Stickdorn and Zehrer (2009) explain that customers perceive the aspects differently and can therefore create different experiences on the perception of the surroundings. Meiselman (2008) explains that the customer enters a restaurant with expectations on the atmosphere. The majority of the participants have expectations on the atmosphere before the service period. Therefore, could the author see that combining the models to ATMO-Journey created a more holistic understanding of atmospheres impact on a customer.

The data from the manager interviews show that restaurants do not have the understanding of the importance of the before service impact on the service period when it comes to atmosphere. The authors see that there is a lack of communicating the atmosphere through the periods by using sensory marketing. Krishna (2013) defines sensory marketing as "marketing that engages the consumer's senses and affects their perception, judgment and behavior". Therefore, can communication be a critical point when communicating the atmosphere for restaurants.



6 Conclusion

The conclusion is based on the analysis of the empirical data that's collected by the semi-structured interviews. With the literature review could a discussion with the empirical findings create a conclusion in the research. In this chapter the authors will present their answers to the research questions. This will be described further with research theoretical implications, managerial implications, social, ethical and sustainable implications. This creates the limitations and suggestions for further research.

6.1 Answering the research question

The research shows that atmosphere has a significant impact on customers' dining experience at Swedish restaurants. Findings show that the atmosphere is an important part of the customer experience where different factors affect. By analyzing that data with the ATMO-journey model could the researchers see that the before service had a big impact on how the consumers experienced their service period. Therefore, do restaurants need to understand which factors influence the consumers in the before service and service period. The research shows that it depends on participants on sense, however could the researchers see that the factor that impacted the most during the periods was different. When choosing a restaurant was the factor food and interior the most important parts, the participants thought it contributed the most to the atmosphere. However, when the participant already sat in the restaurant, they thought that sound and lighting had the biggest impact on the atmosphere. What's important to acknowledge is that it was dependent on the circumstances the customer was dining in, and that these factors affected enormously when it was extreme cases. It could lead to dissatisfaction and customers leaving.

The researchers could also see that the atmosphere can save restaurants from dissatisfaction when the food is terrible. Fabio et al. (2015) talks about how the physiological factors need to be satisfied. This is why the environment that creates the atmosphere is extremely important and should be a priority. Therefore, the senses contribute to create a good experience and are prioritized by the customers as it shows in the research.

Both the experts and participants are searching for a vibe in a restaurant's atmosphere. The experts want the participants to understand the vibe they want to create. The participants want to experience a satisfying experience through the senses. The senses are contributing to how the customers feel about the atmosphere. In line with Gustafsson et al. (2006) says restaurants that do not understand the importance of the room, will be putting a meal on a plate but not understand what aspects that influences the experience of the food.



The researchers can see that the communication between the experts and participants is important in both the before and service period. Customers want the restaurants to communicate their atmosphere and so they can create expectations. These expectations need to be fulfilled otherwise it's a dissatisfaction.

The research shows that the customers are looking for restaurants with good food and a nice atmosphere. Anderson and Sin (2020) explain that the atmosphere increases the customer satisfaction and affects their purchasing decisions by 20%. The data shows that customers want a vibe and as a restaurant they can create a good atmosphere. By creating a good atmosphere where the senses are fulfilled in the ATMO-journey model, can restaurants become more competitive on the market and get more satisfied customers. As SVT and Darvishi Gaziani, (2023) explains, the restaurant industry is one of the toughest industries. Therefore, the atmosphere is important for restaurants to be competitive.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The findings in this thesis could help understand the link between the atmosphere in the pre-service period and its impact on the atmosphere during the service period. This strengthens previous research by Tueanrat et al, (2021) that explains that the early stage has an impact on how the customer will experience the atmosphere and Krishna (2013) that explains that the sensory aspects create a holistic experience.

This research has given knowledge about how the atmosphere influences a dining experience in the context of casual dining restaurants. Theoretical implication was created in this research because the researchers saw a lack in previous literature and models. The researchers thought that the models did not explain the whole customer experience of an atmosphere and explained which senses that effect the perception. With the empirical data could they see that the before service affected the service period experience. To be able to explain what influenced the customers' experiences of the atmosphere, the ATMO-journey model was created. It made it easy to understand how the room, meeting, product and restaurant management created an atmosphere for the customers, in before service and the service period. Therefore, the model has been developed to make it easy to understand for restaurants their atmosphere's effect on the customers. Where restaurants can see the whole journey and what touchpoints they should focus on. The empirical finding gave a result on which factor and senses that impacted the most. The findings showed that there was a different prioritization in the before service and service period. The model's factors that influence the expectations and experiences are prioritized according to the findings in the updated conceptual framework. Literature shows that smell is an important part of the environment. However, the empirical data was not mentioned as an important part that contributed to the atmosphere.

Therefore the smell was not used in the updated conceptual framework. The findings with the model gave a clear understanding that if the expectations in the before service did not meet the experience in the service period it created dissatisfaction in the after-service period. The updated conceptual framework will be further discussed in 6.6 and how it will be researched in the future.

The ATMO-Journey model

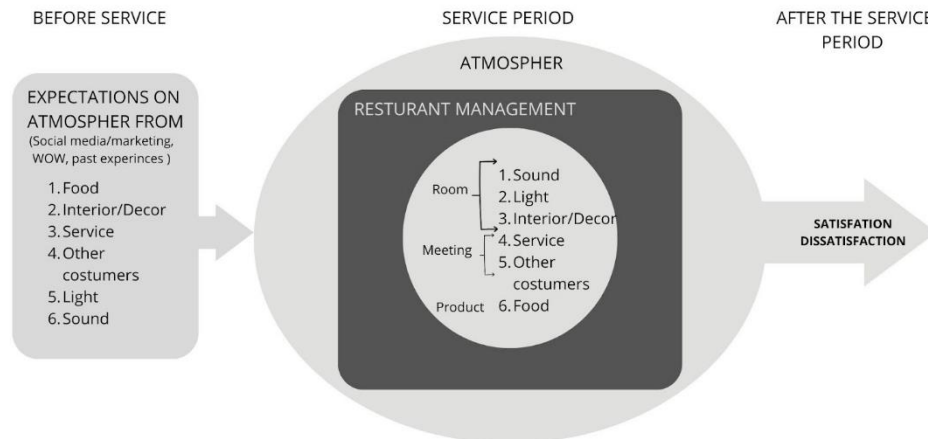


Figure 5.
Updated Conceptual framework

6.3 Managerial Implications

In a managerial perspective this thesis has provided additional knowledge, how restaurants and managers can work both before and during the service encounter to create a positive atmosphere. Restaurants and managers already know that atmosphere is important for the customer experience. However, the authors findings may possibly help them understand they should focus on developing the best atmosphere possible. As the findings show that the customer priorities differently depending where they are in the service encounter. While food was the most important factor when choosing a restaurant in the pre service period. The finding shows that it fell down the list of priorities for the customer and sound became the most important factor. The findings in this thesis could help to design the atmosphere both in the pre-service period and then during the service period. The findings in the research could help restaurants to understand how customers evaluate their experience and better understand their target group. The findings show that if the atmosphere in the service period doesn't meet the expectations of the customer a negative experience is created. As in line with Gustafsson et al. (2006) that argues, restaurants should prioritize so that staff and managers have the resources to give their target group what they expect. This thesis could help restaurants understand what senses to focus on when they create



their atmosphere. As the research shows that the senses are not met the food will be perceived negative.

6.4 Social, Ethical and Sustainability Implications

When writing this thesis, the authors have considered a social, ethical and sustainable approach and have used a theoretical and managerial perspective throughout the thesis. The thesis follows an explanatory approach that helps the reader to a deeper understanding of how the atmosphere impacts the customer experience in a restaurant setting. Together with previous research together with this thesis has contributed to develop the understanding of atmosphere and its impact on customer experience than previously existed. The findings about how customers experience the atmosphere through the service staff, implies that restaurants should keep working with a socially responsible workplace so they create the possibility for the service staff to create the best atmosphere possible. There are also indications from the research that consumers prioritize restaurants with good quality and fresh food when deciding which restaurant to go to. This implies it could be beneficial for restaurants to use more locally sourced food to appear more high quality and be more attractive to the customers.

6.5 Limitations

This research thesis has certain limitations that highlight theoretical and practical gaps, thereby opening up avenues for further research. Several limitations could be identified that may impact the findings of this study. The first limitation pertains to the sample size. With a participant size of only 17 individuals, there is a risk of obtaining misleading results. Conducting a larger study with a larger sample size could have minimized this risk. However, it is important to note that the authors reached a point of saturation during the interviews, suggesting that a substantial amount of relevant data was captured. Nevertheless, a larger sample size may have provided additional insights into how the atmosphere impacts the customer. Another limitation is the lack of investigation into the differences between genders and their atmosphere journey. This aspect could significantly impact the research findings since males and females might experience the atmosphere differently. Not accounting for these potential variations may lead to generalizations that overlook important gender-specific nuances. Additionally, it is worth noting that the researcher only established a requirement that participants had to have eaten once at one of the restaurants chosen als that they needed to eat out at least once a month. However, there was a large difference between the participants how much they ate out and



their experience of the restaurants chosen. It could impact the research findings as some participants only had experienced the restaurants once while others multiple times. This could lead to different experiences and influence the participants' responses.

In summary, these identified limitations include the sample size, the lack of gender-specific analysis, and the varied social media usage among participants. Addressing these limitations in future research could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the atmosphere's impact on the customer experience.

6.6 Suggestions for future research

After conducting this thesis more research could be conducted in the topic of atmosphere impact on customer experience. This opens up opportunities in order to better understand how atmosphere affects the consumers in a restaurant environment. As expressed in the limitations the variable of gender was not included in the research this could be looked into deeper if there is a difference between how the different genders experience the atmosphere.

The authors also found that the different factors impacted differently depending how present they were in the atmosphere. It could be interesting to see where these limits start to impact differently. This could open up for deeper understanding of how the atmosphere impacts the customer experience. In this thesis the authors looked into casual dining in Sweden. It could open up for further research in both fine dining and other cultures to see the differences and help understand how the consumer experiences the atmosphere in different settings, to see the differences between cultures. For further research there is an opening to test the ATMO-journey model and see if its applicable to the larger population.



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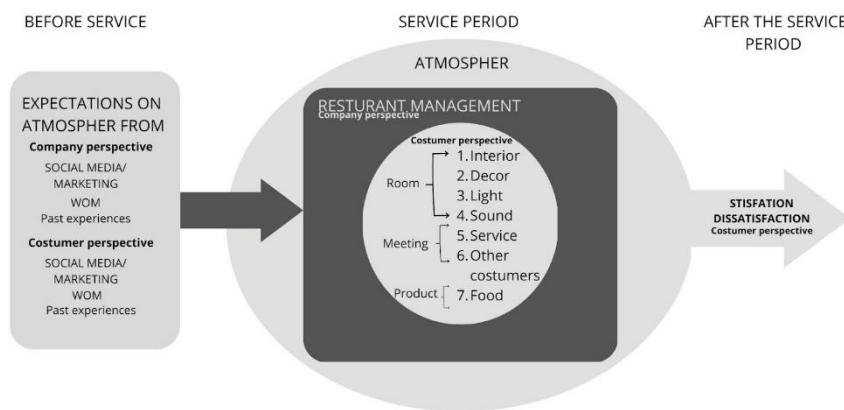
8 Appendix

Appendix 1

Note that the appendices have separate pagination and that they have to be listed manually in table of contents.

Appendix 1

The ATMO-Journey model



The interviews are constructed through our ATMO-Journey model (Figure 5).

Appendix 2

Customer interviews:

1. What factors are most important to you when it comes to dining? (atmosphere, food quality, location. etc.)
2. Why do you choose one option over the other when it comes to dining out?
3. Do you have any favorite restaurants when it comes to the restaurant atmosphere in Kalmar?
4. What do you think of restaurants that use atmosphere to market their products?
5. Have you ever experienced that an atmosphere created or changed your opinion of a restaurant?

The room

6. What influences you when you sit at a restaurant?

Prompts:

7. Do you think lighting in a restaurant is important?
8. Do you think the decor is important in a restaurant?



9. Is music important when eating out?

The food

10. How does the atmosphere affect the food you are dining?

Prompts:

11. In what way?
12. Do you have an example?

The service

13. How have other customers affected your experience of the atmosphere at a restaurant?
14. In what way have staff influenced your atmosphere experience?

Questions regarding the restaurants:

Resturant 1

Before service:

15. How do you experience the atmosphere through these social media posts? (Show a picture)
16. By looking at social media, what expectations do you have of their atmosphere?
17. Do you have any previous experience of this restaurant atmosphere?

Service period:

The room:

18. Explain the atmosphere of the restaurant? (Show pictures)

Prompts:

19. Interior and decor?
20. Explain the sound you have experienced in the restaurant?
21. How have you experienced the lightning at the restaurant?

Service:

22. If you have been to the restaurant how did the service and other customers impact the atmosphere?

Food:

23. Has the food had an impact on your experience of the atmosphere?
24. In what way does food match the environment?

After service period:

25. Did the atmosphere meet your expectations?



26. In what way?

Restaurant 2

Before service:

27. How do you experience the atmosphere through these social media posts? (Show a picture)

28. By looking at social media, what expectations do you have of their atmosphere?

29. Do you have any previous experience of this restaurant atmosphere?

Service period:

The room:

30. Explain the atmosphere of the restaurant? (Show pictures)

Prompts:

31. Interior and decor?

32. Explain the sound you have experienced in the restaurant?

33. How have you experienced the lighting at the restaurant?

Service:

34. If you have been to the restaurant how did the service and other customers impact the atmosphere?

Food:

35. Has the food had an impact on your experience of the atmosphere?

36. In what way does food match the environment?

After service period:

37. Did the atmosphere meet your expectations?

38. In what way?

Restaurant 3

Before service:

39. How do you experience the atmosphere through these social media posts? (Show a picture)

40. By looking at social media, what expectations do you have of their atmosphere?

41. Do you have any previous experience of this restaurant atmosphere?



Service period:

The room:

42. Explain the atmosphere of the restaurant? (Show pictures)

Prompts:

43. Interior and decor?

44. Explain the sound you have experienced in the restaurant?

45. How have you experienced the lighting at the restaurant?

Service:

46. If you have been to the restaurant how did the service and other customers impact the atmosphere?

Food:

47. Has the food had an impact on your experience of the atmosphere?

48. In what way does food match the environment?

After service period:

49. Did the atmosphere meet your expectations?

50. In what way?

Closing questions:

51. Do any of these restaurants miss something in their atmosphere?

52. Would you change anything about their atmosphere?

53. Tell me about yourself?



Appendix 3

Company interviews:

1. Who is your target group?
2. How does atmosphere influences how you market your restaurant?
3. What factors are most important to you when it comes to your restaurant? (atmosphere, food quality, location. etc.)

Before service:

4. How do you want the atmosphere to be perceived through your social media?
5. How do you want the customer to talk about your atmosphere?

Service period:

The room:

6. How would you explain the room at your restaurant?

Prompts:

7. Interior design?
8. Decor?
9. How would you explain the sounds at the restaurant?
10. How would you explain the lightning at the restaurant?

Service:

11. In what way can the service at the restaurant have an impact on your atmosphere?
12. In what way can other customers influence your atmosphere?

Food:

13. How would you explain your food concept?

Prompt:

14. In what way matches the food concept your environment

Closing questions:

15. In what ways is the atmosphere important for your restaurant?
16. Do you work actively to create a good atmosphere at your restaurant?
In what ways?



17. In what way can a good atmosphere generate more customers to your restaurant?
18. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and the restaurant?

Appendix 4

Swedish interview guide.

Kundintervjuer:

1. Vilka faktorer är viktigast för dig när det kommer till att äta ute? (atmosfär, matkvalitet, läge etc.)
2. Varför väljer du det ena alternativet framför det andra när det kommer till att äta ute?
3. Har du några favoritrestauranger när det kommer till restaurang atmosfären i Kalmar?
4. Vad tycker du om restauranger som använder atmosfär för att marknadsföra sina produkter?
5. Har du någonsin upplevt att en atmosfär skapade eller ändrade din uppfattning om en restaurang?

Rummet

6. Vad påverkar dig när du sitter på restaurang?

Uppmaningar:

7. Tycker du att belysning på restaurang är viktigt?
8. Tycker du att inredningen är viktig på en restaurang?
9. Är musik viktigt när man äter ute?

Maten

10. Hur påverkar atmosfären maten du äter?

Uppmaningar:



11. På vilket sätt?

12. Har du ett exempel?

Tjänsten

13. Hur har andra kunder påverkat din upplevelse av atmosfären på en restaurang?

14. På vilket sätt har personalen påverkat din atmosfärsupplevelse?

Frågor om restaurangerna:

Restaurang 1

Före service:

15. Hur upplever du stämningen genom dessa inlägg på sociala medier? (Visa en bild)

16. Genom att titta på sociala medier, vilka förväntningar har du på deras atmosfär?

17. Har du någon tidigare erfarenhet av denna restaurangatmosfär?

Serviceperiod:

Rummet:

18. Förklara atmosfären i restaurangen? (Visa bilder)

Uppmaningar:

19. Inredning och inredning?

20. Förklara ljudet du har upplevt i restaurangen?

21. Hur har du upplevt ljuset på restaurangen?

Service:

22. Om du har varit på restaurangen hur påverkade servicen och andra kunder atmosfären?

Mat:

23. Har maten påverkat din upplevelse av atmosfären?

24. På vilket sätt matchar maten miljön?



Efter serviceperioden:

25. Motsvarade atmosfären dina förväntningar?

26. På vilket sätt?

Restaurang 2

Före service:

27. Hur upplever du stämningen genom dessa inlägg på sociala medier? (Visa en bild)

28. Genom att titta på sociala medier, vilka förväntningar har du på deras atmosfär?

29. Har du någon tidigare erfarenhet av denna restaurangatmosfär?

Serviceperiod:

Rummet:

30. Förklara atmosfären i restaurangen? (Visa bilder)

Uppmaningar:

31. Inredning och inredning?

32. Förklara ljudet du har upplevt i restaurangen?

33. Hur har du upplevt ljuset på restaurangen?

Service:

34. Om du har varit på restaurangen hur påverkade servicen och andra kunder atmosfären?

Mat:

35. Har maten påverkat din upplevelse av atmosfären?

36. På vilket sätt matchar maten miljön?

Efter serviceperioden:

37. Motsvarade atmosfären dina förväntningar?



38. På vilket sätt?

Restaurang 3

Före service:

39. Hur upplever du stämningen genom dessa inlägg på sociala medier? (Visa en bild)

40. Genom att titta på sociala medier, vilka förväntningar har du på deras atmosfär?

41. Har du någon tidigare erfarenhet av denna restaurangatmosfär?

Serviceperiod:

Rummet:

42. Förklara atmosfären i restaurangen? (Visa bilder)

Uppmaningar:

43. Inredning och inredning?

44. Förklara ljudet du har upplevt i restaurangen?

45. Hur har du upplevt Ljuset på restaurangen?

Service:

46. Om du har varit på restaurangen hur påverkade servicen och andra kunder atmosfären?

Mat:

47. Har maten påverkat din upplevelse av atmosfären?

48. På vilket sätt matchar maten miljön?

Efter serviceperioden:

49. Motsvarade atmosfären dina förväntningar?

50. På vilket sätt?

Avslutande frågor:



51. Saknar någon av dessa restauranger något i sin atmosfär?

52. Skulle du ändra något med deras atmosfär?

53. Berätta om dig själv?

Appendix 5

Företagsintervjuer:

1. Vem är din målgrupp?

2. Hur påverkar atmosfären hur du marknadsför din restaurang?

3. Vilka faktorer är viktigast för dig när det kommer till din restaurang? (atmosfär, matkvalitet, läge etc.)

Före service:

4. Hur vill du att atmosfären ska uppfattas genom dina sociala medier?

5. Hur vill du att kunden ska prata om din atmosfär?

Serviceperiod:

Rummet:

6. Hur skulle du förklara rummet på din restaurang?

Uppmaningar:

7. Inredning?

8. Inredning?

9. Hur skulle du förklara ljuden på restaurangen?

10. Hur skulle du förklara blixten på restaurangen?

Service:

11. På vilket sätt kan servicen på restaurangen påverka din atmosfär?

12. På vilket sätt kan andra kunder påverka din atmosfär?

Mat:



13. Hur skulle du förklara ditt matkoncept?

Uppmaning:

14. På vilket sätt matchar matkonceptet din miljö

Avslutande frågor:

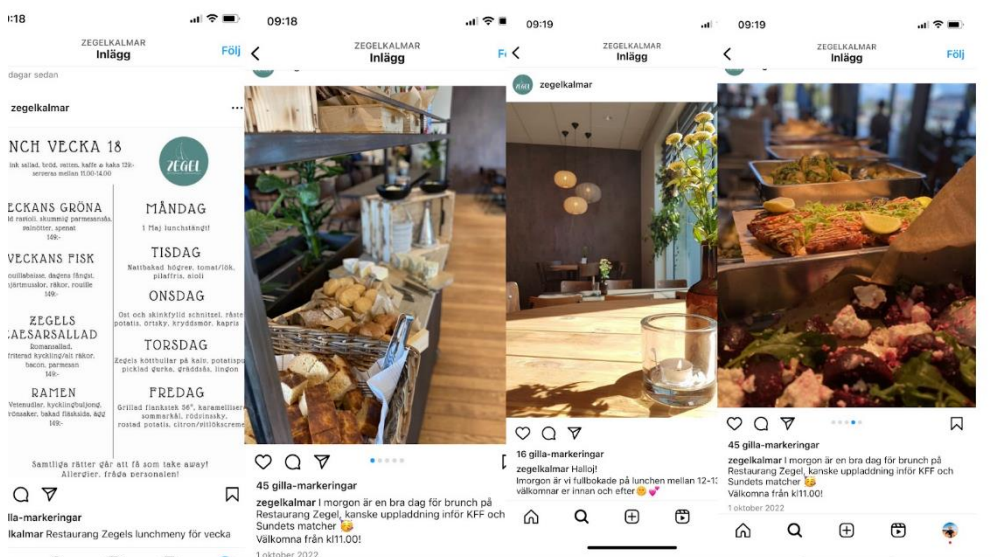
15. På vilka sätt är atmosfären viktig för din restaurang?

16. Arbetar du aktivt med att skapa en god stämning på din restaurang? På vilka sätt?

17. På vilket sätt kan en bra atmosfär generera fler kunder till din restaurang?

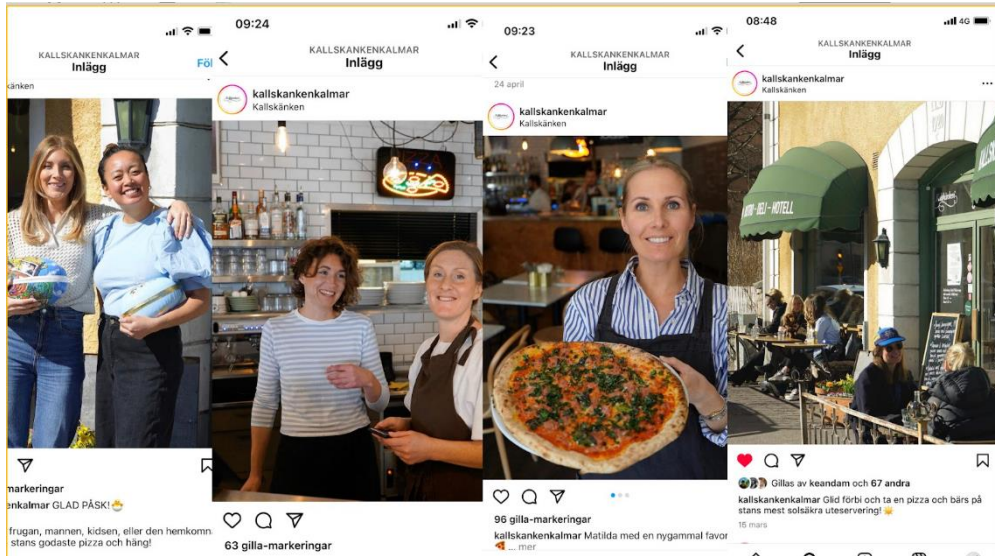
18. Kan du berätta lite om dig själv och restaurangen?

Appendix 6

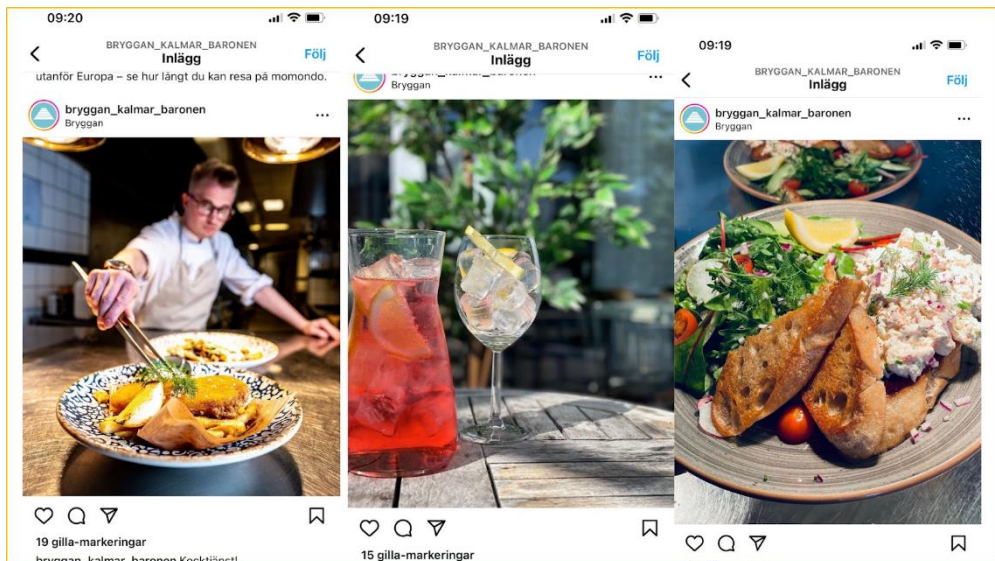




Appendix 7



Appendix 8





Appendix 9

Contribution table

Author	Sarah Wahlund	Victor Eskilsson
Introduction	50%	50%
Literature review	50%	50%
Methodology	50%	50%
Empirical findings	50%	50%
Analysis	50%	50%
Conclusion	50%	50%
Academic language and communication	50%	50%
Active part in seminars	50%	50%