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Heritage Tourism Project 2017



**Locality & choice
of food services in
Luang Prabang,
Laos**

Hanoi University

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ABSTRACT

Considered as one of the most crucial elements in heritage tourism, food nowadays is not only about the basic need of people's life but also an attractive tool to maintain and promote the authenticity of national culture to other friend countries. As time flies and many things evolve, it is evitable that there are several controversial ideas towards the level of locality and authenticity in restaurant management as well as in awareness of tourists. Various number of restaurants claim that they provide truly authentic experience for tourists. However, the perceptions of their customers vary from positive opinions to negative ones based on several criteria: ingredients, decorations, range of products, locality of staffs, etc. Thus, the purpose of this project is to explore the role of authenticity and locality in restaurant management by researching some statistical data obtained. Furthermore, this paper also provides some recommendations which come from researchers' points of view. Hopefully will this paper be useful for some authorities who are looking for better quality in providing authenticity and locality to their customers.

PART 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Authenticity and locality and categories in food culture

Travelling is now one of the trendiest activities all over the world, every traveler looks for knowledge and experiences. They want to find out the culture, people or life of each destination and food is not an exception. Food culture is the thing expressing the highlight of local culture, from experiencing the local food or cooking styles, visitors can learn about the history and lifestyle of local residents. It is therefore essential to define and promote the local dimension of food even where this is subsequently globalized.

As stated above, food culture is an essential aspect in tourism development, thus, locality and authenticity are key elements to shape the destination culture. The concept of authority in food experiences is often link to notions of the locality and novelty (OECD, 2012). For the tourism destinations, this link is really important, because it is supposed that the certain food can be only experienced the best at specific places. Thus, Authenticity not only creates the satisfaction but the motivation as well. Moreover, for tourist objects, authenticity should be interactive and subjected-involved instead of on- way. Food culture expresses negotiated authenticity, learned authenticity, replicable authenticity and customized authenticity. These things linked with food culture authenticity of constructivism that will affect the perceived results of authenticity. The reason is that food culture at the destination can change the taste to suite customer's taste, it is also called trans local production of food focusing on the customer's perception of authenticity. Moreover, food culture is not static, the improvement need to be made appropriately based on local market demand; generally, food culture is an ongoing continuous construction. Beside authenticity, locality is one of the crucial elements affecting restaurants in running businesses. In the context of humanistic geography, place is defined as a "perceived value center", and the carrier of cultural and social significance. Locality plays the key role in distinguishing one place to another, "when one place establishes functional contact with the outside world, the internal condition it has, which is not possessed by other places, is locality". Therefore, the meaning of the place created by people is locality and it is the discovery of uniqueness of local culture. Keeping authenticity and locality in running restaurant businesses is necessary in sustainable

food culture at the destination. In addition, food culture is precipitated and accumulated from local culture, its cultural heritage is more perceivable and recognizable than other non-material culture. Therefore, it is important to keep the excellent folk culture and developing sustainability of food culture is essential to improve and promote the local as well as national economy. Understanding this situation, restaurant owners should keep the authenticity and locality and start from traditional food culture to shape their own value. As a result, restaurant owners should look for the appropriate supply chain both ingredients and labor supplies. (Mitchell D, 1995)

II. Role of local community in restaurant business

1. Involvement in Food and Ingredient Supplies

A supply chain methodology which covers the linkages between relevant supply chain factors. The direct and indirect relationships between producers and consumers are central to the supply chains of locally produced food (Ari, 2010). According to the result from Ari's study (2010), food supply chains consider as a combination of environmental, social and economic sectors. The main phases of the supply chain of locally produced food are production, refining, transport, retail and consumption. The production phase consists of all agricultural processes and farm activities conducted by the producers.

Because food and beverage plays an indispensable part in tourism, it makes large profit each year especially the local factors are considered as important dimension to attract tourists and investment from restaurant business. A restaurant also is a buffer between the consumer and food they consume. It is responsible for where the food comes from and how it is prepared, when a restaurant set the criteria such as locality, authenticity, they tend to import local food supply chain to match their objectives. They also enhance the authenticity, traditional culture of region where they located to customers to make differences from their competitors. Therefore, the restaurants would like to create the harmony between their company's culture with local authentic that support their success in restaurant business. According to Pirog and Genjamin (2003), food production locality has been defined by "food miles." The importance of food miles, "the distance food travels from where it is grown to where it is ultimately purchased or consumed by the end user". With food and fuel costs increasing significantly, restaurants and other food service supply chain participants are looking for opportunities to increase their profitability. If there is a strong demand for restaurant menu items prepared from locally

produced ingredients and the local producers of these ingredients can provide a consistent supply of fresh products at reasonable prices (Thilmany, 2004), a coordinated effort to promote locally grown products can boost profitability of all supply chain partners involved in producing these meals.

2. Involvement in Labor Supplies

A key characteristic of local supply chain is that meet the employment demand for restaurants. According to a research about the supply chain approaches, Terry and his colleagues (Oct,2010) mentioned that local workers help to connect the local culture with food consumers. They are not only make professional service but also translators to transfer information permits restaurant's products and service to be differentiate, enhance the image of their hometown, preserve the authenticity in food. Moreover, customers can gain knowledge, make aware of local value, experience also perceived pictures (Terry, 2010). In another study, Welter (2010) figured out that local community and restaurants have closed relationship. It is clear that restaurants recruits people in variety of positions from dishwashers, cleaners, waiters to managers, etc and they affect to customers of restaurants. In the article 'The importance of local cuisine' (Jan 2017), the author said that being served by local people makes customers, especially foreign tourists feel more "genuine" in terms of service and atmosphere, for example, local chefs have the advantage of knowing the dish well and sometimes have their own recipe to make the food have unique and authentic taste.

3. Authenticity and Locality Factor in Customer's Choice of Restaurant

When choosing restaurant, especially in a tourism destination, people often based on some criteria: price, food quality, service, decoration and atmosphere... However, the locality in restaurant is more and more concerned by customers.

A research about Local Food Preferences of Restaurant Consumers pointed out that there are some main factors affecting customers' choice of restaurant. Local ingredients make up 23%, rank third among 3 options. The others include Meal price (58.5%) and Restaurant type (17.5%). Increasingly consumers are concerned with understanding the food marketing system and knowing where their food has originated. Locality, especially local ingredient is affecting customers' perception. The awareness of the support for local people in the destination is gradually increasing. When using local cuisine, it supports local artisans and businessmen.

Buying local ingredients is buying from local farmers growing their local businesses. Buying local and supporting local businesses improves local economies, which means profit runs directly into local people's pocket (chef Luis,2017).

Moreover, food is always in the best condition with high quality and freshness. The only way to get the freshest ingredients is to be close to the source. Ingredients play an important part in the taste of food, beside cook's skills and experience. The fresher, the better. Therefore, reducing food miles is necessary to restaurants and their customers.

Another important thing is that customers will learn more about seasonal foods. People may wonder why do restaurants need to change their menus once or even twice a year? It's because they're dedicated to providing their diners with the freshest ingredients that changes every season. With new ingredients entering the restaurant, every meal is an exploration of new tastes and smells of the destination. Plus, new ingredients keep chefs engaged, excited, and willing to think about food and cooking in new ways.

Besides, the concept of the restaurant built by the owner is also an important factor. For instance, when coming to Vietnam, eating in small shops located deep inside a small, dark alley is a must. It is the same for food stalls inside small trucks in Korea. Although not being obvious, local staffs indirectly affect customers' experience when dining in a restaurant.

PART 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Population and sample

The aim of our project is to explore the role of authenticity and locality in restaurant management, so that the population of 100 tourists were identified. Subsequently, we selected a qualified sample of 89 tourists travelling to Luang Prabang to participate in this project.

2. Questionnaire design

This questionnaire is divided into two parts. Firstly, ten questions were established to collect data about their behavior and their real experience toward the authenticity and locality in a specific restaurant that they choose during their trip. Secondly, we designed several questions involved in personal detail about identification of participants. In this section, we request each tourists provide their personal information including nationality, gender, age group and their highest level of education.

The very two first questions are aimed at finding out tourists' travelling behaviors including if this is the first time they come to the destination and how long they will spend here. The next three questions concentrated on the behavior, consideration level of tourists when they choose a place to eat during their trip. To learn the most preferred sources which provide tourists information about where to eat, the two following questions were drawn in the questionnaire. In order to figure out whether the chosen restaurant satisfy tourists or not, the next questions was raised. Moreover, the two up-coming questions pointed out some relevant aspects which directly present the performance of the restaurant in term of level of authenticity. And the last four questions, we required tourists to provide us some information about their demographic factors.

3. Sample size

In fact, the accurate number of tourists in Luang Prabang are unable to identify. The huge population as well as the limitation of members and a short-lived time to conduct this project, finally it is ideal choice with a sample of 89 participants. This number for sample size seems to be an applicable and feasible. We think the sample size is large enough to ensure a fairly accurate result and represent about population characteristics very well.

The sample questions are presented in Appendix of this project.

4. Data collection

With a huge advantage to access directly to the real fields, we tried to deliver the hard copies of the questionnaire to the 100 selected respondents. We made efforts in approaching tourists in several destinations, from famous tourism attractions to some sites that we came across.

5. Data processing

After collecting all the responses from questionnaire, we can comfortably take information for drawing appropriate charts and tables thanks to assistance of several function in SPSS Statistics software. Based on statistic figures calculated and correlation recorded, our group made analysis, comparisons and conclusions which were shown in Descriptive results and findings section.

PART 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Overview about Laos Cuisine

The next door neighbor to the east of Thailand and to the northwest of Vietnam is Laos (officially Lao People's Democratic Republic). Due to the geographic characteristic and its open-culture, Laos cuisine is related to Thai culinary and Vietnam dishes in some aspects (Bee n.d.). Laotian also prefers various kinds of herb to daily dishes to create more spice flavor than Thai people does. Although there are a lot of Laos dishes having the same ingredients and appearance like Thai food, Laos versions differentiate themselves by adding other elements to the origin. Moreover, unlike most parts of Thailand, Laotian prefers sticky rice to plain rice in their daily meals. Family plays an important role in overall Laos culture as well as their eating style. Some kinds of dishes will be served at a time and all family members will gather on the floor and share foods (Royal Heritage Cruise n.d.).

❖ Luang Prabang's Traditional Dishes

🚩 *Larb* \ *ລາບໝູ* \ (*Minced Meat Salad*)

Laos is the country where the original Larb comes from. Different from Thai, whose version highlights the spicy flavor from different herbs, this kind of minced meat salad focuses on meaty flavors of pork, chicken, turkey or duck, with the fresh of salad leaves, fresh mint, fish sauce and lime juice. The only spice herb is used in this Laos's traditional dish is Thai basil (Chill And Mint 2014). The original version will be served with a set of sticky rice and raw vegetables. Khao Kua \ *ข้าวคั่ว* \ (toasted sticky rice powder) plays an important role in Larb, helping to enhance the crispy of pork and roasted fragrance (Asian Inspirations n.d.).

🚩 *Or Lam* \ *ອາລາມ* \ (*Laotian Stew*)

Or Lam is a well-known dish in the mountainous region of Luang Prabang. One of its special ingredients is salted buffalo meat. Occasionally, stripes of sun-dried buffalo skin are added as well after being cooked in salty water. This dish requires a complex process to successfully

complete with mildly spicy stew from lemongrass, chili, pepper wood; different flavors aspects from salty taste of meat, sweetness of vegetables and bitterness of the greens from fresh dill and fragrant lemon basil as well (Hanuman 2012).

✚ *Khao Kha Moo* | ข้าวขาหมู | (*Braised Pork Leg*)



In English, this dish is known as Braised Pork Leg. Khao Kha Moo is normally served along with a portion of rice, a hard-boiled egg, a little vegetable at local restaurants and street vendors. The hot and sour spicy chili is poured all over the plate, flavors the dish with amazing taste from that indulgent sauce. The pork legs are boiled for hour to get the tender texture and sweet bouillon, which make it easily melt in your mouth. Some local hotels also offer this kind of dish in their menu but without rice and fusion decoration (Jamon 2015).

✚ *Kaipen* | ไคแปง | (*Mekong Riverweed*)



Kaipen is a snack which is made from Mekong Riverweed collected in dry season. It is believed that Luang Prabang has the most delicious Kaipen in Southeast Asia. Before adding pieces of garlic and sesame seeds on top of Kaipen, it must go through a strict process of different steps: washing, hanging, pounding and pressing into fine flat sheets so that it becomes eatable. The dish is then served with chili dip and beer Lao to enhance the flavor. It is also especially good for health as the rich minerals and vitamins that Kaipen contains (Luang Prabang Timeless n.d.)

✚ *Luang Prabang Sausage*



Another dish that highlights Laotian culinary is called Luang Prabang Sausage, which made from fatty pork and seasoned with lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves, shallots, garlic, salt, fish sauce, galangal and chilies. An appealing observation about this special food is that while this dish is served at weddings and traditional celebrations, it can also be found in regular food stalls and markets. The most favorite one by the local is pig blood sausage and many tourists also come here for this exotic dish (Luang Prabang Timeless n.d.).

✚ *Khao Piak Sen* | ກ້ອນປຸງກ | (*Sticky Rice Noodles*) and Other Well-known Noodle Soups

Last but not least, the most well-known dishes symbolize Asian culture – noodle soup. Besides sticky rice, noodle soup is another favorite food in Laos. There are a lot of impressive noodle soup styles such as Khao Piak Sen, Laos Pho or Laos Khao Soi (Luang Prabang Timeless n.d.). Khao Piak Sen is made from wheat, having some similarity in texture of Japanese’s Udon and Vietnamese’s Banh Canh but different ways of serving. Boiled chicken is the main ingredient which contributes to the sweet flavor of the soup. In Laos’s local way of making Khao Piak Sen,

it is recommended to cook noodles and chicken broth together as well as adding some seasoning at a time (Siew 2014). Different from Vietnamese Pho, which is served with one kind of meat only, the Pho Laos style has various ingredients in just one bowl such as beef, pork, meatball, pork sausage (Theek 2013). When Thai people use bite-sized slices of meat in Khao Soi, the Laos version uses minced pork instead and puts a lot more spice seasoning and herbs in it (Luang Prabang Timeless n.d.). It is the differences that make Laos cuisine worth to give it a try and the experiences will certainly unforgettable.

2. Role of local community in restaurant business

a. Involvement in Food and Ingredient Supplies

It is incontrovertible that local community plays a crucial role in each financial sector of a country, including supplying food and ingredients for its own residents. Having been well-known for owning a long agricultural history, Laos people have taken advantage of their natural habitat to enrich their life by offering their own grown food in both domestic and international market. Hence, in 2000, Lao PDR officially achieved rice self-sufficiency with 80% subsistence farmers, who mainly grow their own food and raising livestock. Nowadays, there still exists an estimated 75 percent of the total workforce in agriculture sector and 72 percent of the total cultivated area is dedicated to rice (Food And Agricultural Organization 2017).

Luang Prabang is an outstanding example of Laos's city in promoting and producing agriculture products for its local. Paddle fields are widely seen in this area, offering local with abundant source of the most well-known dish being served in every Laos's meals – Khao Niew (Bee n.d.). Vegetables, salad greens and herbs - the indispensable ingredients in each Luang Prabang dish are also grown locally. The biggest supplier of organic food in Luang Prabang can be named – The Living Land Company (near Ban Nadad, Luang Prabang). This is the corporation which cooperates with local farmers, projects with the Department of Agriculture and Forestry of the District of Luang Prabang and the Agricultural College of Luang Prabang Province to not only supply the best quality products for people but also preserve and promote the slice of culture belonging to Laos. Due to the productivity and premium food standard, food in Living Land Company is widely supplied directly to the leading hotels and restaurants in Luang Prabang. The company also offer home stay service, where tourists can take part in “A farmer's day” to experience themselves the traditional process to grow food in Luang Prabang and have their

meals served by grown food there. It is the natural land, knowledge and experiences of local farmers that attribute to the freshness and excellent flavor for these chemical-free products, making Living Land becoming the dominant supplier in this city (The Living Land Company 2014).

Besides farmer-families who join Living Land Company, other farms such as Ken's Green Organic Farm (40 Km from Luang Prabang) distribute their raw ingredients to several customers such as local restaurants, small-size hotels, food manufacturers, local markets or making food by their own to sell directly to customers (Angus 2017). There are large numbers of markets operated from dawn to dusk located dispersedly in Luang Prabang. The three famous one are the Morning Market (between north of Sisavangvong Road and east of Kitsalat Road), Phosi Market (Phothisalath Road) and Evening Market (Sisavangvong Road). The Morning Market is certainly the destination for most suppliers because people come here in the early morning to choose fresh ingredients for each day. Each restaurant often cooperates with their own favorite retailers with large orders to make sure the food quality will be the best. Some smaller ones prefer picking food for their own stores. The other two markets concentrate more on processed food at food vendors so that the suppliers will mostly be themselves or work directly with farmers (Braaksma 2013).

b. Involvement In Labor Supplies

The contribution of local community in restaurant business also comes from the local staffs – from the local managers, the chefs to the servants. Whatever the size or the style of restaurants are, the tourists would be experienced the highest open-armed and professional serving styles. It is the local people who bring the soul in each dish and make the atmosphere become brighter. On TripAdvisor, when talking about the staffs at 3 Nagas Restaurant, Ms. Nancy stated: “The staff went out of their way to make sure the experience was excellent”. Meanwhile, the reviews for staffs at Tamarind restaurant are positive, too. To Noynaa, from Bangkok: “The staff were exceptionally well-trained, and very helpful in catering to kids with aversions to herbs, and explaining unfamiliar dishes to them”. Most customers express their feeling that the local staff receive valuable training, learning how to work with people of many different nationalities and practice English well.

Moreover, the tourists may have opportunities to learn how to make traditional dishes by practicing cooking some of them in cooking class under the instruction from the restaurant's chefs, like at Tamarind Restaurant's Cooking School. Edwina, who joined a cooking class at Tamarind Restaurant in 2016, said that the school was taken place in a beautiful garden, surrounding by a small stream and lots of local herbs. She also complimented the class for its scientific school layout when the Restaurant's Cooking School made the best condition for the learners to study about local ingredients, recipes, cooking techniques, as well as the practice of cooking on coal fire with traditional pots and baskets. The chefs, according to her, "explained every dish in detail". After all, her cooking ability had been improved significantly and she was totally addicted the Lao sticky rice thanks for the lesson of making that dish. From the experience of Edwina, it can be seen that these moments be with local people truly bring to tourists unforgettable experience, make them love the Luang Prabang's culinary more.

The appearance of local managers and chefs in traditional restaurants significantly presents the authenticity and locality, due to the fact that they know a lot about Luang Prabang culinary. It is shown in the way they modify the tastes and menu to suit every eating styles while still preserving the culinary styles of Luang Prabang. For instances, Tamnak Lao Restaurant offers mildly flavored dishes to serve the tourists who are the first time to enjoy Laotian spicy flavors, or Coconut Garden Restaurant even designs a menu for the vegetarians (Dawdy, n.d.).

In Luang Prabang, there is a number of restaurant run by family of passed through generation. Manda de Laos Restaurant is a typical example. The manager of Manda de Laos Restaurant shared that the establishment of the restaurant was inspired by the manager's mother – Mama Phiew, who learned to cook traditional Lao dishes from her own mother and passed her the knowledge and love of Lao cooking to the managers and his siblings.

c. Authenticity and Locality in Restaurant's Architecture and Atmosphere

Considering authenticity and locality in restaurants is not just simply for competing in tough local food tourism market. Lots of managers and owners respect these characteristics so they try to boost it into an integration portrait for the land as a way of expressing their esteem. As a result, many restaurants in Luang Prabang have been renovated from the old buildings or redesigned to be in harmony with nature, which sharpens the image of "an ancient capital of the Million-Elephant-Land".

Considering the pure traditional atmosphere and local style, Nagas Restaurant, L'Elephant Restaurant and Dyen Sabai Restaurant are ones among the most outstanding names to both local people and foreign tourists. L'Elephant is the most luxurious restaurant in Luang Prabang upgraded from “an open-air 1960s colonial buliding” (Rogerson, 2016). The other more simple but not less elegant is Dyen Sabai Restaurant which is located across Nam Khan River and set up with bamboo huts in beautiful gardens. The only way to reach to the restaurant is passing through the bamboo bridges in dry season (from November to May) or sailing boats in rainy season (from June to October) (Justgola, 2017). They all share the high rating in tourism websites or traveling blogs, receiving compliments as “amazing place”, “royal kingdom” and so on. Karen, a customer who once tasted dishes there even note on TripAdvisor that she enjoyed the dinning experience so much that she booked the same table for the following night.

So now, how sophisticated is the theme of authenticity and locality in restaurant business? Actually, the answer is based on the very simple formulation – Finding the region's root and soul – That may be food, regional ingredients, its people, or even the mystery lying in history, music and old stories. That is the reason why among so many modern Western restaurants and busy food places, the traditional local ones still touch the customers' hearts.

II. PRIMARY RESEARCH RESULTS AND FINDINGS

1. In-depth interview findings

➤ Tamnak Lao Restaurant

By the time we conducted the field trip to Luang Prabang, we had had opportunity to interview the manager of Tamnak Lao Restaurant to examine more the relationship of supply chain and authenticity.

First of all, the typical ingredients are sausages, fish, milk, sticky rice and they are bought from fresh market and supplied mainly from cousins or those having close relationship with him. Besides, the restaurant also buy them from other vendors in Luang Prabang, but with just a small proportion. The main reasons given by the managers are convenience, price and quality. According to the managers, his acquaintances live near from the restaurant, so it is much easier to provide fresh sources with an ideal deal – which made the importing process become more convenient and cheaper. Besides, those cousins and close relationships understand the quality standard of the manager as well as the restaurant; therefore, they can totally meet the restaurant's needs. In addition, the ingredients must be fresh, which is easily observed through color – if they are not fresh enough, the suppliers need to reload.

The next concern about Tamnak Lao Restaurant is the staffs. There are 28 employees and 9 chefs, all of them are Lao people only. They must attend and finish some training courses before serving officially; however, in the high season or peak time, some new staffs may make conditions to work with the trained ones after short introductions. With that training process, most of the guests are satisfied with the workers. Additionally, the employees can become the best staffs for each period (every month or quarter) if they receives lots of good comments from guests. In every 3 to 6 months, experts from local authority will visit the restaurant and check the serving styles as well as judge the staff's qualification.

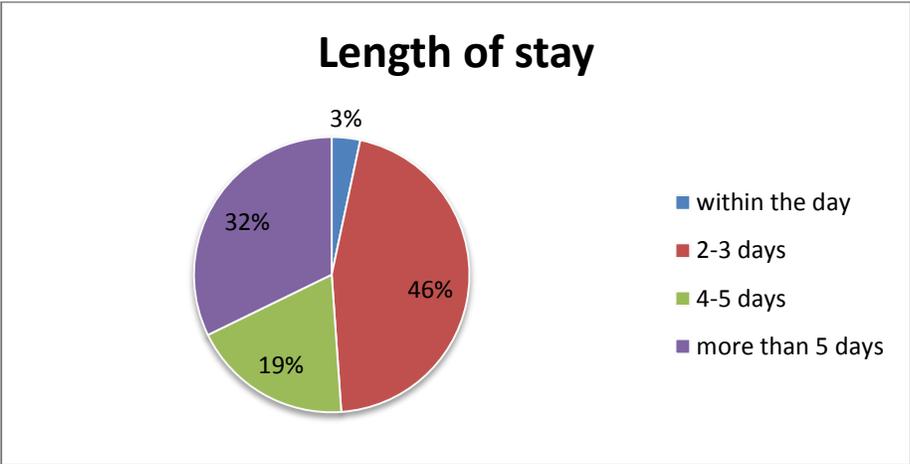
The recipe of Tamnak Lao Restaurant are traditional and quite general, like its competitors in the land of millions of elephants. The architecture is definitely decorated in Luang Prabang's culture, either. The restaurant focuses on traditional style – it can be easily realized that the furnitures like table, floor, windows, balconies, ... are made from wood and decorated in shapes of elephants. In short, that decoration shows the respect of Tamnak to the policy in Luang Prabang, which is forming the style to enhance the beauty of the heritage city.

Visiting Tamnak Lao Restaurant is not eating only – the guests also have chances to watch live dancing performances and attend in some cooking classes (which are taught in other places, not in the area of restaurants). In order to measure the happiness of guest, the manager and staffs will observe the guests’ faces and care the guests’ tips – the higher the tips are, the happier coming from them. Besides, the restaurant also bases on the reviews on tourism websites, forums. Another way to know whether the customers are satisfied or not is the photos between staffs and customers before leaving.

Last but not least, we also concern in the promotion activities. Tamnak Lao Restaurant promotes its reputaiton through official website and brochures. They also corporate with travel agencies and tour operators to expand their popularity.

2. Descriptive results and findings

Question 1 + Question 2:



With 2 questions related to respondents’ trip, general idea has been collected including whether it was their first time in the destination and length of stay.

For the first question, among 89 respondents, 78 of them came to Luang Phrabang for their first time, accounting for 88%. The minority of 11 people indicate that they have visited the destination before.

It is evident from the information provided that visitors who stay in Luang Phrabang for 2-3 days make up the biggest proportion (46%). It is also interesting to note that the length of stay for 4-5 and over 5 days are also very popular, accounting for 19% and 23% respectively. On the other hand, there is a few travelers visit the place within the day (3%).

Question 3: Can you name some local food of the destination?

When being asked about naming some local food, a large number of respondents seem to be unsure about Laos dishes. 21 of them left the answer blank or stated that they have no idea, or they just arrived yesterday. Other people knew some names of food, however, most of them used the English word to indicate local food, instead of its original name: chicken kebabs, banana pancake, steamed rice, fried pineapple, spring rolls... Very few respondents were able to spell dishes name correctly: kao soy, kao pat, laap...

Question 4: When you choose a place to eat during your trip, how important is the authenticity/locality of the destination for your choice?

There is a question as well as a table in the survey conducted with the purpose of collecting respondents' behavior toward the criteria when they choose a place to eat during their entire trip.

In general, in question 4, most of respondents care about the authenticity or locality of a restaurant: nearly half (44%) of them think that they would choose a restaurant if it is featured with authentic elements, while another large amount of 37% think that it is quite important. However, 16% keep the neutral opinion about the question asked, and 3 people, accounting for 3% are sure that authenticity and locality is not very important for their choice of where to eat.

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Very important	39	43.8	43.8
Quite important	33	37.1	80.9
Neutral	14	15.7	96.6

Not very important	3	3.4	100.0
Total	89	100.0	

Question 5. How important are the following criteria toward your choice of a place to eat during your trip?

➤ Descriptive Statistics

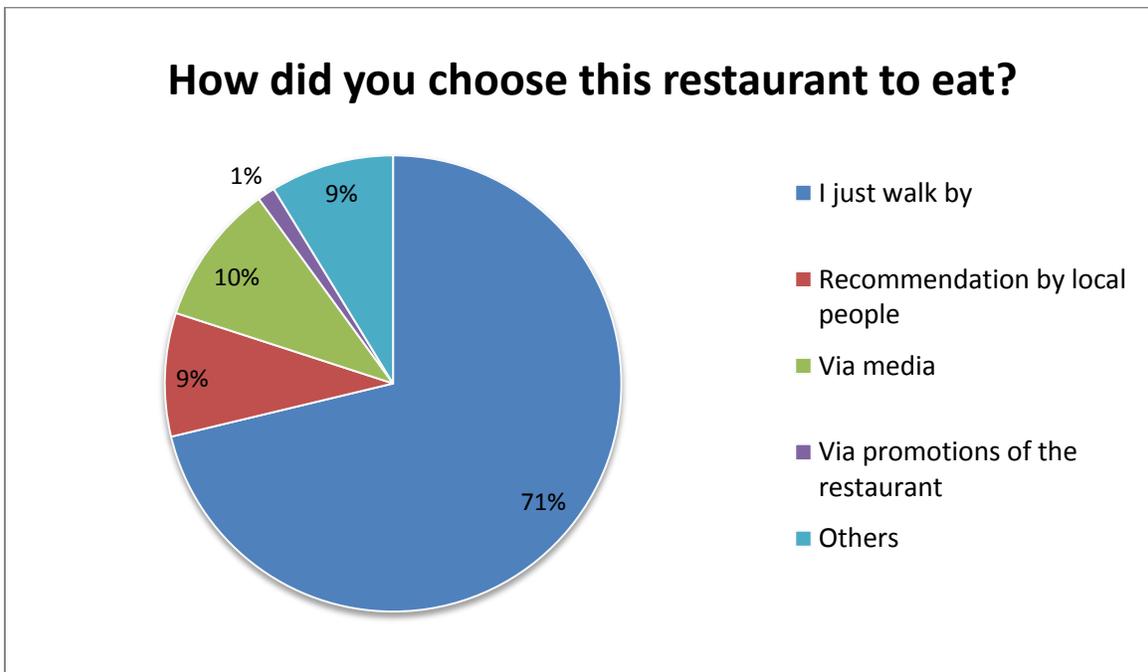
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The restaurants provide local food	83	1	5	2.17	.762
The ingredients used by the restaurants are local products	82	1	4	2.15	.722
The recipe is kept similar to traditions	82	1	5	2.49	.850
The eating style is kept similar to traditions	82	1	5	2.54	.834
The serving staff of the restaurants are local people	82	1	4	1.68	.784
The chef team are local people	82	1	4	2.04	.909
The decoration of the restaurant is local design	83	1	5	2.23	1.063
Valid N (listwise)	79				

More specifically, authenticity importance has been broken into more detailed criteria so that precise information would be collected. Respondents were asked to mark the importance related to authenticity when they choose a place to eat in Luang Phrabang, with 1 as “very important” and 5 as “not important at all”.

Overall, with average point fall from 1.5 to 2.5, respondents tend to choose options “very important”, “quite important”, “neutral”, more than “not very important” and “not important at all”. Nearly in a haft of all questions, respondents tend to choose from 1 to 4, no one chose mark 5 (not important at all). It can be clearly seen that generally, people consider all those criteria to be important to them when making decision of where to eat.

The criteria regarding of local staffs seems to be most important to tourists when making up their mind where to dine in. Local chef team is also carefully taken in to account by our respondents. However, traditional recipe and eating style seem not to affect much on tourists’ decision.

Question 6. Is this your first time to this restaurant?/ Question7. How did you choose this restaurant to eat?



Question 6 and 7 ask respondents to provide information about their choice of the dining place that they were currently at.

The data about whether it was their first time in the restaurant is collected through question 6. Among 83 answers, the majority stated that it was their first time there, accounting for nearly 75%. The other (25%) has been to the place for more than one time before.

It is clearly seen from the questionnaires collected that there are several sources of information for international tourists to choose their places to eat. Walk-in customers with 71% are the highest proportion among 4 means of choosing restaurant to dine in. Approximately 10% of respondents were recommended by local as well as get the information from media. Very small number of tourist, making up 1%, chose the restaurant because of the restaurant promotion. Another main source of information contributed to their decision for a place to eat in Luang Phrabang was via Travel book.

Question 8. How much are you satisfied with the experience at this restaurant?

According to the results of our survey for international tourist in Luang Phrabang that we delivered randomly, we have collected their evaluation of the restaurant they were currently dining in when conducting the survey.

The satisfaction of restaurant customers has been collected through question 8. A large number of survey conductors stated that they are “very satisfied” or “quite satisfied” with the experience in the restaurant, making up 29% and 50% respectively. While 19% of respondents express their “neutral” satisfaction. Ranking at the least place, only 2 people in total chose to rate their experience as “quite dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied”.

Question 9. What mark from 1 to 10 would you give for the level of authenticity of this restaurant?

Respondents were asked to mark the authenticity of the restaurant where they are enjoying food, with 1 as the lowest and 10 as the highest. The biggest proportion goes to medium marks, with 18 people choose mark 8 and 14 people for mark 7. The second largest number of people rate is mark 9, with 9 respondents, followed by mark 6, mark 4, and 3 with 5 people, 4 people and 4 people respectively.

Other 5 conductors keep their neutral opinion and gave mark 6. There are 3 conductors gave the restaurant the highest mark (mark 10) for their authenticity they experienced when enjoying the

meal in their chosen restaurant. A few people who did not find the authenticity feature in the restaurant, which led to the relatively low mark: 2 people for mark 1 and 1 people for mark 2.

In general, restaurants in Luang Phrabang seem to get medium evaluation from tourists, with mark 6.85 in average.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	2	2.2	3.2	3.2
2	1	1.1	1.6	4.8
3	4	4.5	6.5	11.3
4	4	4.5	6.5	17.7
5	2	2.2	3.2	21.0
Valid 6	5	5.6	8.1	29.0
7	14	15.7	22.6	51.6
8	18	20.2	29.0	80.6
9	9	10.1	14.5	95.2
10	3	3.4	4.8	100.0
Total	62	69.7	100.0	
Missing System	27	30.3		
Total	89	100.0		

➤ Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
mark from 1 to 10 for the level of authenticity of this restaurant	62	1	10	6.85	2.179
Valid N (listwise)	62				

Question 10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this restaurant?

The table below shows the proportion of respondents' opinion toward some criteria related to restaurants' authenticity and locality, with 1 is Strongly agree and 5 is Strongly disagree.

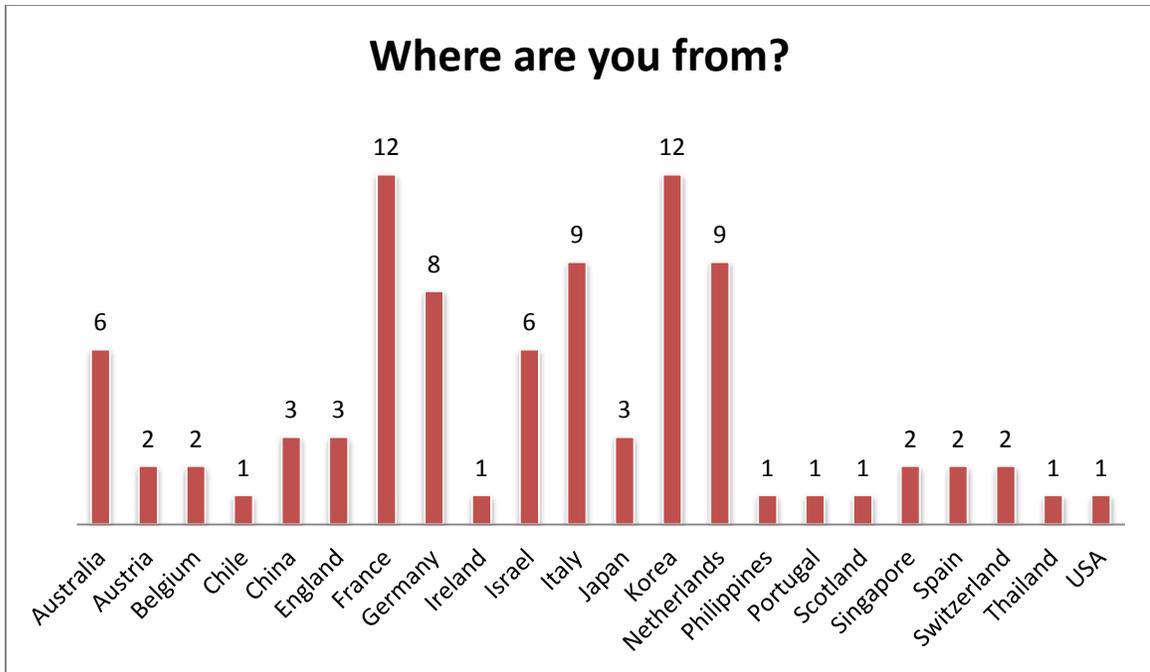
In general, respondents' rates vary from mark 1 to mark 5 in the table for all criteria. They mostly show their agreement about all questions asked about the authenticity of restaurant, including food, ingredients, recipe, eating style, staffs, chef team as well as decoration. With average point of 1.73 and 1.99, the two first criteria seem to be almost strongly agreed by respondents to "provide truly local food" and "ingredients used by the restaurant are local products". For other criteria, the average point is from 2 to 2.3, which also proves the high level of agree among respondents.

➤ Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
The restaurant provide truely local food	89	1	5	1.73	.809
The ingredients used by the restaurant are local products	89	1	5	1.99	.832
The recipe is kept similar to traditions	89	1	4	2.12	.864
The eating style is kept similar to traditions	89	1	4	2.25	.883
The serving staff of the restaurant are local people	89	1	5	2.31	.995
The chef team are local people	89	1	5	2.17	.956
The decoration of the restaurant is local design	89	1	5	2.37	.845
Valid N (listwise)	89				

Question 11: Where are you from?

In terms of nationality, Luang phrabang international tourists come from different countries in the world, mostly Asia countries (China, Japan, Korea...) and Europe (Austria, Belgium, Netherlands...). French and Korean are two nationalities that rank at the first place with 12 tourists each country coming to Luang Phrabang among 98 in total, followed by Italy and the Netherland with 9 tourists each and Germany with 8 tourists. Australia and Isarel tourists are also spotted in the destination with 6 questionnaires has been conducted. Other tourists with less than 3 people from each country are from Austria, Belgium, Chile, China, England, Ireland, Japan, Philippines, Portugal, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand and USA.

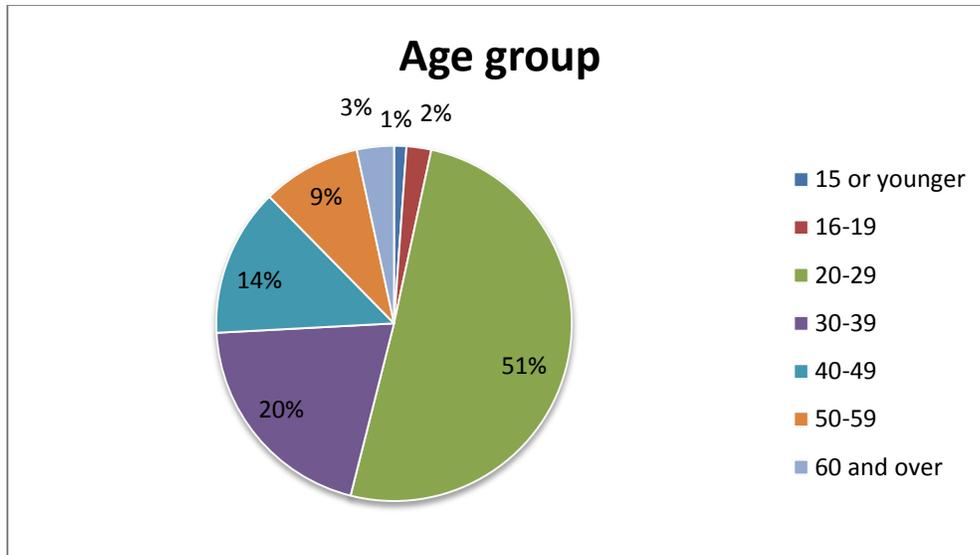


Question 12: Please indicate your gender

In terms of gender, there exists a relatively similar figure of male and female tourists in Luang Phrabang. To be more specific, of 87 valid gender information collected, the number of male and female tourists accounts for 49 percent and 48 percent respectively.

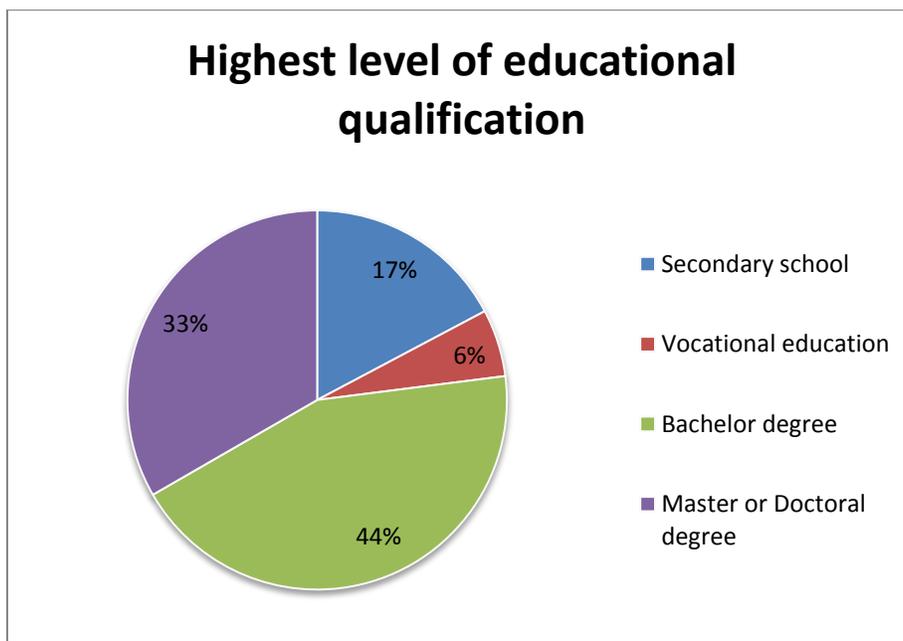
Question 13: Please indicate your age group

Regarding age group, international tourists in Luang Phrabang ranges from 15 to over 60 years old. More specifically, the major visitors of the destination are from 20-29 age group, accounting for roughly a half number of survey respondents (51%). The second largest age group comes from people who aged 30-39 years old, with the proportion of 20%, followed by 40-49 and 50-59 age group which account for 14% and 9% respectively. On the other hand, people over 60 and less than 20 have the lowest percentage in the chart, with 3 conductors in total.



Question 14: What is your highest level of educational qualification?

It is evident from the information provided that people who have Bachelor degree make up the biggest proportions of educational qualification, accounting for nearly a half (44%) with 38 respondents. The second largest proportion went on the higher lever, which is Master or Doctoral degree (33%), followed by Secondary school and Vocational education with 17% and 6% respectively.



3. Other Findings

3.1. Relationship between gender and the level of authenticity importance

Is there any relationship between gender to the locality importance of the eating destinations? Let's analyze so see whether the two genders share the same viewpoint of the importance of authenticity of place to eat. In order to solve that question, the independence sample t-test method is a vital approach. Since the Sig. of Levene's Test is 0.598, which is clearly higher than 0.05, the result from "Equal variances assumed" should be used. It can be seen from the table that the Sig. (2-tailed) T-test is 1.186, which is also much higher than 0.05. Hence, there is not enough evidence to conclude that the male and female are different about the analyzed criteria. Nevertheless, there must be other relations of the locality in the remaining factors; therefore, another test should be used.

➤ Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
The importance of the authenticity/locality of place to eat	male	44	1.91	.884	.133
	female	43	1.70	.773	.118

➤ Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
The importance of the authenticity/locality of place to eat	.280	.598	1.186	85	.239	.211	.178	-.143	.566
			1.188	83.959	.238	.211	.178	-.142	.565

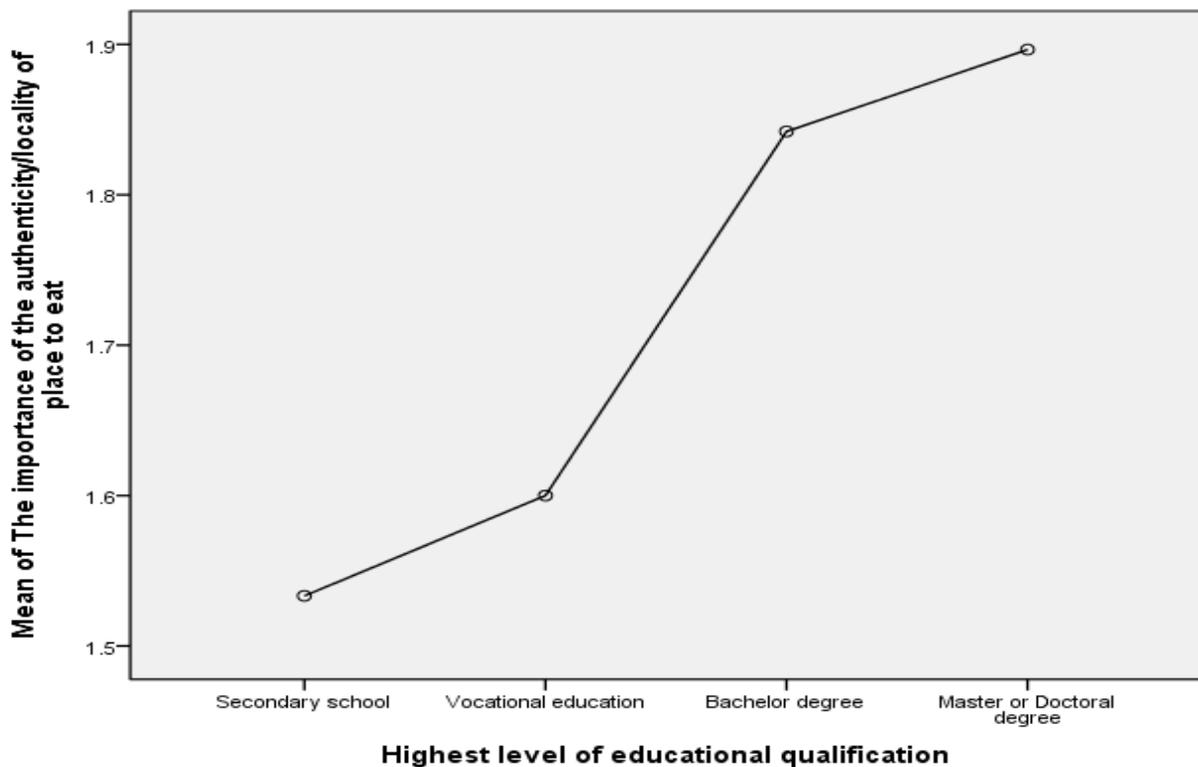
3.2. Relationship between the level of education and the authenticity importance level

➤ ANOVA

The importance of the authenticity/locality of place to eat

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.600	3	.533	.755	.523
Within Groups	58.676	83	.707		
Total	60.276	86			

In order to analyze how the education level affect to the level of authenticity interest or not, One way Anova test (based on SPSS) should be used. It can be seen from the “ANOVA” table above that the Sig. between two groups value is 0.523, which is much higher than 0.05. In conclusion, there is a noticeable difference between the level of education of tourists and their viewpoint of authenticity when they choose an eating place.



From the chart above, it is clear that the higher of education level, the more concerning in the authenticity of the place to eat is. The highest interest belongs to the Master of Doctoral degree, then it decreased to the Bachelor degree, Vocational education and Secondary school level. Overall, the higher level of education travelers are more impressed on the locality factor in selecting the eating destination.

3.3. Relationship between the age group and means of choosing restaurant

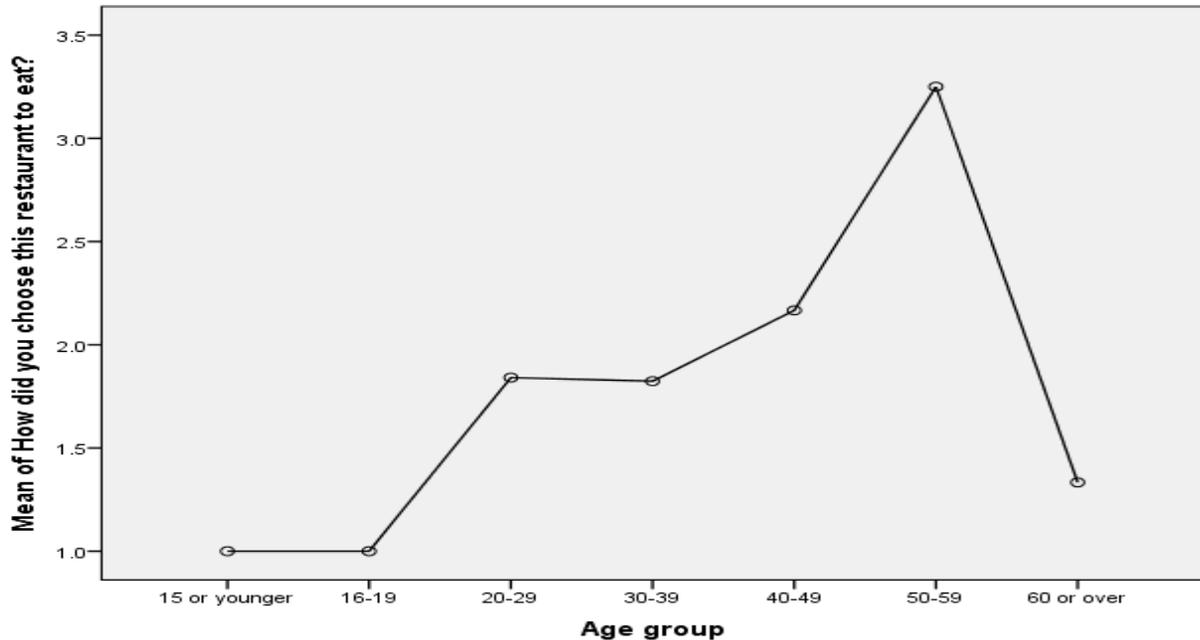
Next, we analyzed the relationship between the age of tourists and how they choose the eating place. The significant level between two groups is greater than 0.05 (0.247), so each age group has its own way to book restaurant.

➤ **ANOVA**

How much are you satisfied with the experience at this restaurant?

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.989	6	.832	1.345	.247
Within Groups	48.825	79	.618		
Total	53.814	85			

Overall, there has a considerable contrast in restaurant selection in the younger and the older groups. The majority age groups agree with the idea of asking the local people’s suggestions before eating. However, a highlighted interesting fact is that the youngest age groups (15 and younger and 16-19), along with the oldest one (60 or over) mostly choose the restaurant to eat randomly – it means that they do not research before and they just give hunch decision. Besides, the middle-aged group seems to be quite careful when they consulted from other tourists.



3.4. The relationship between satisfaction level and means of choosing restaurant.

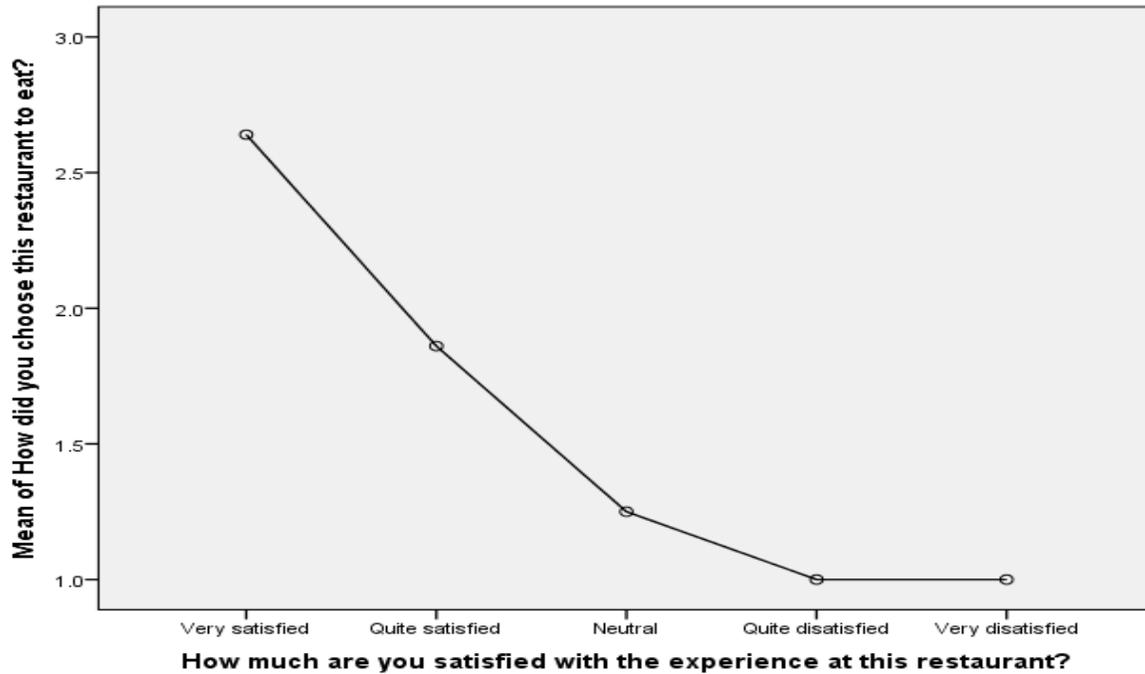
Last but not least, the SPSS-based One way Anova test is effective when it is used to analyzed the tourists' level of satisfaction after choosing the place to eat. As can be seen on the table below, the significant level is 0.067 - just a little bit higher than 0.05. Hence, there must be a minor connection between the means of choosing restaurant and the satisfaction level.

➤ ANOVA

How did you choose this restaurant to eat?

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	21.891	4	5.473	2.286	.067
Within Groups	193.923	81	2.394		
Total	215.814	85			

In general, without the recommendation, the repondents tend to be more dissatisfied than the ones who had asked the advices. As the line graph shows, the respondents who choose the restaurant by just walking by feel dissatisfied most. However, a part of travelers still be neutral although they select the eating place by hunching. By contrast, the recommendation from the local people, the guide books, the media and so forth make the tourist more satisfied; especially, the travelers satisfied most with the chosen restaurant if they are suggested by other tourist.



III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The surveyed tourists basically have a high expectation on the restaurants' authenticity, with more than three fourths of respondents agreed that the authenticity of an restaurant is important when choosing eating destination. The tourists have their own purposes when travelling to a destination, and "One of the main reasons people travel is ... to explore new cultures and customs" (Morgan 2009). Furthermore, according to Cristina De Rossi, an anthropologist at Barnet and Southgate College in Lone, "Culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things" (cited in Zimmermann 2017). Hence, it can be understood that the travellers may keen on the culinary during their trip. They really want to discover something new and different from what they normally eat, leading to the expectation of the originality, not to be hybridized by any factor of that cuisine.

The authenticity importance is clarified into sub-categories with the aim at getting more accurate result. Overall, the tourists have a tendency of being served by local people, including the staffs and chefs. This is understandable as they believe that only the native employees are the ones to get the essence and secrets of local gastronomy, from the ingredients selection, the way to cook into a complete dish to how to enjoy the meal like a local resident. As a result, they can serve

carefully and enthusiastically to the guest – whenever they want to explore more about one dish, the local will surely be the best responders, compared to the non-local ones.

Restaurants in Luang Prabang generally get the medium satisfaction from the guests about the authenticity criteria. Most of the customers agreed that the ingredients are truly from Luang Prabang, not somewhere else. The restaurants in Luang Prabang seem to pay high attention to the use of local fresh sources. Coming back to the in-depth interview with Tamnak Lao Restaurant, the ingredients are provided from relatives in local market, which ensures that the fresh sources come from the local area. Another illustration comes from Tamarind Restaurant, where they introduce the restaurant on their website: “Tamarind’s philosophy is to use only the freshest, local ingredients ... where visitors can sample and learn about the special flavours and foods that comprise Lao cuisine.”. In short, with the serious strategy and intention of using ingredients in Luang Prabang, the restaurants in this destination have really won the customers and let them feel that they are eating dishes whose ingredients are cultivated and raised from Luang Prabang.

The travellers also satisfied that restaurants’ servants are local people. Again, it comes from the policies of those restaurants – using the native workers only, in order to provide the best experiences to the customers about Luang Prabang’s gastronomy. The manager of Tamnak Lao Restaurant revealed that its employees are totally Lao ethnic. In Tamarind Restaurants, cooking class staff and head chefs are the owner’s family members; moreover, one of the head chefs in this restaurant has some experiences of Luang Prabang street food in a street stall previously and the leader of cooking class staffs is described as “a terrific and very resourceful cook”. Overall, the customers have a basis for employee’s satisfaction.

The survey also pointed out that the eating styles and decoration of restaurants, in the surveyed visitors’ eyes, are still belonging to Luang Prabang’s style. This can be explained by the lifestyles of Lao people. About this issue, Tours in Laos website introduced: “Laos is quite traditional and conservative country. Despite globalization and modernization, Lao culture is still profoundly influenced by Buddhism which put effect on Laotians' thinking, attitude and behavior ...”. With this traditional lifestyles, the restaurants in Laos generally and in Luang Prabang particularly still maintain the traditional characters as well as possible, leading to the agreement among the tourists in the originality in serving styles and decorations.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

The project is conducted with the aim at researching the authenticity of restaurants in Luang Prabang. First of all, it can be quite apparently seen that although Luang Prabang cuisine has its own features, it is still influenced by the gastronomy of the neighborhood countries – Thailand, with the spicy tastes in every dishes and Vietnam, with some dishes like Pho, Spring Roll, Banh Cuon (Roll Rice Cake). Secondly, the guests have high expectation in authenticity of restaurants in here, through the ingredients, cooking styles, decoration, staffs; with the result is that they basically agreed that they had chances to enjoy the traditions of Luang Prabang – ingredients comes from this destination, the decoration and serving styles represented clearly for Luang Prabang culture and the employees are local people. Last but not least, the tourists with different demographic factors (age, highest level of education and nationalities) have different viewpoints about authenticity – the higher the education level and the elder among tourists, the more demanding on authenticity of restaurants and the more concern on recommendations they are. Overall, the visitors at restaurants in Luang Prabang moderately satisfied with their locality.

In the future research, it is advisable to study larger topic on the restaurants in Luang Prabang with the aim at improving the quality and standard of restaurant at this destination. Researchers need to transcend several limitations (limited time, not too varied nationalities) on sample to get the most accurate results.

PART 4. PROJECT EVALUATION AND LIMITATIONS

The project was conducted with the aim of illustrating some facts about the management of restaurants in term of locality and authenticity in Luang Prabang. Even though the process of collecting information and calculating was relatively careful, some limitations are unavoidable.

Firstly, time limitation is our most considerable problem. Due to the lack of time, we could only get information on a small scale with the sample size of tourists. This sample size may not cover the best opinion of tourists towards restaurant's level of authenticity service.

Secondly, attitudes of students involving in the survey is one of the limitation affected to the result. During the processing of collecting information, questions which requires tourists to name some dishes that they had were often skipped. Moreover, there were so many groups from the other countries working on their project at the same time; therefore, many tourists felt uninterested in spending time completing those questionnaires.

Lastly, we also find some difficulties in processing the input conducted from the questionnaire. Hardly were all of the hard copy are qualified enough to analyze due to the fact that they may skip some of the questions or misunderstand our requirement, leading to missing value.

APPENDIX

SURVEY ON CHOICE OF LOCAL RESTAURANTS

Hello, we are students from Hanoi University of Vietnam, conducting a research aiming to explore the role of authenticity and locality in restaurant management. This survey questionnaire is designed to find out how the locality influences on your choice of where to eat when travelling to this destination. We would highly appreciate your 10 minutes of doing this survey.

Your provided information will be anonymous and not used for any other purposes except this research. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

1. Is this your first trip to this destination? Yes No

2. How long do you spend in this destination?

Within the day 2-3 days 4 -5 days More than 5 days

3. Can you name some local food of the destination?

4. When you choose a place to eat during your trip, how important is the authenticity/locality of the destination for your choice?

Very important Quite important Neutral Not very important No important

5. How important are the following criteria toward your choice of a place to eat during your trip?

Criteria	Level of importance				
	Very important	Quite important	Neutral	Not very important	Not important at all
The restaurants provide local food	1	2	3	4	5
The ingredients used by the restaurants are local products	1	2	3	4	5
The recipe is kept similar to traditions	1	2	3	4	5
The eating style is kept similar to traditions	1	2	3	4	5
The serving staff of the restaurants are local people	1	2	3	4	5
The chef team are local people	1	2	3	4	5
The decoration of the restaurant is local design	1	2	3	4	5

6. Is this your first time to this restaurant? Yes No

7. How did you choose this restaurant to eat?

- I just walk by
- Recommendation by local people
- Recommendation by other tourists
- Via media
- Via promotions of the restaurant
- Others (please specify) _____

8. How much are you satisfied with the experience at this restaurant?

- Very satisfied Quite satisfied Neutral Quite dissatisfied Very dissatisfied

9. What mark from 1 to 10 would you give for the level of authenticity of this restaurant?

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this restaurant?

Criteria	Level of agreement				
	Strongly agree	Quite agree	No ideas	Quite disagree	Strongly disagree
The restaurant provide truely local food	1	2	3	4	5
The ingredients used by the restaurant are local products	1	2	3	4	5
The recipe is kept similar to traditions	1	2	3	4	5
The eating style is kept similar to traditions	1	2	3	4	5
The serving staff of the restaurant are local people	1	2	3	4	5
The chef team are local people	1	2	3	4	5
The decoration of the restaurant is local design	1	2	3	4	5

11. Where are you from? _____

12. Please indicate your gender: Male Female

13. Please indicate your age group

- 15 or younger 20-29 40-49 60 or over

16-19 30-39 50-59

14. What is your highest level of educational qualification?

- Primary school Bachelor degree
 Secondary school Master or Doctoral degree
 Vocational education Others (please specify) _____

Thank you for your time!

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