

# Engaging the Yin-Yang Concept to Produce Comfort and Spatial Experience: An Interior Design for a Chinese Restaurant in Indonesia

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the engagement of the Yin and Yang concept in restaurant design to enhance visitors' comfort and spatial experience. The aim is to provide the right solution that positively affects Chinese restaurants and form the basis for future research. It aims to establish a method that may invest in a specialty restaurant a culturally rich identity, by implementing the concept of Yin and Yang. It adopted a qualitative case study of the Ta Wan Chinese Restaurant in Indonesia. The respondent was a visitor to Ta Wan restaurant. The results showed that a restaurant designed with the concept of Yin-Yang (Chinese cultural philosophy) with a focus on five aspects, including the organization of space, facilities, atmosphere, colour, and furniture will provide balance to the interior of the restaurant. The concept of this restaurant is proven to solve the problem of comfort and experience of the visitor's room.*

**Keywords:** Yin-Yang, Interior Design, Chinese Restaurant, Comfort, Spatial Experience

## Introduction

Many people go to restaurants not only to dine, but also to communicate or talk about business (Yu, 2009). The interior design plays an important role in the development of a restaurant. A restaurant has a need to offer attractive interior design to make visitors want to return (Pecotić et al., 2014). A unique interior and exterior design easily attract consumers because of a sense of comfort while being indoors (Andreani et al., 2013). In this regard, comfort relates to visitor satisfaction (Wang et al., 2012), including how long they stay in the restaurant (Yang et al., 2017) and the response while indoors (Mubarak & Hasrul, 2011). Jensen and Hansen (2007) established that comfort could be influenced by a restaurant's atmosphere. The atmosphere of a restaurant is experienced by customers through senses: visual, tactile, olfactory, and aural and it is determined by the colour, lighting, space & layout, aesthetics, etc (Pecotić et al., 2014).

There are many types of restaurants, one of which is the specialty restaurant. Based on *lawinsider.com*, a specialty restaurant is a restaurant that serves a menu influenced by the culture of a particular community.

Regarding spatial experience, based on interactions (Sari, 2005), the human dialogue in the space with different tools provide an unlimited space experience. People move from one between spaces seeing, observing, and feeling the design. However, the experience differs with different positions between day and night. Therefore, there is a need to create an interior design of space, especially the restaurant specialties that offer memorable space experience to visitor. Human relations with space can be appropriately examined when the atmosphere presented in a room gives

different experiences to restaurant visitors (Sarihati et al., 2015). This means that it is vital to pay attention to each element of the interior design. Therefore, the comfort and spatial experience of a restaurant is an important factor that helps improve a restaurant as a destination.

The interior atmosphere of a restaurant can be a differentiating factor between other restaurants, one of which uses themes that contain certain traditional or ethnic elements (Sarihati et al., 2015). An example is the application of Chinese culture in a Chinese restaurant. Chinese culture is one of the oldest cultures in the world that has spread throughout the world.

One of China's known cultures is Feng-Shui. In Feng Shui, Yin-Yang is one of the principles used, and is the principle of harmony and balance (Darmayanti and Sondang, 2013).



**Fig. 1:** Yin-Yang Symbol

Source: Google.com, accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Yin-Yang is an ancient and unique concept of the Chinese philosophy and holistic, dynamic, and dialectical worldview (Li, 2008), which bears a resemblance to the Western dialectical thinking (Fang, 2012). It is symbolized (Fig.1), by a circle, divided into two equal parts, black (Yin) and white (Yang), with a curved line (Chang, 2015; Cooper, 1990). Generally, Yin represents female strengths, such as the moon, night, weakness, darkness, tenderness, and self-femininity (Zolfani et al., 2013), while Yang stands for male powers, such as sun, day, strong, bright, hard, and self-masculinity (Fang & Faure, 2011). Furthermore, heterogeneous duality of dialectical thinking connects the two parts (Chen, 2002) with interior design in Yin-Yang's perspective that balances everything (Yang, 2011). Based on this evaluation, it can be argued that ancient Chinese philosophy is a vital tool to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the association between the use of interior design in restaurants. Therefore, this research links the interior design and Yin-Yang concepts of restaurants.

Yin-Yang as a Chinese cultural principle is well known among the Indonesians. According to the Ancient History of Encyclopedia, the principle shows that everything is contradictory and inseparable. For example, women-men, dark-light, and old-young. It was formed as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE and is a fundamental concept in the Chinese philosophy and culture. Yin and Yang attracts and complements each other and as their symbol illustrates, and each side has at its core, an element of the other (Cartwright, 2018).

Many cultures in Indonesia lead to cultural developments such as human life principles and other aspects, including interior design. Therefore, these cultural principles often influence the interior design process. Design can indeed be seen as the embodiment of symbolic and cultural values (Santosa, 2005). This research wants to examine the concept of culture that is not only a part of the symbolic and aesthetic values in the interior, but also a solution to the problems that exist in the interior, especially an interior of a Chinese restaurant.

Most of Indonesia's restaurants accentuate a certain style or nuance to reinforce their characteristics and names. For example, a Chinese restaurant accentuates the oriental style by adopting the Chinese building forms, colours, and cultural properties. This shapes people's perceptions and helps them choose according to the taste of the menu they want. A Chinese restaurant should provide comfort and spatial experience to the visitors and apply the right concept suitable for its specialties.

The purpose of this research is to bring forth new solutions in the problem of comfort and spatial experience from visitors in an interior of a specialty restaurant; in this case a Chinese

restaurants, to better understand the wants and needs of visitors in order to connect it with the concept of the restaurant interior. It is hoped that this research can be further developed and examined in other types of restaurants to increase knowledge and research on interior design of restaurants.

### Case Study

This paper is based on a single case study: namely Ta Wan Restaurant, located in Citylink Festival, Bandung, Indonesia. Ta Wan Restaurant is a Chinese restaurant, based on family dining. It carries a modern Chinese atmosphere on its interior (Fig.2). Its selection is based on the fact that this restaurant has been in Indonesia for 20 years. In the business world, especially in the culinary business, a newly established restaurant can be said to be successful if after three years running, the restaurant continues to grow and the profit generated continues to increase (Fauza, 2011). Ta Wan has more than 19 branches spread across Indonesia.



**Fig. 2:** Ta Wan Restaurant at Festival Citylink, Bandung  
Source: Google.com, accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2021

### Theoretical Review

#### Comfort and Spatial Experience

The comfort aspect of a building is divided into space, visual, audio, and thermal comfort (Karyono,1999). Several aspects influence comfort in a restaurant; the first is colour. Colour selection affects the psychology of visitors, one of which is convenience. Colour inspiration can vary from the trends, culture or anything else (Pecotić et al., 2014). The layout of the space affects perceptions that affect comfort, the desire to return to the restaurant, as well as the visitor's space experience (Tuzunkan et al., 2016). The design and atmosphere of a room become one aspect of the comfort of visitors. The comfort of visitors in a restaurant can be felt from the achievement of the experience of space (design and atmosphere) in the restaurant by visitors. The atmosphere of space is formed from the stimulus process of the human senses that are processed through the human brain. This condition is formed from the interior space design elements that correspond to the restaurant (Sarihati et al., 2020). Invariably, the design will form the atmosphere in the interior of the restaurant, although the facilities also contribute. Facilities in the restaurant also pay attention to the aesthetics of the space, which has an impact on pleasure and the behavior of visitors (Tuzunkan et al., 2016). Furniture is also an important aspect of comfort in the interior of the restaurant which is adapted to the design of the restaurant (Pecotić et al., 2014).

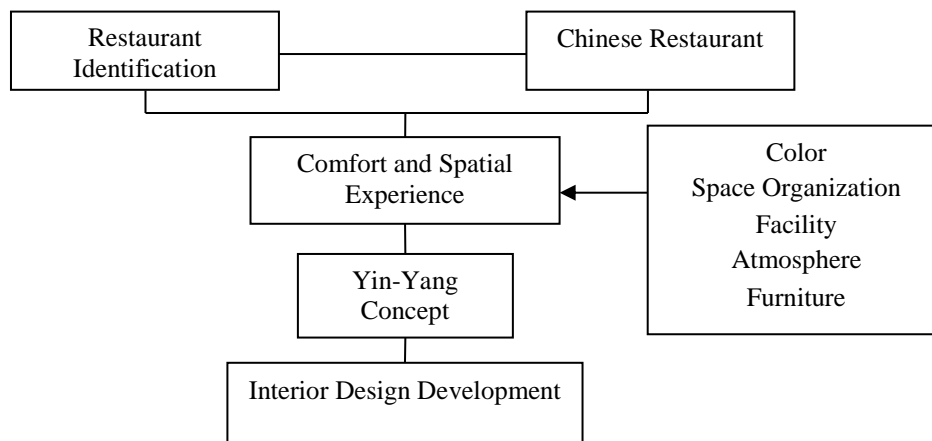
#### Yin-Yang in Design

Feng Shui is rapidly developing and influencing various life aspects, including architecture and interior design. Yin and Yang are some of the Feng Shui aspects associated with interior design, based on the Chinese philosophical concepts describing interconnected forces of Nature. (Ye, 2017) The Chinese characters Yin (阴) means shadow and Yang (阳) means sunshine. If an object is

placed in the sun, it will be half in - half-lit. Based on *thespruce.com* Yin energy is in the calm colors and Yang energy is in the vibrant colors. According to Julie Schuster, an interior designer and leading speaker in terms of interior and Feng-Shui, Yin is a feminine concept which is dark and passive. The design characteristics of Yin include circular shapes, low-level furniture, upholstered furniture, velvet and corduroy fabrics/textures, carpet, detailed prints, and soft window coverings. Yang design characteristics include bright lighting, whites and bright colors, angular furniture and accessories, squared corners, bold feature walls, large patterns and striking objects. Yang will make an interior feel more active, whereas Yin will make that the interior has a more relaxed atmosphere. Based on *camelothomes.com* (Yin and Yang Creating Balance in Architecture) in architecture and interior design, there are also many examples of the Yin-Yang concept: ancient and modern, simplicity and sophistication. Thus, Yin-Yang in interior design balances two opposite things but ensure that the interior has harmonious energy.

### Research Methodology

The research uses a qualitative method with a case study in a Chinese Ta Wan Restaurant, located at Bandung City link Festival. The restaurant was chosen as the research object because it is one of the Chinese restaurants with a definite connection with Chinese culture and design. Data collection will be conducted in three stages (triangulation), including interviews, observations, and documents. The interview was conducted with consent from the Ta Wan Restaurant, City link Festival, Bandung, as well as 6 visitors who came to this restaurant. Information was also obtained from the manager and visitors about the interior of Ta Wan Restaurant (comfort and space experience), such as the influence of restaurant atmosphere and the flow of restaurant activities for visitors and managers. Furthermore, data were collected by observing the behavior and interior environment of the restaurant interior area, such as floors, walls, ceilings, as well as the interior accessories that support the creation of comfort and experience of the visitor's room. Besides, the document here refers to the documentation and literature studies that fit the topic, including Chinese restaurant interiors, Yin-Yang in interior design, and guidelines for the standardization of restaurant interiors. This data collection also uses the dissemination of questionnaires related to the experience and convenience of visitors to Chinese Restaurants and Ta Wan Restaurants. The results of the data collected was analyzed with interior elements in Ta Wan Restaurant so that it could find interior design solutions regarding the comfort and space experience of a Chinese Restaurant.



**Fig. 3: Mind Mapping**  
Source: Authors, 2021

### Ta Wan Restaurant Interviews and Questionnaires

Respondents from interviews and questionnaires were diners of the Ta Wan restaurants. The questionnaire had 52 respondents and the interview had 6 respondents. Topics were raised

about the assessment, answers, and suggestions of respondents to the interior of the Ta Wan Restaurant. The results of interviews and questionnaires are made in the form of percentages to facilitate assessment and conclusion. This assessment is based on the number of respondents and answers to questions asked. Topics are raised based on aspects that affect the comfort and experience of the visitor's space, such as the organization of space, facilities, atmosphere, color, and furniture.

**Table 1.** Respondents Rating (Ta Wan Restaurant)

No	Topic	Questions	Respondents' Results	Percentage Result (%)
1.	Space Organization	Does the flow of activities, such as cashier placement and dining area in Ta Wan confusing you?	50 out of 59 respondents answered confusing.	84,75%
		Does the dining area at Ta Wan make you comfortable to eat and do around this area?	55 out of 59 respondents answered uncomfortable.	93,22%
2.	Room Facilities	Are the facilities (indoor dining room, semi-outdoor) are provided Ta Wan Restaurant satisfying?	52 out of 59 Respondents answered satisfactorily.	88,14%
		If the restaurant is added with other dining facilities, such as VIP and outdoor dining areas, does it make you more comfortable in the restaurant and interested in coming?	59 out of 59 Respondents answered more comfortably and were interested in coming.	100%
3.	Atmosphere	Does Ta Wan already represent a Chinese Restaurant?	47 out of 59 respondents answered that they did not represent a Chinese restaurant.	79,66%
		Does Ta Wan have to represent a Chinese restaurant to enhance your dining experience at the restaurant?	56 out of 59 respondents answered that it is necessary.	94,92%
		Is it necessary for Ta Wan to keep up with the current trending interior design?	45 out of 59 respondents answered that it is necessary to keep abreast of current interior design developments.	76,27%
4.	Color	Does the use of color in the interior of Ta Wan Restaurant give you the feel of a Chinese restaurant?	50 out of 59 respondents answered not yet.	84,75%
5.	Furniture	Does the furniture placement at Ta Wan Restaurant make you comfortable to eat and do activities in the restaurant?	47 out of 59 respondents answered uncomfortable.	79,66%
		Does the placement of a square dining table and contiguous circles in the central dining area (with different dining capacities) cause you discomfort while in the restaurant?	45 out of 59 respondents answered uncomfortable.	76.27%

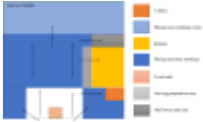
From the results of the respondent's assessment, it was concluded that the problems related to the comfort and experience of the room, including the interior of Ta Wan restaurant does not represent the Chinese impression. The interior of the restaurant should be able to represent the Chinese impression and should be able to follow the development of the current/contemporary interior design. The facilities provided are good, but if it can be added other facilities such as VIP

dining area and outdoor area (this refers to the advice of visitors), and the organization of the space of this restaurant is not good (the distance between tables and other facilities is too narrow, the placement of restaurant facilities is confusing) thus disrupting the activities of the restaurant visitors.

### **Analysis of Comfort and Visitor's Spatial Experience Combined with the Concept of Yin-Yang**

For an easier explanation of the findings of aspects of comfort and space experience in Ta Wan restaurant, a table was created to compare existing restaurant conditions, restaurant standards, and Chinese cultural literature. This comparison table also presented the conclusions derived related to the comfort and experience of space with the concept of Chinese culture: Yin-Yang.

**Table 2.** Research Comparison Table

Analysis	Existing Condition (Observation)	Literature	Impact on Visitors	Results Analysis
Zoning and Blocking	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Circulation:</b> Linear</li> <li>● <b>Private:</b> Employee space</li> <li>● <b>Public:</b> Smoking and Nonsmoking area</li> <li>● <b>Service:</b> Washstand, kitchen, preparation area, cashier, and front table</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Knapp (2000), the pattern of Chinese community spatial organization is linear. It has an arrangement of a linear space organization arrangement.</li> <li>● Yin represents the negative, feminine and passive properties, while Yang represents the positive, masculine, and active properties. Yin and Yang complement and influence each other, which is always dynamic and alive (Darmawan, 2003).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Linear circulation makes circulation direction clear to avoid confusing the visitors.</li> <li>● The cashier area hinders visitors' visibility from essential areas they need to see.</li> <li>● The Restaurant has a very attractive impression, which affects the experience of the visitor's room.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● At Ta Wan restaurant, linear circulation application based on Chinese culture is recommended.</li> <li>● The division area is not optimal because it interferes with visitor activity, therefore the need to change the layout that will begin the redesign of zoning and blocking.</li> </ul>
Space Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The side area near the wall is a 1-6 people, while the other part is for the staff preparation area. The middle area is a dining area of 1-8 people</li> <li>● Semi outdoor area using maximum table capacity of 4 persons with the placement of furniture following the curved shape of the room</li> <li>● The distance between employee preparation area and dining area visitors (capacity 8 people) is too close <math>\pm</math> 80 cm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● According to Unilever Food Solutions, Feng Shui, the cashier is placed at a strategic point, on the Restaurant's right side with strong walls. This position is recommended because it signifies a steady flow of revenues.</li> <li>● In the Book of Human Dimension &amp; Interior Space works by Julius Panero and Martin Zelnik, the distance arrangement for circulation of people walking between chair meals is 91, 4 cm.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The distance between tables that are too close makes the circulation narrow, so that the activities of visitors and employees collide and disrupted, will automatically create discomfort to visitors.</li> <li>● If the visitor is a family of &gt; 6 people and wants to have the comfort of privacy, this cannot be realized in this restaurant because there is no VIP or family room. The division of the dining area in this restaurant combined into one with the principle of open space in the restaurant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● From the analysis of existing conditions and related literature, it is necessary to change the organization of the space includes the laying of furniture which will adjust the activities, standards of the restaurant, and space circulation to make employees and visitors comfortable in the restaurant so that there will be a synergy between humans and the space that should exist in the interior of a Chinese restaurant.</li> </ul>
Style and Atmosphere of The Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A warm nuance arises from the use of wood motifs and colors which are dominated by furniture and wall decoration elements.</li> <li>● Modern nuances of up ceiling application, pastel green colors, as well as the shape of furniture.</li> <li>● The use of pastel blue and pastel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Restaurant's design creates an atmosphere and mood that support the character of food and service offered, creating an impressive dining experience to encourage customers to return and recommend restaurants to others. (Rahma et al., 2017).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The 'Chinese' impression doesn't feel thick in a restaurant that belongs to a Chinese restaurant/specialty restaurant.</li> <li>● The experience of space with modern Chinese styling application and the application of furniture and room decoration elements on Ta Wan has not been felt and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Based on the relevant literature, in designing a restaurant must have the characteristics of the restaurant (e.g. socio-cultural), so the need to change the atmosphere and styling of the restaurant so that the Chinese impression is more pronounced although it will be</li> </ul>

	<p>green on semi sofa chairs and wall decoration elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wall decoration typical of Chinese culture as a point of interest of the restaurant.</li> <li>• From the above condition, the impression of a Chinese restaurant is still not felt compared to modern styling in the restaurant (unbalanced).</li> <li>• The application of color on the interior of the restaurant tends to be bright.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interior elements are essential factors in creating the Restaurant's atmosphere that encourage consumers to linger, revisit, and recommend it to others. (Rahma et al., 2017).</li> <li>• According to Julie Schuster, the concept of Yin-Yang means "Yin" is a calm color and "Yang" is in bright colors, "Yin" can also be interpreted as a dark color. A color appears darker or lighter depending on the surrounding color (Stokley, 2018).</li> </ul>	<p>has not been able to represent a Chinese restaurant, so it will have an impact on the impression and experience of the space that visitors have while in the restaurant.</p>	<p>combined with another styling.</p>
Furniture and Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tables are made using HPL coating with the wooden motif and iron material for the buffer.</li> <li>• Furniture is made of rectangular and circular shapes or commonly called Lazy Susan (Chinese table)</li> <li>• Chair and table design combine traditional form with modern materials and colors (material HPL wood motif brown and the iron color black) to display a modern Chinese representation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Furniture or interior style does not only appear because of the touch of ornaments. It is more determined by the shape of the furniture itself. The shape of furniture design determines the theme or interior style. (Permatasari, 2015).</li> <li>• Apart from a convenience function, furniture design also affects the perception of space or visitor room experience. The impression of 'Chinese' in the furniture restaurant is quite good because some furniture has a distinctive Chinese design with a touch of material and modern colors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apart from a convenience function, furniture design also affects the perception of space or visitor spatial experience. The impression of "Chinese" in the furniture restaurant is quite good because some furniture has a distinctive Chinese design with a touch of material and modern colors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering existing conditions and literature, the basic shape and type of furniture can be maintained. However, the basic form of furniture used in the Restaurant can be developed.</li> </ul>



## Discussion

After going through the stage of analysis and data collection with the case study of the Ta Wan Restaurant, it can be concluded about the interior atmosphere of a Chinese restaurant, that a Chinese restaurant should be able to represent the impression of oriental Chinese culture. In addition, the interior with an oriental Chinese impression can collaborate with a more developed/contemporary interior style (Table 1). This aspect provides a space experience to visitors (Table 1 and Table 2). This is reinforced by the emergence of the concept of Yin-Yang (camelothomes.com) which states "Yin" is traditional and "Yang" is modern. This aspect proves the meaning of Yin-Yang which means balance. Fig. 4 is a visualization of the Yin-Yang concept with the application of traditional Chinese styles combined with contemporary styles by combining Chinese and contemporary characteristics in interior design.



**Fig. 4:** Traditional vs Modern Visualization  
Source: Authors (2020)

Yin-Yang in Chinese philosophy describes interconnected natural forces. (Ye, 2017) Yin means shadow and Yang means sunlight. This Yin-Yang creates an integration between the interior and exterior of the building. Restaurant interior design (Fig. 4 and Fig.5) by allowing the sun to blend in with the restaurant is an implementation of the Yin-Yang concept that provides balance. This implementation is part of the spatial atmosphere where the atmosphere of the space has an impact on the experience of the visitor's room (Jensen & Hansen, 2007).



**Fig. 5:** Visualization of Yin-Yang Integration in Restaurants  
Source: Authors (2020)

Furniture affects the comfort and visitors' spatial experience in terms of the type, design, and materials of furniture (Table. 2). Based on the exposure of Julie Schuster (an interior designer and a leading speaker in terms of interior and Feng Shui), the Yin-Yang concept in the aspect of furniture can be applied by combining rigid or organic/ curved shapes. Yin-Yang also explains the material used in the interior, Yin can be interpreted as fabric-coated furniture, and Yang explains the opposite. Colour affects the atmosphere of the room and the atmosphere of the room affects the visitors' spatial experience (Pecotić et al., 2014). According to Julie Schuster, Yin is a calm color and Yang is in bright colors, Yin can also be interpreted as a dark color. A color appears darker or

lighter depending on the surrounding colour (Stokley, 2018). Fig. 6, gives a visualization of Yin-Yang concept in terms of furniture and colours collaborated with interior styling that has also been determined through the concept of Yin-Yang (traditional and contemporary Chinese). In the image, colour contrast is seen between light and dark.



Fig. 6: Shape and Color Visualization  
Source: Authors (2020)

Based on the questionnaire data (Table. 1) the addition of facilities in the Ta Wan restaurant can provide more visitor comfort while the restaurant can make visitors want to return to the restaurant, but this depends on the organization of the restaurant space. Selection of this facility is based on observational studies and questionnaires related to the interior of restaurants and visitors. The organization of space in Ta Wan restaurant has not been maximized which affects the activities of restaurant diners. After conducting an analysis (Table. 2) the application of linear circulation in restaurants can be maintained referring that this circulation in technical terms provides "direction" to restaurant visitors, in addition to being reinforced with the Yin-Yang in Chinese culture, the pattern of the Chinese community space organizations using linear organizational patterns (Knapp, 2000). Apart from circulation, the placement of furniture is one aspect of the problem regarding the comfort of visitors to Ta Wan. Based on the questionnaire (Table. 1), the laying of dining tables with different shapes (square and round) gives an uncomfortable impression and makes circulation look narrow. The concept of Yin-Yang gives the meaning of Yin as passive and Yang as active. Yin-Yang concept provides a solution by applying this concept with the same form of furniture Yin (example: square dining table), but gives the impression of being active by giving rotation on this furniture Yang (example: dining table rotated 45°).



Fig. 7: Circulation and Space Organization Visualization  
Source: Authors (2020)

## Conclusions

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that five aspects have an impact on the comfort and spatial experience of the visitors at a restaurant. These five aspects are dissolution with the application of the Yin-Yang concept in a Chinese restaurant. First, the application of the atmosphere in the restaurant is obtained by the concept of Yin-Yang which is a combination of traditional Chinese and contemporary styles to create balance. This styling is the basis of characteristics and inspiration that will be applied to the interior elements of a restaurant. Furthermore, the application of linear circulation affects the organization of space combined with the Yin-Yang concept that is passive and active in the application of furniture rotation. With this aspect, visitors have "directions" on the interior of a restaurant. The form of furniture has an impact on comfort, the form of organic and rigid furniture that is collaborated according to Yin-Yang is the solution for this problem. The interior of the restaurant must be able to synergize with Nature, as well as the sun that can be integrated with a restaurant with the presence of windows and the placement of facilities that are connected to Nature. Lastly, it is necessary to employ the application of light and dark colours that depend on the surrounding colours to provide a space experience to visitors with the presence of colour contrast on the interior of a restaurant by the style used (in this case i.e. oriental chinese and contemporary). These five aspects collaborate to form the comfort and spatial experience of the visitors.

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