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## The Management of Thai Restaurant Business in Khonkaen, Thailand

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### ABSTRACT

*The study determined the management of the Thai restaurant business in Khonkaen, Thailand. It specifically evaluated the restaurants' marketing, human resource, financial, and operations management. The study also looked into customer satisfaction as the output of the business and the relationship between customer satisfaction and the level of management of Thai restaurants using the descriptive correlational research method. The study considered the 22 owners/managers, 212 staff, and 400 customers as respondents. The collected data were analyzed using weighted mean and bivariate correlation. The findings show that Thai restaurant management practices have a high status in terms of marketing, human resource, financial, and operations management. Customers are extremely pleased with the restaurants' services. The level of satisfaction of the customers is significantly related to the level of management of the business.*

**Keywords:** *Customer satisfaction, financial management, human resource management, marketing management, operations management*

### INTRODUCTION

Khonkaen Province is the commercial and political center of Northeastern Thailand, which has been one of the fastest-growing areas in Thailand. The Thai government designated Khonkaen Province as the Indo-China Region's export center, and both Laos and Vietnam have consulates in the province to process visa applications. Khonkaen Province is also home to Khonkaen University, the largest university in the northeast and a major center of education and technology.

The restaurant business is one of the businesses that are very important to the service and economy of the country. It consists of small to large lots players and is also relevant to players in many other industries. In addition, the total value of the said business also accounts for 4.7 percent of the total service sector of the Gross Domestic Product (Service GDP).

The direction of the restaurant business in 2020 is still considered a very challenging problem, whether it is the intense competition or higher business costs entering the market to compete with the large operators resulting in pressure on both the same players and new ones going to invest. The high competition situation and the high set-up cost of business will directly affect the operators to adjust all factors to survive in the restaurant market.

Providing excellent service quality and achieving a high level of customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry is an important issue for maintaining existing facilities and the opportunity to improve service quality. Many researchers have investigated service quality

and defined it as a value obtained by comparing customers' perceptions of service quality and their expectations.

Lasitamas (2013) discovered that Thai fusion food businesses had a high service marketing strategy of perceived value in Thai fusion food to the ASEAN market for service marketing strategies, such as food and customer demand strategy, communication, convenience, and managerial cost. It was at a high level in the case of Thai fusion food valued perception, and it covered the environment, good food price, quality of service, admirable acceptance, happiness in dining, times and energy, reputation, food nutrition, and safety. Furthermore, Wichupakornkun (2014) discovered that all factors influence consumer decision-making in Bangkok to have healthy food (Clean food) at the statistically significant level of 0.05, which are the lifestyle factor, service marketing mix (7'Ps) factor, and service quality factor.

Taphon (2017) discovered that consumer factors influenced food consumption behavior, revealing that customers frequently eat out for comfortable and new environments, influencing decision-making options. Internal risks in business management include the operator's lack of experience. According to Lepkowska-White (2017), while social media plays a significant role in small restaurant marketing strategies, the majority of small restaurants use it as a low-cost advertising tool to gain exposure, generate interest, inform, and spread word of mouth.

Chaudhry and Crick (2004) also stated that owner-managers of Chinese restaurants in the United Kingdom must constantly monitor their business practices to maintain an advantage in a competitive business environment. The Human Resource Department must have staffing strategies focusing on employee characteristics, recruitment, and selection. It is critical for the Human Resource Department to hire proactive employees, who have good communication skills, and are alert to increase customer satisfaction (Batt et al., 2014).

According to Tolbe (2020), human resource management guidelines and procedures of SUCs in Region I are highly practiced to ensure that the right personnel is acquired through proper recruitment screening and selection processes and that their IGP employees are maintained and developed. The indicator "paying the appropriate salary" is rated as highly practiced.

Furthermore, according to Chang, Gong, and Shum (2011), hiring and training core customer-contact employees in multiple skills promote hospitality innovation. Working capital management practices such as cash management, receivables management, and inventory management are highly associated with improved business performance among SMEs.

Abanis, Arthur, and Derick (2013) and Abanis et al. (2013) discovered that the extent of financial management is low among SMEs in their study. The Theory of Pecking Order (Myers, 1984), which states that management prefers internal financing over external financing, was demonstrated in this study in the context of SMEs using internally generated funds versus borrowed funds. The restaurant must serve customers safe food. A single case of food poisoning can permanently damage a restaurant's reputation.

There are ways for restaurant managers to protect their customers and reputation regarding supply chain management (Kanyan, Ngana, and Voon, 2016). According to Torlak,

Demir, and Budur (2019), the relationships between structural and infrastructural elements of operations management strategies are as follows: capacity/layout and hygiene influence human resource management, design and hygiene influence ambiance, and hygiene influence food quality.

According to Valdez Jr. (2021), customer satisfaction is one of the goals of every organization, with a particular emphasis on the quality aspect of the business enterprise and the establishment of good relationships with customers. Satisfaction is critical in a business enterprise in order to achieve the desired objective and goal, as well as to maximize profit. The level of satisfaction may differ from one organization to the next depending on the type or level of product or service provided.

According to the findings of the Bhuian (2020) study, the five dimensions of service quality have varying effects on customer satisfaction. The most significant factor was the reliability dimension. Empathy and tangibles were among the factors that exhibited moderate effects. Responsiveness and assurance were the least influential dimensions of customer satisfaction. Despite this, all five dimensions received favorable ratings.

Similarly, Gabrow (2021) discovered that the quality dimensions of the sample restaurants could be ordered in ascending order from (concrete), reliability (reliability), response (response), certainty (warranty), to empathy (empathy). Khatre and Iyengar (2019) discovered that the two most important parameters of service quality are responsiveness and assurance, which positively impact customer satisfaction. Customers expect prompt responses and assurances from managers about quality, which will encourage them to return to the same convenience stores.

According to Saneva and Chortoseva (2018), the "reliability" dimension has the smallest weighted value, while the "assurance" dimension has the highest value.

According to Saad Andaleeb and Conway (2006), the responsiveness of frontline employees has the greatest influence on customer satisfaction, followed by price and food quality (in that order). Mohammadi, and Sohrabi (2018), on the other hand, discovered that the presence of an intermediary variable of customer relationship management has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. This can both retain and satisfy customers while also attracting new ones.

Hanaysha (2016) discovered that food quality has a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the results revealed that price fairness and the physical environment significantly positively affect customer satisfaction. Tourists from around the world visit tourist destinations to have fun and be satisfied. Their leisure satisfaction is determined by the various reasons they visit such places. (Lamarca and Lamarca, 2019).

The study of the Thai restaurant business in Khonkaen, Thailand, is critical due to the city's increased population, business, and tourism rates. To handle and manage these rising rates, it is necessary to investigate the business practices, outputs, and problems of the Thai restaurant business in Khonkaen, Thailand, to operate and manage the restaurant business in the most effective and efficient manner. The study's goal was to evaluate the management of a Thai restaurant in Khonkaen, Thailand. It sought to ascertain the marketing, human resource, financial, and operations management of the Thai restaurant business in particular. Similarly, it investigated the level of customer satisfaction and the

relationship between customer satisfaction and the level of management in these restaurants.

The researchers are confident that the study findings will benefit restaurant owners/managers and employees. It will help restaurant owners improve their business practices. Furthermore, it will provide information that may be useful in setting business standards and may lead to an improvement in the quality of services provided by restaurants, resulting in customer satisfaction and retention. Finally, the researchers hope to improve Thai restaurants, particularly Thai cuisine, which is a major driving factor for Thai business and a major symbol of Thai national and cultural identity.

## METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive correlational method of research. The study respondents were the owners/managers, the staff, and the customers of Thai restaurants in Khonkaen, Thailand. Based on the information from the Department of International Trade Promotion, Ministry of Commerce, Thailand (DITP), 22 restaurants have the highest popularity in Khonkaen, Thailand, and all of the restaurants were considered in the study. The sample size of 212 staff and 400 customer respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's Formula. Accidental sampling was employed for the customer respondents.

The researchers used a structured questionnaire adopted from Chawalee, M. (2017). The structured questionnaire was translated into the Thai language. Three sets of questionnaires were made for each group of respondents, namely the owners/managers, staff, and customers.

The questionnaire for the owners/managers and staff comprises two parts. Part I was used to obtain data on the business practices of the restaurants in Khonkaen, Thailand. Part II collected data on the outputs of the restaurant business in Khonkaen, Thailand. On the other hand, the customer questionnaire consisted of parts: Part I was used to obtain data on the marketing management business practices of the restaurants in Khonkaen, Thailand. Part II collected data on the outputs of customer satisfaction in the restaurant business in Khonkaen, Thailand.

The researchers used the following two-level technique: Preparatory Stage. The researchers followed the standard operating procedure in the conduct of the research. Actual Gathering Technique. The researchers personally distributed and retrieved the questionnaire to and from the respondents.

The data gathered were treated using the following statistical tools: weighted mean to assess the business's management level and the output of the Thai restaurants. The relationship between customer satisfaction and the management level of Thai restaurants in Khonkaen, Thailand, was also considered.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Level of Management of the Thai Restaurant Business in Khonkaen, Thailand

The management level of the Thai restaurant business in Khonkaen, Thailand, in terms of marketing management, human resource management, financial management, and operations management.

#### Marketing Management

Table 1 presents the level of marketing management practices of Thai restaurants.

**Table 1**

*Level of marketing management of Thai restaurants*

Marketing Management	Owners		Staff		Customers		As a Whole	
	Mean	DR	Mean	DR	Mean	DR	Mean	DR
1. Price	3.98	High	3.74	High	3.77	High	3.77	High
2. Place	3.89	High	4.02	High	3.92	High	3.95	High
3. Promotion	3.72	High	3.75	High	3.65	High	3.69	High
Overall Mean	3.86	High	3.84	High	3.78	High	3.80	High

The level of marketing management of Thai restaurants is High, as supported by the overall mean rating of 3.80. This finding implies that Thai restaurants highly adhere to marketing practices. They use a set of actions or tactics to promote their brand or products in the market. In every industry, catching the eye of consumers and making it easy for them to buy is the aim of a good distribution or 'place' strategy explains why the place is highly practiced. This finding agrees with Chaudhry & Crick (2004), who noted that owner-managers of Chinese restaurants in the UK need to continually monitor their business practices to obtain an advantageous position in a competitive business environment. Specific attention to elements of the marketing mix -product, place, price, and promotion - is likely to benefit many owner-managed businesses positively.

Place achieves the highest mean rating of 3.95, indicating a high level of practice. This finding suggests that Thai restaurants ensure that the physical features of their restaurants are attractive to their customers and are designed so that quality services are provided to them. Moreover, the owners chose a location that is accessible to the customers. On the contrary, the promotion has the lowest mean rating of 3.69 but is still at a high level of practice. This finding signifies that Thai restaurants highly adhere to providing promotional activities to the customers through various media, and they offer discount vouchers/coupons to their customers. Promotional activities are always provided to the customers to attract and retain them, but giving membership cards with privileges and bonus points is discreetly used as one of the promotional activities. According to Lepkowska-White (2017), while social media plays a significant role in most small restaurants' marketing strategies, the majority of small restaurants use it as a low-cost advertising tool to gain exposure, generate interest, inform, and spread word of mouth.

### Human Resource Management

Table 2 shows the level of human resource management of Thai restaurants. The level of human resource management of Thai restaurants in Khonkaen, Thailand, is High, as proven by the mean rating of 3.90. This finding implies that Thai restaurants highly adhere to the practices of recruiting, selecting, training and development, and giving and compensation of benefits to the employees.

**Table 2**

*Level of human resource management of Thai restaurants*

Human Resource Management	Owners		Staff		As a Whole	
	Mean	DR	Mean	DR	Mean	DR
1. Recruitment and Selection	3.96	High	3.93	High	3.93	High
2. Training and Development	4.00	High	3.88	High	3.89	High
3. Compensation and Benefits	3.83	High	3.90	High	3.89	High
Overall Mean	3.93	High	3.90	High	3.90	High

Recruitment and selection get the highest rating ( $\bar{x} = 3.93$ ), described as High. This finding suggests that among the components of human resource management, recruitment and selection are most highly practiced, meaning that restaurant management uses different recruitment methods and considers different factors in hiring their employees. Recruitment methods in terms of employee referrals, online recruiting, internal movement, and job advertisements are designed to enhance the efficiency of human resource management in the Thai restaurant business in Khonkaen, Thailand. Training and development, compensation, and benefits get the lowest rating of 3.89 but are still described as High. This finding signifies that training and development programs are provided to the employees to ensure quality services are rendered in the restaurants. These training programs have the development thrusts of the employees.

Furthermore, Thai restaurants highly adhere to providing an equitable salary/wage rate with special employee benefits. Aside from the regular salary/wage, special benefits are also provided. Tolbe (2020) states that human resource management guidelines and procedures are highly practiced to ensure that the right personnel is hired through proper recruitment screening and selection processes and that their IGP employees are maintained and developed. The indicator "giving the right amount of salary" is rated as very highly practiced. The Human Resource Department must have staffing strategies focusing on employee characteristics, recruitment, and selection (Batt et al., 2014).

### Financial Management

The level of financial management of Thai Restaurants is shown in Table 3. Financial management is highly practiced, as indicated by the overall mean rating of 4.04. This finding implies that the restaurants highly adhere to account management, capitalization management, and budgeting practices to benefit both individuals and the restaurants' objectives.

**Table 3***Level of financial management of Thai restaurants*

Financial Management	Owners		Staff		As a Whole	
	Mean	DR	Mean	DR	Mean	DR
1. Account Management	4.15	High	4.16	High	4.16	High
2. Capitalization Management	4.18	High	3.85	High	3.88	High
3. Budgeting	3.90	High	4.09	High	4.07	High
Overall Mean	4.08	High	4.03	High	4.04	High

Moreover, the data reveals that account management gets the highest mean rating of 4.16. This finding suggests that restaurant management uses cash collections and disbursements, proper monitoring of the list of payable balances, and inventory control to give the meaning of accounting as steps of the collection system analysis and reporting of financial data of the restaurants. On the other hand, capitalization management gets the lowest mean rating of 3.88 but still at a high level of practice. This finding implies that capitalization management is utilized by both owners/managers and staff to manage the money or cash in the restaurants to purchase raw materials, equipment, and other products, and especially money to spend to meet the daily operational expenditures of the restaurants. Working capital management practices such as cash management, receivables management, and inventory management are highly associated with improved business performance among SMEs (Abanis, Arthur & Derick, 2013).

### Operations Management

The level of operations management of Thai restaurants is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4***Level of operations management of Thai restaurants*

Financial Management	Owners		Staff		As a Whole	
	Mean	DR	Mean	DR	Mean	DR
1. Process	3.97	High	4.01	High	4.00	High
2. Practice	4.06	High	4.02	High	4.03	High
3. Food Preparation	3.95	High	3.90	High	3.90	High
4. Waste Disposal/Health and Sanitation	3.98	High	3.89	High	3.90	High
5. Supply Chain	4.13	High	3.93	High	3.95	High
Overall Mean	3.98	High	3.93	High	3.93	High

The overall mean rating is 3.93 describes that operation management is highly practiced. This finding implies that the restaurants highly adhere to utilizing and applying operation management in terms of process, practice, food preparation, waste disposal/health, and supply chain in the restaurant management practice toward the goal of operations management, which is to maximize efficiency while producing foods and services that effectively fulfill customer needs. Practice obtains the highest mean rating of 4.03,

which implies that this dimension is implemented and used in a high-level manner in the restaurant as perceived by both owners/managers and staff. Meanwhile, food preparation and waste disposal/health sanitation get the lowest mean rating of 3.90 but still at a high level of practice. According to Kanyan, Ngana, and Voon (2016), operations must ensure that they do not exceed the biological limit of natural resources. Restaurants require effective waste management, which necessitates an assessment of the entire impact, from raw material to use and final disposal. The restaurant must serve customers safe food. A single case of food poisoning can permanently damage a restaurant's reputation.

### The Summary of the Level of Management of the Thai Restaurants

Table 5 shows the summary of the level of management of Thai restaurants.

**Table 5**

*The level of management of Thai restaurants*

Output	Owners		Staff		Customers		As a Whole	
	Mean	DR	Mean	DR	Mean	DR	Mean	DR
1. Marketing Management	3.86	High	3.84	High	3.78	High	3.80	High
2. Human Resource Management	3.93	High	3.90	High	-	-	3.90	High
3. Financial Management	4.08	High	4.03	High	-	-	4.04	High
4. Operations Management	3.98	High	3.93	High	-	-	3.93	High
Overall Mean	3.96	High	3.92	High	3.78	High	3.93	High

### The Level of Customer Satisfaction

The level of customer satisfaction of Thai restaurants is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*The Level of customer satisfaction of Thai restaurants*

Output	Owners		Staff		Customers		As a Whole	
	Mean	DR	Mean	DR	Mean	DR	Mean	DR
1. Tangible	3.83	High	3.94	High	3.84	High	3.87	High
2. Reliability	4.15	High	4.00	High	4.06	High	4.04	High
3. Food Quality	3.99	High	3.95	High	3.95	High	3.95	High
4. Responsiveness	3.85	High	3.80	High	3.76	High	3.78	High
5. Assurance	4.01	High	3.84	High	3.81	High	3.83	High
6. Empathy	4.14	High	3.96	High	3.74	High	3.83	High
Overall Mean	3.99	High	3.92	High	3.86	High	3.88	High



The level of customer satisfaction of Thai restaurants is High, as proven by the overall mean rating of 3.88. The owners/managers, staff, and customers perceived that customer satisfaction was high, as substantiated by the overall mean ratings of 3.99, 3.92, and 3.86, respectively. These findings imply that Thai restaurants provide a High level of satisfaction to the customers in terms of the tangibility feature of the restaurant, reliability of service, quality of food, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. According to Saneva and Chortoseva (2018), customers' perceptions of service quality are an important factor in restaurant sustainability, implying the importance of continuously monitoring their satisfaction with the service.

Reliability gets the highest mean rating of 4.04, which is described as high. This finding implies that reliability in terms of the restaurant is reliable and consistent in the service, and the restaurant serves the food exactly as customers have ordered are highly implemented to please the customers in the restaurants. Responsiveness gets the lowest mean rating of 3.78 but is still described as high. The customers have a high level of satisfaction regarding how the staff handles their requests and how quickly they provide the service. These findings agree with Bhuian (2020), who stated that reliability was the most important service quality dimension in terms of customer satisfaction. Next in line were service empathy and tangibles. The third characteristic was responsiveness. Furthermore, assurance was discovered to be less important in determining customer satisfaction in the hotel industry. Similarly, Gabrow (2021) discovered that the quality dimensions of the sample restaurants could be ordered in ascending order from (concrete), reliability (reliability), response (response), certainty (warranty), to empathy (empathy).

### **The Relationship between the Level of Customer Satisfaction and the Level of Management of the Thai Restaurant Business in Khonkaen, Thailand**

**Table 7**

*Correlation coefficients between the level of management of the Thai restaurant business and the level of customer satisfaction*

<b>Restaurant Management Practices</b>	<b>Customer Satisfaction</b>
Marketing Management	<b>0.135**</b>
Human Resource Management	-0.072
Financial Management	0.002
Operation Management	0.028
Status	0.022

Legend:

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis between the level of customer satisfaction and the level of management in the Thai restaurant business is shown in Table 7. Marketing management in terms of price, place, and promotion has a strong positive relationship with customer satisfaction. This finding implies that Thai restaurants with better marketing practices have

higher levels of customer satisfaction. The findings are consistent with the findings of Mohammadi and Sohrabi (2018), who stated that the marketing mix elements have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction when an intermediary variable of customer relationship management is present. This can help to retain customers, satisfy them, and attract new ones. Hanaysha (2016) discovered that food quality has a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the results revealed that price fairness and the physical environment significantly positively affect customer satisfaction. Saad Andaleeb and Conway (2006) discovered that the responsiveness of frontline employees influenced customer satisfaction the most, followed by price and food quality.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Thai restaurant businesses in Khonkaen, Thailand, are well managed in terms of marketing, human resources, financial management, and operations. Furthermore, customers are extremely pleased with the quality of the restaurants' products and services.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that though management practices of Thai restaurants are very high, the owners/managers may consider giving a membership card with privileges and bonus points as one of their marketing strategies. This is one method of increasing customer loyalty and attracting new customers. The management should also consider job advertisement as one of the recruitment methods in order to reach more qualified applicants for any job vacancy. In order to increase the level of satisfaction and customer retention, the owners/managers should see to it that the employees have the appropriate, decent, and neat dress. During peak seasons, additional employees may be hired to ensure service responsiveness in such a way that services are provided to the customers on time. Since marketing management is related to customer satisfaction and brand loyalty, restaurants should come up with strategies that will increase the level of satisfaction of customers and strengthen their loyalty of the customers such as social media marketing because restaurants with a strong social media presence as part of their restaurant marketing plan are the ones that fare the best and in the competitive food industry. Partnering with online apps encourages visitors to check out restaurants through gamification and customer loyalty programs, which offer visitors a free purchase or discount for visiting a certain number of times. A similar study should be undertaken to include other variables not included and with wider coverage.

### **ETHICAL STATEMENT**

In order to ensure that the findings of the study are valid and trustworthy, ethical principles were observed by the researchers. They are as follows: a) honesty in all scientific communications; b) objectivity to avoid bias in the research methods; c) respect for intellectual property by honoring patents and copyrights, and d) confidentiality to protect

communications and personal information of the respondents. Thus, during the informal interview, the researchers acted as facilitators and, at the same time, the note-taking activities. To ensure the truthfulness of the recording, the respondents validated the note-taking done. After this, the respondents signed the informed consent to show that they affirmed the correctness of the recorded information of the researchers.

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