

DEVELOPMENT OF SEAFOOD THAI CUISINE SERVICING STRATEGY IN THE LEGENDARY OF THAI CUISINE AS TOURIST DESTINATION

by

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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry has an important role in Thailand which drives the country's economy. In term of the facilities of tourism demand, the seafood restaurant business has an important part of Thai tourism. At Hua-Hin, Phachuap Khiri Khan Province, an attraction of Sea side tourist destination was known as the sense of a fruitful atmosphere for the travellers visiting to fulfill leisure activities and to dine with Thai-seafood meal. With the transformation in business environment, it makes impact on business orientation and marketing role in the seafood Thai cuisine business. Capability to adjust offer to evolving customers' needs and demands has become as the one of key success factors for the Thai kitchen to the world. This research aims to explore the marketing mix factors that influence the foreign customers to select the varieties of Thai-seafood cuisine service in order to use the result as a guideline to set out and to develop seafood Thai cuisine restaurant service strategies at Hua-Hin, Phachuap Khiri Khan Province, Thailand. A questionnaire was used as a tool to collect the data from 520 samples of the foreign customers who used Thai-seafood cuisine service at Hua-Hin, Thailand. Referable statistics for hypothesis test and statistical search were Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). This study found that the key issues on hospitality marketing factors influenced the selection of seafood Thai cuisine restaurants selected by foreign customers who visited Hua-Hin, as the tourist destination. As a result, this can be concluded in descending order of priority as Process, Price, Physical evidence, Place, Product, People and Promotion respectively. With respects to business operators, the result of this research was likely to be as a guideline to apply some marketing strategies, focusing on (i) Process: Service system and procedure to ensure promptness and efficiency, (ii) Price: Valuable and Reasonable Prices, (iii) Physical evidence: Beach unique Atmosphere and well Sanitation, (iv) Place: Attractiveness and Direction Signs, (v) Product: Quality and Freshness of seafood, (vi) People: Proficient and Enough Staff, and (vii) Promotion: Advertisement and Discount.

KEYWORDS

Service Marketing, Seafood Thai Cuisine, Hua-Hin Destination

INTRODUCTION

Global economics integration has been taken place for various reasons such as changing socio-economic patterns, favorable political and cultural environments, and a shift from manufacturing to service based economics (Quinn, 1999). In Thailand, the tourism industry has an important role which drives country's economy. Additionally, it is the main industry of the country bringing revenue and foreign currency into the country as well as influencing other local businesses both directly and indirectly. Tourism is described by the government policy which the main purpose is to diversify the country's economy through the promotion of tourism. According to statistics in 2009 and 2010, the foreign tourists travelling to Thailand were approximately 14,149,841 people and 15,936,400 people, respectively (Statistics of the Department of Tourism, 2011). This shows that the foreign tourist market has rapidly expanded. In addition, the information above shows that the tourism industry of Thailand has received positive and negative effects: whether income distribution, job creation, and the commercial threats from new competitors including consumers of the service industry. At Hua-Hin, Phachuap Khiri Khan Province, an attraction of Sea side tourist destination was known as the sense of a fruitful atmosphere for the travellers visiting to fulfill leisure activities and to dine with Thai-seafood meal. Regarding to the research of "the perception of foreign tourists toward tourism in Hua-Hin", it defined that a part of tourism in service resource at Hua-Hin destination is a major of restaurant businesses especially, seafood restaurants (Sompong, 2010). The report states that the Gross Provincial Product-GPP in 2009 and 2010 was valued at 60,538 and 66,299 million baht; 18,020 and 19,821 million baht which were derived from the service business 29.77% and 29.90% of GPP, respectively. The most of domestic service business in Phachuap Khiri Khan Province was the hotel and restaurant service business which are valued at 4,148 and 4,363 million baht (Office of the National Economics and

Social Development Board, 2012). Tourism in general and service in particular restaurant businesses can contribute to a nation's economic and local society a profiting. With the transformation in business environment and the change in social structure according to the aspects of ASEAN Free Trade Area in 2015, it makes impacts on business orientation and marketing role in the domestic seafood Thai cuisine business. Service marketing, which is an important aspect of management and Capability to adjust offer to evolving customers' needs and demands has become as the key success factors for seafood restaurant businesses. Besides, it is thought by some theorists, for example, Lovelock, et al (2005) pointed out that other additional related factors are Government Policies, Social Changes, Business Trends, Advances Information Technology and Globalization. Because of the mentioned causes, researchers were therefore interested in studying the development of seafood Thai cuisine servicing strategy in the legendary of Thai cuisine as tourist destination at Hua-Hin, Thailand.

The objectives of this study are: 1) to survey the satisfaction of foreign tourists with respect to the service marketing mix variables toward seafood Thai cuisine restaurant at Hua-Hin, Prachuap Khiri Khan Province, Thailand, and 2) to explore the marketing factors that influence the foreign tourists as a guideline to develop seafood Thai cuisine restaurant service strategies.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was designed to explore the marketing factors for the development of superb seafood Thai cuisine servicing strategy toward tourism in Hua-Hin. The research focused on the marketing factors that influence the foreign tourists. This research will set up and develop the approach in promoting seafood restaurant businesses of regional tourism at Hua-Hin destination, Thailand for servicing foreign tourists that is beneficial to domestic business of Thailand and to create a competitive advantage in the seafood restaurant market.

How to select the research area and data providers

The research area focuses on foreign tourists in Hua-Hin which is a tourist destination and is full of the variety of tourism resources. According to the GPP, statistic in 2010 showed that the hotels and restaurants service business (Valued at 4,363 million baht) was a large potential market in Phachuap Khiri Khan Province. A seafood Thai cuisine restaurant at Hua-Hin was one of the signature leisure activities for foreign tourists to take a rest by relaxing and casual dining on holiday. The sample size of this study was 520 foreign tourists who used the service of Thai-seafood cuisine restaurant at Hua-Hin for ensuring statistical power as suggested by Hair, et al (2006). Regarding to the sample size in the factor analysis, the researcher generally used the twenty-six observations. As a general rule, the minimum sample size is to have at least five times as many observations as there are variables to be analyzed, and the more acceptable size would have a twenty-to-one ratio. According to Cronbach (2003), the analysis of reliability and validity showed that alpha coefficient was valued at 0.910 of level validity. The design of the questionnaire adopts Likert's five-rating scale pattern of response, ranging from "very important"/ "very satisfactory", "important"/ "satisfactory", "neutral", "unimportant"/ "dissatisfactory", "lesser importance"/ "lesser satisfaction, and scoring from 5 to 1 as the basis of the ensuring statistical analysis.

How to collect data

Research and collect secondary data from related text books, documents and research. Questionnaire is also used as research instrument and followed by personal interview to collect primary data at Hua-Hin Area. The questionnaire consists of the questions related to marketing mix and ranking of 7 P's.

Data Analysis

After the data were received, the researcher recorded, checked, and coded the data by using statistical computer software for a social study. The techniques of statistical analysis used in data analysis were frequencies distribution, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Referable statistics for verification of conformity of Overall Model Fit Measure, and the evaluation conformity of results in the important component of Model (Component Fit Measure) were analyzed by using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The research results were obtained from the development of second Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

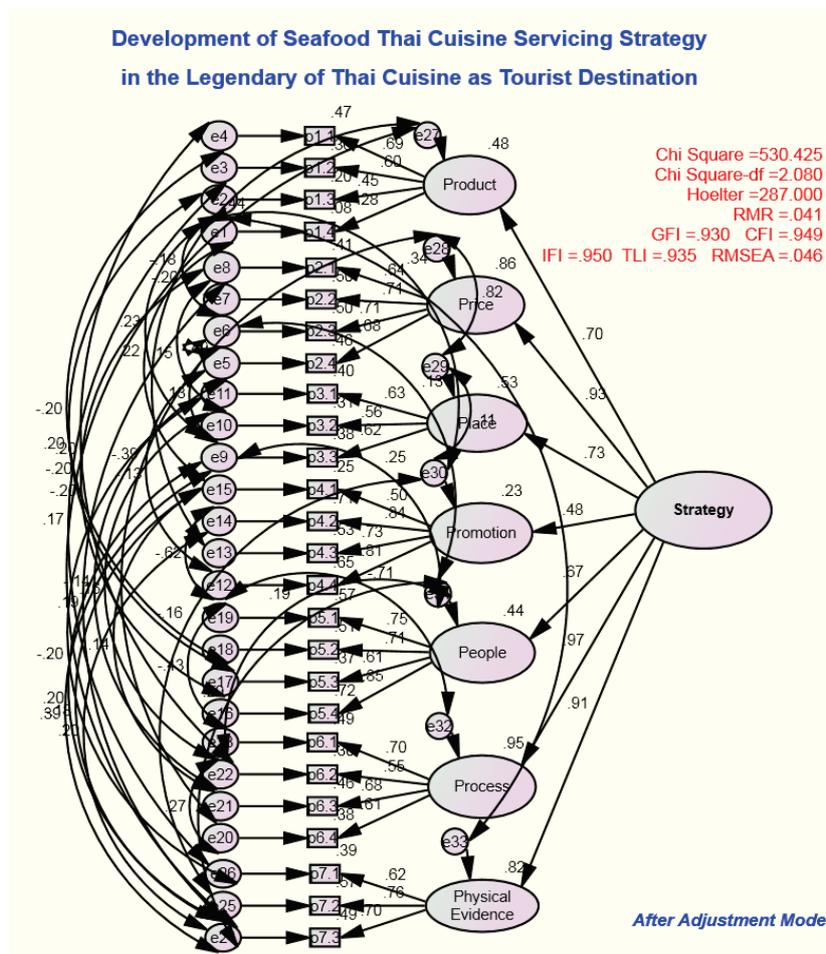
Findings are as follows:

The results of the research showed that the satisfaction of foreign customers while dining in seafood restaurants had been considered to the service marketing in the restaurants at Hua-Hin as follows. By demographically, the majority

of the respondents were categorized as mostly male (56.20%), aged 51-60 years (28.10%), held a bachelor degree or equivalent (30.60%), worked as personal business (43.10%), had an average monthly income more than 1,401 USD (40.80%). The nationalities were Scandinavian (39%), Europe (24%), America (17.10%), and ASEAN (12.30%), respectively. Regarding to staying time at Hua-Hin, the average duration of dining in seafood restaurants was 3-4 times (55.80%), the most meal was the dinner (46.20%), the length of time at restaurants was around 2 hours (61.70%) and they spent on average 21-30 USD (43.10%). The descriptive statistics of foreign customer's behavior that influenced the consumption of seafood restaurants was as follows: at the high level ranking, the decision making to dine at seafood restaurants was the tourists/themselves (Mean=4.07), the influent sources of the information were recommendations from experienced people (friends, colleagues, relatives etc.) (Mean=3.94), while the only type of the beach restaurant (situated by to the beach) was ranking at the moderate level. From the customer satisfaction theory, Word-of-mouth (experienced people) had "a great impact on the popularity of restaurants" (Zhang, Ye, Law and Li, 2010).

By analysis in Structural Equations Model: SEM, the factors used for the purpose of confirmatory factor analysis were shown to be appropriate in terms of construct validity and reliability at an acceptable level. Additionally, the hospitality marketing mix for the service strategies model shown in Figure 1 was validated and fitted the empirical data due to the comprised indicators.

FIGURE 1
A STRUCTURAL EQUATIONS MODEL (SEM)



In the SEM model, the verification of conformity of Overall Model Fit Measure and evaluation conformity of result in the important component of Model (Component Fit Measure) are reported in Tables 1. (Arbuckle, J. L. 2005)

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF GOODNESS-OF-FIT INDICATORS OF SEM MODELS

Indicators	Criterion	SEM: Results
χ^2 / df (CMIN/DF)	< 3	2.080
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.930
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.903
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.908
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.935
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.950
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.949
HOELTER	> 200	287
RMR	< 0.08	0.041
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.046
The overall structures are goodness of fit results of these analysis		

The result of factor analysis stated that the influential marketing mix factor of foreign customers can be concluded in descending order of priority as follows. Most of the customers were priority the factor of process (Factor loading 0.973), the price factor (Factor loading 0.927), the factor of physical evidence (Factor loading 0.905), the factor of place (Factor loading 0.725), the product factor (Factor loading 0.665), the factor of people (Factor loading 0.665) and the factor of promotion (Factor loading 0.482), respectively.

Based on the research results, the influential factor for foreign customers can benefit the seafood restaurant business operators. After considering the result from the techniques of statistical analysis, the development of second Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) suggested way to guideline and set out some marketing strategies as follow; firstly, the factor of process (Factor loading 0.973), the customers thought the method of service (Factor loading 0.699) and prompt of service (Factor loading 0.681) were important to them. Secondly, for the price factor (Factor loading 0.927), they thought that it was important that the reasonable price to be appropriate with quality (Factor loading 0.709). Thirdly, the factor of physical evidence (Factor loading 0.905), they thought cleanliness was significant (Factor loading 0.755). Then, the factor of place (Factor loading 0.725), the customers thought that it was important because the location is convenient and easy to reach (Factor loading 0.634). Then, the product factor (Factor loading 0.665), they thought that it was important because of the quality and freshness of seafood (Factor loading 0.634). The next one is people factor (Factor loading 0.665), giving customer individual attention was an important of view point (Factor loading 0.848). Lastly, the factor of promotion (Factor loading 0.482), the customers thought that it was of little importance, since customers had got the empowering of buying so that they needed discounts. (Factor loading 0.841).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The aspect of this research at Hua-Hin can be summarized that a service industry especially the seafood restaurant businesses has an important part of Thai tourism picture for developing a local and nation's tourism industry. In other words, the seafood restaurant businesses are significant to Hua-Hin destination that basically lead to regional forum on various aspects such as employment, job creation, income generation and income distribution to the local regions, communities. From economic sector to other sectors, there are beneficial to the national economy. According to Sompong (2010), the research defined that a part of tourism in service resource at Hua-Hin destination was a major of restaurant business especially, seafood restaurants. The presented data shows that foreign tourist market is large scale and affects the social dynamic and is regarded as a very high potential market. It is time that seafood restaurant business, Hua-Hin, needs to be ready to welcome foreign tourists that have increased dramatically. However, according to such rapid changes, seafood restaurant business should be ready and adapt to support both proactive and reactive on measures about the service marketing factor in the business. Some theorists, such as Rust, Zahorik, and Keiningham (1995) addressed that the benefits of increased customer satisfaction were in form of basic terms including the improved ability of the firm to attract new customers and the ability of the businesses to maintain repeat customers. In this study, the researcher explored the influential factor for foreign customers that can benefit the seafood restaurant business operators. After considering the result from the techniques of statistical analysis, the development of second Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) suggested way to guideline and set out some marketing strategies as follows. With respects to

influenced operations strategy on the seafood restaurant business operators and management as destinations, the marketing strategies which are focusing on (i) Process factor, the operators should set out the service system in the restaurants and the procedure to ensure promptness and efficiency. (ii) Price factor, they should have some criteria such as valuable and reasonable price with the quality of food and service. (iii) Physical evidence factor, Beach unique Atmosphere and Sanitation should be considered as a creative of beach restaurant appearance. (iv) Place factor, attractiveness and direction signs should be provided in order to reach the targeted customers. Additionally, a wide service area should be organized. (v) Product factor, restaurant business is not only offer the quality and freshness of seafood, flavorful and the right temperature, but also should have an ongoing menu development program. (vi) People factor, restaurants should emphasis on the genuine server communication and enough servers to service all of customers. In addition, the operating staff should be trained to have skills and enthusiastic to service the customer needs courteously. (vii) Promotion, the restaurants should have the multiple activities such as distributing discount coupon, offering a discount, participation during special occasion and festival season, Internet provided website and attending the local activities in order to promote the restaurant business.

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