

**ESSENTIAL BUSINESS STRATEGIES FOR
SUCCESSFUL SME RESTAURANTS AND BARS IN BANGKOK
THAT EARN MOST REVENUES FROM THE LIQUOR SALES**



**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
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entitled
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WHO EARN MOST REVENUES FROM THE LIQUOR SALES**

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ABSTRACT

Bangkok, the capital city of Thailand, has been ranked as one of the best nightlife destinations by reliable tourism sources. However, there are highly competitive in the restaurants and bars industry, especially SME businesses that have limited resources.

The objective of this paper is to deeper understand the significant business strategies for the successful SME restaurants and bars in Bangkok that earn most revenue from liquor sales and can survive during the COVID-19 pandemic which will help increase the likelihood of success for the business owner.

The outcomes of this paper provide essential strategies for SME restaurants and bars to embrace the competitors which are 1) Maintaining Strong Brand Identity, 2) Creating A Comfortable Environment and Community, 3) Conducting Event Marketing, 4) Cutting Unnecessary Expenses, and 5) Making Employees Feel Valued and Appreciated. These can help business owners, stakeholders, and decision-makers improve the crucial traits of SME restaurants and bars to become successful businesses in the future.

KEY WORDS: Business strategy / Restaurants and bars / SMEs

32 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, is well-known for its cuisine, culture, and nightlife in particular. Since it offers a wide variety of restaurants and bars, including stylish rooftop bars, wine bars, cocktail bars, lively clubs, and more, as well as numerous types of music, including jazz, rock, and pop. Bangkok has long been considered one of the greatest places to party. In the past, there were only a few well-known districts in Bangkok for nightlife, such as Khaosan Road, Sukhumvit, RCA, and Thonglor, all of which had been operating for many years. However, the growth of urban population in Bangkok has grown rapidly which urbanization can contribute to the opportunity for new business in new areas, therefore, there are many new restaurants and bars across Bangkok with many styles.

Thailand's nightlife sector is estimated to generate around \$5.5 billion (Kishimoto, 2020). Bangkok has been ranked top 20 world's best cities for nightlife by many travel websites showing that nightlife in Bangkok is accepted around the world. Also, there are 5 bars in Bangkok that win Asia's 50 Best Bars 2022 awards (Gries, 2022). Seeing that the night-time economy plays important role in Thailand's tourism business. During the past 10 years, Thailand's urbanization rate has increased from 43.86 percent to 51.43 percent urban which shows that half of the population lives in urban areas and most of the growth comes from Bangkok (O'Neill, 2022). Moreover, urbanization is one of the factors that drive business expansion and increase opportunities for new business in Bangkok including restaurants and bars so there are many bars open in other areas all over Bangkok such are Sanampao, Ari, Charoenkrung, and Ladprao following the demand of urban as the city grows.

In 2019, the new virus, COVID-19, was found in Wuhan, China, and spread globally in a few months. The severity of COVID-19 can be ranged from very mild to severe which leads to a cause of death in many people around the world. The first COVID-19 case in Thailand was identified in January 2020 and has been ongoing since

then. The COVID-19 cases started to rise in June 2021 and reached a peak at around 20,000 new cases in August 2021. During COVID-19 Pandemic, there are many policies launched to cope with the pandemic. The government had banned alcohol sales and closed the bars for a total of nine months from 2020 to 2021 without subsidiaries to curb the pandemic, then the policy had released when the number of COVID-19 cases improved. According to the Announcement of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (2021), people are allowed to consume on-site in October 2021 and the alcohol ban was lifted in November 2021 so that people can consume alcohol in restaurants since then. However, there were many rules after the allowance such as limiting customers to 50% of capacity, limiting the closing time of the restaurant to 9.00 P.M. in November 2021, and releasing to 11.00 P.M. in December 2021.

The pandemic definitely impacts restaurants and bars, especially those gain most of their revenue from liquor sales. When restaurants were forced to closed, most of them adapted their businesses to online channels such as food delivery platforms. Even though they were charged 15 percent to 30 percent of sales as commission, they still gained income and some of them gained new business opportunities from the growth of online food delivery. Unlike normal restaurants, restaurants and bars that earned most of their revenue from liquor sales were very suffered during this period due to the alcohol regulation. Not only they were forced to close for about 9 months, but there are also regulations that online alcohol sales and delivery are prohibited in Thailand. In addition, referring to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act, online advertising of alcoholic beverages on digital and social media is banned including direct selling, persuading customers, and introducing alcoholic products (“Thai Government Prohibits”, 2020). Therefore, restaurants and bars that have most of their revenue from alcohol lost a major revenue since they could not sell or promote alcoholic beverages during the lockdown period. Some of them had to change their business to sell other products such as food, non-alcohol beverage, and fruit. There were 413 bars all over Bangkok that propose to change their business license from clubs and bars to restaurants (Petpailin, 2022). Since the customers cannot sit in the bars, some business owners were concerned about the brand recognition that the customers might lose attention and forget the bars so they were more active online though music lives with the band that played at the bars to keep connect with customers and increase customer engagement through

the online channel. The food and beverage industry in Thailand has been badly affected by these restrictions. There is a loss of about 1.4 billion baht or \$44.97 million per day during restrictions. Around 50,000 restaurants have shuttered either permanently or temporarily during the May and June 2021 and at least 10,000 businesses in this industry cannot survive by the end of the outbreak (Perawongmetha & Tanakasempipat, 2021).

This paper will focus on SME restaurants and bars since they are different from large-scale restaurants and bars in many aspects. Large-scale restaurants and bars that have been opened for a long time have more resources to operate the business such as the source of funds and reserve funds, customer base, bargaining power with suppliers, and staff rotation while SME restaurants and bars have very limited resources. Even though SME restaurants and bars have a less competitive advantage, some of them can survive and are still open now after COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, they are more interesting to explore. Moreover, I found that there are both SME restaurants and bar that can survive and close in the same location which make me wonder what makes their business successful.

The objective of this paper is to deeper understand the restaurants and bars industry and explore the significant business strategies for the successful SME restaurants and bars in Bangkok that earn most revenue from liquor sales and can survive during the COVID-19 pandemic even though there have been close for months. The result of this paper will be benefits and a business guide for the reader who is a business owner and wants to be successful in the industry. The reader will have a comprehensive understanding of the crucial elements and implement the strategies in order to strengthen and prepare the company for greater competitive advantages and a higher likelihood of success.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Brand Identity Prism Model

The Brand Identity Prism model was created by J. Kapferer (1992) to contribute understanding of brand identity for business and help the business build a strong and distinctive brand identity. Since the brand should not only have a name but also connect with customers so that the Brand Identity Prism model also helps the businesses communicate the messages clearly and easily remembered and recognized in minds of customers. There are six elements from the model as follows

First, the physique is the physical characteristics of a brand that customers can perceive such as logo, style, and color which will come up in customers' minds when the brand name is mentioned. Second is brand personality or character representing the brand in the customer's eye which can be communicated to the customers by the specific writing style, tone, attitude, and specific colors to shape all brand communications related. Third, culture shows the brand's origin story such as brand values, ideals, morals include style of working which link between brand and organization together. Forth, relationship describes the engagement between a brand and consumers in which customer satisfaction can lead to a strong relationship between brand and customers. This aspect needs a brand manager or company representative to express the relationship that the brand stands for. Fifth, reflection shows who you want your customer to be. This element makes the brand describe customers with the value that the brand wants the customer to be, but this is not necessary to be the same with the target group. Lastly, self-image is the mirror of the target group which represents what customers see themselves in the brand.

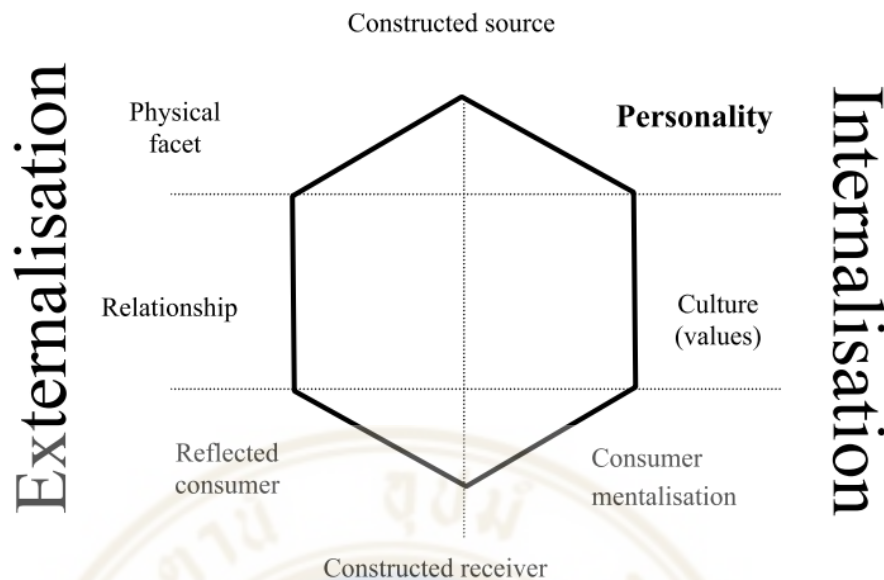


Figure 2.1 : 6 Aspects of Brand Identity Prism Model

Source: Kapferer (1992)

2.2 Revisit Intention

Customer satisfaction is the result when customers compare their experiences with their expectations (Oliver, 1980). Bitner and Hubbert (1994) stated that customer satisfaction is an overall evaluation of performance based on prior experiences with a provider. In the service sector, customer satisfaction has an important role in repurchasing intention (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) which high satisfaction can reduce the perception of benefits of switching service providers (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993). Moreover, Getty and Thompson (1995) described that there is a linkage between service quality, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions in which customers' behavioral intentions to recommend and repurchase are based on their perception of satisfaction and service quality. When customers are satisfied, they tend to refuse offers from competitors and repurchase the product or service from the current provider (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993; Cronin and Taylor, 1992; Zeithaml et al., 1996). For the restaurant industry, satisfying customers affect customer expectation and intention to revisit which is the result of the expansion of satisfaction (Wu et al., 2018).

These studies all show a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and revisit intention.

Atmospheric can be defined as a general interior that includes music, sound, lighting, scent, color, temperature, and visual design elements (Turley & Milliman, 2000). Also, atmospherics can illustrate both tangible and intangible environmental features for instance music, lighting, and furnishings (Liu & Jang, 2009), so atmospherics can be perceived through the senses and correlate with customer satisfaction (Heung & Gu, 2012). According to Chow et al. (2013), the restaurant environment positively affects customers' revisit intention. Environment issues are one of the criteria for customers to choose restaurants which shows that atmospheric is necessary for management to consider in order to attract customers to come to the restaurants. Instead of food, customers might be focused on the restaurant's environment. Moreover, the atmospheric factor is related to factors that give an impact on meal experiences which can be identified as meal experiences 'satisfiers' (Andersson and Mossberg, 2004). This proved that the atmosphere affected customers' revisit intention (Weiss et al., 2004). In addition, restaurant attributes, for example, food quality, service quality, atmospherics, environment, location, and price can also influence revisit intention (Weiss et al., 2004; Hyun, 2010; Erkmen & Hancer, 2019).

Revisit intention is repurchased intention and behaviors that describe the willingness to endorse positive information for a service provider (Teng & Kuo, 2011). Revisit intention can be conceived by the amount of the previous visit (Petrick et al., 2001). It is essential for the business to not only attract new customers but also attract repurchase behaviors from existing customers (Hanai et al., 2008). The studies mentioned before display the positive correlation between customer satisfaction, atmospheric, and revisit intention.

2.3 Event Marketing and Brand Awareness

Event marketing is an activity that a company has planned and organized to introduce a brand of the company (Hoyle, 2002). Events provide businesses with a strategic and versatile tool to meet various marketing-related objectives (Crowther, 2011). Event marketing is one of the most effective ways to communicate brand

messages that needs to create brand-related realities for customers as part of an integrated experience in order to maximize its communicative potential (Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2005)

Kotler and Keller (2016) show that brand awareness can improve people's ability to recall or recognize the brand to make a purchase. According to Keller (2003), brand awareness is the ability of customers to remember and identify the brand by identifying the logo, name, and symbol in their memory. Brand awareness is having a big definition including brand acquaintance, the potential of being remembered, and information and ideas about the product (Bilgili and Ozkul, 2015). Brand awareness can be created by exposing the brand to as many customers as possible, and awareness is essential for creating an idea and perception about the brand (Gwinner, 1997).

Event marketing relates to the theme of the activities in order to create an experience for consumers (Belch and Belch, 2001). Miller & Washington (2012) expose that direct contact with consumers during events can create a memorable brand experience for everyone. Engaging customers in a more personalized and immersive environment can create a stronger association and bond with the company and products. In the end, event marketing can lead to increased customer engagement and memorability. The impact of company's activities can be broadened when customers have deep brand knowledge and loyalty and become brand supporters (Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2005). Event marketing is outstanding among classical marketing communication as it encourages and allows the target group to participate in the event. Also, it has a positive effect between the target group and brand in terms of familiarity, brand image, behavior, and emotional connection that the target group establishes with the brand (Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2006).

2.4 Personal Connection in Business

Personal relation with service provider characteristics in the early stage of service relationship has a necessary impact on trust (Coulter and Coulter, 2002). Some common personality attributes, attitudes, or interests with another person can lead to connection (Duck, 1994), while both parties communicate to assess these potential similarities

People tend to be influenced by their feelings about almost anything that is associated with them when they have positive associations with respect (Greenwald and Banaji 1995; Hettis, Sakuma, and Pelham 1999; Paulhus and Levitt, 1987). Beggan (1992) defined that consumers show more favorable attitudes toward products that reflect their personal identities. Guanxi contains that to make use of close links and associates, a network of intermediate to support the common business behaviors within the business circumstance (Bruun, 1993).

2.5 Motivation at Work

Motivation is a willingness to act driven by an internal or external force (Nnabife, 2009). A person's effort can be stimulated and directed by forces that can identify as motivation (Robbins, 2009). Motivation can be determined as the psychological process that leads to the arousal, direction, and persistence of behavior (Ilgen and Klein, 1988). Joena Agbato (1988) states that motivation is a significant intention of human behavior which reach a goal, thus, motivation beget performance. Like Joena Agbato (1988), Luthans (1998) also defined motivation as a process that starts with a physiological or psychological need that urges behavior to achieve a goal or incentive.

Whether a firm is public or private, employee motivation is the most crucial component for all organizations to succeed (Chintallo & Mahadeo, 2013). Grant (2008) defined that motivation enforces employee consequences such as performance and productivity. Also, motivated employees are more oriented toward autonomy and are more self-driven than less motivated employees which leads them to take developmental opportunities more correctly. Franco et al. (2002) state that internal motivation but the presence of internal factors such as essential skills, intellectual capacity, and ability to finish tasks clearly have an impact on performance. Job performance is directly influenced by motivation, so it is an accelerator for higher performance when employees are motivated positively (Inayatullah & Jehangir, 2012). Businesses pay a lot of attention to satisfying customers but often put low effort to satisfy employees. However, the customer would not be satisfied if the employees are not satisfied because satisfied staff

will do more works which will ultimately result in consumers' happiness (Ahmad et al., 2012).



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research focuses on the descriptive data by understanding people's beliefs, attitudes, and behavior to identify and interpret their patterns of them. The semi-structured interviews allow the attendants to talk in-depth with open-ended questions which the writer can dig down more and collect insight data for this research which enable the writer to find out the history, knowledge, opinion, and experience of interviewees that are important in their business. Also, we can develop our understanding of the restaurants and bars and people's experiences.

To understand the key factors of businesses, the writer used primary research and qualitative method to gain business insight. The writer conducted in-depth interviews during 15-20 June 2022 via the video conferencing platforms for 3 interviewees and on-site interviews at the store for 1 interviewee. Due to the confidential information, the writer will not disclose the interviewees' names and store names. The alias will be used to identify them as the first interviewee, second interviewee, third interviewee, and fourth interviewee.

3.1 Interviewee Selection

In this research, the objective is to figure out the common success factors for SME restaurants and bars and understand what strategies that make their business succeed. The writer decided to interview 3 owners and 1 manager of SME restaurants and bars. These people were selected because they are decision-makers who can make a huge impact on the business. Also, their business was opened before 2021 and has alcohol as the primary revenue of the business or more than 60% of total sales which COVID-19 contributes a significant effect on business. The writer tried to cover many aspects by choosing different styles and different sizes of restaurants and bars to interview. The future plan did not include in the interview. Moreover, there is also the

limitation of time of study so that there are only 4 restaurants and bars owners were interviewed. However, there might have more strategies and factors that could contribute to the success of restaurants and bars in Bangkok.

The first interviewee is the co-founder of a hidden boutique bar in Charoenkrung. The bar has been opening for 3 years and 8 months with the capacity of 50 pax and decorated in the 1950s architectural style in a theatre-themed venue. Customers can find creative cocktails named after famous plays and operas along with jazz music from top-notch bands here. All the sales come from alcoholic beverages. There was an old bar opened in this building before, however, the old owner lent the building and leased the bar. The founders take over this bar because they saw the opportunity and then change to the current bar that is open now. The interviewee is a co-founder and responsible for all areas of business but mainly focuses on the marketing part since he also is the owner of a digital agency company. The interview was conducted through the online channel with a duration of 40 minutes.

The second interviewee is the bar owner of a funky-looking casual bar located next to BTS Sanampao. The bar was founded in April 2019 with the concept of a warm sunset decorated in a vintage style which creates a homie and warm atmosphere. The playlists are alternative genres played by DJs such as indie, pop, retro, and disco. The menus are fusion food, beer, wine, and cocktail which the portion of alcohol at 65% and food at 35%. The maximum capacity is 100 pax. The interviewee is one of the bar founders who is in charge of all management, especially operations. He worked as an engineer in Japan and got the project at Thailand. At that time, he liked to drink and he can not find a bar in the style that he liked in this area so he open this bar to satisfy his need and his dream to be a bar owner. The interview was conducted through the online channel with a duration of 30 minutes.

The third interviewee is the co-founder of an ancient Chinese-style bar in Ekkamai Shopping Mall (ancient-shed). The bar opened in 2020 with the capacity of 80 pax then expand to 250 pax in 2022. The decoration was inspired by the tavern in a Chinese martial arts movie. The bar offers Thai food, beer, whiskey, and cocktails, of which alcohol has sales contribute 60% and food at 40%, with everyday live music from the full band. The founders have other bars opened before at Bangkae, then they saw the opportunity in the ancient-shed area since there are a lot of customers waiting outside

the bar around here. The interviewee is one of the partners who is mainly responsible for marketing and event as he graduated with a marketing major and he works as a singer. The interview was conducted on-site with a duration of 30 minutes.

The fourth interviewee is the manager of a Korean bar on Khaosan road which was first launched in December 2020. The design was inspired by street food stalls in Korea, known as pocha, with neon light decoration. The music is popular K-pop tunes played by famous DJs. The bar sells Korean food, soju, and beer which the portion of alcohol is 65% and food is 35%. The maximum capacity is 200 pax. The interviewee was an event organizer specializing in Korean style before working as a manager at the bar. In the past few years, there is no Korean bar on Khaosan road before so the building owner want to open the first Korean bar on Khaosan road but they did not specialize in this type of bars. He contacted the interviewee and invited him to conduct the plan and was hired as the bar manager who was responsible for all processes such as planning, construction, marketing, and operations. The interview was conducted through the online channel with a duration of 35 minutes.

Table 3.1: Interview Questions

Topic	Question
Introduction & Background	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you tell me your background? 2. How did you start the business? 3. How do you describe your restaurants and bars? 4. What is the strength and weakness of your business? 5. Who are your customers? 6. How does COVID-19 affect your business?
Operational Management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many staff are in your business? 2. What is the responsibility of each of them? 3. What is the workflow of the restaurant and bar? 4. When alcohol is banned during COVID-19, did you change your product or service during this period? What are they? 5. Did you change the working process? How? 6. Due to social distancing, how does the layout change, and how does it affect your business? 7. How did you handle costs and expenses during the pandemic?
Marketing Strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did you advertise your business? 2. Which channel did you most use for advertising? Why? 3. How often do you do advertising? 4. Did you do more advertising during this COVID-19? How often? 5. Which part of your advertisement can attract customers compare to others? 6. Did you promote your business on other pages or influencers? 7. How often did you promote your business?

Table 3.1: Interview Questions (cont.)

	<p>8. Did you use more public pages or other pages to promote your business during the shutter period? How often?</p> <p>9. Did you offer promotions to customers?</p> <p>10. How do you choose or add the promotion to the business?</p> <p>11. Do you think sales promotion is important for the business? Which promotion is work for your business?</p>
	<p>12. Did you use personal selling to attract customers?</p> <p>13. How many of them and how they can generate income?</p> <p>14. Did you organize events for the business?</p> <p>15. How often did you organize the events?</p> <p>16. What is the most effective marketing strategy for your business?</p>
Personal Factor	<p>1. Do you think your personal connection can contribute benefit to your business? How?</p> <p>2. Which skill of the owner do you think is important?</p> <p>3. How do you lead and motivate your staff?</p>

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS ANALYSIS

This chapter will explain the research finding and the information gathered from 4 decision-makers of restaurants and bars who are the focus group of the research. After conducting the in-depth interview, there are many interesting facts and strategies that all the successful SME restaurants and bars have in common which have necessary impacts on the business and make their businesses become successful and can compete with the competitors. Below is the analysis of the findings.

4.1 Maintaining Strong Brand Identity

All the interviewees stated that they give a priority to their brand identity or store identity in every aspect such as style, design, music, vibe, mood, and tone including how they see their customers and how customers see the store. Their restaurants and bars have unique styles, and they attach great importance to maintaining their identity.

The first interviewee is the co-founder of a hidden boutique bar in Charoenkrung. He mentioned that everything is aligned with the bar style of a theatre-themed venue. Starting from the decoration of red curtains which can be seen in 1950s theatre, also, the name of cocktails are the famous shows and operas. The lighting is yellow and dim to set the mood and tone which make clients feel cozy. Especially the music, they perform live music every day played by top-notch bands offering jazz and soul music which the bar is the only standalone offering this style in this corner. Even the picture on social media, the colors of the pictures are aligned on every channel with red, black, and yellow tones. Moreover, he has clearly the image of his customers that they are the first jobber to middle age who can spend more than 500 THB per person with a special character. He saw his customers as chic and cool with individual taste.

The second interviewee is the bar owner of a funky-looking casual bar, well-known as a hipster's bar. He said that target customers are 20 to 35 years old who work in areas of artist such as creative, organizer, and stylist which fit with the store's style. The bar is decorated differently from other bars by using random furniture in a mid-century and bright tones such as white, cream, and light brown. The playlists are rare to find in other bars since this bar offers alternative genres such as indie, pop, retro, and disco which is not the mass song for most people, only a few groups of people listen to this style of music. Therefore, this bar is very unique, and rarely find this style in this area. Moreover, the interviewee mentioned that he tries his best to keep the bar character so that sometimes he orders the DJs not to play the songs that customers request if it is not our style. The materials on social media are in vintage style including color, font, mood, and tone.

The third interviewee is the co-founder of an ancient Chinese-style bar in which every decoration, furniture, equipment, and cutlery are in Chinese style as the Chinese martial arts movie. Moreover, the red neon lights are used to decorate the bar and the logo is presented on the back of the stage which is the signature of the bar. All the marketing materials consist of the red light and the logo. The neon logo shows in every picture on Instagram and Facebook which make customers easily recall the bar.

The fourth interviewee is the manager of a Korean bar inspired by street food stalls in Korea. The pink and blue neon light decoration and mirror are autographs of the store. All decorations and artworks are Korean style including color and font which can attract customers. There are many corners of the bar which are viral and instagramable so its decoration makes this store outstanding among other Korean bars so that customers can remember the unique corners. The interviewee target both K-pop lovers and non K-pop lovers who want to explore the bar and enjoy the vibe at the bar. He pays a lot of attention to the bar atmosphere to make the customer enjoy and dance together, so he selects all the playlists by himself which some songs are rarely found in other bars.

The information from participants shows that the interviewees have covered almost all elements of the Brand Identity Prism Model which deliver a strong brand identity to customers. The first element is Physique. All the bars have their own unique style which is outstanding in that area and can be obviously seen from the decoration,

logo, and color such as a theatre theme bar, a funky-looking casual bar, an ancient Chinese-style bar, and a Korean bar. Second, all of them have their own music style and communication way to communicate with customers through all the artworks, writing styles, and colors that are aligned in every channel which related to the brand personality in the model. All the interviewees can describe their customers well and how they see their customers so they have a clear image of their customers, also, the customer will perceive their self-image as a unique style according to the strong physique and personality that the bar offering such as customers of a funky-looking casual bar will feel that they are indie or hipster who is independent and different from others even they are not this kind of person since the bar offer alternative songs that only a few people will know. These related to Reflection and Self-Image in the Brand Identity Prism Model. For Culture and Relationship elements, the staff of bars can express these elements well. Their working style is supportive style which makes staff happy and can deliver better service, also, the staff help create a comfortable environment and community that build a strong relationship with customers. There will be more details in the following part.

Strong identity makes these bars outstanding and different from the competitors. Therefore, customers can easily perceive and remember what the brands communicate. Also, the customers can recall when thinking about this type of bar in their area. Not only creating a strong identity but also maintaining identity are significant. All components and activities are continuously operated and aligned with the bar style.

4.2 Creating A Comfortable Environment and Community

One thing that the interviewees answered in the same direction is about the store atmosphere or environment. “Feel like home” or “Neighborhood bar” is the common answer when describing their bar. Since they are SME restaurants and bars, they need a lot of customers to generate income and cover all costs so finding new customers and increasing the repurchase intention of existing customers are important. Therefore, all of them mentioned that they try to make customers feel comfortable at their bars to increase revisit intention.

The interviewees pay attention to all customer's touch points. Apart from the physical environment like decoration, people such as staff, bartenders, DJs, and singers are the key persons to this factor. Starting with the outfits, all staff apparel must be polite which can be both store uniform and personal clothes but wearing sandals and shorts is not allowed. Next is manners. The staff must have a good manner that does not threaten customers and not expose bad behavior to customers. Lastly, the staff personality should be a friendly person who can talk and chat with customers without awkwardness, for instance, the staff greet every customer and have some chat with them, the singer not only sings a song but also talk and dance with the customer. Most customers do not have high expectations of this kind of environment because most of them are focusing on drinks and music. Therefore, they will feel good and satisfied when the service of bars is over what they expected. The staff are trained to comfort and provide great experiences to customers at every touchpoint. Not only the staff, but the bar components also support the comfortable atmosphere. The bars are decorated with dim lighting which associates with calm and relaxation. The music volume is not too loud so customers can talk without shouting, also, the tempo and rhythm are not too fast which encourages the customer to stay at the bar longer. On social media, the wording and content are communicated in an informal style like a friend talking which makes customers feel that the bar is approachable and feel close to the brand. Moreover, some of the interviewees mentioned that instead of charging a high price to gain more profit, the menus and prices are managed not too expensive or reasonable for their target customers and they can come more often.

In addition, the comfortable environment creates a small community at the bars for old customers. When staff make customers feel free to talk with them and other customers, the customers will find common interests with others, and personal relationships will begin. The co-founder of Charoenkrung bar said that the customers who meet at the bar have at least 2 things that they like in common, the bar and music. Customers meet a lot of new friends at the bar, and they will invite each of them to the bars together. One interviewee claimed that “you can come to my bar alone and get new friends here”. Some of the interviewees also said that they use Line group instead of Line Official Account to let the customers have some chat together and the staff can join

the conversation. Having friendly and talkative staff is one of the magnet factors to encourage customers to visit more often, also this can help strengthen the community.

When the customers are comfortable and feel connected, they will come more frequently and tend to invite friends to come to the bar, in another word, this will create word-of-mouth marketing which has a strong impact on customers to perceive the product or service, and the likelihood of purchase. In the customer purchase process, Word-of-mouth is more significant in the final stage as it reassured consumers and reduced post-purchase uncertainty (Martilla, 1971). As a result, even if the bars are closed for months due to COVID-19 situation, old customers still feel connected with the bar and revisit again with friends when the bar reopens so that bars gain both existing and new customers.

4.3 Conducting Event Marketing

To keep customers coming back, the decision-makers stated that they use event marketing to promote the bar. The objective of their event marketing is not about making a profit but about customer expansion and brand awareness. All of them mentioned that the profit from organizing the event is very low and does not worth the effort that they put into the event but what they got from it is that they gain new customers and brand awareness. For the event in restaurants and bars business, sponsors from the well-known alcoholic beverages brand which have a lot of followers on their platforms always support the events to promote their brand. When the bar got sponsoring, the brand will promote the event on their page which will generate a win-win situation for both parties because the bar to reach more of their target customers through the brands' pages and the customer of the bars will acknowledge the products of beverage brands. Also, the business will get promoted by the celebrities of the event because the event will be announced on the celebrities or singers' pages which will help expand awareness of the bars. Furthermore, they can use the singer's reputation to attract customers when they launch marketing campaigns on social media. During the event, there are many customers that engage with the bar which makes them have deep knowledge and gain good experiences from the bar, also, they record and share it on their social media such as Instagram and Facebook making the bar can gain more

engagement and increase brand awareness. Therefore, the bar owners and co-founders said that this is one of the most effective ways to promote the bars at the cheapest cost. The interviewee also added that the event will help refresh the bar to a new style that differs from the existing style. Most of them hold at least 1 event quarterly. There is only one that has the event every week.

4.4 Cutting Unnecessary Expense

As mentioned before that SME restaurants and bars have limited resources including the source of funds. The interviewees mentioned that they tried so hard to minimize all possible costs, especially during the lockdown period, and cut off unnecessary costs and expenses that cannot generate income. The interviewees said that there is no income during COVID-19 pandemic because alcoholic beverages are not allowed to sell and promote via an online platform. 3 interviewees said that they tried to adapt to the situation by selling food and non-alcohol drinks. However, their store positioning is not a restaurant, and the customers perceive the business as a bar. At the beginning, the customers came to buy to support the businesses but later, they cannot compete with the restaurants that have a positioning on selling food since the beginning, therefore, the income declined, and they completely closed the store before getting loss. They were also concerned that brand recognition might reduce, and customers might forget them, but they did not put their budget into any marketing activities during that time since the bars were forced to shutter and the customers could not attend the bars. They did not gain income from the investment in the marketing part. All the interviewees agreed in the same way that they tried to minimize costs as much as possible, so they just close the bars for months and did nothing which is better for their business's cash flow. Luckily, there is some support from Social Security Office to help pay staff salaries and the landlord reduced the rental costs. Thereby, it reduced their cost burden and make them maintain the cash flow during that period. After the lockdown was released, some interviewees said that they start doing marketing campaigns and advertisements which still depend on sales. For other expenses, they consider the return and benefit first before making a payment. One of them said if the additional expenses

for a new project have a possibility to make the business get loss, he is not going to take this risk.

4.5 Making Employees Feel Valued and Appreciated

All the interviewees put their staff in high priority to consider. Most of them said, “We are family”. They are very closed and very supportive to their staff. Even though all the interviewees suffered from the burden of expenses during COVID-19, they did not lay off their staff and they only negotiate to reduce salaries for a few months. Apart from money, they also add value to their employees and make them know that they are important to the business.

The hidden boutique bar in Charoenkrung has 3 staff at the bar. The co-founder informed that he did not dismiss his staff when the bar had closed for a year in total. Despite the advertisement can attract customers, the frontmen are the most important factor to impress the customers and can make them come back again since the customers can perceive the great service mind that the employees delivered. The co-founder not only uses the money to motivate his staff but also emotion. He understands that staff at the bar are different from office workers. For example, bartenders need to serve happiness to customers, so the employer must respect their passion for their work. The co-founder focuses on the staff’s self-esteem and makes them proud to be at this bar. He always tell his staff that they make the bar famous and successful which makes his staff proud to work here.

The second interviewee is the bar owner of a funky-looking casual bar near Sanampao Skytrain. There are 8 staff at the restaurants and bars who are 1 cashier, 1 bartender, 3 waiters, and 3 kitchen staff. The owner said that he always talks and drinks with the staff. He is very closed to them and always supports his staff in every situation both work and personal issues, for instance, he is the person who solves the problem when the staff are estranged. When the staff have problems, they will tell him first and they will get through it together.

There are 8 staff at the ancient Chinese-style bar in Ekkamai Shopping Mall. The co-founder mentioned that he treats his staff like a family. He helps their staff find new jobs to gain more income and lends the money to the staff for personal propose

during COVID-19. This can make him gain the trust from staff and make them stay longer. The staff are very appreciative of what he has done because he helps to find jobs and encourages them which makes them feel prouder than giving money.

The fourth interviewee, the manager of a Korean bar on Khaosan road, works with 13 staff which are 4 kitchen staff, 2 frontmen, 5 waiters, and 2 managers. He said that he motivates part-time staff with money since they need money for their daily life such as food, rental expense, and family expense. So that he will use bonuses and reward to motivate them. At the supervisor level, he motivates the staff with a career path to enhance their self-esteem. He always teaches and guides the supervisor to make them learn, improve themselves and see opportunities to grow. Moreover, he always cheers up his staff and makes them feel comfortable working with him.

Money is a mandatory factor to attract staff to work at the bar but positive internal motivation which reflects the staff's value is more important to make them stay longer and contribute to better performance. The interviewees state that it is worth devoting much attention to the staff because they will contribute to better outcomes and pass the happiness to customers.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study of this research paper is to figure out what are the significant business strategies for successful Bangkok SME restaurants and bars that generate major income from the sales of liquor. The writer has conducted qualitative research with open-ended questions to gain more insight from the interviewees and cover as many aspects as possible. The writer interviewed 4 decision makers of the business who are co-founders and managers of SME restaurants and bars that opened before 2021 and earn major sales from alcoholic beverages.

After analyzing the data from the interview, there are 5 essential strategies that successful SME restaurants and bars have done to achieve success. The 5 strategies are 1) Maintaining Strong Brand Identity, 2) Creating A Comfortable Environment and Community, 3) Conducting Event Marketing, 4) Cutting Unnecessary Expenses, and 5) Making Employees Feel Valued and Appreciated.

Maintaining a strong brand identity is important to the business since it makes customers recognize and remember the brand. The unique and strong brand identity can be built by many elements including design, decoration, style, music, mood and tone, and communication. Also, a clear image of target customers can help business owners communicate with them more efficiently. According to the Brand Identity Prism model, there are 6 factors that can help accelerate brand identity which is similar to some factors found in this paper. When these elements are conducted together with consistency, it makes the businesses get into the mind of the customers.

Based on the literature reviews, customer satisfaction and store atmosphere have a positive relationship with the revisit intention which is relevant to the strategy in this paper to make customers keep coming back. To make the customers visit the bar again, creating a comfortable environment and community is needed. The atmosphere is one of the factors that the customers consider for eating out and the comfortable

environment which makes the customer feel like home is the one that can attract customers to come more often. Also, personal connection can be associated with the support of the business as mentioned in literature reviews so that the community contributed by the staff will create a bond with customers in which can make them come to support the business more.

Conducting event marketing is another strategy to expand the customer base and increase brand awareness. There is a lot of value that can be gained after the events. The sharing by the attendees on their social media is an effective way to increase brand awareness and reach a lot of people without advertising. The singers and celebrities of the event are the magnet factor to attract new customers to visit the bars. Moreover, the business will be promoted by sponsors of alcoholic beverages at the event. In one event, there are many benefits from event attendees, celebrities, and sponsor brands.

For SME businesses with limited resources, good financial planning is required to make the business run smoothly without problems. The shortage of cash flow is terrible for the business so cutting unnecessary expenses will help to maintain cash flow and avoid loss. There might be additional expenses to create new projects or new opportunities, but the cash flow is more important so that the payment will not occur if it does not generate income.

Lastly, the staff is the most important thing for this kind of business so the owners or employers should make subordinates feel valued and appreciated. Only money is not enough to make them feel valued so the owners should motivate them with emotional, self-esteem, and career paths rather than money. When staff feel that they are important to the business, they will be proud, and it will make them contribute more to work and productivity.

5.2 Limitation in the Scope of Study

There are only 4 successful SME restaurants and bars in Bangkok that were interviewed for this study which are only a small portion of entrepreneurs in this industry. There are 5 important strategies identified in this research, but if there are more time and more SME restaurants and bars were available for interview, there may be

more techniques that might contribute to the success of business SME restaurants and bars in Bangkok.

5.3 Recommendations

As mentioned, there are 5 strategies that successful SME restaurants and bars use in common, and it would be great for the readers or the bar owners to consider these strategies. The entrepreneur should prepare all the business components from the beginning of the business plan such as the design, decoration, music, style, character, mood, and tone to differentiate from competitors and make them align in the same direction, also, the owner should focus on maintaining the business identity during the business operation. All communication and materials should be conducted under the brand character to make the customers recognize the brand. For the marketing part, the owners should consider attracting new customers by organizing events quarterly. Moreover, existing customers should be grabbed by a comfortable environment and community to increase the frequency of bar visits. Employees should be trained to communicate and deliver this atmosphere to customers, for instance, basic manners, communication skills, and customer service skills. To contribute the best service, the owners should understand and support the staff who are the customer contact point. The staff should be treated well, and the owners should motivate them through both internal and external forces such as giving rewards and compliments, enhancing their self-esteem and communicating how they and their jobs are important. Lastly, unnecessary expenses should be removed to maintain the cash flow so that the money can be used for more profitable opportunities.

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