WHAT DO FOOD ENTREPRENEURS DO TO RUN THEIR BUSINESSES ON DELIVERY PLATFORMS SUCCESSFULLY?

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ABSTRACT

The food delivery industry has seen tremendous growth in recent years, with more consumers turning to online platforms to order food for delivery. In this context, food entrepreneurs must develop effective strategies to compete and succeed in this highly competitive market. This study aims to explore the strategies that food entrepreneurs use to run their businesses successfully on delivery platforms.

Through semi-structured interviews with eight food entrepreneurs operating on popular delivery platforms, this research identifies several key strategies that contribute to success in this market. These include optimizing menu offerings to cater to delivery customers, leveraging technology to manage orders and inventory, and focusing on building a strong brand identity through marketing and customer engagement.

The findings of this study have significant implications for entrepreneurs looking to enter the food delivery industry and for established businesses seeking to improve their performance on delivery platforms. However, further research can explore the effectiveness of specific marketing strategies on customer engagement and loyalty, as well as the impact of delivery platform commissions on the profitability of food businesses.

KEY WORDS: Food entrepreneurship / Delivery platforms / Business Success

38 pages

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the background of this research (1.1), the problem statement (1.2), the research objectives (1.3), and the expected benefits (1.4).

1.1 Research Background

The food business is one of the most successful and profitable businesses in the world including Thailand where you can find food or beverages almost everywhere whether in the malls, office buildings, or along the streets. As the data showed that there were roughly 530 thousand new restaurants established in 2020 in Thailand. While there were approximately 111,370 street food enterprises in Thailand, with a small increase from the preceding year. During this same period, the volume of such businesses in Thailand experienced a growth rate of four percent (Statista, 2022).

Food has evolved into a cultural and social experience, beyond just being a source of nutrition. It has become a way for people to express their creativity, connect with others, and explore new cultures and flavors. Eating has become a significant part of everyday life, with a thriving food industry, cooking shows, and social media platforms dedicated to food. People now seek out new and unique dining experiences and take pleasure in sharing meals with loved ones. Food has become much more than just fuel for our bodies. Food become valuable for consumers in many aspects. People nowadays go to a restaurant not just for having food but also seeking for new experiences. Many restaurants now offer unique and exciting dining experiences that go beyond just good food, such as immersive themes, innovative menu items, and unusual dining settings. For example, some restaurants offer “Chef's Table" experiences, where diners can sit at a special table in the kitchen and watch the chef prepare and serve the food.

However, the Internet and technologies have changed consumer behavior in terms of eating food. While they still want to enjoy the experience offered by different restaurants, consumers can order food from anywhere without having to commute by themselves with the help of online delivery platforms such as Grab Food, Line Man, Shopee Food, and Robinhood. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has come to emphasize the fact that consumers started to change their eating behavior in a long run. Government policies, lockdowns, and outbreaks have encouraged consumers to order food from online delivery platforms to fulfill their needs. In consequence, restaurants have to adapt themselves, quickly adopt online platforms, and come up with a strong strategy in order to survive.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Due to the change in consumer behaviors where the number of people ordering food via delivery applications is increasing, the number of cloud kitchens or ghost restaurants is also increasing significantly, especially the small ones. However, not a lot of small food and beverage businesses can survive in this competitive market since there are a lot of similar restaurants available on the platforms while customers can also choose to buy from any restaurant they want. Therefore, it is quite challenging for food entrepreneurs to develop their strategy to win over competitors. This research wants to explore the business model of a successful food business as well as the common characteristics that a great food entrepreneur should have.

1.3 Objectives

The researcher has several objectives for this study, which are as follows:

- To find out what are common characteristics that food and beverages entrepreneurs should have in order to successfully run their food businesses.
- To identify the obstacles that the restaurant will face when opening an online store on delivery platforms.

- To learn how entrepreneurs come up with their business ideas and how they overcome and sustain each stage of the business.
- To learn all the processes from the entrepreneur to open a new restaurant starting from the front end to the back end (for example, kitchen management, inventory management, financial management, marketing, and, branding, etc.).

1.4 Expected Benefits

The expected outcome of this research is to provide a guideline for future entrepreneurs who wants to start their own food business as well as current food business owners who wish to develop and sustain their restaurant. This research will secure the future and current food entrepreneurs with checklists to start their own food businesses.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will discuss a review of the literature on the critical areas of this research. The chapter provides a clearer understanding of a subject related to the research topic including SMEs in the food industry (2.1), the change in consumer behavior (2.2), what is an online delivery service (2.3), ghost restaurants and cloud kitchens (2.4), the importance of Marketing in the food business (2.5), and things to be considered before starting a food business (2.6).

2.1 SMEs in the Food Industry

According to European Commission (2018), SMEs or Small and Medium-sized Enterprises are businesses that normally have fewer employees and have lesser revenue when compared to larger corporations. SMEs play a crucial role in the food industry because they account for a significant portion of food businesses and contribute to economic growth as well as job creation. Moreover, SMEs can also bring innovations, competition, and diversity to the market, and can be more agile and responsive to changes in the market compared to larger corporations (European Commission, 2018).

In addition, the characteristics of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises as mentioned in Thailand's Ministerial Regulations on the Designation of the Characteristics of Small and Medium Enterprises, 2019, stated that Small enterprises are service providers, retailers, and wholesalers businesses that can hire a maximum of 30 employees with revenue that does not exceed 50 million baht. While medium enterprises in the same industry are the enterprises that hire more than 30 but less than 100 employees and can generate annual revenue of more than 50 million baht but not more than 300 million baht.

Considering the environment of food SMEs in Thailand, according to the research, the number of new restaurants established in the first nine months of the year

2022 was equal to 2,288 restaurants which was considered 60% higher than in 2021 when compared to the same period of time. This is due to the recovery of Thailand's economy from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the relaxing of measures related to the pandemic, according to the Business Analysis Report made by the Department of Business Development, Ministry of Commerce, 2022.

2.2 The Change in Consumer Behavior

It is inevitable to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has made a severe impact on the food industry. Many restaurants could not manage to survive due to many rounds of lockdowns and the changes in consumer behavior. However, the situation also brought a new phenomenon where many businesses established a new business model for theirsurvival since consumers changed their way of buying food. According to research from Nielsen, 2020, the COVID-19 situation encouraged consumers to eat at home more than outside at restaurants because people are aware of the pandemic as well as the social distancing policy that restrains people from eating outside. While eating at home does not mean that people have to cook by themselves but also order from delivery services. With all of the policies and concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the research says that more than 5,000 Asian consumers are concerned about food safety where they tend to prioritize healthy food and prefer to consume local food products over imported ones, stated in Mckinsey research by Dymfke et al., 2020.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 outbreak not only changes the eating behavior of consumers but also the way people order food. It can be obviously seen that people are purchasing food from online delivery platforms more than before. Therefore, the direction of food consumption in Thailand will be a long-last shift where consumers are transforming from eating outside to ordering food from online platforms. Consequently, every SME restaurant faces the challenge of adapting its strategies according to the new normal trends. While also focusing on what customers are looking for, such as healthy food and local food products.

2.3 What is an Online Delivery Service?

An online delivery platform is a digital platform that enables customers to order food online and have it delivered to their door. This can include both restaurants and other food businesses, such as grocery stores, supermarkets, and bakeries. The platform connects customers with food businesses offering delivery services and facilitates the ordering and delivery process. Hence, mobile food ordering applications allow users to access restaurants, view their menus, order, and make a payment without having to interact with the restaurant staff, Wang et al., 2019.

In addition to providing convenience and choice, online delivery platforms offer benefits for food businesses, including increased visibility, a more extensive customer base, and the ability to reach new customers through targeted marketing and advertising campaigns. This has helped many food businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to grow and expand their customer base, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Thailand, online delivery platforms have become increasingly popular in recent years, with many people using these platforms to order food for home delivery. Some of the most popular online delivery platforms in Thailand include Foodpanda, GrabFood, Line Man, Robinhood, and Lalamove. These platforms offer a wide range of food options, from local Thai cuisine to international dishes, and allow customers to order food from their favorite restaurants or food businesses with just a few clicks. It cannot be denied that these online delivery platforms play a significant role in the

growth of Thailand's food-delivery business. The research from Kasikorn Research Center (2018) shows that the average growth rate of the food-delivery business in Thailand was 10% from 2014 to 2018. While it is expected to grow by 13.45% annually (CAGR 2023-2027) with a projected market volume of US$6.58bn by 2027, according to Statista market forecast (2022).

2.4 Ghost Restaurants and Cloud Kitchens

The change in consumers' behavior, where they tend to purchase their food via online delivery platforms more than before, creates an opportunity for many food entrepreneurs to adopt the business model called a ghost restaurant. A ghost restaurant is a restaurant that operates solely as an online food delivery service and does not have a physical dining space for customers. The term ghost restaurant was first used in the early 2010s and refers to the fact that these businesses often have no storefront or physical presence and exist only in the digital world (Kandasamy, 2022).

Moreover, the rise of ghost restaurants in Thailand is a recent trend in the food industry, driven by the growth of online food delivery services such as Grab Food and Line Man (Jitpleecheep, 2021). This trend has been particularly prevalent in Bangkok, where high rental costs and traffic congestion make it challenging for traditional restaurants to operate effectively.

Ghost restaurants allow food entrepreneurs to focus on delivering food through online platforms without having to worry about the costs and operational challenges of maintaining a physical dining space (Bangkok Post, 2020). They also allow for greater flexibility and scalability, as ghost restaurants can be operated from a shared commercial kitchen space, or even from a home kitchen, with the ability to reach a large customer base through food delivery services. This trend has also been fueled by the growing demand for food delivery services in Thailand, as more people turn to online platforms for their meals due to busy work schedules and the convenience of having food delivered to their doorstep (The ASEAN Post, 2021).

The rise of ghost restaurants in Thailand is a response to the growth of online food delivery services and the changing needs of consumers. This trend is expected to continue as food entrepreneurs seek new and innovative ways to reach

customers and meet the growing demand for food delivery services in Thailand (The ASEAN Post, 2021). Many food delivery platforms in Thailand, including Line Man (see figure 2.1), have started to incorporate cloud kitchens or ghost restaurants that offer a variety of cuisine options from different popular restaurants. These cloud kitchens are essentially commercial kitchens that operate exclusively for food delivery and takeout orders, without the need for a physical restaurant space.

Apart from the cloud kitchen from delivery platforms, many restaurant chains in Thailand, including ZEN Group, have also started to establish new ghost restaurant brands. For example, Khiang (figure 2.2) is a new ghost restaurant brand under ZEN group that sell cooked -to-order dish (see figure 2.3 for an example of dishes served at Khiang restaurant).

Figure 2.1 A cloud kitchen established by delivery platform, Line Man, that incorporates many famous restaurants.

Figure 2.2 Khiang, one of the most famous ghost restaurants under ZEN group.

Figure 2.3 Example of food served at Khiang

2.5 The Importance of Marketing in the Food Business

According to “Principles of Marketing" (Kotler et al., 1980) marketing is a crucial aspect of any business, including food businesses. It also plays a vital role in the success of any brand. Marketing is the process of creating value for customers as well as building strong relationships. Moreover, effective marketing helps organizations to understand their customers' needs and develop products and services that meet those needs. Furthermore, marketing is also important for building brand awareness and creating a positive image for an organization. A strong brand can help to differentiate from competitors while also increasing customer loyalty as well. This allows organizations to build trust and credibility with their customers, which is essential for building strong relationships.

Effective marketing also helps organizations to reach new customers and increase sales. Organizations can use various marketing tools, such as advertising, sales promotions, public relations, and personal selling, to reach a wider audience and generate more sales. In addition, it helps brands to measure their success and make informed decisions about future marketing efforts. By tracking sales and customer feedback, organizations can determine the effectiveness of their marketing efforts and make adjustments as needed.

Therefore, marketing is an essential aspect of any business and plays a crucial role in the success of an organization. Great marketing helps businesses to

understand their customers' needs, build strong relationships with customers, increase brand awareness, reach new customers, and measure their success. By investing in marketing efforts, brands can ensure their long-term success and growth.

2.6 Things to be Considered Before Starting a Food Business

The COVID-19 pandemic has given a big learning lesson for all entrepreneurs, including food service entrepreneurs. The owner must be well-prepared since an unfortunate event can always happen without warning. Therefore, there must be certain characteristics that food entrepreneurs must be equipped with in order to manage their businesses successfully. According to Furgison, 2019, the owner needs to understand that starting a business requires significant capital investment and ongoing operational costs. They must be on hand to address any issues that arise and be prepared to provide constant support. While a clear business plan is also needed before launching their food business. The plan should also include market positioning, operations, and feasibility for future growth.

Furthermore, the workforce also plays a crucial role in a successful business. Putting the right employees at the right job is essential, especially when the company is still small and financial resources are limited. Providing staff with training materials, recipes, and other resources is important to ensure a great start. The owner must also have a clear understanding of the necessary startup costs and have adequate funds to cover equipment, expenses, and personal bills for the first six months. They should be prepared for the business to have a negative yield during this time. Lastly, in order to minimize risks, the owner should have a line of credit in place to cover unexpected expenses. Regularly monitoring food costs, inventory, and waste can help optimize the business and reduce losses (Furgison, 2019).

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, we will discuss the details of the method used in this research to gain the needed data as well as the brief information about businesses of the participants and interview questions. The chapter will start with introduction followed by the discussion of data analysis (3.1), the discussion of interviewees (3.2), and lastly, the interview questions (3.3).

This research will adopt the qualitative research method in which the data received will be from a semi-structured interview with eight participants who are the owners or managers of restaurants that also sell food via delivery platforms. The interview with the owner or restaurant managers will give information from direct experiences they have gained through each stage of their business. Moreover, the semi-structured interview with open-ended questions allows the interviewees to speak about their own specialization. At the same time, the interviewer will also be able to have an in-depth exploration of the candidate's experiences and be able to follow up on specific points or ask additional questions as needed. During the interview session, the interviewees will be asked to tell their stories of how they started their restaurant business, how they can manage to adopt the online delivery platforms, and how they plan to sustain their business in the future. Moreover, the interviewer will explain the objective of this research as well as the scope of the interview to the participants before the interview session starts.

3.1 Data Analysis

Textual analysis is a method used in this study to analyze the received data. The researcher will record the voice during the interview. Once all the interviews are done, the data collected will be transcribed. Then, the researcher will do an analysis of the information extracted and collect the best information for the study.

3.2 Interviewees

There are eight interviewees who are the owners of restaurants, cafes, and bakery shops who operate their businesses both online and offline. See table 3.1 for a brief explanation of businesses of participants. Participants were assured that their identity would remain anonymous throughout the study, and their personal information as well as their businesses would not be shared with anyone outside. The table below shows lists of participants and their roles in the businesses.

Table 3.1 The list of participants

Participant No.	Role	Business Brief
1	Owner	Café and bakery shop that sells both on the delivery platforms and at the store.
2	Owner	Korean-style bakery business that started selling on the owner's personal social media and then expanded to a kiosk store and joined the delivery platforms.
3	Owner	Café and bakery shop that is decorated in a Scandinavian style aiming for customers to check-in at the café but also offer a takeaway option and is available on delivery platforms.
4	Owner	Congee restaurant that offers both dine-in and takeaway options also on delivery platforms.
5	Owner	Seafood restaurant that started selling on the online marketplace (Facebook group) and expanded to sell their franchise. There are currently eighteen branches of this restaurant, all of which only offer a takeaway option to order on the online delivery platforms.

Table 3.1 The list of participants (cont.)

Participant No.	Role	Business Brief
6	Owner	Craft beer bar and restaurant that sells a variety of beer and food. The bar was first operated during the lockdowns, making them focus on selling food initially. The bar is planning to join the delivery platforms soon in order to expand their sales channel and touchpoint.
7	Owner	Authentic Indian restaurant that currently has four branches. The restaurant aims to provide experience for customers who want to try Indian food; available for both dine-in and delivery.
8	Owner	The owner of two restaurant franchises including bar-b-q and Chinese hot pot restaurants.

3.3 Interview Questions

The researcher will ask a series of open-ended questions about the research topic during the semi-structured interview. The open-ended question allows both the interviewer and the interviewee to go into greater detail. Participants are not limited in their responses, and the researcher is free to cue and probe the interviewee for more information (Mathers et al., 1998).

A list of interview questions will be prepared ahead of time under the area of the research topic. In this case, the questions will be under the topic of restaurant management which the questions will be as follows.

1. Setting up a business:

1.1. What is your inspiration to start this food business?

1.2. How long has this business been operated?

1.3. What are the processes before launching?

1.4. What are some of the difficulties you have been facing when starting the business?

2. Supply Chain:

2.1. Can you share the process of sourcing ingredients?

2.2. How do you manage and store the ingredients? Is there anything that needs to be especially concerned?

2.3. Can you explain how you can plan for the number of ingredients needed per day?

3. Restaurant and Kitchen Management:

3.1. Can you explain how's your restaurant look like? Is it a ghost restaurant?

3.2. Could you explain how you manage the space of your restaurant?

3.3. How important is it to have a dine-in space?

3.4. What systems or technologies do you use to help operate within the restaurant?

3.5. In case you have many branches of restaurants, how will you manage and control the quality of food and service?

4. The Delivery Platforms:

4.1. How many delivery platforms do you join?

4.2. How do you manage when there are both orders from the physical store and from the online platforms?

4.3. How do you manage when it's prime time (when people order food at the same time)?

5. Staff:

5.1. How do you search for staff in each role?

5.2. How do you train your staff before starting their jobs?

5.3. How to maintain the staff motivation and make sure they will give the best service while you're not at the store?

5.4. Are there any issues that you think it's hard to be solved?

6. Administration works and Financial:

6.1. How to legally open a food business? What are the steps and document works that need to be done?

6.2. How do you estimate the cost and do pricing?

6.3. How do you plan for budgeting in each operation?

7. Marketing and branding:

7.1. What are your marketing strategies?

7.2. Do you think branding is important?

7.3. Can you share the branding of your business?

8. The Consumers:

8.1. Who are your main target consumers?

8.2. How did you identify your target group?

9. Others:

9.1. What are the factors that cause restaurants to fail?

9.2. Do you have any suggestions for people who want to be food entrepreneurs? Will you recommend people invest in this industry?

9.3. Do food trends such as healthy or organic food affect your business?

CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis conducted using semi-structured interviews in the context of the research questions and objectives outlined in the prior chapters. The chapter will be discussed based on the analysis of the findings along with data gained from participants regarding each interview question as well as how the findings from the semi-structured interviews can contribute to the broader understanding of the research topic. The outline for this chapter will begin with first, setting up a business (4.1), supply chain (4.2), Restaurant Management (4.3), the delivery platforms (4.4), staff management (4.5), administration works and finances (4.6), marketing and brand (4.7), and lastly, the consumers (4.8).

4.1 Setting up a business

Starting a new food business requires a lot of processes. Making a decision on which kind of restaurant or which type of food the restaurant will sell is also a crucial step for entrepreneurs. Regarding this aspect, each entrepreneur has different inspirations and interests in starting their businesses. Many bakery shops and cafe owners start their businesses based on their hobby or favorable in baking bakery products.

The owner of a beverage and bakery shop mentioned that her motivation was the love of the father in making bakery items.

"At that time my dad was planning on finding something to do after his retirement. A coffee and bakery shop were the choice because my dad knew that he liked baking. So, he took additional baking classes to improve his skills and at that time I also began to learn how to make coffee and drinks. That was the starting point of my cafe," stated Participant No. 1, during an interview session.

Similarly, Participant No.3 who is also the owner of a café and bakery shop told that the beginning of this cafe came from her passion and her love of baking and making bakery items as well.

"I graduated from the faculty of Veterinary Science and had been working as a veterinarian for several years. I personally like to make desserts and also I am a person who always bakes as a hobby. So, after I burnout from being a veterinarian, I decided to start my cafe business with encouragement and support from my partner."

It can be seen that dreams and passion for something are the reason why many food entrepreneurs start their own businesses. Apart from the love of baking and cooking, some food entrepreneurs also started their businesses from the changes in their lives. Participant No.2, the owner of Korean-style dessert lost his job to the COVID-19 outbreak. This incident in his life inspired him to start his own bakery business.

"Previously I was a flight attendant in one airline. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic attacked and I lost my job. I decided to start a Korean-style dessert shop in which I made all the desserts on my own."

While some entrepreneurs see an opportunity for a business to grow in an unexpected incident like COVID-19. Participant No.5 who is the owner of seafood restaurant also started their food business during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

"At that time, people were facing difficult situations. Restaurants, department stores, and many places were closed. To help each other, Facebook pages such as Chula Marketplace were created and allowed everyone to post their products and sell online within this group. I saw an opportunity, so I decided to sell ready-to-eat seafood rice and it was successful."

Moreover, some entrepreneurs also see an opportunity in the rising trends. Participant No.8 who came up with the bar-b-q franchise because of the recent trend that Thai people love to have Thai-style bar-b-q or known as Moo Krata when they gather with friends and family.

"I opened this restaurant for two years already, the reason why I choose to open Moo Krata restaurant is because I see that Moo Krata is popular among Thai people. Thai people they love eating pork bar-b-q with friends or family both at home and at the restaurant."

While entrepreneurs may have different passions and motivations for starting their businesses, they all share a common goal of becoming successful business owners. They want to create a product or service that people need or want, build a strong customer base, and generate profits. However, starting a new business is not easy. These entrepreneurs also faced difficulties along the way. Before the restaurants were established, the owners have gone through a series of trials and errors.

"I baked a lot and many times I have to throw the failed one away before I can get the final recipe that everyone (her friends and family) agrees is delicious," said Participant No.3. *"Packing food for delivery is also a challenging point. I have to make sure that the food and drinks are well-packed and will be arrived in a good condition because the food is delivered by motorcycle and we cannot know how well the riders will take care of our products. That's why I also pay attention to packaging as well,"* she added.

"My life completely changed, from being a full-time office worker to a restaurant owner. In the beginning, I have to wake up at 4 a.m. every day to seek the best ingredients at the market all on my own," Participant No.4, the owner of Congee restaurant, shared when she was asked about the difficulties she had gone through before starting her food business.

"Since I sell seafood via online delivery platforms, it is quite challenging on how to keep the seafood fresh all the time in order to make sure that my food will arrive to customers in a good condition. I tested a lot with different transportation," Participant No.5

Making mistakes is often an inevitable part of the entrepreneurial journey. Many successful entrepreneurs have experienced failures or setbacks early on in their careers. However, these mistakes can also provide valuable learning opportunities that help entrepreneurs refine their strategies and improve their businesses over time.

4.2 Supply Chain

A well-managed supply chain is crucial for any food business, especially those that sell in delivery platforms. A supply chain refers to the processes and activities involved in moving a product from the supplier to the customer. In the context of food

businesses, this includes sourcing ingredients, manufacturing, packaging, and delivering the product. By effectively managing their supply chain, small food businesses can ensure that they have the right ingredients and supplies on hand, that their products are manufactured and packaged efficiently, and that they are delivered to customers in a timely and cost-effective manner. A well-managed supply chain can help small food businesses reduce costs, improve quality control, and increase customer satisfaction. Additionally, it can help them stay competitive in a crowded market by enabling them to offer a wider variety of products and better respond to customer demands.

Participant No.4 also share her own story about supply sourcing as well. *"As an entrepreneur, I prioritized the quality of my food the most. I want to make sure that all the ingredients are the best ones. So, in the beginning, I went to Klong Toey market on my own every day. Talk with the sellers, and find the best suppliers to ensure that I'll get the best quality at an acceptable price. After I found each of them then I asked for their contact and hired a regular transporter without going to the market by myself."*

Similarly, Participant No.6, the owner of a craft beer bar and restaurant, also went to the market on her own every morning to find the best raw ingredients and then get their contact. Nonetheless, some food businesses that have many branches or have other franchises, have quite different supply chain models.

Moreover, the owner of seafood restaurant also shared her story about how she sources ingredients, *"I started by ordering seafood products from my hometown in the Southern part of Thailand. Once the demand increase, I have to seek more seafood from other sources as well such as in the Eastern part like Rayong or Chantraburi. There are also concerns about the season as well, that's also why I have to search for raw materials from different parts of the country.*"

Owners search for suppliers online and then went to meet them to make sure that the seafood meets the standard and quality. In addition to this case of a seafood restaurant, transportation is another factor that can't be overlooked since the customers are expected to receive fresh and great quality seafood. This restaurant uses a temperature-controlled truck to transport their ingredients both from the suppliers and to their franchisees.

Furthermore, some restaurants may need special ingredients that have to import from overseas. As mentioned by the owner of an Indian restaurant, she has to order some herbs and spices directly from India as she wants to the customers to experience the most original Indian food.

Considering on how to estimate the amount of ingredients needed daily, every entrepreneur mentioned the same that it was quite challenging to make an estimation during the early period of the restaurants. Once the restaurants have operated for some time, then they can see the pattern and can plan for buying ingredients better. However, technology and system like POS or Point of Sale can greatly help since it keeps all the data, including how much each item sold per day and which items can sell a lot on what days.

4.3 Restaurant Management

Proper space management in a restaurant is crucial to ensure optimal utilization of available space. Restaurants need to be designed to accommodate customers while also providing enough space for movement and comfort. Efficient space management can also help to reduce overhead costs by minimizing wasted space and increasing the seating capacity.

"At Freja cafe, we have plenty of space available for the customer to sit in. With decoration in Scandinavian design to attract customers. We really pay attention to the designs of the dine-in space because it is our selling point," Participant No.3.

However, for ghost restaurants, designing a dine-in space is a thing that the owner may not have to worry about too much, but proper space management is still important for ghost restaurants, as they need to efficiently use the kitchen space to ensure smooth operations and timely delivery of food.

"As my restaurant is a ghost restaurant, dine-space is not what we really put much effort in. We then focus more on the kitchen area. Good kitchen management can help us operate the orders more efficiently. When there are many orders coming at the same time, a well-designed and organized kitchen allows for maximum efficiency in food preparation and cooking.," Participant No.5.

Moreover, technology like POS is also a system that many entrepreneurs use to help manage their restaurants both at the storefront and at online delivery platforms. With a POS system, restaurant owners and managers can easily track sales and inventory in real-time, view sales reports, monitor employee performance, and manage customer orders and payments.

4.4 The Delivery Platforms

For restaurants that also offer dine-in, joining a food delivery platform can offer several benefits, including increased visibility, convenience for customers, a competitive advantage, increased revenue, and access to technical support.

"Having my restaurant appear in these delivery applications is essential. At my cafe, the proportion of orders from online applications versus orders from the store is 50/50. So, it can't be denied that the orders from delivery platforms are also where my main revenue comes from," Participant No.1.

"Joining these delivery platforms is like building an online storefront. It helps reach a wider audience and increase restaurant visibility. These platforms have a large customer base and can help us attract new customers who may not have discovered my restaurant yet. For me, in this era, I think restaurants should have an online store in delivery platforms," Participant No.4.

Even though the restaurants will have to pay around 30% of their sales as a GP (Gross Profit) when joining these delivery platforms. However, joining the platforms is still a crucial thing. To cope with this concern, restaurants and cafes have to increase the price of each item in applications in order to still make a profit.

"Although the prices when ordering via delivery applications are higher than buying at the store, it is acceptable for my customers. They said that ordering from the apps is more convenient because sometimes they don't want to go out. While ordering online saves more time and uses less effort," Participant No.1.

However, there are also some trade-offs to having an online store in the delivery platforms. Participant No. 1, 4, and 7 mentioned that they receive less profit from the delivery applications than from the physical store. This is because they do not want to increase the price to be too high. In addition, another challenge in joining these

platforms is competitiveness. There are tons of store openings on these platforms while some sell the same products. Making the restaurant appear in the apps is also a challenge.

"I have to join the campaigns in order to increase my restaurant visibility in those apps and the restaurants have to support sales promotions by themselves. This makes me get even less profit from the delivery apps. I still have to do it in order to make my customers satisfied," Participant No.4.

4.5 Staff Management

Effective staff management can help restaurants improve their overall efficiency, productivity, and customer service, leading to increased customer satisfaction as well as revenue. Also, it is undeniable to say that finding a suitable employee is another challenging thing for restaurant owners, especially for a new restaurant owner who has less experience in this field.

"I changed employees at the restaurant frequently during the beginning period. There were many problems, some employees did not work as well as they should have, some had personal issues, and some argued with each other. I think hiring employees was the most problematic thing that a business owner will face. However, as I kept going, we began to find the right path. I had criteria in mind for selecting employees,"

Participant No.1.

"Where we are looking for staff is also important for a restaurant to recruit suitable employees. I used to look for staff in one Facebook group and it does not work well for me. I am looking for a person who is also ready to learn something new and is willing to improve themselves which some people are not like that. I hire many different people until I can find the right place to recruit the right person," Participant No.6.

Apart from recruiting the right people, setting up a good working environment and system is also crucial. A well-designed system can help ensure that all aspects of the restaurant, from the kitchen to the front of the restaurant, are running smoothly and efficiently.

"Every branch of my restaurant will have one Thai manager who will take responsibility for training the staff, especially those who will have to deal directly with customers. All of them will be trained to know the detail of the dishes we serve and have a clear role in what they have to do. Luckily, I found a suitable restaurant manager for each branch," said the Indian restaurant owner.

Moreover, creating a positive work environment is also essential for retaining employees and building a strong team. Many entrepreneurs offer free accommodations and food for their staff as well. Participant No.4 and Participant No.7 have similar characteristics as entrepreneurs. Both of them really pay attention to the benefits that the staff will get.

"I try to treat them as a family to create a great environment while working. I offer every staff a free accommodation near a restaurant and a free meal as well. This is because I believe that if I treat them well, they will work well for me too," stated Participant No.7.

4.6 Administration Works and Finances

Opening a restaurant legally is essential for the success and sustainability of the business. While some restaurants may need the licenses and permits that may be required to operate a restaurant legally including a business license, food service permit, liquor license (if serving alcohol), and zoning permit.

"As I opened a bar and restaurant that also sell alcohol, I have to ask for a license to sell alcohol in addition to the Commercial Registration Certificate," Participant No.6.

To open a restaurant legally, several steps need to be taken. This includes registering the business with the appropriate local, state, and federal agencies, obtaining the necessary licenses and permits, and complying with health and safety regulations.

"I registered as a company and then ask for a permit to operate a restaurant business for each branch," added Participant No.7.

Apart from the license and permit that the owners have to complete before operating their restaurant. There are also other concerns that owners have to study and keep in mind.

"Signs and billboards in front of the store need to be done in accordance with the law as well. In Thailand, different types of signs pay taxes at different rates. Sign with no Thai spelling or have Thai spelling below will have to pay more," Participant No.3.

Furthermore, finances are also incredibly important for food businesses, as they can greatly impact the success or failure of the business. Food entrepreneurs should also have a solid understanding of finance to effectively manage the financial aspects. In addition, pricing is also a critical aspect of running a food business. It's important to consider factors such as food cost, labor cost, overhead cost, market demand, menu positioning, and sales strategy when setting prices to ensure that you are making a profit and staying competitive in the market.

"When I calculate the food cost and set the price of the food, I measured the amount of each ingredient used per one serve and then set the selling price. Moreover, since I also sell on delivery platforms, I have to set another pricing for selling on those platforms too," participant No.8.

4.7 Marketing and branding

It can't be denied that marketing and branding are also important elements for restaurants. Effective marketing can help to attract new customers, increase sales, and build a strong brand identity. To promote the restaurant's products and services, marketing can also help to build relationships with customers and foster a sense of community.

"I used Facebook and Instagram to communicate and keep in touch with my customers. I think this is a useful tool to keep my restaurant presenting in my customer's feeds when they scroll on their social media," Participant No.6.

With marketing, restaurants can increase their visibility, attract new customers, and build a loyal customer base that will return to the restaurant time and time again, especially through social media marketing. Social media content is a powerful tool for restaurants to build their awareness and gain more sales,

"In the early stages of opening my cafe, there were various review pages that came to review and so content at my cafe, which was a highly successful marketing strategy. Many people came to the restaurant and tried the food a lot," Participant No.3.

Apart from online marketing, offline store or physical store is still important too. Many entrepreneurs including participant No.2 and participant No.5 build awareness for their restaurants by joining food festivals and creating kiosks to sell their products. However, participant No.5 has a little different approach.

"Since now I shifted our business to sell franchises, I have my connections and whenever there is a food festival, I will tell my franchisees who live in a particular area and ask if they want to join the festival," mentioned by Participant No.5.

4.8 The Consumers

Defining and understanding the target customer is an undeniably critical aspect of running a successful restaurant business. According to participant No.5 who is the owner of a bar and restaurant business also agrees on this point. She mentioned, *"entrepreneurs need to have a clear understanding of the demographic and psychographic characteristics of their target customers in order to develop effective marketing strategies and provide a dining experience that meets their needs and expectations."* In this case, her restaurant targets people who like to experience a bar and taste different Thai craft beers; therefore, she designed her bar to serve this group of people.

The owner seafood restaurant also agrees with the point that the restaurant has to understand customers. She added, *"we need to know the behaviors of our target customers as well as the changing trends. Back at the time when I started this business, it was during COVID-19, I knew that people will have to rely on delivery platforms. So, I jump into this business and go do directly to where my customers will be."*

Moreover, in addition to this, the café owner also worked hard in order to design their cafe to meet with target customers' needs. Participant No.3 added, *"our target group is quite clear which is those people who like to visit a cafe, take pictures and share on their social media. So, we designed our cafe in Scandinavian style to attract this group of people. However, we still find our uniqueness in terms of bakery and beverage items to*

make the customers revisit our cafe since right now many people come to Freja only one time but never come back."

Unlike the Congee restaurant, the owner mentioned that many of her customers are repeat customers who often order her food or dine-in at her restaurant. *"Many of them are the elders who asked for me when I was not at the restaurant because I treated them like a person in my family when they visited."*

Therefore, ultimately, by defining and understanding the target customer, entrepreneurs can create a dining experience that resonates with their customers and helps them build a loyal customer base. This can lead to increased sales, positive word-of-mouth, and a strong reputation in the community.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This chapter will provide a summary of the key findings discussed in the previous chapter as well as reflecting on the significance of the study, and its contribution to the broader field of study. The chapter will begin with a research's summary (5.1), managerial recommendations (5.2) and limitations of the study (5.3).

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study aimed to investigate what food entrepreneurs do to run their businesses successfully both on delivery platforms and at the physical store. Through a comprehensive literature review and a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews, this study found that food entrepreneurs who succeed on delivery platforms have certain characteristics and behaviors contributing to their success. Starting a restaurant or food business requires a lot of processes, such as making a decision on which kind of restaurant or type of food the restaurant will sell. All entrepreneurs have different passions and motivations for starting their own restaurants, but all of them share a common goal of becoming successful business owners. Moreover, starting a new business can be difficult, as the owners had gone through a series of trials and errors before the restaurants were established.

A supply chain is essential for food businesses, especially those that sell in delivery platforms. It involves sourcing ingredients, manufacturing, packaging, and delivering the product. A well-managed supply chain can help small food businesses reduce costs, improve quality control, and increase customer satisfaction. An example of this is given of an entrepreneur who went to the Klong Toey market on their own and searched for the best suppliers for the best quality product at an acceptable price. Furthermore, food businesses that have many branches or have other franchises have different supply chain models. Some of them have central kitchens where they pre-

cooked some ingredients and deliver them to other branches. This is to control the taste and quality of food that will be served to customers. Additionally, technology and systems like POS or Point of Sale can help estimate the number of ingredients and the amount that the restaurants have to buy each day as it keeps all the data, including how much each item sold per day and which items can sell a lot on what days.

In this digital era, restaurants need to have an online presence. Joining a food delivery platform give several benefits, including increased visibility, convenience for customers, a competitive advantage, increased revenue, and access to technical support. These platforms are essential for having restaurants appear in these delivery applications, as they reach a wider audience and increase restaurant visibility. However, there are trade-offs with having an online store in the delivery platforms, as entrepreneurs may receive less profit from the delivery applications than from the physical store. While making the restaurant appear in the apps is a challenge, as there are tons of store openings. Therefore, business owners will have an extra expense in establishing sales promotions and buying paid ads on the platforms.

Moreover, to expand the restaurants, it is important to hire staff. However, finding suitable employees is a challenge for restaurant owners. Most entrepreneurs face difficulties finding qualified candidates, retaining staff, training new hires, managing schedules, and ensuring food safety. To overcome these problems, business owners have to develop a comprehensive training program, create a positive work environment, and offer proper benefits to employees. A well-designed system can help ensure that the restaurant will run smoothly and efficiently. Besides, to run a successful and sustainable restaurant, entrepreneurs need to take several legal steps such as registering the business, obtaining licenses and permits, and complying with health and safety regulations. They also need to have a strong understanding of finance and consider factors such as food cost, labor cost, overhead cost, market demand, menu positioning, and sales strategy when setting prices. While effective marketing and branding are also essential for success, which can be achieved through social media as well as offline events like food festivals, and creating kiosks to sell their products.

Lastly, understanding the target customer is crucial for running a successful restaurant business. Entrepreneurs need to know the demographic and psychographic characteristics of their target customers to develop effective marketing strategies and

provide a dining experience that meets their needs and expectations. Different restaurant owners shared their experiences of designing their restaurants to cater to their target customers, such as a bar serving Thai craft beers, a seafood restaurant delivering through online platforms, a cafe designed in Scandinavian style to attract social media-savvy customers, and a congee restaurant treating its customers like family. By creating a dining experience that resonates with their target customers, entrepreneurs can build a loyal customer base, leading to increased sales, positive word-of-mouth, and a strong reputation in the community.

5.2 Managerial Recommendations

As mentioned in the first chapter, the expected benefit of this study is to provide a guideline for future entrepreneurs who wants to start their own food business. The following topics will be about guidelines for establishing a new food business and common characteristics that entrepreneurs should have.

5.2.1 Guidelines for starting a new food business

Based on the analysis of the research from the data acquired from semi-structured interviews, here are the steps and guidelines for future food entrepreneurs who want to start their own businesses.

5.2.1.1 Identify your niche

The first step that entrepreneurs may consider when starting a food business is to determine what type of food business they want to start as well as what sets them apart from competitors in this competitive market. In order to make their business appeal to target customers, business owners may have to think of their uniqueness and what they can do best and then establish their unique selling points. For example, instead of selling regular beef noodles, entrepreneur may consider selling a “Wagyu beef” noodle with a variety option of soup.

5.2.1.2 Identify target customer

Knowing who is the target customers of the brand is another important factor before opening a food business. Identifying target customers is beneficial for brands in many aspects; for example, it allows food businesses to create

products and services that meet target audiences' specific needs and preferences. It also allows brands to create targeted marketing campaigns that speak directly to their audience and helps food businesses to create a better customer experience.

5.2.1.3 Develop a business plan

Another step that future food entrepreneurs should not overlook is to develop a business plan. Entrepreneurs should consider creating a detailed business plan that outlines their vision, mission, goals, and strategies as well as financial projections, marketing plans, and operational plans.

5.2.1.4 Establish brand

After knowing what to sell and developing a concrete business plan, future food entrepreneurs may consider establishing their brand for the next step. This step includes developing a brand identity that reflects the brand's unique selling proposition and resonates with the target audience. This comprises the business name, logo, menu, website, and social media presence.

5.2.1.5 Obtain necessary licenses and permits

Quality and standards of the restaurant are one of the most important factors for any restaurant. While customers nowadays are increasingly concerned about the quality and standards of the restaurants they visit. With the rise of social media and online review platforms, customers have more access to information about the quality and standards of restaurants. Therefore, obtaining the necessary licenses and permits is crucial for food businesses to comply with laws and regulations, maintain health and safety standards, build a positive reputation, manage risk, and achieve growth and expansion. A proactive approach to license and permit management can help food businesses achieve long-term success and profitability. For instance, if they have an alcohol included in the menu, then the entrepreneur will also have to ask for a permit to sell alcohol as well.

5.2.1.6 Secure a location

Choosing the right location is the next step that is also crucial for the success of food businesses. A good location should be accessible to the target customers of that restaurant. Entrepreneurs may need to take the target market into consideration when choosing the right location while avoiding competition and balancing costs is crucial for profitability as well. Lastly, having the necessary

infrastructure, such as adequate water and power supply and appropriate zoning regulations, is important for the smooth operation of the business.

Even if that restaurant is a ghost restaurant that doesn't need to have a storefront, determining a location for your kitchen is still significant. Business owners should identify a location where their target customers are living, for example; if they sell fast food targeting office workers, the owners may consider finding a location where there are many offices or where these office workers live.

5.2.1.7 Hire staff

Hiring staff is essential for food businesses to improve productivity, quality, customer satisfaction, compliance, and scalability. By hiring staff, food businesses can increase their productivity, distribute tasks among employees, and benefit from the expertise of the specialized team. Moreover, hiring staff also provides flexibility to manage fluctuations in demand and to focus on core activities such as financial management and marketing.

However, hiring the right person can be challenging for business owners. There may be several problems along the way, including a high turnover rate, skill gaps, and cultural fit. Therefore, Employers need to take a strategic approach to recruitment, which includes developing clear job descriptions, using multiple recruitment channels, and providing attractive incentives and benefits to retain staff. Furthermore, employers should invest in staff training and development to help employees build their skills and progress within the business.

5.2.1.8 Develop a marketing strategy

In this competitive market, developing a concrete online and offline marketing strategy is another factor of a successful business. Marketing is essential for food businesses to attract new customers, differentiate from competitors, and build customer loyalty. By creating effective marketing campaigns, food businesses can increase their visibility, sales, and revenue, while providing a positive experience for their customers. Giving example, in this digital era where customers consume a lot of online media, constructing a strong content marketing and advertising will help strengthen restaurant's brandings as well as gaining more brand awareness. Moreover, developing sales promotions, especially during the launching period, can help encourage customers to purchase.

5.2.2 Characteristics of food entrepreneurs

Apart from the above guidelines, based on the analysis of the findings, the researcher also concludes the study with the common characteristics that food entrepreneurs have in order to successfully run their food businesses as follows.

5.2.2.1 Adaptability

The food industry is constantly evolving as well as unexpected events that can occur at any time. Therefore, a successful food entrepreneur must be able to adapt quickly to the changing market conditions and consumer preferences. For example, a sudden change like pandemic had made some restaurant's owners adapt their business and shifted to online platforms.

5.2.2.2 Creativity

With the rise of food delivery platforms, consumers are exposed to a wider variety of cuisines and flavors. A food entrepreneur must be creative and innovative to make their restaurant stand out in a crowded market. For example, entrepreneurs can be creatively using social media (i.e., create various forms of content) to connect with their target audience, tell brand stories, and build strong identity. Furthermore, entrepreneurs may also want to be creative with their menu such as create a menu around a specific theme like farm-to-table menu featuring local ingredients or a seasonal menu showcasing dishes that highlight seasonal flavors.

5.2.2.3 Customer-centric

A customer-centric approach means placing the needs and preferences of the customers at the center of the business and making decisions based on what will provide the best experience for them. By being customer-centric, food entrepreneurs can build a loyal customer base, increase customer satisfaction, and improve the overall success of their business. Being customer-centric, entrepreneurs will have to ask for feedback from customers on experience at their restaurant and make changes based on those feedback. Moreover, personalize the experience is another way of being customer-centric.

5.2.2.4 Technological savvy

With the quickly changing trends and the era of food delivery platforms and online ordering, food entrepreneurs must be comfortable using technology and data to improve their operations and customer experience. Giving an

example of this cashless-society, entrepreneurs may want to offer mobile payments to allow customers to pay for their meals without having to use cash or credit cards. In addition, entrepreneurs who are technological savvy may use social media monitoring, to look for trends, gather feedback and make improvements to their operations.

5.2.2.5 Attention to detail

Attention to detail is an important trait for food entrepreneurs, as it involves paying close attention to every aspect of the business. This includes operational details such as the quality of ingredients, presentation of dishes, and cleanliness of the restaurant, as well as financial and administrative aspects such as budgeting, accounting, and regulatory compliance. By being attentive to these details, entrepreneurs can provide the best possible experience for their customers, which can lead to increased customer satisfaction, positive reviews, and repeat business. In the competitive food industry, attention to detail is essential for achieving long-term success and profitability.

5.2.2.6 Financial acumen

Financial acumen involves understanding and managing the financial aspects of the business, including budgeting, forecasting, and financial analysis. In the food industry, financial management is crucial for ensuring profitability and sustainability. Entrepreneurs need to understand the costs of ingredients, labor, and overhead as well as how to manage these costs effectively to maximize profits. Moreover, they also need to be able to forecast revenue and expenses, create and manage budgets, as well as analyze financial data to make decisions.

5.2.2.7 Passion

A food entrepreneur must be passionate about their business and the food they are serving. Passion is the driving force behind success in the food industry, and a food entrepreneur who is truly passionate about their business will be more likely to overcome challenges and persevere through difficult times.

To conclude, successful food entrepreneurs are often adaptable, creative, customer-centric, technologically savvy, collaborative, detail-oriented, and passionate. They also have a solid understanding of the business side of the food industry, prioritize the needs and preferences of their customers, and are able to pivot their business strategies to stay ahead of the curve. Lastly, successful food entrepreneurs

also foster a positive work culture that encourages creativity and innovation and values the contributions of their staff.

5.3 Limitations

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the experiences of food entrepreneurs who use delivery platforms to run their businesses, it is important to acknowledge several limitations that may impact the generalizability and validity of the results. By identifying these limitations, we can better understand the scope of the study and the potential implications of the findings. In this section, we will discuss some of the key limitations of the study, including the small sample size, limited geographic scope, and potential bias in the data collection and analysis.

To begin with the small sample size, since the study was conducted with a limited time, it is difficult to collect data from a large number of food entrepreneurs who use delivery platforms. As the findings and results were analyzed from the data gained from only eight participants, this could be the result of limiting the generalizability of the findings in which we may not be able to imply the results to every business. In addition to the limited timeframe, it may be difficult to capture long-term trends or changes in the use of delivery platforms by food entrepreneurs, which could limit the relevance of the findings over time.

Similarly, to the small sample size, the study focuses on a specific geographic region or country, which in this case is in Bangkok, Thailand only. Therefore, the findings may be biased and may not be applicable to food entrepreneurs in other regions or countries. While these limitations may impact the scope and applicability of the findings, they do not diminish the importance of the study's contributions to the field. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the experiences and practices of food entrepreneurs who use delivery platforms to run their businesses successfully. By acknowledging and addressing these limitations, future research in this area can build on the findings of this study and further explore the challenges and opportunities faced by food entrepreneurs in this rapidly evolving field.

However, to improve the study and make the study more applicable to larger groups of entrepreneurs, the researcher may need to use a diverse sample representing a range of demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. This can help to ensure that the findings are not limited to a specific group or population. Furthermore, a theoretical framework can also be used to help ensure that the findings are relevant and applicable to other regions or populations. By using a theoretical framework, researchers can identify key concepts or themes that are likely to be applicable across different contexts.

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