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## Customer-Contact Business Strategies Affecting Organizational Reputation of Airline Businesses in Thailand 4.0

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### Abstract

The research aimed to investigate the effect of customer-contact business strategies on organizational reputation of airline business in Thailand 4.0. The samples were of 350 customers residing in Bangkok and Metropolitan area and used to use services from airline businesses in Thailand. The questionnaires were used to collect the data with the purposive sampling and convenient sampling methods. Data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and inferential statistics including structural equation model (SEM). The results showed that personnel strategy had a direct effect on marketing strategy and customer experience building strategy, and an indirect effect on organization reputation with standardized coefficient as of 0.790, 0.557, and 0.605. The marketing strategy had a direct effect on customer experience building strategy and organization reputation with standardized coefficient as of 0.352 and 0.321, respectively. Lastly, the customer experience building strategy had a direct effect on organization reputation with standardized coefficient as of 0.283 at the significant level as of 0.001. The study results can contribute managerial implications in developing personnel strategy, marketing strategy, and customer experience to create the organization reputation in era of Thailand 4.0.

**Keywords:** Customer-Contact Business Strategies, Organizational Reputation, Airline Businesses

**Type of Article:** Research Article

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## กลยุทธ์ทางธุรกิจสำหรับการติดต่อกับลูกค้าที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อชื่อเสียงองค์กรของธุรกิจ สายการบินในยุคประเทศไทย 4.0

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## บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบผลกระทบของกลยุทธ์ทางธุรกิจสำหรับการติดต่อกับลูกค้า ที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อชื่อเสียงองค์กรของธุรกิจสายการบินในยุคประเทศไทย 4.0 กลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้ในการศึกษา คือ ลูกค้า อาศัยอยู่ในเขตกรุงเทพมหานครและปริมณฑล และเคยใช้บริการจากธุรกิจสายการบินในประเทศไทย จำนวน 350 คน ใช้แบบสอบถามในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล วิธีการสุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นแบบเจาะจงและวิธีการสุ่มตัวอย่างที่สะท้อน การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลประกอบด้วยสถิติเชิงพรรณนา ได้แก่ ความถี่ ร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย และส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และแบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้าง ผลการวิจัย พบว่า กลยุทธ์ด้านบุคลากรมีผลโดยตรงต่อ กลยุทธ์ด้านการตลาดและกลยุทธ์ด้านการสร้างประสบการณ์ของลูกค้าและผลทางอ้อมต่อชื่อเสียงขององค์กร ด้วยค่าสัมประสิทธิ์มาตรฐานที่ 0.790, 0.557 และ 0.605 ในขณะที่ กลยุทธ์ด้านการตลาดมีผลโดยตรงต่อกลยุทธ์ ด้านการสร้างประสบการณ์ของลูกค้าและชื่อเสียงขององค์กรโดยมีค่าสัมประสิทธิ์มาตรฐานเท่ากับ 0.352 และ 0.321 ตามลำดับ สุดท้าย กลยุทธ์ด้านการสร้างประสบการณ์ของลูกค้ามีผลโดยตรงต่อชื่อเสียงขององค์กรโดย มีค่าสัมประสิทธิ์มาตรฐานเท่ากับ 0.283 ที่ระดับนัยสำคัญที่ 0.001 ซึ่งผลการศึกษาสามารถอธิบายบริหาร กำหนดและพัฒนากลยุทธ์ด้านบุคลากร กลยุทธ์ด้านการตลาด และกลยุทธ์ด้านประสบการณ์ของลูกค้าเพื่อ สร้างชื่อเสียงที่ดีให้กับองค์กรในยุคประเทศไทย 4.0

**คำสำคัญ:** กลยุทธ์ทางธุรกิจที่ติดต่อกับลูกค้า ชื่อเสียงขององค์กร ธุรกิจสายการบิน  
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## 1. Introduction

The airline business competition today brings the importance for their executives, managers, and business involvers to consider the factors that can affect the business in this industry to be successful (Enz, 2002; Mellat-Parast et al., 2015; Hapsari et al., 2016; Tiwasing et al., 2019). In addition, the trend of Industry 4.0 evolved Thailand 4.0 by focusing on the increase in people's quality in the country by using the technology such as advanced machinery, information, and communication technology as well as Internet of Things. Accordingly, creating the good strategies to overwhelm the competitors in the same industry can be then necessary. Porter (1985) suggested generic strategies including low-cost leadership, differentiation, and focus as well as other scholars introduce various strategies in numerous aspects. These strategies can include employee service strategy, marketing strategy, customer experience creation strategy, and others (Mellat-Parast et al., 2015; Hapsari et al., 2016; Tiwasing et al., 2019). However, to create the right strategies, both inside and outside organization factors to drive the business in the airline industry should be taken into account. For inside organization factors, there can be such as business resources management; business and marketing strategies; employee training, development, and management, business service process development and others. In the meantime, the outside organization factors can include such as

customer focus, business environment scanning, technology availability, supplier networking, service innovation, and others (Mellat-Parast et al., 2015; Hapsari et al., 2016; Tiwasing et al., 2019). When the impressive effective strategies can be conducted and conveyed to the customers, they will feel satisfied and their impressive experience will appear (Solimun & Fernandes, 2018; Ban & Kim, 2019). At the end, it can create organizational reputation, customer retention, customer recommendation, customer loyalty (Walsh et al., 2006; Nikbin et al., 2011; Seo & Park, 2017).

In line with importance mentioned above, the researchers are then interested in studying about the customer-contact business strategies affecting on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0. The "ABC" Thai national airline can be the case of study. The results from this study can confirm and provide such a good guideline for business practices and management.

## 2. Research's objectives

The researchers have the aim to investigate the effect of customer-contact business strategies on organizational reputation of airline business in Thailand 4.0.

## 3. Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: The personnel strategy had a positive effect on marketing strategy in Thailand 4.0.

Hypothesis 2: The personnel strategy

had a positive effect on customer experience building strategy in Thailand 4.0.

Hypothesis 3: The personnel strategy had a positive effect on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0.

Hypothesis 4: The marketing strategy had a positive effect on customer experience building strategy in Thailand 4.0.

Hypothesis 5: The marketing strategy had a positive effect on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0.

Hypothesis 6: The customer strategy had a positive effect on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0.

#### 4. Literature reviews

##### 4.1 Customer-Contact Business Strategies

Porter (1985) suggested generic strategies including low cost leadership, differentiation, and focus as well as other scholars introduce various strategies in numerous aspects both inside and outside organization factors to drive the business in the airline industry. For inside organization factors, there can be such as business resources management; business and marketing strategies; employee training, development, and management, business service process development and others. In the meantime, the outside organization factors can include such as customer focus, business environment scanning, technology availability, supplier networking, service innovation, and others (Mellat-Parast et al., 2015; Hapsari et al., 2016; Tiwasing et al., 2019).

However, to create an effective strategy and positive external impact to the customers, the internal factors such as personnel and organizational strategies are very crucial and necessary to consider. The personnel strategy refers to ability of the organization can manage the human resource in the organization, which it can include recruiting the right people and staffing the right position, training employees when state-of-the-art skills and knowledge required, motivating employees to perform the works, providing appropriate benefits and welfares, creating good working environment, offering and rewarding good salaries, evaluating and assessing employees' work and performance, and granting opportunity for career advancement (Ejem et al., 2016; Sukortpromme et al., 2019). When employees in the organization can be well and fair treated, the employees will be satisfied and commit to perform the better work (Judge et al, 2001).

One of the most important works and had been studied by numerous academicians is marketing activity management. This management can create the profit and benefits for the organization. Abdelhady et al. (2019) advocated that marketing mix is important and can influence the air customer's purchasing decision. This marketing mix refers to the ability to manage the marketing activities or elements, which consisted of product referring to providing the right service to match the customer needs, price referring to flexible price setting that at the end can generate the revenue for the organization,

place referring to place and distribution channel offering and delivering product and services to the customers, and promotion referring to the communication, service introduction and service persuasion granted for the customers. When the impressive marketing activities can be conducted and conveyed to the customers, they will feel satisfied and their impressive experience will appear (Solimun & Fernandes, 2018).

Regarding customer experience, the literature revealed that the customer experience is very crucial for the service businesses such as airline business. The customer experience is one of the significant factors that will expedite or delay the customer decision. Ban, and Kim (2019) identified that the factors creating customer experiences can include seat comfort, food and beverage, ground services, service staff, price, and facilities. When customers feel satisfied with the services and good experience will instantaneously exist. Finally, it can help create the organization reputation.

#### 4.2 Organizational reputation

The organizational reputation refers to the positive perception of the customers on the organization activities and management. The organizational reputation can be measured by organizational promise, organizational image, organizational praiseworthiness, organizational friendly, organizational progressiveness and innovativeness, customer retention, customer recommendation, customer loyalty (Walsh et al., 2006; Nikbin et al., 2011; Seo & Park,

2017). If the businesses in this airline industry can achieve in generating effective strategies and tool, they will be probably reaching the organizational reputation and financial advantages and business growth.

### 5. Research methodology

#### 5.1 Research methodology

This study employed quantitative research approach for answering the objectives of the study.

#### 5.2 Population and sample

The population is customers, residing in Bangkok and Metropolitan area and ever using the services from airline business in the era of Thailand 4.0. The samples of study derived from Cochran's (1977) sample calculation were of 385 customers residing in Bangkok and Metropolitan area and used to use services from airline business in Thailand 4.0.

#### 5.3 Research instrument

The research instrument using for data collection was questionnaires with five parts consisting of (1) general personal information, (2) personnel strategy, (3) marketing strategy, (4) customer strategy and (5) organizational reputation. In terms of research content validity and reliability, the researchers employed the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) and Cronbach's Alpha, respectively. For IOC testing, the researchers invited 3 experts from the related fields and the IOC value was revealed higher than 0.7. In the meantime, the Cronbach's Alpha tested for content reliability was higher than 0.7, which personnel strategy,

marketing strategy, customer experience building strategy, and organizational reputation had acceptable scores as of 0.818, 0.892, 0.817, and 0.885, respectively (Wheaton et al., 1977; Hajiar, 2014).

#### 5.4 Data collection

In terms of data collection, the purposive and convenient sampling methods were employed, by focusing on customers who used the services from the airline and selecting them based on convenience. After distributing 385 sets of questionnaires, there were only 350 usable ones, which they were accounted for 90.91 percent comparing to the expected number of samples. Regarding the study done by Baruch (1999) and Nulty (2008), the obtained percent of usable answers can be accepted and performed data analysis.

#### 5.5 Data analysis

In relations to data analysis as well as hypotheses testing, the researchers employed descriptive and inference statistics, generated by SPSS and AMOS Software. The descriptive statistics include frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, skew and kurtosis. The inference statistics include structural equation modeling (SEM) with the good-fitness model requirements (Hooper et al., 2008). The model-fit indices can include relative chi-square ( $\Delta\chi^2/\Delta\text{df}$  is not over than 2), Chi-square probability Level ( $p$ -value should be more than 0.05), goodness of fit index (GFI should be more than 0.90), adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI should be more than 0.90), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA

should be less than 0.08), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI should be more than 0.90), comparative fit index (CFI should be more than 0.90), and normed fit index (NFI should be More than 0.90). The result and its discussion will be explored in the next section (Hooper et al., 2008; Siljaru, 2012).

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Descriptive analysis

In terms of personal information, the results showed that most of the respondents from 350 customers to whom were distributed the questionnaires were 183 female or 52%. In terms of age, there were 141 persons with age between 21-30 years old or 40.3%. In the terms of education level, 216 respondents or 61.7% graduated from bachelor's degree. Lastly, 95 persons or 27.1% worked as civil servants.

In terms of personnel strategy, the study found that it was overall rated in high level with mean score as of 4.12, reflecting that airline business highly used staffs who have attentive, courteous, enthusiastic characteristics with ability to communicate in different languages, professional and related work knowledge to quickly provide the service to the customers. In the meantime, the study found that the overall marketing strategy was rated in high level with mean score as of 4.06, presenting that airline business highly provided the services with good marketing strategies such as appropriate price setting, promotions, purchase channel, payment channels, and

advertisements to cover the needs of customers. In addition, the study also discovered that the overall customer experience building strategy was rated in high level with mean score as of 4.03, presenting that the airline business highly created customer experience by providing the good cabin facilities together with good food, good lounge, and good ground services. Lastly, the study found that the overall organizational reputation was rated in extremely high level with mean score as of 4.25, meaning that the airline business are successful in creating organizational reputation indicated by being accepted, well-known, unique, and reliable. In terms of hypotheses testing, the researchers employed structural equation modelling which also requires that the data used for analysis must pass the basic study requirements. Firstly, the values of skew and kurtosis must be between -3 and +3, meaning that all data was distributed normally (Tabachnick & Linda, 2001). Secondly, all variables should not be inter-correlated, meaning that all variables' Pearson coefficient should be less than 0.91 as recommended by Tabachnick and Linda (2001). Herewith, the study found the Pearson coefficient were between 0.59 and 0.85. Thirdly, all good-fit indices should be accepted (Hooper et al., 2008; Siljaru, 2012). From the study, the model was run and generated the values as follows: Cmin/df was of 1.004, p-value was of 0.473, GFI was of 0.959, AGFI was of 0.933, RMRSEA was of 0.003, TLI was of 1.000, CFI was of 1.000 and

NFI was of 0.962.

After the model was run, the study result displayed that all narrow lines of independent variables heading toward dependent variables lines represented statistical acceptance because their p-values were lower than 0.05. The t-values were between 2.096 and 7.463. The standard error values were between 2.096 and 7.463. Lastly, the standardized coefficient values were between 0.283 and 0.790. However, the result excluded the narrow line of Personnel Strategy heading to Organizational Reputation because its p-value was higher than 0.05. The final model was displayed in the figure 1.

## 6.2 Hypotheses testing

The study can bestow the hypotheses testing detail as follows.

Hypothesis 1: The personnel strategy had a positive effect on marketing strategy in Thailand 4.0.

From the first hypothesis testing, the study revealed that personnel strategy had a positive effect on marketing strategy in Thailand 4.0 at the statically significant level as of 0.05 due to the p-value was 0.000, lower than 0.05. In addition, the study revealed that standardized estimate was as of 0.790, standard error was as of 0.125 and critical value (t-value) was as of 7.463. The ability to predict the model was of 79.0 percent.

Hypothesis 2: The personnel strategy had a positive effect on customer strategy in Thailand 4.0.

From the second hypothesis testing,

the study revealed that personnel strategy had a positive effect on customer strategy in Thailand 4.0 at the statically significant level as of 0.05

Due to the p-value was 0.000, lower than 0.05. In addition, the study revealed that standardized estimate was as of 0.557, standard error was as of 0.121 and critical value (t-value) was as of 4.795. The ability to predict the model was of 55.7 percent.

**Hypothesis 3:** The personnel strategy had a positive effect on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0.

From the third hypothesis testing, the study revealed that personnel strategy did not have a positive effect on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0 at the statically significant level as of 0.05 due to the p-value was 0.209, higher than 0.05.

**Hypothesis 4:** The marketing strategy had a positive effect on customer strategy in Thailand 4.0.

From the fourth hypothesis testing, the study revealed that marketing strategy had a positive effect on customer strategy in Thailand 4.0 at the statically significant level as of 0.05 due to the p-value was 0.000, lower than 0.05. In addition, the study revealed that standardized estimate was as of 0.352, standard error was as of 0.086 and critical value (t-value) was as of 3.643. The ability to predict the model was of 35.2 percent.

**Hypothesis 5:** The marketing strategy had a positive effect on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0.

From the fifth hypothesis testing, the study revealed that marketing strategy had a positive effect on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0 at the statically significant level as of 0.05 due to the p-value was 0.001, lower than 0.05. In addition, the study revealed that standardized estimate was as of 0.321, standard error was as of 0.104 and critical value (t-value) was as of 3.229. The ability to predict the model was of 32.1 percent.

**Hypothesis 6:** The customer strategy had a positive effect on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0.

From the sixth hypothesis testing, the study revealed that customer strategy had a positive effect on organizational reputation in Thailand 4.0 at the statically significant level as of 0.05 due to the p-value was 0.036, lower than 0.05. In addition, the study revealed that standardized estimate was as of 0.283, standard error was as of 0.159 and critical value (t-value) was as of 2.096. The ability to predict the model was of 28.3 percent.

In terms of the analysis related to total effect; direct effect; and indirect effect, the study revealed that personnel strategy had direct standardized-coefficient effect on marketing strategy as of 0.790, customer experience building strategy as of 0.557, and indirect standardized-coefficient effect on organization reputation as of 0.605. In the meantime, the marketing strategy had direct standardized-coefficient effect on customer experience building strategy and organization reputation as of 0.352 and 0.321, respectively.

Lastly, the customer experience building strategy had direct standardized-coefficient

effect on organization reputation as of 0.283 at the significant level as of 0.001.

## Final Model

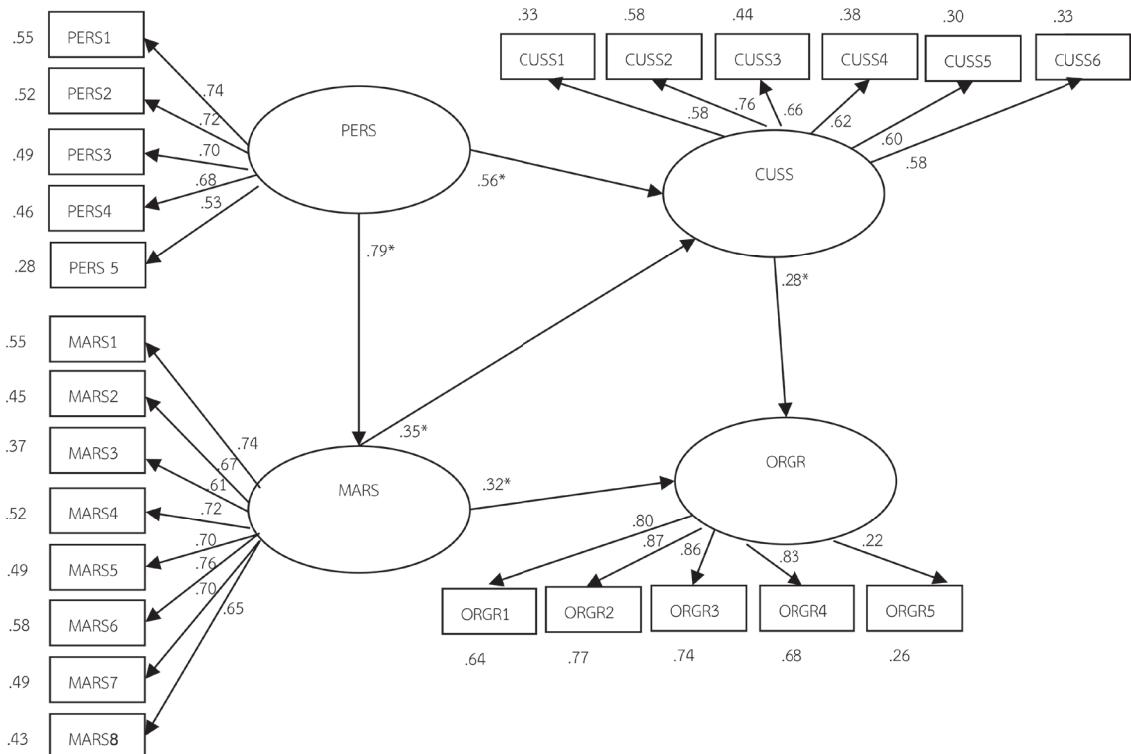


Figure 1 Final model of the study

Note: Personnel Strategy, PERS; Marketing Strategy, MARS; Customer Experience Building Strategy, CUSS; and Organizational Reputation, ORGR

## 7. Discussion and conclusions

Due to the study result, the conclusion and discussion can be made as follows. Most of the respondents were female, aged between 21-30 years old, graduated from bachelor's degree and worked as civil servants, respectively. This is because this range of age, education, and career is appropriate time for

travelling. In addition, some of factors such as gender which female are more travelling than male has been also discussed since there is change in economic status, more freedom of choice, and travelling constrain reduction. This is matched with the study done by Tilley and Houston (2016), who revealed that young women now travelling more than young men.

The result also matched with the study done by Tiwasing et al. (2019), whose study pertains the relationship of customer's behavior and service innovation on customer satisfaction towards low-cost airline business and the result found that most of the respondents were female, aged between 20-40 years old. The study result revealed that the customers had opinion related customer-contract business strategy in terms of personnel strategy, marketing strategy, customer experience building strategy and organizational reputation in the high level. This is because many organizations understood that to have good reputation of the organization should create the good feeling of the customers through the customers' expected responsiveness such the right service, right price, right distribution channel and good promotion. This study result is related to the study done by Ban and Kim (2019) studying about the understanding customer experience and satisfaction through airline passengers' online review. The result found that customer experience and satisfaction could be created by having a good service for the customers. The good services can be in terms of seat comfort, food and beverage, ground services, service staff, price, and facilities.

In terms of hypothesis testing, the study revealed that personnel strategy had direct effect on marketing strategy and customer experience building strategy, and indirect effect on organization reputation. The reason is that to create the reputation of the

organization and good work performance, the organization needs to have employees who have the matched ability with work requirement, and there is good motivation offered to the employees. When the employees can be treated well enough, they will be willing to better perform the work and create the work performance. This is matched with the study done by Ejem et al. (2016) studying about the exploratory factor analysis of human resources management strategies in the Nigerian airline industry. This study revealed that the organization is required to recruit good employee, know technology, service-minded, good motivation and so on.

In addition, the marketing strategy had direct effect on customer experience building strategy and organization reputation. This is because that when the organization wishes to impress the customer, create customer satisfaction and expedite customer decision, the customer experience with appropriate marketing mix activities such as good service, food and beverage services, employee willingness to service, persuasive promotion and advertisement and so on should be considered. This corresponds with the study done by Abdelhady et al. (2019) studying about the influence of airlines' marketing mix elements on passengers' purchasing decision-making: the case of FSCs and LCCs. The result revealed that price, place, product, and promotion affected the purchasing decision-making.

Lastly, the customer experience build-

ing strategy had direct effect on organization reputation. This is because if the organization want to be perceived and recognized by various customers, the organization should know how to create good customer experience. The experience of the customers toward the airline business can be measured by seat comfort, food and beverage, ground services, service staff, price, and facilities (Ban & Kim, 2019). When the customer experience can be created, the organizational reputation in terms of organizational promise, organizational image, organizational praiseworthiness, organizational friendly, organizational progressiveness and innovativeness, customer retention, customer recommendation, or customer loyalty will follows (Walsh et al., 2006; Nikbin et al., 2011; Seo & Park, 2017).

## 8. Recommendations

### 8.1 Recommendations for Managerial and Academic Aspects

#### 8.1.1. For Managerial Aspect

1) In order to have staff to work well on other strategies including marketing and customer experience building strategy, the airline business should recruit and train their staff to be attentive, courteous, enthusiastic, and willing to provide services and to respond the customer's needs with smile and good personality and manners. Also, they should have the staff who can be fluent in many languages, has knowledge and expertise related to airline business services.

2) In order to create the organization

reputation, the airline business should implement the good marketing strategy, which it can emphasize on providing customers the expected flight services and rounds; offering appropriate price with good service and appropriate distance; providing various ticket purchase channels; providing various secured and convenient payment channels; using attractive activities such as point exchanges for rewards; using attractive promotions in various festivals and holidays; hiring reputed actors or actresses for airline public relations; and promoting airline business through various offline and online channels.

3) In order to create the organization reputation, the airline business should have good customer experience building strategy. This strategy can focus on distinguishing services; providing good and clean tasty food and beverage; providing good on-board equipment and facilities such as magazines, infotainment systems, headphones, cabins, bathrooms, and seats; having convenient and fast ground services such as check-in, baggage tracking, transportation as well as nice lounge services while waiting for flight departure.

#### 8.1.2 For Academic Aspect

The result of this study can confirm strategies used to create the organizational reputation which it can be then create customers' loyalty, satisfaction, and retention. In addition, the academicians can understand more about the strategies including personnel strategy, marketing strategy, and customer experience building strategy that have been

implemented in Thai airline business in Thailand 4.0 era. Lastly, the study also displays the linkage of strategies that they are correlated spontaneously.

## 8.2 Recommendations for Future Study

Because there are some limitations that can be further studied such as the limited number of samples, period for data collection, data collection techniques, other strategies affecting organizational reputation and Thailand 4.0 context. Therefore, the future studies can be then focused on following points. Firstly, the next study should expand more sample size in order to see the different points of view of customers. Secondly, the interested researchers can endeavor to adopt qualitative

research approach by using such in-depth interview, observation, and participation in the customer behavior in order to study about the crucial strategies creating organizational reputation. In addition, the future research can consider other strategies in different theories such as resource based view, sustainability, networking theories, dynamic theory, supply chain management concept, and/or stakeholder theory, which they later can perform different strategies used in the airline business. Lastly, the future study should extend the study on Thailand 4.0 dimension, which it can be in terms of using technology, ecology consideration, stakeholders, and community benefits, and/or internationalization.

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