



Exploring the Entrepreneurial Performance of Restaurant Business in the New Normal Era using Structural Equation Modeling

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Abstract

The objectives of this research were twofold. (1) To study the variable levels of organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, food and service quality, and performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era, and (2) To analyze the influence of variables of organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, and food and service quality and their effect on the performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era. This quantitative research targeted restaurant entrepreneurs registered as juristic persons with the Department of Business Development (2022), Ministry of Commerce, operating as limited companies between 2002–2022, with registered capital of 2,000,000–5,000,000 baht. The sample size was determined by estimating the observation variables in the proportion of 1 to 20 for 460 persons. Multi-stage sampling was used and the data was analyzed by a structural equation. The results of the research showed that 1) all variables on organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, food and service quality, and performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era were of a high level and 2) the factors on organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, and food and service quality had a direct influence on the performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era with the statistical significance at 0.05. The model demonstrated that all variables collectively predicted 87% of the variance in business performance ($R^2 = 0.87$) and can be used as guidelines to develop strategies and policies that are suitable for restaurant businesses and relevant sectors in the future.

Introduction

The New Normal era is characterized by lifestyle changes from the past due to the COVID-19 crisis that affected all dimensions of society. It is necessary for people globally to adjust themselves in order to cope with this new situation. The New Normal era is a mixture

of traditional and new lifestyles arising from both technologies and prevention measures for COVID-19 that severely affect the world. The pandemic that occurred at the end of 2019, became more severe in 2020, and started to dissipate in 2022 caused a significant impact on both economic and social spheres, especially causing

changes in consumer behavior, which led to alterations in the business operating context, accordingly (Phothong, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic had an effect on almost all branches of business. In 2020, the economy in Thailand reduced by 6.1 percent, while most countries around the world saw a reduction by 3.4 percent on average, especially falling in the tourism sector, which holds great importance for the Thai economy. The income from tourists declined by 2.18 trillion baht in 2020, which was 70 percent of the economic contraction nationwide. Restaurant businesses were particularly affected by this situation due to the slowdown of foreign tourists traveling to Thailand. This affected spending on food consumption, which was in the proportion of 15 percent of foreigners' expenses for those who travelled to Thailand or 1.93 trillion baht in 2019 (Kasikorn Research Center, 2020). In turn this had a profound effect on the sales volume of restaurants at each type and level. The main objectives of the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023-2027), established during COVID-19 pandemic, were: restructuring the production and service sector to become an innovation economy; developing for the modern world, heading towards a society of opportunity and fairness; transitioning production and consumption towards sustainability; and enhancing the country's ability to manage changes within the context of the modern world (National Economic and Social Office, 2024) in order to be prepared and cope with future eventualities.

The pandemic affected restaurant businesses in many factors, such as a decrease in sales, higher costs, transformations in consumer behaviors, higher competition, and adjustment to government security measures. Some entrepreneurs were unable to bear the burden resulting in the closure of their business. From the survey of the Economic Intelligence Center (2023), it was discovered that of businesses that required closure, full-service restaurants and restaurants located in department stores and tourist destinations were especially prevalent. Apart from their decline of income, this group of restaurants also had high fixed expenses that caused limitations in the adjustment of costs and business structures over other groups, leading this group of restaurants to face continuous losses that affected their liquidity and necessitated their closure. Meanwhile, the limited-service restaurants received a moderate impact as a result of having multiple sales channels, flexibility of cost structure, and adjustments in the investment of major entrepreneurs. Even though they had shrunk in the

previous year, the increase of sales channels, such as delivery or online sales, provided this group of restaurants with alternate means of generating income.

Entrepreneurs must adjust and find new innovations to generate income, as suggested by Dijk (2020). Kitivanarat et al. (2002) emphasized that entrepreneurs need to adjust their businesses in response to changes in consumer behavior. To navigate these challenges effectively, a Performance Model is essential, providing a structured framework to guide decision-making and adaptation efforts. Entrepreneurs need to prepare themselves to deal with various crises, such as by providing training to employees and enhancing the business's standards to align with the New Normal era, emphasizing cleanliness, food safety, and socially distanced service delivery.

When the situation improved, the restaurant industry entered the New Normal era, where take-away and delivery services would become permanent features of operations. A Performance Model can help restaurants integrate improvements in food quality and operational efficiency, benefiting both traditional and emerging service formats, and thus ensuring long-term sustainability.

Organizational culture is critical for fostering innovation and adaptability, especially in industries like hospitality. Key aspects include psychological safety, collectivism, and flexibility, which influence employees' behaviors and innovation capabilities. These cultural factors create environments where employees feel empowered to contribute to problem-solving and creativity, enhancing organizational resilience and performance in rapidly changing contexts. Studies emphasize that innovative organizational cultures enable businesses to adapt to external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by encouraging proactive behaviors and collaborative problem-solving. Entrepreneurial potential refers to the ability of individuals or businesses to identify opportunities, innovate, and manage risks effectively. This potential is influenced by individual traits such as proactivity and resilience, as well as organizational factors like supportive cultures and access to resources. During periods of uncertainty, entrepreneurial potential drives businesses to adopt innovative strategies and maintain competitive advantages. Research highlights the role of entrepreneurial leadership in fostering adaptability, creativity, and sustainable growth within organizations. Management innovation involves implementing novel management practices or structures to improve performance. It has been shown to enhance

efficiency and service quality, especially in dynamic industries such as the restaurant sector. Examples include new team management approaches, digitization, and adaptive leadership frameworks. These innovations are pivotal in responding to evolving customer needs and industry challenges, making them critical for sustaining operations during crises like the pandemic. Zhang et al. (2023) discovered that management innovation involves implementing novel management practices or structures to improve performance. Examples include new team management approaches, digitization, and adaptive leadership frameworks. In respect to food and service quality Suwannarak et al. (2023) proclaimed that food and service quality are foundational for customer satisfaction and loyalty in the restaurant business. Dimensions such as food safety, taste consistency, service responsiveness, and hygiene have gained heightened importance in the New Normal. Zhang et al. (2023) found that service quality frameworks such as SERVQUAL underscore how these attributes directly influence business performance by shaping customer perceptions and driving repeat business. The performance of restaurant businesses is closely tied to their ability to innovate, maintain customer loyalty, and adapt to external pressures. Metrics such as customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and financial outcomes are used to gauge success. Studies highlight that resilience strategies, including digital transformation and menu innovation, significantly contribute to performance during crises. Maintaining a loyal customer base is essential, as repeat customers provide a buffer against revenue losses during turbulent times. (Zhang et al., 2023)

From the abovementioned, it can be seen that restaurant businesses that can adjust and cope with the

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic can survive and continue to grow. However, they must face new challenges, such as severe competition, alterations to consumer behaviors and new technologies. Hence, restaurant businesses must develop and adjust continuously in order to compete and survive in the digital era. Therefore, it is necessary for the researcher to study the Performance Model of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era. This Performance Model will identify critical success factors and provide a structured framework for navigating these challenges effectively. The results obtained from the research will become an academic database for interested parties, academics, researchers, or those who study issues relevant to the success of the Performance Model of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era. These findings can be used as guidelines to set measures benefiting restaurant entrepreneurs by minimizing losses. Additionally, the Performance Model will present adaptable approaches that other restaurant businesses might employ when encountering unexpected problems in the future.

Objectives

1. To study the variable levels of organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, food and service quality, and performance with respect to restaurant businesses in the New Normal era

2. To analyze the influence of the variables of organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, and food and service quality affecting the performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era

Conceptual Framework

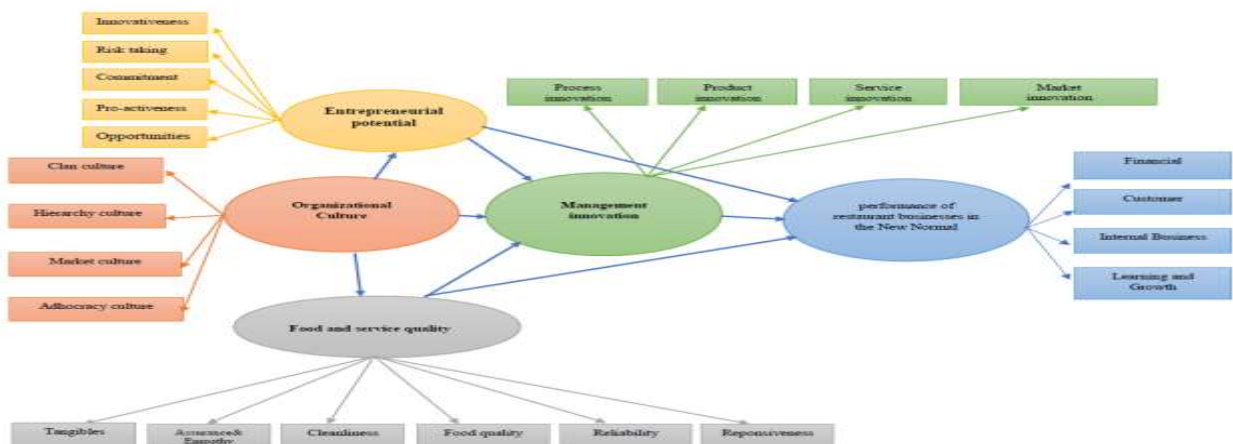


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

1. Population and Samples

The population and samples used in the quantitative research were entrepreneurs in restaurant businesses that are registered as a juristic person with the Department of Business Development, Ministry of Commerce in the form of a Company Limited during 2002-2022 and are still in operation with registered capital between 2,000,000-5,000,000 baht. The sample size was determined by estimating the observation variables in the proportion of 1 to 20 for 460 persons (23 variables X 20). The data were collected by using a multi-stage sampling method.

2. Research Instrument

The tool and method used in the study was a rating scale questionnaire at 5 levels. The questionnaire was assessed by (1) content validity to test the validity of questions, using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) by 5 experts to consider the clarification, consistency in variable measurement, and appropriateness of language used to develop and revise the questionnaire for suitability. The researcher selected the questions with the IOC value of greater than 0.5. Accordingly, all questions in this research had obtained an IOC value greater than 0.5, being between 0.6-1.0. (2) Assessment via a reliability test on samples with almost the same qualifications as the actual samples for 30 persons by using the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient with the acceptable criteria of greater than 0.70. Accordingly, the value obtained from this research was 0.722-0.94, indicating that the reliability of this questionnaire fell within the acceptable criteria.

3. Collection of Data

In the collection of quantitative data, the researcher used 500 qualifying questionnaires to collect the data from the actual population and obtained 460 validated questionnaires for data analysis.

4. Data Analysis

The data was analyzed in descriptive statistics by using a statistical package to obtain the mean and Standard Deviation (S.D.) by which the interpretation of average scores was as follows: 4.50-5.00 means Strongly Agree; 3.50-4.49 means Agree; 2.50-3.49 means Moderately Agree; 1.50-2.49 means Slightly Agree; and 1.00-1.49 means Least Agree (Sinjaru, 2017) together with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Model Fit Index to consider the conformity of the model with the empirical data.

Results

1st Objective: From the research results in the study of variable levels on organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, food and service quality, and performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era according to the 1st objective, it was found that the latent variable undergone within the study obtained the average of between 3.97-4.45, which was in a high level. The organizational culture factor achieved the most averages, followed by performance of restaurant businesses, food and service quality, management innovation, and entrepreneurial potential respectively, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Average, Standard Deviation, and Interpretation of Variable Levels Undergone the Study

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	Meaning
1. Organizational Culture (ORGCL)			
1.1 Clan Culture (CLAN)	4.56	.51	Very High
1.2 Hierarchy Culture (HIER)	4.72	.41	Very High
1.3 Achievement Culture (MARK)	4.27	.56	High
1.4 Adhocracy Culture (ADHO)	4.25	.55	High
Total Average	4.45	.51	High
2. Entrepreneurial Potential (ENTPT)			
Innovation (INOV)	3.88	.57	High
Risk Encounter (RISK)	4.05	.65	High
Commitment (COMT)	4.16	.59	High
Proactive Operations (PROA)	3.92	.69	High
Opportunity (OPPO)	3.85	.81	High
Total Average	3.97	.66	High
3. Food and Service Quality (QSFD)			
Tangibility (TNGB)	3.78	.97	High
Attention and Emphathy (ASEM)	3.89	.72	High
Cleanliness (CLEN)	4.04	.73	High
Food Quality (FDAL)	4.11	.60	High
Reliability (REBL)	4.07	.61	High
Responsive Need (RSPN)	4.43	.59	High
Total Average	4.05	.70	High
4. Management Innovation (MNGIN)			
Process Innovation (PRCS)	3.93	.74	High
Product Innovation (PRDT)	3.99	.68	High
Service Innovation (SRVC)	3.87	.61	High
Marketing Innovation (MKINV)	4.21	.58	High
Total Average	4.00	.65	High
5. Performance of Restaurant Businesses (PFRST)			
Financial Perspective (FNCL)	4.26	.55	High
Customer Perspective (CSTM)	4.11	.62	High
Internal Operation Perspective (INTN)	4.49	.59	High
Learning and Growth Perspective (LNGW)	4.17	.60	High
Total Average	4.26	.59	High

2nd Objective: From the research results regarding the analysis of the influence of variables on organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, and food and service quality that affect the performance of restaurant businesses in

the New Normal era and the parameter estimation of the influence of coefficients of observation variables undergone in the study in the structural equation modeling that is revised until being able to summarize the completed research, it was found that factors that affected the success of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era consisted of 1) Organizational Culture (ORGCL) that directly influenced the Entrepreneurial Potential (ENTPT) with an influence coefficient of .89 and the statistical significance at .05; 2) Organizational Culture (ORGCL) that directly influenced the Management Innovation (MNGIN) with an influence coefficient of .54 and the statistical significance at .05; 3) Organizational Culture (ORGCL) that directly influenced the Food and Service Quality (QSFD) with an influence coefficient of .83 and the statistical significance at .05; 4) Entrepreneurial Potential (ENTPT) that directly influenced the Management Innovation (MNGIN) with an influence coefficient of .50 and the statistical significance at .05; 5) Food and Service Quality (QSFD) that directly influenced the Management Innovation (MNGIN) with an influence coefficient of .85 and the statistical significance at .05; 6) Management Innovation (MNGIN) that directly influenced the Performance of Restaurant Businesses (PFRST) with an influence coefficient of .62 and the statistical significant at .05; 7) Entrepreneurial Potential

(ENTPT) that directly influenced the Performance of Restaurant Businesses (PFRST) with an influence coefficient of .54 and the statistical significance at .05 and 8) Food and Service Quality (QSFD) that directly influenced the Performance of Restaurant Businesses (PFRST) with an influence coefficient of .56 and the statistical significance at .05. Moreover, from the analysis results of the structural equation, the Entrepreneurial Potential (ENTPT), Food and Service Quality (QSFD), and Management Innovation (MNGIN) can mutually predict the Performance of Restaurant Businesses (PFRST) for 87 percent, as shown in Table 2.

Therefore, the data analysis results from Table 2 and Equation (1) – (4) can be used to describe the research objectives as follows:

1) Organizational Culture (ORGCL) directly influenced the Entrepreneurial Potential (ENTPT) with an influence coefficient of .89 and the statistical significance at .05, which can describe the variance or predict for 80 percent.

2) Organizational Culture (ORGCL) directly influenced the Food and Service Quality (QSFD) with an influence coefficient of .83 and the statistical significance at .05, which can describe the variance or predict for 69 percent.

Table 2 Parameter of Coefficient of Direct Influence, Indirect Influence, and Overall Influence

Depend Variables	R ²	Influence	Independent Variables			
			ENTPT	QSFD	MNGIN	ORGCL
ENTPT	.80	Directly	n/a	n/a	n/a	.89*(13.50)
		Indirectly	n/a	n/a	n/a	-
		Overall	n/a	n/a	n/a	.89*(13.50)
QSFD	.69	Directly	n/a	n/a	n/a	.83*(12.47)
		Indirectly	n/a	n/a	n/a	-
		Overall	n/a	n/a	n/a	.83*(12.47)
MNGIN	.93	Directly	.50*(9.01)	.85*(9.71)	n/a	.54*(7.12)
		Indirectly	n/a	n/a	n/a	.30*(5.99)
		Overall	.50*(9.01)	.85*(9.71)	n/a	.84*(16.32)
PFRST	.87	Directly	.54*(9.60)	.56*(9.39)	.62*(8.04)	n/a
		Indirectly	.30*(5.01)	.32*(6.72)	n/a	.68*(14.22)
		Overall	.84*(9.36)	.88*(6.39)	.62*(8.04)	.68*(14.22)

$\chi^2 = 361.62$ df = 190 p-value = .00000, $\chi^2 / df = 1.90$, RMSEA = .046, RMR = .020, SRMR = .044, CFI = .99, GFI = .93, AGFI = .91, CN = 289.57

Note: The value in parentheses is the t-test value. If the value is not between -1.96 to 1.96, it means that the value has a statistical significant at .05.

The data analysis result from Table 2 can be written into the structural equity as follows:

$$\text{ENTPT} = 0.89 \times \text{ORGCL}, \text{Errorvar} = 0.20, R^2 = 0.80 \quad (1)$$

$$\text{QSFD} = 0.83 \times \text{ORGCL}, \text{Errorvar} = 0.31, R^2 = 0.69 \quad (2)$$

$$\text{MNGIN} = 0.50 \times \text{ENTPT} + 0.85 \times \text{QSFD} + 0.54 \times \text{ORGCL}, \text{Errorvar} = 0.07, R^2 = 0.93 \quad (3)$$

$$\text{PFRST} = 0.54 \times \text{ENTPT} + 0.56 \times \text{QSFD} + 0.62 \times \text{MNGIN}, \text{Errorvar} = 0.13, R^2 = 0.87 \quad (4)$$

3) Entrepreneurial Potential (ENTPT), Food and Service Quality (QSFD), and Organizational Culture (ORGCL) directly influenced the Management Innovation (MNGIN) with an influence coefficient of .50, .85, and .54 and the statistical significance at .05, which can describe the variance or predict for 93 percent.

4) Entrepreneurial Potential (ENTPT), Food and Service Quality (QSFD), and Management Innovation (MNGIN) directly influenced the Performance of Restaurant Businesses (PFRST) with an influence coefficient of .54, .56, and .62 and the statistical significance at .05, which can describe the variance or predict for 87 percent.

The research results created a new body of knowledge that reflects the factors that are important to business operations in the New Normal era. These factors collectively offer a comprehensive and updated framework tailored to the challenges and opportunities of the New Normal era. They expand traditional business models by integrating post-pandemic priorities, such as safety and flexibility, and emphasize innovation and adaptability as survival mechanisms, including customer dynamics as part of performance measurement. This framework provides practical guidelines for restaurant entrepreneurs while contributing academically to evolving research in hospitality and crisis management, acting as guidelines for restaurant entrepreneurs when encountering unexpected developments in the future as follows:



Figure 1 Operational Styles of Restaurant Businesses in the New Normal Era

1) Reliability

Reliability affects food and service quality in respect to the necessity for restaurant businesses to

maintain the cleanliness and safety of the restaurants, quality of food and beverages, service quality of employees, providing honest information, and listening to and fixing any mistakes without delay. These factors will provide restaurant businesses with reliability and help to maintain their customer base in the long run.

2) Adhocracy Culture

The adhocracy culture relates to the culture that emphasizes flexibility and provides a sense of independence. All employees can take part in initiating, suggesting, and solving problems independently, which is suitable for rapidly changing businesses. The advantages are that it facilitates flexibility in management, enhances creativity, and increases work efficiency.

3) Product Innovation

Product innovation in restaurant businesses is an important factor that helps restaurant businesses to survive by increasing the opportunity to reach customers, and creates new experiences for customers as well as enhancing competitive ability and providing an opportunity to develop restaurant businesses to become outstanding and unique.

4) Commitment

The commitment of restaurant entrepreneurs is an important factor that affects the success and sustainability of their business under an uncertain and rapidly changing situation, causing the entrepreneurs to be committed to get beyond the obstacles and adapt and adjust the business structure to suit the current situation.

5) Customer Performance

The performance success of restaurant businesses during COVID-19 is very important. If restaurants have a good customer base, the customers will support and help the restaurants during arduous times, which will affect sales volume, retention in all channels, and word of mouth, which can lead to a sustainable business. Moreover, the restaurants need to maintain their old customer base and create satisfaction for new customers as well as adapt themselves according to the customer needs, which will lead the business to succeed and grow sustainably.

Discussion

From the research results under the 1st objective, it was found that the variable levels of organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, food and service quality, and performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era obtained the average of 3.97-4.45, which was in a high level. The

organizational culture obtained the most average values, followed by performance of restaurant businesses, food and service quality, management innovation, and entrepreneurial potential respectively. This conformed to Osman et al. (2023) in the study of the Influence of Organizational Culture on Constructing Firms' Performance: The Mediating Roles of Innovation and Marketing Capabilities, which found that organizational culture affected a company's performance. This also aligned with Noone et al. (2024), who stated that the adhocracy culture helps with creating product innovation that rapidly increased during a crisis, thus helping the organization to survive. Villanueva et al. (2023) measured the service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty of fast-food restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was found that customer satisfaction towards service quality was in a high level. Also, Mulady & Sumadi (2023) studied the influence of service quality, product quality, price, and innovation towards customer loyalty at a satay restaurant in Yogyakarta with customer satisfaction as the mediator variable. According to the study's findings, service quality, product quality, price, and innovation had a positive impact and were significant to the satisfaction of customers in a satay restaurant in Yogyakarta, revealing that service quality was the most influential. Ramadani et al. (2019) conducted a study on Product Innovation and Efficiency of a Company in the Transitional Economy Era: Multi-Stage Evaluation Approach, Production Innovation Affecting the Efficiency of a Company during Transitional Economy, and Innovation for Specific Product for Assessment of Impact on Innovation Affecting the Efficiency of a Company. The research results indicated that product innovation had a positive impact on the performance of a company during the transitional economy (Dijk, 2020) in a variety of situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which can ignite the creativity, act as the new innovation impetus of entrepreneurs, and create new concepts and opportunities to generate income to escape from a crisis. Wila et al. (2018) studied the modern entrepreneurial characteristics that affected the business operations through competitive advantages of a start-up business. It was found that the potential of modern entrepreneurs had the most impact.

From the research results under the 2nd objective, it was found that the analysis results of variables of organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, and food and service quality directly influenced the performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era with the statistical

significance at .05 by which all variables can predict the performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era for 87 percent. This conformed to previous researches, namely Rostain (2021); Yumuk & Kurgun (2020); Tran (2021), which found that relationships with organizational cultures influenced the entrepreneurial potential. Rahman et al. (2021), Grover et al. (2022), Haffar et al. (2023), and Noone et al. (2024) found that organizational culture influenced management innovation, which in turn affected innovation, performance and the ability to create innovations for competitive advantages and efficiency through new products and services. Additionally, Alshemmari (2020), Aburayya et al. (2020), and Mulady and Sumadi (2023) found that organizational culture and food and service quality were related. Kee & Rahman (2020) found that entrepreneurial potential and management innovation was related. Suwannarak et al. (2023) found that the factor that directly influenced the food quality was management innovation. The relationship between management innovation and the performance of restaurant businesses adhered to Dijk (2020); Ibidunni et al. (2021). The relationship between entrepreneurial potential and the performance of restaurant businesses conformed to Wongwirach et al. (2020) who had studied entrepreneurial characteristics, business networks, organizational culture, and innovations that influenced the performance of community enterprises of food processing and food production in Thailand in which it was found that business networks influenced the organizational structure. Also, it was found that entrepreneurial characteristics, which were risk encounters, proactive operations, and commitment, influenced the operation.

Suggestions

Following the research results, the research recommends as follows:

1. Recommendations from the Research

From the research results under the 1st objective, it was found that factors affecting the performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era, which were organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, and food and service quality, were in a high level. Therefore, the restaurant entrepreneurs and relevant sectors should apply the said factors with their business operations during arduous times that might occur in the future, in order to be prepared and respond to these changes.

From the research results under the 2nd objective, it was found that the analysis results of variables regarding organizational culture, entrepreneurial potential, management innovation, and food and service quality directly influenced the performance of restaurant businesses in the New Normal era. Therefore, the restaurant entrepreneurs and relevant sectors should set the direction for organizational culture, an important matter that will lead the organization to become successful in all eventualities. The entrepreneurial potential in various aspects, namely regarding innovation, risk encounter, commitment, proactive operations, and opportunity, is an important factor for organizational development. Food and service quality is the top priority as the current consumers have expressed an importance, especially in terms of confidence in service and food quality, with respect to cleanliness and safety. Management innovation is the adjustment of entrepreneurs, regarding process innovation, product innovation, service innovation, and market innovation. Entrepreneurs must adjust all these factors to keep up with changes of technologies in the current era and are factors that affect business survival.

2. Recommendation for Future Research

For business operations in the changing era, entrepreneurs should study the ESG in which E: Environment refers to taking care of the environment; S: Social means responsibility to the society; and G: Governance relates to a good corporate governance. These are the factors that measure the sustainability and morality of a business operation, helping to create reliability and sustainability in any business, and are recommended as issues to which restaurant entrepreneurs should accord due attention.

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