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ไทย : กรณีศึกษาร้านอาหารบัดดี้ลอร์ด ถนนข้าวสาร

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เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของ
การศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ
พฤศจิกายน 2007

A STUDY OF FOREIGN CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION
AND EXPECTATION TOWARD THAI RESTAURANTS: A CASE STUDY OF
BUDDY LODGE RESTAURANT ON KHAO SARN ROAD

MASTER'S PROJECT
BY
WORAWAN CHANCHIEW

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication
at Srinakharinwirot University
November 2007

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จันทร์คล้าย

สารนิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาระดับความพึงพอใจของลูกค้าชาวต่างชาติที่มีต่อการให้บริการของร้านอาหารบัดดี้ลอร์ด และเพื่อสำรวจคุณลักษณะของร้านอาหารไทยที่ชาวต่างชาติให้ความสำคัญในการพิจารณาเลือกใช้บริการ โดยใช้วิธีการสุ่มตัวอย่างจากลูกค้าชาวต่างชาติ 50 คนที่มารับประทานอาหารที่ร้านอาหารบัดดี้ ลอร์ด ถนนข้าวสาร ในเดือนกรกฎาคม 2550 โดยกลุ่มตัวอย่างตอบแบบสอบถาม และผู้วิจัยนำข้อมูลที่ได้รับมาวิเคราะห์ผลโดยใช้ค่าร้อยละ

ผลการศึกษาพบว่าโดยทั่วไปความพึงพอใจของลูกค้าชาวต่างชาติต่อการให้บริการในด้านต่างๆของร้านอาหารบัดดี้ ลอร์ดอยู่ในระดับสูง โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งในด้านคุณภาพและรสชาติของอาหารและเครื่องดื่ม ด้านราคาและความคุ้มค่า และความรวดเร็วในการให้บริการและความสะอาด ทั้งนี้ลูกค้าชาวต่างชาติทุกคนมีความเห็นว่าคุณภาพของอาหารและเครื่องดื่ม ความสะอาด ความรวดเร็วในการให้บริการ และรสชาติของอาหารเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่สุดในการตัดสินใจเลือกใช้บริการของร้านอาหารไทย

A STUDY OF FOREIGN CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION
AND EXPECTATION TOWARD THAI RESTAURANTS: A CASE STUDY OF
BUDDY LODGE RESTAURANT ON KHAO SARN ROAD

AN ABSTRACT
BY
WORAWAN CHANCHIEW

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication
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Worawan Chanchiew. (2007). *A Study of Foreign Customers' Satisfaction and Expectation toward Thai Restaurants: A Case Study of Buddy Lodge Restaurant on Khao Sarn Road*. Master's project, M.A. (Business English for International Communication). Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University. Project Advisor: Ms. Sopin Chantakloi.

The objectives of this study were to find out the satisfaction level of the foreign customers when dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant and to explore the aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants that the foreign customers consider important when dining out. Questionnaires were used in the survey to collect data from fifty foreign customers dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant on Khao Sarn Road in July 2007. The data were analyzed using percentage.

The findings of the study revealed that overall foreign customers were very satisfied with the service aspects employed at Buddy Lodge Restaurant, especially in terms of quality and taste of food and beverage, price and value, prompt and attentive service, and cleanliness. The findings also showed that the foreign customers considered the quality of food and beverage, the cleanliness, the prompt and attentive service, and the taste of menu items the most important aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants when dining out.

The master's Project Advisor, Chair of Business English for International Communication Program, and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Master's Project as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakarinwirot University.

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This Master's Project has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakarinwirot University.

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November....., 2007

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

At present, the hospitality industry or the service industry plays an important role in the global society and generates a large sum of income to many countries in the world. According to Williams A. (2002: 21), service industries are being a crucial part in developed economics and now account for over 70 percent of employment in many instances. Philip Kotler, John Bowen, and James Makens (1996: 8) mention that the hospitality industry is one of the world's major industries. In the United States, it is the second largest employment, providing jobs for approximately 10 million people. In more than half the 50 states, the hospitality industry is the largest industry with total sales of 400 billion per years. Robert D. Reid and David C. Bojanic (2001: 33) also indicate that the growth in the service sector of the worldwide economy has been phenomenal in the last two decades. One of the examples is the services in the United States that currently account for more than 75 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) which is a popular measure of an economy's productivity.

Among different kinds of service business, the food service industry becomes one of the most important service industries that influence people lifestyles. People gradually have no time to prepare or cook food by themselves since they have to rush to work early in the morning and come back home late at night. Moreover, those who want to change their lifestyle will probably try to taste new dishes at different restaurants. Therefore, dining out becomes popular. Accordingly, John Fuller and David Kirk (1991: 6) assert that dining in hotels and restaurants in the twentieth century has become fashionable as a family activity. Moreover, Donald E. Lundoerg (1989: 211) asserts that lifestyle changes have also been important for restaurant sales since people turn to eat away from home and feel that eating out at the restaurants is something to be deserved even it is something out of necessity.

For years, the restaurant business in Thailand, like some other countries, has grown up very rapidly among a lot of competitors throughout the countries. However, due to the economic crisis in 1997, restaurant businesses have had a negative impact since people have considered cooking and dining at home by themselves or selecting restaurants which can offer them a much lower price when dining out. Consequently, small restaurants offering lower price become one of the best economical alternatives

for most consumers. Therefore, plenty of investors have tended to operate restaurant business, especially a small restaurant that the owner can maintain competitive advantage by a variety of menus, convenient location, and low price (Narong Rujinan.2005: 14). Convincingly, according to Kasikorn Research Center (Kasikorn Research Center Co., Ltd.: 2007), the value of the restaurant business in Thailand in 2007 will increase about 21,000 million baht and the expansion rate will increase to 8.0%.

In addition, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs record, Thai government has been promoting Thailand as “Kitchen of the World” since Thailand is the country with excellent resources of raw cooking ingredients as well as an effective production system. Additionally, the rising recognition of Thai cuisine is due to the fact that most western people today are more health-conscious. They realize that having the traditional-western style of food in their diet can be critically harmful to their health due to an excessive amount of fat and cholesterol. Therefore, Thai food has become popular among those who want to change their eating habit and look for healthier alternatives like Thai food. Thai food is probably considered lighter since most of Thai food consists of many kinds of vegetables. Furthermore, the herbs and spices used as

Thai common ingredients greatly offer medical properties to the consumers.

Accordingly, Thai cuisine can easily beat gourmets from all over the world with their unique flavors and tastes (Thai Portal Co.,Ltd.2006: Online).

As mentioned above, it is a great chance for Thai people, especially the restaurant business owners, to promote Thai food as well as to enhance Thailand's reputation as one of the tourist destinations offering a variety of exotic food.

Furthermore, when people come to Thailand, one of the first things they want to do is to have some genuine Thai food (Panrit 2007: Online). Obviously, Bangkok is one of tourist attractions in Thailand where tourists can visit plenty of restaurants offering different styles of Thai cuisines. Among the most crowded streets in Bangkok, Khao Sarn Road is very outstanding to the tourists since it provides many kinds of business such as stalls presenting different kinds of Thai products, guest houses, travel agencies, Internet cafes, bars and restaurants; these businesses keep the road busy from mornings till nights. Convincingly, according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Khao Sarn Road can accommodate 8,000 tourists a day, and the number of tourists staying in the guest houses rises to 10,000 a day. Restaurants consequently become a promising as well as competitive business on Khao Sarn Road. Therefore, the

researcher is interested in studying and exploring the restaurant business in this area.

The researcher spent a couple of months observing the restaurant business on Khao

Sarn Road and noticed that Buddy Lodge Restaurant is one of the most crowded

places that is always full of customers almost everyday. This restaurant seems to be

very successful among the others.

Nevertheless, the key to success in restaurant business is not only providing

good food or working on marketing strategies like sale promotion or offering low price.

Focusing on creating positive and excellent service aspects to meet or exceed the

customers' expectations is also crucial. Good service aspects can be exemplified as

providing the customers with a great experience of high quality of food, improving speed

of service, and so on. Moreover, one of the most important factors that needed to be

concerned in the business is customers. According to Philip Kotler, John Bowen and

James Makens (1996: 3), today the customer is king, and satisfying customers is a

priority in most businesses. They also point out that the purpose of a business is to

create and maintain profitable customers. In addition, customers are attracted and

retained when their needs are met. Not only do they return to the same restaurants, but

they also talk favorably to others about their satisfaction. Therefore, customers' satisfaction leading to profit is the central goal for hospitality marketing.

Accordingly, this research aims to study the service aspects employed at Buddy Lodge Restaurant that meet or exceed the customers' expectation. Also, the customers' satisfaction toward the service while dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant will be analyzed. Additionally, the study will explore the aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants that the foreign customers concern most when dining out. The result of the study will benefit the business owners who are concerned about the effective service aspects using in restaurant which lead to a great success in business.

2. Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To measure the satisfaction level of foreign customers when dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant.
2. To explore the aspects concerning characteristic of Thai restaurants that foreign customers consider important when dining out.

3. Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the foreign customers' satisfaction levels toward the service aspects employed at Buddy Lodge Restaurant?

2. What aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants do foreign customers consider important when dining out?

4. Significance of the Study

This study will reveal the effective service aspects using in a Thai restaurant that meets or exceeds the customers' satisfaction in terms of design and layout of the restaurant, quality and taste of food and beverage, advertising and promotion, friendly and attentive service, reasonable price and value for money, good atmosphere, cleanliness, professional communication to the customers, courtesy of staff. Also, the characteristics of Thai restaurants that foreign customers consider important when dining out will be explored and analyzed. The findings of the study will be beneficial and used as guidelines for restaurant owners in Thailand who are improving their service concepts to meet or exceed the satisfaction and expectation of the foreign customers.

5. Scope of the Study

Buddy Lodge Restaurant has been one of the top restaurant businesses serving foreign tourists on Khao Sarn Road for over ten years. From the researcher's pilot observation, this restaurant is always daily crowded with foreign customers. In addition, the interview with the restaurant owners also convinced that this restaurant is popular among tourists visiting Khao Sarn Road and several of them frequently dine here. Therefore, this research is aimed to study the satisfaction and expectation of foreign customers when dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant on Khao Sarn Road in Bangkok. The questionnaires emphasizing customers' satisfaction will be randomly distributed to fifty foreign customers who dine at Buddy Lodge Restaurant during July, 2007.

6. Definition of Terms

Terminologies in this study are defined as follows:

6.1 Hospitality industry

Hospitality industry refers to the provision of accommodation, food, and beverage to the customers who are away from home.

6.2 Customers' satisfaction

Customers' satisfaction refers to the customers' overall feeling of contentment of a customer interaction with the organizations' performances.

6.3 Customers' expectation

Customers' expectation refers to the customers' personal vision of the result of products or services' performance that will come from his or her experience.

6.4 Service

Service refers to a transaction relationship between a providing organization and its customers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides related secondary data concerning service aspects in restaurant and customer satisfaction from the textbooks. This research reviews four areas as follow: (1) Definitions of hospitality industry (2) The service theories (3) Satisfaction theories (4) Related previous studies on customer satisfaction

1. Definitions of Hospitality Industry

The hospitality industry is made up of organizations that offer guest courteous, professional food, drink, and lodging service, alone or in combination. Beyond that, the industry has been defined in many different ways. An expanded definitions might also include theme park, gaming, cruise ship, trade show, fair, meeting, planning and convention organizations (Robert C. Ford & Cherrill P. Heaton. 2000: 4).

According to Nail Wearne and Alison Marrison (1996: 107), hospitality is a series of products which have to be customer-oriented to work. The business owners

need to provide a better experience for the customers and the only way to succeed in business is to think about strategies all the time; to think about pleasing, appealing and the surprising ways the business owners can make at their place a better experience for customers.

2. The Service Theories

2.1 Definition of Services

According to Robert D.Reid and david C. Bojanic (2001: 29), services are different from products, which are tangible. In contrast, they are intangible. A service is not a physical goods, but it is the performance of an act or a deed. This performance often requires consumers to be presented during the production or delivery of the service. Moreover, service industries, including hospitality and travel, are actually selling consumers an experience. Service employees can be exemplified as front desk clerks, housekeeping, staff, hostesses, waiters, car rental agents, flight attendants, and travel agent who are responsible for creating positive experiences for customers (Robert D. Reid & David C. Bojanic. 2001: 33).

Robert C. Ford & Cherrill P. Heaton (2000) explained that a common way to think of service is as the intangible part of a transaction relationship between a provided organization and its customer, client, or guest. Another way to think of service is strictly from the customer's point of view rather than the organization.

In addition, it is service excellence which gives an organization a competitive advantage. Outstanding service makes a lot of money for a hospitality establishment (Neil Wearne & Alison Morrison. 1996: 86).

2.2 The Service Concept in Restaurant Business

Speed of Service

According to William L. Kahrl (1997: 133), complaints about service in the industry center are on slow or inadequate service. Kahrl suggested that service must be not only fast but complete. For example, serving a cup of coffee without the cream or a spoon will displease the guest who wants cream and sugar in his coffee. Serving entrees to three people in a party of four and telling the fourth that his meal will come later is disturbing. Kahrl also claims that even you run a fast-food operation or a gourmet restaurant fast and complete service will both satisfy the guest and increase sales and profits.

In addition, Lynn Van Der Wagen & Anne Goenettileke (2004: 11) stated that response times are necessary; in the restaurant setting the customer who has just arrived wants immediate attention, while the customer waiting for the dessert menu is seldom in such a hurry. It is the manager's responsibility to ensure that all staff do their best to understand and cater for all customers' needs.

Cleanliness

Marian C. Spears (1995: 408-409) acknowledged that no one considers cleaning as a profit-maker for a place, and it can either earn a reputation for an establishment or ruin one. Most of us expect cleanliness as a norm, from the place where we stay and eat. When it is obviously dirty, the establishment has failed to meet customers' expectations.

Moreover, Spears also claimed that employee personal hygiene and good food are basics of a satisfaction program in a food service facility. One major risk is that unsanitary employees can contaminate food products that go from receiving to service. Therefore, food service managers should emphasize the importance of food safety and sanitation to the employee before hiring and then after hiring.

Product Quality and Price

According to Lynn Van Der Wagen and Anne Goenettilleke (2004: 12), in the hospitality industry, product includes meals, beds, furnishings, business centers, gymnasiums, swimming pools and the like. Quality expectations of the product offered are generally linked to price". Food products, for example, can differ markedly. Some restaurants offer menu items that are prepared from only the freshness and finest ingredients which results in an exquisite product at a high price. Other restaurants use packaged, frozen and bulk foods in their products, which sell for a lower price. A customer may choose the products and price ranges of both types of restaurant at different times.

Quality and Appeal

William L. Kahrl (1197: 134-135) demonstrated that much of the quality and appeal of the food is controlled by the service kitchen often more than by preparation area. The finest most carefully prepared item will be ruined if the service kitchen cannot finish it off and serve it correctly. Kahrl suggested the guidelines for a successful method of cooking which mentioned below:

Cook and finish off foods in small quantities throughout serving period. Food prepared too far in advance will lose tester flavor, and eye appeal. Nothing is worse than dried-looking food that has been sitting on the hot-food table for hours.

Serve “hot foods hot and cold foods cold”; this is such a cliché that it is easy to forget it is a good rule.

Be sure all service ware is clean and free from chips, cracks, and other signs of wear.

Arrange food carefully and neatly on serving dishes.

Garnish each serving with something colorful as a finishing touch.

Set up specifications and guidelines for finishing off foods just as you do in the preparation kitchen.

Robert C. Ford and Cherill P. Heaton (2000: 66) expressed that an excellent strategy emphasizes quality. Without a commitment to quality, nothing else matters. In addition, any hospitality organization can write a mission statement by committing the organization to providing the customer with a great experience of high quality.

2.3 Convivial Aspects

Convivial aspects are the crucial part of service sector, according to Robert

Christie Mill (1998), the convivial dimension of service is made up of:

Attitude

Attitude is the first element of the convivial dimension of service, refers to the way people act, think, and feel is expressed through the way they act and the things they say. A smile is a visible manifestation of a positive attitude. Therefore, a standard could be set that in all interactions with customers, employees should exhibit a smile before talking.

Body Language

People communicate much more through nonverbal communication than through the words that are used. One point that is usually made is the desirability to maintain eye contact with the person being spoken to. This can be another standard of quality service.

Tone of Voice

The second most important way which people communicate is through the inflections used in speaking. Although it is difficult to measure, standards can be set to

ensure that servers communicate in an enthusiastic, friendly, and in upbeat way, depending on the type of atmosphere desired by management.

Tact

It involves saying the correct thing at right time. Standards can be set regarding proper etiquette for various situations.

Naming Names

One way that service people can communicate individually to customers is to call them by name. Standards can be set such that an individual is called by name when being seated by the host as well as when a credit card or check is being used to pay for the meal.

Attentiveness

It implies that people are treated as individuals, not just numbers. Servers can be told to inquire. Management would want the server to follow up on the inquiry to make whatever adjustments were necessary to provide individualized treatment.

Guidance

To offer guidance, service personnel would have to be familiar with all the dishes on the menu, including the ingredient and the method of preparation and suggest items appropriate to the various perceived needs of the customers.

Suggestive Selling

The server's job is to expose customers to items that might enhance the experience of the meal. Server should ask all customers if they would like appetizers, drinks, desserts and other specialty items.

Problem Solving

Service providers need to solve any problems that might arise and identify any problem that customer are having. This provides them with the opportunity to solve this problem and ensure a satisfied customer.

3. The Satisfaction Theory

3.1 Definition of Satisfaction

In general, satisfaction is a person's feelings of pressure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome in relation to

his or her expectations. If the performance matches the expectations, the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds expectation, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted (Phillip Kotler. 2003: 61).

According to Yvette Reisinger & Lindsey W. Turner (2003: 176), satisfaction refers to the comparison of expectation with experiences in terms of performance as when experiences differ negatively from expectations, dissatisfaction occurs. Reisinger & Tuner also asserted that satisfaction results only when the expectations are met or exceeded, and the best way to satisfy customers is to exceed their expectations.

3.2 Meeting Customer Expectations

Buyers form their expectations from past buying experience, friends and associated advice, and marketers and competitors information and promises. If marketers raise expectations too high, the buyer is likely to be disappointed. However, if the company sets expectation too low, it won't attract enough buyers even it will satisfy those who do buy (Phillip Kotler. 2003: 62).

Robert D. Reid & David C. Bojanic (2001: 45) stated that customer's satisfaction occurs when a firm's service, as perceived by customers, meets or exceeds their expectation.

Additionally, Robert Christie Mill (1998: 22) pointed out that customers increasingly have higher expectations, demanding more attention and friendlier service.

He also noted that most customer seem satisfied with food quality, dining area cleanliness, comfort of the atmosphere, freshness of the ingredients, and portion size.

Robert C. Ford and Cherrill P. Heaton (2000: 16) explained that the major responsibility for fulfilling the expectations created by the marketing department and by the past experiences of repeat guest lies with the operations side of the organization. If what guests get falls short of what they have been led to expect or what they have learnt to expect, they will be unhappy. They will not think back later on a delightful, carefully planned guest experience; they will remember the events surrounding the poor service as a bad experience. Ford and Heaton also presented that to preserve its reputation and customer base, the hospitality organization must meet or exceed the expectations of its guest. If it cannot or does not, it must change its marketing strategy and create difference guest expectations or change its service product or service the delivery system so that it can meet present guest expectation.

3.3 Customer Value and Satisfaction

Customer Perceived Value

According to Phillip Kotler (2003: 60), customers will buy from the firm that they see as offering the highest perceived value. Customer perceived value (PV) is the difference between the prospective alternatives. Total customer value is the perceived monetary value of the bundle of economic, functional, and psychological benefits customers expect from a given market offering. Total customer cost is the bundle of costs customers expect to incur in evaluating, obtaining, using, and disposing of the given market offering.

Delivering High Customer Value

The key to generating high customer loyalty is to deliver high customer value, a company must design a competitively superior value proposition aimed at a specific market segment, backed by a superior value-delivery systems.

Basically, the value proposition is a statement about the resulting experience customers will gain from the company's market offering and from their relationship with the supplier. The brand must represent a promise about the total experience customers can expect. Whether the promise is kept depends on the company's ability to manage

its value-delivery systems. The value-delivery systems include all the experiences the customer will have on the way to obtaining and using the offering (Phillip Kotler 2003: 63).

Additionally, customer satisfaction with a purchase depends on the product's performance relative to a buyer's expectations. A customer might experience various degrees of satisfaction. If the product's performance falls short of expectation, the customer is dissatisfied. If performance matched expectation, the customer is satisfied. If performance exceeds expectations, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted (Phillip Kotler, John Bowen, & James Makens. 1996: 345).

4. Related Previous Studies on customer satisfaction

Many studies worked on satisfaction issues in restaurants. These include service aspects and factors that influence the satisfaction of customers in restaurants.

The studies on customers' satisfaction in the restaurants are as follows:

Pimswat Kamolsiri(2002) worked on the master's project entitled "A Study of Customer Satisfaction Toward KFC Restaurants in Bangkok". The result indicated that there was a significant difference between customer expectation and perception toward

KFC Restaurants as well as when segmented by cleanliness, hospitality, accuracy, product, and speed of service. Maintenance was the only factor that indicated no difference between customer satisfaction and perception. Moreover, the results showed that customers having different age category, gender, educational level, occupation, and income level differed in their expectation toward KFC Restaurants. The research also found that there was a significant difference in customer perception when segmented by gender. In contrast, the research indicated that the customer perception when segmented by age level, educational level, occupation, and income level were similar.

Panita Tussanapirom (2004) worked on the master project entitled "Customers' satisfaction with the service of Chester's Grill, Lotus Rama 4 Branch". She found that the customers were satisfied with the service of Chester's Grill, Lotus Rama 4 was at high level for overall aspects and each aspect, except the price was a moderate level. There was no statistical significant difference for the satisfaction with the service in overall aspects from the customers with different sex, marital status, income and different occupation. There was statistical significant difference for the satisfaction at level 0.1 in overall aspects from the customers with the different age and education.

A research conducted at MK Restaurant by Sirprapa Thaweethammawut (2006)

revealed 5 factors affecting customers' satisfaction to the services of MK Restaurant.

The customers were satisfied with service approaching, physical characteristics, staff

service, crockery cleanliness, and payment service. Overall customers' satisfaction to

the qualities of service of the 5 factors at MK Restaurants were statistically significant

(0.01). Gender, education, occupation, and income have no statistically significant

difference (0.05) to overall customers' satisfaction to the services of MK restaurant

whereas age and marital status had a statistically significant difference (0.05).

Sirichai Pianprasert (2006) studied about factors affecting selective behavior of

foreign tourists towards restaurants in Pattaya. He found that the majority of foreign

tourists preferred eating out with their friends who had taken part in choosing

restaurants. Most of these tourists liked restaurants on seaside. The main aim of the

foreign tourists was to choose any restaurants in Pattaya in order to have a party with

their friends. Personnel seemed as the problem found by most of them. For selective

behavior, these foreigners focused on services of restaurants, and quick dish and buffet

were favorite types of food for foreign tourists.

The previous studies are either focusing on the satisfaction of Thai customers or the selective behavior and this study differs from them as the researcher will study the service and the characteristics in the restaurant business focusing on the foreign customers' satisfaction. The researcher aims to pinpoint the outstanding service and characteristics that can be a guideline for the restaurant business owners to improve or create a proper service that meet or exceed the customers' satisfaction.

CHAPETR 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology of the research. It contains five parts; subjects of the study, procedures of the study, research instrument, data collection and data analysis. The details are as follows:

1. Subjects of the Study

The subjects of this study consists of fifty foreign customers dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant on Khao Sarn Road in Bangkok. They were selected randomly to complete the questionnaires.

2. Procedures of the Study

The primary data in this study was derived from responses to questionnaires distributed to a sample group of fifty foreign customers, both male and female of different ages and nationalities. The researcher planed to distribute a set of

questionnaires to the target group while they were dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant in July, 2007.

3. Research Instrument

From April to June 2007, the researcher conducted a pilot study via observations and interviews to select a representative of Thai restaurants on Khao Sarn road for this research. From the researcher's observations, Buddy lodge Restaurant is one of the most crowded places daily visited by a variety of foreign customers. Also, the interview with the restaurant's owner convinced that Buddy Lodge Restaurant has been one of the successful restaurants on this road for years.

The researcher designed the early draft of the questionnaire by using the information gathered from the interview and adapting some parts of the questionnaire created by Heung Chul Oh in 1995. The model questionnaire was used in the research entitled "An Empirical Study of the Relationship between Restaurant Image and Customer Loyalty".

To standardize the questionnaire, the researcher distributed the first version of the questionnaire to five foreign customers dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant as a pilot

study. The feedback from this first draft of the questionnaire were used to improve a better version of the final questionnaire. Consequently, some irrelevant items were excluded, and any ambiguous wording was clarified.

The early drafts of the questionnaire were designed in accordance with the objectives and were revised according to the pilot survey. After that, the final draft was used in the study.

The final draft of the questionnaire consists of three parts, each designed with a specific purpose as follow:

Part I: Personal data of the respondents.

This part aimed to gather the general information of the respondents.

Part II: The satisfaction of the foreign customers when dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant.

This part measured the foreign customers' satisfaction levels toward Buddy Lodge Restaurant.

Part III: The characteristics of Thai restaurants that the foreign customers consider important when dining out.

This part explored the characteristics of Thai restaurants that the foreign customers consider important when dining out.

4. Data Collection

Fifty foreign customers who dined at Buddy Lodge Restaurant on Khao Sarn Road in Bangkok were randomly asked to complete the questionnaire during July, 2007. Afterward, the questionnaires were verified and analyzed.

5. Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaires were compiled and analyzed by use of percentages. The findings were presented in tables followed by explanations in Chapter 4. Conclusions, recommendations for further study and limitation were offered in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the data analysis. Details of the data derived from the completed questionnaires which are divided into three parts: general information of the respondents, the satisfaction of the foreign customers toward the services employed at Buddy Lodge restaurant, and the aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants that the foreign customers consider most important when dining out.

Tables are designed to show the findings in percentage, and a brief discussion is presented below each table.

PART 1: General Information of the Respondents

Fifty sets of questionnaire were distributed to the foreign customers who dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant on Khao Sarn Road in Bangkok during July 2007. Details of general information of the respondents are presented in Tables 1-5

Table 1 Gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	28	56%
Female	22	44%
Total	50	100%

From Table1, it presents that most of the respondents (56%) were male. The remaining (44%) were female.

Table 2 Age

Age	Number	Percentage
20-25 years old	2	4%
26-30 years old	6	12%
31-35 years old	14	28%
36-40 years old	18	36%
41-45 years old	9	18%
More than 50 years old	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Table 2 demonstrated that the majority of the respondents (36%) were 36-40 years old. 28% was 31-35 years old whereas 18% was 41-45 years old. Another 12% was 26-30 years old whilst 4% of the respondents was 20-25 years old and 2% was over 50.

Table 3 Nationality

Nationality	Number	Percentage
Japan	3	6%
China	2	4%
Korea	2	4%
Taiwan	4	8%
Hong Kong	2	4%
Vietnam	1	2%
Malaysia	1	2%
India	2	4%
Indonesia	2	4%
Philippines	3	6%
Singapore	2	4%
The United States	6	12%
Mexico	1	2%
England	4	8%
Germany	3	6%
Italy	2	4%
France	2	4%
Switzerland	2	4%
Ireland	1	2%
Hungary	1	2%
Russia	1	2%
Ukraine	1	2%
Israel	1	2%
Brunei	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Regarding the nationalities, the foreign customers who dined at Buddy Lodge

Restaurant came from 24 different countries. The majority of the foreign customers

(12%) were American followed by Taiwanese (8%), and British (8%). 6% of the

following countries were Japanese, Filipino, and German. There were two customers from each of these countries: China, Korea, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Singapore, Italy, France, and Switzerland while there was one respondent from Vietnam, Malaysia, Mexico, Ireland, Hungary, Russia, Ukraine, Israel, and Brunei.

Table 4 Amount Spending for a Meal at a Thai Restaurant

Amount spending for a meal at a Thai Restaurant	Number	Percentage
Less than \$ 15.00	1	2%
\$ 16.00 to \$ 20.00	6	12%
\$ 21.00 to \$ 25.00	8	16%
\$ 26.00 to \$ 30.00	19	38%
More than \$ 30.00	16	32%
Total	50	100%

Most of the foreign customers (38%) spent \$26 to \$30 for a meal at any Thai restaurants whereas 32% of them spent more than \$30. The findings also indicate that 16%, 12%, and 2% of the foreign customers spent \$21 to \$25, \$16 to \$20, and less than \$15 for a meal at Thai restaurants, respectively.

Table 5 Frequency of Dining at a Thai Restaurant while Visiting Thailand

Frequency of dining at a Thai Restaurant while visiting Thailand	Number	Percentage
More than once a week	20	40%
About once a week	16	32%
About every two weeks	8	16%
About every three weeks	3	6%
About once a month	3	6%
Total	50	100%

In terms of frequency of dining out while visiting Thailand, the majority of the foreign customers (40%) dined at Thai restaurants more than once a week while 32% of them did this about once a week. 16% of them went to a Thai restaurant about every two weeks whereas 6% of them visited Thai restaurants about every three weeks.

Another 4% of them dined at a Thai restaurant about once a month while. Obviously, the majority of the respondents (72%) frequency dined at Thai restaurants at least once a week.

PART 2 : The Satisfaction of the Foreign Customers toward the Service Employed

at Buddy Lodge Restaurant

This section presents the satisfaction of the foreign customers in different levels toward the services employed at Buddy Lodge Restaurant. The service aspects explored are prompt/attentive, décor/design/layout, exterior design, quality/taste of food, advertising/promotion, reputation, atmosphere, price/value, location, cleanliness, communication of staff, courtesy of staff, uniform of staff, variety of menu selection, lighting, music, noise level, and comfortable seating. The results of this part are demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2 The Satisfaction Level of the Foreign Customers toward the Service**Employed at Buddy Lodge Restaurant**

Item	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Very Poor		Total N/P	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Prompt/Attentive service	41	82%	9	18%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Decor/Design/Layout	38	76%	12	24%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Exterior design	31	62%	19	38%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Quality/Taste of food	48	96%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Advertising/Promotion	0	0%	16	32%	34	68%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Reputation	0	0%	43	86%	7	14%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Atmosphere	39	78%	11	22%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Price/Value	44	88%	6	12%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Location	4	8%	24	48%	22	44%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Cleanliness	40	80%	9	18%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Communication of staff	8	16%	33	66%	9	18%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Courtesy of staff	22	44%	21	42%	7	14%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Uniform of staff	1	2%	47	94%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Variety of menu selection	7	14%	42	84%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Lighting	22	44%	28	56%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Music	29	58%	21	42%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Noise level	2	4%	7	14%	41	82%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Comfortable seating	0	0%	14	28%	36	72%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%

In terms of prompt and attentive service employed at Buddy Lodge Restaurant, the majority of the foreign customers (82%) were “very satisfied” whilst 18% of them was “satisfied” with this.

In terms of decor, design, and layout of Buddy Lodge Restaurant, most of the foreign customers (76%) were “very satisfied”. Another 24% of them was “satisfied” with this aspect.

In terms of exterior design, 62% of the foreign customers indicated that it was “excellent” while 38% of them stated that it was “good”.

According to the quality and the taste of food and beverage, the majority of the foreign customers (96%) were “very satisfied” whereas 4% of them was “satisfied” with this.

Regarding the advertising and promotion, most of the foreign customers (68%) felt “neutral” while another 32% of them was “satisfied”.

Regarding the reputation of Buddy Lodge Restaurant, 86% of the foreign customers stated that it was “good”. Another 14% of them pointed out that it was “fair”

Concerning the atmosphere of Buddy Lodge Restaurant, 78% of the foreign customers was “very satisfied” whilst 22% of them was “satisfied”.

In terms of price and value, the majority of the foreign customers (88%) were “very satisfied” whereas 12% of them was “satisfied” with this aspect.

In terms of location, 48% of the foreign customers were “satisfied”. 44% of them felt “neutral” about this aspect.

In terms of cleanliness, the majority of the foreign customers (80%) indicated that it was “excellent”. Another 18% of them stated that it was “good” while only 2% of them mentioned that it was “fair”.

Regarding the communication of staff of Buddy Lodge Restaurant, most of the foreign customers (66%) were “satisfied”. However, 18% of them felt “neutral” while 16% of them was “very satisfied” with this issue.

Regarding the courtesy of Buddy Lodge staff, 44% of the foreign customers revealed that it was “excellent” while 42% of them pointed out that it was “good”.

In terms of uniform of Buddy Lodge staff, the majority of the foreign customers (94%) were “satisfied” while 2% of them was “very satisfied”.

In terms of variety of menu selection, 84% of the foreign customers was “satisfied”. Another 14% of them was “very satisfied”.

In terms of lighting, most of the foreign customers (56%) stated that it was “good” while 44% of them claimed that it was “excellent”.

In terms of music, the majority of the foreign customers (58%) were “very satisfied” while 42% of them was “satisfied” with this.

Concerning the noise level, the majority of the foreign customers (82%) mentioned that it was “fair”. Another 14% of them indicated that the noise level at Buddy Lodge Restaurant was “good” while 4% of them stated that it was “excellent”.

Concerning the comfortable seating, 72% of the foreign customers revealed that it was “fair” while 28% of them responded that it was “good”.

To sum up, the results indicated that the foreign customers dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant were “most satisfied” with the quality and taste of food and beverage (96%), followed by the price and value (88%), the prompt and attentive service (82%), and the cleanliness (80%). They were also very satisfied with other service aspects employed at this restaurant. These were the atmosphere (78%), the decor, design, and layout (76%), the exterior design (62%), the music (58%), and the courtesy of staff (44%). Moreover, the foreign customers revealed that the following aspects were good: the uniform of staff (94%), the reputation (86%), the menu selection (84%), the communication of staff (66%), the lighting (56%), and the location (48%). However, there were three service aspects that the foreign customers rated at “fair level”. These

were the noise level (82%), the comfortable seating (72%), and the advertising/promotion (68%).

Generally, the customers have pre-determined standards or concepts in their mind when selecting good restaurants. These were particularly referred as the quality and the taste of the product, the price and value, the speed of service, and the cleanliness. Therefore, the findings clearly demonstrated that Buddy Lodge Restaurant was successful with these service aspects resulting in a high level of satisfaction rating by its foreign customers.

PART 3 : Aspects Concerning Characteristics of Thai Restaurants that the Foreign

Customers Consider Most Important When Dining out

This section presents the aspects concerning characteristics of a Thai restaurant that the foreign customers consider most important when dining out. The aspects explored are: quality of food and beverage, decor, variety of menu selection, service friendliness, menu price, atmosphere, cleanliness, noise level, comfortable seating, appearance of food presentation, layout of dining area, prompt and attentive service, location, lighting, music, taste of menu items, theme of the restaurant, uniform of staff, nutritional of menu items, waiting area for seating, exterior design, knowledgeable staff, promotion and advertising, and value for the money. The results of the different aspects are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3 The Characteristics of Thai Restaurants the Foreign Customers**Consider Most Important When Dining out**

Item	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Neither Important Nor Unimportant		Somewhat Unimportant		Very Unimportant		Total N/P	
Quality of food and beverage	50	100%	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Decor	4	8%	27	54%	18	36%	1	2%	0	0%	50	100%
Variety of menu selection	19	38%	20	40%	8	16%	3	6%	0	0%	50	100%
Service friendliness	35	70%	15	30%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Menu price	2	4%	2	4%	22	44%	10	20%	14	28%	50	100%
Atmosphere	7	14%	9	18%	34	68%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Cleanliness	50	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Noise Level	4	8%	11	22%	35	70%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Comfortable seating	29	58%	15	30%	6	12%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Appearance of food presentation	27	54%	20	40%	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Layout of dining area	8	16%	33	66%	9	18%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Prompt/Attentive service	50	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Location	4	8%	2	4%	44	88%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Lighting	2	4%	4	8%	28	56%	9	18%	7	14%	50	100%
Music	2	4%	11	22%	23	46%	11	22%	3	6%	50	100%
Taste of menu items	50	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%
Theme of the restaurant	0	0%	2	4%	34	68%	13	26%	1	2%	50	100%
Uniform of staff	0	0%	2	4%	23	46%	16	32%	9	18%	50	100%
Nutritional quality of menu items	48	96%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Item	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Neither Important Nor Unimportant		Somewhat Unimportant		Very Unimportant		Total N/P	
Reputation	9	18%	6	12%	25	50%	8	16%	2	4%	50	100%
Waiting area for seating	2	4%	7	14%	22	44%	18	36%	1	2%	50	100%
Exterior design	3	6%	15	30%	17	34%	13	26%	2	4%	50	100%
Knowledgeable staff	2	4%	9	18%	34	68%	5	10%	0	0%	50	100%
Promotion/Advertising	9	18%	11	22%	26	52%	4	8%	0	0%	50	10%
Value for the money	15	26%	34	68%	3	6%	0	0%	0	0%	50	100%

Regarding the quality of food and beverage, all foreign customers (100%)

considered it “very important”.

In terms of decor, most of the foreign customers (54%) thought it was

“somewhat important”. 36% of them concerned that it was “neither important nor

unimportant”, or they felt “neutral” with this aspect.

In terms of variety of menu selection, 40% of the foreign customers revealed

that it was “somewhat important”. 38% of them believed that it was “very important”.

In terms of service friendliness, 70% of the foreign customers realized that it

was “very important” while 30% of them claimed that it was “somewhat important”.

Concerning the menu price, most of the foreign customers (44%) concerned that it was “neither important nor unimportant” or “neutral” whereas 28% of them responded that it was “very unimportant”.

Regarding the atmosphere, 68% of the foreign customers thought it was “neither important nor unimportant”. Another 18% of them pointed out that it was “somewhat important” whereas 14% of them believed that it was “very important”.

In terms of cleanliness, all foreign customers (100%) stated that it was “very important”.

In terms of noise level, most of the foreign customers (70%) mentioned that it was “neither important nor unimportant”, followed by “somewhat important” for 22%, and “very important” for 8%.

In terms of comfortable seating, most of the foreign customers (58%) indicated that it was “very important”. Another 30% of them stated that it was “somewhat important”.

Regarding the appearance of food presentation, the findings indicate that most of the foreign customers (54%) concerned that it was “very important”. 40% of them stated that it was “somewhat important”.

Regarding the layout of dining area, 66% of the foreign customers considered that it was “somewhat important”. Another 18% of them concerned that it was “neither important nor unimportant” while 16% of them mentioned that it was “very important”.

In terms of prompt and attentive service, all foreign customers (100%) stated that it was “very important”.

In terms of location, the majority of the foreign customers (88%) felt that this aspect was “neutral” or “neither important nor unimportant”. 8% of them mentioned that it was “very important”.

In terms of lighting, 56% of the foreign customers concerned that it was “neither important nor unimportant” while 18% of them pointed out that it was “somewhat important”.

In terms of music, 46% of the foreign customers rated that it was “neither important nor unimportant”. 22% of them mentioned that it was “somewhat important” while another 22% of them stated that it was “somewhat unimportant”.

Concerning the taste of menu items, all foreign customers (100%) considered that it was “very important”.

In terms of theme of the restaurant, 68% of the foreign customers thought it was “neither important nor unimportant”. 26% of them believed that it was “somewhat important”.

Regarding the uniform of staff, most of the foreign customers (46%) thought it was “neither important nor unimportant”. 32% of them stated that it was “somewhat unimportant”.

Regarding the nutritional quality of menu items, the majority of the foreign customers (96%) claimed that it was “very important”.

In terms of reputation, 50% of the foreign customers considered that it was “neither important nor unimportant”, followed by “very important” for 18%, and “somewhat unimportant” for 16%.

In terms of waiting area for seating, 44% of the foreign customers concerned that it was “neither important nor unimportant”. 36% of them realized that it was “somewhat unimportant”.

Concerning the exterior design, 34% of the foreign customers demonstrated that it was “neither important nor unimportant”, followed “somewhat important” for 30%, and “somewhat unimportant” for 26%.

In terms of knowledgeable staff, most of the foreign customers (68%) concerned that it was “neither important nor unimportant”. 18% of them thought it was “somewhat important”.

In terms of promotion and advertising, the majority of the foreign customers (52%) considered that it was “neither important nor unimportant”, followed by “somewhat important” for 22%, and “very important” for 18%.

In terms of value for the money, most of the foreign customers (68%) realized that it was “somewhat important”. Another 26% of them stated that it was “very important”.

To sum up, the aspects that all foreign customers (100%) considered the most important when dining out at Thai restaurants are: quality of food and beverage, cleanliness, prompt and attentive service, and taste of menu items. It can be assumed that when selecting a place for dining, the foreign customers seriously consider on these four aspects. Therefore, the restaurant owners should focusingly give priority to these four aspects in order to meet or exceed the foreign customers' expectation and satisfaction. In addition, the following aspects were considered as "very important" when the foreign customers choosing a Thai Restaurant to dine at: nutritional quality of menu items (96%), service friendliness (70%), comfortable seating (58%), and appearance of food presentation (54%). Consequently, the restaurant owners should also pay attention on these four aspects as well.

Interestingly, the finding showed some aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants do not affect the decision of the foreign customers when dining out. The respondents considered the following aspects as "neutral" or "neither important nor unimportant". These aspects were: location (88%), noise level (70%), atmosphere (68%), theme of the restaurant (68%), knowledgeable staff (68%), lighting (56%), promotion and advertising (52%), reputation (50%), uniform of staff (46%), music (46%),

waiting area for seating (44%), menu price (44%), and exterior design (34%).

Furthermore, 28% of the respondents stated that the menu price was “very important”

when they select a Thai Restaurant.

This can be assumed that when the major significant aspects - quality of food and beverage, cleanliness, prompt and attentive service, and taste of menu items - meet or exceed the customers' expectation and satisfaction, they do not pay much attention on other aspects.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains three main sections: summary of the study, discussion of the major findings, limitations and recommendations for further studies.

Summary of the Study

This study was conducted with fifty foreign customers dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant on Khao Sarn Road in July, 2007. The purpose of the research is to measure the satisfaction level of the foreign customers when dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant and to explore the aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants that the foreign customers consider important when dining out.

The data from fifty questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed to answer two research questions:

1. What are the foreign customers' satisfaction levels toward the service aspects employed at Buddy Lodge Restaurant?

2. What aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants do the foreign customers consider important?

Discussion of the Major Findings

The following are the major findings addressing the research questions posed in the study.

Research question 1: What are the foreign customers' satisfaction levels toward the service aspects employed at Buddy Lodge Restaurant?

Buddy Lodge Restaurant is outstanding and successful among a highly competitive restaurant business on Khao Sarn Road for over ten years. Buddy Lodge Restaurant owner seemed to be able to satisfy the foreign customers' need by offering services which meet or exceed the foreign customers' satisfaction.

The findings revealed that the overall foreign customers' satisfaction toward the service aspects employed at Buddy Lodge Restaurant was at high levels, especially in terms of quality and taste of food and beverage (96%), price and value (88%), prompt and attentive service (82%), cleanliness (80%) ,atmosphere (78%), decor, design, and

layout (76%), exterior design (62%), music (58%), and courtesy of staff (44%).

Additionally, the foreign customers were satisfied with uniform of staff (94%), reputation (86%), variety of menu selection (84%), communication of staff (66%), lighting (56%), and location (48%). However, there were three factors the foreign customers felt neutral and rated as "fair". These were noise level (82%), comfortable seating (72%), and advertising and promotion (68%).

This study indicated that several factors aforementioned were rated at a high level of foreign customers' satisfaction and were also crucial for the success of the restaurant business. The findings can be supported by the study of Knutson and Palton (1993) on seniors' eating out behaviors and their evaluation of the restaurant experience. They found the four main reasons for visiting a restaurant most often were quality of food, quality of service, price/value, and atmosphere/cleanliness.

In addition, according to Ron Kurtus (2006: Online), the services in restaurants are considered important to their customers since restaurants are in the business of serving food to their customers. In other words, restaurant is one kind of the hospitality service. The quality of the food and service is defined as meeting or exceeding the

expectations of the customers as if promised by the restaurant. The food should be properly prepared and the service should be prompt and courteous. The benefit of quality food and service is that customers will come back and will recommend the restaurant to others. Accordingly, the findings of this study convincingly showed that Buddy Lodge Restaurant successfully meet their customers' satisfaction in terms of quality and taste of food and beverage, price and value, prompt and attentive service, and cleanliness.

Interestingly, the findings showed that there were three aspects - the noise level, comfortable seating, and advertising and promotion - that do not meet or exceed customers' satisfaction since they were not rated high. The results can be analyzed and explained as follows:

In terms of noise level, the satisfaction level was not rated high because Buddy Lodge Restaurant located at Khao Sarn Road, a busy and crowded area. Therefore, it is not surprising that Buddy Lodge is always noisy.

In terms of comfortable seating, the satisfaction level was not rated high because the chairs and tables at Buddy Lodge Restaurant are made of glass and steel

which may not be comfortable enough for the customers. Therefore, if Buddy Lodge Restaurant wants to improve this service aspect to meet its customers' satisfaction, it should consider the following suggestions:

According to Edward A. Kazarian (1989), tables, chairs, and banquettes should be large enough to seat dinners comfortably without crowding. Distances between tables are sized to enable waiter or waitresses to move through the area while serving and allow dinners to eat and converse without being distracted. Selection of chairs is critical since the greatest body contact is made with them. Chairs must have suitable shape, angle of seat and back, size, relationship to table, and tactile qualities to be comfortable.

In terms of advertising and promotion, the satisfaction level was not rated high. From the researcher's observation, there were no discounts or any coupons for a special promotion. The advertising on brochures and in the Internet did not elaborate on interesting details about the quality and taste of food and beverage or some outstanding service aspects such as atmosphere, music, and theme of the restaurant. Therefore, it

can be assumed that the advertising and the promotion of Buddy Lodge Restaurant were not interesting and could not attract the foreign customers much.

Research question 2: What aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants do foreign customers consider important when dining out?

The study revealed that all foreign customers (100%) considered the quality of food and beverage, cleanliness, prompt and attentive service, and taste of menu items the most important aspects concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants.

Regarding the quality of food and beverage, the findings can be ascertained by Lain P. Murray (1992) who referred to the proposals of Martin (1986) which included a section in the questionnaire that respondents were requested to evaluate the importance and their degree of satisfaction with four categories of restaurant service quality: physical facilities, food, wait staff behavior, and value for money spent. Mean values calculated for each category revealed food as being rated the most important, and value for money, physical facilities, and wait staff behavior approximately equal in importance. Among the four importance factors, food quality received the highest mean rating.

Regarding cleanliness, the results can be supported by Nice-Pak Foodservice (2006: Online), the organization surveyed the factors affecting decision making of the customers when selecting a restaurant. It was found that 63% of the respondents believed that cleanliness was essential in restaurants. Cleanliness ranked second only to the quality and taste of food (69%).

In terms of prompt and attentive service, the findings can be supported by Lain P. Murray (1992), who studied about service quality in restaurant operations. He found that the respondents rated the importance of timelessness of service, cleanliness, quality of the food, hot foods hot cold foods cold, and ambiance as equally essential elements of service quality in restaurants.

In terms of taste of menu items, the results can be ascertained by a study of the UK's national organic board on over a thousand customers. It was found that 95% of the respondents stated that tastes and quality are more important criteria than price when selecting food and beverage in restaurants.

It can be concluded that these four aspects: the quality of food and beverage, cleanliness, prompt and attentive service, and taste of menu items were seriously expected when people dine out, especially at a Thai restaurant.

The study also revealed some important service aspects on the consideration of the foreign customers. These were nutritional quality of menu items (96%), service friendliness (70%), comfortable seating (58%), and appearance of food presentation (54%). Furthermore, there were also some factors that the foreign customers concerned somewhat important. These were value for the money (68%), layout of dining area (66%), decor (54%), and variety of menu selection (40%). This means that the restaurant owners should also pay attention to these aspects in order to successfully meet the customers' expectation.

However, the findings showed that the foreign customers indicated that the following factors were considered as "neither important nor unimportant" aspects when dining out. These neutral aspects were: location (88%), noise level (70%), atmosphere (68%), theme of the restaurant (68%), knowledgeable staff (68%), lighting (56%), promotion and advertising (52%), reputation (50%), uniform of staff (46%), music (46%),

waiting area for seating (44%), menu price (44%), and exterior design (34%) were mentioned as neither important nor unimportant aspects. Convincingly, this can be assumed that the foreign customers were primarily concerned about the important criteria: quality and taste of food and beverage, cleanliness, attentive service, etc. If these important aspects exceed their satisfaction, the other factors are less important for them.

To conclude, this study indicated that the aspects which make the restaurant business become successful were the quality of food and beverage, cleanliness, prompt and attentive service, and taste of the menu items. All foreign customers (100%) considered these four aspects most important when choosing a Thai Restaurant. Besides, there were other four aspects that the foreign customers concerned very important when deciding to dine at Thai restaurants. These were the nutritional quality of menu items, the service friendliness, the comfortable seating, and the appearance of food presentation.

The findings and the data of this study can be used as a guideline for the restaurant owners to improve the service aspects and to enhance the businesses,

and for the new beginners who want to start a restaurant business successfully.

Nevertheless, the restaurant owners should diligently concentrate on every aspect concerning characteristics of Thai restaurants because nowadays customers have more choices so everything is necessary for restaurant business. This can be ascertained according to Keith Waller (1996), customers are increasingly open to new ideas, they travel more, are subjected to new ideas and standards. Consequently, needs are continuously changing and customers have become more demanding. For these reasons, the success of any restaurants is dependant upon a number of factors; a clear focus of the concept, food quality, and offering (service), the serving staff, presentation of the meal, price and value, and the design of the space all play their part. If orchestrated well, these elements are a recipe for success and will certainly ensure return visits and endorsement (David Lieberman. 2006: Online).

The findings and the data of this study can be used as a guideline for the restaurant owners to improve the service aspects and to enhance the businesses, and for the new beginners who want to start a restaurant business successfully.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

This study was limited with some factors. Firstly, the current study focused on only satisfaction and expectation of the foreign customers toward Thai restaurants. Hence, further study should emphasize on the satisfaction and expectation of both Thai and foreign customers toward Thai restaurants. The satisfaction and expectation from Thai and foreign customers will give more details and benefits to enhance service aspects in restaurant businesses.

Secondly, this study was limited in collecting and analyzing data of only fifty foreign customers dining at Buddy Lodge Restaurant on Khao Sarn Road, the number of respondents and the survey location were limited. Also, the study was carried out from June to November, 2007, so the reliability of the findings will be limited for the certain time as opinion and attitude of the customers may probably change afterward. Hence, further study should explore the satisfaction and expectation of a larger number of foreign customers toward Thai restaurants in other tourist areas such as Silom and Sukhumvit road or in tourist attractions such as Phuket, Samui, and Changmai. Therefore, further studies conducted on a larger number of respondents and different restaurants will yield more accurate and reliable findings.

Thirdly, Buddy Lodge Restaurant has only one branch located on Khao Sarn road. The service aspects might be adjusted to be suitable for the foreign customers in that area, so the expectation and satisfaction could be specific according to the foreign customers' needs on Khao Sarn road. Further study should explore Thai chain restaurants with many branches. Therefore, the service aspects setting on the same standards employed in branches of a certain Thai chain restaurant will reflect different and boarder expectation and satisfaction of foreign customers.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to explore the service aspects at Buddy Lodge Restaurant that meet the customers' satisfaction. Your responses will provide crucial information for this study, so please kindly fill out all the questions. All the information will be used only for this study and will be strictly kept confidential.

Part 1: Personal Information

Directions: Please fill in this questionnaire by marking ✓ in () or writing your answer in the space provide.

1. Gender

() 1. Male

() 2. Female

2. Age

() 1. 20-25 years old

() 4. 36-40 years old

() 2. 26-30 years old

() 5. 41-45 years old

() 3. 31-35 years old

() 6. More than 50 years old

3. Nationality

4. Approximately how much do you spend for a meal when dining at a Thai restaurant?

() 1. Less than \$15.00

() 2. \$16.00 to \$20.00

() 3. \$21.00 to \$25.00

() 4. \$26.00 to \$30.00

() 5. More than \$30.00

5. How often do you dine at a Thai restaurant while visiting Thailand?

() 1. More than once a week

() 2. About once a week

() 3. About every two weeks

() 4. About every three weeks

() 5. About once a month

Part 2: Satisfaction of the foreign customers toward the services employed at
Buddy Lodge restaurant.

Directions: Please circle the number of each issue that best shows your
satisfaction level toward Buddy Lodge Restaurant

1	2	3	4	5
Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent

1. Prompt/Attentive Service	1	2	3	4	5
2. Decor/Design/Layout	1	2	3	4	5
3. Exterior design	1	2	3	4	5
4. Quality/Taste of Food and Beverage	1	2	3	4	5
5. Advertising/Promotion	1	2	3	4	5
6. Reputation	1	2	3	4	5
7. Atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
8. Price/Value	1	2	3	4	5
9. Location	1	2	3	4	5
10. Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5
11. Communication of staff	1	2	3	4	5
12. Courtesy of staff	1	2	3	4	5
13. Uniform of staff	1	2	3	4	5
14. Variety of menu selection	1	2	3	4	5
15. Lighting	1	2	3	4	5
16. Music	1	2	3	4	5
17. Noise Level	1	2	3	4	5
17. Comfortable seating	1	2	3	4	5

Part 3: The aspects concerning characteristics of a Thai restaurant that the foreign customers consider most important when dining out.

Directions: Please circle your response using the scale very important to very unimportant (when you are dining at any Thai restaurants) to indicate the level of the importance of each following attributes

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither Important Nor Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Very Important

1. Quality of food and beverage	1	2	3	4	5
2. Decor	1	2	3	4	5
3. Variety of menu selection	1	2	3	4	5
4. Service friendliness	1	2	3	4	5
5. Menu price	1	2	3	4	5
6. Atmosphere	1	2	3	4	5
7. Cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5
8. Noise Level	1	2	3	4	5
9. Comfortable seating	1	2	3	4	5
10. Appearance of food presentation	1	2	3	4	5
11. Layout of dining area	1	2	3	4	5
12. Prompt/attentive service	1	2	3	4	5
13. Location	1	2	3	4	5
14. Lighting	1	2	3	4	5
15. Music	1	2	3	4	5
16. Taste of menu items	1	2	3	4	5
17. Theme of the restaurant	1	2	3	4	5

1	2	3	4	5
Very Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither Important Nor Unimportant	Somewhat Important	Very Important

18. Uniform of staff	1	2	3	4	5
19. Nutritional quality of menu items	1	2	3	4	5
20. Reputation	1	2	3	4	5
21. Waiting area for seating	1	2	3	4	5
22. Exterior design	1	2	3	4	5
23. Knowledgeable staff	1	2	3	4	5
24. Promotion/Advertising	1	2	3	4	5
25. Value for the money	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your cooperation

VITAE

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