

## **The Use of Thai Food Knowledge as Marketing Strategies for Tourism Promotion**

Termsak Singsomboon  
*School of Tourism Management*  
*National Institute of Development Administration*  
termsak@singsomboon.com

### **Abstract**

Thai cooking schools for foreign tourists are a kind of tourism business that allows entrepreneurs to apply Thai food knowledge to their business operations, by providing cooking activities for foreign visitors. According to the study conducted through an in-depth interview of 20 Thai cooking schools' entrepreneurs from three major tourist provinces - Chon Buri, Chiang Mai, and Phuket - similarities and differences are equally found in the use of Thai food knowledge as marketing strategies and activities to promote tourism, following Lovelock and Wirtz's 8Ps marketing mix factors. The sustainability and the success of Thai cooking schools depend on these key success factors: (1) being an entrepreneur with vision and ability; (2) having a strong knowledge of Thai food, for example, having unique Thai food recipes that have been passed down from generation to generation; (3) possessing strong and adequate operating resources, such as human resources, location, teaching style and process, and capital; (4) participation from the community/local; (5) continuity of operations; (6) innovation and new creative activities; and (7) formal and continuous support from the government and affiliated organizations in terms of policy, human resources, budget as well as regulations.

**Keywords:** marketing strategy, marketing mix, Thai food knowledge, Thai cooking schools for foreign tourists

## Introduction

Thai food is a local wisdom and a cultural heritage that has been passed down from generation to generation. With its unique appearance and flavor, as well as its health benefits, Thai food is considered healthy and has become popular among consumers around the world. Well-known dishes include Tom Yum Kung, Green Curry, Pad Thai, Pad Kaprao, and Panang Curry. The popularity of Thai food among foreigners attracts a large number of foreign tourists to visit Thailand to learn Thai cooking in culinary institutes in Bangkok and important tourist provinces such as Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Chon Buri. Numerous factors influence tourists' decision to learn Thai cooking. Global community awareness of healthy eating and Thai food are known for containing herbal elements that build up the body's immune system. Moreover, the government's "Thai Food to the World" (Sookpum, 2004) campaign, which started several years ago, integrates Thai food and Thai cooking in their tourism promotion strategies. In addition, there is a change in tourist behavior that leads to what is known as "special interest tourism", which involves tourists in search of new experiences. These novel forms of special tourism can be connected, among others, to health, adventure, sport, religion and education.

With the current trend in tourists taking cookery classes in Thailand and tourism being prioritized by the government as a service industry that generates over 100 billion baht of annual revenue (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2011), the tourism development plan has been included in the 11th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2012-2016). This plan focuses on developing the service sector to create added value and to upgrade the quality of tourist sites to meet market and community needs, enabling them to generate the main source of income for the country. The income generated from these activities is distributed to the local community as a way of sharing the benefits gained from the development, in an equitable manner, while developing products and services under the concept of creative economy. This is another alternative to creating economic value-added, with the potential to generate jobs and revenue, and is a source of pride for the Thai people. Accordingly, the Thai cookery school business tends to attract new investors. Statistics published by the Kasikorn Research Center (2011) state that the Thai cooking school business amounted to 250 million baht in 2011. The competition is as intense for new businesses as for existing entrepreneurs. Undoubtedly, foreign tourists who want to take Thai cooking classes will choose according to their preferences. Thai cooking school entrepreneurs, therefore, need to adjust their business strategies in order to stay competitive in the market. They should, for example, make the curriculum more favorable to the students, adjust teaching methods to comply with students' interest, improve teaching standards and quality, and increase public relations channels.

For the aforementioned reasons, it is necessary to conduct a study on the use of Thai food knowledge as marketing strategies for tourism promotion, since competition in the Thai cooking schools for foreign tourists is quite intense. If business strategies do not comply with the tourists' needs and behaviors, entrepreneurs and affiliated parties are likely to be affected. This study focuses on the use of Thai food knowledge as a marketing strategy for tourism promotion. Entrepreneurs and affiliated organizations can use recommendations from this study as a guideline to implement their short-term and long-term strategies for Thai culinary tourism.

## **Objective of the Study**

This study is conducted with the main objective to study the use of Thai food knowledge as a marketing strategy for Thai tourism promotion.

## **Related Theories And Concepts**

### **Marketing Strategy Concepts**

Although there are many definitions of marketing strategy, most of them share some similarities but this may depend on how the strategy is employed. For example, marketing strategy is a set of tools used as a guideline or a policy for marketing (4Ps) that is appropriate with the opportunities in the target market and fulfills the organization's objectives (Jaturonkakul, 2000). It is also a guideline the business can implement to achieve its marketing goals (Sangsuwan *et al.*, 2004). It could also be the appropriate use of marketing mix with the target market, by analyzing the target market and the market environment and implementing the target market plan to achieve the desired objectives (Guiltinan, 1989). In addition, it is a basic method employed by organizations to achieve their marketing goals, consisting of concepts such as target market selection, product positioning, marketing mix, and marketing expense (Kotler, 1997).

Kotler (1997) places marketing strategy under nine categories:

(1) Marketing strategy for a new business: Entrepreneurs need to know who their target market is, what position they are in, and who their competitors are.

(2) Marketing strategy for market leaders, challengers, followers, and nichers:<sup>1</sup> Entrepreneurs need to know whether they are the market leaders, challengers, followers, or nichers.

(3) Marketing strategy for different stages of the product life cycle: The cycle comprises: (a) introduction; (b) growth; (c) maturity; and (d) decline. Each stage requires different strategic planning and entrepreneurs need to know what stage their products are in and formulate strategies accordingly.

(4) Product development strategy: Focusing on what to produce and which target market's need is to be met.

(5) Product mix, product line, product item, brand, packaging, and label strategy: A planning of expanding, decreasing, product positioning, and market expansion to the upper and lower product line including logo and package design that are easy to remember and notice, allowing customers to call the product name correctly;

(6) Marketing strategy for services firms: A successful business administration requires four elements; administration, external image management, internal management, and the moment of truth.

(7) Pricing strategy: Product pricing according to the firm's objective, to obtain the maximum profits or earn the highest market share.

(8) Marketing channel and physical distribution strategy: Under this strategy, distribution channels, product categories, numbers of middlemen in the channel or density of middlemen, and the support and distribution of products to the market must be considered.

(9) Promotion mix strategy: A way to communicate the store's marketing with customers through advertising, personal selling strategy, sales promotion strategy, publicity and public relation strategy.

## **The Marketing Mix Concepts**

The concept of "marketing mix" was introduced for the first time by Borden (1964). It was referred to as 4Ps, comprising four factors of marketing mix: product, price, place, and promotion. However, Lovelock and Wirtz (2004) enhanced the marketing mix factors from 4Ps to 8Ps to better reflect new services, comprising:

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<sup>1</sup> In 'niche' marketing, all efforts are focused on a small segment (niche) of the market. It is also known as micromarketing.

(1) Product: Goods and services developed and produced to meet the needs of customers in order to create the highest satisfaction. This includes brand, packaging, guarantee, and product and quality development.

(2) Price: What customers spend to get desired goods or services. The goal of price setting is to create competitive advantages to the extent that a company gains profit and customers can afford goods and services.

(3) Place: The selling process and the support of product distribution that make goods and services ready for sale.

(4) Promotion: Setting up communication guidelines with target customers about the product, service, price, and other information, to encourage their decisions to buy products and services by using promotional mix such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, and personal selling.

(5) People: Everyone is involved in the product and service selling process, including employees and customers who make a purchase or are service users.

(6) Process: Steps or processes involved in the provision of services, as well as regulations and how the job is done to create and promote goods and services to customers. For example, decisions on policy matters relating to customers and personnel of the organization.

(7) Physical evidence: An environment associated with service provision, a place where customers and business providers interact, and any tangible component that facilitates or communicates that service.

(8) Productivity and quality of service: Factors affecting the productivity and quality of service industry such as service quality, customer satisfaction, ability to meet customers' needs, ability to resolve customers' problems, modern tools and equipment, and service quality assurance.

## **The Use of Thai Food Knowledge for Tourism Promotion Concepts**

From the study conducted by Sirisoontorn (2012: 10-14), it was found that Thai food has undergone constant development and has been passed down from generation to generation. It is now embodied in the country's identity and has been widely accepted throughout the world. To be categorized as Thai food, the food must have one of these characteristics;

(1) Ingredients: The food must use ingredients that are firstly found by Thai people, in the land of Siam or Thailand.

(2) Cooking methods: The food must be cooked and prepared with unique Thai methods and must have been created by Thai people.

(3) Geography: The food must have originated or must have appeared first in the land of Siam or Thailand.

(4) Race: The food must have been invented by any one of the Thai ethnic groups and must have become a part of that ethnic culture or tradition, and that food must appear before any other similar food invented by other ethnic groups.

(5) Popularity: The food must be available throughout the country.

(6) Entry: The details of that food must have been recorded by the Thai ethnic group before any other ethnic group or must be recorded in stone or other document form, before any other ethnic groups.

(7) Tradition, culture, and custom: The food must be widely known around the world as Thai food, with historical evidence that show the connection with the traditions, cultures and customs of the Thai ethnic group in the land of Siam or Thailand.

(8) Thai kingdom: The food must contain or use local ingredients found since the old kingdom of Sukothai, Ayutthaya, Thonburi and Ratanakosin.

(9) Being internationally accepted: The food must be internationally accepted as Thai food.

Regarding guidelines for using Thai food knowledge in tourism promotion, scholars and Thai food experts have different views, which can be summarized as follows.

Kanit Muntaporn (quoted in Sirisoontorn, 2012: 68-79) believes that to place the potential of Thai food onto the international level, it is necessary to verify the information and references to find the strengths and distinction of Thai food from other global cuisines to achieve Thai uniqueness. Important points in this regard are: (1) cleanliness; (2) health issue; and (3) Thai tradition and culture, which are the most important points.

In the first instance, branding requires a story. The problem with Thai food is that excessive emphasis is placed on the quantity of restaurants rather than on the creation of the “Thai brand”. The strength of Thai food remains unclear and the collection of Thai food references is lacking. The more references we can find about an important dish, the higher the potential for that dish to become outstanding. If other nations argue with its origin, we can claim that it was developed by Thais, provided we can produce sufficient evidence and documentation (Sirisoontorn, 2012).

Somsri Charoenkietkul (quoted in Sirisoontorn, 2012: 79-80) states that there are more Thai dishes that can be developed and presented to the world. We should not just focus on several dishes and present something new besides those ten

already well-known dishes ranked by popularity (for example, Tom Yum Kung, Tom Kha Kai, Panang Curry, Green Curry, Pad Thai, Pad Kaprao, Roasted Duck Curry, Spicy Roasted Beef Salad, Pork Satay, and Stir Fried Chicken and Cashew Nuts). In addition, Thai eating culture should be presented. Japanese people publicize their eating culture very well. People learn Japanese eating culture from the food presented in a form of set menus in restaurants, so they understand that Japanese people eat rice with miso soup together with a protein-based dish made of fish, pork, or chicken. Side dishes of pickled vegetable or salad are also served, depending on the type of meat in that meal. Most of the Thai restaurants, on the other hand, do not present how Thai people eat rice with assorted dishes. Foreigners, therefore, may lack the necessary information on the intricacies of the Thai eating culture, including how to pair dishes from the vast Thai culinary repertoire. Each Thai meal consists of several dishes that are meant to be eaten with rice. For example, rice is best eaten with assorted dishes and is not meant to be eaten together with noodle dishes like Pad Thai, which should be eaten as a stand-alone dish (Sirisoontorn, 2012).

On the other hand, Kraisit Tantiririn (quoted in Sirisoontorn, 2012: 81-82) state that the Thai eating culture should be conserved. Moreover, they argue that the Thai way of eating can be promoted effectively by providing two options: one is the Thai way and the other is single-eating, a series of dishes for one person, not a one-dish meal, but a combination of assorted dishes. Nonetheless, a one-dish meal should also be developed, since many restaurants now provide express Thai-food options. This is a good concept, because the social trend is moving towards this pattern. In addition, research should be conducted on Thai food, to find any outstanding elements that can strengthen the argument for Thai food to be widely accepted in Thailand and around the world.

## **Creative Economy Concepts**

Creative economy is an element of the economy-drive concept based on knowledge, education, creativity, and intellectual property, which connect with cultural base, accumulated knowledge of the society, technology, and innovation. There are various definitions of creative economy and a single definition of creative economy has not been agreed upon. For example, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) defines creative economy as the development and the economic growth through the use of properties generated by creativity. Likewise, The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) (2003) explains that the industrial component of the creative economy focuses on the context of intellectual property rights

that comprises cultural industry plus all cultural or artistic production, whether live or produced as an individual unit. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2007) holds on to the definition of creative economy defined by the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport (UK DCMS), which states that the creative economy draws its origin in individual creativity, skill, and talent, and which has a potential for wealth and job-creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. In addition, a simple definition of creative economy by Howkins (2001) is the value derived from the human thought.

Accordingly, the components of the creative economy cover different industrial sectors, which were categorized on the basis of two different concepts; by product/service type and by production activities and supply chain. Nowadays, there are six commonly known categories, which are:

(1) UK DCMS Model: Comprising 13 sectors categorized by products and services; advertising, architecture, arts and antiques market, crafts, fashion, design, film and video, music, performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio, and video and computer games (UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2001).

(2) Symbolic Texts Model: Comprising 11 sectors; advertising, films, internet, music, publishing, television and video, creative arts, consumer electronics, fashion, software, and sport (Hesmondhalgh, 2002).

(3) Concentric Circle Model: Comprising 14 sectors; literature, music, performing arts, visual arts, films, museums and libraries, heritage services, publishing, sound recording, video and computer games, advertising, architecture, design, and fashion (Throsby, 2007).

(4) WIPO Copyright Model: Copyright-based, comprising 20 sectors; advertising, collectible societies, film and video, music, performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio, visual and graphic art, blank recording material, consumer electronics, musical instruments, paper, photocopiers and photographic equipment, architecture, clothing and footwear, design, fashion, household goods, and toys (WIPO, 2003).

(5) UNCTAD Model: Comprising four sectors; heritage or cultural heritage, arts, media, and functional creation (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, 2009: 21).

(6) UNESCO Model: There are five core cultural domains in this model, comprising cultural and natural heritage, performance and celebration, visual arts, crafts and design, books and press, and audio visual and digital media. Additionally, other related domains were added to provide grouping alternatives appropriate to the culture of each country (UNESCO, 2007).



As for Thailand, the Office of the National Economics and Social Development Board (2009) has categorized the Thai creative economy based on the UNCTAD model with some adjustments based on UNESCO model, resulting in four major sectors and 15 sub-sectors comprising;

(1) Heritage or cultural/bio diversity-Based Heritage: Comprising four sub-sectors; crafts and handicrafts, cultural tourism/biodiversity, Thai traditional medicine, and Thai food.

(2) Arts: Comprising two sub-sectors; performing arts and visual arts.

(3) Media: Comprising four sub-sectors; films and video, publishing, broadcast, and music.

(4) Functional Creation: Comprising five sub-sectors; design, fashion, architecture, advertising, and software.

## Research Methodology

This study uses qualitative research methods by collecting data from two sources: (1) secondary data, collected from documents such as research papers, documents, text books, information from media (newspapers, journals, and electronic media); and (2) primary data, collected from surveys on opinions and experience, exchanged opinions from participants in Thai culinary tourism, as well as the study of strategies and marketing activities that use the knowledge of Thai food to promote Thai tourism. Data are collected from in-depth interviews of 20 key participants, who are entrepreneurs in Thai cooking schools from three major tourist provinces: Chon Buri, Chiang Mai, and Phuket.

As for the sample of Thai cooking school entrepreneurs, this study uses purposive sampling<sup>2</sup> with the following criterion: The key participants must be stakeholders in the business, who are experienced and able to express their opinions regarding the strategies and marketing activities that use their knowledge of Thai food to promote Thai tourism.

The structured interview is used as a tool with the interviewing topic, regarding the use of Thai food knowledge as marketing strategies for Thai tourism promotion, following the concept of Lovelock and Wirtz's (2004) 8Ps of marketing mix, which comprises product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, process and productivity, in addition to quality of service.

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<sup>2</sup> Purposive sampling is a popular method of sampling which focuses on particular individuals in a population sample, because of their features, which make them ideal for the research in hand.

To analyze the data from the literature review and in-depth interviews, logical analysis, grouping, classification, causality, and qualitative data analysis are employed.

## **Findings**

Based on the in-depth interviews of 20 Thai cooking school entrepreneurs in the three major tourist provinces of Chon Buri, Chiang Mai, and Phuket, it was found that the majority of the entrepreneurs had inherited their Thai food knowledge from close relatives such as grandmother, grandfather, parents, aunts, and uncles. Some of the entrepreneurs had received formal training from courses run by culinary schools. Accordingly, most Thai food knowledge employed in informing foreigners concerns popular dishes such as Tom Yum Kung, Green Curry, Pad Thai, Massaman Curry, Panang Curry, Khao Soi and Som Tum. Nonetheless, some entrepreneurs have employed a marketing mix which comprises product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, process and productivity, and quality of service, to determine their strategies and marketing activities to attract foreign tourists to learn Thai cooking at their schools. Both similarities and differences are found in the use of Thai food knowledge to formulate strategies and marketing activities for tourism promotion. The most differences were found in the product and productivity and quality of service attributes, while the least differences were found in the promotion and people attributes (as shown in Table 1).

### **Similarities in the Strategies and Marketing Activities**

The similarities in the strategies and marketing activities are as follows:

(1) Product: Numerous Thai cooking schools focus on teaching general dishes like Tom Yum Kung, Green Curry, Pad Thai, and Massaman Curry. Various curricula are provided for foreign tourists to choose from, ranging between short course, long course, Thai dessert course, and vegetable and fruit carving course. Besides teaching Thai cooking, students also learn about Thai herbs and culture and are taken to visit local markets and organic vegetable farms.

(2) Price: Most Thai cooking schools set various prices for their cooking courses.

(3) Promotion: To publicize their schools, the majority of Thai cooking schools use websites and social networks, and arrange cooking demonstrations in tourism exhibitions as their public-relation channels.

(4) Place: Most Thai cooking schools use websites and Facebook for the course registration. They also create tourism alliance with travel agencies, hotels, and car hire agencies and introduce customers among this tourism alliance.

(5) People: Most Thai cooking schools are conscious of the importance of good services. Thai teachers are selected on the basis of their hospitality and English proficiency.

(6) Physical evidence: Most Thai cooking schools set up the kitchen using international kitchen layout, focusing on the cleanliness and the readiness of classrooms. Classrooms are cleaned weekly. Class size, the number of tools and equipment must be appropriate with the number of students.

(7) Process: Most Thai cooking schools provide private and group classes. Theory will be taught before students begin their practical sessions. In addition, websites and social networks are used as communication channels between students and teachers for Question and Answer (Q&A) sessions. Extra services, such as offering herbal drinks, drinking water, and shuttle bus service, are also provided.

(8) Productivity and quality of service: Most Thai cooking schools provide a certificate of completion to students and use restaurant standards to manage the schools. They also participate in the “Clean Food Good Taste” campaign to get certified by the Ministry of Public Health.

## **Differences in the Strategies and Marketing Activities**

The differences in the strategies and marketing activities are as follows:

(1) Product: Some cooking schools in Chiang Mai teach Kao Soi, a traditional local dish, and Thai vegetarian dishes, to interested students. The concept of sufficiency economy is also taught. Some cooking schools in Phuket make their own house brands of chemical-free seasonings and sauces without monosodium glutamate (MSG) and preservatives. Books regarding Thai food, such as *Work the World and Pum's Lazy Cuisine*, are published for registered students and are also available for sale to foreign tourists.

(2) Price: Some cooking schools in Chiang Mai set the fee as low as 1,000 baht (approx. 20 US dollars) per person. This price is for both Thai and foreigners. There is flexibility in accommodating the number of days in a course, provided that the students have informed the organizers in advance.

(3) Place: Some Thai cooking schools in Phuket expand their branches to major tourist provinces in Thailand like Krabi, Chiang Mai, and Bangkok, as well as

outside the country, for example, Bahrain, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dubai, Jakarta, London, Lyon, Malta, and Paris.

(4) Physical evidence: Some Thai cooking schools in Chiang Mai decorate the place using earth-tone color to create a close-to-nature atmosphere and reflect the Lan Na style. Some Thai cooking schools in Phuket use clear-glass walls for their classrooms, to attract passersby.

(5) Process: Students of some Thai cooking schools in Chon Buri must submit reports to complete the courses. Some cooking schools in Chiang Mai use “listen-speak-ask-write” as their teaching concept. Students will be told which recipes they need to write down, to ensure that they remember the theoretical part of a course but also to enable them to ask questions afterwards. Some cooking schools in Phuket are open all year-round. Vegetable-cutting machines are used in their international branches.

(6) Productivity and quality of service: Some cooking schools in Chon Buri and Chiang Mai are legally established and are certified by the Ministry of Education. Also, some cooking schools in Chiang Mai and Phuket use home-grown organic vegetables as their cooking ingredients, such as sweet basil and holy basil. They also make their own curry paste and sauces, to use as ingredients in their classes. Moreover, some cooking schools in Phuket use students’ comments on Facebook and TripAdvisor to improve their services and teaching processes, as well as include research and development in their business development.

**Table 1** Comparison of Strategies and Marketing Activities Used by Thai Cooking School Entrepreneurs to Promote Tourism

Marketing mix/strategy and marketing activity	The use of strategies and marketing activities			
	Chon Buri	Chiang Mai	Phuket	Similarity/ Difference
1. Product				
(1) Teaching general Thai dishes	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(2) Teaching local dishes like Kao Soi		✓		Different
(3) Teaching vegetarian dishes		✓		Different
(4) Having various curricula to choose from	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(5) Providing knowledge of herbs and Thai culture	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(6) Teaching new theory and sufficiency economy		✓		Different
(7) Taking students to visit local markets	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(8) Taking students to visit organic vegetable farms	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(9) Making house brand products			✓	Different
(10) Publishing books about Thai food			✓	Different
2. Price				
(1) Having different prices to choose from	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(2) One price for Thai and foreigners		✓		Different
3. Promotion				
(1) Using websites and social networks	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(2) Arranging Thai cooking demonstrations in tourism exhibitions	✓	✓	✓	Similar
4. Place				
(1) Using websites and Facebook for class registration	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(2) Creating tourism alliance networks	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(3) Expanding branches			✓	Different
5. People				
(1) Providing good services	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(2) Having teachers with good hospitality	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(3) Having teachers with English proficiency	✓	✓	✓	Similar
6. Physical evidence				
(1) Using international kitchen layout	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(2) Decorating places to attract students		✓	✓	Different
(3) Having the classrooms cleaned weekly	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(4) Having an appropriate class size based on the number of students	✓	✓	✓	Similar

Marketing mix/strategy and marketing activity	The use of strategies and marketing activities			
	Chon Buri	Chiang Mai	Phuket	Similarity/ Difference
7. Process				
(1) Having both private and group classes	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(2) Teaching theory before practical classes	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(3) Using the “listen-speak-read-write” process		✓		Different
(4) Having students submit reports upon class completion	✓			Different
(5) Opening all year-round			✓	Different
(6) Using vegetable cutting machines			✓	Different
(7) Using websites and social networks as communication channels between teachers and students, for Q&A sessions	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(8) Providing extra services like herbal drinks, drinking water, and shuttle bus service	✓	✓	✓	Similar
8. Productivity and service quality				
(1) Legally established and certified by the Ministry of Education	✓	✓		Different
(2) Providing certificate of completion	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(3) Using restaurant standards to manage the schools	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(4) Using home grown organic vegetables as cooking ingredients		✓	✓	Different
(5) Making homemade curry pastes and sauces as cooking ingredients in classes		✓		Different
(6) Participating in the “Clean Food Good Taste” campaign	✓	✓	✓	Similar
(7) Using students’ comments on Facebook and TripAdvisor to improve service and teaching processes			✓	Different
(8) Using research and development to develop the business			✓	Different

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Thai food knowledge can be used in tourism promotion in the form of gastronomic tourism through cooking schools for foreigners. Thai food has undergone constant development, has been passed down through tradition and culture and is identified with the nation. Also, Thai food is widely accepted around the world. Accordingly, using Thai food knowledge is considered to increase the efficiency of the nation's economic drive and tourism industry through cultural heritage based on knowledge, education, creativity, and intellectual property. These features relate to cultural background, social knowledge, technology, and innovation, following the concept of creative economy. Accordingly, Thai cooking school entrepreneurs can implement these by: (1) Location: Creating tourism with an identity that relates to the way of life of the community or location; (2) Management: Tourism should have no adverse impact on the environment. Tourists, local communities, and affiliated persons can take part in Thai food culture conservation and promotion; (3) Activity and process: Tourism should facilitate education by providing training on Thai food and culture and the Thai way of life; and (4) Participation: Tourism should envisage participation from tourists by allowing them to have real Thai food cooking experience and the possibility to enhance their understanding by asking questions. However, this depends on entrepreneurs' knowledge, ability, and experience, as well as marketing-mix factor used to determine strategies and marketing activities to attract foreign tourists to their cooking schools. The result of the study showed that strategies and marketing activities used by entrepreneurs in Chon Buri, Chiang Mai, and Phuket provinces shared some similarities and some differences. The cooking schools that could differentiate their strategies and marketing activities would gain more attention from foreign tourists and were likely to be selected by the tourists. For example, if product factor is to be used as a marketing strategy, entrepreneurs must create products that have varieties, while emphasis should not simply focus on regular cooking classes. Other types of cooking classes should also be offered, for example, classes on ancient Thai cooking, local Thai cooking, and healthy Thai cooking. In addition, to draw tourist attention from other types of products, a selling point is essential. This could be a book about Thai food or how to manufacture a house brand of curry pastes, seasonings, or sauces.

Nonetheless, the sustainability and success of Thai cooking schools depend on these key factors: (1) having vision, knowledge, ability, and gastronomic tourism experience; (2) having a strong knowledge of Thai food, for example, having unique Thai food recipes that have been passed down from generation to generation; (3) possessing strong and adequate operating resources such as human resource,

location, teaching style and process, and capital; (4) participation from the community/local/location; (5) continuity of operations/business; (6) innovations and new creative activities such as using machines in the production of cooking ingredients for classes, publishing books on Thai food, or manufacturing entrepreneurs' own house brand, and expanding branches; and (7) formal and continuous support from the government and affiliated organizations in terms of policy, human resources, budget and regulations.

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