A STUDY OF THE KEY SUCCESS FACTORS FOR LOUNGE BAR MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing the key success factors for lounge bar management. Since the introduction of this industry into the Taiwan market, it has provided a new night-time leisure place for both white-collar and blue-collar workers to totally relax in the evening. The owners of lounge bars and the lounge bar industry are unceasingly looking for new ways to attract customers and enhance the experience of existing customers; thus, influencing their loyalty. Through a literature review and in-depth interview with experts, this research analyses the key success factors, which resolved to six major phases and thirty items. An Analytic Hierarchy Process technique was employed to identify the five most important factors in lounge bar management, including Market analysis, Talent team, Product value, Institutional management, and Brand building. This study recommends lounge bar managers to improve their service quality, as well as providing references for those who are interested in entering the lounge bar industry.

Keywords: Lounge Bar, Key Success Factors (KSF), Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)

INTRODUCTION

Lounge bar first appeared in the perimeter of the US military camp in the 1980s, and spread from Paris to the rest of the world, including Taiwan (Xiao, 1994). Lounge bar can develop rapidly in Taiwan, mainly in modern people's life, such as socializing, eating, leisure and other activities generally using space atmosphere. Among the types of leisure activities, lounge bars and pubs are the most popular and the best meeting places to relieve stress after work hours (Yang, 2006, Guo, 2016; Kknews, 2017). In response to the new consumption concept, consumers' needs are becoming more and more diversified, and they are pursuing a strategy of fashion taste and personalization. Consumption is entirely a cultural phenomenon and a social practice (McCracken, 1988; Miller, 1987). Therefore, it is very important to attract consumer support and re-consumption. With the public's emphasis on leisure and consumption, the need for such privacy and resting space is highly valued. And will be faced with a huge and constant work, urgent and eager for a dark, gorgeous, and modern interior space equipment (Yang, 2006; Guo, 2016).

After the lounge bar industry introduction into the Taiwan market, it provides a meeting place for white-collars and blue-collars to relax at night and achieve the goal of complete relaxation. Businesses are eager to develop the characteristics of their shops, how to maintain the favor of consumers and improve their repurchase power and loyalty as the survival of the businessmen. The leisure industry in 2020 was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, consumers can still come out to drink under the epidemic environment (Marty Shih, 2020). To

survive, Taiwan's catering industry (bars) has changed the rules of the game and is developing towards delivery platforms, home bartending and one-person company respectively (Marty Shih, 2021).

Based on the general leisure industry, there is very little research and literature on Key Success Factors (KSF) of lounge bar. The purpose of this study is as follows:

1) Build a hierarchy of KSF for lounge bar operations through expert interviews.

2) To construct the planning reference for the entry of the lounge bar into the industry through hierarchical analysis.

This study began with a literature review to summarize the factors that contribute to the success factors of the lounge bar operations and to develop a framework for in-depth interviews with experts, screening influencers, and build a hierarchy of KSF for lounge bar operations. Based on the data obtained from the in-depth expert interviews, the influencing factors were selected and a hierarchy of critical success factors for the lounge bar operation was constructed. Through the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP), the relative weights of the KSF for the lounge bar operations were selected and analyzed.

Lounge bar is a popular meeting place for drinking and socializing. Lounge bar is a new and popular bar nowadays, with elegant and comfortable decoration with soft music, providing gentlemen and celebrities to socialize with noble and elegant drinks and social activities (Wu & Fan, 1998; Wazaiii, 2022). Lounge bar is a public place that is not too public with lounges, sofas, and reclining chairs, etc. The relaxing music gives consumers a high-level sense of high-class enjoyment, allowing consumers to completely relax as if they were at home. The kind of urban feeling with a little bit of laziness and fashion is favored by the public in a busy society.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In chapter 2, we briefly describe the literature review. In chapter 3, we develop the research methods. Chapter 4 presents the research results. Finally, chapter 5 concludes our paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

KSF

John R. Commons put forward the concept of "limiting factor" in 1934 and applied it to the management of the economic system. The KSF are important concepts in strategic management and information management with a wide range of applications. Early scholars had different fields of study, subjects, or themes, resulting in highly divergent terminologies, such as "limiting factors", "strategic factors", "success factor", "key areas","strategic variables", etc. Daniel (1961) argued that most industries have three to six key critical factors that determine success. If a company wants to be successful, it must be particularly good at these factors. Critical success factors are areas where good performance will ensure an organization's ability to compete successfully (Porter, 1985), and poor performance will lead to performance decline.

The concept of KSF is often used when discussing the relationship between industry characteristics and corporate strategies. KSF is a combination of specific competencies that are required by the environment in order to achieve good performance. A KSF is a certain condition or asset that an industry must possess to operate successfully in the business. If an enterprise can operate well, it must be performing well in KSF, which is where the strength of the enterprise lies. Only by mastering KSF can an enterprise establish a lasting competitive advantage (Aaker, 2004). The KSF are used to identify the information needs of a system as an overall planning approach. The only way to build a sustainable competitive advantage is to

capture the most important competencies or assets in the industry, otherwise, even if a company has an excellent strategy, it will be at its disadvantage in terms of KSF and its competitiveness will be greatly reduced (Huang, 1999). The main areas that must be mastered for the success of an enterprise help guide companies in formulating effective strategies and execution procedures, and have been widely used in the design of high-level decision-making information systems (Wu, 1992). As for the evaluation method of critical success factors, the AHP is one of the most widely used methods (He, 1990). In light of the above, this study defines Critical Success Factors (CSFs) as important areas of a company's unique and advantageous conditions, i.e., the key tangible or intangible resources and capabilities that enable an enterprise to survive or perform better among the competitive advantage resources it possesses. In business management, capital, human resources, and time are all scarce resources and if you can identify the key areas of success or failure and find the right mix of resources to them, you can put yourself in a position of real advantage.

Lounge Bar

Lounge bar is a popular meeting place in Europe and the United States for drinking and socializing, and is part of the hospitality industry (Company F501050), which is engaged in the catering service of alcoholic beverages without the provision of escorts, including beer houses and drinking establishments (Department of Commerce, MOEA, 2022). With its elegant and comfortable decoration and soft music, lounge bar provides a place for gentlemen, ladies, and celebrities to socialize in a refined and elegant manner (Wu & Fan, 1998). Lounge bar is a nightclub with lounges, sofas, and lounge chairs (Liu., Jiang., Hong., & Chen, 2003; Guo, 2016). There is also another definition of lounge bar as"a new type of bar with private rooms or tassel sofas for drinking and listening to music". The entrance is situated in a quiet alleyway, with unobtrusive signage, inconspicuous doors, dim lighting, and a mysterious atmosphere. This is the main difference between lounge bars and other types of bars, as they are often referred to as reception rooms and upscale bars abroad. In terms of business content, music, and interior design, personal privacy is the main purpose. This is the biggest difference from other types of bars. Lounge bar is unique and can be judged by the following four features (Ma, 2003):

Decoration. Most of them are based on simple Zen-style and the high-ceiling pattern can appear outstanding and spacious, embellished with some post-modern style. The color scheme is based on warm red and refreshing white.

Sofa. A sofa bar should never be without a sofa to provide consumers with a warm nest, not only to sit comfortably but also to lie down leisurely.

Music. Walking into the lounge bar is like walking into an exquisite sensory journey. In addition to satisfying the senses of vision, touch, and taste, it also provides consumers with a sense of hearing. The music played here is widely known as lounge music.

Wine. The lounge bar offers whisky, champagne, and cocktails, as well as fruit cocktails for female customers. Good music should always be accompanied by fine wine to be perfect.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Structure

This study is based on the development of literature related to lounge bar and critical success factors, and extracts the factors of critical success factors through in-depth interviews. Finally, after AHP weighting, induction, and collection, the KSF of operations are screened out. The framework of this study is shown in **Figure 1.**
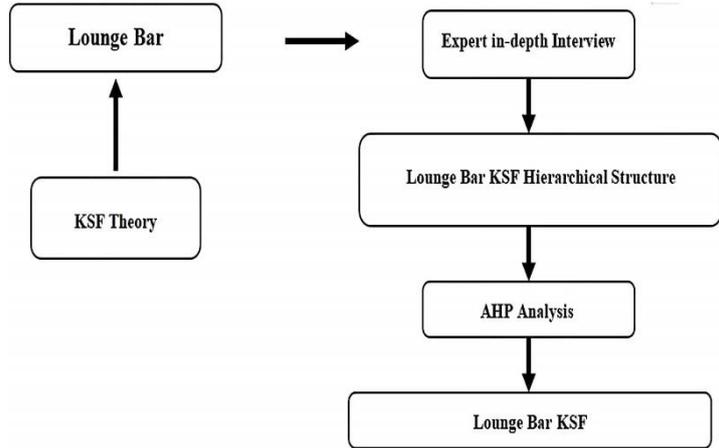
Figure 1: Research Framework

Research Subjects

The respondents were selected from five lounge bar owners in Central Taiwan with different scales and different features through internet search and customer word-of-mouth marketing. Five interviews with lounge bar were conducted as exhibited in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Lounge bar Interviewees' Background

Company	Area	Size/Staff	Characteristics
A	Restaurant	15	Live piano performance
B	Shopping area	40	Live band and famous singers
C	Residential area	10	Relax & drink comfortably
D	Commercial area	20	Stress-free chat room
E	Commercial area	30	High standard private space

Research Tools

In-depth Interview

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain personal knowledge management (PKM) in order to conceptualize the way in which the lounge bar service industry is conceived, and to illustrate the directions of construction or the way in which meaning is given (Yuan, 2002). The study was designed according to the research questions and objectives throughout the interview process. The interviewers can also make flexible adjustments to the interview questions according to the actual situation (Cooper., & Kleinschmidt, 1995). The interviewers were also given the flexibility to adapt the interview questions according to the actual situation (Cooper, & Schindler, 2008). After an in-depth interview, the interview content is compiled into a verbatim transcription of the interview, and the initial development of the information category is made after confirming the content with the interviewees.

Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP)

This study first simplifies complex decision-making issues into a few simple levels, and each level of items compiled is independent. The judgment and experience of experts are collected through a 10-level professional expert questionnaire, and a quantified evaluation scale is given to serve as the basis for weight ranking analysis to measure the relative importance of each factor, and to select the option with the highest weight value as the most suitable option for decision-making.

There are four main steps in the Analytical Hierarchical Process (Saaty & Vargar, 1983):

Step 1. Structured and hierarchical assessment of complex issues

Step 2. Set the evaluation scale for each question and establish an even comparison matrix.

Step 3. Calculate the relative weights for each question.

Step 4. Test consistency.

If the consistent results meet the standard, it will be used as a reference for decision making, otherwise it will be re-evaluated (Huang, 2006). After pairwise comparison, the priority order is determined, then measured by a scale. There should not be too many elements in the hierarchy, preferably no more than 7 according to Saaty (1994)'s suggestion.

Data Analysis

Based on the results of the interview, the dimensions of the critical success factors and the content of the indicators were summarized and analyzed. The matrix of pairwise comparisons was established using Saaty (1980)'s hierarchical analysis, and the decision support software "Expert Choice 2000" software was used to obtain the relative weights of the factors, check their consistency, and calculate the weights for each hierarchical level.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Background Analysis

This study was conducted by interviewing a total of five managers from five lounge bars in Taichung City, Taiwan. Of the five respondents, two were males and three were females, one was a leader, three were managers and one was a team leader. All of them are actually involved in the management and decision-making roles in the operation, and they understand quite well the characteristics of the industry.

Constructing a Hierarchy of Critical Success Factors

This study constructs project categories based on the results of data analysis, and summarizes key success factor indicators into six levels: geographical location, consumption patterns, marketing methods, space atmosphere, music creation, and leisure involvement. After in-depth interviews with experts, this research has drawn up 30 success factors in five dimensions of critical success factors for the operation of a lounge bar as follows (Critical Success Factor Hierarchy Chart as shown in **Figure 2):**

Market Analysis: six success factors, including Comfort relaxation, Geographical location, Promotional activities, Interior design, Space atmosphere and Customer quality level.

Talent Team: six success factors, such as Employee quality, Personnel training, Personnel attitude, Adaptability, Employee recognition, and internal cohesion.

Product Value: six success factors, including Product features, Social activities, Life experience, Activities attractiveness, Service vitality, and Service affinity.

Institutional Management: six success factors, such as On-the-job training, Process standardization, Assessment form, Payment system, Promotion systems, computerized operations.

Brand Value: six success factors, including Festivals, Customer target, Environmental impression, Brand building, Price value, and Indoor environmental perception.
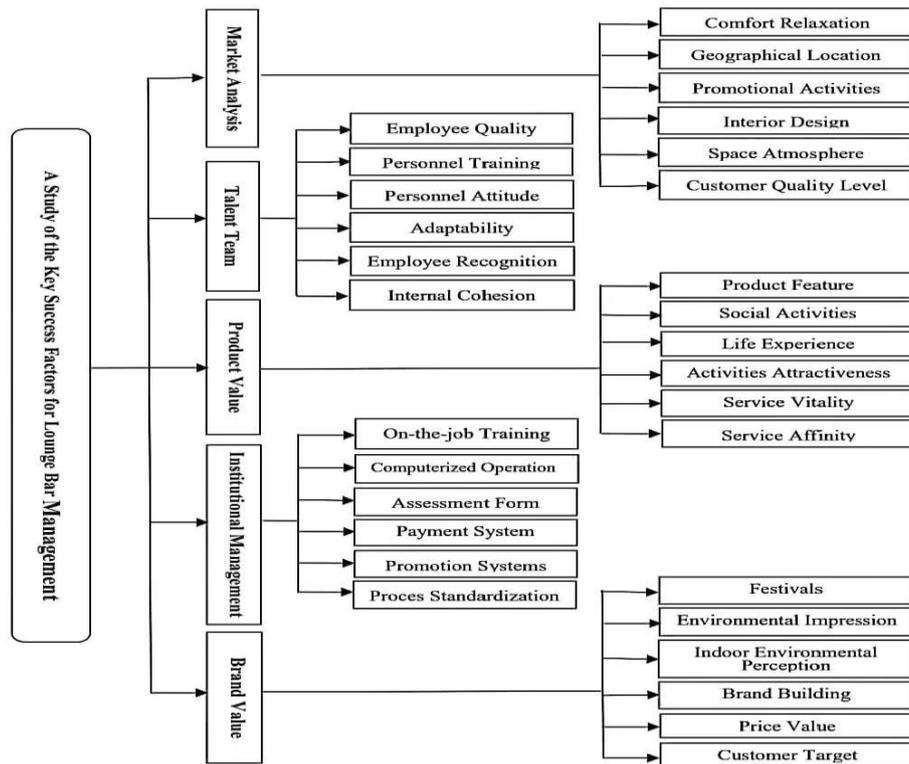
Figure 2: Critical Success Factor Hierarchy Chart

Results of the AHP Analysis

Consistency Test

Through the hierarchical structure and quantitative methods, the probability of decision-making errors will be reduced (Deng., & Zeng, 1989). For the suitability and screening criteria of the questionnaire content, the consistency ratio value of the 3 x 3 matrix must be less than .05 to be acceptable, the consistency ratio value of the 4 x 4 matrix must be less than .08 to be acceptable, and matrix consistency ratio values above 5 x 5 must be less than .1 to be acceptable (Saaty, 1994). The second level of this questionnaire has five dimensions: Market analysis, Talent team, Product value, Institutional management, and Brand building. Level 3 has six factors under each of these constructs. Therefore, the consistent ratio value of the expert questionnaire in this study must be less than .1.

Results of Data Analysis

Based on the above five constructs, including Market Analysis, Talent Team, Product Value, Institutional Management, Brand building, the KSF were calculated using the Expert Choice 2000 software and the results are as follows.

Results of the Overall Structural Analysis: The results of the questionnaire survey were used to calculate the geometric mean of the relative importance of each pair of elements using Expert Choice 2000 software to form a pairwise comparison matrix with five groups in the second level of the hierarchy. According to the results of the questionnaire, the top six critical success factors were "Process standardization", "Internal cohesion", "Adaptability", "Assessment form", "Payment system" and "On-the-job training". These five critical success factors are divided into two major components: "Institutional management" and "Talent team", indicating that the critical success factors are not industry-specific because they are part of the leisure services industry (see **Table 2** for the overall ranking of the success factors).

Table 2: Overall Ranking of Key Success Factors

Factors	Weight/ Sorting	Key Success Factors	Sorting	Weight %	Overall weight%	Overall sorting
Talent Team	36.20% 1	Internal cohesion	1	28.5	10.3	2
		Adaptability	2	19.7	7.1	3
		Personal training	3	15.2	5.5	7
		Employee quality	4	13.8	5.0	8
		Employee recognition	5	11.5	4.2	9
		Personnel attitude	6	11.3	4.1	10
Institutional Management	36.20% 1	Process standardization	1	28.9	10.4	1
		Assessment form	2	19.5	7.1	4
		Payment system	3	17.3	6.3	5
		On-the-job training	4	17.0	6.2	6
		Promotion systems	5	9.3	3.4	12
		Computerized operations	6	8.0	2.9	14
Product Value	11.70% 3	Activities attractiveness	1	29.2	3.4	11
		Service affinity	2	24.5	2.9	13
		Service vitality	3	19.0	2.2	15
		Life experience	4	10.8	1.3	23
		Product features	5	8.5	1.0	24
		Social activities	6	8.1	.9	26
Market Analysis	8.40% 4	Promotional activities	1	25.3	2.1	16
		Interior design	2	20.7	1.7	18
		Space atmosphere	3	20.6	1.7	19
		Geographical location	4	18.5	1.6	21
		Comfort relaxation	5	8.2	.7	28
		Customer quality Level	6	6.7	.6	29
Brand Value	7.40% 5	Festivals	1	24.9	1.8	17
		Indoor environmental perception	2	22.6	1.7	20
		Environmental impression	3	21.9	1.6	22
		Brand building	4	14.1	1.0	25
		Price value	5	11.7	.9	27
		Customer target	6	4.8	.4	30

In the overall analysis of the second tier, both the Talent team and Institutional management dimensions have a weight of .362, ranking 1st. The Product value dimension has a weight of .117, ranking 3rd. The market analysis dimension has a weight of .084, ranking 4th. The Brand value dimension has a weight of .074, ranking 5th and the CI value of .01 is acceptable (see **Table 3**). Among the factors in the second tier, experts believe that the Talent team and Institutional management are internal factors that are easier to control and therefore have the highest weight.

Table 3: Results of the Overall Factors Analysis

Factors	Weight	Sorting
Market Analysis	.084	4
Talent Team	.362	1
Product Value	.117	3

Institutional Management	.362	1
Brand building	.074	5
CI = .01		

KSF for Market Analysis: The results of the questionnaire survey showed that the weights and rankings of the variables were consistent at .01 or less than .1, which is acceptable. In the order of weight, they are as follows: Promotional activities, weight .253, ranking 1st; Interior design, weight .207, ranking 2nd; Space atmosphere, weight .206, ranking 3rd; location, weight .185, ranking 4th; Comfort relaxation, weight .082, ranking 5th; and Customer quality level, weight .067, ranking 6th (see **Table 4**). Lounge bars provide a relaxing environment for consumers, but it is important to attract consumers in order to reinforce their loyalty. For this reason, experts believe that regular promotions are necessary and are ranked first in terms of weight. The lounge bar is different from a typical pub or hotel, so it is also important to have a unique design and atmosphere, which is ranked second and third respectively in terms of importance.

Table 4: Variables of Market Analysis Results

Factors	Weight	Sorting
Geographical location	.185	4
Promotional activities	.253	1
Interior design	.207	2
Space atmosphere	.206	3
Customer quality level	.067	6
Comfort relaxation	.082	5
CI = .01		

KSF for Talent Team: The results of the questionnaire survey showed that the weight and ranking of the variables were consistent at .00 less than .1 and the results were acceptable. The weights are as follows: internal cohesion, weigh .285, ranking 1st; Adaptability, weight .197, ranking 2nd; Personnel training, weight .152, ranking 3rd; Employee quality, weight .138, ranking 4th; Employee recognition, weight .115, ranking 5th; and Personnel attitude, weight .113, ranking 6th (see Table 5).

The lounge bar offers consumers a comfortable and sensual experience, and the service teams should have a clear understanding of the restaurant's characteristics and core values in order to generate profits for the business.

Table 5: Results of the Talent Team Profile Analysis

Factors	Weight	Sorting
Employee attitude	.113	6
Adaptability	.197	2
Employee recognition	.115	5
Internal Cohesion	.285	1
Employee quality	.138	4
Personal training	.152	3
CI = .00		

KSF for Product Value: The weights and rankings of the variables obtained from the questionnaire results are consistent at .02 less than .1 and the results are acceptable. In order of weight, the following variables were ranked: Activities attractiveness, weight .292, ranking 1st; Service affinity, weight .245, ranking 2nd; Service vitality, weight .190, ranking 3rd; Life

experience, weight .108, ranking 4th; Product features, weight .085, ranking 5th; Social activities, weight .081, ranking 6th (see Table 6). To attract customers to the lounge bar, various types of activities are held from time to time to maintain customer loyalty and achieve event marketing. Therefore, the Activities attractiveness has the highest weight.

Table 6: Results of Product Value Analysis

Factors	Weight	Sorting
Product Features	.085	5
Activities Attractiveness	.292	1
Service Vitality	.190	3
Service Affinity	.245	2
Life Experience	.108	4
Social Activities	.081	6
CI = .02		

KSF for Institutional Management: The consistency between the weights and rankings of the variables obtained from the questionnaire is .01 or less than .1, which is acceptable. The weights are as follows: Process standardization, weight .289, ranking 1st; Assessment form, weight .195, ranking 2nd; Payment system, weight .173, ranking 3rd; On-the-job training, weight .170, ranking 4th; Promotion systems, weight .093, ranking 5th; Computerized system, weight .080, ranking 6th (see **Table 7**).

In terms of Institutional management, the industry believes that process standardization helps improve operational efficiency and facilitates communication between management and service teams to avoid errors. This is why process standardization has the greatest value.

Table 1: Analysis of Institutional Management

Factors	Weight	Sorting
On-the-Job Training	.170	4
Process Standardization	.289	1
Assessment Form	.195	2
Payment System	.173	3
Promotion Systems	.093	5
Computerized Operations	.080	6
CI = .01		

KSF for Brand Value: Based on the results of the questionnaire survey on the brand value, the weights and rankings of the variables are obtained, with a consistency of .00 less than 0.1, which is acceptable. In order of weighting, they are as follows: Festivals, weight .249, ranking 1st; Indoor environmental perception, weight .226, ranking 2nd; Environmental impression, weight .219, ranking 3rd; Building brand, weight .141, ranking 4th; Price value, weight .117, ranking 5th; and Customer target, weight .048, ranking 6th (see **Table 8**). During festivals or special events, such as Christmas, Thanksgiving Day, and Valentine's Day, the atmosphere is created to attract consumers' attention to boost their spending. For this reason, lounge bar often holds events in conjunction with festive occasions, with the most weight given to Festivals.

Table 2: Analysis of Brand Value

Factors	Weight	Sorting
Festivals	.249	1
Customer Target	.048	6
Environmental Impression	.219	3

Brand Building	.141	4
Price Value	.117	5
Indoor Environmental Perception	.226	2
CI .00 < .1		

Research Findings

According to Daniel (1961)'s definition of success factors, "There are important things that must be done exceptionally well in order to be successful. In most industries, there are usually three to six factors that determine success". The overall weight of the components and the rankings of the key factors were extracted (see **Table 2 above**).

Institutional Management

The research results show that the hierarchy is ranked 1, among which the "process standardization" factor has an overall weight of 10.4%, and the overall ranking is 1; the "Assessment form" factor has an overall weight of 7.1%, and the overall ranking is 4; the "Payment system" factor has an overall weight of 6.3%, the overall ranking is 5; the overall weight of the "On-the-job training" factor is 6.2%, and the overall ranking is 6.

Talent Team

The results of the study show that the hierarchical ranking is the same as that of "Institutional management"1, with the "Internal cohesion" factor having an overall weight of 10.3% and an overall ranking of 2, and the "Adaptability" factor having an overall weight of 7.1% and an overall ranking of 3.

Product Value

The results of the study show that the hierarchy is ranked 3, with the "Activities attractiveness" factor having an overall weight of 3.4% and an overall ranking of 11, and the "Service affinity" factor having an overall weight of 2.9% and an overall ranking of 13.

Market Analysis

The results of the study show that the hierarchy is ranked 4, with the "Promotional activities" factor having an overall weight of 2.1% and an overall ranking of 16, and the "Interior design" factor having an overall weight of 1.7% and an overall ranking of 18.

Brand Value

The results of the study show that the hierarchy ranking is 55, among which the "Festivals" factor has an overall weight of 1.8%, an overall ranking of 17, and the "Indoor environmental perception" factor having an overall weight of 1.7% and an overall ranking of 20.

CONCLUSION

Structure of Key Success Factors for Operations

After in-depth interviews with experts, 30 key success factor structures in five key success factors of operating lounge bar were obtained, which are listed as follows:

Talent Team: Internal cohesion, Adaptability, Personnel training, Employee quality, Employee recognition, and Employee attitude.

Institutional Management: Process standardization, Assessment form, Payment system, On-the-job training, Promotion systems and computerized operations.

Product Value: Product features, Social activities, Life experience, Activities attractiveness,

Service vitality, and Service affinity.

Market Analysis: Promotional activities, Interior design, Space atmosphere, Geographical location, Comfort relaxation, and Customer quality level.

Brand Value: Festivals, Customer target, Environmental impression, Brand building, Price value, Indoor environmental perception.

Six Key Success Factors for Operation

Through the hierarchical analysis method, the top six key success factors of the overall weight were "Process standardization", "Internal cohesion", "Adaptability", "Assessment form", "Payment system" and "On-the-job training".

Implications for Management

Lounge bar operators used to focus on space planning and atmosphere creation, shaping store features to attract consumers. This research study found that the six KSF of lounge bar operation, namely "process standardization", "Internal cohesion", "Adaptability", "Assessment form", "Payment system" and "On-the-job training", all focus on human resources management and the establishment of systems. The finding of this study is believed to bring a different direction of thinking for lounge bar operators. For those who intend to operate a lounge bar or existing operators, the findings of this study can be used to examine the KSF in order of weighting, which is the basis for the sustainable operation of the lounge bar.

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