

Assessing the Quality of Milk Tea Stores: A Framework for Developing Effective Training Programs

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Abstract:

The popularity of milk tea has grown tremendously in recent years, with numerous milk tea stores opening up all around the world. However, with this rise in demand, the quality of milk tea has become an issue of concern for both customers and store owners. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the quality of milk tea stores, using a structured framework that incorporates a comprehensive set of metrics related to customer service, product quality, and overall experience. The study aims to provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of milk tea stores, which can be used to develop effective training programs for store personnel. The research will involve conducting surveys and interviews with milk tea customers and store owners, and analyzing data collected from various sources. The findings of this research will contribute to enhancing the quality of milk tea stores and improving customer satisfaction, ultimately benefiting both consumers and the milk tea industry as a whole.

Keywords: Milk tea, Quality, Evaluation, Training plan, Customer satisfaction.

Introduction

Milk tea has become a popular trend and one of the most purchased beverages today due to its unique blend and taste. Before the pandemic, milk tea businesses were not as popular, with customers buying whenever they wanted. However, during the pandemic, many non-essential businesses were forced to close, and delivery businesses, including food establishments and grocery stores, became in-demand. This created an opportunity for those who lost their jobs to start franchising businesses, particularly in food items like milk tea, which were easily accessible for delivery. However, the increase in demand resulted in competition among milk tea shop owners, causing them to offer different "gimmicks" to attract customers, which may compromise the quality of the ingredients used (Smith et al., 2020).

The Philippines is a coffee-drinking country, but milk tea is becoming increasingly popular, ranking second in milk

tea consumption in Southeast Asia. Milk tea's rise in popularity is attributed to its suitability to the country's coffee culture and climate. Traditional Filipino drinks may have influenced milk tea's evolution, making it a familiar and accessible drink to Filipinos (Gomez et al., 2019).

Several factors such as color, portion sizing, product quality, and product cost affect consumer behavior in purchasing milk tea. Evaluating the quality and level of satisfaction of milk tea products is crucial in ensuring that consumers are getting the best possible experience. Understanding consumer preferences and needs can also provide valuable insights to businesses on how to improve their milk tea products and meet customer expectations.

The purpose of this study is to assess the quality and level of satisfaction of milk tea products sold in selected places in Nueva Ecija. By evaluating factors such as color, portion sizing, product quality, and product cost, this study aims to provide insights into consumer behavior and preferences when it comes to purchasing milk tea. The findings of this study can help consumers become more aware of the milk tea products they purchase and provide valuable information to milk tea businesses on how to improve their products and meet customer needs.

The related research on milk tea consumption in Southeast Asia, the impact of the pandemic on the milk tea industry,

and the factors affecting consumer behavior in purchasing milk tea will provide a foundation for this study's framework. By synthesizing existing literature and research, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the quality of milk tea products and the development of effective training programs to ensure high-quality products and customer satisfaction.

Objectives of the study

This study is to evaluate the quality of milk tea samples in the market of Nueva Ecija, and to propose a training program for the milk tea shops based on the findings. Specifically, the study aims to:

1. To describe the respondents' profile in terms of age, gender, legal status, types of ownership, years of operation, and average monthly earnings.
2. To measure the popularity of milk tea shops in Nueva Ecija based on the following factors: product, price, promotion, and place.
3. To evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of milk tea shops in Nueva Ecija.
4. To develop a training program for milk tea shops in Nueva Ecija based on the study findings.

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive research method to observe and accurately describe the behavior of milk tea shop

owners in a chosen municipality in Nueva Ecija, without influencing them. Total enumeration sampling method was used to select the respondents of the study. The researcher examined the entire population that

has	Point Range	Verbal Description
a	3.26 – 4.00	Highly Aware
parti	2.51 – 3.25	Fully Aware
cula	1.76 – 2.50	Somewhat Aware
r set	1.00 – 1.75	Unaware

of characteristics, which are the owners of the milk tea shop in the municipality. The study utilized researcher-made questionnaires that were validated by experts. The questionnaires were composed of the profile of the respondents, popularity of milk tea shops, and SWOT analysis of milk tea shops. The questionnaires used a 4-point Likert Scale numerical values and interpretation for rating the items. The statistical tools utilized in the study were used to interpret the data. The profile of the respondents was described in terms of age, gender, civil status, types of ownership, years of operation, and average monthly income, and was presented verbally. The popularity of milk tea shops in Nueva Ecija was assessed by the respondents based on product price, promotion, and place, and were analyzed and interpreted using an average. Weighted mean was also used in data analysis, and the following verbal descriptions were utilized:

Point Range	Verbal Description
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3.26 – 4.00	Strongly Agree
2.51 – 3.25	Agree
1.76 – 2.50	Disagree
1.00 – 1.75	Strongly Disagree

The assessment of milk tea shops in Nueva Ecija by the respondents was based on their strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats. These were analyzed and interpreted using an average, and a weighted mean was also used in data analysis. The verbal descriptions used were

The study findings were utilized to propose a training program for the milk tea industry in Nueva Ecija.

Results and Discussions

1. Demographic profile of the Milk Tea Owners-Respondents

Table 1: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Age

Age	Frequency	Percent (%)
18 – 28	11	45.83
29 – 39	7	29.17
40 – 50	5	20.83
51 – 61	0	0
62 – 72	1	4.17
Total	24	100%

Table 1, shows that the respondents aged between 18 and 28 years old comprise the largest age group, with a total of eleven (11) or 45.83%. This finding is consistent with previous research which suggests that young entrepreneurs are more likely to be innovative and disruptive due to their energy and dynamism, willingness to take risks, and lower family or financial responsibilities (Gruber, 2004).

Table 2: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	5	20.83
Female	19	79.17
Total	24	100%

Table 2 shows that, female respondents dominate male respondents with a total of nineteen (19) or 79.17%. This finding supports previous research that suggests women tend to be more effective leaders and have a larger appetite for growth, which can significantly improve the performance of start-up businesses (De Mel et al., 2012). However, despite the potential advantages of female entrepreneurship, the CBO estimates that female-owned businesses have worse average outcomes than male-owned businesses, possibly due to social and economic barriers (CBO, 2020).

Table 3: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Civil Status

Civil Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Married	12	50
Single	11	45.83
Separated	1	4.17
Total	24	100%

Table 3 indicates that half of the respondents are married, accounting for 50% of the total number of respondents, while 45.83% are single, and 4.17% are separated. The marital status of entrepreneurs can impact their business decisions, as married entrepreneurs may face more financial and family responsibilities than their single counterparts. One study by Ali and

Abdulrahman (2018) found that marital status has a significant impact on entrepreneurship, with married entrepreneurs facing unique challenges such as balancing family responsibilities with business obligations. Married entrepreneurs may also have limited access to financial resources due to familial obligations, which can impact their business growth and success. On the other hand, single entrepreneurs may have more flexibility and fewer distractions, allowing them to focus more on their business ventures.

Table 5: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Ownership

Ownership	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sole Proprietorship	21	87.5
Partnership	3	12.5
Corporation	0	0
Total	24	100%

Table 4 shows that the majority of the respondents, twenty-one (21) or 87.5%, managed their businesses independently, while only three (3) or 12.5% of the respondents had a partner in running their business. In a study by Li and Qian (2021), they found that solo entrepreneurship is a growing trend globally, with many entrepreneurs opting to start and run their businesses on their own rather than with partners or in teams. This trend is attributed to several factors, including the rise of digital platforms, the increasing availability of funding, and the growing popularity of flexible work arrangements. Additionally, some entrepreneurs prefer to be their own

bosses, make all the decisions, and have complete control over their businesses, which may explain the high percentage of respondents who managed their businesses independently.

Table 5: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Years of Operation

Years of Operation	Frequency	Percent (%)
1-11 Months	5	20.83
1-3 Years	14	58.34
4-6 Years	5	20.83
Total	24	100%

Table 5 presents the duration of operation of the respondents' businesses. It shows that a majority of the respondents have been managing their business for 1-3 years, with a total of 14 or 58.34%. This is consistent with the findings of a study by Gnyawali and Fogel, which suggests that small businesses often have a survival rate of three years or less (Gnyawali & Fogel, 1994). The study also found that businesses that were able to survive beyond three years had a greater chance of long-term success. This highlights the importance of strategies and support systems that can help small businesses survive and thrive beyond their initial years of operation.

Table 6: Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Average Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percent (%)
₱1,000 – 10,000	10	41.67
₱11,000 – 20,000	11	45.83
₱21,000 and up	3	12.5
Total	24	100%

Table 6 shows that the majority of the respondents have an average monthly income ranging from 1,000 to 20,000 pesos.

This finding is consistent with the study of Gunday et al. (2011), which highlights that small businesses tend to have a lower profit margin than larger companies, leading to lower average monthly earnings for the owners. Moreover, the study of Lazear (2005) argues that small business owners often face uncertainty and risk, which may explain why some respondents reported relatively low average monthly earnings. However, it is worth noting that the income level reported by the respondents in this study may also be influenced by various factors such as business type, location, and market competition.

2. The popularity of milk tea industry in Nueva Ecija

Table 7. Quality evaluation of Milk Tea

Product		WM	Verbal Description
1	Materials and ingredients used in milk tea are important elements in production	3.46	Strongly Agree
2	Customizing the taste of product based on customer preferences	3.13	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.30	Strongly Agree
Price		WM	Verbal Description
1	Provide PWD and senior citizen allowance / discount	3.21	Agree
2	Customer buy milk tea because of its affordability	3.04	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.13	Agree
Promotion		WM	Verbal Description
1	Advertisement (Tarpulin, stickers, etc.)	3.38	Agree
2	TV/ Radio station	2.63	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.00	Agree
Location		WM	Verbal

			Description
1	Easily accessible	3.42	Strongly Agree
2	The owner conducted feasibility study in selection of location	3.04	Agree
Average Weighted Mean		3.23	Agree

In the product quality, the results shows the respondents' evaluation of the quality of the milk tea product. The use of high-quality materials and ingredients in the production of milk tea is a crucial component, which received a average weighted mean of 3.46 with a verbal description of "strongly agree." Furthermore, customizing the taste of the product based on customer preference received a average weighted mean of 3.13 with a verbal description of "agree," resulting in a total average weighted mean of 3.30, indicating a "strongly agree" evaluation of the product quality. According to Yeh and Chen (2016), the quality of ingredients plays a significant role in determining the taste and overall satisfaction of the consumers with the product.

In the product price, the provision of PWD and senior citizen allowance/discount has a weighted mean of 3.21 with a verbal description of agree. This finding suggests that customers are in favor of businesses that provide discounts or special allowances for persons with disabilities and senior citizens. In addition, the weighted mean for customers buying milk tea because of affordability is 3.04, indicating that customers consider price as an important factor in their purchasing

decision. These results show that offering discounts and prioritizing affordability can be effective strategies for attracting customers and improving customer satisfaction. One study conducted by Kim and Park (2020) supports the importance of affordability and discounts in attracting customers. They found that consumers perceive price discounts as a signal of product quality and are more likely to make purchases when discounts are offered. Moreover, they found that providing discounts to vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities and senior citizens, can enhance a company's social responsibility and positively impact consumer attitudes towards the business. Overall, the findings suggest that businesses should consider providing discounts and special allowances to attract customers and improve customer satisfaction.

In the product promotion, the table shows the quality evaluation of promotion advertisements used by milk tea shops. The results indicate that promotional materials such as tarpaulins and stickers had a total weighted mean of 3.38, corresponding to a verbal description of "Strongly Agree," due to their affordability. In contrast, advertisements through TV or radio stations had a total weighted mean of 2.63, with a verbal description of "Agree." The total weighted mean for all promotion advertisements evaluated was 3.00,

indicating agreement among respondents. Studies have shown that promotional strategies are essential in creating awareness and interest in products and services (Rahim et al., 2016). In the food and beverage industry, promotional materials such as tarpaulins and stickers are cost-effective ways of advertising products, particularly for small businesses with limited marketing budgets (Fang, 2015). On the other hand, advertisements through TV or radio stations can be costly and may not effectively reach the target audience, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Kabadayi & Price, 2014).

In the store location, the respondents strongly agreed with a weighted mean of 3.42 that the milk tea product is easily accessible, indicating that the distribution strategy is effective in making the product available to potential customers. On the other hand, the use of feasibility study in selecting the store's location received an average score of 3.04, indicating that respondents agree with the store's location but may not have been fully aware of the process for selecting it. The overall weighted mean for the two factors is 3.23, which falls under the verbal description of "agree." This suggests that the accessibility of the product is an important factor in attracting customers, while the feasibility study for the store's location may not be a significant consideration for them.

3. Strenght, Weaknesses, Opportunity, and Threats (SWOT)

Table 8. SWOT Analysis

Strength		WM	Verbal Description
1	Marketing strategy	3.33	Highly Aware
2	Cheaper prize	2.67	Fully Aware
Average Weighted Mean		3.00	Fully Aware
Weakness		WM	Verbal Description
1	Too many competitor in the area	3.21	Fully Aware
2	Internet accessibility	2.46	Somewhat Aware
Average Weighted Mean		2.84	Fully Aware
Opportunities		WM	Verbal Description
1	Developed seasonal recipes for the availability of raw materials	3.12	Fully Aware
2	Opening new store	2.75	Fully Aware
Average Weighted Mean		2.94	Fully Aware
Threats		WM	Verbal Description
1	Too amny competitors	3.21	Fully Aware
2	Nothing new to offer	2.29	Fully Aware
Average Weighted Mean		2.75	Fully Aware

In table 8 shows that the marketing strategy was identified as the main strength of the milk tea shops with a weighted mean of 3.33 and a verbal description of "highly aware." This finding is consistent with previous research that highlights the importance of marketing strategy in the success of small businesses (Koernig et al., 2018). In addition, the lower price compared to other milk tea shops was found to be a common tactic used by the owners with a weighted mean of 2.67 and a verbal

description of "fully aware." This result suggests that the owners are aware of the importance of price in attracting customers. The total weighted mean for the strength was 3.00, which corresponds to the verbal description of "fully aware."

In the weaknesses shows the results of milk tea shops based on the respondents' evaluation. The result indicates that having too many competitors in one location is considered the main weakness, as it obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.21 and a verbal description of "fully aware." This finding suggests that competition is a significant challenge for milk tea shop owners, and they must be prepared to address it to succeed in the market. In contrast, internet accessibility is not a significant concern for milk tea shop owners, as it received a weighted mean of 2.46 and a verbal description of "somewhat aware." The total weighted mean for the milk tea shop owners' weakness is 2.84, indicating that they are "fully aware" of their weaknesses.

In Table 8, it can be seen that developing seasonal recipes for the availability of raw materials is viewed as an opportunity for milk tea businesses to be on top, as reflected by the weighted mean of 3.12 and its verbal description of "fully aware." This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the importance of innovation and creativity in the food and beverage industry (Kaufman &

Wood, 2013). Furthermore, opening a new branch is not considered a good idea by most milk tea owners, as reflected by the weighted mean of 2.75 and its verbal description of "fully aware." This may be due to the high level of competition and saturation in the market, making it challenging for new businesses to thrive (Hsu, 2019).

In threats, indicates that having too many competitors is the biggest threat to a business, with a weighted mean of 3.21 and a verbal description of "fully aware." This finding is consistent with previous studies that highlight the impact of competitive pressures on businesses (Barney, 1991; Porter, 1980). However, the lack of innovation or new offerings is not considered a significant threat in a milk tea shop, as owners can develop unique solutions to differentiate their products from competitors. The weighted mean for this threat is 2.29, with a verbal description of fully aware. The total weighted mean for all threats is 2.75, with a verbal description of fully aware.

4. Training program plan for Milk Tea Owners

Training Program Plan					
Goals	Indicators	Activities	Timeline	Status	Person Responsible
To improve the quality of products and service	1. Increased number of positive customer reviews	1. Product and service quality assessment 1.1 Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the store's products	1 Week (7 Days)	In-Progress	Owner / Manager

s in the milk tea stores, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty	and ratings 2. Higher sales revenue and profitability 3. Improved employee performance and product quality 4. Enhanced brand reputation and recognition	and services, including taste, appearance, consistency, and packaging 1.2 Collect feedback from customers through surveys and interviews to identify areas for improvement. 1.3 Developed a plan to address the identified issues and implement the necessary changes			
		2. Employee Training and Development 2.1 Conduct training sessions for employees on product preparation, customer services, and sales techniques 2.2 Provide regular feedback and coaching to improve performance and productivity 2.3 Establish a reward and recognition program to incentivize and motivate employees	On Going	In-Progress	Owner / Manager
		3. Marketing and Promotion Strategy 3.1. Develop a marketing and promotion plan to attract new customers and retain existing 3.2. utilize social media, email marketing, and other digital channels to reach target. 3.3. offer promotions, discounts, and other incentives to encourage repeat business	1 Month 30 Days	Not Started	Owner / Marketing Specialist

		4. Brand Reputation Management 4.1. Monitor and respond to customer feedback and reviews on social media and other reviews 4.2. Develop and implement a crisis management plan to address negative feedback and reviews 4.3. Promote positive brand reputation through community involvement and engagement	Ongoing	In-progress	Owner / Manager
		5. Financial Analysis and Management 5.1. Conduct a financial analysis of the store's performance to identify areas for improvement 5.2. Develop and implement a budget and cost-control plan to optimize profitability 5.3 Regularly monitor and analyze financial metrics, such as sales revenue, expenses, and profit margins.	1 Month (30 Days)	In-Progress	Owner / Financial Analyst

Improving the quality of products and services in a milk tea store is a crucial goal to achieve customer satisfaction and loyalty, which can lead to increased sales revenue and profitability. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive training plan that includes various activities and indicators.

The first indicator is an increase in positive customer reviews and ratings, which can be achieved through a product and service quality assessment. This

involves evaluating the taste, appearance, consistency, and packaging of the store's products and collecting feedback from customers through surveys and interviews. Based on the feedback, a plan should be developed to address the identified issues, and the necessary changes should be implemented.

The second indicator is improved employee performance and productivity, which can be achieved through employee training and development. Regular training sessions should be conducted to enhance product preparation, customer service, and sales techniques. Providing regular feedback and coaching and establishing a reward and recognition program can also motivate employees to improve their performance.

The third indicator is an enhanced brand reputation and recognition, which can be achieved through marketing and promotion strategies. Developing a marketing and promotion plan and utilizing digital channels, promotions, discounts, and incentives to encourage repeat business can attract new customers and retain existing ones.

The fourth indicator is brand reputation management, which involves monitoring and responding to customer feedback and reviews on social media and other review sites. Establishing a crisis management plan to address negative feedback and reviews and promoting positive brand reputation through

community involvement and engagement can enhance the store's reputation.

Finally, the fifth indicator is financial analysis and management. Conducting a financial analysis of the store's performance, developing and implementing a budget and cost-control plan, and regularly monitoring and analyzing financial metrics can optimize profitability.

The overall timeline for the training plan is six months, but the timeline and activities may vary depending on the specific needs and goals of the milk tea store. It is essential to regularly review and adjust the training plan based on feedback and results to ensure continuous improvement in product and service quality, employee performance, brand reputation, and financial performance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. The respondents of the study are owners of Milk Tea shops in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The majority of them are single or married, aged between 18 to 41 years old. Their types of ownership are 97% sole proprietorship and 3% partnership. The respondents' monthly income range from 1000 to 21000 Pesos based on their daily customer transactions.
2. Milk tea shops employ unique strategies to attract their target market.

Unlike other shops that base their offerings on customer requests, milk tea shops develop seasonal recipes for the availability of raw materials, creating a new product every season.

3. The shop's vulnerability depends on the session and the clients who will buy or use their goods on a monthly basis. To market their business, milk tea shops utilize social media platforms to attract more milk tea fans, especially women, who prefer milk tea over men.
4. Women are more enthusiastic about visiting milk tea shops than men, as they enjoy the atmosphere and the variety of drinks. Men, on the other hand, may option to get their beverages elsewhere.

In conclusion, the study suggests that milk tea shops in Nueva Ecija, Philippines, are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They develop unique marketing strategies and seasonal recipes to capture their target market's attention. The study also highlights the potential market for milk tea shops among women, who prefer milk tea over men. Overall, the findings of the study could be useful for aspiring entrepreneurs who want to venture into the milk tea business.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this research, the researcher arrived with the following recommendation.

1. Milk tea shop owners should continue to maintain and improve their businesses by staying relevant to the interests of today's youth.
2. Owners should focus on attracting younger customers, who are more likely to be passionate about milk tea and share their experiences on social media. They can also consider taking online milk tea classes to broaden their knowledge and keep up with current trends.
3. Owners should encourage their employees to make suggestions for new ingredients or products to add to their menu, which can help keep their offerings fresh and interesting.
4. For future research, it is recommended to focus on product development and identify current trends in the milk tea industry to create a unique product that can capture the interest of customers.

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