Managerial skills and functions of restaurant managers of independent casual restaurants in national capital region, Philippines

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Abstract | Restaurant operations is one of the busiest and most demanding food business areas that should be led by competent and proficient managers to attain optimum productivity for guests and owners. The study features an evaluation of the management skills and functions of independent casual restaurant managers in the National Capital Region, Philippines. The processes involved in determining the said functions and skills comprised assessments through survey-questionnaire and interviews. Human skills requires more focus since managers usually contact staff at the top and lower levels of operations. Emphasis has been given to highlighting service culture and strict observance of the mission, vision and objectives of the operations. Thus, a series of professional development programs promises a myriad of avenues to improve the manager's skills and its impact on daily operations, to ensure that benefits are extended towards upper management and results are felt within measurable means.

Keywords | Restaurant management, independent casual restaurant, managerial skills, management functions, service culture

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1. Introduction

The restaurant industry is a wide and diverse community which captures a lot of employment opportunities for varied talents. In 2016, the National Restaurant Association projects that the restaurant industry will post sales of 783 billion dollars and employ 14.4 million people in more than 1 million locations. With its vastness and huge demand, it is no wonder that the restaurant industry poses a lot of changes and trends that may affect the flow of the establishment's operations (Sheel, 2017). Some of these trends include headwinds - restaurant operators face legislative and regulatory pressures, moderate economic growth, labor cost increases and cybersecurity. Also, the restaurant industry will continue to strengthen its position as an industry where people from all backgrounds have the opportunity to achieve the dream of managing his own business. Consequently, recruitment and retention of employees will also re-emerge as a top challenge. It will be difficult for an organization to function effectively without efficient management.

In the Philippines, owning and investing in a restaurant is quite difficult as the Filipino market is highly selective and at the same time conscious in the selection of food and restaurants to choose from. Moreover, in the case of independent restaurants (restaurants independently owned and run by proprietors) which functions on a fairly smaller scale than chain restaurants, there will always be distinctions between operational structures, the type of culture built, customer experience that is introduced, developed and delivered, and the challenges and prospects each type might face. With the challenges posed by these trends and its discrete brand culture, it is really a must for these establishments to be managed properly through a careful identification, selection and matching of the different skill sets and functions assigned to these restaurant managers. With this, the aim of this research is to determine the management skills and functions that are actually performed by the selected managers of Independent Casual Restaurants in the National Capital Region and develop a management model that will address their current concerns.

2. Literature Review

Managerial Skills and Functions of Restaurant Managers

Managers, in order to become successful, should be properly equipped to perform well (Chen, 2011; Darbi, 2012). Relatively, different manager levels require different skill sets. For top managers, conceptual skills are deemed the most necessary (Tesone, 2006). For middle managers, human skills which include communication and strong relationships are important while lower level managers need the technical skills the most. The different skills are also deemed necessary during the management journey. Furthermore, Katz (2009) mentioned that there is an inverse ratio of these skills needed when the management level increases. This is why gaining these skills are still important. Successful managers in an organization should therefore learn to use these assets at their disposal, collecting critical information and data to communicate upward for strategic planning (Johanson, 2011).

Relative to the skills are the functions or tasks that are actually performed by the restaurant managers. Managers are involved in a variety of functions such as planning, where goals are actually set (Alexander, 2007). They are also involved in the synchronization and integration of activities, responsibilities and command and control structures to ensure that the resources of an organization are used most efficiently in pursuit of the specified objectives (Petree, Broome & Bennett, 2012). The need for coordination is felt when group effort

is needed for the accomplishment of an objective. Leadership is also very inevitable to study the different leadership styles, how to streamline organizations and engage employees (Gill, Bhutani, Mand & Sharma, 2010).

Management in the restaurant industry is quite a challenge as it is an opportunity. With the needs for varying skill sets at different levels in the organization, it is a challenge even for the owner to balance their proportion to one another. Accordingly, the tasks which are equally important should be where these skills are targeted. Even for an independent casual restaurant where headwinds are usually turning up every time, accessing the managerial skills and matching them with the functions should be one of the restaurant's dire priority.

Service Quality in the Restaurant Business

In the hospitality industry, most specifically in the restaurant business, the concept of service and quality cannot be ignored (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). Even though scholars are still in debate whether to consider it an industry, it cannot be neglected that service provision and quality should be an issue that a restaurant manager (much more in the Independent Casual Restaurants) should address (Testa & Sipe, 2012).

An important component of service provision is the maintenance of quality. Quality as defined, is the result of perceiving it and granting it in actual setting. Relatively, the presence of quality allows managers to recognize and remove barriers to change and solicit the opinions and ideas of their associates and do something about those good ideas (Cardy, 2011). It also empowers not only the managers, but also the staff in engaging in relational exchanges, including self-disclosure and customer recognition, which is actually the end-goal of the operation (Reyes & Kleiner, 2013).

A strong service culture with focus on development of a clear vision, mission and objectives leads to sustained improvements to customer experience and a sustainable competitive edge for organizations (Hu, 2009). This idea was highlighted even more as customers have a vast array of options in service-oriented industries and thus, easier for them to change sources and/or suppliers. With globalization and modernization allowing the customers to raise their expectations and widen their set of needs and wants, hence, organizations must continuously introduce, establish, develop and create a sustainable service quality (Mok, Sparks & Kadampully, 2013).

Defining the managerial skillsets and their functions plus the inculcation of service culture are the basic requirements for a harmonious environment in a restaurant setting. In the Philippines, the literature only shows a great opportunity for the future of independent casual restaurants and the managers that service them. But this is only the start of this niche market to level off with other chain restaurants with established mechanisms, highlighting service education and its implementation in these independent casual restaurants (Kusluvan, 2010).

With the uniqueness that these entities offer, the managers are posed both an opportunity and a challenge as they play both the roles of a top and middle level manager. Notwithstanding the present state of operations in the Philippine setting, the right mix of human, technical and conceptual skills are set aside as there are other priorities of the operation such as budget cuts and price increases.

It is now therefore imperative that a study be made to evaluate the status of the restaurant managers in independent casual types vis-à-vis the roles that they currently undertake in the daily operations. Significantly, their job performance will be affected and the tasks assigned to them will be met with great ease and comfort. More than that, it is the end-users who will greatly benefit from this undertaking. The employees and staff who will be receiving tasks and will encounter restaurant ma-

nagers are the ones who are greatly affected by their current state, which in turn will have an adverse effect to the service quality that the guest or customers receive.

If these aspects will be greatly examined, the owners can actually get a huge benefit out of this endeavor. As the managers' condition will be checked, an inventory can be derived out of the present skill set of these restaurant managers and a training plan or better yet a management model can be proposed to remedy the weaknesses at hand.

Having this in mind, the present study evaluates the current status of the restaurant managers of the independent casual restaurants when it comes to their skills and functions. It is also aimed to check the relationship of the skills and functions towards each other and eventually find out the perceived strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, based on the present setup of the restaurants, an identification of the plans and operational practices was assessed to contribute to the proposal of a management model at the end of the study.

3. Method

This study adapted the descriptive-correlational-developmental design. The first stage highlights the skillset required for managers of the selected Independent Casual Dining restaurants. Determination of the technical, human and conceptual skills (adapted from RL Katz Theory) was conducted in this section. The results of the first stage were used as the basis for the inventory of the current skills set of the restaurant managers in said setting. The second stage is also descriptive in nature but qualitative in approach. The management functions performed by these managers was the focus of this section. Stage three focused on determining the relationship of the skills mentioned and whether these skills affect each other within the scope of operations. The fourth stage

determined the problems encountered by the restaurant managers based on the evaluation. Finally, a management model was proposed to address the challenges.

Face and content validity were done to determine the reliability and appropriateness of the adopted instruments to the intended participants of the study. The 38-item paper and pencil survey questionnaire was utilized in the determination of the management skills. Ten of the items focused on the conceptual skills, eleven focused on the human skills and the last seventeen highlighted the technical skills.

To determine the functions performed by the restaurant managers, an interview guide was crafted. Before the conduct of the interview, the instrument has undergone validation from three graduate school professors and three restaurant managers which decided whether to retain, reject or rephrase the statements.

Participants

The set of participants were purposively selected in each stage of the study. It is the intention of the study to identify the actual skills manifested by the restaurant managers that is why the participants were selected from among those that they encounter in the operations. For the functions part, the participants were again purposively selected based on their actual performance for the reason that owners of these restaurants served as the interviewees. As the locations are in the National Capital Region, the researcher has utilized the independent casual restaurants in the commercial districts of Metro Manila including AyalaLand, Eastwood City, Tomas Morato and Capital Commons, to name a few.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study started in 2017 when there was a boom in the foodservice and

restaurant business in the Philippines. The survey was conducted inside the restaurants after each shift of the supervisors, managers and assistant managers, as requested in order not to hamper daily operations. The instrument was administered to the identified 60 supervisors, 32 shift managers and 23 assistant managers within a specified period. The interview meanwhile was conducted together with the 15 owners of the independent casual restaurants who had agreed with the request. There were 32 restaurants identified but only 15 granted the request.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the collected data included: 1) determining the mean scores and standard deviations of the management skills; tallying and frequency counting for the checklist section; 2) data sets from the correlation test and 3) coding and thematizing the participants' responses in the interview held. Critical review and analysis of the

coded and thematized qualitative data generated the themes and their corresponding descriptions. The descriptive and inferential statistics, together with the qualitative data provided the reasons why the tests were employed.

4. Results & Discussion

Results

Skillset of Independent Casual Restaurant Managers

The major goal of the study was to determine the current skill set of the independent casual restaurant managers in terms of the skills identified by Katz. Implications of the results were focused on how these skill set will affect the employees and guests respond on the virtues the managers manifest.

Table 1 | Assessment on the Managerial Skills of the Independent Casual Restaurant Managers

Criteria	Supervisors		Shift Managers		Asst. Managers		Composite	
	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI	Mean	VI
1. Conceptual Skills	4.31	E	4.17	VG	4.07	VG	4.18	VG
2. Human Skills	4.33	E	4.21	E	4.18	VG	4.24	E
3. Technical Skills	4.31	E	4.13	VG	4.04	VG	4.16	VG
Overall Weighted Mean	4.32	E	4.17	VG	4.10	VG	4.19	VG

Response Code: Excellent (E), Very Good (VG), Good (G), Fair (F), Poor (P)

The restaurant managers manifested very good skills in the restaurant operations as shown in Table 1, as assessed by their subordinates. Referring to conceptual skills, a restaurant manager usually formulates long-ranged goals and short-ranged goals with component members of the organization, bases the goals/objectives on performance which are measurable and attainable. He also identifies the goals/objectives that provide the elements of an organization's policies, philosophies and values. With technical skills, his tasks involve checking the goals/objectives upon performance which are measurable and attainable, making goals/objectives fo-

cus on results rather than activities. He also develops appropriate measurement that managers can use to make decisions based upon fact rather than intuitions. Consequently, the human skills which ranked excellent involves leading goals/objectives directly to increase job satisfaction and to reward which are related to success, communicating the objectives not only in writing, but also in face-to-face discussions, work harmoniously and establish rapport with staff. As hospitality practitioners, it is good that the managers are able to relate to their subordinates that creates a stimulating service culture in the workplace.

Functions Performed by the Independent Casual Restaurant Managers

Table 2 | Final Repertory Grid on the Functions Performed by Independent Casual Restaurant Managers

Theme	Categories	Significant Statements
Sales	Sales Performance	• We are always reminded what to do and what to improve for the restaurant so we can reach the sales effectively. • He values his employees because he believes that a happy employee give more income than a sad one. He's connected with his employees and wants to know if they are alright, he is also hands on when it comes to our operation and he's always updated with what is happening during store hours.
	Utilized marketing techniques	• Promotion especially during holiday seasons. Tie-ups with credit card companies, they could get 50 percent off. • We do not stop from advertising our products and of course, thinking out of the box. We improve our sales through social media and my RM tell my staff to advertise more our business even they are outside or not in duty
	Customer Relations	• We sustain them by treating them as part of family, making them feel home even when they're not. • Through good communication with guests and giving out discounts to loyal customers
Employee Retention	Techniques utilized in retention	• Good and harmonious relationship with co-workers and superior. Also, the manager sees to it that the employees' health is suitable for their job • Most important to consider is the performance. If the employee is doing well or performs well we will retain them but we have categories and criteria to consider. First is having a positive attitude like having a complete attendance and their excellent performances. So we balance everything
Training	Method employed to staff	• He makes basic rules, ones that are highly understandable and sets himself as a role model. • In conducting training to our subordinates, our restaurant manager gives them special trainings especially in using standard service. He shares his knowledge and what he learned from others to challenge them.

Table 2 presents the qualitative data gathered from the 15 restaurant owners who served as participants of the study. On the sales criteria, the owners mentioned that the restaurant managers act as a reminder to the restaurant staff in boosting the sales of the establishment, Furthermore, he utilizes his influence with his employees through positive connection which will later enable his staff, delivering more income than expected. Moreover, the managers still maximize their human skill in relating to the customers as the loyal ones are treated like a family member, communicating better with them which then later empower them in co-creating their experience.

Table 3 | Problems encountered by the Independent Casual Restaurant Managers

	Indicators	f	\%	Rank
1.	Inadequate supervisors to do administrative jobs.	39	9.85	4.5
2.	Inadequate staff.	42	10.61	1
3.	Lack of knowledge in dealing with operational leadership tasks.	30	7.58	10.5
4.	Inadequate physical facilities/ equipment.	30	7.58	10.5
5.	Presence of political biases/influences that hinders the standard operating policies and procedures.	39	9.85	4.5
6.	Negative attitudes of the staff toward the managers.	38	9.60	6
7.	Lack of cooperation from the staff with regards to programs and projects.	41	10.35	2
8.	Low salaries and lack of incentives, and benefits of the manager.	40	10.10	3
9.	Leadership weaknesses (from the higher ups).	31	7.83	9
10.	Lack of coordination with and support of co-managers.	32	8.08	8
11.	Lack of regular training and seminar about operational leadership.	34	8.59	7

As expected, the independent casual restaurant managers have experienced problems that hindered them in performing their tasks. The top five problems of the managers focuses on external factors rather than internal. The items which got the highest rating refers to their subordinates which includes 'inadequate staff' and 'lack of cooperation' highlighting the importance of empowered employees to perform the jobs right; next is motivational in nature, referring to 'low salaries and lack of incentives' and the last are still external in nature referring to 'inadequate supervisors' and 'presence of political biases.'

Association Between the Skill set of the Independent Casual Restaurant Managers

Table 4 shows the Pearson r-test to check if significant relationship exists between the managerial skills of the independent casual restaurant managers. Findings show that all skills fell under the range of very strong correlation (0.80-0.99, very strong correlation) making the skills highly dependent on each other in the case of the managers.

Table 4 | Correlation Test between the Management Skills

Criteria	Conceptual		Technical		Human	
	r	VI	r	VI	r	VI
Conceptual			0.968	VSC	0.900	VSC
Technical	0.968	VSC			0.937	VSC
Human	0.900	VSC	0.937	VSC		

Proposed Management Model

The proposed above management model for managers of independent casual dining restaurants in National Capital Region shows how related activities can be used to equip and develop self-directed restaurant managers and correct performance when it gets off track. This progressive model is separated into two regions; equipping zone, where the managers learn and master their acquired skills and knowledge, and the correcting zone, where managers who have mastered skills
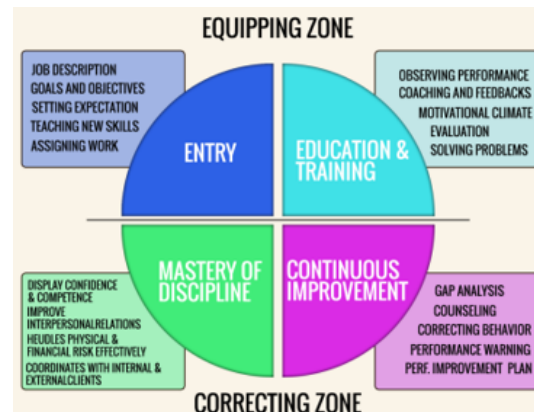
and knowledge correct occasional shortfalls.

Figure 1 | The proposed management model for independent casual restaurant managers

Discussion

Primarily, the research distinguished the current skill set of the independent casual restaurant managers as to their managerial skills vis-à-vis the functions they currently undertake, and to establish correlations, if any, between the different managerial skills they possess.

Sunindijo (2015) generalizes that for managers to be effective, they should focus on the development of their skills in order to become better equipped in meeting their objectives. Findings from this study support that claim, suggesting that independent casual restaurant managers develop their human skills as they are both coordinating with top management and their subordinates, not to mention guest relations. Results also suggest managers should not only develop their human skills, but they should also focus on their technical skills and conceptual skills as evidenced by the association of these skills toward each other. Since the National Capital Region is made up of huge number of commercial establishments, especially the restaurant business, these findings are particularly significant given that the managers are facing a

lot of changes brought by different factors from the internal and external environment.

The abilities of a manager needed in an organization depend on the manager's position in its hierarchy (Mardanov, Sterrett & Baker, 2007). As the independent casual restaurant manager is both coordinating with the top management and subordinates, it is important for him to hone all aspects of his skill set, most specially those which involve human relations. Human relations is something that cannot be mechanically applied to personality traits as this skill should be natural, spontaneous, unconscious and consistently demonstrated in a manager's every action (Bart, Botis & Taggar, 2001). In a restaurant environment, there are a lot of activities happening inside and outside the facility where different human behaviors can be observed. Guests and employees are likely to be aware of their feelings and beliefs toward others and understanding others' feelings, highlighting the importance of this skill to a restaurant manager (Lugosi & Lugosi, 2010). But these gaps cannot be resolved by human relations alone. Managers who have conceptual skills have the ability to think creatively and understand complicated or abstract ideas (Härtel, Gough & Härtel, 2008). This is equally true since the restaurant operation is very demanding when it comes to the needs of both the guests (in the service process) and the employees (motivation and benefits). Apart from this, another test an independent casual restaurant manager faces is the difficulty brought about by its novelty in the market. Being an independent establishment could pose a lot of challenges for the manager. This is why the technical know-how of the manager in all scopes is very much needed.

In addition to the skills a manager may possess and the tasks at hand, another important aspect in the conceptualization of the model operation for independent casual restaurant managers would very much dwell on the vision and mission of the establishment and whether the concept of service culture is actually seen in the operations.

A strong service culture focusing on a clear vision, mission and objectives leads to sustained improvements to guest experience and a sustainable competitive edge to an organization (Hu, 2009).

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Being in the restaurant industry is very challenging as there are a lot of challenges every employee face. More than the service, a manager is tasked to relate to all stakeholders inside the operation and thus, needs to balance his internal environment as well as his external environment. It may seem for some that the restaurant manager's job is simple and can very much be evaluated in mere observation, but it takes a lot more to become a restaurant manager, especially in independent casual restaurants.

The study provided several strong points in areas that restaurant managers should concentrate on to achieve professional development. The research results argued that managers should have a complete range of technical, conceptual and most importantly, human skills. Though there were some challenges which were encountered by the restaurant managers, they still saw that through constant updating and continuous training and development, the process will be beneficial for them primary with their self-improvement. The restaurant managers believe in improving themselves as a means of providing better service and supervision to their guests and staff; therefore, they seek to enhance their professional competence, industrial know-how and skill development.

The restaurant managers' performance are triggered by their relationship with their colleagues, the owner of the restaurant and primarily with the guest needs and wants. Accordingly, the owners set the direction for the restaurant managers and greatly affect whether to prioritize one key area from another. The restaurant mana-

gers pick up from this direction and eventually leads the entire organization towards its goal. Application of the different management techniques and leadership styles yields its best contribution to operational efficacy as the establishment's success rates become clearer to achieve its goal. Similarly, Hon's (2016) proposed model integrates individual- and group-level uncertainty determinants of creativity and yields a multilevel approach to creativity, which lead to operation leadership.

It seems critical that the restaurant managers believe that their enhanced management skills will greatly affect their operational efficacy and overall performance. Pursuing this path, however, needs the full support of the owner, other managers and even the staff. Findings of the study suggests that even though some of the managers came from the esteemed chain restaurants, it really is different for independent casual restaurants. Subsequently, though the restaurant managers are determined to hone their management skills, it is also important that a proper framework be readied ahead of time for them. Manl and Molina-Azorín (2015) enumerated the effects of quality management on competitive advantage. Li, Kim, and Zhao (2017) saw the same effect on employees and guests in enhancing restaurant operations.

With the aforementioned benefits and needs of the restaurant managers to improve themselves, a series of focused professional development programs promises a myriad of avenues to improve the restaurant manager's skill set and their impact on the daily operations, to ensure that the benefits are extended towards the upper management and results are felt within measurable means. Providing avenues for restaurant managers to excel more on their chosen field not only allows them to learn from these experiences but also set a gold standard from which the restaurant can take off to explore other opportunities such as sharing best practices in this niche industry. Membership to professional organizations such as the Hotel and Restaurant Association of the Philippines and the

Association of Human Resource Managers of Hotel Industry can also help them in raising their present skill set into comparable levels with those members of the organizations. Mentoring programs from other experienced managers can be practiced as a mechanism where the restaurant managers can learn from experts. In this way, the training for professional development can be implemented and monitored, sharing with both the novice and expert managers the values and behavior that should be exhibited while in the service setting and act as an inspiration to both their co-managers and staff to acquire the true concept and value of service. Chosen approaches may be formalized and initiated, so as to forward these experiences extending to the entire organization thus, creating a service culture for the restaurant.

This study, however, considered only the responses towards the independent casual restaurant managers of the National Capital Region. The study may have a different take if other elements like culture and markets are considered. Taking from the experiences of the managers, the direction set by the top management is a critical factor in crafting the development for these managers hence, the restaurant administration may work on patching up the existing needs of the managers, the owners and the main stakeholders of the service setting which is the guests.

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