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ENHANCE SERVICE BUSINESS WITH CULTURAL CAPITAL IN NIBONG ANCIENT COMMERCIAL STREET, THAILAND

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Abstract

This research aims to 1) study the knowledge constituting the cultural capital in the Nibong ancient commercial street, 2) develop the main components for enhancing the image of the service business by utilizing the cultural capital of the Nibong ancient commercial street, and 3) analyze and compare the economic value before and after the development of the service business. The research design is qualitative, employing the concept of corporate image as the research framework. The research area was the Nibong ancient commercial street in Yala Municipality, Yala Province, Thailand. The sample group consisted of five service business operators in the Nibong ancient commercial street, selected through purposive sampling. Three research instruments were used: 1) focus group discussions, 2) interviews, and 3) questionnaires. Data were analyzed using content analysis and descriptively written up. The research findings indicated the emergence of five unique pieces of cultural knowledge in the Nibong ancient commercial street. These findings can be used as concepts and inspiration for designing and enhancing the business image, thereby elevating the service business. Additionally, the economic value of the five service business operators in the Nibong ancient commercial street was higher after development compared to before.

Keywords: Enhancement, Service Business, Cultural Capital

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Introduction

The Nibong ancient commercial street, also known as Sai Klang Area, is one of the earliest commercial areas in Yala City, Yala Province, Thailand. Malay people from Pattani province purchased land there before the railway construction in 1921 and settled in the area, starting businesses with only 2-3 families. Since World War I, Chinese immigrants have rented properties to engage in commerce. Historically, the Sai Klang area housed approximately 115 shops, with Chinese-owned shops comprising 93%, Malay-owned shops 5%, and Indian-owned shops 2%. However, after a fire in 1977 and the expiration of the 20-year lease agreements between the Chinese tenants and Malay landlords, the Malay landowners began to operate their businesses on their own properties (Sirisakdamkeong, 2003).

Currently, the Nibong ancient commercial street is quiet. It lacks activities that promote trade and investment due to four main reasons: 1) the significant fire that devastated the old town's commercial area, 2) ongoing unrest in the region, making the commercial area a safety zone, 3) the shift to online shopping and the growth of modern shopping malls, altering the economic role of the old town commercial area (interview with Yusoon Jintaphakorn, Deputy Mayor of Yala Municipality, on January 4, 2022), and 4) a decrease in railway travel by locals and visitors. These factors have led some business operators in the Nibong ancient commercial street to lose motivation to develop their businesses, resulting in poorly maintained buildings, business closures, and inability to afford rental costs. Additionally, comparing tourist statistics for Yala province between January-November 2020 and 2021, there was a decrease in revenue from both Thai and foreign tourists by 57 million baht (Yala Provincial Tourism and Sports Office, 2021). Nevertheless, the Nibong ancient commercial street retains unique architectural features, significant landmarks, traditional lifestyles, and cultural practices passed down through generations. These characteristics offer the potential for development in line with modern changes, particularly in cultural aspects that could transform the area into a cultural tourism site, a learning space, and an economic zone aligned with Yala Province's development strategy (2023-2030) to enhance "prosperous quality of life, thriving agriculture, and sustainable tourism."

Currently, the Nibong ancient commercial street still has businesses operated by descendants of the original owners. This research focuses on developing the potential of service business operators in cultural services utilizing the area's unique cultural capital. Five service businesses with cultural capital in the Nibong ancient commercial street were selected for this study: 1) Hai Pang Restaurant, serving breakfast and beverages, 2) Krua Nij Restaurant, selling sticky rice desserts, a Yala souvenir, 3) King's Ice Cream Store, offering shaved ice and ice cream, 4) Soup Seng Restaurant, serving traditional beef and offal soup, and 5) Yala-Rusoh Taxi Stand, the only remaining taxi stand in the Nibong ancient commercial street. This research paper presents the findings on cultural capital knowledge in the Nibong ancient commercial street, the results of developing the main components for enhancing the service business image using cultural capital, and the economic value comparison before and after the business development. The research aims to: 1) study the cultural capital knowledge in the Nibong ancient commercial street, 2) develop the main components for enhancing the service business image using the cultural capital of the Nibong ancient commercial street, and 3) analyze and compare the economic value before and after the service business development.

Literature Review

Corporate Image

Corporate image refers to the mental picture the public holds of a particular company or business entity (Kahokaew & Nurittamont, 2021). This image encompasses management, service, human resources, products, and the organization's goals, clearly defining its unique identity (Hanpayak, 2011).

Consumer perception of brand image, as explained by Assael (1995), directly influences marketing objectives and strategies related to store image and corporate ethics.

1) Brand Image Perception: When consumers decide to purchase a specific product or brand, they consider factors such as quality, price, service, and warranty. Consumers generally perceive branded products as higher quality than unbranded ones. Additionally, products sold in discount stores are often viewed as lower quality compared to those sold in department stores, and price perception varies accordingly.

2) Store Image Perception: Overall satisfaction and impression of a business or store contribute to creating a favorable store image. Key components include:

2.1) Service: Customer satisfaction with service can be measured by the following five aspects:

2.1.1) Tangible Aspect of Service: It refers to the physical characteristics that provide visible conveniences, such as staff, various facilitation tools for coordination, and an environment where customers feel they are being cared for. This type of service will make the customers perceive the attention they are receiving.

2.1.2) Reliability and Trustworthiness: Providing services that match the promises made to customers. Every service instance must be appropriate, and the results of the service must be consistent, which will assure customers that the service is reliable and trustworthy.

2.1.3) Responsiveness and Service Recipients: The readiness and willingness to provide services by promptly responding to customer needs.

2.1.4) Assuring Customers: Building customer confidence requires demonstrating service knowledge and skills, meeting customer needs with courtesy and good manners, and using effective communication to ensure customers that they will receive the best service.

2.1.5) Empathy: Personalized attention to individual customer needs.

2.2) Convenience: Design elements that enhance customer convenience, such as location, parking, and business hours.

2.3) Product Quality: Ensuring products meet customer satisfaction and quality standards.

Interior Design

Dunne & Lusch (2008) and Hasty & Reardon (1997) describe interior design as the arrangement of store layouts, product displays, and various elements such as lighting, color, and sound. Effective interior design should prioritize customer comfort and support sales. Key aspects include:

1) Customer Traffic Flow: There are three main layout patterns:

1.1) Grid Pattern Layout: This layout consists of main aisles, secondary aisles, and minor aisles. This type of layout maximizes sales area and usability.

1.2) Free Flow Pattern Layout: This highly flexible layout reduces construction costs for wall-mounted furniture but increases the number of shelves and racks. The cashier's desk can be seen from every corner of the store.

1.3) Boutique Layout Pattern: This layout is an advanced design based on the Free Flow pattern, allowing for continuous sales of related products.

2) Fixture Furniture: Walls and furniture inside should be flexible and adaptable. Retail stores must continually develop and change to create new experiences for customers. Customers entering the store should feel refreshed by seeing new creations. Allowing the store to remain unchanged can lead to customer boredom and monotony. Therefore, materials used in interior decoration should be adaptable without being overly costly.

3) Loose Furniture: This refers to furniture that can be moved and arranged in various ways as desired. It can be relocated to different areas as needed, offering complete freedom in decoration. Unlike fixture furniture, loose furniture allows for repositioning and rearranging according to preference without any hassle.

4) Color and Lighting: The colors used in the store should match the personality of each type of retail store. Red can evoke feelings of excitement and thrill, which may be suitable for

nightclubs or restaurants. For bakeries or food stores, white is appropriate as it conveys a sense of cleanliness. Lighting within the store is crucial to the atmosphere. For example, hospitals should use daylight bulbs as they provide light similar to natural daylight. Warm white bulbs, emitting a soft yellow light, create a warm atmosphere suitable for bedrooms, living rooms, or relaxation areas. Cool white bulbs balance the warmth of warm white light and the brightness of daylight, producing a pleasant soft white light.

5) Product Arrangement: The arrangement should help customers easily “remember” the planograms, such as the size, model, scent, color, and style of products, and whether they should be on the left or right side, or which products should be on the top or bottom shelves.

Research Conceptual Framework

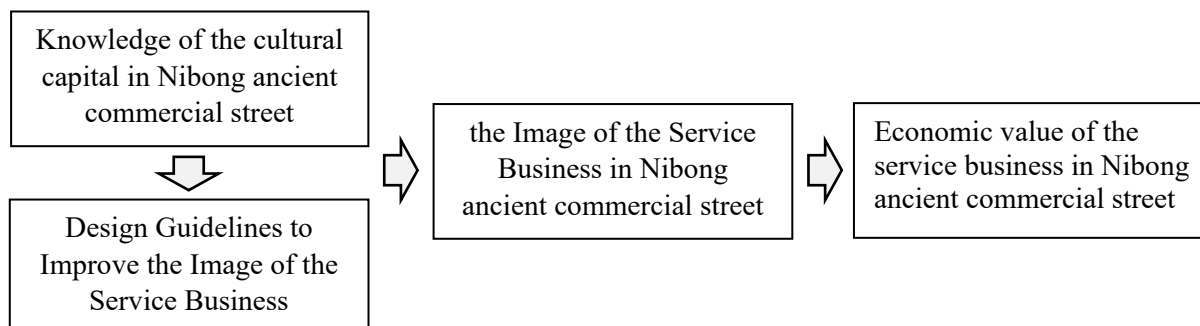


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The population consists of service business operators in the Nibong ancient commercial street. The sample group includes five service business operators in the Nibong Nibong ancient commercial street who have distinctive identities.

Data Collection and Analysis

This research is qualitative and is divided into three stages. 1) Study and compile cultural capital knowledge specific to the Nibong ancient commercial street. 2) Develop the main components of service business image enhancement using cultural capital from the Nibong ancient commercial street. 3) Analyze and compare the economic value before and after the development of service businesses.

Research Instruments were activity records for focus group discussions for designing and enhancing the service business image using Nibong’s cultural capital, interviews with service business operators in the Nibong trading area, and Economic value questionnaires. Data were collected through focus group activities, interviews, and surveys with service business operators in the Nibong ancient commercial street. The data were then analyzed using content analysis and descriptively reported.

Research Results

The research on cultural capital knowledge, the development of the main components for enhancing the service business image using cultural capital, and the comparison of economic values before and after the development of service businesses in the Nibong ancient commercial street involved focus groups, interviews, and questionnaires with business operators and stakeholders. The findings are as follows:

Cultural Capital Knowledge and Image Enhancement Components

Hai Phang Restaurant: A breakfast and beverage shop known for its signature dish, grilled bread with a special custard spread, and grilled Chinese crullers (Pa Tong Ko). Although the restaurant sources the crullers from another supplier, it ensures they are grilled over charcoal

to enhance flavor and aroma. The furniture, approximately 65 years old, includes marble tables and carved wooden chairs imported from Italy, which were popular at the time. Display cabinets and storage units were gifts from relatives and friends upon the store's opening, and they remain in good condition today.

The results of the SWOT Analysis of the environment of Hai Phang Restaurant as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 SWOT Analysis Results for Hai Phang Restaurant

Strengths	Weaknesses
1) Offers delicious breakfast menus with unique cooking methods. 2) The business's long history enhances customer trust, with many regular customers. 3) The interior decor remains original, featuring furniture such as cabinets, tables, and chairs over 60 years old and still functional. 4) Sells breakfast at affordable prices.	1) Open for service only half the day. 2) Operated solely by the owner, no additional staff hired.
Opportunities	Threats
1) Consumer behavior of photographing food for social media influences breakfast choices in a nostalgic atmosphere. 2) Food reviews by influencers on social media create a desire to taste the food and experience the restaurant's ambiance.	1) One-way traffic regulation may impact accessibility to the restaurant. 2) The emergence of new breakfast businesses in Yala municipality provides consumers with more options.

The study results show that the cultural capital knowledge of entrepreneurs can be used to develop guidelines for enhancing the main components to improve the image of the Haipang restaurant as follows.

1) Storage and display cabinets: The pioneering business owner named the business "Haipang," which means fragrant sea because he had to travel across the sea from China to make a living in Yala Province. The designer used the meaning of the business name in the design of the display cabinets by developing patterns of the sea and choosing clean, white lines that blend harmoniously with the wooden and glass display cabinets.

2) Food Preparation Table and Sangkhaya (Panda Leaves Custard) Packaging: The designer used the "Haipang" logo in the design to create brand recognition for customers visiting the restaurant. Initially, the entrepreneur produced Sangkhaya packaging based on customer orders, using plastic boxes with lids, which lacked any logo or text. The researcher and designer suggested that the entrepreneur use square glass bottles with silver lids, and the words "Haipang Homemade Sangkhaya" as a selling point for the product.



Figure 2 Haipang Restaurant Design

Krua Nij Restaurant: The “Krua Nij” restaurant is distinguished by its seven-color sticky rice product, packaged in attractive containers. The sticky rice is fresh, colorful, clean, and delicious, making it a great souvenir from Yala Province. The restaurant is clean and features a unique display cabinet.

The results of the SWOT Analysis of the environment of Krua Nij Restaurant as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 SWOT Analysis Results for Krua Nij Restaurant

Strengths	Weaknesses
1) It is a store selling delicious, clean sticky rice with attractive colors, and beautiful packaging, and has long been accepted as a popular souvenir. 2) The production uses the store’s secret recipe and is made fresh daily without preservatives.	1) The shelf life is short, about 3 days, affecting the shipping of products to customers outside the area.
Opportunities	Threats
1) The trend of Thai desserts that are appealing and beautifully packaged. 2) Reviews of desserts or food by consumers on social media.	One-way traffic regulation may impact accessibility to the restaurant.

The study results show that the cultural capital knowledge of entrepreneurs can be used to develop guidelines for enhancing the main components to improve the image of the Krua Nij restaurant as follows.

- 1) Glass doors and display cabinets: The designer introduced a new “Krua Nij” logo, which was made into white stickers for placement in the center of the glass doors on both sides. The glass was further decorated with repeated floral patterns and flower pollen designs, with the same patterns made smaller for application on the lower part of the display cabinets.
- 2) Packaging, payment channel signs, and storefront vinyl: The Krua Nij restaurant offers two sizes of packaging for “Krua Nij Sticky Rice.” The larger size uses cardboard boxes with the original Krua Nij logo and floral patterns, priced at 120 baht per box. The smaller size uses plastic boxes with Krua Nij sticky rice stickers, priced at 70 baht per box. Since the larger packaging is produced in bulk and cannot be modified, the researcher and designer suggested updating the smaller packaging stickers instead. They proposed using the newly designed Krua Nij logo, repeated floral patterns, and a color scheme of purple and pink to reflect the freshness and beauty of flowers. The payment channel signs and storefront vinyl were also designed with the same concept as the packaging stickers.



Figure 3 Krua Nij Restaurant Design

King’s Ice Cream Store: The “King’s Ice Cream” store is known for its signature menu items: coconut milk ice cream, Saroem (a traditional Thai dessert), and mixed shaved ice. These items

are relatively hard to find nowadays. With the store's secret recipe and its location near an old cinema in Yala Province, customers returning to enjoy the ice cream still remember the prosperity of this street vividly.

The results of the SWOT Analysis of the environment of King's Ice Cream Store as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 SWOT Analysis Results for King's Ice Cream Store

Strengths	Weaknesses
1) The menu includes traditional coconut milk ice cream and shaved ice, which are well-known and hard to find.	1) The entrepreneur is considering closing the business to pursue other ventures.
2) The store has been well-known to locals for a long time, as it is located in front of Siam Cinema.	2) Currently, the ice cream is not homemade but purchased from a manufacturer, resulting in a taste that is close to the original but not the same.
Opportunities	Threats
1) Various organizations have started using the nearby hotel for exhibitions, bringing more customers to the store.	1) One-way traffic regulation may impact accessibility to the restaurant.

The study results show that the cultural capital knowledge of entrepreneurs can be used to develop guidelines for enhancing the main components to improve the image of the King's Ice Cream Store as follows.

1) Storage cabinet: The designer used illustrations related to ice cream, shaved ice, and ice cream toppings such as caramelized bananas, caramelized pineapple, and jackfruit, along with cartoon characters, to create stickers decorating the storage cabinet. This design aims to convey a sense of happiness and fun.

2) Price display signs: The design approach for the price display signs follows the same concept as the storage cabinet, with added details on the prices of ice cream and shaved ice per cup. Acrylic stands were used as the material for these signs.

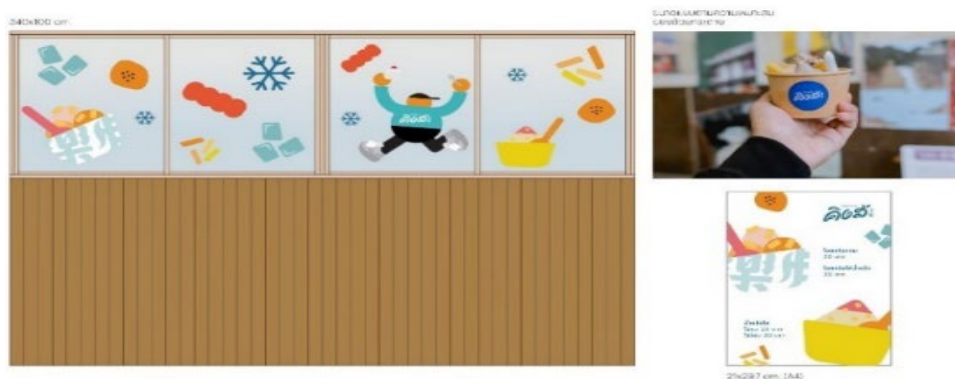


Figure 4 King's Ice Cream Store Design

Soup Seng Restaurant: The “Soup Seng” restaurant is renowned for its menu items: beef soup, offal soup, and omelets. These dishes are a must-try when visiting Soi Soup Masjid Gabo, which is now popularly known among the youth as “BTS Soup Alley” due to its proximity to Yala Province’s railway station. The restaurant’s decor remains reminiscent of the past, with round wooden chairs in their original condition and vintage menu signs sponsored by soft drink businesses from that era. This setup allows customers to experience the ambiance of a bygone restaurant era.

The results of the SWOT Analysis of the environment of Soup Seng restaurant as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 SWOT Analysis Results for Soup Seng Restaurant

Strengths	Weaknesses
1) The menu features beef soup paired with omelet, a well-known and popular dish among customers for a long time. 2) The store maintains its original decor, including the menu signs, tables, and chairs. 3) Located in an area with high foot traffic from train and car travelers, and a neighborhood known for its soup restaurants.	1) The store is small and located in an alley inaccessible by car, requiring customers to park and walk in, which may be inconvenient for some.
Opportunities	Threats
1) As a signature dish in Yala province, it attracts tourists and influencers who promote it on social media.	1) Since beef is a main ingredient, the store must close on Buddhist holy days (Wan Phra).

The study results show that the cultural capital knowledge of entrepreneurs can be used to develop guidelines for enhancing the main components to improve the image of the Soup Seng restaurant as follows.

- 1) Store signage: The new “Soup Seng Yala” logo was designed with colors that harmonize with the aluminum sheeting covering the cooking tables at the front of the store. For the signage, plastic wood was chosen instead of the vinyl signs previously used by the entrepreneur.
- 2) Cooking tables: The designer incorporated the logo and illustrations related to the business, such as soup bowls and milk cans, as decoration for the cooking tables. White stickers were chosen as the material for this decoration.
- 3) Aprons: Since Soup Seng Yala is the only business among the five that has both the owner and about 10 employees working together to serve customers, it was observed that they used commonly available, colorful aprons without any branding. The proposal includes creating aprons featuring the store’s logo to enhance brand recognition and communication through the aprons.



Figure 5 Soup Seng Restaurant Design

Yala-Rueso Taxi Stand: The Yala-Rueso Taxi Queue is the only taxi stand located in the central area, as other queues that used to be in this area have moved to the old market area behind the Yala provincial train station. This queue features a variety of taxi models, such as the Fish Tail, Grasshopper e220, Jumbo, Sweet Eye, and Champa 162, and they come in beautiful colors. These taxis have previously been used as props in video shoots. The area next

to the Yala-Rueso taxi stand was formerly the Yala-Betong taxi queue. Taxis from this queue were once used as props in the film “Okay Betong.” However, it has now become a shop selling delicious curry puffs. The operator of this shop sells a variety of curry puff fillings, including chicken, fish, beans, and meat.

The results of the SWOT Analysis of the environment of the Yala-Rueso Taxi Stand as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 SWOT Analysis Results for Yala-Rueso Taxi Stand

Strengths	Weaknesses
1) Utilizes various models of vintage Benz cars as taxis. 2) Located near the train station, making it convenient for picking up and dropping off customers traveling to their destinations.	1) The taxi queue area is cramped and lacks clear signage for customer information.
Opportunities	Threats
1) The trend of using vintage cars for travel or in various events.	1) The age and maintenance of the vehicles.

The study results show that the cultural capital knowledge of entrepreneurs can be used to develop guidelines for enhancing the main components to improve the image of the Yala-Rueso Taxi Stand as follows.

1) Vinyl Signage at the Taxi Stand: Communicate the routes and contact numbers to customers using graphics related to taxi services, such as images of pink taxis, the provincial clock tower, and passengers.

2) Counter for Queue Staff: Use graphics similar to those on the vinyl signage at the taxi stand, including details of contact numbers.



Figure 6 Design Work for the Yala-Rueso Taxi Stand

Comparison of Economic Value Before and After Business Development in the Nipong Ancient Commercial Street

The analysis of the economic value of the five service businesses found that the Soup Seng restaurant had the highest increase in revenue after development, at 40%, followed by High Pang restaurant with a 20% increase, Yala-Rueso taxi stand with an 18.75% increase, Krua Nij with a 16.67% increase, and King’s Ice Cream with an 11.11% increase, respectively.

Table 6 Comparison of Economic Value Before and After Developing Service Businesses

Business Name	Income Before Development (Baht/Month)	Income After Development (Baht/Month)	Development Percentage (Decrease) in Income After Development Compared to Before Development
Hai Phang Restaurant	10,000	12,000	20.00
Kitchen Nij Restaurant	30,000	35,000	16.67
King's Ice Cream Store	9,000	10,000	11.11
Seng Soup Restaurant	50,000	70,000	40.00
Yala-Rueso Taxi Stand	8,000	9,500	18.75

Conclusion and Discussion

Upgrading the service businesses through cultural capital in the Nipong ancient commercial street by enhancing the business image using cultural capital involves developing brand symbols, designing and decorating equipment, developing printed media, and packaging to create a positive business image. This development takes into account the area's identity, which is consistent with Pinthongpan (2003), who proposed that culture creates identity, differentiating us from other groups. She identified 10 groups of learning methods to understand these differences: 1) Communication systems and language, 2) Body language and attire, 3) Food and eating habits, 4) Time and awareness, 5) Reciprocity and greetings, 6) Relationships, 7) Values and norms, 8) Self-perception and distance, 9) Psychological development and learning, and 10) Beliefs and attitudes.

Recommendations

A key finding of this research is that the knowledge of cultural capital in service businesses in the Nipong ancient commercial street can be applied effectively. Emphasis should be placed on developing the main components for improving the business image using cultural capital. Future research should focus on developing products and services for businesses, such as expanding online sales channels through various platforms, improving product and service promotion channels, and extending product life.

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Data Availability Statement: The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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