

THE POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUSINESS OF SMALL HOTELS IN DIGITAL ECONOMY AGE IN THAILAND

การพัฒนาศักยภาพการประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัลในประเทศไทย

Nata Tubtimcharoon

Faculty of Management Sciences

Panyapiwat Institute of Management, Thailand

E-mail : natatub@pim.ac.th

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to create a handbook for operating the small hotel business in the digital economy age based on the research and development approach consisting of the following steps: the first step is the analysis of problems; the second step is the designing of the handbook; the third step is the development of the handbook; the fourth step is the try-out and evaluation of the handbook; and the fifth step is the potential development using the workshop as a tool for the transferring the body of knowledge for potential development. The handbook for operating the small hotel business in the digital economy age entitled “Click to Future: Small Hotel Is not Too Difficult to Create if Having Smart People and Strong Marketing” was the core content for this particular workshop. The satisfaction assessment for workshop and in-depth interviews with small hotel entrepreneurs participating in the pilot project after attending the workshop and using the handbook for potential development of small hotel business was employed as the evaluation tools. Data were analyzed with content analysis of in-depth interview results which followed the concept of constructionism. The triangulation method was employed was to check the validity of the data and validity of data analyzers. The population comprised 50 purposively selected small hotel entrepreneurs. The results of research showed that the developed handbook of the small hotel business in the digital economy age entitled “Click to Future: Small Hotel Is not Too Difficult to Create if Having Smart People and Strong Marketing” contained the marketing strategies of small hotel business and the competency of small hotel entrepreneurs. It could be really used for potential development of the small hotel business in the digital economy age.

KEYWORDS : Potential development, Small hotel, Digital economy age

บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสร้างคู่มือการประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัล ตามแนวทางการวิจัย การพัฒนา โดยมีขั้นตอนการดำเนินการวิจัยคือ ขั้นตอนแรก การวิเคราะห์ปัญหา ขั้นตอนที่สอง การออกแบบ ขั้นตอนที่สาม การพัฒนา ขั้นตอนที่สี่คือ ทดลองและประเมินผล และขั้นตอนที่ห้าเป็นการพัฒนาศักยภาพ โดยใช้การอบรมเชิงปฏิบัติการเป็น เครื่องมือสำหรับการถ่ายทอดองค์ความรู้เพื่อการพัฒนา ซึ่งมีคู่มือการประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัล เรื่อง Click to the Future: Small Hotel สร้างไม่ยาก หากคุณมีคนที่ Smart บวก ตลาดที่ Strong เป็นเนื้อหาสำหรับการอบรม ใช้แบบประเมินความพึงพอใจการฝึกอบรมเชิงปฏิบัติการ และ แบบสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับผู้ประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กที่เข้าร่วมโครงการนำร่อง ภายหลังเข้าร่วมอบรมเชิงปฏิบัติการและนำคู่มือการประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัล ไปพัฒนาศักยภาพการประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัล โดยการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา จากการสัมภาษณ์เชิง ลึกตามแนวคิดสร้างสรรค์นิยม และมีรูปแบบการตรวจสอบข้อมูลแบบสามเส้าด้านข้อมูลและตรวจสอบสามเส้าด้านผู้วิเคราะห์ ข้อมูล ประชากร คือ ผู้ประกอบการ ผู้บริหารของโรงแรมขนาดเล็ก จำนวน 50 โรงแรม โดยวิธีการเลือกแบบเฉพาะเจาะจง ผลการศึกษาพบว่าคู่มือการประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัล มีเนื้อหาประกอบด้วยกลยุทธ์การตลาดของ การประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัล และสมรรถนะของผู้ประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัล สามารถนำไปพัฒนาศักยภาพการประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัลได้จริง ซึ่งคู่มือการประกอบธุรกิจโรงแรม ขนาดเล็กในยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัล Click to the Future: Small Hotel สร้างไม่ยาก หากคุณมีคนที่ Smart บวก ตลาดที่ Strong

คำสำคัญ : การพัฒนาศักยภาพ โรงแรมขนาดเล็ก ยุคเศรษฐกิจดิจิทัล

INTRODUCTION

National Social and Economic Development Plan Number 11 (2012 – 2016) and Draft Plan Number 12 (2017 – 2021) focus on the development and support the tourism industry. In addition, the Ministry of Tourism and Sport determined the year 2015 was The Discover Thainess Year (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2015). Making business related to tourism industry is increasing as well. This includes investment in small hotels as an important driver of tourism industry of Thailand. The survey of National Statistical Office found that a number of accommodations in hotels, resorts and guesthouses in the year 2014 were 457,029 and in the year 2016 the number was increased to 481,529. In the digital economy age, small hotel entrepreneurs in Thailand should be prepared to introduce new technologies to add value to the services sector and

enhance the competitiveness through technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT) that connects the internet to devices for further convenience.

The business of small hotels still presents many problems. The review of the research on small hotels found that entrepreneurs were considered of being lack of knowledge and experience of hotel management system (Institute for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, 2010). However, they are now able to take advantage of tools provided by the new digital economy age such as digital marketing (Anon W. and Suree K., 2012). According to a study by the Siam Commercial Bank on the customers 4.0 an online media has become a channel to influence consumer decision making, with more than half believing that reviews are shared online rather than the other media. And a new generation of consumers

to spend outdoors by not spending as much on travel (Economic Intelligence Center (EIC) Thailand Commercial Bank, 2017). Consumers in this digital age act as of being receivers, who receive products or services (passive consumer) as thinkers, co-creators, and propose themselves in terms of prosumers, enthusiasm for leadership, seek new things for themselves and find the answers to respond all their answers through online tools with all types (Ngamkornkulkit, 2016). Hence, the competency of entrepreneurs needs to focus on the strengthening of knowledge and strategic abilities to manage the hotel through online websites to reduce costs and increase profit sustainably, as well as improving services standards and accelerating the development of strategic and operational marketing activities of the digital economy age. This approach will enable entrepreneurs to provide additional valuable oriented tourism. The sharing of experiences can positively affect the development of small hotel business in Thailand, thus creating a sustainable industry.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND QUESTIONS

The objective of this study is to answer the following question 1) what format will the handbook for small hotels in the digital economy age take? 2) is the handbook that aims to develop and provide training to small hotel entrepreneurs (pilot project) practical? And 3) when small hotel businesses follow the handbook, does this enhance the business potential of small hotels in the digital economy age? in order to create a handbook for small hotels in the digital economy age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The potential development of the business of small hotels in digital economy age in Thailand. The integration of marketing strategies and competences for small hotel businesses has led to the creation of small hotel handbook in digital economy age. In order to develop the potential of the business one must first help small hotel entrepreneurs to enhance their own potential. This handbook will be developed on the basis of the research: “The Customer Demand of Small Hotels and the Marketing Strategy of the Business of Small Hotels in Digital Economy Age”. This information is derived from the SWOT analysis of small hotel business, voice of customer and tourist needs. All data is collected, synthesized and used to create marketing strategies for small hotel business in the digital economy age. The results from the research project the competency of the business of small hotel in digital economy age. The data from research is synthesized and summarized into desirable entrepreneurial competencies for small hotel business. Then, employ the marketing strategies and the competencies of entrepreneurs to create a handbook by using training as a method to convey to small hotel entrepreneurs.

This section introduces the concepts and theories involved, the concept of potential development, small hotel, and digital economy to create conceptual research framework to obtain information on research objectives and research questions. The details are as follows:

1. Potential development: The meaning of potential development is putting the knowledge that is the person is most beneficial to the person and the organizations bring them to use as process. Especially

in the age of globalization where everything has changed all the time and easy to access to information (Khraisri, 2008). The research in the past related to the business of entrepreneurs. The findings are useful for information to improve the entrepreneurial potential of entrepreneurship which started with the management of Ismail, Domil and Isa (2014) has study management competence, quality relationships and competitive advantage between small and medium exporters. The research found that the ability to manage quality relationships results in competitive advantage and moreover quality relationships have a significant effect on competitive advantage. Mahdi and Almsafir (2014) has study the role of leadership strategies in creating a sustainable competitive advantage in the educational environment reveals that the strategic leadership capabilities have a significant positive effect on competitive advantage. It is important to be developed in the corporate human resources management. The research of Bahadur (2015) found that the potential of each entrepreneur is related to the attitude and behavior of the entrepreneur. In the present situation, the competition is high. Entrepreneurs will consider ways for economic development through new business creation and strong competition. And even increase productivity or profit through technology (Hindle and Rudhworth, 2000; Kuip and Verheul, 2004; Fitzsimmons and Douglas, 2005; Gibb and Hannon, 2006; Mohar et al., 2007). Entrepreneurship is central to the development and economic development cycle, especially in the region. Regardless of the economic drivers, local employment, and creating new business (Fauchart and Gruber, 2011).

2. The small hotel: Hotel business is an important element of the tourism industry. The government has a policy to promote tourism industry

by setting a tourism strategy as a province in the spatial integration of tourism (Tourism Department, 2015). The classification and grouping of the hotels did not provide any clear definition of a small hotel. However, there are a lot of researches about the small hotels. The researches have been considered in several dimensions to obtain the number of rooms, both regulatory requirements and requirements concerning the business of hotels. The definition of a small hotel is considered as there are no more than 79 rooms in the hotel, unique style, affordable price, ideal for customers with privacy and focus on new experiences (Keith and Molcolm, 1997; Morrison and Thomas, 1999; Supattra Soipech, 2007; Moriath et al., 2008; Dallen and Victor, 2009; Thailand Hotel Associate, 2010; Zupan and Milfelner, 2014).

3. Digital Economy: Don Tapscott wrote the book “The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the Age of Network Intelligence” which points to 1995 the internet will change the way the world has never seen before. It requires IT infrastructure, rules, and effective law enforcement. As well as adjusting and people’s attitudes (Academic focus, 2015) Digital Economy is an economy that relies on information technology or the internet to create a career or economic activities. Including the use of communications and telecommunications technology to develop businesses or industry widely is a key factor. Digital economy is driving the economy of the country by digital technology to increase efficiency and add value to gross domestic product. (The secretariat of the House of Representatives, 2015)

The application of digital technology to business operations under concrete projects in this urgent phase is a development of the capabilities of local businesses, especially in the Small and Medium

Enterprise (SME) and community enterprises can compete in the modern world. Including the potential development of entrepreneurs to have knowledge, capability, and expertise in using technology that maximizes their business is a must. Affecting the government's policy of improving the quality of life. To contribute to the stability, prosperity and sustainability of Thailand.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Conceptual framework was designed based on literature review and results from the research project on the customer demand of small hotel and the marketing strategy of the business of small hotel in digital economy age. And the results

from the research project the competency of the business of small hotel in digital economy age. Bring to the conceptual framework as follows.

The research concept brings to a research framework for developing the potential of small hotel business. The process is as follows.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative Research Method in Developmental Research

Population

50 Entrepreneurs, Executives or General Managers of small hotels by purposive sampling in 10 provinces tourism of Thailand (5 hotels in 1 province)

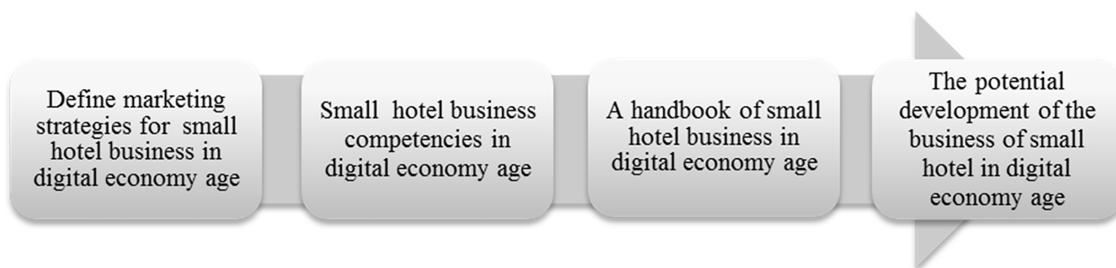


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

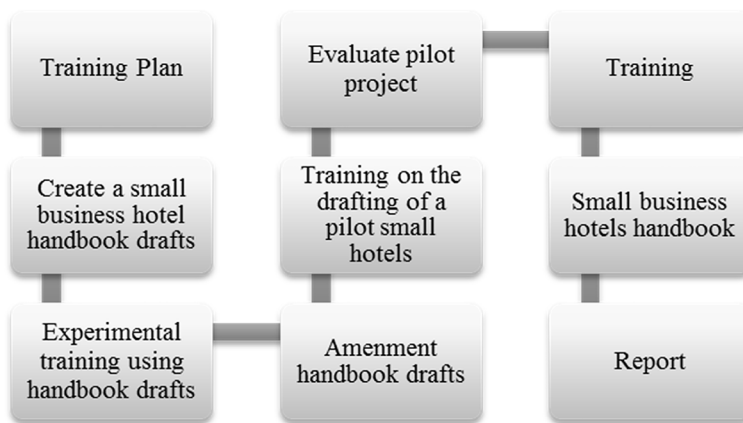


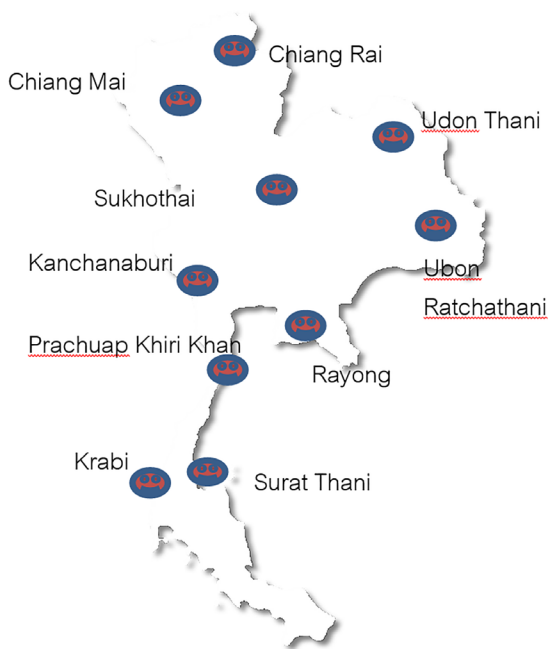
Figure 2 Research Framework for developing the potential of small hotel business

Table 1 Number of Hotels, Resorts and Guesthouses in tourism province Year 2016

Province	Number of hotels	Individual Registration	Meuang District (SMEs Registration)
Chiang Rai	392	352	31
Chiang Mai	647	396	57
Udon Thani	162	144	18
Ubon Ratchathani	219	199	9
Sukhothai	79	64	5
Kanchanaburi	307	208	13
Rayong	307	234	9
Prachuap Kiri Khan	481	355	5
Surat Thani	416	259	8
Krabi	1,302	896	39

Remark : National Statistical Office, 2016
 Department of Business Development, 2017

This research has set the criteria for selecting small hotels through literature review. The scope of research is as follows.



The selection criteria for hotels

1. In the city or comfortable travel
2. Provinces with airport or convenient transportation
3. Number of rooms up to 79 rooms and usable space of 4,000 m²
4. No star rating
5. Thai Owner
6. Business at the local level
7. No chain hotel
8. The general hotels and boutique & resort hotels
9. Provide information and Join the research project

Figure 3 Tourism provinces

Research Instruments

Workshop training for knowledge transfer, training evaluation, In-depth interview (snow ball technique) and Observation

Data Analysis

Implementation of the process of development research in each step. The evaluation operation will be done in stages that can be divided into two parts as follow:

- Data analysis from the satisfaction evaluation of training.

- Data analysis from in-depth interviews.

The data analysis process is as follows.

Research Process

The Developmental Research has the following steps;

Section 1 Problems analysis; Research results on the customer demand of small hotel and the marketing strategy of the business of small hotel in digital economy age. And the results from the research project the competency of the business of small hotel in digital economy age make known the problems and needs to be developed.

Section 2 Development design; Set the pattern of development to be consistent with the results of both researches to solve the problems and

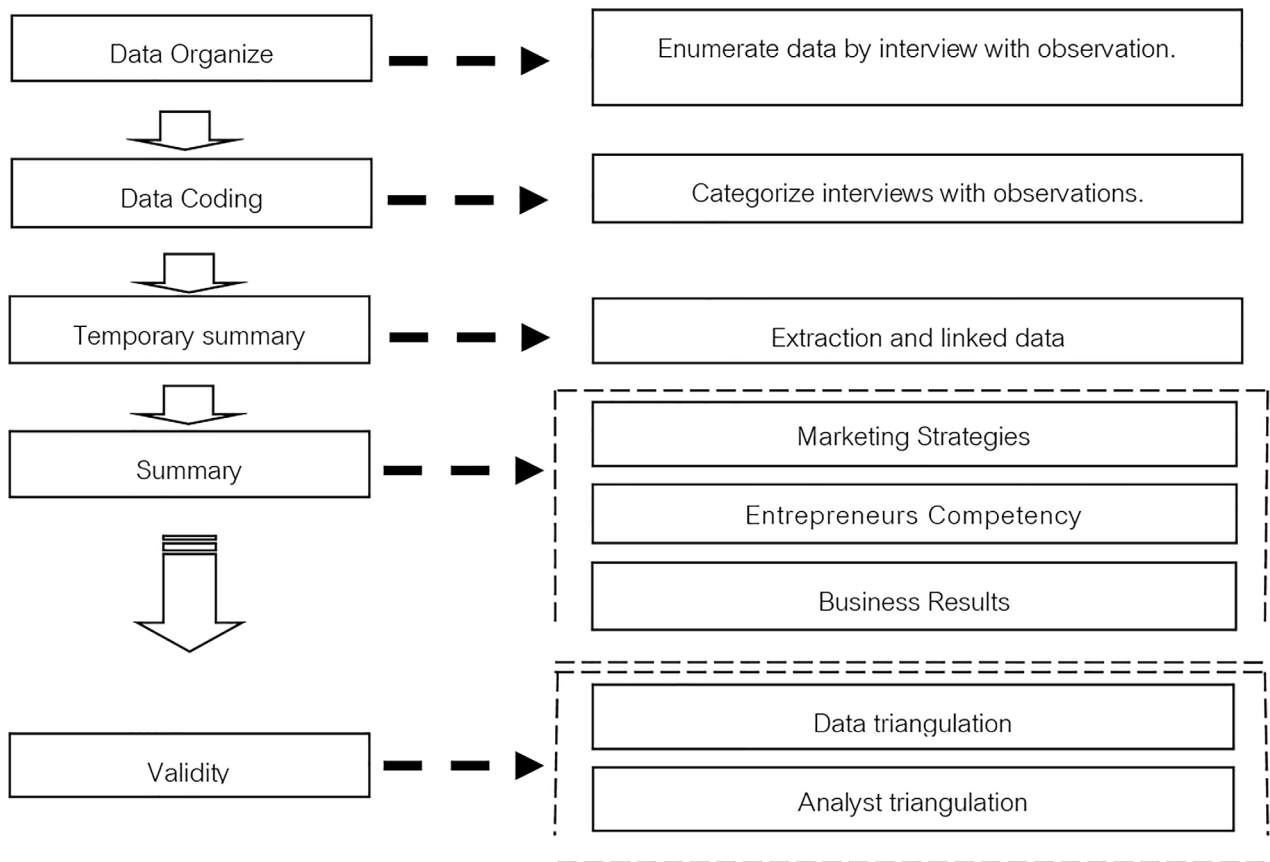


Figure 4 Data analysis process

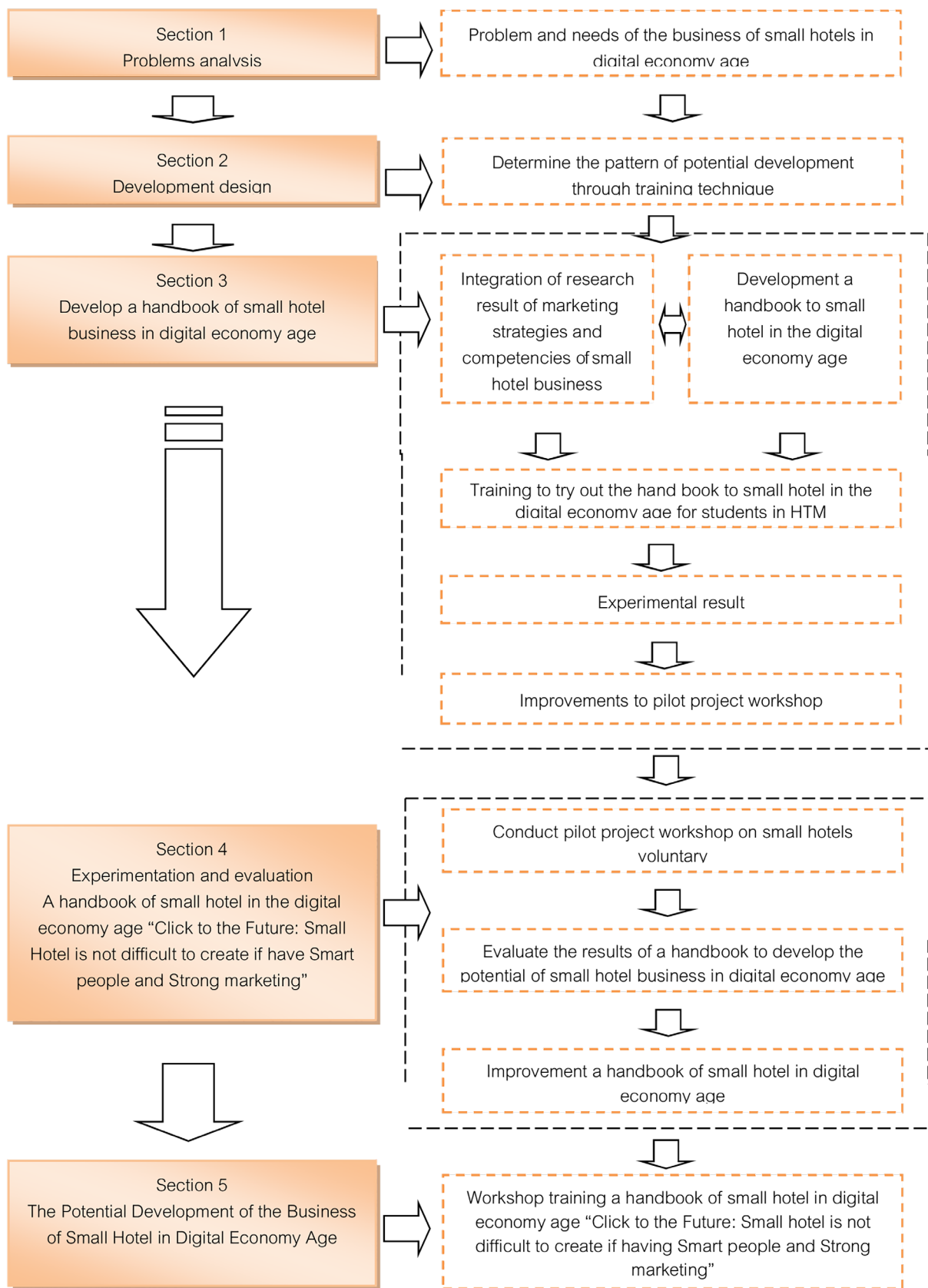


Figure 5 Developmental Research Process

respond to the needs of small hotel entrepreneurs. The potential development model is based on workshop training as a tool for knowledge transfer.

Section 3 Develop a handbook of small hotel business in digital economy age as follows; Step 1) Integration of research result of marketing strategies and competencies of small hotel business to development draft a handbook to small hotel in the digital economy age. The draft handbook are provided to the qualified curriculum expertise consider content and schedule for workshop training. Step 2) Pilot training to used a handbook to the students of Hotel Business Management (or related) who are members of the Association of Private Higher Education Institutions of Thailand (APHEIT). Step 3) Experimental result the handbook. Step 4) Revise a handbook to implement pilot project workshop training for small hotel entrepreneurs volunteer to join the project.

Section 4 Experimentation and evaluation a handbook of small hotel in the digital economy age “Click to the Future: Small Hotel is not difficult to create if have Smart people and Strong marketing” as follows; Step 1) Workshop training to use a handbook for small hotel entrepreneurs volunteer to join the pilot project one province per 1 hotel and satisfaction evaluation for workshop with descriptive statistics. Step 2) after 3 months evaluate that to use a handbook for the potential development of the business of small hotel in digital economy age with in-depth interviews and observe. Step 3) Improve a handbook from the results of step 2 to be more complete. Section 5 the potential development of the business of small hotel in digital economy age; Workshop training a handbook of small hotel in digital economy age “Click to the Future: Small hotel is not difficult to create if have Smart people and Strong marketing”

RESULT

Implementation of the developmental research is starting from problem analysis. The information provide in response to research results on the customer demand of small hotel and the marketing strategy of the business of small hotel in digital economy age. And the results from the research results on the competency of the business of small hotel in digital economy age to design the development model to be consistent with the research results can solve problems and meet the needs of small hotel entrepreneurs. Using the development model is a workshop for transferring knowledge. Then develop a handbook of small hotel in the digital economy age through implement and workshop training to use a handbook for small hotel entrepreneurs volunteer to join the pilot project then including the knowledge from a handbook of small hotel in the digital economy age. To development of small hotel business in the pilot project to prove that a handbook can be used to potential development of the business of small hotel in digital economy age. And finally got a handbook of small hotel in the digital economy age “Click to the Future: Small Hotel is not difficult to create if having Smart people and Strong marketing” to small hotel entrepreneurs to develop the potential of small hotel business. Operates small hotel business to international standards and encourage them to convey the value oriented to tourist. There is a share experience that generates wide awareness an impact on the development of the hotel business in Thailand to be sustainable.

DISCUSSION

Findings according to the objective in this research are results from applied a handbook of small hotel in the digital economy age “Click to the Future: Small Hotel is not difficult to create if having Smart people and Strong marketing” using to the potential development of the business of small hotel in digital economy age. The results show that small hotel entrepreneurs participating in the research have introduced the knowledge from handbook of small hotel in digital economy age is the output of the research applied to their hotels. It can be developed in the first part without affecting existing resources. The outcome has been satisfactory both for the entrepreneurs are knowledgeable, skills and features that will make them have strengthen business as well as to create long term competitive advantages. As a business result, the hotel’s occupancy rate has been increasing following from a handbook of small hotel in digital economy age for the potential development of the business of small hotel. The local community can create jobs for local people without abandoning homeland; create a business link with the hotel business which complies with the government policy of The Eleventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (B.E. 2555 – 2559) and maintain continually to The Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (B.E. 2560 – 2564). It is self-explanatory to define the development strategy for its strengthen economic in the third strategic plan; in formulating the strengthen economic of individual areas. One of the areas that the government does emphasize is the service industry. In other words, enlarging the potential from the in-hand previous bases, and expanding to new target bases in terms of well-adjusted in economy of strengthen serviced

bases together with the development of the Tourism Industry toward quality growth equally as well as sustainability. This corresponds to the concept of Richey and Klein (2005) about the developmental research which refers to the creation of knowledge from the collection of information to convey the development to solve problems, process or tool inventions designing, designing or developing techniques. Even the creation of new business and the development of anything can perform more efficiently. Steven A.B., Timothy P.M. and David K.R. (2006) also argue that the transfer of knowledge through training is a process that develops skills so that they can perform work or tasks the must be performed well, more effective. That means a handbook of small hotel in digital economy age that developed and conveyed to the entrepreneur can be used to tangible benefits. Satisfy the entrepreneurs participating research.

SUGGESTIONS

Research results can provide policy recommendations as follows:

1. Tourism Authority of Thailand and Department of Business Development, the findings should be considered and used in terms of written articles, documents and handbooks to disseminate small hotel business for response to government policies.
2. Department of Business Development, Ministry of Commerce should develop from the research results by pushing up for a hotel cluster development plan, upgrading hotel standards, establishment of service standards, community participation or other side to fulfill the ministry’s mission.

3. The government should have subsidies in terms of being some investments, educating for information technology system that are useful to manage small hotel to standards and have credibility for tourists.

4. The government relevant should consider the specific rules regarding small hotel in particular for the benefit of small hotel business to local development and sustainable.

Practical recommendation for small hotels: The research results can offer practical recommendation for small hotels have potential and sustainable should be prepared or implements as follows.

1. The small hotel entrepreneurs should use a handbook of small hotel in the digital economy age “Click to the Future: Small Hotel is not difficult to create if having Smart people and Strong marketing” to develop the potential of the business of small hotel in digital economy age and follow Thailand 4.0.

2. The small hotel entrepreneurs in digital economy age should continually develop themselves to keep pace with the development of Information Technology and bring up the management of their own business.

3. The small hotel entrepreneurs should keep updated the news of government that there are various types of business support. To increase knowledge, skills development can be adapted in accordance with their hotel.

The research results can indicate opportunities for future research as follow:

1. Study the critical success factors with best practice of small hotel through benchmarking.

2. Study other contexts of small hotel to develop small hotel business to support sustainable local tourism industry.

3. Study and create digital system, Information Technology System to support the small hotel business in the 21st century.

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Dr.Nata Tubtimcharoon

She received Ph.D. in Quality Management from Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Master's Degree in Educational Technology from Kasetsart University and Bachelor of Education in Elementary Education from Nakhon Pathom Teacher College. She is currently a full-time lecturer in Faculty of Management Science and Deputy Dean of Faculty of Management Science, Panyapiwat Institute of Management. Her research interests are in the areas of benchmarking, marketing mix, service marketing, and process improvement.