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Bridging Cultures through Language: The Role of Thai and Korean Restaurant Names in Shaping Global Perception and Soft Power

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Abstract Naming is humans' tool to represent things, expressing their unique characteristics and identities. This study explores the role of Thai and Korean restaurant names in building global awareness and promoting soft power, focusing on cultural and marketing significance. This research examines 100 restaurant names, including 50 Thai and 50 Korean restaurants, selected from economic areas in Bangkok and Seoul. Content analysis, comprising in-depth interviews with restaurant owners and stakeholders, customer reviews, and popular menu items, uses Interactional Sociolinguistics and Nye's soft power theory to assess how these names promote soft power. The findings show that restaurant names systematically use cultural backgrounds, location names, and linguistic characteristics to show national identity, attract tourists, and boost soft power. Thai restaurant names focus on feelings of warmth, friendliness, and famous landmarks. In contrast, Korean restaurant names highlight modernity, tradition, and the popularity of the Korean wave. This research contributes to understanding how naming practices can be used as a tool for international branding and marketing.

Keywords: Restaurant names, Soft power, Global perception, Thailand, Korea

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1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, cross-cultural exchanges occur in every country. Restaurants are not just places to eat as they used to be but also powerful symbols of national identity and culture, regardless of whether a country's restaurants operate overseas (Thwe, 2023). Internationally popular Thai and Korean cuisines succeed because they are rich in flavors, blend with local lifestyles, and reflect the social values of each culture (Rockower, 2012). Oum (2005) stated that naming a restaurant is vital because it creates an image and attracts customers. Therefore, naming a restaurant must show the identity, style of food, or various characteristics. A restaurant's name can provide insights into the types of cuisine it offers. Naming a restaurant should consider, for example, using words that people are familiar with, naming the

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An Analysis of Strategies and Attitudes Toward Naming of Korean and Thai Restaurants

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ABSTRACT: This research aimed to analyze and compare Korean restaurants' naming strategies and attitudes in Bangkok and Thai restaurants in Seoul. The research methodology employed a qualitative approach. The data collection of the names was from 50 Thai restaurants in Seoul and 50 Korean restaurants in Bangkok. The results identified three naming strategies for Korean and Thai restaurants: language and writing style, grammatical structure, and semantic viewpoint. Naming attitudes for Korean restaurants in Bangkok emphasized words conveying deliciousness, the atmosphere of Korea, and entertainment to enhance enjoyment. In contrast, Thai restaurants in Seoul focused on words related to deliciousness and culture to emphasize Thai culture and identity. This research improves understanding of restaurant naming strategies and attitudes in a cross-cultural context, linking theory and practice in the restaurant business, promoting cultural exchange, and supporting the development of multinational enterprises.

Keywords: naming strategies, Korean restaurants, Thai restaurants, restaurant naming attitudes

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, society communicates and migrates for various benefits. Therefore, food and eating cultures are increasingly being exchanged between countries. The evidence from the Ministry of Tourism and Sports in 2022 (searched online) found that the Republic of Korea had a population of 51,305,186 people in 2021. From a survey of Korean tourists entering Thailand, it was found that in 2019, there were 1,785,147 Korean tourists, and in 2020, the number increased to 1,880,465 people, which is considered the third largest number of foreigners traveling to Thailand among tourists in East Asian countries. (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2019-2022) The influx of population has led to the opening of many Korean restaurants in Thailand to satisfy the Korean and Thai people who love Korean food. Due to the Korean wave (Hallyu) that has entered Thailand in the past 20 years, restaurant names are significant because the name represents the national culture and identity. For example, Korean restaurants represent Korean culture and identity, while Thai restaurants also represent Thai culture and identity. For Thai tourists traveling to Korea, it was found that there were 515,658 people in 2019, which increased to 558,595 people in 2020 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2019-2022), causing a small number of Thai restaurants in Korea. However, it is also popular among Koreans who love Thai food and Thai people or foreigners living in Korea.

Naming strategies and attitudes towards naming Korean and Thai restaurants reveal the complex interplay between cultural significance, historical influences, and market dynamics that shape the identities and identities of these establishments. In the context of branding, restaurants serve to identify and express the type of food and as a communication tool that helps customers make a first impression and recognize the cultural values behind the name. For example, the name of a Korean restaurant may evoke inspirations

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