

PAGLAMBO GIKAN SA YANO: AN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY ON STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF A THRIVING LOCAL PIZZA RESTAURANT

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Abstract In an increasingly competitive food service industry, local pizza restaurants face mounting challenges in maintaining profitability, customer loyalty, and operational efficiency. This research aims to identify best practices and tailored strategies that can enhance the restaurant's long-term sustainability and competitive edge in a crowded market. This study is grounded in the Resource-Based View and Human Capital Theory. Appreciative Inquiry was used as the primary approach, emphasizing the positive core of the business and its proven practices. Through qualitative research design, specifically employing in-depth interviews, document analysis, and observation, the researchers engaged with key personnel across various organizational levels from first level to top management. The setting of the study is a local thriving pizza restaurant located in the Southern Philippines. Findings revealed several core themes, the best strategic management practices are established collaborative leadership, standardization of food quality and service, strategic site selection, and menu innovation. The study also highlighted the restaurant's ability to adapt to market trends, maintain internal coherence, and foster a customer-centric culture. These practices were anchored in strong internal resources and a clear vision. For future studies, it is suggested to explore quantitative or mixed-method research on strategic management practices suited for micro and small food service enterprises in local contexts.

Keywords: *Appreciative Inquiry, Strategic Management, Local Pizza Restaurant*

I. INTRODUCTION

Local businesses offer several advantages: they promote entrepreneurship, create jobs, strengthen economies, use more efficient production methods, and provide better-paying employment opportunities (Ayandibu & Houghton, 2017). By driving growth and employment, local businesses help improve people's standard of living.

However, local businesses also face major obstacles, such as high failure rates and the need for significant upfront capital (Blank et al., 2020). Although their success and expansion are crucial for increasing productivity, profitability, and job creation, many local companies struggle to grow as they get older (Decker et al., 2014).

According to Hill et al., (2020) Strategic management is essential because it provides direction and focus for an organization, enabling leaders to make informed decisions that align with long-term goals. It helps businesses anticipate changes in the external environment, allocate resources efficiently, and maintain a competitive edge. Through strategic planning, organizations can set measurable objectives, monitor performance, and adapt to market trends or disruptions. Ultimately, strategic management

fosters proactive thinking, enhances organizational effectiveness, and increases the likelihood of achieving sustained success and growth.

This study explores strategic management strategies used by a thriving local pizza restaurant. It aims to understand how these strategies help the business grow and stay successful in a competitive market. By looking at real-life examples, the study will highlight practices that contribute to effective operations and overall business success.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A local business is typically defined as a business that is privately owned and operated within a specific geographic area, often by residents of that community. These businesses usually serve a local customer base, employ local workers, pay local taxes, and reinvest profits back into the community. While the exact definition may vary, the key characteristic is that control and ownership remain within the locality, as opposed to large national or international chains (Pitts, 2019).

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are widely recognized as the backbone of the global economy (Nwosu & Umeh, 2021). This holds especially true for developing countries like the Philippines, where MSMEs significantly contribute to job creation, innovation, and wealth generation (Philippine Senate Economic Planning Office, 2012). These enterprises are instrumental in driving economic growth in rural areas, supporting larger businesses through service provision, and nurturing future entrepreneurs and corporations (Senate of the Philippines, 2012). Consequently, MSMEs are vital to unlocking the Philippines' full economic potential and play an important role in maintaining the country's cooperative and competitive edge within the ASEAN region and the global market. The 2023 List of Establishments (LE) of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) recorded a total of 1,246,373 business enterprises operating in the country.

In the United States, more than half of small local businesses fail in the first 5 years of operation (SBA, 2014). Small businesses significantly contribute to the U.S. economy by creating the majority of new jobs and supporting economic recovery during downturns. Despite their vital role, the number of sustainable small local enterprises has been steadily declining. From 1992 to 2013, they accounted for 63.3% of net new jobs and generated 60% to 80% of employment opportunities in the country (SBA, 2016).

According to the study of Dauda et al., (2010) titled "Strategic management practice and corporate performance of selected small business enterprises in Lagos metropolis," strategic management is essential for small businesses because it helps them set clear goals, use resources wisely, and adapt to challenges. By practicing strategic management, small businesses can make better decisions, grow more effectively, and stay competitive. This not only boosts their performance but also supports long-term success and sustainability.

Strategic planning is essential for business success, guiding organizations like a roadmap toward their goals. According to David (2017), without a clear strategy, a business lacks direction and purpose. Strategic management tools and approaches, which became popular in the mid-20th century and resurged in the 1990s, remain crucial for maintaining profitability and competitiveness across all business sizes. Just as a football team needs a game plan to win, businesses need a strategic plan to thrive in a competitive environment.

Research on strategic management in pizza restaurants shows how important it is for staying competitive and growing. For example, a study on RS Top Pizza in the

Philippines used tools like SWOT and Porter's Five Forces to identify weaknesses and recommend improvements through technology and marketing (Mandario et al., 2021). Similarly, Pizza Hut applied strategic change management, including adding healthier menu options and aligning its business model for better growth and profits (Pizza Hut, 2023). Studies on Domino's Pizza highlight its success through market expansion, product innovation, and online ordering systems, which helped it compete and increase revenue worldwide (IvyPanda, 2023; SlideShare, 2017). These examples show that pizza restaurants must use strategic management to adapt, innovate, and improve operational efficiency to succeed.

In the highly competitive foodservice industry, particularly for local businesses, strategic planning helps restaurant owners navigate challenges, differentiate themselves, and maintain a competitive edge. Through strategic planning, a pizza restaurant can align its vision, mission, and values with the operational aspects of the business, such as menu development, customer service, and marketing strategies. For example, a well-thought-out strategy could focus on offering unique pizza varieties, using locally sourced ingredients, or implementing loyalty programs that encourage repeat business. By continuously assessing the market and customer preferences, a strategic plan allows the restaurant to adapt and innovate, which is crucial for sustaining long-term success in a dynamic industry (David, 2017).

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researchers used a qualitative method in this study. Qualitative research focuses on gathering and analyzing non-numerical data like text, video, or audio to better understand ideas, opinions, or experiences. According to Bhandari (2020), this approach helps gather detailed insights into a problem or spark new research ideas. Creswell (2018) explained that the qualitative method is suitable when the researcher aims to explore a problem or issue.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a powerful approach for studying strategic management because it focuses on a business's strengths instead of its problems. It brings people together to highlight what's working well and imagine a better future, creating positive energy and commitment for change. This method helps businesses develop effective strategies based on their core strengths and shared goals, making the strategic management process more engaging and productive (Cooperrider et al., 2008).

Phases of Appreciative Inquiry. The 4D cycle proposed by Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008) is the basis of this study. The phases of discovery, dream, design, and destiny are represented by the 4D cycle.

Discovery. Facilitating meaningful and high-quality engagements with participants is essential when collaborating within their organization. The initial stage of the 4D model lays the groundwork for the following Dream phase, fostering creative thinking and imaginative exploration of the organization's future (Horan, 2017).

Dream. The Dream phase in Appreciative Inquiry marks the beginning of envisioning future possibilities. Whether termed dreaming, envisioning, or imagining, the goal is to explore potentials that extend beyond current understanding (Stevenson, 2019).

Design. During this process, plans are developed to reflect the perspectives of individuals regarding exceptional practices and their visions. This involves creating suggestive propositions or assertions that articulate the contributor's intention to gain.

Destiny. The focus now shifts to action planning, specifically identifying the necessary steps to transform visionary ideas into tangible outcomes. Collaboratively, stakeholders strategize and determine the programs and investments required to enhance the organization's capabilities and realize the envisioned future (Berkessel, 2020). This phase also involves aligning the organization with the desired outcomes, as emphasized by Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2008).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was conducted at the Southern part of the Philippines. A thriving local pizza restaurant with 11 years of operation and classified as a micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME).

Population and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling is a technique researchers use to choose suitable participants for an academic study (Palinkas et al., 2015). The sample consisted specifically of (1) one corporator who has been involved in strategic planning of the institution, (1) one general manager who is also involved in strategic planning and (5) five first level managers that participated in the day to day operation. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis.

In qualitative research like Appreciative Inquiry, having 7 participants is enough when data saturation is reached. This means that after talking to these participants, no new ideas or themes come up. The information gathered is enough to fully understand the topic. Experts say it's about the quality of data, not just the number of people (Guest et al., 2006; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Morse, 2015). So, if no new insights appear after 7 interviews, the sample size is sufficient and the study's findings are reliable.

Data Collection Method

Appreciative Interview The appreciative interview seeks to discover, highlight, and understand the positive qualities that bring energy and vitality to the organization (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Furthermore, appreciative interview attempts to enhance the pleasure and delight of participants as they discuss their experiences and dreams for the future. Each interview with the participants lasted between 20 minutes and 2 hours on average.

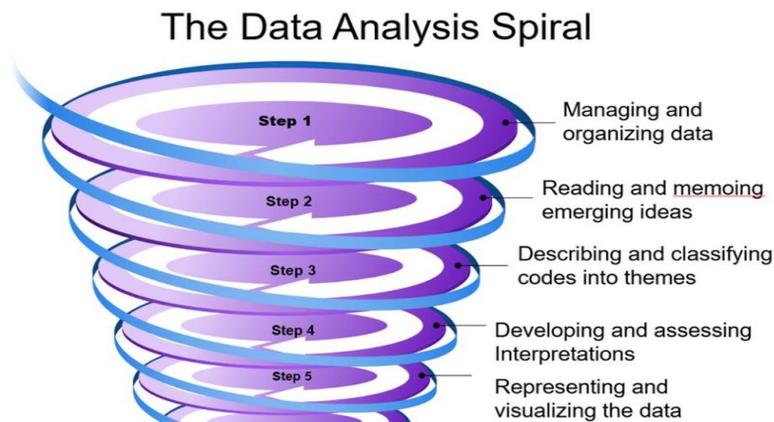
Observation. The researchers visited the pizza restaurant from its opening at 9 AM until it closed at 7 PM. They observed how the staff interacted with customers, noted the times when customer numbers increased, and watched how the manager or owner handled operations. They also observed the service crew's ways of serving and dealing with customers.

Documents. Qualitative research recognizes the importance of using documents as a key source of information as Creswell (2012) explains. According to Ary et al. (2010), documents can be either written or non-written. The researchers kept a written journal

during the entire study. This journal included detailed notes about the research process, such as observations, thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences.

Data Analysis

This study used Creswell and Poth's spiral data analysis. This study mostly follows the research methods used in qualitative studies, though there may be some minor differences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data analysis framework is described as spiraling because, as Creswell and Poth (2018) explain, the analysis process follows a general pattern that is best represented by a spiral shape (see Figure 1)



Creswell and Poth's spiral data analysis is a simple, step-by-step way to analyze qualitative data. First, you organize the data, like transcribing interviews. Then, you read through it carefully and start noting important points. Next, you break the data into small pieces called codes and group these codes into bigger themes. After that, you look at the patterns and meanings in these themes to understand the data better. Finally, you present the findings clearly using charts, tables, or stories. This process is flexible and lets you go back and forth to dive deeper into the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is how researchers assure themselves and their readers that their research findings are reliable and worth considering (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, they introduced credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability as some of the trustworthiness criteria.

Credibility. In this study, the researchers made sure the study was reliable by planning well, having experts review the interview questions, building good relationships with participants, using peer debriefing, and gathering data from different sources.

Dependability. To ensure this, the researchers did several things: kept detailed records of each step (audit trail), asked participants to check and confirm the findings (member checking), gathered data in different ways (interviews, observations, and document review), and followed methods used in earlier studies. These steps helped show that the research was done carefully and transparently, as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Transferability. To support this, the researchers gave clear and detailed descriptions of how the study was done and carefully chose participants through purposive sampling. In

this study, transferability was ensured by explaining the research setting, methods, data collection, and how the final report was prepared. The participants were also selected on purpose to match the goals of the study.

Confirmability. This means the study's findings can be supported and checked by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, confirmability was ensured by using only the participants' experiences as the source of data. The researchers also made sure the participants had no personal ties to them, so the information given would be fair and unbiased.

Ethical Consideration

This study followed ethical research practices by first ensuring that participants clearly understood the purpose of the research and their roles in it. The researcher made sure that micro business owners or managers were fully aware of their involvement and the importance of their input. This openness helped build trust and encouraged voluntary participation, which is a key principle in ethical research (Scribbr, 2021).

Discovery Phase: Appreciating Which Gives Life

During the discovery phase, participants expressed enthusiasm as they shared their experiences regarding best practices in strategic management within thriving local pizza restaurant business. This phase emphasized the effective strategies being implemented, reflecting the viewpoints of both professionals and business owners. The identified practices aligned with key themes from local business insights, particularly emphasizing efficient operations, quality assurance, consistent monitoring, and strict adherence to established policies.

Theme 1: Supportive Organizational Culture

Empowering employees giving them more control over their tasks and decisions can solve this problem. McFee (2023), stated when workers are trusted to make decisions and take on responsibility, they feel more involved and committed to their job. This not only improves their mood but also helps the organization perform better. Studies show that empowered workers are much more engaged than those who feel powerless. To build a more productive and positive work culture, companies should focus on creating trust and allowing their employees more freedom in how they work.

Category 1: Compassionate Owner

Leadership plays a big role in keeping employees engaged at work. Good leaders go beyond the usual ways of managing them use fresh ideas that connect with different kinds of people in the workplace. According to Pagisi (2022), Leaders who lead by example, give helpful feedback, mentor others, celebrate team wins, and are open to change help create a positive and energized workplace.

Category 2: Managerial support to employees

Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) suggested that implementing an employee engagement program can be a cost-effective method to boost organizational performance. They emphasized that a highly engaged workforce positively influences the organization. Similarly, Mokaya and Kipyegon (2014) highlighted a connection between employee engagement and effective performance management. Jevé et al., (2015) noted that employees who enjoy their work often find time passes quickly.

Category 3: Organizational Culture and Communication

Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) suggested that implementing an employee engagement program can be a cost-effective method to boost organizational performance. They emphasized that a highly engaged workforce positively influences the organization. By adopting employee engagement, organizations can achieve better financial outcomes and gain a stronger competitive edge.

Theme 2: Empowering Employees through Rewards and Recognition

Rewarding employees is not merely an act of kindness but a vital strategic initiative that enhances engagement, boosts motivation, and increases loyalty within an organization. Research indicates that employees who feel acknowledged are 73% less likely to suffer from burnout and 56% less likely to seek new employment opportunities. Thoughtful recognition serves as a strong catalyst for both individual and organizational success (Workhuman & Gallup, 2023).

Category 4: Rewarding Employee Loyalty

Employee loyalty is vital for creating a stable and trusting work environment, benefiting both employees and the organization. Loyal employees are more committed and productive, directly contributing to the achievement of organizational goals. Furthermore, loyal employees serve as brand advocates, helping to attract top talent and enhancing the organization's reputation and overall success (Ateeq et al., 2023).

Category 5: Incentive for good performance

Incentives are external motivators designed to encourage individuals to take certain actions or avoid others. They serve as a catalyst for behavior, offering rewards or benefits in exchange for specific actions. The purpose of incentives is to influence desired behaviors and attitudes to achieve a particular goal or outcome (Dewar, 2025).

Theme 3: Evident standard procedure on food quality

In the restaurant business, quality control is essential, not just a procedure, but a key component of a positive dining experience. Customers expect consistent, high-quality food and excellent service every time they visit. While it can be challenging for managers to meet these standards, focusing on quality control helps build customer trust, improves operational efficiency, and fosters loyalty (Bevanda, 2024).

Category 6: Food Quality Control & Assurance

According to Goetsch & Davis (2016), This evolving demand compels food producers, manufacturers, and suppliers to make product quality a core focus of their operations. Prioritizing quality is essential not only for protecting consumer health but also for strengthening brand reputation and sustaining success in a competitive marketplace.

Category 7: Operational Standards & Procedures

Operational Standards and Procedures are important guidelines that help ensure daily tasks are done consistently, safely, and efficiently. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) give clear instructions for regular work to support quality, teamwork, and following industry rules while avoiding confusion (Comprose, 2024).

Theme 4: Exceptional Products and Services

When customers feel special and welcomed, they are more likely to return, reinforcing loyalty and promoting positive word-of-mouth (Ashurbeyov, 2022). Hospitality plays a vital role in the service industry by enhancing customer experiences, fostering loyalty, and strengthening brand identity.

Category 8: Quality Product

According to Suchánek et al., (2015) Product quality plays a crucial role in a company's overall success and reputation in the marketplace. When a business consistently delivers products that meet or exceed customer expectations, it can benefit from reduced production costs, greater returns on investment, and increased revenue.

Category 9: Food delivery

According to Soni (2023) Food delivery services have evolved into an essential part of modern life, transitioning from a mere convenience to a fundamental service. These platforms ranging from high-tech apps to local restaurant deliveries cater to various consumer needs, whether it's a quick lunch or a family dinner.

Theme 5: Faith Based Management Practices

According to Ly and Tuan (2023) this commitment builds a workplace culture rooted in trust, respect, and loyalty factors that significantly boost employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and long-term growth. Leaders who are anchored in their faith often lead with a clear sense of mission and integrity.

Category 10: Ethical and Values-Based Practices

Faith significantly shapes how leaders think, act, and respond to challenges. It helps build a strong ethical foundation and encourages integrity in leadership (Vaibhav, 2024). A study by the Center for Creative Leadership found that leaders who integrate faith into their work tend to behave more ethically and with greater moral clarity traits that are increasingly important in today's leadership landscape.

Category 11: Prayer First

(Vaibhav, 2024) emphasizes that integrating prayer into our business practices acknowledges God's sovereignty over all aspects of our lives, including our professional endeavors. Praying about our business aligns our vision with God's will, guiding our decisions and actions.

Theme 6: Strategic execution of productivity

Strategic execution of productivity refers to the process of turning an organization's strategic plans-especially those aimed at improving productivity-into concrete, actionable steps that produce measurable results. It is the bridge between high level strategy (what the organization wants to achieve) and operational action (how those goals are actually accomplished) (Bleeker & Werner, 2024).

Category 12: Accountable Professionalism

According to Lowe (2018), true accountability thrives in a culture based on trust and teamwork, where there is honesty about areas of improvement and humility in actions. Instead of focusing on punitive measures, accountability in the workplace should be about setting clear expectations aligned with the company's mission, values, and goals.

Category 13: Implementation of Training Programs

According to Burgess (2024) Investing in employee training and development yields significant benefits for organizations. Key advantages include increased employee performance, as continuous learning ensures that knowledge remains current and relevant. Training also leads to a stronger workforce, with employees demonstrating improved skills and greater confidence in their roles.

Category 14: Task Allocation and Assessment

Task allocation is the strategic process of assigning specific tasks and responsibilities to team members within a project or organization to ensure optimal resource utilization, efficiency, and project success (Zhang & Zhang, 2013).

Theme 7: Well established labor management protocol

Well-established labor management protocol in strategic management refers to structured frameworks and practices designed to optimize workforce efficiency, ensure compliance, and foster productive labor-management relationships (Budd, 2021).

Category 15: Due Process and Employee Rights Monitoring

Due process in Human Resource Management (HRM) refers to the fair and transparent handling of employment-related decisions, ensuring that employees' rights are respected and that disciplinary actions or terminations are justified and consistent (Roesler, 2021).

Category 16: Regulatory Compliance and Legal Monitoring

Regulatory Compliance refers to an organization's adherence to laws, regulations, guidelines, and standards set by governmental and industry bodies, such as the SEC, FDA, GDPR, or HIPAA, depending on the industry and jurisdiction (Cole, 2022).

Category 17: Cost-Efficiency and Sustainability of Employee Benefits

According to SHRM (2022), Cost-Efficiency of Employee Benefits means providing valuable benefits to employees while controlling or minimizing expenses for the organization. It focuses on offering competitive health insurance, retirement plans, wellness programs, and other perks without overspending.

Theme 8: Established Relationship with Stakeholders

Understanding who your stakeholders are and why their support matters can significantly enhance your ability to foster positive relationships. This includes recognizing the different types of stakeholders, the importance of nurturing these connections, and the strategies you can apply to effectively manage and sustain them (Freeman et al., 2010).

Category 18: Established relationship with suppliers

It is essential for businesses to trust that suppliers will deliver the agreed-upon goods or services, while suppliers must also be assured of receiving fair and timely payment. A strong supplier relationship is built when both parties fully understand and honor their commitments. Maintaining consistent, respectful, and open communication helps ensure these agreements stay on track and fosters a healthy, productive supplier relationship (Monczka et al., 2016).

Category 19: Established relationship with employees

Building strong relationships with employees is vital for boosting workplace morale and overall productivity. A positive employer-employee relationship greatly influences employee satisfaction, work efficiency, and the organization's success. Although individual preferences for an ideal workplace may differ, employees generally expect an environment built on mutual respect, open communication, and the absence of hostility (Vora, 2015).

Category 20: Established relationship with customers

Developing strong customer relationships is essential for long-term business success, as it fosters trust and communication, which can boost customer retention and repeat purchases. Especially in today's competitive market, focusing on relationship marketing offers numerous advantages (Adams, 2023).

Theme 9: Strategic Planning and Operational Efficiency

A well-defined strategic plan provides a competitive edge by keeping organizations ahead of trends and changes. Additionally, it fosters a sense of shared responsibility among employees, ensuring everyone understands their role in achieving the company's goals. Strategic planning also enhances leadership efficiency by aligning the organization's activities with its objectives and increasing operational efficiency (Niguse 2025).

Category 21: Operational Performance

The primary goals of operational performance differ across industries, but generally share common themes. One major objective is cost reduction, which involves identifying ways to minimize expenses by improving workflows, removing inefficiencies, and optimizing how resources are used (Patle & Tekade, 2023).

Category 22: Operational Efficiency

Operational efficiency means doing things in the best and smartest way to save time and money, while still maintaining high quality. Improving operational efficiency involves understanding the current state of a business by assessing financial performance, employee productivity, workflow, and waste using tools like root cause analysis and lean principles (Kumar, 2018).

Theme 10: Implemented Proper Sanitation and Comfortable Atmosphere

Running a restaurant involves a variety of responsibilities, one of the most important being sanitation. A well-maintained and sanitized restaurant not only ensures customer safety but also helps in maintaining customer loyalty (Gupta et al., 2020; FDA, 2022).

Category 23: Ambiance of the restaurant

Ambient conditions such as temperature, scent, noise, and music play a vital role in shaping customers' emotional responses and overall dining experience. For example, uncomfortable temperatures may elicit negative emotions and reduce the likelihood of repeat visits (Lin, 2020)

Category 24: Proper Sanitation Practices

Food safety includes proper handling, preparation, storage, and transportation of food to avoid contamination. Restaurant owners must make food safety a top priority and ensure all staff are properly trained. Keeping food safe also reduces waste, helps maintain a clean environment, and leads to higher profits (WHO, 2022).

Dream Phase: Envisioning the Future

The Dream Phase is the second step in the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process, where participants are encouraged to envision a compelling future grounded in their past successes and strengths. According to Cooperrider, this phase invites individuals and organizations to dream boldly and creatively about what could be, without being constrained by current limitations (Sabbott, 2021).

Theme 1: Collaborative Decision-Making Processes

Engaging multiple individuals in the decision-making process allows organizations to draw from a broader range of skills, experiences, and viewpoints, often resulting in more creative and successful outcomes (Harris, 2024).

Category 1: Include Crew in Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a valuable method that professionals in the business world can apply to come up with innovative and original ideas. Although it's commonly mentioned,

the term is frequently confused with other approaches used for solving problems and generating concepts (Paulus & Brown, 2021).

Category 2: Staff Led- Menu Audit

A staff-led menu audit is an internal review process where restaurant team members including chefs, kitchen staff, managers, and front-of-house employees collaboratively evaluate the menu to ensure it aligns with customer preferences, operational efficiency, and business objectives (National Restaurant Association, 2023).

Theme 2: Monthly Specials Program

Restaurants must balance innovation with operational efficiency. Frequent menu changes require coordination in sourcing ingredients, training staff, and updating promotional materials (Foodservice Equipment & Supplies, 2020). Monthly specials also serve as a low-risk way to test new recipes and concepts, providing valuable customer feedback before committing to permanent menu changes (National Restaurant Association, 2023).

Category 3: Innovation of the Menu

Effective menu innovation allows restaurants to remain competitive, satisfy customer expectations, and continuously refresh their brand appeal (Parsa, 2015).

Category 4: Offering of New Product Monthly

Offering new products on a monthly basis is a strategic approach used by many restaurants to keep their menus fresh and exciting, while also responding to changing consumer preferences and market trends. This approach involves regularly introducing limited-time or seasonal menu items, such as new pizza toppings, unique appetizers, or special desserts (Menegaki et al., 2020).

Themes 3: Established and Implemented Structured Hierarchy

A hierarchical organizational structure features a clear chain of command that helps employees easily recognize their roles and responsibilities. This model enables business owners to maintain efficient operations and well-defined reporting lines. It is widely effective in many work environments and offers several advantages, particularly for large companies (Jones, 2013; Daft, 2016).

Category 5: Establish Organizational Management Structure

Establishing an organizational management structure is a critical step for ensuring that a business operates efficiently and effectively. This structure defines the roles, responsibilities, and relationships within the organization, helping to establish clear lines of communication, accountability, and decision-making (Robbins & Coulter, 2022).

Category 6: Structured Policies and Implementation

Clear and organized policies are very important for keeping an organization running smoothly and efficiently. These policies give formal rules that guide how employees should act, how work should be done, and how to handle different situations. They can cover things like employee behavior, safety rules, money matters, customer service, and following the law. Having these structured policies helps make sure that everyone is treated fairly, knows what to do, and avoids confusion or problems (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020)

Theme 4: Growth and Market Expansion

Market expansion involves making strategic changes that help a business grow its revenue, create employment opportunities, and strengthen its brand identity. A crucial element of any growth initiative is developing a comprehensive marketing plan. For those

pursuing careers in fields like management, business consulting, or marketing, it's important to understand the various strategies for expansion in a constantly evolving market (Ijomah et al., 2025).

Category 7: Market Penetration

Market penetration refers to the extent to which a product or service is adopted by customers within its intended market. In simple terms, it reflects how successfully a product is selling. Typically shown as a percentage, this metric helps guide strategies aimed at growing a product's market share. While concentrating on market penetration can boost sales, it may have negative consequences if not implemented correctly (Smith & Nagle, 2020).

Category 8: Geographic Diversification

Diversification, generally speaking, is the practice of allocating money to a wide variety of investments so as to minimize risk. It's the financial equivalent of not putting all your eggs in one basket (James, 2022).

Theme 5: Building and Equipment Upgrade

Upgrading restaurant equipment plays a critical role in ensuring the continued success of any food service establishment. High-quality, durable equipment is essential to meet the demands of daily operations and to deliver consistent results. Staying updated with the latest technology and industry advancements is key to maintaining competitiveness in the market (Sparks & Browning, 2011).

Category 9: Improved Facilities

Better facilities in a restaurant mean making improvements to the building and work areas, such as the dining room, kitchen, restrooms, storage, lighting, ventilation, and layout. These upgrades help create a more comfortable and efficient place for both customers and workers. For example, a modern kitchen with new equipment can make food preparation faster and cleaner, while a nicer dining area can give customers a better experience (Kimes, 2008).

Category 10: Expansion of the Infrastructure

Expanding a restaurant's infrastructure means improving or adding to the physical spaces and tools that help the business grow and work better. This can include upgrading the kitchen, dining room, storage, and service areas, as well as using new technology to make operations smoother. Adding more seating or extending the dining area also allows the restaurant to serve more customers during busy times, which can help increase earnings (Kimes, 2008).

Theme 6: Flagship Pizza Brand of Digos

The flagship pizza brand of Digos reflects the goal of building a unique and well-known pizza restaurant that stands out in the local food scene. A flagship brand shows the main identity of a business, known for its consistent quality, special products, and a name people trust. As Kotler and Keller (2016) explain, this could mean creating a pizza with a unique crust, sauce, or toppings, adding local flavors, or using ingredients from the area that connect with the community.

Category 11: Established Marketing Strategies

Established marketing strategies are long-term plans that help businesses reach their target customers, promote their products or services, and meet their goals. In today's digital world, methods like search engine optimization (SEO) and social media marketing

are very important. These strategies help businesses connect with people through personalized and focused content on different online platforms (Kotler & Keller, 2020).

Category 12: Brand Awareness

Brand awareness refers to the extent to which consumers can recognize or recall a brand, making it a critical element in marketing strategies. It involves both brand recognition, where consumers identify a brand by its name, logo, or other distinguishing features, and brand recall, which is the ability of consumers to remember a brand when thinking about a specific product category (Keller, 2013).

Category 13: Optimizing the Use of Marketing Strategies

Optimizing marketing strategies means regularly improving marketing efforts to get the best results and value. It involves studying customer behavior, campaign outcomes, and market trends to make sure all actions support the business's goals. This is a continuous process of testing, learning, and adjusting to stay competitive in a fast-changing market (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

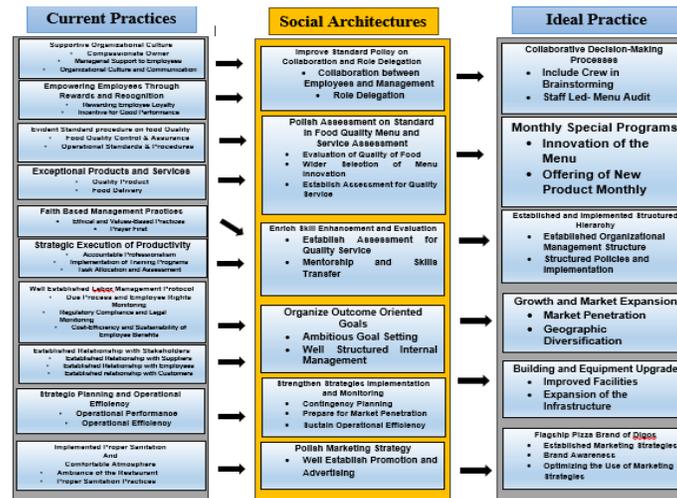
Design Phase: Con-constructing the Future

Six social architectures were identified to bridge the gap from the current practices to an ideal marketing strategy (see Figure 2). The identified themes and categories serve as a strategic roadmap to bridge the gap between current practices and the ideal state of strategic management. By systematically addressing each theme, the organization can shift from reactive decision making to proactive, intentional strategies that enhance both strategic management and operational efficiency. This design phase is not only focused on optimizing current practices but also on creating a sustainable framework for continuous development. This ensures the organization remains resilient and competitive in a rapidly evolving financial landscape. Under the element of efficient and effective operation, six key plans have been identified: (1) improve the standard policy on collaboration and role delegation, (2) polish assessment criteria for food quality, menu, and service, (3) enrich skill enhancement and evaluation processes, (4) organize outcome-oriented goals, and (5) strengthen strategy implementation and monitoring efforts. (6) polish marketing strategy

Destiny phase: Sustaining Change

The final phase of the 4D Appreciative Inquiry model, known as the destiny or delivery phase, focuses on transforming forward-looking ideas into concrete actions through collaborative efforts aimed at achieving a shared goal (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p. 46). This stage puts into motion the plans and visions developed in the earlier phases, emphasizing the implementation of insights gained during the discovery, dream, and design stages. It signifies the culmination of the Appreciative Inquiry process, beginning with the acknowledgment and celebration of organizational accomplishments. This phase also provides a moment to reflect on and analyze the positive outcomes, key themes, and social dynamics that contributed to the organization's success.

Social architectures to bridge the gap.



V. CONCLUSION

Best strategic management practices of a thriving local pizza restaurant include upholding a supportive organizational culture that focuses on empowering employees, promoting teamwork, and fostering compassionate leadership. In capturing value, best practices include the standardization of food quality and operational procedures that ensure consistent service and customer satisfaction. In delivering value, the best practice is providing exceptional products and services that focus on hospitality, faith-based management, and a customer-centered approach. In communicating value, the best practice is maintaining established relationships with key stakeholders, including suppliers, employees, and customers, which strengthens brand loyalty and operational stability.

Ideal strategic management strategies include growth and market expansion that aim for greater market penetration, geographic diversification, and infrastructure development to support sustained business success. Another ideal includes building the flagship pizza brand of Digos that focuses on enhancing brand awareness, optimizing marketing strategies, and establishing a distinct identity in the local food service industry. The participants also shared that a well-established structure, which includes a structured hierarchy and clear policies, is part of the dream. Continuous innovation through monthly specials and collaborative decision-making processes, as well as creating a comfortable and sanitary dining atmosphere, are also part of the ideal strategies.

Social architectures to leverage the best strategic management practices to what is ideal include improving standard policies on collaboration and role delegation, enhancing food quality assessment and menu evaluation, enriching training programs, strengthening strategy implementation and monitoring, and polishing marketing strategies that align with evolving market trends. It is recommended to have the commitment of the management to consistently revisit and enhance strategic plans, to establish functional and proactive management structures, and to anchor business practices on both operational excellence

and core values. These commitments are essential to turning ideal strategic management strategies into reality and sustaining growth in the competitive restaurant industry.

Similar to typical research processes, Appreciative Inquiry goes beyond just drawing conclusions and making recommendations. It initiates a new cycle of exploration to further expand the boundaries of knowledge. For future studies, it is suggested to explore quantitative or mixed-method research on strategic management practices suited for micro and small food service enterprises in local contexts.

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