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Implementation Of Plating Standardization As Part Of Quality Assurance In Maintaining The Consistency Of Food Products At Star-Rated Hotels: (A Study At Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel, Taiwan)

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Abstract

The modern hotel industry faces increasingly demanding expectations in maintaining service quality, particularly within the Food and Beverage Product Department, which plays a vital role in shaping guests' dining experiences. Beyond food taste, product consistency and presentation aesthetics (plating) have become essential indicators of quality, influencing guest perceptions, satisfaction, loyalty, and the hotel's overall reputation. This study aims to analyze the implementation of plating standardization as a quality assurance strategy for maintaining food product consistency in the Food and Beverage Product Department at Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel, Taiwan. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed based on an internship experience study. Data were collected through participant observation during the internship as a cook, documentation, informal interviews with chefs and supervisors, and an analysis of the hotel's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), standardized recipes, and plating guidelines. The findings reveal that quality assurance is implemented through an integrated system consisting of standardized recipes, plating standards, routine quality inspections, interdepartmental coordination, and continuous product evaluation. Plating standardization ensures consistency not only in the visual appearance of dishes but also in taste, portion size, texture, and serving temperature. The implementation of these standards improves operational efficiency, minimizes production errors, strengthens restaurant identity, and enhances guest satisfaction. Furthermore, the internship experience demonstrates that successful quality assurance depends on competent human resources, strict compliance with SOPs, effective communication, a professional work culture, and a strong organizational commitment to continuous improvement. This study highlights the importance of operational standardization in sustaining food quality and provides

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practical insights for hospitality practitioners while serving as a reference for tourism and hospitality education based on industry experience.

Keywords: quality assurance, plating standardization, food product consistency, Food and Beverage Product, five-star hotel.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry has developed very rapidly, driven by increasing tourist mobility and global competition in the tourism sector (Kotler et al., 2022). This condition drives every hotel to continuously improve service quality in order to maintain competitiveness and meet increasingly high customer expectations. In the context of the modern hospitality industry, a hotel's success is no longer determined solely by the quality of its physical facilities, but also by its ability to provide a comprehensive, high-quality, and consistent guest experience throughout the guest's use of various hotel services. One important element that contributes to shaping this experience is the quality of food and beverage service provided through the *Food and Beverage Product* Department.

The Food and Beverage Product Department holds a strategic role because it is responsible for the entire food production process, from menu planning and raw material preparation to processing and serving guests (Walker, 2021; Hayes et al., 2016). The food products generated not only fulfill consumption needs but also represent the restaurant's identity and the hotel's overall service quality. Therefore, every dish served must meet established standards in order to create customer satisfaction while maintaining the hotel's reputation.

Changes in consumer behavior in the digital era have also influenced how customers evaluate the service quality of hotel restaurants. Beyond taste, travelers now increasingly pay attention to the visual aspects of food, cleanliness, portion size, and presentation consistency. The growth of social media and online review platforms has made food appearance one of the factors that can influence public perception of a restaurant's quality (Spence, 2017; Kotler et al., 2022). Dishes with an attractive appearance tend to be photographed and shared by customers, thereby indirectly serving as a promotional medium that can enhance the hotel's image. Presentation aesthetics (*food plating*) have thus become an important part of service and marketing strategy in the hospitality industry.

Food plating is the technique of arranging food on a serving medium while paying attention to the balance of composition, color, texture, proportion, and decorative elements to produce an

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attractive appearance that also reflects the restaurant's character (Spence, 2017; Zellner et al., 2011). In star-rated hotel operations, plating is not only regarded as an aesthetic aspect but also as a work standard that must be applied consistently by all cooks. Uniformity in dish presentation indicates that the production process has run according to the procedures established by the company, unaffected by individual differences or kitchen operational conditions.

Maintaining food quality consistency in a star-rated hotel environment is a fairly complex challenge, as it involves a large workforce, demand variation, and high operational pressure (Hayes et al., 2016; Stevenson, 2021). Kitchen operational activities involve many workers with varying levels of experience, shift work systems, high production capacity, and time pressure during busy operational hours. These conditions can potentially cause variation in portion size, taste, texture, and food appearance if not supported by an effective quality control system. Therefore, the implementation of *Standard Operating Procedure* (SOP), *standardized recipe*, *standard plating guide*, and quality control mechanisms becomes the main foundation for maintaining the consistency of the food products produced.

Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel, Taiwan, is one of the five-star hotels that implements a comprehensive quality control system as part of the Marriott International network. This hotel serves both domestic and international guests through various restaurants with diverse culinary concepts, thus requiring operational standards capable of ensuring quality uniformity across every food product. This work environment provided the intern with the opportunity to directly observe the implementation of the *quality assurance* system in the operational activities of the *Food and Beverage Product* Department.

During the internship, the student was directly involved in various stages of food production, from *mise en place*, ingredient processing according to standardized recipes, and dish preparation based on the *standard plating guide*, to the quality inspection process before food is served to customers. This experience showed that food product consistency depends not only on a cook's technical skills but is also determined by the effectiveness of the quality management system, inter-team coordination, and compliance with applicable operational procedures.

From a quality management perspective, *quality assurance* is a systematic approach that emphasizes preventive efforts against potential quality deviations through the control of the production process. This approach differs from *quality control*, which is more oriented toward inspecting the final product outcome. In the hospitality industry, both systems are implemented in an integrated manner through the use of standardized recipes, human resource training, operational supervision, periodic evaluation, and the application of a work culture that prioritizes

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discipline and thoroughness.

Although research on service quality and customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry has been widely conducted, studies specifically examining the relationship between plating standardization, the quality assurance system, and food product consistency remain relatively limited. Most research has focused more on aspects of service quality or consumer behavior, while the implementation of presentation standardization as part of a quality control system has not received adequate attention. In fact, in the operational practice of star-rated hotel restaurants, the consistency of food appearance is one of the important indicators influencing customer perceptions of service quality.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the implementation of plating standardization as part of the quality assurance system in maintaining food product consistency in the *Food and Beverage Product* Department at Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel, Taiwan. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of hospitality operations management studies, particularly in the field of food quality control, and to serve as a practical reference for the hotel industry in improving service quality through the consistent application of operational standards.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of plating standardization as part of the quality assurance system in maintaining food product consistency (American Psychological Association, 2020). The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to describe phenomena occurring naturally within the work environment and provide a comprehensive understanding of the operational processes taking place in the *Food and Beverage Product* Department. The research focus is directed at the implementation of operational standards used to maintain food product quality, from the preparation stage through to serving guests.

The research was conducted in the Food and Beverage Product Department of Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel, Taiwan, a five-star hotel under the management of Marriott International. The location was selected based on the consideration that the hotel implements operational and quality control systems in accordance with international standards, thereby providing an opportunity to observe best practices in food production management within the hospitality industry. In addition, the diversity of restaurants operating at the hotel allowed the researcher to gain a broader understanding of the implementation of quality standards across various types of

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culinary services.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Overview of *Quality Assurance* Implementation in the *Food and Beverage Product* Department

The *Food and Beverage Product* Department holds a strategic role in supporting hotel service quality through the provision of food products that meet company standards. In star-rated hotels, food quality is measured not only by taste but also by food safety, product consistency, portion size, timeliness of serving, and the visual appearance of food (Meiselman, 2001; Namkung & Jang, 2007). Therefore, every stage of production is designed to follow a *quality assurance* system aimed at ensuring that the entire process runs consistently in accordance with established operational standards.

Observations during the internship showed that Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel implements a *quality assurance* system comprehensively at every stage of kitchen operations. Quality control begins at the receiving of raw materials (*receiving*), storage (*storage*), ingredient preparation (*mise en place*), the cooking process, through to serving food to guests. All these activities are carried out based on *Standard Operating Procedures* (SOPs) that serve as guidelines for all employees in the *Food and Beverage Product* Department. With standardized procedures in place, every staff member shares the same understanding of the work stages, thereby minimizing variation in the food production process.

The implementation of *quality assurance* is realized not only through the preparation of operational standard documents but is also supported by a work culture that emphasizes discipline, responsibility, communication, and cooperation among staff. During the internship, every production activity began with a brief *briefing* led by the *chef* or *supervisor*. This activity aimed to communicate production targets, task allocation, menu changes when necessary, and information regarding product quality that needed to be observed that day. This pattern of communication contributed to creating effective work coordination while reducing the potential for errors during the production process.

In addition to internal coordination, quality supervision is also carried out in layers. Food products that have finished being produced are not served directly to guests but are first inspected by the *chef de partie*, *sous chef*, or *executive chef*. This inspection covers the level of doneness, taste, portion size, food temperature, equipment cleanliness, and conformity of appearance with the applicable *plating* standard. Products that do not yet meet the standard must be corrected or

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reproduced so that the food received by guests truly conforms to the hotel's quality standard.

These findings indicate that the concept of *quality assurance* at Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel is more oriented toward controlling the process than merely inspecting the final outcome. This preventive approach allows potential quality deviations to be identified early, thereby minimizing the risk of customer complaints. This practice is consistent with the concept of quality management that places quality as the responsibility of every member of the organization, not merely that of the quality control staff.

b. Implementation of *Plating* Standardization in Maintaining Food Product Consistency

One of the main components of the *quality assurance* system implemented at Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel is *plating* standardization. Based on observations, every menu has a presentation guideline (*standard plating guide*) that contains information on the type of plate used, the position of food components, portion size, sauce application, garnish, and the final appearance of the dish. This guideline serves as a reference for all cooks so that every dish produced has the same visual characteristics regardless of the individual preparing it.

The application of plating standards provides several benefits for kitchen operations, including maintaining the restaurant's visual identity, improving production efficiency, and easing the training process for new employees (Hayes et al., 2016; Prenata et al., 2026). First, the standard is able to maintain the restaurant's visual identity so that customers receive a consistent experience each time they order the same menu item. Second, the presentation guideline speeds up the production process because every cook already knows the position and composition of each food element. Third, standardization simplifies the training process for new employees because they have a clear reference for preparing dishes in accordance with the company's standards.

During the internship, the writer observed that before food is sent to the service area (*service area*), each dish is first compared with the visual example contained in the *standard plating guide*. The inspection is carried out carefully to ensure that all food components have been placed according to the standard, in terms of proportion, color balance, and presentation cleanliness. If a discrepancy is found, the food is not permitted to leave the kitchen until it has been corrected.

Plating standardization also affects operational efficiency. With clear guidelines in place, the time required to arrange food becomes shorter because every cook already understands the work sequence and the position of each dish component. This is especially important when the restaurant faces a high volume of orders, such as during lunch, dinner, or large-scale events. In

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such situations, presentation consistency must be maintained even as work pressure increases.

From the customer's perspective, uniformity in food appearance is an indicator of restaurant professionalism and contributes to perceptions of quality and customer satisfaction (Namkung & Jang, 2007; Zellner et al., 2011). Customers expect that the menu item they order will have the same quality on every visit. If differences occur in appearance or portion size, customers may judge that the restaurant's quality has declined, even if the taste of the food remains good. Therefore, *plating* standardization is not only related to aesthetic aspects but also functions as an instrument for building customer trust in the hotel's service quality.

c. The Role of *Standardized Recipe* in Ensuring Product Consistency

In addition to *plating* standardization, food product consistency is also supported by the use of *standardized recipe*. A standardized recipe is an operational document that contains information on ingredient types, quantities, processing methods, cooking time, temperature, portion size, and the presentation technique for every menu item. All cooks are required to follow the recipe without making unilateral changes, except with the approval of the *executive chef*.

Observations showed that the use of standardized recipes is able to reduce taste variation between products produced by different cooks. Every cooking process is carried out based on predetermined measurements so that food quality remains stable even when produced by different personnel or at different times. In addition to maintaining taste, standardized recipes also serve as a basis for cost control (*food cost control*), as the quantity of ingredients used has been precisely determined.

The combination of *standardized recipe* and *standard plating guide* forms a mutually complementary quality control system. The standardized recipe ensures the internal quality consistency of the product, while the *plating* guideline ensures the uniformity of the food's external appearance. As a result, customers obtain a consistent dining experience in terms of both taste and presentation.

d. Factors Supporting the Implementation of *Quality Assurance*

The success of *quality assurance* implementation in maintaining food product consistency at Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel is determined not only by the existence of documented operational procedures but is also influenced by various interrelated supporting factors. Based on observations during the internship, the effectiveness of the quality control system is built through the integration of competent human resources, clear operational standards, effective leadership, team coordination, and an organizational culture oriented toward quality. The combination of these factors creates a work environment capable of producing food products of consistent quality

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in accordance with star-rated hotel standards.

The first important factor is human resource competence. All kitchen personnel have clear task divisions in accordance with the organizational structure and their respective responsibilities. Every cook is required to master technical skills, understand operational procedures, and be able to work quickly without compromising product quality. Beyond individual ability, the learning process also continues through direction from the *chef de partie*, *sous chef*, and *executive chef*. During the internship, the participant received direct guidance on food processing techniques, the application of *plating* standards, the use of kitchen equipment, and sanitation procedures. This approach demonstrates that improving employee competence is an important part of maintaining consistency in food product quality.

The next factor is the consistent application of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). SOPs serve as operational guidelines that regulate every stage of production, from the receiving of raw materials, storage, preparation, and processing, to the serving of food. The clarity of these procedures reduces variation in work methods among employees, ensuring that every activity is carried out to the same standard. As a result, the likelihood of errors in the production process can be minimized, while operational efficiency can continue to be maintained.

In addition to SOPs, the existence of standardized recipes and the standard plating guide is also a key factor supporting the implementation of *quality assurance*. Both documents provide detailed references regarding ingredient composition, processing techniques, portion sizes, and the layout of each food component on the serving medium. Through these standards, all cooks produce dishes with uniform taste and appearance even when made by different personnel or at different times. This consistency is one of the main characteristics of service at star-rated hotels that prioritize uniformity in product quality.

Another equally important factor is leadership (*leadership*) within kitchen operations. Observations showed that the *executive chef*, *sous chef*, and *chef de partie* not only carry out a supervisory function but also serve as mentors who provide technical direction, evaluation, and solutions to various operational obstacles. Communicative leadership creates good work coordination so that every team member understands the quality targets that must be achieved. Through routine *briefings* before operations begin, all personnel receive information regarding task allocation, production targets, and the quality standards that are the priority for that day.

Organizational work culture is also a factor that supports the successful implementation of *quality assurance*. The work environment in the *Food and Beverage Product* Department emphasizes the values of discipline, responsibility, teamwork, and attention to detail. Every staff

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member is encouraged to maintain the cleanliness of the work area, comply with sanitation procedures, and help one another in completing the production process. This kind of work culture creates a shared commitment to producing food that meets the company's standards while strengthening the quality control system that has been implemented.

e. Constraints in the Implementation of *Plating* Standardization

Although the *quality assurance* system has been implemented comprehensively, the execution of *plating* standardization within the kitchen's operational environment still faces various challenges. Based on observations during the internship, one of the main constraints is the high volume of food production, particularly during peak meal hours, *banquet* events, conferences, or large-scale events. Under these conditions, every cook is required to produce large quantities of food within a limited time, causing work pressure to increase significantly. This situation has the potential to affect the accuracy of the *plating* process if not balanced by good team coordination.

The next constraint relates to differences in the level of experience and skill among employees. Although all personnel work based on the same SOPs, each individual's technical ability can affect the speed and accuracy of preparing dishes according to company standards. Therefore, continuous supervision and coaching become an important need to ensure that all team members are able to produce products of uniform quality.

In addition to human resource factors, kitchen operational dynamics are also influenced by changes in the number of guests and variations in customer demand. During periods of high hotel occupancy or when special events are taking place, the number of orders increases drastically, demanding flexibility in production management. Under these conditions, every team member must be able to maintain a balance between service speed and product quality consistency. This shows that the implementation of *plating* standardization depends not only on procedural documents but also on the organization's ability to manage operational pressure effectively.

Another constraint relates to time management (*time management*). Preparing *plating* requires precision so that every food element is arranged according to the established visual standard. However, when order volume increases, the time available for final inspection becomes more limited. Therefore, coordination among cooks and the supervisory process carried out by the *chef* become important factors in maintaining presentation quality without hindering the speed of service to guests.

Overall, these various constraints do not diminish the effectiveness of the *quality*

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assurance system implemented at Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel. On the contrary, these operational challenges provide a basis for management to continue conducting evaluation, training, and refinement of work procedures so that food product quality can continue to be maintained consistently under various operational conditions.

f. Implications of *Plating* Standardization Implementation for Guest Satisfaction and Operational Performance

The findings indicate that the implementation of *plating* standardization as part of the *quality assurance* system makes a significant contribution to improving service quality, guest satisfaction, and the operational effectiveness of the *Food and Beverage Product* Department. Presentation standardization not only functions as a technical guideline for arranging food but is also a quality management instrument that ensures every dish has consistent visual characteristics, portion size, and quality in accordance with hotel standards. According to Stevenson (2021), a quality assurance system that is applied consistently will produce more effective operational processes because every activity is carried out based on standardized procedures.

From the customer's perspective, product quality consistency is one of the main determinants of guest satisfaction. Consumers expect that the food they order will have the same quality on every visit. Inconsistency in taste, portion size, or dish appearance has the potential to lower customer perceptions of restaurant service quality (Namkung & Jang, 2007). Therefore, the implementation of *plating* standardization becomes an important strategy for building customer trust while increasing loyalty toward the hotel restaurant.

In addition to increasing customer satisfaction, the implementation of presentation standards also affects kitchen operational efficiency. The presence of a *standard plating guide* makes it easier for every cook to arrange dishes according to established specifications, thereby shortening presentation time without compromising product quality. According to Hayes et al. (2016), production process standardization is able to increase kitchen productivity by reducing work variation and speeding up the decision-making process during operations.

The implementation of *quality assurance* also provides benefits in reducing the level of human error (*human error*) during the production process. Operational standards applied at every stage of work help all personnel understand the procedures that must be followed, thereby minimizing variation in food processing and presentation. This condition also supports cost control (*food cost control*), as fewer products need to be corrected or reproduced due to non-conformance with company standards (Walker, 2021).

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Beyond operational aspects, *plating* standardization also strengthens the restaurant's visual identity as part of its marketing strategy. In the digital era, food appearance has become one of the factors influencing consumer decisions in choosing a restaurant or hotel. Dishes with attractive presentation tend to be shared on social media, thereby indirectly increasing brand exposure (Spence, 2017). Research by Zellner et al. (2011) also shows that food presented with more attractive arrangement receives higher ratings than food with the same taste but presented less aesthetically. These findings indicate that *plating* standardization holds strategic value not only in maintaining product quality but also in building the hotel's image in the eyes of customers.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that the implementation of *plating* standardization at Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel is an inseparable part of the *quality assurance* system within the operations of the *Food and Beverage Product* Department. This system positions quality as the responsibility of every staff member through the application of operational standards, standardized recipes, presentation guidelines, and quality control mechanisms at every stage of production. This approach is consistent with the concept of *quality assurance*, which emphasizes the prevention of quality deviations through process control rather than merely inspecting the final product (Stevenson, 2021).

Viewed from the perspective of Total Quality Management (TQM), the success of *plating* standardization implementation is determined not only by the existence of SOPs but also by an organizational culture that supports continuous improvement (*continuous improvement*). TQM emphasizes that quality is the responsibility of every member of the organization through active involvement, effective communication, strong leadership, and continuous evaluation (Goetsch & Davis, 2021). Observations show that the work culture within the *Food and Beverage Product* Department has reflected these principles through the implementation of *briefings*, routine supervision, food quality evaluation, and coordination among employees before and during operations.

This study also shows that standardized recipes and the standard plating guide are two main instruments in maintaining food product consistency. The *standardized recipe* ensures uniformity in taste, portion size, processing technique, and use of raw materials, while the *standard plating guide* guarantees the visual appearance consistency of every dish. Hayes et al. (2016) explain that recipe standardization is a key foundation in food quality control because it is able to produce consistent products while supporting operational cost efficiency. Thus, the

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combination of both standards forms a mutually complementary quality control system.

From the perspective of Hospitality Operations Management, food product consistency is one of the indicators of success in hotel restaurant operations. According to Johnston et al. (2023), service quality in the hospitality industry is strongly influenced by an organization's ability to produce consistent service at every point of interaction with customers. Therefore, *plating* standardization is not only related to aesthetic aspects but is also part of the operational strategy for maintaining service quality and strengthening restaurant identity.

The findings also show that human resource competence plays an important role in the successful implementation of *quality assurance*. Continuous training, supervision, and learning processes enable every employee to understand the quality standards that must be achieved. This finding is in line with Walker (2021), who states that the success of hotel operations is greatly influenced by employee competence, effective leadership, and an organizational culture oriented toward service quality.

On the other hand, this study found that high production volume, shift work systems (*shift*), and differences in employee experience level are the main challenges in maintaining food product consistency. Nevertheless, these challenges can be minimized through the consistent application of SOPs, good team coordination, and layered supervision by the *chef de partie*, *sous chef*, and *executive chef*. These findings reinforce the view of Reid and Bojanic (2020), who state that the effectiveness of hospitality operations management greatly depends on an organization's ability to control process variation so that service quality is maintained under various operational conditions.

Overall, the findings confirm that *plating* standardization is a strategic element within the *quality assurance* system that supports food product consistency, improves operational efficiency, strengthens restaurant image, and increases customer satisfaction. These findings also reinforce Namkung and Jang's (2007) research showing that food product quality is a key determinant of restaurant customer satisfaction, while the visual aspect of presentation also adds value to the dining experience (Zellner et al., 2011; Spence, 2017). Thus, the implementation of *plating* standardization has technical implications for the food production process and is also part of a strategy to enhance the hotel's competitiveness within an increasingly competitive hospitality industry.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the implementation of *plating* standardization is one of the main

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components of the *quality assurance* system applied in the *Food and Beverage Product* Department of Sheraton Grand Taipei Hotel, Taiwan. The application of presentation standards aims not only to produce visually appealing food but also serves as a mechanism to guarantee the consistency of product quality served to guests. Through the implementation of *Standard Operating Procedure* (SOP), *standardized recipe*, *standard plating guide*, and a continuous quality control process, the hotel is able to maintain uniformity in taste, portion size, texture, serving temperature, and dish aesthetics in accordance with international service standards.

The findings also show that the effectiveness of *quality assurance* implementation is influenced by several factors, namely human resource competence, effective leadership, inter-team coordination, compliance with operational standards, and an organizational culture oriented toward quality. The synergy among these factors enables the food production process to run systematically, thereby minimizing operational errors, improving work efficiency, and maintaining product quality stability even when facing a high volume of production.

On the other hand, the study found that the implementation of *plating* standardization still faces a number of challenges, such as high kitchen operational intensity, variation in employee experience level, and increasing order volume during certain periods. However, these various challenges can be overcome through an effective supervision system, continuous training, good communication, and routine evaluation of SOP implementation. This shows that the success of *quality assurance* depends not only on the existence of standard documents but is also determined by the commitment of every member of the organization in consistently applying these standards.

Overall, this study confirms that *plating* standardization has a strategic role in supporting food product consistency while improving service quality at star-rated hotels. The implementation of an integrated *quality assurance* system provides benefits not only for kitchen operations through improved efficiency and quality control but also for customers through the provision of a consistent and high-quality dining experience. Thus, *plating* standardization can be regarded as an important strategy for strengthening a hotel's competitiveness amid the increasingly competitive hospitality industry.

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