

Marketing Mix and International Tourists' Consumer Behavior Towards Thai Street Food in Thailand After Post-COVID 19 Era

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Abstract

This study attempts to explore the factors that influence their preferences, decision-making, and overall satisfaction in order to gain insights into the role street food plays in shaping their cultural experience during their visit to Thailand. The respondents in this study were international tourists in Bangkok. The numbers of respondents are 200 respondents. The participants in this study are voluntary and anonymity. Descriptive, frequency, percentage distributions, Xs are used to describe and report the information collected affecting to individual variables and demographic information. The regression equation provided represents a statistical model that examines the relationship between the independent variables (product, price, place, and promotion) and the dependent variable (street food experience). It reveals that all four independent variables have positive coefficients, suggesting that improvements in product quality, reasonable pricing, attractive place (location), and effective promotions can enhance the overall street food experience.

Keywords: Street Food, Consumer Behavior, International Tourist, Marketing Mix

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Importance of the Problem

Thai street food is a popular and beloved part of Thai culture, and it is also a major draw for tourists. Many tourists come to Thailand specifically to experience the country's delicious and affordable Thai street food (The Nation, 2023). According to a study published in the journal WMS Journal of Management, tourists have a generally positive perception of Thai street food. The study found that international tourists were most impressed by the food's quality, taste, and affordability. They also appreciated the variety of Thai street food available, as well as the opportunity to experience Thai culture through food (Suphaphon, 2019). However, some tourists do have concerns about the safety of Thai street food. Intuluck (2022) found that tourists were most concerned about

the hygiene of Thai street food vendors. They were also concerned about the use of artificial ingredients and preservatives in Thai street food.

In term of economic, Thai street food is one of major economic sector driving in Thailand. Thai street foods combine the authentic culture of the local people and the traditional values by using local resources, contributing to local economies and maintaining a sustainable tourism system (Ellis et al., 2018; Henderson et al., 2012). Thai street food significantly contributes to Thailand's economic growth through various Xs. It generates employment opportunities, stimulates tourism revenue, supports small businesses, and revitalizes local areas. Its affordability makes it accessible to a wide range of consumers, benefiting the economy by allowing spending in other sectors. It is estimated that the Thai street food industry contributes around 10% of the country's GDP and employs over 2 million people (Thailand Board of Investment, 2022). Furthermore, the World Bank found that Thai street food vendors in Bangkok generate an estimated \$15 billion in revenue each year (Thailand Board of Investment, 2022). In recent years, the Thai government has taken steps to promote the Thai street food industry. In 2017, the government launched a campaign called "Thai street food: The Taste of Thailand. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the importance of Thai street food to the Thai economy and culture. The government also introduced a number of initiatives to improve the safety and hygiene of Thai street food providing training to Thai street food vendors on how to improve their food safety practices (Sirichokchatchawana, Taneepanichskula, Prapasarakulc, 2021).

1.2 Research Question

What are the consumer's preferences, decision-making, and overall satisfaction in order to gain insights into the role street food plays in shaping their cultural experience during their visit to Thailand?

1.3 Research Objective

This article aims to explore the factors that influence their preferences, decision-making, and overall satisfaction in order to gain insights into the role street food plays in shaping their cultural experience during their visit to Thailand.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Related Concepts and Theories

2.1.1 *International Tourists' Consumer Behavior and Thai Street Food*

The tourism industry is a major economic driver in many countries, and the behavior of international tourists can have a significant impact on the success of this industry. Tourists from different cultures have different preferences and expectations when it comes to food, shopping, and entertainment.

2.1.2 *Marketing Mix in Street Food Industry*

The marketing mix is a fundamental concept that encompasses a set of strategic decisions and actions taken by street food vendors to optimize their offerings, reach their target audience, and drive business success. Kotler (2005) states that the 4Ps model still provides a valuable framework for

marketing planning. The main point beside selling and generating the revenue is that specific elements contained in the marketing mix should deliver more value, build a long-term and mutually profitability relationship with customers. Siriporn et al. (2022) found that the marketing mix has a significant impact on street food consumption. The four Ps of marketing - product, price, place, promotion - are often referred to as the marketing mix. These are the key elements involved in planning and marketing a product or service, and they interact significantly with each other.

2.2 Literature Surveys

2.2.1 International Tourists' Consumer Behavior and Thai Street Food

Pornpisanu and Prathana (2020) found that tourists from different cultures have different preferences and expectations when it comes to food, shopping, and entertainment. For example, tourists from Western countries may be more likely to be interested in trying new foods, while tourists from Asian countries may be more likely to stick to familiar dishes.

Furthermore, Chidchanok and Kanyapat (2022) found that cultural travel motivations include life fulfilment, wanting local cultural contact, and desiring unique local participation. The tourists' consumer behavior has been changed during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The health and safety of Thai street food became a significant concern for tourists. As the virus spread globally, people became more cautious about their dining choices, especially in crowded and communal dining settings like street food stalls. The pandemic emphasized the importance of stringent food handling and hygiene practices. Tourists became more vigilant about vendors' hygiene standards, including the use of personal protective equipment, frequent handwashing, and sanitization of utensils and surfaces (Lawrence, Percival, David Zhongqin, Gabriel and Minjie, 2021).

Moreover, tourists preferred takeaway options or street food served in individual packaging to minimize contact and potential exposure although there is a serious environmental problem and concern (Kitz, Walker, Charlebois and Music (2022). Furthermore, service infrastructure would create a platform to support the private sector, while the promotion and innovation part is to improve their productivity and workflow process efficiency through the supply chain (Avirutha, 2018).

Tourists preferred contactless payment methods to minimize physical contact during transactions. Vendors who adopted digital payment options were perceived as more modern and safety-conscious (Watit, 2022). Therefore, tourist consumers' behavior is mainly aware of health and safety concerns especially in the post-COVID-19 era. Tourists themselves may be more aware of their personal hygiene practices.

2.2.2 Marketing Mix in Street Food Industry

Product considers both tangible (goods) and intangible (services) products which include services quality, service facilities, branding, packaging, standardization and grading. Moreover, product has had a significant impact on street food in the post-COVID-19 era (Siriporn, Kosol, Timothy, and Sunghyup, 2022). Street food vendors have had to adapt their products to meet the new demands of consumers, who are now more concerned about hygiene and safety, focusing on fresh, healthy, and ingredients. Consumers are increasingly concerned about their health. Kivela and Crotts (2006) addressed food safety concerns. Fear of foreign food also known as Food-Neophobia happens to western tourists traveling to Asian countries. Maneewan, Siriwan, & Siriamornpun (2018) found that the product factor was more important for local consumers than for international tourists.

Price decisions affect both a firm's sales and profits, so price is always a consideration. As the pandemic brought about shifts in consumer behavior, economic uncertainties, and heightened health concerns, pricing strategies have played a pivotal role in shaping consumer choices and sustaining the street food industry (Kohli, Timelin, Fabius, and Veranen 2020). Street food vendors who adapted their pricing strategies to accommodate changing economic circumstances were better positioned to attract and retain customers (Siriporn, Kosol, Timothy, and Sunghyup, 2022). Furthermore, the shift towards contactless payment and digital transactions also impacted the price factor (Sirinnaree, 2023). Consequence, street food vendors have also had to offer contactless payment options, redesign their menus, and offer delivery and takeaway options in order to reach more customers.

The function of place is to match supply capabilities to the demands of the many target markets, moving goods wherever they are needed, including the factors that go into providing the time, and place, and possession utilities needed to satisfy target customers. When choosing a location, vendors should consider the following factors: visibility, convenience, atmosphere, and authenticity. By considering these factors, street food vendors can choose a location that will help them to attract more customers and grow their business (Yeo and Chang, 2019). Maneewan, Siriwan, and Siriamornpun (2018) found the place factor is important because it can influence the visibility of the vendor, the convenience for customers, and the overall customer experience. The pandemic-induced focus on health and safety has driven consumers to seek outdoor and open-air dining options. Furthermore, the digital landscape has also influenced the place factor in the post-COVID-19 era. Street food vendors who embraced online platforms and food delivery services expanded their reach beyond physical locations. By offering takeaway and delivery options, vendors tapped into the growing demand for convenient and contactless dining experiences.

Promotion considers that is communication between seller and buyer, including advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, tools of publicity, public relations, and various other forms of promotion. Promotion is vital, but not the only element of marketing strategy. A street food vendor might promote their business through social media, such as Facebook and Instagram. They might also hand out flyers or offer discounts to attract customers. Many vendors started using social media to promote their businesses and reach new customers. Others partnered with other businesses to promote their food, such as restaurants and hotels (Wongsathian and Siriwan, 2021).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design is drawn from quantitative research methodology. The survey is used to establish a baseline on the study of the international tourists' consumer behavior toward Thai street food in Thailand after post-COVID 19 era. The respondents in this study were international tourists in Bangkok.

3.2 Population and Sample

The numbers of respondents are 200 respondents. The participants in this study are voluntary and anonymity. This study employed convenience sampling to collect data.

3.3 Research Instruments

To establish the reliability of standardized tests, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to analyze all the scores on individual items, and all aspects are met at the 0.7 level.

3.4 Data Collection

Data was collected for the quantitative research.

3.5 Statistics Used for Data Analysis

Descriptive, frequency, percentage distributions, Xs are used to describe and report the information collected affecting to individual variables and demographic information. Furthermore, the multiple regression is used to test the relationship between the marketing mix and decision-making process.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

The study surveyed 200 street food consumers in Bangkok to assess the impact of the marketing mix on their decision-making process. The results showed that the product factor was the most important factor influencing street food consumption, followed by the price factor, the place factor, and the promotion factor.

4.2 Data Analysis of the Quantitative Data

A total of 200 usable questionnaires are obtained. The results showed the distribution of usable responses by gender; consist of 89 males (44.54%), and 104 females (52%), and 7 others (3.5%). The respondents reported their age to be between 18-25; 36 (18%), respondents reported their age to be between 26-35; 45 (22.5%), respondents reported their age to be between 36-45; 43 (21.5%), respondents reported their age to be between 46-55; 34 (17%), and respondents reported their age to be over 55; 42 (21%). Furthermore, international tourist classified by regions. International tourists were from the top three main regions: East Asia (62, 31.5%), Southeast Asia (55, 28%), and Europe (53, 27%). Tourist visits can be classified into three main categories: leisure travel (97, 48.5%), business travel (76, 38%), and visiting friends or relatives (27, 13.5%). The majority of tourists to Thailand stayed for 4-7 days (52, 26%), followed by 15-30 days (48, 24%), 1-3 days (37, 18.5%), 1-3 months (24, 12%), 3-6 months (23, 11.5%), and 8-14 days (16, 8%).

Table 1 shows the respondents are asked their opinion regarding product factor in marketing mix element that they have experienced in the Thai street food. The most frequency endorsed responses is variety of food categories ($X = 3.94$), followed by restaurant's reputations and attraction ($X = 3.77$), quality of food ($X = 3.24$), and fresh, hygienic and cleanness ($X = 3.13$).

Table 1 The X for Product Factor in Marketing Mix Element

Product	X	SD.	Ranking
Variety of food categories	3.94	0.80	1
Restaurant's reputations and attraction	3.77	0.90	2
Quality of food	3.24	0.58	3
Fresh, hygienic and cleanness	3.13	0.47	4
Average	3.56	0.78	

Table 2 shows the respondents are asked their opinion regarding price factor in marketing mix element that they have experienced in Thai street food. The most frequency endorsed responses is reasonable price (X = 3.30), followed by negotiable price (X = 2.90), cashless payment (X = 2.77), and tipping is not customary (X = 2.70).

Table 2 The X for Price Factor in Marketing Mix Element

Price	X	SD.	Ranking
Reasonable price	3.30	0.75	1
Negotiable price	2.90	0.65	2
Cashless payment	2.77	0.57	3
Tipping is not customary	2.70	0.58	4
Average	2.91	0.70	

Table 3 shows the respondents are asked their opinion regarding place factor in marketing mix element that they have experienced in Thai street food. The most frequency endorsed responses convience location (X = 4.49), followed by unique and authentically culture experience (X = 4.21), many sellers and restaurants are available (X = 4.10), and online platforms and food delivery services (X = 3.39).

Table 3 The X for Place Factor in Marketing Mix Element

Place	X	SD.	Ranking
Convience location	4.49	1.14	1
Unique and authentically culture experience	4.21	1.29	2
Many sellers and restaurants are available	4.10	1.42	3
Online platforms and food delivery services	3.92	1.32	4
Average	4.15	0.95	

Table 4 shows the respondents are asked their opinion regarding promotion factor in marketing mix element that they have experienced in the Thai street food. The most frequency endorsed responses is social media content and online recommendation (X = 4.24), followed by restaurant standards and certification (X = 4.04), promotion offer (X = 3.95), and Understandable menu (X = 3.86).

Table 4 The X for Promotion Factor in Marketing Mix Element

Promotion / Marketing Communication	X	SD.	Ranking
Social media content & online recommendation	4.24	0.68	1
Restaurant standards and certification	4.04	0.56	2
Promotion offer	3.95	0.64	3
Understandable menu (picture, text)	3.86	0.63	4
Average	4.02	0.39	

Table 5 shows the respondents are asked their overall satisfaction of street food experience regarding the customer purchase decision making through the Thai street food. The most frequency endorsed responses is I enjoy having Thai street food (X = 4.34), followed by I intent to have Thai street food for next (X = 4.32), I have a good experience with Thai street food (X = 4.31), and I recommend my friends for Thai street food (X = 4.17).

Table 5 The X for Overall Satisfaction of Street Food Experience

Overall Satisfaction of Street Food Experience	X	SD.	Ranking
I enjoy having Thai street food	4.34	0.53	1
I intent to have Thai street food for next	4.32	0.50	2
I have a good experience with Thai street food	4.31	0.56	3
I recommend my friends for Thai street food	4.17	0.68	4
Average	4.28	0.45	

Table 6 shows the significance of each coefficient for each independent variable. The regression equation provided represents a statistical model that examines the relationship between the independent variables (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) and the dependent variable (Street Food Experience). It reveals that the predictor variables of product ($\beta = 0.223$, $t = 3.715$, $P = 0.000$), price ($\beta = 0.216$, $t = 3.657$, $P = 0.000$), place ($\beta = 1.275$, $t = 3.079$, $P = 0.000$), and promotion ($\beta = 1.290$, $t = 3.212$, $P = 0.000$) are achieved significance at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the regression equation for predicting the dependent variable from the independent variable is

$$\text{Street Food Experience} = 1.323 + 0.231(\text{Product}) + 0.255 (\text{Price}) + 1.527 (\text{Place}) + 1.429 (\text{Promotion})$$

Table 6 The Relationship between Marketing Mix and Street Food Experience

The Relationship between Marketing Mix and Street Food Experience	Regression Coefficient (b)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t	P
Product	0.231	0.223	3.715	0.000*
Price	0.255	0.216	3.657	0.000*
Place	1.527	1.275	3.079	0.000*
Promotion	1.429	1.290	3.212	0.000*
Constant (a)	1.323		3.839	0.000*
R = 0.252, R2 = 0.212, F = 22.442, P = 0.000*				

*P < 0.01

4.3 Summary of the Results

The regression equation provided represents a statistical model that examines the relationship between the independent variables (product, price, place, and promotion) and the dependent variable (street food experience). It reveals that all four independent variables have positive coefficients, suggesting that improvements in product quality, reasonable pricing, attractive place (location), and effective promotions can enhance the overall street food experience.

5. Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

This study highlights the International Tourists' Consumer Behavior toward Thai street food in Thailand After Post-COVID 19 Era. According to the finding, the regression equation indicates that all four independent variables have positive coefficients, suggesting that improvements in Product quality, reasonable Pricing, attractive Place (location), and effective Promotions can enhance the overall Street Food Experience.

5.2 Discussion

This model can be used to predict the Street Food Experience based on the values of the independent variables and may provide insights for street food vendors and policymakers to optimize their marketing strategies and improve customer satisfaction. Understanding the impact of the independent variables (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) on the Street Food Experience can guide vendors in making informed decisions to enhance customer satisfaction and business success.

5.3 Recommendation

The following recommendations are proposed to enhance the Street Food Experience and achieve business success:

1) The positive coefficient for the Product variable indicates that improving the quality of street food offerings can lead to a higher Street Food Experience for customers. Vendors should focus on offering delicious, authentic, and unique dishes that meet the preferences of their target audience. Emphasizing freshness, variety, and culinary creativity can set vendors apart and drive positive customer experiences.

2) The Price variable's positive coefficient suggests that pricing street food offerings reasonably can positively influence the overall Street Food Experience. Street food vendors should strike a balance between affordability and perceived value. Offering competitive prices while maintaining quality and portion sizes can attract more customers and foster loyalty.

3) Vendors should consider setting up stalls in high-traffic areas, tourist hotspots, and places with a vibrant food culture. Creating a welcoming ambiance and ensuring a clean and comfortable dining environment can also contribute to a positive Street Food Experience.

4) Engaging with customers through social media, surveys, and feedback forms can provide valuable insights into their preferences and expectations. Vendors should actively listen to customer feedback and make improvements based on their suggestions.

5) Adopting digital ordering systems, mobile apps for loyalty programs, and contactless payment options can enhance convenience and safety for customers. Embracing technology can also improve efficiency in order processing and enhance the overall customer experience.

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