

The deciding factors in market purchases during the spread of the COVID-19 virus

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ABSTRACT

The current COVID-19 pandemic has caused many problems to people. For example, the cost of living becomes higher while the income does not increase. People are unemployed or have been reduced working hours. The consumer products have higher prices causing people with low income cannot afford enough resources for their daily expenditures. As a result, most consumers have to change their consumption behaviors. From those who used to buy products based on the credibility of the brand in the department store, they adapt to shopping in the community, stores located near their houses, or flea markets to reduce the cost of products and travel. They buy products with the focus on making the most use and worthiness. This research examines the causal factors that affect purchasing decisions of consumers who shopped at the Flea Markets in Nong Khai. Six hundred consumers who shopped at a flea market answered a questionnaire and were included in the sample of the current study. The purpose of this research is 1) to examine the causal relationships between a marketing mix and consumer behaviors that affect the decision to purchase in the flea market. 2) to examine the conformity of empirical data using Confirmatory Factors Analysis (CFA) on each factor and examines construct validity using Statistic Program. In this research, the population surveyed in Nong Khai Province was 600 people in the age of over 15 years in the flea market area of Nong Khai Province. Multi Stage Sampling was done consisting of the form with the defined quota, defined district size and market size and the random-size form by drawing lots. The sample groups consisted of Muang District, Tha Bo District, Phon Phisai District, and Si Chiang Mai District, respectively, based on the size of the districts from big to small. The questionnaires were used as research tools.

Examination of the causal relationship between the marketing mix and consumer behavior affecting their decisions to purchase in the flea market was done. It was found it that the distribution factor affected decisions to purchase in this flea market at $\alpha = 0.01$. The product factor affected decisions to purchase in this flea market at $\alpha = 0.05$. Price and promotional factor influence on decisions to purchase were not statistically significant. The findings also show that the distribution factor in terms of convenience and safety has the greatest factor weight such as entrance-exit determination and screening, wearing mask all the time, keeping a distance of at least 1 meter between persons, having adequate soap and water or hand sanitizer available, having market clean daily especially the bathroom, zoning the sales of products, classification for fresh food, ready-made food, determining the number of people, duration, and not organizing activities that cause the gathering of service users, etc.

Keywords

purchasing decision, consumer behavior, flea market, marketing mix

Introduction

Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the world's economy, impacting trade both domestically and internationally. The public is incurring additional costs to prevent infection by buying health masks or handwashing gels. The government's stay-at-home order has reduced incomes, caused stress and mental health problems among the people of Thailand.

These problems are not limited to Thailand. The global economy has been negatively impacted. Thailand's domestic economic growth has slowed. The 12th Economic and Social Development Plan focuses on economic growth in terms of investment for both the public and private sectors. This is to promote community self-reliance, stimulate entrepreneurship and promote small enterprises (Sutabutr, T., 2012).

The spread of the COVID-19 virus has caused consumers to change their eating habits away from the purchase of food products on demand. They adjusted their purchasing behavior to buy necessities from community shops or flea markets near their homes. They buy cheaper products with quality that is appropriate for the price or quantity and they buy products that are appropriate for the current economy. The proliferation of flea markets is an indicator of a community's economy at the grassroots level. Especially,

Fruit and vegetable markets were significantly impacted by the spread of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (and COVID-19 disease) (Richards, T. J., & Rickard, B., 2020).

Saowanee Khunkhantod. (2010: 1) studied consumer behavior towards purchasing product from flea market in muang district nakhon ratchasima. It was found that the factor that most influences the choice of a community flea market is its proximity to a consumer's home. Purchases can easily be made as discussed by Thongrawd, C., & Saninmool, A. (2016: 2). It was found that several key factors affect purchase decision-making in the market. They include the 1) products, 2) market location, 3) price, and, 4) marketing promotions.

Nong Khai is a province in the northeast of Thailand. Its longest border is the Mekong River, across from Laos. It has a population of 353,022 people aged 15 and over, Nong Khai consists of 9 Districts and 62 Tambons (Nong Khai Provincial Statistics Office, Q1/2016), with the Tha Sadet Market and Walking Street markets, both of which are popular with Thais and foreign tourists. Therefore, the current study examines market shopping decision factors during the COVID 19 outbreak as a case study. It focuses on the factors and determines the causal relationship of factors that affect market purchases. This may be beneficial to market operators facing similar characteristics.

Research objectives

The current study has several research objectives. They are:

1. to examine the causal relationship of purchasing decision factors in a flea market during the COVID-19 pandemic in a case study in Nong Khai Province, Thailand.
2. to check the consistency of empirical data.

Literature Review

Marketing mix

The definition of a marketing includes the factors that can be controlled to influence customers' purchasing decisions. It consists of four components: 1) products, 2) prices, 3) distribution, and 4) marketing promotion Somjit Luanjamroen. (2019: 40-54). These are a combination of products in a distribution system, a price structure and marketing promotion activities. The marketing mix will change when there are changes in market conditions such as in the economy, politics and society. It is important that the marketing mix is developed to respond to the needs of consumers. Withawat Rungruangphon. (2013: 24-25) stated that this mix is a factor in the buying and selling processes. Products are offered in a way to achieve the goals of traders and consumers with attention to the four aforementioned components.

Product

The study of Chayet, S., Kouvelis, P., & Yu, D. Z. (2011) on Product variety and capacity investments in congested production systems focuses on the issue of The variety of products which is the fundamental element of Product. There is also the issue of Quality of the product causing the consumers to be relieved from the pandemic. This is also consistent with the study of Yuen, E. F., & Chan, S. S. (2010) studying The effect of retail service quality and product quality on customer loyalty and the issue of Useful life of the products of Mukherjee, K., Mondal, S., & Chakraborty, K. (2017) studying the Impact of various issues on extending the useful life of a product through product recovery options.

Price

The price issue for buying the products in the flea market which is different from buying the products in the department store is the issue of Negotiate the price from the study of Kuo, C. W., Ahn, H. S., & Aydin, G. (2011) on Dynamic pricing of limited inventories when customers negotiate, the issue of Products are less expensive than the others through the comparison of consumers from the work of Yao, J., Oppewal, H., & Wang, D. (2020) on Cheaper and smaller or more expensive and larger: how consumers respond to unit price increase tactics that simultaneously change product price and package size and the issue of The price tag which the consumers pay attention to as the element supplementary for making the decision to buy, and Miguez, M., Marioni, M., Ortiz, M., Vogel, G., & Arnaud,

A. (2019, November) studying An IoT-based electronic price-tag for food retail.

Place

The issue of place is the issue paid much attention to as it is considered the main factor in the spread of disease. It is found to have the element of Safe travel from the work of Kask, S., Kline, C., & Lamoureux, K. (2011) and the issue of Close proximity to the flea market, from the study of Turcotte, J., Kirzinger, A., Dunaway, J., & Goidel, K. (2017) in The many layers of local: proximity and market influence on news coverage of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and the issue of Orderly arrangement of products and ease of walking, from the study of Utto, G., Utto, W., Kaewmahawong, S., Lawong, P., & Seethon, N. (2020) in the Factors Affecting Retailers' Decisions on Participating Activities in Displaying Products and Providing Services According to Safe Fresh Market Concept.

Promotion

For the promotion on the decision making to purchase of the consumers, there are some issues of Having a price tag showing a special price for introducing new products from the study of Bagatini, F. Z., Wagner, R. L., & Rech, E. (2019, September) studying The effects of a price tag presentation on the purchase intention of new products and the stimulation of purchasing volume with Discounted prices when buying large quantities as it is related to the reduction of travel in the spread period, and from the work of Yang, P. C. (2004) on Pricing strategy for deteriorating items using quantity discount when demand is price sensitive. There is also the public relation via the online channel especially during the period of staying home campaign when the consumers popularly spend their free time on the online media as Promotion through various media Martinus, H., & Anggraini, L. (2018).

Flea Markets

A market means a place where people gather to buy, sell, exchange products. Usually they occur at appointed dates, times, and places. Hansson, N., & Brembeck, H. (2015: 91-121.) defines a flea market is a place where sales can occur at appointed dates and times. The products sold are mainly general merchandise, including clothing and food. Each operator needs to implement proper strategies to sell the products at different flea markets with similar product characteristics, Amornpinyo, N. (2016, 2018).

Consumer Purchasing Decisions

3.1 Numerous scholars have studied and tried to explain consumer decisions. They examined what influences consumer decision-making and found the following. Sam, K. M., & Chatwin, C. (2015). Decisions are the process of choosing to do a single thing from various alternatives. Consumers often have to make informed choices about the products and services that they purchase. She will choose a product or service based on information and the constraints

of the situation. The purchasing decision is therefore an important process and it is within the minds of consumers. Hawkins, D. I., & Mothersbaugh, D. L. (2010). stated that careful selection from objective resources to achieve one's goals involves three conceptual decisions: 1) alternative decisions, 2) choosing one of them, 3) and that decisions are thoughtful, detailed processes. Emotions and elements of the mind influence thought processes. Decisions lead to actions that aim for results and success.

3.2 The role of buying

Yaemketsukhon, R., & Tilokavichai, V. (2016: 218-227.) found that we can classify the roles that people may take to make a purchase decision into five categories. 1) The originator is the first person to propose an idea about buying a product. 2) An influential person is one who is the owner of an idea or whose suggestion affects the decision to buy a product. 3) The decision-maker is the person who makes the purchase. 4) The buyer is the person who makes the purchase. 5) The user is the person who employs the product or the person consumes the purchased goods.

3.3 Purchasing behavior

Related research

The researcher studied academic documents and research by experts who studied the relationships between the marketing mix and consumer behavior. Factors affecting consumers' purchasing decisions were examined.

Nonthapot, S., & Thomya, W. (2020) studied the effect of the marketing mix on the demand of thai and foreign tourists. They found that the customers value a marketing mix that considered the products, their variety, standardization and quality. Customers give high priority to price and price suitability. They also found that location and marketing promotion are important. The importance of these factors is statistically significant.

Saowanee Khunkhantod. (2010: 65-69) studied consumer behavior in choosing products from a flea market in Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District. She found that the factor that has the highest effect on the purchase of products from the flea market is the price, with the average value at 3.99/5.00.

Thongrawd, C., & Saninmool, A. (2016) studied Consumers' buying behaviors of products in night markets in Bangkok Metropolitan. It was found that marketing mix factors affected the decision to buy products in this market, with the average value at 3.95/5.00).

Onusa Janepraphapong (2009: 61-67) studied consumer behavior in buying goods from flea markets in Mae Phrik District, Lampang Province. She found that the price factor has the highest influence in purchasing decisions with the average score of 3.25/5.00.

In this study, the researchers analyzed relevant documents and research studies. Their framework for research considered 1) consumer purchasing decisions and consumer variables, 2)

market equations including products, prices, distribution, and marketing promotion.

The research

Brata, B. H., Husani, S., & Ali, H. (2017). Consumer decision-making behavior can be classified into four categories according to engagement level and the level of brand differences as follows. Regarding the purchasing behaviors during the spread of virus, it was found that the consumers pay attention to 1) the quality of the product In accordance with the work of Jahanshahi, A. A., Gashti, M. A. H., Mirdamadi, S. A., Nawaser, K., & Khaksar, S. M. S. (2011) studying the effects of customer service and product quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty. 2) lower prices than other places is the price issue due to the decreasing income and the higher cost of living. This agrees with the work of Anggita, R., & Ali, H. (2017) studying the Influence of Product Quality, Service Quality and Price to Purchase Decision of SGM Bunda Milk. The issue of 3) help of others to make decisions due to the panic at the lack of standardized epidemic control measures. This is in line with the work of Reyna, V. F. (2004) studying How people make decisions that involve risk: A dual-processes approach.

Population and Sample

consisted of 600 people in Nong Khai province, aged 15 and over. The sample was derived from split sampling and adjusted the number of samples to achieve the number of digits ending with hundreds of areas in the study. Multi-stage sampling consisted of a quota set to determine the size of the district and the size of the market. Random size was determined by lottery. The following markets in the Muang District were included: Tha Sadet Market, Walking Street, Chaiporn Market, Klong Thom Market or Railway Market, and Sawang Market. In Tha Bo the markets included Khlong Thom Tha Bo Market, Nam M Community Market, and Tha Bo Municipal Market Ponphisai consisting of Phon Phisai Municipal Market Pak Suai Market, Si Chiang Mai, along with Khlong Thom Khlong Muang Ban Pot Market, and Si Chiang Mai Municipal Market.

Data Collection

used in this study was a questionnaire to collect data from the sample. It was divided into four parts as follows: 1) It asked for the personal status of the respondents, i.e., gender, age, education level, occupational status and average income per two months. 2) It inquired about their buying behavior in the Nong Khai flea market. Information was requested about the most recently purchased products, the most important reason to buy particularly products, who has the most influence on purchasing decisions, how the customer travelled to this market, the time to buy products, the value of each purchase and the frequency of purchase. 3) It asked about the importance of the marketing mix of the flea markets in Nong Khai province, i.e., its products, distribution, price and marketing promotions.

The researcher collected data by himself. The process was as follows. 1) The questionnaires were prepared and sample size determined. 2) Permission was requested from the owner of the flea market. 3) Questionnaires were distributed to the sample, asking for cooperation in answering the questionnaire and explaining the research objectives. Data

confidentiality was assured and the researcher stressed the importance of completing the questionnaire. Additionally, the researcher expressed his gratitude, 4) Collecting questionnaires and recording data. 5) Finally the research data was analyzed.

Data analysis

The researcher used the IBM SPSS software package to statistically analyze the data with the following steps:

1. Checking data before statistical analysis by examining measurement error problems, the relationships between variables, the coefficients of parameters, and alpha values of each component.
2. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics, presenting basic data by frequency and percentage distribution to explain data from the questionnaire.
3. Data analysis using statistical inference was done. The researchers analyzed the data as follows: 1) Model analysis was done examining the measurements and performing relationship analysis between observable variables and latent factors using linear composition analysis and structural equations in the estimation error of the measuring instrument.

Statistics used for analyzing this data

The researcher calculated the 1) frequency, percentage, average, standard deviation, Chi-square test statistic and determined if it was less than the Chi-square threshold, 2) that the GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, and NFI consistency indices were greater than 0.95, and 3) that the RMSEA, SRMR estimation error values were less than 0.05 Sirirut Jumnaksarn. (2020:12-20).

Results

1) The analysis result following the 1st objective revealed that from the data analysis of the questionnaire responses, 600 respondents who were consumers in the flea markets Nong Khai Province, all returned their questionnaires. This is a 100% response. Most respondents were female (58.23%), aged 46 years and older (51.12%), with the highest education level of a bachelor's degree (65.13%), were civil servants/state enterprise employees (25.40%), with average two month income of more than 30,000 baht (42.52%).

From the analysis of data about consumer behavior, the products that most people bought at the flea market were prepared food (37.00%), followed by fresh food (29.17%) and clothes (20.10%). The reason for buying products in the flea market was convenience (38.13%), followed by bargain prices (20.00%) and the available selection of goods (14.57%). The person who influenced the purchase decision was themselves (54.50%), followed by friends. (12.13%) and parents or guardians (9.60%). The most frequently used methods of traveling to flea markets was personal automobile (68.83%). The amount of money spent at the market per trip was 301-400 baht (28.17%), followed by an amount greater than 400 baht, and less than 200 baht (24.135%). The frequency of buying goods at the Flea

markets was three times per month (32.00%), followed by more than 4 times per month (25.27%).

The researcher collected data about the importance of the four marketing mix factors and calculated the means (\bar{X}) and standard deviations (SD). The importance of the marketing mix of the flea market was at a high level, with the average value (\bar{X} = 4.03) and standard deviation (SD = 0.65). When considering each aspect, it was found that they were at a high level in all aspects. The first important aspect was distribution and distribution channels utilized with an average (\bar{X} = 4.39) and the standard deviation (SD = 0.80-0.87), followed by the product price (\bar{X} = 3.84) and (SD = 0.68-0.60).

The results of the analysis of the importance of the marketing mix of the flea markets

Product	\bar{X}	Aspects
1. the variety of products	4.38	High
2. quality of the products	4.23	High
3. useful life of the products	4.01	High
Total	4.22	High
Price	\bar{X}	Aspects
1. negotiate the price	4.12	High
2. products are less expensive than the others	4.00	High
3. the price tag	3.65	High
Total	3.84	High
Place	\bar{X}	Aspects
1. safe travel	4.48	High
2. close proximity to the flea market	4.41	High
3. orderly arrangement of products and ease of walking	4.26	High
Total	4.44	High
Promotion	\bar{X}	Aspects
1. having a price tag showing a normal price	3.93	High
2. discounted prices when buying large quantities	3.80	High
3. promotion through various media	3.72	High
Total	3.60	High
Purchasing Decision	\bar{X}	Aspects
1. the quality of the product	4.13	High
2. lower prices than other places	4.02	High
3. help of others to make decisions	3.53	High
Total	3.88	High

The test of the purchasing decision factors in the flea market was done during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nong Khai, Thailand. Analysis was done with modified structural equation. Their results are consistent with the empirical data.

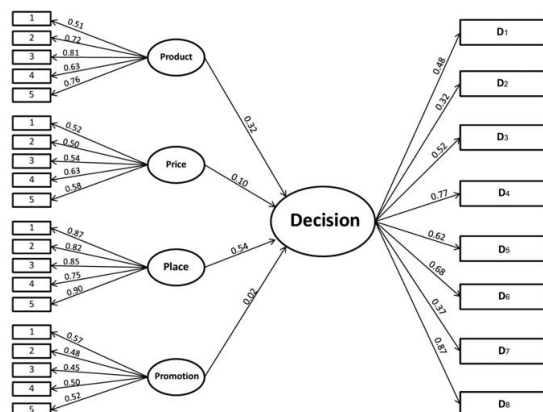
When considering the factor weight (factor loading), it was found that the product variety (Product3) had the highest factor weight, 0.81, which is consistent with the study of Nonthapot, S., & Thomya, W. (2020) who examined the market mix and trends of buying behavior at Thonburi Flea Market (Sanam Luang 2). In this study, the respondents gave the most importance to the product side in terms of product diversity.

When considering the factor weight (factor loading), it was found that bargain prices (Price4), had the highest factor weight, 0.63, which is consistent with Saowanee Khunkhantod study (2010: 65-69) of consumer behavior. Consumers purchased products from the flea market in Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima District attach the most important to the price in terms of the customer's ability to bargain the prices of products.

When considering the factor weight (factor loading), it was found that convenience and safety (Place4) had the highest factor weight, 0.95, which is consistent with the studies of Thongrawd, C., & Saninmool, A. (2016: 82-90) who

examined shopping habits in a night market. They found that respondents most value distribution in terms of having staff to provide convenience and safety.

When considering the factor weight (factor loading), it was found that there is a tendency to reduce the product price from the normal price (Promotion1). The maximum factor weight was 0.57, which is consistent with the study of Onusa Janepraphapong (2009). Consumer behavior in purchasing goods from mobile markets in Mae Phrik District, Lampang Province., found that the respondents find the most important products with a discounted price from the normal price.



From the above results, it can be seen that the distribution factor, regarding convenience and safety (Place 4), had the highest factor weight, 0.95. The questionnaires also provide useful insights for improving convenience and security in the flea market. This can be summarized as follows: 1) The entrance and exit markets should be specified and every entrance and exit must be screened. 2) Every person entering the market must wear a cloth mask or health mask at all times. 3) There is space between people, stalls, tables, at seat/dining, places of purchase and payment of at least 1 meter. 4) Soap and water or alcohol gel should be supplied so that they customers can wash their hands. 5) Clean the flea market with a cleaning solution or disinfectant daily. Especially the bathrooms, focusing on risk areas such as spray lines, toilet seats, handles to flush toilets and urinals, faucets, as well as bolts and doorknobs, among others. The market should be cleaned at least once a week following hygiene principles. 6) Use personal food contact equipment that is not shared. 7) Sufficient individual utensils/equipment for eating or ready-to-use disposable serving utensils. 8) Separate product distribution zones for fresh and prepared foods. 9) Determine the number of people in the facility, the duration of their stand, and do not organize activities that cause the aggregation of users. 10) Correct waste management must be done. There should be enough containers to support and collect waste for disposal every day. Garbage collection and cleaning workers must wear rubber gloves, aprons shoes with rubber outer soles and use long tweezers to place the garbage in the bag completely. They should wash their hands after every operation. 11) Reduce contact or close contact between the sellers and buyers by having a price tag. There should be a tray for receiving money or goods. Use an online payment system.

2) The analysis result following the 2nd objective revealed that Analysis results of the modified structural equations model of the Price and Distribution factors along with the marketing promotion factors influencing the decision to buy products in the flea market found that the structural equations based on assumptions that are consistent with empirical data. Considering the Chi-square value, 246.227, the value of χ^2 / df is 1.099 (which should not exceed 2), with 224 degrees of freedom (df), p is equal to .081, the RMSEA is equal to .011, the GFI index

TABLE
Results of Goodness-of-Fit Indices of Hypothesized Measurement Model

Indices	Recommended	Hypothesized Model
Chi-square		246.227
χ^2 / df	<2	1.099
P-value	>0.05	0.081
GFI	>0.90	0.982
AGFI	>0.90	0.952
RMSEA	<0.05	0.11

The value is equal to .982, AGFI is equal to .952. This revealed that the distribution factor (Place) influences the decision to buy products in a flea market with statistical significance at $\alpha=.01$. Product factors influence the decision to buy products in the flea market with statistically significance at $\alpha=.05$ include the price and promotion factors that have an influence on buying decisions in a flea market. There was no statistical significance at $\alpha=.05$.

Consistency between square weighting factor and empirical data

The results of this study show that place factor is the first reason, product factor is the second, the third factor is price and promotion is the last one.

Discussions of results

1.1 Distribution factors are the number one cause of the problem. Therefore, business operators flea market operators should take into account the important points identified in the current study. These are the important issues as the consumers can realize the factors of the virus spread which are 1) convenience, safety corresponding to the work of Cha, S. S., & Lee, S. H. (2020), 2) market proximity to consumer homes corresponding to the work of Giurea, A. M. (2015). The consumers are also concerned with the issue of standard facility care. 3) The market is clean corresponding to the work of Phuwanatwichit, T. (2014). The issue of 4) the area is sufficient, spacious, corresponding to the work of Zakariya, K., & Ware, S. A. (2010). In addition, the consumers are concerned with the management process. 5) The arrangement of products orderly, easy to walk around in and to receive good from the market is consistent with the work of Jermsittiparsert, K., Thaiprayoon, K., Prianto, A. L., & Kurniasih, D. (2019).

1.2 The product is the second most important factor. Therefore, flea market operators should consider the important product issues. For the mostly-found issues, the consumers focus on quality and product safety such as 1) product variety corresponding to the work of Chayet, S., Kouvelis, P., & Yu, D. Z. (2011), 2) product quality, corresponding to the work of Saengchai, S., & Jernsittiparsert, K. (2020), 3) modern and new products corresponding to the work of Zakariya, K., & Ware, S. A. (2010).

1.3 The price factor is the third important factor. The top two priorities for consumers are: from the price issue, the consumers think that flea markets are unique in their ability to negotiate prices or product quantities such as 1) negotiable prices. This agrees with the work of Kuo, C. W., Ahn, H. S., & Aydın, G. (2011) and the price comparison due to similar products and the ability to negotiate products, 2) prices that are less expensive than elsewhere for the same product corresponding to the work of Yao, J., Oppewal, H., & Wang, D. (2020).

1.4 Marketing promotion is the last important factor. Consumers place high emphasis in two area. This issue is of the least importance from the consumer perspective during the spread of virus, for example, 1) labeled discounts from the regular prices, corresponding to the work of Bagatini, F. Z., Wagner, R. L., & Rech, E. (2019, September). The effects of a price tag presentation on the purchase intention of new products. In CLAV 2019 and 2) discounts when buying large quantities corresponding to the work of Yang, P. C. (2004), etc.

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