

Consumers' Perceptions of Restaurants on Yo Island, Songkhla Province, Thailand

Chetsada Noknoi and Wannaporn Boripunt

Abstract— This research aims to compare consumers' perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island, Songkhla Province in two ways: 1) as classified by personal factors and 2) as classified by consumer behavior. The sample comprised some 400 consumers, aged 15 and over, of restaurants on Yo Island, Songkhla Province. The research instrument was a questionnaire, which was then analyzed according to frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and one-way ANOVA. Two findings were revealed: 1) consumers with different monthly incomes have different perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island, and 2) consumers who have differences in reasons to choose a service, number of users, and frequency of use have different perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island.

Keywords— Consumers' perceptions, restaurants, Songkhla Province, Yo Island.

I. INTRODUCTION

In addition to the beautiful sights and nature of Thailand, food is also a highlight for which the country has long been famous. Some tourists especially appreciate Thailand for its delicious food, and they travel there especially for it. Likewise, the people of Thailand place importance on their food. Many entrepreneurs have invested in establishing their own restaurant businesses and providing good service to build up a good reputation. The total food and beverage business in Thailand is expected to be worth more than 669,000 million baht this year.

Due to the current economic uncertainties, however, people are cutting down on their spending, and this in turn affects restaurants. There may be fewer customers through the door each week, and those that do come in may order less food. During harder times, many people choose to eat at home more often. In addition, street food and convenience stores also affect the restaurant business, because consumers can buy convenient, fast food at a reasonable price [1]. There are changing social conditions too, however. Some people rather avoid the hassle of cooking at home, want to relax in a different atmosphere, and seek to have a good time with family or friends. Entrepreneurs in the restaurant business therefore need to adapt to the needs of consumers, who are now paying more attention to the value of food and focusing on cutting costs [2].

The growth in the restaurant sector is expected to continue,

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however. The [3] expects the restaurant business market, in terms of chain and general restaurants, to grow at 1.9-2.7 percent. Thais have the option of using a variety of restaurant services, both large and small from domestic and foreign brands. It is clearly a very competitive business, so restaurants need to work to survive in this sector. In addition to quality, taste, and service, internal management is also important. Restaurant businesses, especially SMEs, have typically managed their businesses in the traditional way in the past. They write orders on papers, put money in a drawer, and check their stock by volume. The chances of a mistake are high, and this can consequently affect the image of a restaurants and the satisfaction of its customers. It can also lead to higher costs. It can therefore not be denied that technology is now a necessity for SMEs in the restaurant business. Technology can help make restaurant operations more efficient by keeping data organized, offering convenient operation, reducing errors and duplication, serving and satisfying customers better and faster, and even helping control the work of staff and reducing errors in their work [4].

The economic slowdown has affected the eating habits of Thai people, however, so the competition between restaurant businesses has intensified. The large chain restaurant businesses are constantly establishing new restaurants in the market and expanded their existing restaurants. There are also major players in related businesses, such as the manufacturers of seasoning products, raw materials, finished food, beverages, and so on. These use their existing expertise to maximize their returns from the restaurant sector. A restaurant business develops by being creative in demonstrating value for its food and so making it stand out from its competitors when meeting the demand for exotic, modern, unique restaurants in society [3].

The government itself has taken measures to ensure the quality and standards of restaurants for consumers. The Department of Health has been monitoring the food sector since 1999 under the *Clean Food Good Taste* program. It seeks to improve the hygiene of restaurants in areas such as location, food, animals and insects, and food handling, as well as by encouraging food-business operators to develop sanitary facilities and ensure the restaurant meets all standards for clean, safe, contamination-free food preparation. The project has been developed into the *Clean Food Good Taste Plus* program by adding the following standards: 1) Must meet the standard for clean and delicious food; 2) There is a middle spoon for

consumers; 3) There is a sink for consumers; 4) The toilet in the restaurant passes the HAS (Healthy Accessibility Safety) standard, and there is a disabled toilet; 5) Fresh organic vegetables, free from insecticides, are used; 6) Food handlers must be trained and have relevant cards; and 7) Food gloves are used.

The *Clean Food Good Taste Plus* program will give consumers confidence in clean and safe food, ready for the ASEAN community [5]. There is also the *Thai SELECT* program from the Department of International Trade Promotion of the Ministry of Commerce to promote the consumption of Thai food. The *Thai SELECT* logo is used to certify Thai restaurants both domestically and internationally, and Thai food products have been improved in quality and are thus recognized as such. This encourages Thai restaurants and food manufacturers to develop and maintain the quality standards of their businesses [6].

Songkhla Province has a coastal landscape. One type of restaurant that is popular with both locals and tourists alike is the seafood restaurant. There are many players in the seafood market, but few seafood restaurants are genuinely popular. As a result, new seafood restaurants entering the market tend to offer exotic food and services to become a trend leader, thus distinguishing themselves from the seafood restaurants that are already popular. The management of raw materials, so they are fresh and of the best quality, is at the heart of a good seafood restaurant. Reliable suppliers are therefore a big part of a restaurant's efforts to enhance its competitiveness [3].

Yo Island is a famous attraction in Songkhla Province. The island is located within Songkhla Lake, and it is a famous tourist district that won the OTOP tourist village award. It produces a famous fabric that is popular, with unique designs including the royal flower design. Yo Island is also a good place to farm sea bass in cages located in Songkhla Lake. Of course, there are many fine restaurants on the island, and it has been recognized by consumers as one of the best restaurant centers in Songkhla Province. However, there was a case shared over social media by a group of customers about the price of a meal in a restaurant [7]. Later on, the restaurant admitted a mistake in the communication between the cashier and other staff, so they apologized for the incident and refunded the overcharged money to the customers. Events like this affect consumers' willingness to frequent the restaurants of Yo Island. The researchers have had the opportunity to frequently use restaurant services on Yo Island, and they found fewer customers there. This was further confirmed when inquiring from the restaurant operators of Yo Island, who indeed said that restaurant customers had declined. The researchers came to the conclusion that it was worthwhile to survey consumers' perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island. Information about consumers' views of restaurant can then be used to help restaurant businesses to adapt to meet the needs of consumers. This may also encourage restaurant operators to pay more attention to selling quality food, meeting the standards set by the relevant agencies, and satisfying consumer needs. Overall, this

information will help raise the standards of restaurants on Yo Island, Songkhla Province.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To compare consumers' perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island, as classified by personal factors
2. To compare consumers' perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island, as classified by consumers' behavior

III. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

A. Area Scope

The research area is Yo Island, Songkhla Province.

B. Time Scope

The data were collected during May 1–31, 2018.

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. Consumers with differences in personal factors have different perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island.
2. Consumers with differences in consumer behavior have different perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island.

V. RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

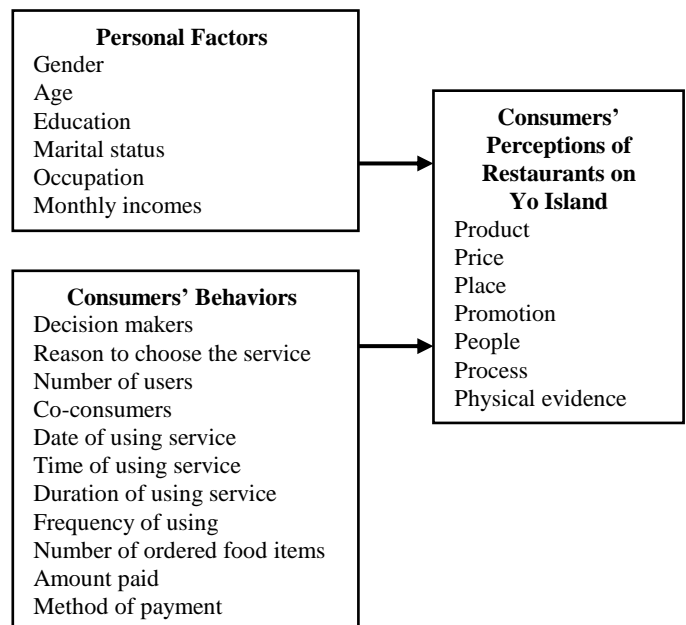


Fig. 1 Research conceptual framework

VI. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Sources of Data

- 1) Documentary research obtained by studying documents, books, and other texts about theories, concepts, and related research to guide the conduct of this study
- 2) A field study that collected data using questionnaires that were completed by the consumers of restaurants on Yo Island.

B. Population and Sample

The sample for this research comprised consumers, aged 15 years and over, that frequent the restaurants of Yo Island. However, the restaurants of Yo Island do not collect data on the number of total consumers, so the exact population size is not known. The sample size was calculated using the Cochran formula [8]. The minimum sample size for data analysis to be stable and reliable was found to be 385, so a sample size of 400 was used.

C. Data Collection

The researchers used probability sampling. This involved writing down the names of the restaurants on Yo Island and putting the pieces of paper into a box before randomly choosing ten restaurants to collect information from. The sampling quota was set to 40 consumers of each restaurant to get a total of 400 respondents using random sampling. Data was collected from respondents using a provided questionnaire. If a respondent had visual problems, the researcher read the questionnaire to him or her. The researcher then collected the questionnaires and checked their completeness until 400 valid responses were collected.

D. The Research Instrument

For this research, a questionnaire was used to collect data. These were divided over three parts:

Part 1: Personal factors, such as questions about gender, age, education, marital status, occupation, and monthly income

Part 2: Consumer behavior, namely questions about decision-makers, reason for choosing the service, number of users, co-consumers, date of using service, time of using service, duration of using service, frequency of using the service, number of ordered food items, amount paid, and method of payment.

Part 3: Consumer perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island, comprising seven aspects: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence

The researcher set the score on the questionnaire using the Likert scale divided over 5 levels, where 5 refers to the strongest level of agreement and 1 the weakest. For the analysis, the researchers defined the criteria as also being interpreted over 5 levels. An interpretive criteria score of 4.21–5.00 means the highest, 3.41–4.20 means high, 2.61–3.40 means medium, 1.81–2.60 means low, and 1.00 – 1.80 means the least.

E. Monitoring the Quality of the Research Instrument

This study examined the quality of the questionnaire used in the following ways:

1) **Validity:** Content validity measurements were constructed according to a comprehensive definition of the terminology used in the research and found to substantially meet the aims of the research. After that, the questionnaire was taken to consult with experts. Finally, the accuracy of the questionnaire was tested.

2) **Reliability:** The researchers used the questionnaire responses from outside the sample in order to test the internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient, which must be at least .70 to be used as a tool [9].

The reliability test of the scales used in this study found that for the consumers' perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island, the coefficient of reliability is at a very good level with values of .926.

F. Data Analysis

This study is quantitative research based on using a questionnaire to collect data. The collected research data was analyzed using computer software. This involved:

1) Descriptive statistics using frequency and percentage to describe the data collected through the first and second parts of the questionnaire, while the mean and standard deviation were used to describe the data collected through the third part of the questionnaire.

2) Inference statistics using a t-test and one-way ANOVA.

VII. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. Personal Factors of the Sample

Based on a study of the personal factors of consumers of restaurants on Yo Island, most of the 400 respondents were found to be female (63.8%), 21–30 years old (61.3%), having a bachelor's degree (65.8%), single (71.8%), a student (58.3%), and with a monthly income below 15,000 baht (62.5%).

B. Consumer Behavior for Restaurants

The study of the behavior of the consumers of restaurants on Yo Island found that they or their family members mostly decided whether to use a service, with 38.8% and 39.8%, respectively. Popular reasons for choosing a service included delicious food (31.1%) and good atmosphere (25.3%). The typical number of users was 3–4 persons (58.3%). Co-consumers were generally family members or friends, with 45.6% and 41.1%, respectively. Most consumers used the restaurant's service either on Saturday and Sunday (41.9%) or special occasions (33.6%). The typical time of using the service was 16.01–19.00 hrs. (31.8%), 13.01–16.00 hrs. (29.0%), or 19.01–22.00 hrs. (24.3%). Most diners used the service for 1–2 hours at a time (60.9%), with a typical frequency of 1–2 times per month (72.3%). The number of ordered food items was usually 3–4 or 5–6, with 42.3% and 36.0%, respectively. The amount of money spent each time generally fell within 500–1,000 baht or 1,001–1,500 baht, with 34.8% and 29.0%, respectively. The vast majority of the sample paid in cash (94.5%).

C. Consumers' Perceptions of Restaurants on Yo Island

The results of the study of consumers' perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island showed that consumers were satisfied overall with the restaurants at a high level with an average score of 3.43. Breaking this down, the consumers were satisfied at a high level in five aspects: the product, physical evidence, process, place, and price, with means of 3.57, 3.49, 3.47, 3.45, and 3.41, respectively. For the consumers' perception of the people and promotion aspects, the consumers were moderately satisfied with means of 3.36 and 3.21, respectively, as shown in Table I.

TABLE I
CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF RESTAURANTS ON YO ISLAND,
SONGKHLA PROVINCE

Consumers' Perceptions	Mean	S.D.	Satisfaction
Product	3.57	0.96	High
Price	3.41	0.92	High
Place	3.45	0.87	High
Promotion	3.21	0.92	Moderate
People	3.36	0.87	Moderate
Process	3.47	0.83	High
Physical evidence	3.49	0.88	High
Overall	3.43	0.80	High

D. Research Hypotheses Testing

1) The comparison of consumers' perception of restaurants on Yo Island can be classified by personal factors.

The study indicates that consumers with different monthly incomes have different perceptions of the restaurants on Yo Island. Meanwhile, consumers with different genders, ages, education, marital statuses, and occupations do not have differing perceptions of those restaurants, as shown in Table II.

TABLE II
COMPARISON OF CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF RESTAURANTS
ON YO ISLAND, AS CLASSIFIED BY PERSONAL FACTORS

Personal Factors	Test Statistics	Sig.	Meaning
Gender	t = 1.26	0.21	Not different
Age	F = 0.65	0.66	Not different
Education	F = 1.32	0.25	Not different
Marital status	F = 0.64	0.59	Not different
Occupation	F = 1.64	0.15	Not different
Monthly incomes	F = 2.74	0.02	Different

2) The comparison of consumers' perceptions of restaurants on Yo Island can be classified by consumer behavior.

The study indicates that consumers with different reasons to choose the service, number of users, and frequency of use have differing perceptions of the restaurants on Yo Island. Meanwhile, consumers with different decision makers, co-consumers, dates of using the service, times of using the service, durations of using the service, number of ordered food items, amount paid, and method of payment did not have differing perceptions of the restaurants on Yo Island, as shown in Table III.

TABLE III
COMPARISON OF CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF RESTAURANTS ON
YO ISLAND, AS CLASSIFIED BY CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumers Behavior	Test Statistics	Sig.	Meaning
Decision makers	F = 0.22	0.93	Not different
Reason to choose the service	F = 2.47	0.03	Different
Number of users	F = 5.03	0.00	Different
Co-consumers	F = 1.87	0.14	Not different
Date of using service	F = 0.80	0.50	Not different
Time of using service	F = 0.68	0.56	Not different
Duration of using service	F = 1.57	0.21	Not different
Frequency of using	F = 3.34	0.01	Different
Number of ordered food items	F = 2.41	0.05	Not different
Amount paid	F = 1.33	0.25	Not different
Method of payment	F = 1.93	0.12	Not different

VIII. FINDINGS DISCUSSION

1. Consumers with different monthly incomes have varying perceptions of the restaurants on Yo Island, perhaps because this factor affects the expectations of consumers. This accords with the results of [10], who found that monthly income

influenced people's decision to choose a restaurant in Surat Thani Province. The results of this study are also consistent with the study of [11], which found that monthly income had a significant impact on consumers' choice of restaurant in Bangkok. In addition, [12] found that monthly income also affects the loyalty of those using a food service.

2. Consumers with different reasons for choosing the service, number of users, and frequency of use have differing perceptions of the restaurants on Yo Island. This is because the strengths and weaknesses of each restaurant may vary, such as in areas of food taste, quality of service, and location. This concurs with the study of [11], which found that the reason to choose a service affected consumers' decision to frequent a restaurant for people in Bangkok.

3. Consumers with differing numbers of users have different perceptions of the restaurants on Yo Island. This is likely because each restaurant is designed to accommodate a different clientele. This is consistent with the study of [11], which found that the number of users affected the decision to use a restaurant for consumers in Bangkok.

4. Consumers with differing frequency of use again have different perceptions of the restaurants on Yo Island. This may be because a high frequency of use gives consumers more opportunity to experience a service in various areas. This is consistent with the study of [11], which found that the frequency of use affects the decision to choose a restaurant for consumers in Bangkok. In addition, the study of [13] found that the frequency of use correlates with the service market mix.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. This Study's Recommendations

1) Restaurant operators on Yo Island should focus on their main target groups, so they can give their core customers what they want.

2) Offering a unique restaurant is important to gaining consumers' acceptance and satisfaction.

3) Operators should design their restaurants and their seating plans to meet the needs of as many different users as possible.

4) It is important for entrepreneurs to create a sense of satisfaction for lower frequency users, so they may become regular customers of the business in future. However, a business should not neglect its current regular customers.

B. Recommendations for Further Study

1) The factors influencing a decision to use a restaurant on Yo Island should be studied so that entrepreneurs can focus on these in future.

2) Consumers' perceptions of restaurants in other parts of Songkhla Province should be studied, so restaurant operators in the wider Songkhla Province can also improve their operations.

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