

A Comparison of Marketing Mix and Consumer Decision-Making in Choosing Small Restaurants in Chaloem Phra Kiat District, Nakhonratchasima Province

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Abstract

The research purposes were to study 1) A comparative study of the marketing mix and consumer decisions to choose small restaurants, 2) Compare the marketing mix and consumer decisions to choose small restaurants classified by the personal factors. The population was the consumers who used the services of small restaurants in Chaloem Phra Kiat District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, between March 1 and April 30, 2025, the sample group was the 384 people by using sample size calculations without knowing the population size.

The research instrument was the rating scale questionnaire. The data analysis statistics were the percentage, mean, standard deviation, t test (Independent samples). The research findings were: 1) The marketing mix factors that significantly influence consumers' decisions to use small restaurants in Chaloem Phra Kiat District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, are, overall, at a high level. Ranked from highest to lowest average value, they are: personnel, physical characteristics, distribution channels, marketing promotion, product, service process, and price. 2) the consumer with different gender, education levels, and occupations found the opinions on the marketing mix and consumer decisions to choose small restaurants did not different.

Keywords: Decisions, Small Restaurants, Consumer, Service, Nakhonrachsima Province

Introduction

The robust expansion of the Thai economy has fundamentally reshaped societal lifestyles, labor paradigms, and dietary behaviors. The transition from extended to nuclear families, alongside the rise of single-person households, reflects the accelerated pace of modern existence. Consequently, time constraints associated with professional commutes have led to a marked decline in domestic culinary activities. Restaurants have emerged as primary venues for social interaction and stress mitigation, assuming

a pivotal role in daily sustenance due to their inherent convenience and operational speed (Suwanragsa et al., 2025).

The restaurant industry constitutes a vital pillar of the national economy, generating an annual turnover exceeding 400 billion baht and accounting for 4.7% of the service sector's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Kasikorn Research Center, 2025). This sector encompasses a diverse spectrum of operators, ranging from micro-enterprises to large-scale corporations, and maintains intricate linkages across various industries. Between 2017 and 2024, the industry experienced sustained growth, propelled by consumer preferences for premium quality and accessibility. Data indicates that food and beverage expenditures represent the second largest spending category for both domestic and international tourists, surpassed only by accommodation and transportation costs (Kasikorn Research Center, 2024). Such attractions as unique local flavors, aesthetic grandeur, and distinctive dining atmospheres serve as primary motivators for out-of-home consumption (Chatchakul, 2008).

Contemporary economic shifts have integrated the populace into a capitalist framework, necessitating external employment to meet rising living costs. This dependency on commercial food services is evident nationwide, driven by rapid urbanization and the pursuit of leisure. Survey results from the Department of Business Development underscore the continuous expansion of this sector (Cho et al., 2023). Modernity prioritizes professional obligations, thereby reducing the temporal allocation for personal activities and home cooking. Technological integration has further diversified consumption options, making food acquisition more efficient (Kechri et al., 2025). The National Statistical Office reports that household expenditure on eating out is projected to reach a peak of 35.9% in 2024, reflecting the superior variety and responsiveness of restaurant services to consumer demands.

Considering these evolving consumption patterns influenced by urbanization and technological progress, understanding the intersection of marketing strategies and consumer choice is essential. This research evaluates the relationship between the marketing mix and consumer decision-making processes regarding small restaurants in Chaloem Phra Kiat District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The empirical findings provide a strategic framework for operators to optimize marketing efficacy and enhance consumer engagement.

Research Objectives

1. To compare the marketing mix factors with consumer decisions to choose small restaurants in Chaloem Phra Kiat District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province.
2. To compare the marketing mix factors that influence consumer decisions to choose small restaurants in Chaloem Phra Kiat District, Nakhon Ratchasima Province, categorized by personal factors.

Literature Review

1. Demographic Profiles and Behavioral Patterns

The examination of demographic variables serves as a foundational element in understanding consumer behavior within the food and beverage sector. Panyaloed & Panthong (2022) identified a specific demographic concentration within industrial zones, noting that most consumers are single females, aged 27–35, with educational attainment below a bachelor's degree and monthly earnings under 15,000 THB. Despite

this concentrated profile, their empirical analysis confirmed that demographic variations including gender, age, and income do not yield statistically significant differences in the decision-making process for selecting made-to-order restaurants. This suggests a homogenization of consumption patterns among the industrial labor force, where situational necessity outweighs individual demographic traits.

2. The Impact of the Marketing Mix (4Ps/7Ps)

The marketing mix serves as a robust framework for predicting consumer choice, though the significance of individual dimensions fluctuates depending on the restaurant category and the prevailing economic environment.

2.1 Price and Promotion

Price appropriateness relative to perceived food quality remains the primary determinant for repeat patronage and consumer loyalty. Research by Amornkitja (2021) and Ji (2019) consistently identifies pricing as the most influential factor across diverse dining segments. In highly competitive urban markets, promotional activities act as critical catalysts for decision-making, particularly as rising living costs necessitate value-oriented consumption (Amornkitja, 2021). This alignment between cost and quality is essential for sustaining a 4.6% growth rate in a capitalist framework where household budgets are under constant inflationary pressure.

2.2 Product and Distribution

Recent scholarly inquiries suggest a diminishing influence of traditional Product variety and Place (location) in specific sectors. Amornkitja (2021) observed that for grilled food establishments in Bangkok, neither product attributes nor distribution channels yielded a statistically significant impact on consumer choice. This phenomenon is largely attributed to product homogenization within the industry and the widespread adoption of digital delivery platforms. The ubiquity of home delivery services has effectively mitigated the necessity of physical proximity, shifting the consumer's focus from geographic convenience to service efficiency.

2.3 Physical Evidence and Service Quality

In the wake of the global pandemic and within the specialized context of industrial estate dining, physical characteristics encompassing hygiene standards, cleanliness, and atmospheric quality have become vital for bolstering consumer confidence. Studies by Ahlawat et al. (2022) and Panyaloed & Panthong (2022) underscore that physical evidence significantly influences the selection process, as consumers prioritize environments that ensure safety and provide a sense of leisure. These findings coincide with the observations of Panyaloed & Panthong (2022), who identified physical characteristics as a significant variable with an efficiency of 53.60% in influencing decision-making.

3. Service Quality and Word-of-Mouth Dynamics

Service quality and word-of-mouth (WOM) as the primary catalysts for consumer decision-making in small-scale restaurants within provincial areas like Nakhon Ratchasima. While the fundamental marketing mix provides a structural baseline, Amornkitja (2021) prove that dimensions of People and Process yield a more profound impact on repeat patronage than traditional advertising. As the market expands toward a 657 billion THB valuation in 2025, the shift toward a capitalist framework necessitates high responsiveness to meet the time-utility demands of the

urbanizing populace. Consequently, positive WOM serves as a high-credibility, low-cost marketing tool that mediates the relationship between operational excellence and customer loyalty, making service quality the critical differentiator for small enterprises competing in a hyper-competitive economic landscape.

Research Method and Design

1. Research Scope and Variables

The investigation integrates seven marketing mix dimensions (7Ps) as independent variables alongside demographic profiles (gender, education, and occupation). The dependent variable focuses on the consumer decision-making process. Data collection was conducted between March 1 and April 30, 2025.

2. Population and Sampling

The target population comprises consumers utilizing local restaurant services. Based on Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level, a minimum sample of 384 respondents was established, recruited via non-probability convenience sampling (Cochran, 1977).

3. Research Instrument and Validation

A three-part structured questionnaire was utilized, featuring a 5-point Likert scale (Joshi et al., 2015) and open-ended qualitative sections. Content validity was confirmed by three experts with an Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) between 0.66 and 1.00. Reliability was established through a pilot test (n=30), yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92, indicating high internal consistency (Fokoue & Gunduz, 2015).

4. Data Collection and Analysis

With a 100% response rate (384 valid sets), data were processed using: Descriptive Statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Inferential Statistics including Independent Samples t-tests and One-way ANOVA (F-test) to examine differences across personal factors.

Research Finding

Based on objective 1, The descriptive analysis in Table 1 reveals that all seven dimensions of the marketing mix exert a high influence on consumer decision-making, with an aggregate mean of 3.72. Notably, the Personnel dimension emerged as the most significant factor ($\bar{X} = 3.82$), suggesting that service quality and human interaction are paramount in small-scale operations. This is followed by Physical Evidence factor ($\bar{X} = 3.75$), highlighting the continued importance of hygiene and atmosphere in the 2025 F&B landscape.

Table 1: Statistical Analysis of Marketing Mix (7Ps) Influencing Consumer Decision-Making in Small-Scale Restaurant Operations

Dimension of Marketing Mix (7Ps)	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interpretation
Product	3.70	0.38	High
Pricing	3.66	0.40	High
Distribution channel	3.72	0.41	High
Promotion	3.71	0.43	High
Personnel	3.82	0.41	High
Process	3.70	0.43	High
Physical Evidence	3.75	0.40	High
Overall	3.72	0.38	High

Based on objective research 2: the comparative analysis of consumer decision-making across demographic profiles, as illustrated in Table 2, reveals no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level. Specifically, the p-values for gender (0.077), education levels (0.192), and occupation (0.759) all exceed the established threshold for significance. These results suggest that personal factors do not uniquely differentiate the selection criteria for small-scale restaurants in the study area, indicating a standardized behavioral response toward marketing stimuli among the diverse populace.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of marketing factor consumer decision-making across demographic profiles.

Demographic Profiles	t/F	<i>p</i>
Gender	-2.821	0.077
Education levels	1.532	0.192
Occupation	0.468	0.759

Conclusion and Discussion

The empirical results of this study indicate that the marketing mix (7Ps) serves as a significant determinant of consumer choice, with all dimensions yielding high influence scores. Specifically, the Personnel dimension emerged as the primary factor, which reflects the necessity for high-quality service interactions in the modern hospitality sector. This aligns with the broader context of the Tourism Industry as defined by Chatchakul (2008), where service providers are integral to the consumer experience. Furthermore, the high importance placed on Physical Evidence and Process in the results correlates with the findings of Ahlawat et al. (2022), who noted that post-pandemic consumer preferences in the COVID-19 era have shifted toward hygiene and safety standards. These factors are critical as the Kasikorn Research Center (2024) projects the food and beverage sector to expand to 657 billion baht in 2025, even as a subsequent outlook from Kasikorn Research Center (2025) warns of risks such as stagnant foreign tourism and sluggish spending.

The ranking of marketing factors in this study, where Personnel and Physical Evidence outperformed Price, suggests a shift in consumer priorities. While Amornkitja

(2021) and Ji (2019) emphasized that price and product variety traditionally drive decision-making in Bangkok's competitive landscape, the current data from Chaloem Phra Kiat District indicates that service quality and the dining environment are more influential for small-scale operations. This transition is supported by Kechri et al. (2025), who suggest that emerging consumer behaviors are increasingly influenced by holistic experiences rather than mere cost. Furthermore, Suwanragasa et al. (2025) argue that such entrepreneurial resilience and service-oriented strategies are vital for economic growth within Thailand's evolving capitalist framework.

Regarding demographic profiles, the statistical analysis using Cochran's (1977) sampling methodology and the Likert scale framework explained by Joshi et al. (2015) revealed no significant differences in decision-making based on gender, education levels, or occupation ($p > 0.05$). These findings are consistent with Panyaloed and Panthong (2022), whose study in the Lat Krabang Industrial Estate also concluded that demographic variations do not yield significant differences in restaurant selection. This uniformity suggests that in urbanized or industrial environments, consumers respond to marketing stimuli in a homogeneous manner. As explored by Cho et al. (2023) in their study of gentrified commercial areas, the survival of food and beverage businesses depends less on targeting specific demographics and more on adapting to structural market shifts and maintaining high-reliability standards, as measured by the Cronbach's alpha consistency recognized by Fokoue and Gunduz (2015).

Suggestion

Suggestions for Applying Research Findings

Small restaurant operators should adopt an integrated 7Ps strategy to navigate the competitive 2025 market landscape. Key actions include diversifying menus with health-conscious options, maintaining transparent value-based pricing, and expanding digital accessibility through Offline-to-Online (O2O) channels. Furthermore, fostering a Service Mind culture, utilizing POS systems for operational efficiency, and ensuring high hygiene standards within an aesthetically distinct environment are critical for capturing a share of the projected 657-billion-baht market.

Suggestions for Future Research

To advance the current findings, future investigations should employ qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to explore the deeper psychological motivations of consumers. Longitudinal and comparative designs across different regions would also enhance the generalizability of behavioral trends. Additionally, research into the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and service automation is highly recommended to examine how these technologies mediate traditional marketing factors and consumer acceptance in a shifting capitalist framework.

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