CONSUMERS’ PERCEPTION TOWARD FOOD MARKET IN NONTHABURI

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ABSTRACT
Food markets in Thailand have changed a lot because of the influence of foreign giant supermarket, local giant supermarket. Additionally, the changing life style of people also is the big cause. This research intends to study on the relationships among demographic characteristics, consumer's perceptions and customer buying behavior. Representative samples are 400 consumers in Nonthaburi province. Quantitative statistics were used to analyze data variables and test hypotheses. Statistics in data analysis are frequency percentage, average, standard deviation, of which were tested by t-test, one way ANOVA and Pearson's correlation and Pearson's chi-square.

Research showed that demographic characteristics are related to consumer's perception. Age and income are the factors that related to all consumers' perception. Perceptions are correlated to buying behavior; representative samples pay much attention to the good public transport and trust in vendor. And demographic characteristics are also related to consumer buying behavior. Education is the main factor that affected to consumer buying behavior. Majority of the representative samples chose to buy from supermarkets. Main factors for buying food from supermarkets are cleanliness, car parking facilities, satisfactorily service and trust in vendor.

INTRODUCTION
The research studied the perception of Thai consumers in Nonthaburi by focus on the food products through which government can be aware of consumers' benefits that might help issuing rules and regulations. Moreover fresh markets and supermarket can also know about consumer perceptions of them which they can set strategies to achieve their goals.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
The objectives for this research are (1) To determine the level of consumer demographic characteristics, consumers’ perception and consumer buying behavior and (2) To study the relationships among consumer demographic characteristics, consumers’ perceptions and consumer buying behavior.

SCOPE OF RESEARCH
The research attempts to understand perceptions and buying behavior of consumer toward food market. The study focuses on residents in Nonthaburi during March 2013.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
The conceptual framework of this research appears below

HYPOTHESES
H1. There are relationships between consumer demographic characteristics and consumers’ perceptions on food market.
H2. Consumers’ perception on food market correlates with consumer buying behavior.
H3. There are relationships between consumer demographic characteristics and consumer buying behavior toward food market

LITERATURE REVIEW
To support this research, this section reviews the concepts or theories and related research as following:

1. Concepts or Theories of Consumers’ Perception
Solomon and Stuart (2000) stated that perception is the process by which people select, organize, and interpret information from the outside world. People receive information in the form of sensations by sensory receptors; eyes, ears, nose, mouth and fingers. People interpret the sensations they receive by their past experiences. The perception process is very important for marketers because it is difficult even to make consumers notice their ads. Although consumers notice it, there is no guarantee that they will perceive as marketers want. Therefore, marketers need to care the whole process including exposure, perceptual selection and interpretation. Consumer perception theory attempts to explain consumer behavior by analyzing motivations for buying or not buying particular items. Three areas of consumer perception theory relate to consumer perception theory are self perception, price perception and perception of a benefit to quality of life.

2. Consumer Behavior
Wierenga et al (1987) described consumer behavior as all personal actions that are part of acquiring, using or discarding products or services in order to satisfy their own needs. The actual purchasing of a product is important just like the corresponding actions. Those actions could involve parts of the decision process, like orientation, obtaining advise from other consumers or consulting a consumers’ magazine. Three theories of consumer behavior are explained; economic theory, classical economic utility theory and the characteristic approach. The economic theory is based on the distribution of income among saving and purchasing products. The classical economic utility theory assumes that the consumer is familiar with all possible choice options and will choose the option, in this case a price or income could be analyzed with this theory. The characteristic approach is based on the assumption that consumers evaluate characteristics that describe the products. Different decision rules can be used to product, which corresponds to the highest satisfaction or in other words, utility. Effects of possible changes in make the actual choice, a combination of different rules is possible as well. Some rules are compensatory, which means that one (bad) characteristic can be compensated by another (good) characteristic.

3. Previous Research
(1) Awng Di studied “Consumer Perceptions Toward Retail Stores Comparing Between Superstores and Family-Run Stores In Bangkok”. The object of this study is to determine consumers’ perceptions toward superstores and family-run stores in Bangkok on consumer perception towards retail stores which focus a broad sense on marketing, business, economic and social factors. The researcher used qualitative methods to approach a wide scope of consumer perceptions. 400 sample people were randomly picked up from central, northern, western and eastern parts of Bangkok. The research found that majority of respondents shopped when they need to buy something, while they are on the way and when they are free. So the outcomes cannot be assumed that consumers would shop when they have extra money. And spent more time at superstores than family-run stores although frequencies of shopping times are the same. The superstores could sell more and can make more profit that have negative effect on family-run stores and the study supported with what Jitpleecheep (2008b) said that, about 300,000 small local family-run stores closed down their business in Thailand in the past decade because of superstores. Finally the result showed that the demographic factor which are gender, age, education, occupation, monthly income, material status and resident place have an effect on customers’ perception toward retail store between superstores and family-run stores.

(2) Dynamics of consumers’ perception, demographic characteristics and consumers’ behavior towards selection of a restaurant: an exploratory study on Dhaka city consumers (Rahman, 2012) showed that a significant proportion of consumers in Dhaka city of Bangladesh are very sensitive towards choosing a restaurant services. The research argues that consumers’ perception always mediating by
consumers' age, gender differences and their income. On the other hand in some situation age differences can be an important factor which may also be influenced an individual to choose a restaurant's services.

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design
This research is quantitative in design using a survey questionnaire and multi-stage sampling to collect primary data from consumer who shopped for food in Nonthaburi.

Population and Samples
Population for this research is residents of Nonthaburi, which has population figure of 1,101,743 in 2010 (Department of Provincial Administration, 2012). Since the size of the population is large, sample size was calculated using Yamane’s formula (Yamane, 1967). The significant level is accepted at 95 percent.

\[
n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}
\]

Remark: 
\(n\) = Sample size 
\(N\) = Population of sample 
\(e\) = Significance level (0.05)

According to the equation, the sample size can be calculated as follows;

\[
N = \frac{1,101,743}{1+1,101,743(0.05)^2}
\]

= 399.85 or 400 samples

The researcher set up sample size of 400 samples. Stratified sampling and simple random sampling will be used for choosing the market place where are Chonpratarn fresh market, Bang Yai City fresh market, supermarket at Central Jangwattana and supermarket at Tesco Lotus RAMA V to distribute the questionnaires. And the systematic sampling will be used to correct the 100 samples per market. Every 5th customer who comes to shopping for food at the selected fresh markets or supermarkets will be chose.

Data Collecting Method
Secondary source data were collected from text books, past researches, newspapers, journals, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and world-wide-web pages. Primary source data were collected from questionnaire survey. The questionnaire for this study was developed based upon concepts, theories and past research information. Then, it was translated into Thai language. The questionnaire consisted of 3 parts including part 1: questions about demographic data of samples, part 2: questions about consumers' perception which were classified into 5 levels (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) following Likert’s scale interval as in Figure 3.2, part 3: questions about consumer buying behaviors.

DATA ANALYSES
All responses of each questionnaire would be key-in into statistical package program. And the analysis would be separated into two parts. The first part would measure data diversification of demographic variables, customers' perception and customer buying behavior by mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage. The last part was to test hypothesis of the research as follow:
1 T-test and one-way ANOVA would be used to find the relationships between consumer demographic characteristic and consumers' perceptions on food market. The t-test is used to compare the means between two groups, one-way ANOVA is a statistical procedure used to compare means between three or more.
2 Pearson's correlation and Pearson's chi-square statistic would be used to find the correlations between consumers' perception on food market and consumer buying behavior. Pearson's chi-square statistic is used to find the correlation between qualitative and qualitative variables. And Pearson's correlation is used to find the correlation between quantitative variables and quantitative variables.
3 T-test, one-way ANOVA, Pearson's correlation and Pearson's chi-square statistic will be used to find the relationships between consumer demographic characteristics and consumer buying behavior.

RESULT AND CONCLUSION
This study on consumers’ perception toward food market in Nonthaburi was accomplish by approving hypotheses structure from the conceptual framework which are relationships between
consumer demographic characteristics and consumers' perception, correlations between consumers' perception and consumer buying behavior, and relationships between consumer demographic characteristics and consumer buying behavior toward food market. A literature review was also carried including past researches, concepts and theories about consumers' perception and consumer buying behavior.

Qualitative method was used in this research and 400 sample people were randomly picked from Nonthaburi. Most of respondent are female (58.5%) and 31-40 years old. The majority of the respondents are bachelor degree and master degree holder, single and employees. Most of respondents earn 50,001-85,000 baht per month and have 3 or 4 people in their family.

The descriptive analyses of consumers' perception also revealed that distance from place of residence to market, product quality, reasonable price are high important for food market. And the research also showed that respondents go shopping for food around 4 times per 2 weeks. Most of respondents go to buy food products at 08.00 am. – 04.00 pm and spend money around 1-1,000 baht per time. Top three of food products which most respondents buy are instant food, dairy products and snacks.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING
Hypothesis 1: The results from this research are accepted the first hypothesis. Researcher found that age and income have significance relationships to consumers' perception on all categories. Education, occupation and family have relationships to most categories of consumers' perception. And gender has relationship to consumer's perceptions on appropriate open hours only.

Hypothesis 2: The researcher found that consumer's perception has strongly correlate with consumer buying behavior on period of time to go shopping and weakly correlate with consumer buying behavior on kind of food to buy which are snack, dried food and fresh food. Moreover, researcher also finds the relationships between consumers' perception and preference market to know that which perception relate to preference market. The results showed that consumers' perception on opening hours, distance from place of residence to market, product quality, speed of purchase, clean and comfortable and easiness on finding the product related to preference market.

Hypothesis 3: Study on relationship between consumer demographic characteristics and consumer buying behavior toward food market was strongly accepted. The results shows that all demographic characteristics factors related to all consumer buying behavior factors which is period of time to go shopping for food and education has relationship to nearly all categories of consumer buying behavior.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS
The important limitation of present research was period of time of data collection. Period of data collection was based on the convenience of researcher which may not meet consumers who go to the market at some time such as earlier than 04.00 am. So the sampling was non-probability and thus the results from this study in terms of period of time to purchase food may not a good representative.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS
The results show that most consumers' perception based on age, income, education, family size and occupation. Thus, the owner should pay more attention to educate the perception of consumer focus on consumers demographic characteristics which were mention above. As majority of consumers is working-age. Most of them are highly educated; they think that instant foods are safer, cleaner and more convenience. According to the factors mentioned above, improvement could bring more customers to fresh market.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH
The further study on this subject should broaden their research on satisfaction of consumers' experiences in supermarkets to find out consumers' satisfactory perception and services needed. Conclusion of research could be use to improve services in response to consumers needs. Study of possibility of other marketing plans those are appropriate for working-age population. Re-design of fresh markets to attract more consumers and boost business growth.
REFERENCES

1. Awng Di (2008), Consumer Perceptions Toward Retail Stores Comparing Between Superstores and Family-Run Stores In Bangkok, The Thesis of Business Administration in Management School of Management, Shinawatra University


