

Behavior of Economic Determinants of Healthy Food in Bangkok

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines two issues from the perspective of Bangkok, Thailand: 1) customer behavior towards healthy food and 2) economic determinants of decision to eating healthy food. The sample used in the research includes 286 customers from Bangkok responding to a questionnaire. The data were analyzed by calculating descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and the mean calculated on the basis of variables evaluated on a Likert scale. It is found that, on the working days, most customers usually buy ready to eat food rather than cook at home by themselves, whereas it is the opposite during holidays. As for eating at restaurant, they do so 2-4 times a month. The average expenditure incurred at each meal is smaller than 200 bahts/person. The overall consumer behavior towards healthy food does not seem to be distinct from that towards normal food. The primary factors affecting the selection of healthy food are safety, health benefits, good taste, and good services, in that order.

Keywords: consumer behavior, economic determinants, healthy food

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, Thai people have become accustomed to hurried daily life and constant, racing against time. The life of the new generation of Thai people is characterized by competitive lifestyles as they work in the city and therefore do not have opportunities to eat healthy food. However, due to rising demand, businesses offering healthy food are experiencing a rising growth. In Thailand, businesses offering healthy food are expected to combine the art of cooking with service. Otherwise customer satisfaction is jeopardized. The finding presented in this paper on economic factors determining consumer decisions in Bangkok concerning the purchase of healthy food should be of particular interest to Thai entrepreneurs.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

2.1 Study customers' behavior towards healthy food.

2.2 Study economic determinants of decision to eat healthy food.

3. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire in 3 parts. Part 1 was made up of a set of demographic questions pertaining to personal factors including sex, age, status, level of education, income per month, and career. Part 2 asked a set of questions concerning customer's behavior towards healthy food. Part 3 investigated factors affecting a decision to eat healthy food. The questionnaires were distributed across the population, 286 were returned. All were included in the study sample. Responders were asked to grade the response to each question according to the following Likert scale: 1 Least important, 2 of low important, 3 of medium importance, 4 more important. 5 most important.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of the sample group

Characteristics	Number (n = 286)	Percentage (100%)
1. Gender		
Male	101	35.31
Female	185	64.68
Total	286	100
2. Age		
≤ 25 yrs.	10	3.5
> 25-35 yrs.	105	36.71
> 36-45 yrs.	81	28.32
> 46-60 yrs.	63	22.02
> 60 yrs.	27	9.44
Total	286	100
3. Level of education		
Lower than Bachelor's degree	59	20.63
Bachelor's degree	201	70.28
More than Bachelor's degree	26	9.09
Total	286	100

Table 1 continue

Characteristics	Number (n = 286)	Percentage (100%)
4. Income per month(Baht)		
Less than or equal to 25,000 Baht	18	6.29
25,001- 50,000 Baht	65	22.73
50,001- 80,000 Baht	128	44.76
More than 80,000 Baht	75	26.22
Total	286	100
5. Status		
Single	60	20.98
Married (family size: 2-4 persons.)	135	47.20
Big family(≥ 5 persons)	91	31.82
Total	286	100
6. Career		
Student	30	10.49
Private Company Employees	130	45.45
Bureaucrats/Staff of State - Enterprises	35	12.24
Business owner and Entrepreneurs	86	30.07
Others	5	1.75
Total	167	100

Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of the responders. Note that there were more female responders than male, the average age was between 25 and 35 years, over 70% had at least a bachelor's degree over, 44.76 % had annual income between 50,001-80,000 Bath. Almost had a small family between 2 and 4 persons, and 45% were private company employees while 30 % were running their own businesses. It is clear that our sample is representative of the middle class.

Table 2 summarizes lifestyles and habits characterizing consumer behavior towards food

Items	Number (n = 286)	Percentage (100%)
Breakfast on Working Day		
- No breakfast	14	4.90
-Buy from restaurant	68	23.78
-Buy food ready to eat	115	40.21
-Cooked at home by themselves	86	30.07
-Order delivery service	3	1.04
Total	286	100
Lunch on Working Day		
-No lunch	8	2.80
-Buy from restaurant	123	43.01
-Buy food ready to eat	102	45.66
-Cooked at home by themselves	42	14.69
-Order delivery service	11	3.86
Total	286	100
Dinner on Working Day		
- No dinner	61	21.33
-Buy from restaurant	68	23.79
-Buy ready to eat food	82	28.67
-Cooked at home by themselves	73	25.52
-Order delivery service	2	0.70
Total	286	100
Breakfast on Weekend		
- No breakfast	34	11.89
-Buy from restaurant		3.15
-Buy food ready to eat	118	41.26
-Cooked at home by themselves	125	43.70
-Order delivery service	0	0.00
Total	286	100

Table 2 continue

Items	Number (n = 286)	Percentage (100%)
Lunch on Weekend		
- No lunch	6	2.10
-Buy from restaurant	96	33.57
-Buy ready to eat food	52	18.18
-Cooked at home by themselves	102	35.66
-Order delivery service	30	10.49
Total	286	100
Dinner on Weekend		
- NO dinner	43	15.03
-Buy from restaurant	98	34.27
-Buy food ready to eat	70	24.48
-Cooked at home by themselves	58	20.28
-Order delivery service	17	5.94
Total	286	100

Table 2 summarizes lifestyles and habits characterizing consumer behavior towards food. Note that 40.12% were purchasing ready to eat food in the morning for breakfast and lunch, 43% like to have their dinner at a restaurant, and 28% found it convenient to order ready to eat food , 20% exhibited behavior distinctly different from the average behavior.

Table 3 Consumer's behavior towards eating healthy food over the previous 3 months

Items	Number (n = 286)	Percentage (100%)
Used to	275	.9615
Not used to	11	3.85
Total	286	100.
Items	Number (n = 286)	Percentage (100%)

Frequency in a month		
- ≤ 2 times	40	26.67
-2-4 times	62	41.33
-5-6 times	20	13.33
-more than 6 times	28	18.67
Total	150	100
Average expenditure on healthy food		
- ≤ 100 Baht	15	10.00
-101-300 Baht	102	68.00
-More than 300 Baht	33	22.00
Total	150	100

Table 3 summarizes consumer behavior (frequency of eating and expenditure) towards eating healthy food. Note that most bad eating habit (eating healthy only 2 to 4 times a month). The average expenditure on healthy food was 101-300 Baht per person.

Finally, Table 4 summarizes details concerning the economic determinants of the respondents with respect to their decisions to eat healthy food.

Table 4 Economic determinants for decision to eating healthy food

Items	The least Important number (%)	Lower Important number (%)	Medium Important number (%)	More Important number (%)	The most Important number (%)
Taste	0 (0.0)	5 (3.33)	8 (5.33)	94(62.67)	43(28.67)
Benefit for health	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.67)	40(26.67)	109(72.67)
Variety food	16 (10.67)	53 (35.34)	71 (47.33)	8 (5.33)	2 (1.33)
Services	1 (0.67)	18 (12.00)	35 (23.33)	55(36.67)	41 (27.33)
Safety	0 (0.00)	0 (0.0)	4 (2.67)	8 (5.33)	138(92.00)
Pricing	20 (13.33)	41 (27.33)	55 (36.67)	26(17.33)	8 (5.33)
Convenient	1 (0.67)	20 (13.33)	37(24.67)	64(42.67)	28 (18.67)
Service provided by the nutritionist	21 (14.00)	36 (24.0)	71(47.33)	17(11.33)	5 (3.33)

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results presented above indicate that Bangkok's lifestyle may be characterized

as “everything is rushing and racing “just as in most other cities. The breakfast are hurried because most (65%) are in the working age. They say they have many things to do in morning; dressing up children and themselves getting ready. Some visit family before traveling to work .Almost all grapple with daily traffic jams. Since almost 80% are married, many take their children to school before going to work. Thus there is no time to cook,so relying on ready to eat food is the only way. Lunchtime behavior is somewhat different;43% eat at a restaurant while 35% eat ready to eat again .But ,in the evening ,they adopt a different style: 21.33% do not eat any dinner, 23.78% visit a restaurant,28.67% buy ready to eat food, and 25.52% cook dinner at home. Very few order delivery service at dinner time. The behavior however dramatically changes during weekend, when they are relaxing or spending time with family. On weekend, most cook breakfast and at home. Some go to the restaurant for dinner. At lunch time they like to cook at home by themselves but for dinner they choose to go to the restaurant for relaxing,97% are fairly used to eating ready to eat food ,25.52% eat healthy food about 2-4 times a month,with each restaurant trip costing between 100 and 300 Baht.

Our data have shown that the major economic determinants of the decision to eat healthy food are 1) safety ,2) health benefits,3) differences in tastes and services., and 4). convenience ,in that order., Overall pricing plays the dominant role. The next dominant factor is concern for health. Consumers must have confidence that the food they eat is healthy food and is being handled appropriately: this observation should have particular importance to entrepreneurs operating in fresh healthy food business.

6. RECOMMENDATION

1 The healthy food market is opening up new opportunities since the urban lifestyle is changing dramatically.

2 The best way to practice food safety is to remain well informed about the basic principles of food production, safe food preparation, and caring for customer needs.

3. The increase in consumption of healthy food is a result of the abundance of scientific evidence regarding linkages between diet and good health. The rising costs of health care coupled with a high incidence of obesity and diet-related disease are leading to significantly increased public concern about health and nutrition.

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