

The Relationship between Marketing Mix Perception and Consumer Choice of Convenience Stores in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to study the level of perception of the marketing mix and consumer choice of convenience stores. It also analyzed the relationship between marketing mix and consumer choice of convenience stores in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi. The population used in this study was 208 convenience store consumers. The tool used for data collection was a questionnaire. The statistics used to analyze the data were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis. The research found that the highest level of physical evidence perception (mean=4.30, SD=0.43) and the lowest level of awareness promotion (mean=3.92, SD=0.54), which was high level. Also, found that the promotion, process, and physical evidence of the convenience stores were significantly related to consumer choice of convenience stores at the 0.05 level. Conclusions and recommendations from the research may be useful for convenience store operators to further improve convenience store operations to be successful.

Keywords: Marketing Mix; Consumer Choice; Convenience Stores

1. Introduction

Retail businesses expanded slightly as domestic purchasing power has declined during the COVID-19 pandemic. An overview of retail businesses during the first-half of 2020 showed that they were expected to contract by 5% to 8% as compared to 2019 (Kasikorn Research Center, 2020). Retail businesses have to adjust as more consumers shift to online shopping. As a result, retailers need to review and adjust their business strategies by selecting the appropriate method to meet the needs of target customers. In addition, there must be improvement of the service quality that creates an impression of customers, including providing convenient, fast and safe services.

Convenience stores are one type of retail business which is growing in number and rapidly expanding branches in Thailand because they are quite agile, although there are both large and small competitors. Convenience stores are available to the community and facilitate consumer purchases of essential everyday items such as ready-to-eat meals, beverages, snacks and daily necessities. The consumer choice of convenience store depends on many factors, so convenience store tries to improve their service to be more integrated in order to meet the needs of consumers or the market. They also make significant investments in selecting good quality products and services, as well as adding other services such as depository service, car registration, and bill payment to meet the needs of customers who want to buy near home, convenient, and fast.

Convenience stores are classified as a service business with seven aspects of the marketing mix, known as the 7Ps, which consist of Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence. Researchers have studied and found that the relationships between the 7Ps service marketing mix and consumer choice of convenience stores were different. For example, Maruthorn (2015) found that product, price, place, and promotion did not affect the consumer choice of convenience stores, while Ratanaram (2017) found that retail mix (location, product variety, price, store design and positioning), and custom services influenced consumer choice. Type of product and service, store layout and design, positioning, and convenience location also were found to influence consumer choice (Kanjana, 2011). Moreover, Niempracha (2018) found that all service marketing mixes were related to consumer choice of convenience stores. The literature review revealed different findings regarding the relationship between service marketing mix and consumer choice of convenience stores.

To benefit convenience store owners and those who are interested in operational models, business expansion, and addition of convenience store branches, researchers are interested in studying the relationship between marketing mix perception and consumer choice of convenience stores. The population used in this study was consumers of convenience store in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi. The findings may be academically useful because they will identify differences and dynamics in the findings as compared to past research studies. They

may also be beneficial to convenience store owners, who can use them as guidelines to develop and improve their management to be successful.

2. Objectives

1. To study the level of awareness of consumer perception of convenience store marketing mix in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi.
2. To study the level of awareness of consumer choice of convenience stores in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi.
3. To analyze the relationship between marketing mix perception and consumer choice of convenience stores in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi.

3. Theoretical and Related Literature

3.1 The Marketing Mix. Kotler (1997) stated that the service marketing mix is defined as delivering something that can meet consumer needs to achieve business objectives or compete with new future businesses, including product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. Therefore, the conceptual framework of the service marketing mix, also known as the 7Ps according to Kotler's concept, consists of the following:

- 1) **Product** refers to beneficial and valuable things that satisfy human needs that the seller provides to customers;
- 2) **Price** is the value of a product in form of money that allows customers to compare between the value received and what must be paid. The price should be suitable for the value that is given to customers;
- 3) **Place** means a convenient location that's easy to get to;
- 4) **Promotion** is communication with target markets to inform or persuade so that their attitudes and behaviors will lead to buying decisions, which can build long-term relationship with customers;
- 5) **People** means those who perform services for customers. Recruitment, selection, training and motivation are required to enable employees to perform their work to the fullest and to create customer satisfaction;
- 6) **Process** refers to activities related to operations and regulations to provide accurate, fast and impressive service; and
- 7) **Physical Evidence** is the creation and presentation of the physical elements to customers. Therefore, these service marketing mixes are extremely important for convenience stores in order to truly satisfy their customers.

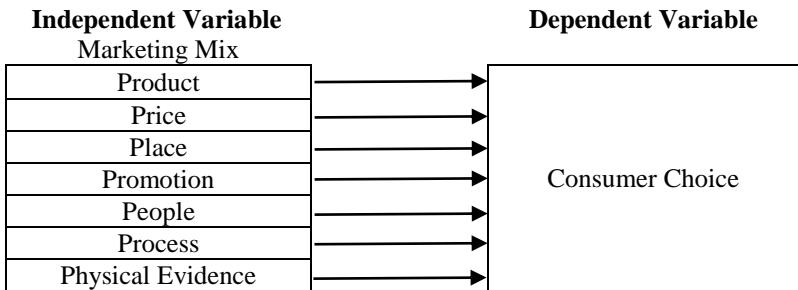
3.2 The Consumer Choice. Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) proposed the concept of consumer choice processes based on factors such as; 1) External Factors such as searching for information about product, including attitudes and values that affect decision-making; 2) Pre-purchase process is a pattern or method that a consumer uses to make decisions. It consists of internal factors including motivation, perception, learning, personality, and attitude, which reflect product demand, and are used to evaluate decision-making; 3) Result of purchasing decision process is the final step. Peter and Olson (1987) and Kotler (1997) stated that consumer purchasing decisions come from a problem-solving model. It is the basis of understanding the consumer purchasing decisions. The consumer decision process consists of five steps. The first step is the need recognition stage, in which a consumer recognizes a need or problem for which a decision is needed. The second step is searching for information about the product, in which a consumer tries to find out as much as possible about the product. At the third stage, the consumer uses the information to evaluate alternative products. The consumer makes decision at the fourth stage by selecting the most suitable product. The last stage is the post-purchasing evaluation; depending on the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, the consumer may become a loyal customer.

3.3 Related Literature. According to a literature review, a number of studies have been done on the convenience store marketing mix with various variants. Maneewong (2013) found that the 7Ps service marketing mix has a positive correlation with the trend of choosing to use 7-Eleven and other mini-mart stores, while Niempracha (2018) stated that 7Ps had a positive correlation with decision-making behavior in convenience stores. Yaowarat (2019) studied how the 4Ps marketing mix (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) affected buying behavior in modern trade stores, and found that Product and Promotion had an impact on purchasing behavior. The results of Soonsan and Sangthong (2020) found that price and promotion from the 4Ps marketing mix affected consumer purchasing decisions for ready-made food in convenience stores. Previous studies found that there was a difference in the 4Ps marketing mix and 7Ps service marketing mix that were used to study the consumer choice of convenience stores. Therefore, this study is different from previous research because data was collected from a different sample. The findings obtained from this research may confirm those of previous studies. However, differences or changes in the marketing mix may lead to developments and adjustments of convenience store operations that are consistent with the current situation

3.4 Conceptual Framework. This study examined the relationship between marketing mix and consumer choice of convenience stores. The marketing mix factors as independent variables consisted of product, price, place, promotion, people, process,

and physical evidence. Consumer choice was the dependent variable. The conceptual framework is shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Marketing Mix Factors and Consumer Choice



4. Methodology

A quantitative approach was chosen as the main data collection method. The population used in this study was consumers in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi, a total of 6,864 residents (Muak Lek Municipality, 2020). The sample size can be obtained by using Yamane’s formula to calculate the size of the population (Yamane, 1973), which yielded a sample size of 378 consumers who were selected by means of simple random sampling.

The researchers collected data by passing out a questionnaire survey. The survey consisted of three parts. Personal information collected with closed-end questions, while information about 7Ps marketing mix perception and consumer choice were gathered with items that used a five-point Likert scale. The researchers developed and improved questions from recognized research studies by Maruthorn (2015), Deepprasertdumrong (2016), Traijet (2015) and Sunasuan (2016). An Item Objective Congruency Index (IOC) was employed to validate the questions. Items with an IOC index higher than 0.67 were accepted and used in the questionnaire. A pilot test of the questionnaire was conducted with 30 consumers, and reliability was analyzed by Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, which showed a confidence value of 0.94. The researchers collected data by distributing and receiving 208 completed questionnaires, which was equivalent to 55.03%. Their reliability was analyzed by Cronbach’s alpha of all variables, which showed confidence values of between 0.63 - 0.83; product (0.71), price (0.67), place (0.70), people (0.83), process (0.75), physical evidence (0.72), and consumer choice (0.63). However, Hulin et al. (2001) stated that the confidence value of all variables equals to or greater than 0.60 is considered reliable.

The personal factors were summarized with descriptive statistics, such as raw frequencies and percentages. The marketing mix perception factors were summarized using mean and standard deviation. Interpreting the questionnaire results used an interval scale by dividing the perception as follows (Wanitbancha, 2002); average score of 4.21 to 5.00 means 'Highest Awareness', 3.41 to 4.20 means 'High Awareness', 2.61 to 3.40 means 'Moderate Awareness', 1.81 to 2.60 means 'Low Awareness', and 1.00 to 1.80 means 'Lowest Awareness'. The relationship between the marketing mix and consumer choice of convenience stores were used to perform a correlation analysis to analyze the relationship between each variable. A multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

5. Results

5.1 Personal Factors. The personal characteristics of 208 respondents are reported in Table 1. The largest group of respondents were male (57.7%), aged between 21-25 years old (30.8%), graduated with Bachelor degree (65.9%), single status (49.0%), who worked at private companies (30.8%), had average incomes of less than 10,000 THB (96.6%) per month, visited convenience stores one time per day (51.9%), and spent less than 500 THB per time (96.6%).

Table 1: Personal Factors of Respondents

Factors		Frequency (208)	Percentage
Gender	• Male	120	57.7
	• Female	88	42.3
Age	• Less than or equal to 20 years old	41	19.7
	• 21 – 35 years old	64	30.8
	• 26 – 30 years old	28	13.5
	• 31 – 35 years old	17	8.0
	• 36 – 40 years old	31	14.9
	• More than 41 years old	27	13.0
Education Background	• Lower than Bachelor Degree	61	29.3
	• Bachelor Degree	137	65.9
	• Higher than Bachelor Degree	10	4.8
Married Status	• Single	102	49.0
	• Married	96	46.2
	• Divorced/widowed	10	4.8
Occupation	• Civil Servants/State Enterprise Employees	23	11.1
	• Students	41	19.7
	• Private Business	13	6.3
	• Private Company Employees	64	30.8
	• General Employment	54	26.0
	• Others	13	6.3
Average Income per Month	• Lower than 10,000 THB	68	32.7
	• 10,001 – 20,000 THB	41	19.7
	• 20,001 – 30,000 THB	48	23.1
	• 30,001 – 40,000 THB	27	13.0
	• 40,001 – 50,000 THB	17	8.2
	• More than 50,001 THB	7	3.4
	• Less than one time per day	91	43.8
	• One time per day	108	51.9

How many times per day?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than one time per day 	9	4.3
How much to spend per time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than 500 THB 	201	96.6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 501 – 1,000 THB 	6	2.9
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 1,000 THB 	1	0.5

5.2 Marketing Mix Perception. The overall perception of all marketing mix factors in the convenience store is shown in Table 2. The results found that product, people, and physical evidence had the highest level of awareness, while the other four factors had a high level of awareness. When marketing mix factors were considered by question, the first five highest awareness questions were employees spoke politely and were willing to serve (mean=4.48, SD=0.70), employees work properly and systematically (mean=4.48, SD=0.61), the store is located in an ideal location to use the service (mean=4.46, SD=0.58), quality products that are safe for consumers (mean=4.43, SD=0.70), there is a good security system that can be trusted (mean=4.39, SD=0.62), and employees are clean and dressed neatly (mean=4.38, SD=0.69). The lowest awareness question was leaflets are distributed to inform customers (mean=3.53, SD=0.87).

Table 2: Perception of Marketing Mix Factors

Factors	Mean	S.D.	Level of Awareness
Product	4.22	0.45	Highest
Price	4.13	0.43	High
Place	4.14	0.43	High
Promotion	3.92	0.55	High
People	4.26	0.54	Highest
Process	4.13	0.45	High
Physical Evidence	4.30	0.43	Highest

5.3 Buying Decision Making. The buying decision-making perception level of convenience store is shown in Table 3. When considered by question, it was found that two questions had the highest level of awareness: you use a convenience store because you need it in your daily life (mean=4.30, SD=0.60), and you use convenience stores because they are easy to access and offer a variety of services (mean=4.26, SD=0.54). The lowest awareness question was before using convenience store services, you compare products or services with other stores (mean=3.47, SD=0.94).

Table 3: Perception of Consumer Choice

Questions	Mean	S.D.	Level of Awareness
You use a convenience store because you need it in your daily life	4.30	0.60	Highest
You use convenience store services such as online banking, purchase of products, etc. because they are convenient and fast	3.93	0.72	High
Before using convenience store services, you compare products or services with other stores	3.47	0.94	High
You use convenience stores service because they have quality products, are safe, and have good service	4.12	0.61	High
You use convenience stores because they are easy to access and offer a variety of services	4.26	0.54	Highest

The researchers used Pearson’s correlation coefficient analysis to analyze the magnitude and direction of linear relationships between the variables. It was found that all variables were statistically significant at the 0.01 level. Correlation between the variables should not be greater than 0.75, nor should the r value be greater than 0.75 according to the study of Prasittrattasin (2008). Table 4 shows that correlation between the variables had correlation coefficients of between 0.33 - 0.68, which were lower than 0.75, and within the acceptable range. It was also found that all independent variables had VIF values lower than 3.30, indicating that there were no problems with the relationships between the independent variables (Songsrirote, 2014)

Table 4: Correlation Coefficients and VIF Results

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Decision Making	1.00							
Product	0.33**	1.00						
Price	0.44**	0.64**	1.00					
Place	0.42**	0.53**	0.67**	1.00				
Promotion	0.53**	0.48**	0.58**	0.68**	1.00			
People	0.49**	0.43**	0.57**	0.54**	0.59**	1.00		
Process	0.61**	0.52**	0.52**	0.52**	0.59**	0.68**	1.00	
Physical Evidence	0.56**	0.56**	0.56**	0.47**	0.54**	0.61**	0.69**	1.00
VIF		1.98	2.54	2.43	2.32	2.29	2.56	2.31

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Using the multiple regression analysis by error method, it was found that independent variables were able to predict the consumer choice of convenience stores. When considered by factor, four factors [product (sig=0.01), promotion (sig=0.01), process (sig=0.00), and physical evidence (sig=0.00)] were significantly related to consumer choice of convenience stores. Price (sig=0.11), place (sig=0.91), and people (sig=0.79) were not statistically significant as shown in Table 5.

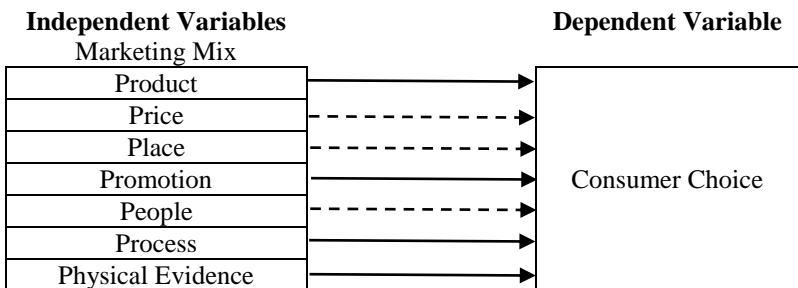
Table 5: Multiple Regression Results

Model	B	St. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	1.12	0.28		4.01	0.00
Product (X1)	-0.20	0.07	-0.21	-2.81	0.01*
Price (X2)	0.14	0.09	0.13	1.62	0.11
Place (X3)	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.11	0.91
Promotion (X4)	0.17	0.06	0.22	2.72	0.01*
People (X5)	-0.02	0.06	-0.02	-0.26	0.79
Process (X6)	0.36	0.08	0.36	4.31	0.00*
Physical Evidence (X7)	0.25	0.08	0.24	3.04	0.00*
$R^2 = 0.46, \Delta R^2 = 0.44, F = 24.09, Sig. = 0.00^{**}$					

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer Choice

It can be seen that product, promotion, process, and physical evidence were correlated with consumer choice of convenience stores, while price, place, and people were not related to consumer choice as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Multiple Regression Testing Results



—————→ Means are statistically significant at 0.05
 - - - - - → Means are not statistically significant at 0.05

6. Discussion

The research proposed to study the level of perception of the marketing mix and consumer choice of convenience stores in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi. Most consumers who responded the questionnaires were male, aged between 21-25 years old with a Bachelor degree, single marital status, working as private company employees, have an average income of less than 10,000 THB per month, use convenience store service one time per day, and spend less than 500 THB per time.

The results of marketing mix perception found that physical evidence factors had the highest level of awareness, which was consistent with the findings of Pkukkaman (2009). The promotion factor had a high level of awareness, which was related to the research results of Phonsri (2007), Prachanukul (2011), and Deeprasertdumrong (2016), who found that promotion awareness was also at a high level.

The analytical findings of the relationship between marketing mix and consumer choice of convenience stores in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi found that product, promotion, process, and physical evidence factors were related to consumer choices. This was consistent with the research results of Ritboonchai (2013), who studied the relationship between service marketing mix factors affecting consumer choice at 7-Eleven based on the attitudes of students from Burapha University. This study used second orders confirmatory factor analysis as the statistical tools, and found that the first three factors affecting consumer choice were physical evidence, process and product. Niempracha (2018) found that promotion and physical evidence factors were positively correlated with purchasing behavior and consumer behavior in Khon Kaen Municipality. Yaowarat (2019) found that product and promotion factors influenced consumer purchasing behavior at modern trade retail stores in Bangkok. Deeprasertdumrong (2016) found that consumer decision at LOFT Stores in Bangkok were mostly affected by product and promotion. Chantaraphak (2017) stated that convenience stores which had a variety and healthy products and were clean affected decision making by the elderly in Bangkok. Prachanukul (2011) found that product, physical environment, and promotion affected consumer choice of traditional trade retailers in Muang District, Ratchaburi Province. Soonsan and Sungthong (2020) studied the relationship between marketing mix and consumer choice toward ready-to-eat food in convenience stores; their results showed that promotion significantly influenced consumer choice. Kanajanapa (2011) found that the three factors of retailing mix which influenced consumer purchasing behavior the most were merchandise offered, visual merchandising and store design.

Furthermore, the analysis results found that price, place and people factors had no relationship with consumer choice, which was consistent with the research findings of Khanla and Nipinit (2016). They found that traditional retail shops should do business more flexibly by focusing on customer behavior in order to fulfil their needs, such as

having clean price tags and clean display areas. Rattananram (2017) found that the location and pricing factors of retailing mix did not influence customers purchase decisions of Tseng Ha Klong 16. Chantaraphak (2017) stated that price did not affect to consumer choice because convenience was the key. Maruthorn (2015) found that the price and place marketing factors did not affect the purpose of purchases at Max Value.

The results of this study were different from the findings of Traijet (2015), who stated that all service marketing mix factors had a high level of influence on decision making of Old-fashioned Retail Grocery Stores at Talaad Thai Marketing in Pathumthani. And Maneewong (2013) found that all service marketing mix factors were positively correlated with consumers' decision to choose retail stores.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the results of this research were different from previous studies in some areas. Price, place, and people factors did not affect consumer choice of convenience stores. Most convenience stores have the same price for goods or service charges, the design of distribution channels was also the same for all, and service capabilities of employees was similar, which caused consumers not to see the importance of price, place, and people factor of convenience stores. Or, it can be said that if a convenience store wants consumers to purchase goods or use services in their stores, there must be a wide variety of products, interesting promotion methods and materials to attract consumers, operational systems that assure consumers of quality and efficiency, a good environment inside and outside of the stores, and product placement that allows consumers to see and feel with their eyes.

7. Recommendations and Future Directions

The research results indicate that convenience stores should improve these significant factors by adding more product variety to provide customers with more purchase options, adjusting to suit the market price, consider the affordability of customers, and provide sufficient and suitable parking space. They should also organize regular and ongoing promotion activities, find new ways to capture customers' attention, have a sufficient number of employees who are willing to provide convenient and fast service, give information continually to customers, and arrange for employees to introduce new products and services to customers.

For researchers and people who are Interested in Researching the Future, this research was especially for consumers in Muak Lek Municipality, Muak Lek District, Saraburi, and so the results are limited. Therefore, the population should be expanded in the next study such as at the provincial or national level. This research studied only the marketing mix; other variables which are related to the decision making should also be studied, such as attitude and learning. Finally, data collection was quantitative, so qualitative data should be collected such as through in-depth interviews or focus groups, which would make the research complete and more valuable.

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