

## **CUSTOMERS PERCEPTIONS, SERVICE MARKETING AND CONSUMERS LIFESTYLE INFLUENCING CUSTOMERS PURCHASING DECISION OF SOFT SERVE FOR STUDENTS IN BANGKOK UNIVERSITY**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this research is to study the factors impacting customers purchasing decisions of soft serve for students in bangkok university. The three independent variables of this study to understand the dependent variable of customers' purchasing decisions are customer perceptions, service marketing and consumers lifestyle. The sub-variables for customer perceptions consisted of. The sub-variables for service marketing included. The sub-variables for consumers' lifestyle included. Quantitative research was implemented to collect the data from the 429 respondents who were bangkok university students accommodation and study locations which were near bangkok university, future park rangsit and near bts victory monument, where are in bangkok and pathum thani provinces, and a convenience sampling method was applied to collect questionnaires in google form advertised on facebook and twitter(x) to reach out target questionnaires. The questionnaire contains in Likert scale 1-5 ranges having three questions for each sub variable and independent variables consisting of three sub variables. The software IBM SPSS is used to calculate statistics and analyze the data such as inferential and descriptive analysis. The results concluded that there was an impact between the independent variables (customers perceptions, service marketing and consumers lifestyle) and the dependent variable (customers' purchasing decisions).

**Keywords:** customers' purchasing decisions, customers perceptions, service marketing, consumers lifestyle, marketing management

### **Introduction**

There is always a demand to relieve the hot weather especially in Bangkok, Thailand where it can rise up to 50 degree celsius in summer. Cold desserts and beverages such as ice cream, popsicles to cold beverages and non-beverages drinks such as tea, coffee, juices and vitamin drinks can be found with numerous and colorful brands in 7 eleven stores across the

country to beat the heat of Bangkok. Such comfort foods are on trend among Thai people, all of these foods are locally and customized according to Thai appetite as mentioned by Chen & Huang (2013).

According to Suneeta & Dharaiya (2014), Low fat and low calories soft ice cream is more popular than ever due to cheaper cost and nourishing milk food alternatives. Soft serve, a frozen dessert, with less milk fat, without egg yolks and much more air content inside. Unique processing with air content makes a lighter and fluffier texture compared to traditional ice cream. Soft serve, frozen dessert is more popular than ever due to less dairy healthier options, more environmentally friendly and prices competitive in contrast to ice cream and cold beverages explained in the background of the business industry section.

Locations selling soft serve are going to be the places where bangkok university students live, hangout and study. Since Khlong Toei Bangkok University branch is closed permanently, most of the university students inhabitant places would be nearby Pathum Thani Bangkok University and Victory monument, Phaya Thai since there is a van transporting from Phaya Thai to Khlong Luang district daily. Some places worth mentioning are near Future Park Rangsit and BTS light green line which are also convenient to travel to Bangkok University.

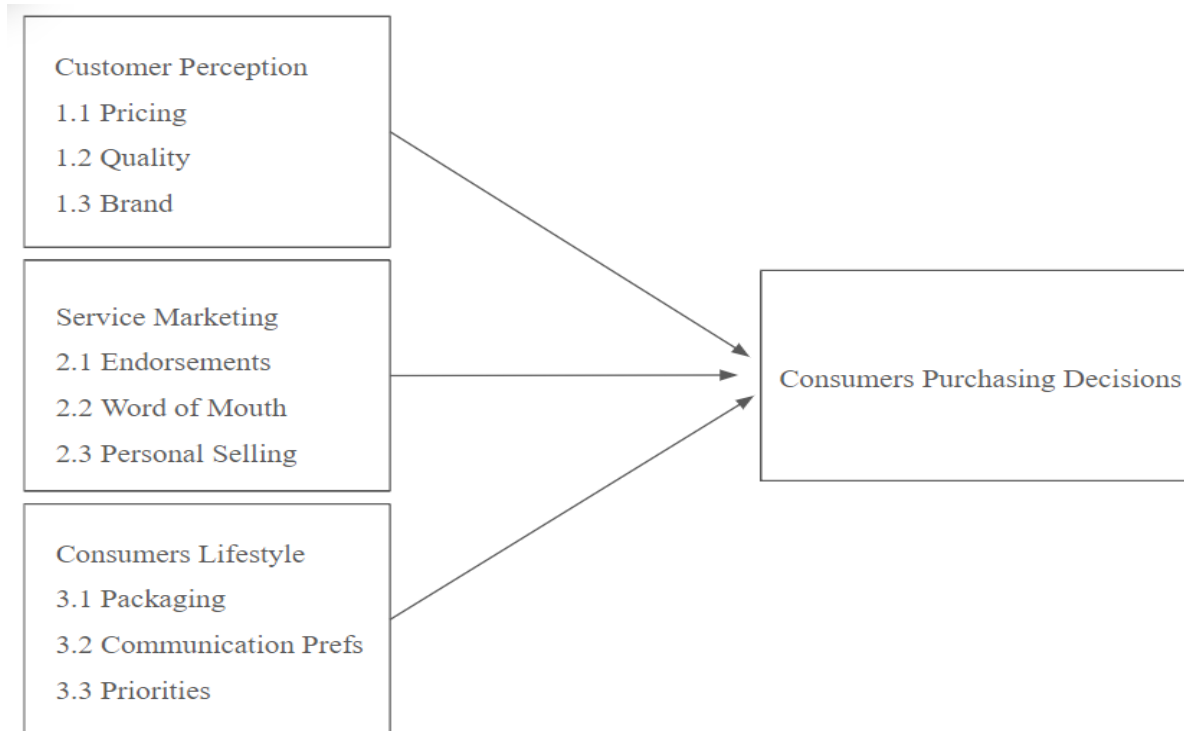
Importance of the study is to provide the healthier, cheaper and more environmentally friendlier option to university students. According to Strong, Parks & Anderson (2008), university students tend to consume more caffeine, sugar, fat and sodium more and healthier foods and fruits less while lack of sporting activities due to lack of time available which leads to exposing chronic risk disease. Even though soft serve contains sugar and fat, its content is far less than ice cream, chai thai tea and frappuccino. This is supported by Srividhya & Savithri (2021) as 66% of respondents are willing to buy food products with higher health benefits under the topic of customer perception on ice cream. Thus, the study of healthier, cheaper and more environmentally friendly products is a necessity.

### **Objective of the study**

1. To study the impact of Customer Perception factor Pricing, Quality & Brand on Consumers Purchasing Decision.
2. To study the impact of Service Marketing factor Endorsements, Word of Mouth & Personal selling on Consumers Purchasing Decision.
3. To study the impact of Consumers Lifestyle factor Packaging, Communication Preferences & Priorities on Consumers Purchasing Decision.

## Scope of the study

### Conceptual Framework



### **Literature Review**

According to Forbes, Kahiya & Balderstone (2015), the factors that drive consumer purchasing behavior come from internal and external factors which include flavor, texture, energy and satiety and external factors are those marketing aspects such as advertising or promotions, price, brand name, and product packaging. This refers to soft serve advertising in the peripheral path of ELM, giving the impression of appealing price, quality and brand by service marketing to potential customers to satisfy their lifestyle needs when cooling food is required.

Akkaya (2020) stated that firms can sustain by predicting the dynamic of purchasing behavior of customers and having proactive marketing strategies. Since, selling soft serve for most university students and modern trends are on top of the needs of pyramids, it is a reliable theory for marketers in terms of customer perception, service marketing and consumer lifestyle.

Soft serve industries are on trend due to its foodstagramming appearance as subjective norms according to Andrews (2020). Vaterlaus, Patten, Roche & Young (2015) stated that college students admitted that what they see on other posts on social media influenced them to refer to it as an instagram diet. Thus, good attitudes in service marketing and consumer lifestyle among university students.

## **Methodology**

### **Population and Sample**

The study is how customer perception, service marketing and consumers' lifestyle affect customer purchasing decision. The researcher selected both Thai and foreigners who are Bangkok university students to demonstrate the purchasing decision of soft serve in Bangkok & Pathum Thani. (Population)<sup>42</sup> According to Yamane's table, if the population is greater than 100,000, 400 sample sizes are needed to be collected with a precision level of  $\pm 5\%$ . However, 22 samples are collected due to working on IS alone.

### **Type of Research and Tool**

Questionnaires are created in google form with Likert scale. Descriptive statistics, Inferential statistics and SPSS data analysis method will be used for data analysis. For research design, screening questions & demographics, the fact: nominal and ordinal scales will be used and other parts, the behavior: interval scale is measured. Convenient sampling techniques will be used for collecting questionnaires.

### **Validity Test**

The validity of this online questionnaire was carefully checked and approved by the advisor.

### **Reliability Test**

After collecting 43 samples of questionnaires, the total Cronbach's Alpha reliability value of 0.724 is calculated by using SPSS statistical software which data collection is acceptable.

### **Statistics**

1. Descriptive statistics, which is composed of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.
2. Inferential statistics, which is composed of the Multiple Regression Analysis Test.

## **Result**

### **Demographic Data**

Most respondents are below 25 years old, which is 75.99% of total respondents and 60.84% are Thai nationality. 60.4% of them are likely to go for soft serve once a month while 33.1% of them are willing to pay 21 - 30 baht for each soft serve. Majority like Milk and Matcha flavor for their soft serve with 47.79% and 41.03% respectively. 56.18% of them

admitted that Taste, Quality & Packaging are the main factors that influence them to buy soft serve.

**Mean and Standard Deviation**

1. customer perception: ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.29, SD = 0.69), SATISFIED
2. service marketing: ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.28, SD = 0.70), SATISFIED
3. consumers lifestyle: ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.28, SD = 0.70), SATISFIED
4. customers purchasing decision: ( $\bar{x}$ = 3.28, SD = 0.70), SATISFIED

**Multiple linear regression**

1. Customer perception toward customers' purchasing decisions.: Adjusted R-square =0.905, F =1345.478, \*P≤0.05, Independent Variable = Customer perception

Sub Variables	b	Beta	t	Sig	Interpretation
1.1 Pricing	0.338	0.402	21.339	<0.001*	Accepted
1.2 Quality	0.297	0.369	20.688	<0.001*	Accepted
1.3 Brand	0.323	0.404	22.627	<0.001*	Accepted

2. Service marketing toward customers' purchasing decisions: Adjusted R-square =0.893, F =1184.385, \*P≤0.05, Independent Variable = Service marketing

Sub Variables	b	Beta	t	Sig	Interpretation
2.1 Endorsements	0.309	0.371	17.532	<0.001*	Accepted
2.2 Word of Mouth	0.310	0.382	19.550	<0.001*	Accepted
2.3 Personal Selling	0.313	0.392	20.069	<0.001*	Accepted

3. Consumers' lifestyle toward customers' purchasing decisions: Adjusted R-square =0.918, F =1577.328, \*P≤0.05, Independent Variable = Consumers' lifestyle

Sub Variables	b	Beta	t	Sig	Interpretation
3.1 Packaging	0.329	0.397	22.074	<0.001*	Accepted
3.2 Communication Preferences	0.307	0.375	22.009	<0.001*	Accepted

## **Conclusion**

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>1</sub>: Customer Perception (Pricing, Quality & Brand) has a significant impact on customers' purchasing decisions of soft serve for students in bangkok university.

H<sub>2</sub>: Service Marketing (Endorsements, Word of Mouth & Personal Selling) has a significant impact on customers' purchasing decisions of soft serve for students in bangkok university.

H<sub>3</sub>: Consumers Lifestyle (Packaging, Communication Preferences & Priorities) has a significant impact on customers' purchasing decisions of soft serve for students in bangkok university.

### **Recommendation**

While analyzing the data, average mean and standard deviation are on average 3.28 and 0.7 and the difference in gap value between each sub variable are low which can presume that the questionnaires are found to be one side which is (5) most agree. All findings of sig values are  $P \leq 0.05$  and which can be concluded as reliable data. However, all F values are in between 1000 and 1500, Beta value low in percentage with the average of 0.382 suggested that respondents are obscure about their responses as results of (1) least agree to (5) most agree are balanced. Therefore, questionnaires should be improved such as clear, short, less biased, and specific questions need to be implemented. The solution such as reducing the number of question items, being confidential is suggested for future studies. Furthermore, the term 'soft serve' is less known to most respondents compared to ice cream or cold drinks which can hinder their true opinions and so is the results.

### **Discussion**

To be concluded, the correlation between (pricing, quality and brand) customer perception, (endorsements, word of mouth and personal selling) service marketing and (packaging, communication preferences and priorities) consumers lifestyle on customer purchasing decisions is academically supported by the 12 theories. According to Yamane's table, 429 respondents is sufficient enough to do data analysis.

This research thoroughly discussed and studied a total of twelve theories in literature review. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Theory of Planned Behavior Model (TPB) covers customer perception, service marketing and consumers of customer purchasing decisions respectively. Perceived Value Theory, Perceived Quality Theory, and Brand Perception Theory covers for pricing, quality and brand loyalty of customer perception respectively. Relationship Marketing Model, Service Quality Gap Model and Service Blueprinting Model covers for endorsements, word of mouth and personal selling

of service marketing respectively. Sociocultural Theory and Consumer Identity Theory, Sociocultural Theory and Psychographics covers packaging, communication preferences and priorities respectively. This research is done in four dimensions regarding sub-variables, customer perception, service marketing and consumer lifestyle each supporting Theories / Academic Concepts and Other Relevant Research Articles respectively and concluded with dependent variables of why they are connected to their respective sub variables by referring Theories / Academic Concepts and Other Relevant Research Articles.

Attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control is affecting service marketing and consumer lifestyle of customer purchasing decisions. Soft serve industries are on trend due to its foodstagramming appearance as subjective norms according to Andrews (2020). This was mentioned in Theory of Planned Behavior Model (TPB) which correlated to customer perception.

Petty, Cacioppo & Abraham (1986) stated that The Elaboration Likelihood Model is when communication is affected to potential customers, their motives incline to the central and peripheral path which is logical and emotional thoughts during purchasing decisions. Thus, customer perception, service marketing and customer lifestyle is induced. This was mentioned in The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) which correlated to service marketing.

Meer (2015) proposed Maslow’s motivational theory with a pyramid to display priorities from necessity to creatively which are physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self esteem and self actualization from bottom to top respectively. This was mentioned in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs which correlated to consumers' lifestyle.

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