Marketing Mix, Purchasing Behavior, and Word-of-Mouth for Thai Street Food Vendors Located in Bangkok Among Foreign Tourists

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Abstract

Street food is a significant cultural and economic component of Bangkok's tourism sector, and understanding these factors is critical for vendors aiming to enhance their competitiveness and appeal to international visitors. The objectives of this research were to study the influence of the marketing mix (comprising product, price, place, and promotion), and purchasing behavior (comprising food safety and hygiene, cultural experience, and vendor interaction) on word-of-mouth (WOM) for street food vendors located in Bangkok among foreign tourists. A quantitative research design was employed, collecting data from 300 foreign tourists who visited popular street food locations in Bangkok. The data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis to examine the relationships between the marketing mix, purchasing behavior, and WOM. The results reveal that all components of the marketing mix significantly influence WOM which Product quality emerged as the most significant factors, followed by Price, Place and Promotion. Moreover, purchasing behavior in term of Cultural Experience was found to be the most key driver of WOM, followed by Food Safety and Hygiene, and Vendor Interaction. These findings highlight the critical role of the marketing mix and purchasing behavior in shaping foreign tourists' WOM. Recommendations are provided to guide vendors in optimizing the marketing mix to increase the effectiveness of WOM, and operational strategies to capitalize on the preferences and enhance purchase behaviors to drive positive WOM.

Keywords: Marketing mix, Purchasing behavior, Word-of-mouth, Street food, Bangkok

1. Introduction

1.1 Principles and Rationale

Street food has become an essential part of the global tourism experience, offering not only convenience and affordability but also a deep cultural connection to the destinations visited. Vendors selling street food provide an authentic and immersive experience for tourists, helping them to engage with the local culture and cuisine.

Thailand's street food culture is a significant aspect of its tourism industry, particularly in Bangkok, which is known globally for its vibrant food scene. The city's street food vendors cater to both locals and foreign tourists, offering an authentic and affordable culinary experience (TAT, 2022). As the street food market continues to grow in popularity among international visitors, understanding the factors that influence tourists' decisions to purchase food and their subsequent behavior is critical for vendors aiming to succeed in this competitive market.

The popularity of Thai street food among foreign tourists visiting Bangkok has grown substantially, drawing attention to the strategies employed by street food vendors to attract and satisfy their international customer base. Essential components of marketing, including the marketing mix, purchasing behavior, and word-of-mouth, play a vital role in influencing how these tourists perceive and interact with street food offerings in the city.

Together, the marketing mix, purchasing behavior, and WOM create a robust framework for understanding and enhancing the effectiveness of Thai street food vendors in Bangkok. By examining these elements, this study aims to explore how vendors can adapt their strategies to meet the preferences of foreign tourists, ultimately contributing to the sustainability and growth of the city's vibrant street food culture.

1.2 Research Objective (TNR 12pt., bold)

1. To analyze the influence of the marketing mix on foreign tourists' word-of-mouth (WOM) toward Thai street food vendors in Bangkok.
2. To analyze the influence of purchasing behavior on foreign tourists' word-of-mouth (WOM) toward Thai street food vendors in Bangkok.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Marketing Mix (4Ps) and Street Food Vendors

The marketing mix framework comprising of product, price, place, and promotion, provides a comprehensive approach to understanding how businesses meet customer needs and preferences (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017; Baker & Hart, 2016). For street food vendors, these elements are essential for attracting foreign tourists and distinguishing their offerings in a competitive marketplace.

Product refers to the quality, flavor, and authenticity of the food offerings. These elements play a crucial role in attracting tourists who value unique, locally-inspired culinary experiences.

Price involves affordability and perceived value, which are significant determinants of tourists' willingness to purchase street food.

Place relates to the location, accessibility, and cleanliness of the vendor's establishment, as vendors are often located in high-traffic areas near popular attractions, making them easily accessible to tourists.

Promotion includes vibrant food displays, personal interactions, and increasing use of social media, enhances vendor visibility and draws attention in crowded marketplaces.
Effective promotion enhances visibility and reputation.

2.2 Purchasing Behavior of Foreign Tourists

Purchasing behavior refers to the factors that influence a consumer's decision to purchase a product or service (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995; Solomon et al., 2018). When it comes to street food, the purchasing behavior of foreign tourists is shaped by various internal and external factors.

Food Safety and Hygiene: For foreign tourists, concerns about health and sanitation often influence their willingness to try street food. Vendors who demonstrate compliance with hygiene standards are more likely to gain trust and encourage purchases (Chang & Chang, 2018).

Cultural Experience: Tourists are drawn to street food that represents the cultural essence of a destination. Authentic dishes provide a sense of connection to local traditions and contribute to a memorable experience (Kim & Kim, 2005).

Vendor Interaction: Friendly and engaging customer service fosters positive impressions and enhances satisfaction, motivating tourists to return and recommend the vendor to others.

2.3 Word-of-Mouth (WOM) and Street Food

Word-of-mouth is a critical driver of business success, particularly in tourism and food-related industries. Positive WOM whether shared in-person or through digital platforms like TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, or Instagram, can significantly boost the visibility and reputation of street food vendors (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Tourists who enjoy high-quality food, positive interactions, and cultural experiences are more likely to share favorable reviews, encouraging others to visit. Conversely, negative WOM can deter potential customers and harm a vendor's image (Litvin et al., 2008; Berger, 2014).

3. Methodology

The study employs a quantitative research design to and a survey-based methodology is utilized to collect primary data with the cross-sectional approach is used, collecting data at a single point in time. The target population consists of foreign tourists who have visited street food vendors in major tourist areas of Bangkok. A minimum sample size of 300 respondents is selected to ensure statistically significant results, following the recommendations for behavioral research (Cochran, 1977). A quota sampling method is employed to capture diverse demographics (e.g., age, gender, nationality). Respondents are selected from high-tourist footfall areas such as Khao San Road, Yaowarat (Chinatown), Banthat Thong and Samyan, and Chatuchak Market.

A structured questionnaire is used to collect data on Marketing Mix (4 Ps), Purchasing Behavior, and Word-of-Mouth (WOM) which adapted from prior studies. Likert-scale items designed to capture the key determinants of tourists' opinions. The data collected with the questionnaire will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The statistics used in data analysis include: Descriptive Statistics used to summarize demographic data and provide an overview of respondents' general preferences and behaviors, as well as Inferential Statistics used Multiple Regression Analysis to determine the influence of the marketing mix and purchasing behavior on Word-of-Mouth (WOM).

4. Results

The results of the quantitative analysis of the relationships between the marketing mix, purchasing behavior, and word-of-mouth (WOM) for street food vendors among foreign tourists in Bangkok. A combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques was used to examine the data collected through a structured questionnaire.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The demographic of the respondents indicated a majority of respondents were aged 25–40, 55% female, Tourists from Asia (35%), 50% mid-level incomes, approximately 70% were first-time visitors to Bangkok, and 40% traveled with friends, spend 200–400 THB per day on street food, and 40% of tourists trying street food daily or multiple times during their visit.

4.2 Inferential Analysis

The results are categorized into two main components of the marketing mix, purchasing behavior, and WOM regarding street food vendors among foreign tourists.

4.2.1 The Influence of Marketing Mix on foreign tourists' Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

The multiple regression analysis revealed a significant relationship between the Marketing Mix (4 Ps) and foreign tourists' Word-of-Mouth (WOM) toward street food vendors in Bangkok. The results of the regression analysis shown the statistical values as shown from Table 1.

Table 1 The influence of Marketing Mix (4 Ps) on foreign tourists' Word-of-Mouth (WOM) toward street food vendors in Bangkok

Marketing mix	B	β	t	Sig.
Constant	3.825	.578	10.753	.000**
Product	.346	.353	4.232	.000**
Price	.309	.314	3.324	.000**
Place	.275	.281	2.564	.008**
Promotion	.220	.225	2.253	.021*

* Significant level at .05, ** Significant level at .01

The results found that the Marketing Mix comprise of Product, Price, Place, and Promotion significantly influenced on foreign tourists' purchasing behavior toward street food vendors in Bangkok at the Significant level at .05 and .01. The regression model explained 56% of the variance in purchasing behavior ($R^2 = 0.56$), indicating a strong influence of the marketing mix on tourists' decisions. Based on the regression analysis, the following results are expected:

- Product (β = 0.353, $p < 0.001$): The cultural experience of the food were the most influential factors in purchasing decisions. Respondents emphasized traditional recipes and unique cultural experiences as key motivators for choosing Thai street food.
- Price (β = 0.314, $p < 0.001$): Tourists found street food to be a highly affordable option compared to other dining alternatives. However, perceived value for money played a critical role; tourists were willing to pay slightly higher prices for exceptional taste and hygiene.

- Place ($\beta = 0.281$, $p < 0.01$): Proximity to tourist attractions and accessibility influenced the likelihood of purchasing. Vendors located in high-footfall areas, such as Khao San Road and Chatuchak Market, were frequently visited.
- Promotion ($\beta = 0.225$, $p < 0.05$): Social media and online reviews significantly impacted purchasing behavior. Respondents often relied on platforms like Instagram and TripAdvisor to discover popular vendors.

4.2.2 The Influence of Purchasing Behavior on Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

The multiple regression analysis revealed a significant relationship between the Purchasing Behavior and foreign tourists' Word-of-Mouth (WOM) toward street food vendors in Bangkok. The results of the regression analysis shown the statistical values as shown from Table 2.

Table 2 The influence of the purchasing behavior on foreign tourists' Word-of-Mouth (WOM) toward street food vendors in Bangkok

Purchasing behavior	B	β	t	Sig.
Constant	2.248	.235	8.413	.000**
Food Safety and Hygiene	.346	.351	4.242	.000**
Cultural Experience	.415	.422	5.237	.000**
Vendor Interaction	.308	.214	2.174	.035*

* Significant level at .05, ** Significant level at .01

The results found that the Purchasing Behavior comprise of Food Safety and Hygiene, Cultural Experience, and Vendor Interaction significantly influenced on foreign tourists' Word-of-Mouth (WOM) toward street food vendors in Bangkok at the Significant level at .01. The regression model explained 62% of the variance in purchasing behavior ($R^2 = 0.62$), indicating a strong influence of the marketing mix on tourists' decisions. Based on the regression analysis, the following results are expected:

- Food Safety and Hygiene: The coefficient for food safety and hygiene is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.351$, $p < 0.001$), this would indicate that tourists who perceive higher levels of food safety and hygiene are more likely to engage in positive WOM, which show that hygiene standards are essential for customer satisfaction in the food industry.
- Cultural Experience: The coefficient for cultural experience is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.422$, $p < 0.001$), would suggest that tourists who perceive the food as cultural experience are more likely to recommend the street food vendor to others. This result refers to cultural experience is a key driver of consumer satisfaction and WOM in the tourism and food industry.
- Vendor Interaction: The coefficient for vendor interaction is significant and positive ($\beta = 0.214$, $p < 0.05$), would imply that friendly and engaging vendor behavior has a strong influence on positive WOM. This finding emphasize that vendor-customer interactions significantly affect consumer perceptions and WOM.

5. Conclusion

The results highlight the critical role of the marketing mix and purchasing behavior in shaping foreign tourists' WOM. Product quality emerged as the most significant factors, followed by

Price, Place and Promotion. Moreover, purchasing behavior in term of Cultural Experience was found to be the most key driver of WOM, followed by Food Safety and Hygiene**,** and Vendor Interaction**.** These findings underscore the need for Thai street food vendors to strategically align their offerings with tourists' preferences to maximize business success.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are provided to help vendors enhance their marketing strategies and increase the effectiveness of WOM as a promotional tool. The recommendations to leverage Word-of-Mouth (WOM) for Long-Term Success are as follows:

1. Optimizing the Marketing Mix (4Ps): Product should focus on providing high-quality, authentic Thai food, local ingredients, traditional recipes, and unique flavors can create a more memorable experience that tourists are likely to share via WOM. Pricing should be competitive yet reflect the perceived value of the product, as well as offering premium items for tourists seeking an authentic, high-end experience, while keeping basic offerings affordable for budget-conscious travelers. Place should ensure that their stalls are located in high-traffic tourist areas and create an inviting, visually appealing environment. Moreover, Promotion should leverage both traditional and digital promotional methods, offering discounts or promotions through mobile apps, or partnering with influencers to increase brand awareness.

2. Enhancing Purchasing Behavior to Drive Positive WOM: Vendors should place a high priority on maintaining food safety and hygiene standards, visibly displaying their compliance with health regulations. Moreover, Vendors should train their staff to provide friendly and engaging customer service, including welcoming tourists, answering questions about the food, and creating a positive and memorable experience.

3. Encourage Customer Reviews and Social Sharing: Vendors should actively encourage satisfied customers to share their experiences online by offering incentives (e.g., small discounts or a free drink with the next purchase) in exchange for online reviews or social media posts.

Acknowledgment

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