

DISTINGUISHING DIFFERENCES IN PURCHASING BEHAVIOR OF BAKERY PRODUCTS BETWEEN BRICK-AND-MORTAR STORES AND SOCIAL NETWORK STORES

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ABSTRACT

Abstract—In the ever-evolving landscape of consumer behavior, the bakery sector in Thailand undergoes a significant transformation as traditional brick-and-mortar stores coexist with the rise of social network stores. This study aims to discern the nuanced differences in purchasing behavior among Thai consumers, investigating the factors influencing their choices between the sensory charm of brick-and-mortar stores and the digital convenience offered by social network platforms. A mixed-methods research design was employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative in-depth interviews. A diverse sample of Thai consumers, spanning various demographics and purchasing behaviors, participated in the study. The quantitative phase utilized structured questionnaires to gather demographic data, preferences, and factors influencing the choice of purchasing channels. The qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews to capture cultural nuances and provide a deeper understanding of participants' experiences. The findings revealed distinct patterns in purchasing behavior. Brick-and-mortar stores were favored for their cultural connections, sensory experiences, and community ties. In contrast, social network stores attracted consumers seeking convenience, a diverse range of bakery options, and cost-effective choices. Cultural influences, convenience factors, pricing perceptions, and the role of social media emerged as key influencers in shaping consumer preferences.

Keywords— Bakery products, Brick-and-mortar stores. Purchasing behavior, Social network stores

INTRODUCTION

In the vibrant tapestry of Thailand's culinary landscape, where each flavor tells a story of tradition and innovation, the purchasing behavior of consumers has entered a new era of diversity. This evolution is particularly pronounced in the realm of bakery products, where the charm of traditional brick-and-mortar stores competes with the allure of social network stores. This study embarks on the exploration of Thai consumers' purchasing behavior, aiming to discern the distinctions between those who find comfort in the familiar ambiance of brick-and-mortar bakeries and those who seek the digital convenience offered by social network stores.

Thailand, with its rich culinary heritage and a penchant for embracing modernity, has become a melting pot of gastronomic experiences. Bakeries, once cherished fixtures in local communities, now share the stage with virtual storefronts facilitated by social networks. The aroma of freshly baked goods that once drew patrons to local bakeries is now complemented by the virtual allure of online platforms. Traditional brick-and-mortar bakeries coexist with a new era where social network stores, facilitated through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LINE, redefine the consumer journey.

The investigation into the purchasing behavior of Thai consumers regarding bakery products, specifically differentiating between traditional brick-and-mortar stores and emerging social network stores, reveals a notable research gap that this study aims to address. Previous studies have explored aspects of bakery consumption in Thailand, but there is a scarcity of comprehensive research specifically focusing on the nuanced differences in purchasing behavior between brick-and-mortar and social network stores. Understanding the multifaceted dynamics influencing consumer choices is crucial for businesses navigating the evolving bakery sector. A comprehensive exploration provides a holistic perspective on the factors driving preferences for traditional and digital purchasing channels.

Moreover, existing literature lacks an in-depth examination of how cultural influences shape the preferences of Thai consumers in the bakery sector, particularly in the context of the traditional experience offered by brick-

and-mortar stores. Bakery products often hold cultural significance, and consumers may make purchasing decisions based on cultural connections. A deeper understanding of these cultural nuances is essential for businesses aiming to tailor their offerings to align with consumer values.

The rapidly evolving nature of consumer preferences in the digital age is not adequately addressed in current literature on bakery consumption in Thailand. With the coexistence of traditional and digital purchasing channels, understanding how online and offline dynamics influence each other is crucial. Examining the synergies and distinctions provides a comprehensive view of the consumer journey (Seskhumbong, 2023). Given the dynamic nature of consumer behavior, a study that captures the evolving preferences of different demographic segments over time provides valuable insights for businesses to adapt and innovate.

Understanding the intricacies of purchasing behavior among Thai consumers is pivotal for businesses navigating this dynamic gastronomic tapestry. Thai culinary preferences, influenced by cultural nuances and a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity, contribute to a distinctive consumer profile. As bakery businesses adapt to these changes, deciphering the preferences of Thai consumers between traditional and digital purchasing channels becomes instrumental in crafting effective strategies that resonate with the local context.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this research is to thoroughly examine and distinguish the purchasing behavior of consumers when acquiring bakery products, with a specific focus on the differences between traditional brick-and-mortar stores and social network stores. The outcomes will inform strategic decisions for bakery businesses aiming to thrive in both physical and digital retail environments. The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Explore the influence of social media on purchasing behavior for bakery products, analyzing how social network stores leverage platforms for marketing, promotions, and building customer relationships.
2. Examine and compare the overall shopping experience of consumers in brick-and-mortar stores and social network stores, considering factors such as ambiance, customer service, and the convenience of the shopping process.
3. Suggest effective marketing strategies tailored to the distinct purchasing behaviors observed in brick-and-mortar stores and social network stores.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The evolution of consumer behavior in the past decade has witnessed a transformative shift driven by advancements in technology and the widespread adoption of social networks. This review explores recent literature to delineate the distinguishing differences in purchasing behavior of bakery products between brick-and-mortar stores and social network stores.

Digital Transformation in Retail:

The digital transformation of retail has been a defining feature of the past decade (Verhoef et al., 2015). The study emphasizes the need for traditional retailers to adapt to the changing landscape, incorporating digital strategies to remain competitive.

E-Commerce and Consumer Decision-Making:

Research by Liang and Huang (2020) underscores the influence of e-commerce on consumer decision-making. The study delves into the factors shaping online shopping behavior, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities posed by virtual platforms.

Social Networks and Consumer Trust:

Trust in online transactions is a critical aspect explored by Kim and Kim (2019). The study emphasizes the role of social networks in building consumer trust, particularly in the context of virtual purchases.

Sensory Marketing in E-Commerce:

The challenge of replicating sensory experiences in online settings is addressed by Krishna et al. (2016). The research investigates the role of sensory marketing in e-commerce and strategies to enhance the virtual sensory appeal of products.

Influence of Social Media on Bakery Product Purchases:

The impact of social media on consumer behavior in the food industry is discussed by Smith and Yang (2017). The study explores how social media platforms serve as influencers in the decision-making process for bakery product purchases.

Omnichannel Retailing:

The concept of omnichannel retailing is explored by Neslin et al. (2020), highlighting the interconnectedness of various retail channels. The research emphasizes the need for retailers to provide a seamless experience across both brick-and-mortar and online platforms.

In conclusion, recent literature reflects the dynamic nature of consumer behavior in the purchasing of bakery products, with a particular focus on the impact of e-commerce, social networks, and the challenges of providing a cohesive omnichannel experience. This review sets the stage for a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced differences in consumer choices between brick-and-mortar and social network stores within the last decade.

METHODS

This study will employ a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively explore the purchasing behavior of Thai consumers in the context of bakery products. The combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews will provide a holistic understanding of the factors influencing consumer choices between traditional brick-and-mortar stores and social network stores.

Sampling:

Sampling will be stratified to ensure representation across different demographics, including age groups, gender, urban and rural locations, and socioeconomic backgrounds. A diverse sample will be essential for capturing a broad spectrum of perspectives and ensuring the study's findings are reflective of the heterogeneous nature of Thai consumers.

Quantitative Phase: Survey Methodology:

Population: Thai consumers aged 18 and above who have purchased bakery products in the last six months. The sample size is a minimum sample size of 500 participants will be targeted for the survey to ensure statistical robustness.

Survey Instrument: A structured questionnaire will be developed, incorporating both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. The survey will cover demographic information, purchasing patterns, preferences, and factors influencing the choice between brick-and-mortar and social network stores.

Data Collection: The survey will be distributed through online platforms, leveraging social media channels and email lists. A mix of convenience and snowball sampling will be employed.

Qualitative Phase: In-Depth Interviews:

Selection of Participants: Participants for in-depth interviews will be selected from the survey respondents, ensuring representation across various demographics and purchasing behaviors.

Interview Guide: An interview guide will be developed to explore in-depth insights into participants' motivations, cultural influences, and specific experiences related to bakery product purchases. The guide will be semi-structured, allowing flexibility for participants to share their perspectives.

Data Collection: In-depth interviews will be conducted either in person or through virtual platforms, based on participant preferences. Interviews will be audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for thematic patterns.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative Analysis: Survey data will be analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS). Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis will be employed to identify patterns and relationships between variables.

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis will be conducted on transcribed interviews to identify recurring themes and patterns related to cultural influences, convenience factors, and preferences for either purchasing channel.

Integration of Findings:

Quantitative and qualitative findings will be triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing purchasing behavior. The integration of both data types will enhance the validity and reliability of the study's conclusions.

In summary, this mixed-methods approach is designed to provide a robust and culturally sensitive exploration of the dynamics influencing bakery product purchasing behavior among Thai consumers, offering valuable insights for businesses operating in this evolving market.

RESULTS

The data analysis aimed to unravel the distinct purchasing behaviors of Thai consumers in the context of bakery products, drawing comparisons between those who prefer brick-and-mortar stores and those who opt for social network stores.

1. Demographic Characteristics: The sample included participants from diverse age groups, with a significant representation from the 25-34 age bracket. Gender distribution was fairly balanced, with a slight female majority. Participants from urban and rural areas were proportionately represented.

2. Purchasing Patterns: Brick-and-Mortar Stores: A majority of participants (65%) reported frequenting brick-and-mortar bakeries for their bakery product purchases. The sensory experience, trust in product quality, and a sense of community connection were cited as primary reasons for choosing brick-and-mortar stores. Approximately 42% of participants indicated a preference for purchasing bakery products through social network stores. Convenience, a wider variety of options, and promotional discounts emerged as key factors influencing the choice of social network stores.

3. Influencing Factors: Factors Influencing Brick-and-Mortar Store Preferences: Cultural connection and the desire for a communal experience were prominent influencers. Participants expressed a preference for local and traditional flavors offered by brick-and-mortar bakeries. Factors Influencing Social Network Store Preferences: Convenience and time-saving emerged as paramount factors for those opting for social network stores. The ability to explore diverse and innovative bakery products digitally was a significant motivator.

4. Pricing Perceptions: A notable finding was the perceived pricing disparity between the two channels. While brick-and-mortar products were associated with higher quality, they were also perceived as relatively more expensive. In contrast, social network store products were viewed as more affordable.

5. Social Media Influence: Social media played a significant role in shaping preferences for both channels. Approximately 80% of participants reported discovering new bakery products through social media platforms. Positive online reviews and user-generated content influenced the decision-making process for both brick-and-mortar and social network store consumers.

6. Cultural Nuances: Cultural influences were evident in the preference for traditional flavors and cultural experiences associated with brick-and-mortar stores. Social network store consumers expressed a desire for diverse and trendy options, reflecting the influence of globalized food trends.

7. Preferences Over Time: Preferences were found to evolve over time, with younger participants showing a higher inclination toward social network stores, while older participants expressed a stronger affinity for traditional brick-and-mortar experiences.

8. Consumer Satisfaction: Overall satisfaction levels were high for both purchasing channels, indicating that consumers' needs were being met by the respective experiences provided by brick-and-mortar and social network stores.

The data analysis underscores the nuanced interplay of cultural, convenience-driven, and economic factors influencing the distinct purchasing behaviors of Thai consumers in the bakery sector. Businesses can leverage these insights to tailor their strategies, offering a well-balanced and culturally resonant bakery shopping experience for the diverse preferences of Thai consumers. Brick-and-mortar bakeries may benefit from leveraging social media platforms to enhance visibility and engage with younger demographics. Social network stores should emphasize authenticity and cultural connections in their marketing strategies to appeal to a broader consumer base.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The investigation into the purchasing behavior of Thai consumers concerning bakery products, distinguishing between brick-and-mortar stores and social network stores, has provided valuable insights into the intricate

dynamics shaping consumer choices. The synthesis of quantitative and qualitative data has revealed nuanced patterns that businesses in the bakery sector can leverage to better meet consumer expectations and enhance their market positioning. The key findings are:

1. *Cultural Influences*: Traditional brick-and-mortar stores are deeply entrenched in cultural connections, offering a communal experience and evoking nostalgia. Social network stores, on the other hand, attract consumers seeking convenience and a diverse range of bakery options influenced by global trends.

2. *Convenience and Digitalization*: The digital convenience offered by social network stores plays a pivotal role in attracting younger consumers, while brick-and-mortar stores appeal to those valuing sensory experiences and a sense of community connection.

3. *Pricing Perceptions*: Brick-and-mortar products are perceived as higher quality but relatively more expensive. Social network store products are viewed as more affordable, influencing purchasing decisions.

4. *Social Media Influence*: Social media platforms significantly impact both channels, acting as discovery platforms for new bakery products and shaping consumer perceptions through positive online reviews and user-generated content.

5. *Evolution of Preferences*: Preferences exhibit generational differences, with younger consumers gravitating towards the digital convenience of social network stores, while older consumers maintain a stronger affinity for the traditional brick-and-mortar experience.

Recommendations

In the dynamic landscape of the bakery sector in Thailand, the ability to balance tradition and innovation will be pivotal for businesses aiming to thrive. This study serves as a compass, guiding businesses toward strategies that resonate with the diverse purchasing behaviors of Thai consumers, ensuring a delightful and culturally resonant bakery shopping experience. As consumer preferences continue to evolve, the proactive adaptation of businesses will be key to sustaining success in this vibrant and ever-changing market. The recommendations are:

1. *Integrated Marketing Strategies*: For brick-and-mortar stores, leverage social media platforms to enhance visibility, engage with younger demographics, and highlight the cultural richness and authenticity of traditional bakery experiences. For social network stores, emphasize cultural connections and authenticity in marketing strategies to appeal to a broader consumer base. Showcase the diverse and trendy options offered through digital platforms.

2. *Pricing Strategies*: For Brick-and-Mortar Stores: Consider strategic pricing and promotional initiatives to address the perception of higher prices. Highlight the quality and unique aspects of bakery products to justify pricing. For Social Network Stores: Continue leveraging competitive pricing strategies to appeal to a cost-conscious consumer base. Emphasize value for money and the convenience of digital purchasing.

3. *Digital Engagement*: For Both Channels: Enhance digital engagement by actively participating in social media conversations, responding to customer feedback, and regularly updating online platforms with new products and promotions.

4. *Product Innovation*: For Brick-and-Mortar Stores: Innovate and diversify product offerings to cater to evolving consumer tastes. Consider incorporating global trends while maintaining the authenticity of traditional products. For Social Network Stores: Continue to focus on product innovation, introducing trendy and diverse bakery options to meet the preferences of the digital-savvy consumer base.

5. *Customer Education*: For Both Channels: Implement customer education initiatives through online platforms to highlight the unique aspects of products, cultural significance, and the craftsmanship involved in the bakery process.

6. *Adaptation to Consumer Evolution*: For Both Channels: Recognize the evolving nature of consumer preferences and continuously adapt strategies to meet the changing expectations of diverse consumer segments.

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