Factors Affecting Customer Perception Toward Customer Loyalty of Street Food Hygiene During The Pandemic: A Case of Bangsean, Thailand

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Abstract

This research paper focused on the investigation of customer perception in the context of hygienic street food in the case of Bangsean City, Thailand. Three variables have been analyzed in this valuation as follows: food hygiene practice, service and sanitation operation, and street food atmosphere. Regarding research methodology, the authors used a quantitative approach to testify on an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Linear Regression Analysis. Particularly respondents were collected by distributing four hundred questionnaires to Thai citizen tourists who had recently visited the town with consumed street food in a place. As a result, indicated that customer perception positively affected customer satisfaction. Simultaneously, customer satisfaction positively affected customer loyalty. Moreover, the finding can be justified by a new persuasive method of contribution for the street food vendors in terms of hygiene conditions, in order that enhances the quality of food, service and sanitation operation advancement, and build-up an atmosphere which are the factors affecting to the customer's perception.

Keywords: street food hygiene, customer perception, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, bangsean

A. Introduction

Thailand is the prospective tourism and travel hub of ASEAN with plenty of various tourism resources and deliverable sectors. One of the most attractive tourists visiting places in Thailand is street food. Many foreign visitors gain experience with a variety of Thai street foods to make their enchanted traveling experience (Choe and Kim, 2018; Vesci and Botti, 2019). In this regard, a kind of offering tourism product by a portion of food and beverage in everyday life, reflecting how people make a living, local socio-culture, then becoming a well-known tourist attraction. Not only international tourist arrivals but also domestic and even general people probably like to consume street food from the vendors. Which is Thai people's lifestyle to find out this easy way of eating out along anywhere places. Torres Chavarria and Phakdee-auksorn (2017) present that approximately there are 90,000 street food vendors across the country on the avenues, schools or colleges, bus and train stations, and other crowded venues that tourists can visit day and night (Ceyhun Sezgin and Şanlıer, 2016).

This tourism product commercialization is an ancient practice common in several countries and represents the culture of typical and local food (Cortese et al., 2016). Street food should be promoted because food in each area has its own distinctive and high growth potential rate, from snacks and drinks to heavy meals. In terms of business model, vendors prepare and sell food and beverages on the street to minimize the fixed cost of the rental fee for example on buildings. Although, street food is considered unappropriated for health by low nutrition content and fast food. Sometimes, it was produced in an unacceptable conditioned location which may cause hygiene to be low (Nkosi and Tabit, 2021). Besides, no less of people are willing to consume such a food category due to its inexpensive and fast service (Ceyhun Sezgin and Şanlıer, 2016).

However, as the Pandemic Coronavirus or COVID-19 has been weakening at the global level and performed catastrophically in the Thai economy and society since March 2020, the virus spreads via droplets rapidly infectious and could be severe symptoms on the human physical to death in case of not vaccinated. In accordance with this, it made both visitors and people tend to pay more attention to hygiene and sanitation, and life turned out to new normal and back to normal with the new pattern, in addition to alternation of food and beverages (F&B). Following this matter, F&B contamination prevention could be fundamentally implied by washing hands regularly for anti-virus purposes by the closed ecosystem of food products manufactured at the industrial level. Despite compliance with the Universal Prevention of Outbreaking, most of the street food vendors have been lacking water objectivity for cleaning since they were in the street. Therefore, the hygiene and sanitation range is considered 'low' (Duda-Chodak et al., 2020).

Based on COVID-19, the customer perception of street food can be affected. Talking about the dependent factors that customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are the findings of the customer perception of the value of street food hygiene and sanitation. Notwithstanding, the recognition of satisfaction is broadened as being associated with a value and basic concept. Moreover, street food satisfaction includes the ambiance and physical environment, which play a key role in defining the experience of the client (Kotler, 1973). Furthermore, customer perception of sanitation also significantly impacts customer behavior. Thus, street food for tourism is a general product in need of improvement for creating a good experience for both local people and particularly international and domestic visitors.

B. Literature Review
Street Food

An outbreak of COVID-19 was a breakthrough in rocketing the number of people aware of food hygiene. This concern is not only in the restaurant but also in street food. It impacted the importance of gastronomy and various types of cuisine (Ramón et al., 2018). As street food could be described as food and beverages that are ready-to-eat while to be sold in public places, usually nearby streets, and be available to lots of people sight or convenience. That similarity is quite like fast food in terms of terminology, nevertheless, vendors regularly provide the traditional or local food of the country (Torres Chavarria and Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). Most countries have those conventional foods to provide that reflect their folklore cuisine, involved with food production and preparation, sales funnel, and a way of consumption therein. In general, people probably like to have street food when traveling because of its preferences, diversification of the typical foods, affordable price, and ease of finding subject to availability of time (Ceyhun Sezgin and Şanlıer, 2016).

Basically, Thailand's street food is usually uncooked and ready-to-eat such as food and beverages, desserts, snacks, and fresh fruits (Jeaheng and Han, 2020), whereas compared to the latter are available in stores or malls at higher prices. Besides, street-food-producing is defined as authenticity and unique flavor so that consumers can taste surrealism. It is able divided into three categories namely (1) sold by mobile vendors such as food trucks, and food stalls; (2) sold in fixed locations such as semi-permanent stalls; (3) sold at a point occupied such as a marketplace (Jeaheng and Han, 2020). Even though, some concerning issues might be incurred thanks to poor prevention of carrying out food handling, cleanliness such as fabrication, and masks (Mamun et al., 2020).

This industry is a vital part of the development of the city by demanding food dwellers and economic contribution. As a result of the expansion, a trend of ready-to-eat consumption has been increasing among workers, respectively

with families that have no time to cook and eat inside. That particularly impacts opening the windows for self-business employment, including with re-skills and up-skills so as to become a tourism resource. Forthcoming to be taken into consideration is to improve the provider in terms of designing operations, and service facilities, in addition to hygiene and sanitation access kits for instance, water for cleaning, protected utensils and containers, and efficient waste and disposal systems (Mamun et al., 2020). To this matter, it can be raised the income of sellers, the quality of customers, particularly the provision of the value of money, and further nutritious street food (World Health Organization, 2020).

Customer Perception

A process of people selecting, organizing, and interpreting sensations such as responding to basic stimuli is called 'perception', whereas 'consumers' perception' is based on consumers' factors to perceive and evaluate products or services. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) present that the physical environment could impact human emotion and behavior. By means, the environment's condition could impact customer perception of certain things. The condition of the environment could be the hygiene of the place, the atmosphere or ambiance, the grooming of staff, et cetera. The consumer's perception of street food hygiene depends on the factors used by the consumer to recognize and evaluate products or services at street food vendors (Morano et al., 2018). Therefore, to define the character of this tourism product notably to be assessed such as organization, service operation, point of sale, cleanliness, sanitation, and consumption process safety on health security (Ceyhun Sezgin and Şanlıer, 2016).

To study, the main aim was to analyze the consumer perceptions impacted by COVID-19 on street food hygiene in one reputation destination in Thailand, Bangsaen City to investigate which factors affect visitation. Nkosi and Tabit (2021) present that nowadays most of the tourism product and service providers who have not attended food safety training possess inadequate knowledge and are supposed to be non-compliance with specific regulations. One of the maximum relevant issues was deficient monitoring and control of preventive actions by health authorities (Ceyhun Sezgin and Şanlıer, 2016). In addition, the literature could also mention that a possible quality determinant is food trade consumed away from home which established in service operation, cleanliness, organization, and healthiness, said to authors (Cortese et al., 2016; Torres Chavarria et al., 2017; Choe and Kim, 2018; Duda-Chodak et al., 2020; Mamun et al., 2020; Nkosi and Tabit, 2021).

In a meaningful of ambiance, the effects on the human senses of the five, whereby dimensions of its conditions lighting, scent, and temperature will be studied separately (Nkosi and Tabit, 2021). The investigation of these

decomposed factors should be considered how each aspect affected a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Inferior to food safety, it is administered worldwide to eliminate outbreaking in the restaurant and temporary food service establishments (Ceyhun Sezgin and Şanlıer, 2016). Notwithstanding, food handlers often exhibit a poor understanding of microbial or chemical contamination of food and the measures necessary to correct them. Many studies tend to be conducted on a short-term basis; longer-term evaluations are required to assess behavioral changes in food operators properly. World Health Organization (2020) suggests that the most critical line of defense against foodborne disease is implementing a food safety education program. For example, chefs must wash their hands with soap and clean water every time before meeting food. After coming into contact with raw food, cleaning and sanitizing all surfaces after food preparation, and separating raw and cooked chopping boards, chefs must keep them clean with proper sterilization (Nkosi and Tabit, 2021). Must make sure all utensils are in clean condition before using them. All of that is for the health and safety of consumers (World Health Organization, 2020).

Finally, food and beverage service operations in the tourism and hospitality industry involve the immediate supply of ready-to-eat but exclude retail and food production (Lillicrap and Cousins, 2010). Food service operations involve providing a broad of business acumen. Lots of servings per day in tremendous types. To managers, professionals in operations, sales and marketing, people and team management, customer experiencing-relationship, and financial management are essential in sequence management (Yu et al., 2014). Delivering and services process through customers is ultimately for the business's survival, further service operation could affect customer perception of the firm and then lead to satisfaction. In the food industry, accretion of customer satisfaction is indispensable, achieved by inter-relation by superior customer service and quality of deployment, this preference is to determine of translation on which satisfies which customer desire. In summary, customers' requirements were a shorter time identifying food delivery, fast order taking, good taste, fine dining ambiance, and food production, especially health threats related (Morano et al., 2018).

Eventually, sanitation is the final critical factor as it was a massive matter of human beings in hygiene. The contemporary iconic after the Pandemic is undoubtedly well-being or wellness defined by how we live. Sanitation is a way to treat human excreta to protect human health, despite it is the high cost to adopt this infrastructure, otherwise, without that accountability could impact the customer perception. For example, being in a restaurant could lead to foodborne illness and be very harmful to physical conditions (Ridderstaat and Okumus, 2019). Moreover, sales volume and associated supply chain shall be continuity

concerns. As a matter of these facts, understanding and right acknowledging customer perception in regard to sanitation is either significant for human resource development or re-designation of the firm.

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

Delighted customer or beyond expectation makes the succeed company, to what extent, does focusing on customer satisfaction is led to your firm accomplishment? Stranjancevic and Bulatovic (2015) illustrated in their qualitative research that service quality is a significant factor that affected customers' satisfaction, which is greatly relevant to good hygiene. Thus, service quality and sanitary products can acquire customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Moreover, a happy face customer is also a must for the firm, said Kaur and Naail (2017). They defined customer satisfaction as customers' pleasant feelings when perceived the products and services compared to their expectations.

Quality of the service is expected to achieve customer satisfaction to derive customer loyalty. However, this process could be taken not so long time through the human learning paradigm on satisfaction or dissatisfaction when perceiving what they purchased. Yu et al. (2014) testified that service quality directly influenced the satisfaction of clientele and led to loyalty later, as well as Kaur and Naail (2017) mentioned that the three main attributes of customers satisfaction were atmosphere, food hygiene, and service quality both targeted new customers and customers retention.

As we know, food hygiene and services are the key elements to obtaining customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Meanwhile, if the firm is unable to satisfy them, there were no way out to attract newcomers or retain the existing ones (Kaur and Naail, 2017). Nakpathom et al. (2021) latterly revealed a supportive of customer loyalty had redounded by customers' satisfaction, in which service quality played on this predictive relationship thereof.

Bangsaen, Thailand

A small-city but nationwide-international reputation located in Sean Sook Sub-district, Chonburi province, which is named Bangsaen City, a potential municipal smart and wellness city with 45 minutes by drive from Suvarnabhumi International Airport and 1.5 hours direct from Bangkok or approximately 74 kilometers on the distance. Moreover, it is centered in between the new coming aerotropolis U-tapao International Airport, the industrial estates, and the seaports wherein mainly support the tourism economy of the nation. In terms of geography, there are many communities with a diversity of local wisdom, culture, and manifest, combination with natural resources of coastal and marine sciences, a 5 kilometers beach with good quality seawater about 87 MWQI, and

standardization infrastructures which enabled for international scale-event for instances, marathon, sport event, including to welcoming tourists more than 1.8 million ever since the year of Pandemic 2020 especially group of families and revisit on weekends.

Additionally, an ample of activities influenced the local foods, seafood, and fusion cuisine and it is such a paradise for food lovers with hundreds of street food alongside the canton. The offering can be found on the whole side of the beach and neighboring touristic e.g., grilled, and roasted seafood or fresh ones in the local fishery market, further to other Thai signature dishes – for example, Papaya Salad (Weins, 2020). Coherently says, the research findings conducted by Nakpathom et al. (2021) justified that Bangsean beach is an incredibly famous Gastronomy tourism and it also indicated hygiene and sanitation in the street food. As aforementioned, many people realize that this town and Bangsaen beach has become a place where worth revisiting.

C. Research Methods

Research methodology refers to the nature of research design and methods. The sample of the study consisted of tourists visiting Bangsean, Thailand. Data were collected at various times of day in December 2021. Four hundred fifty questionnaires were based on a non-probability convenience sampling technique (Amick and Wallberg, 1975). Of these, 400 questionnaires were returned, representing a 90% response rate to the study's original sample.

A structured questionnaire has been used to collect and gather data which is divided into four parts. The first part is general information asking about socio-demographic characteristics, including age, gender, education status, monthly income, and times the respondents have used street food. The second part is determining customer perception of hygiene on street food. The third part is customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The final part is recommendations. The measurement scales of a questionnaire for all items were based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 'strongly agree' to 1 'strongly disagree.' A pilot study was conducted to pretest questionnaires for validity and reliability with Cronbach's alpha = 0.948.

This quantitative study focuses on an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) that was first performed to determine how the 18 were teams divided into dimensions for customer perception of street food hygiene in Bangsean, Thailand. Linear Regression Analysis was conducted to determine which prediction was previously determined from the EFA. SPSS for Windows was employed to analyze the descriptive analysis and the scale measurement. Descriptive analysis frequencies and percentages are calculated. The Explorer Factor Analysis (EFA) was used while Statistical Technique was applied for data collection, with an Eigenvalue greater than 1 being accepted (Glenn et al., 2005).

Next, factor loadings must be in any event equivalent to or more noteworthy than 0.5 to be retained, and only retained factors with at least three items (Field, 2000). Lastly, the specified factors and items should be theoretically comprehensible; internal compatibility reliability was investigated for the identified factors. Next, linear regression analysis was applied to identify customer satisfaction and customer loyalty to forecast the trend in the future.

D. Result and Discussion

The data collected from the questionnaire for this research could be collected with customers by 400 sets in Bangsean, Thailand, during December 2021. Customer demographic characteristics of the sample can provide dividends into male and female, which most of the respondents' gender is female (66.8%). Most of their age is between 21-30 years old (58%). Most of the sample has a bachelor's degree (76.7%) and is still single. Most of the income is less than 10,000 baht (41%). The demographic characteristics of the respondents can be processed as follows in Table 1.

Table 1. Customer demographic characteristic

Customer demographic characteristics		N = 400	Percent
Gender	Male	133	33.2
	Female	267	66.8
Age	Less than 20 years old	76	19.0
	21-30 years old	232	58.0
	31-40 years old	27	6.7
	41-50 years old	37	9.3
	51-60 years old	28	7.0
Education	Lower than a bachelor's degree	65	16.2
	Bachelor's degree	307	76.7
	Master's degree	23	5.8
	Doctor's degree	5	1.3
Status	Single	323	80.7
	Married	72	18.0
	Separated	5	1.3
Income	Less than 10,000 Baht	164	41.0
	10,001-15,000 Baht	94	23.5
	15,001-20,000 Baht	38	9.5

Source: Researcher (2022)

The customers' behavior in buying street food uses service street food in Bangsean, Thailand. Most customers prefer to buy 1-5 times per week (56.8%). The average cost per time to buy street food is 101-300 baht per time (47%). The day that the customers choose to buy the street food is a weekday (78.3%) and the Characteristic to buy the street food is with friends (52.5%) in Table 2.

Table 2. Customer behavior for buying street food

Customers' behavior in buying street food		N = 400	Percent
How often to buy street food per week	1-5 times	227	56.8
	6-10 times	117	29.3
	11-15 times	21	5.3
	more than 16 times	35	8.8
The average costs per time to buy the street food	Less than 100 baht	64	16.0
	101-300 baht	188	47.0
	301-500 baht	98	24.5
	More than 501 baht	50	12.5
The day that you choose to buy the street food	Weekdays	313	78.3
	Weekend and public holiday	87	21.7
Characteristic to buy the street food	Alone	175	43.8
	With friends	210	52.5
	With family	10	2.5
	other	5	1.2

Source: Researcher (2022)

The data analyzed by EFA, the suitability of the information on the use of factor analysis techniques. KMO value is 0.924 which is more than 0.5 and close to 1, therefore, concluded that the existing data is appropriate to use factor analysis techniques. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was used to test the hypothesis that variables are correlated, the Chi-square value is equal to 2799.163, and the Sig. is equal to 0.000 ($p<0.05$), therefore, the variables are correlated. That is, the 16 variables of this data set were associated and suitable to be used in factor analysis.

The analysis of the relationship between the variables of customer perception of hygiene of street food in Bangsean. The Initial Eigenvalues indicated that the three factors are meaningful as they have Eigenvalues of more than 1. Factors 1, 2, and 3 explain respectively 24.82%, 22.23%, and 12.33% of the variance with a cumulative total of 59.38%.

When testing the relationships of the variables using a Varimax Rotation that is the Orthogonal rotation, which assumes that the components are independent of each other. The factor loading values found that: Factor 1

consists of 6 variables, Factor 2 consists of 7 variables and Factor 3 consists of 3 variables. 8 variables are eliminated because the factor loading less than 0.5 in all groups, therefore cannot be classified into any group. Then, the researcher determined the list of elements to convey the meaning that is consistent with the parameters of the individual components by Factor 1 is "Food Hygiene Practice", Factor 2 is "Service and Sanitation Operations" and Factor 3 is "Atmosphere of Street Food" in Table 3.

Table 3. Factors of customer perception of street food hygiene

Attributes	Factor Loading
Factor 1: Food Hygiene Practice	
(Eigenvalues = 3.97 and Variance = 24.82)	
The food is clean	0.802
Washing raw food before cooking	0.750
The atmosphere inside and outside the shop is clean	0.725
Check the expiry date labels of the food on the package	0.714
Storing raw food items in an area separate from cooked food	0.616
It's important for street food vendors or staff to wear masks and gloves while serving the food	0.522
Factor 2: Service and Sanitation Operations	
(Eigenvalues = 3.56 and Variance = 22.23)	
Measure the temperature and clean your hands with sanitizer before entering the store	0.766
Street food vendors need to cover their hair all the time	0.688
Frequent cleaning of store surfaces and touchpoint	0.661
Vending stalls are maintained in clean conditions. (e.g., plastic cover with food, wear gloves)	0.660
Street food vendors need to always wear an apron	0.599
Street food vendors need to provide cleaning stuff (e.g., tissue, hand sanitizer, etc.)	0.558
Use of contactless payments (e.g., transfer money)	0.544
Factor 3: Atmosphere of Street Food	
(Eigenvalues = 1.97 and Variance = 12.33)	
The interior of the shop is beautiful and catches the eye	0.852
The place is cleaned every 30 minutes	0.619
The chairs and tables are set up to make customers feel the comfort of the restaurant	0.512

Source: Researcher (2022)

Factor 1: Food Hygiene Practice is the most important for customers' perception of Hygiene of street food in Bangsean with 3.97 Eigenvalues and Variance at 24.82. There are 6 attributes in this factor which are 1) the food is clean 2) washing raw food before cooking 3) the atmosphere inside and outside the shop is clean 4) check expiry date labels of food on the package 5) storing raw food items in an area separate from cooked food and 6) it's important for street food vendors or staff to wear mask and gloves while serving the food. The factor loadings are presented at 0.802, 0.750, 0.725, 0.714, 0.616, and 0.522, respectively.

Factor 2: Service and Sanitation Operations has Eigenvalues at 3.56 and Variance at 22.23. The attributes in this point identify 7 attributes which are 1) measure temperature and clean your hands with sanitizer before entering the store 2) it's important for street food vendors to cover their hair all the time 3) frequent cleaning of store surfaces and touchpoints 4) vending stalls maintained in clean conditions 5) it's important for street food vendors to wear an apron at all times 6) it's important for street food vendors to provide cleaning stuff and 7) use of contactless payments. that shows the factor loading at 0.766, 0.688, 0.661, 0.660, 0.599, 0.558, and 0.544, respectively.

Factor 3: Atmosphere of Street Food has Eigenvalues at 1.97 and variance at 12.33. There are 3 attributes in this factor which are 1) the interior of the shop is beautiful and catches the eye 2) place is cleaned every 30 minutes and 3) the chairs and tables are set up to make customers feel the comfort of the restaurant that shows the factor loading at 0.852, 0.619 and 0.512, respectively.

Table 4. Result of a linear regression between customer perception and customer satisfaction in hygiene street food

Dimension	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient	P-value
Food hygiene practice	0.327	0.117	0.193	0.006**
Service and sanitation operations	-0.038	0.115	-0.022	0.742
The atmosphere of street food	0.194	0.077	0.155	0.012**

** significance level < 0.05
Source: Researcher (2022)

Table 4 shows the result of the linear regression between customers' perception and customer satisfaction with the hygiene of street food in

Bangsean, Thailand. There are two significant dimensions which are food hygiene practice and the atmosphere of street food. However, among these two dimensions, the most effective towards satisfaction is food hygiene practice (β = 0.193, p-value = 0.006). When customers choose to buy food, they must consider food hygiene, and secondly, the atmosphere of street food (β = 0.155, p-value = 0.012) If the atmosphere of the street food firm looks clean will make the customers want to buy more food.

Table 5. Result of a linear regression between satisfaction and customer loyalty

Dimension	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient	P-value
Customer Loyalty	0.296	0.031	0.432	0.000**

** significance level < 0.05
Source: Researcher (2022)

Table 5, the result of the linear regression between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. It shows that satisfaction is a high impact as shown that the p-value is below 0.005 which indicates that when the overall customer is satisfied, this leads to tourists' loyalty positively.

From the investigation, it can be concluded that hygiene is a vital part of street food operations, in addition to highly impacted customer perception affecting street food service providers, the Pandemic situation assaulted all people drastically emerged their hygiene mentality. To take corrective action the potential customers started to pay more attention to the service, sanitation, and hygiene environment. The findings said customer perception was identified into three (3) factors; food hygiene practice, service and sanitation operations, and atmosphere of street food which were positively important to approach customer satisfaction in hygienic awareness. This testification of this study revealed as same as Mamun (2020) identified that street food vendors ought to improve operation and service conditions with support facilities, including access kits e.g., water for cleaning, protected utensils and containers, and efficient waste and disposal systems as the key success factors for new normal food industry's firm operation.

Furthermore, Ceyhun Sezgin and Şanlıer (2016) indicated that fundamental factors contributing to customer satisfaction also include the quality of food and food delivery. However, staff performance in service and sanitation operations could be reached the professionals well-trained, friends, customer relationships, and experience management eventually. (Mamun, 2020). As a result of sanitation, it was verified by Ridderstaat and Okumus (2019) that understanding consumer perception and attitudes and acknowledgment of the

critical sanitation dimension led to how to train the employees and/or remodeling the restaurant.

E. Conclusion

Consequently, customer perception, and customer satisfaction toward the hygiene of street food in Bangsean, Thailand was confirmed into two (2) dimensions as follows; food hygiene practice and atmosphere of street food due to perceiving of the customers by neural sensorial on five human senses i.e., touching, sight, hearing, smelling and taste. Besides, the service and sanitation operations were not significant because food dwellers would sell most of the takeaway orders, not dine in on the street during the COVID-19 incident.

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