

## Behavior of Mahasarakham University Students towards Ready-to-eat Food Purchasing at Convenience Stores

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### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งศึกษาปัจจัยด้านลักษณะทางประชากร ทักษะคิด พฤติกรรม และแนวโน้มที่มีต่อการซื้ออาหารพร้อมบริโภคในร้านสะดวกซื้อ โดยใช้แบบสอบถามในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากนิสิตจำนวน 419 คน (n=419) วิเคราะห์ความน่าเชื่อถือของเครื่องมือได้ค่า Cronbach's alpha 0.946 จากการใช้ Factor Analysis สามารถสกัดตัวแปรทัศนคติที่มีต่อการซื้ออาหารพร้อมบริโภคได้ 12 ปัจจัย แล้วศึกษาลักษณะทางประชากรที่มีต่อทัศนคติที่ได้พบว่า ลักษณะทางประชากรที่ต่างกันมีผลทำให้นิสิตมีทัศนคติแตกต่างกัน ลักษณะทางประชากรและทัศนคติที่ต่างกันมีผลทำให้นิสิตมีพฤติกรรมและแนวโน้มการกลับมาซื้อซ้ำและการบอกต่อแตกต่างกัน พฤติกรรมที่ต่างกันมีผลทำให้นิสิตมีแนวโน้มการกลับมาซื้อซ้ำและการบอกต่อแตกต่างกัน โดยทัศนคติมีความสัมพันธ์กับพฤติกรรมด้านความถี่ จำนวนเงิน จำนวนชิ้นที่ซื้อ และมีความสัมพันธ์กับแนวโน้มการกลับมาซื้อซ้ำและการบอกต่อ

**คำสำคัญ:** ทักษะคิด พฤติกรรม อาหารพร้อมบริโภค ร้านสะดวกซื้อ นิสิตมหาวิทยาลัยมหาสารคาม

### Abstract

Data from 419 Mahasarakham University students were collected by use of a questionnaire survey to examine the behaviour of the students toward ready-to-eat food purchasing at convenience stores. The questionnaire was tested for construct validity and reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.946. Consumers' demographic and attitude factors related to frequency of purchasing, amount of money spent, and also items purchasing affected ready-to-eat food purchasing. However, consumers' behaviour had no effect on ready-to-eat food purchasing.

**Keywords:** Behavior: Mahasarakham University: Ready-to eat food: Convenience stores

### Introduction

Recently, food and beverage marketing in Thailand is changing in both production and distribution due to changes in consumers' behavior. Consumers are not only concerned about healthy food but also about quality and safety of food in regard to their health and well-being. Thai consumers' behavior also

changes as population structure alters and lifestyles are adjusted. A quick and comfortable lifestyle drives manufacturers to present products to suit their needs, such as easy to take-away and ready-to-eat. Convenience stores which are now one of the key distribution channels have rapidly spread throughout the country. The strengths of these stores are good locations, 24-

hour service, excellent selections of products offered, modern decorations, and provision of daily used goods. Convenience stores are now playing an important role in Thai society. Predominantly the revenues of these convenience stores come from food products, many ready-to-eat foods.

A number of studies on consumer satisfaction and consumer decisions to visit the convenience stores have been reported. In 2013, Sangwiset [1] reported that 7-Eleven customers were satisfied with the renovation of the shops especially the physical usefulness and the shop appearance. Another study [2] stated that demographic factors affecting the customer's decision to visit 7-Eleven stores showed that the total amount of money per visit was not affected by gender, education, occupation, product, price, production, and place (4Ps) and physical evidence factors. However, other factors such as age, income, status, process, and personal factors affected the purchasing amount each time. A further [3] reported that age, marital status, educational level, monthly income, occupation, and number of family members were considered significant factors affecting purchasing behavior at a convenience store. A study [4] reported that consumers purchasing frozen food from convenience stores were aged 20-30 years, single and had bachelor degrees. The researchers also found that demographic factors, consumer behavior, and marketing mix influenced decisions of frozen food purchasing from convenience stores in Bangkok.

University students have probably significantly changed their lifestyle and food purchasing. Take Mahasarakham University (MSU) as an example. The Student Affairs

department at MSU reported that there are more than 30,000 students currently. Convenience stores are densely located on many corners inside and around the university area. Little information is known about university students' attitudes and behavior towards the purchase of ready-to-eat foods at these convenience stores. The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes and behavior of Mahasarakham University students in regards to ready-to-eat foods purchased at the convenience stores.

### **Materials and methods**

Data was obtained through a questionnaire from 419 undergraduate MSU students experienced in purchasing ready-to-eat foods at convenience stores. Students from three fields of study, health science, humanities and social science, and science and technology, were purposive sampled. Subsequently, convenience sampling was also conducted to recruit participants.

The questionnaire was organized to collect data on demographics (gender, student income, parents' income, weight and height, year, and field of study), purchasing behavior on ready-to-eat food at convenience stores (frequency of visit, duration of visit, frequency of purchasing), attitude toward ready-to-eat purchasing (5-Likert scale – 55 questions) re-purchasing and recommendations to others behavior [re-purchasing (1 = no purchase at all, 5 = definitely purchase), repurchasing in case of higher price (1 = no purchase at all, 5 = definitely purchase) and recommendations to others (1 = not recommended at all, 5 = definitely recommended)], and a series of open-ended questions for any suggestions.

The questionnaire was validated in both content and construct and was tested for reliability by 30 participants (not included in the final samples). Cronbach's Alpha-coefficient was used to estimate the reliability of scale. The maximum value of the coefficient is 1. Cronbach's Alpha-coefficient was analyzed and it was 0.946 which was over 0.7 [5]. Then, ANOVA was performed. Data were analyzed by the SPSS program (Version 17, demo).

## Results and discussion

### Demographic data

Twenty cases from 436 completed questionnaires were dropped because of missing values. Hence, 419 cases were analyzed. Demographic data of participants is shown in Table 1. The sample consisted of first-year (26.97%), second-year (30.55%), third-year (24.34%) and also fourth-year (18.14%) students and most of the sample was female (72%). The average household income of respondents indicated that more than 30% of the sample had parental income higher than 30,000 baht which was above the average monthly income of population in Mahasarakham province (25,461 baht) [6]. Most of the students stayed at the dormitory (90.21%) and the fields of study were human and social science (41.53%), health science (26.25%), and science and technology (32.22%). More than 60% of the students had monthly allowance in the range of 4000-8000 baht.

### Attitudes toward ready-to-eat food at convenience store and repurchase trend and recommendations to others

The majority of consumers made purchases at the convenience stores on the basis of these factors: product packaging (mean score  $3.99 \pm 0.72$  from 5), quality and safety of the products (score 3.82), product price and value of money on products ( $3.59 \pm 0.84$ ), place ( $3.96 \pm 0.80$ ), and sale promotion ( $3.96 \pm 0.80$ ). Health benefit products (score  $3.37 \pm 0.96$ ) and food neophobia and food neophilia ( $3.32 \pm 1.08$ ) were moderately preferred. Those were more likely to repurchase ready-to-eat food products at the convenience store scored ( $4.42 \pm 0.87$ ) and to recommend to others ( $3.47 \pm 0.107$ ).

### Ready-to-eat food product purchasing behavior

The students were most likely to visit the convenience stores to buying ready-to-eat foods one or more times a day (35%) and they were likely to visit 7-Eleven shops (87.83%) more than other convenience stores (108 shop, Tesco Lotus Express, Family mart, non-franchised convenience store). More than 40% of them visited the store between 6.00-10.00 pm. The behavior of MSU students towards ready-to-eat foods purchased at the convenience stores were analyzed and it was found that their behavior had no effect on ready-to-eat food purchasing ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 1** Demographic data of participants

Category	Subcategory	Frequency
Sex	Male	117 (27.92)
	Female	302 (72.08)
Monthly allowance	<4000 baht	113 (26.97)
	4,000-8,000 baht	261 (62.29)
	>8,000 baht	41 (9.79)
Parents' income	<10,000 baht	61 (14.56)
	10,20 - 001,000 baht	143 (34.13)
	20,001,30 - ,000 baht	78 (18.62)
	30,40 - 001, 000 baht	54 (12.89)
Year of study	>40,000 baht	83 (19.81)
	1	113 (26.97)
	2	128 (30.55)
	3	102 (24.34)
Field of study	4 up	76 (18.14)
	Human and Social Science	174 (41.53)
	Health Science	110 (26.25)
	Science and Technology	135 (32.22)

### The effect of demographics on consumers' behavior

Comparison between genders revealed that there were no difference in frequency of visits and purchasing frequency per week. However, visiting time of the day ( $p=0.05$ ) and amount of money spent ( $p=0.022$ ) were significantly different. Female students made their visits in the morning while male students were more likely to visit in the evenings until late at night. Female students spent more per visit. Monthly allowance, year of study, and field of study had no significant effect ( $p>0.05$ ). Students with higher parental income made more visits to the convenience stores ( $p<0.05$ ). For repurchasing, it was found that gender and parental income had no influence. On the other hand, students with higher allowances and Health

Science students were more likely to repurchase ready-to-eat food in convenience stores ( $p<0.05$ ). The reason behind this behavior was partly due to the willingness to pay more when the price increased and their belief in the food quality standard.

### Conclusion

The convenience store is the main ready-to-eat food provider for students. From this study, demographic factors had an influence on students' behaviour. Ready-to-eat food repurchasing was affected by demographic and attitude factors. Attitude factors related to frequency of purchasing, amount of money spent, and also items purchasing. Consumer behavior had no influence on the ready-to-eat food purchasing.

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