Buyer Consumer Behavior in Flea Market During COVID-19 in Thailand

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Abstract: COVID-19 lockdown under the Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situation, B.E. 2548 was partially eased from 3 May 2020 to allow public venues including retailers, market, flea markets, floating markets to reopen again with preventative measures imposed, i.e., temperature check for sellers and buyers, social distancing while choosing and paying. Flea markets in this research means any market without any permanent fixture offering fresh produces, goods and services. Flea markets are a part of Thai way of life; they are local and a congregating place of 20,000 – 30,000 consumers with revenue ranging from 600,000 and 10,000,000bht per day per flea market. Flea markets are scattered around Thailand and their market value are significant, however the crowded nature of flea markets is against social distancing guideline imposed to prevent the spread of COVID-19; thus, social distancing would render a third of service space in flea markets unusable. In order to concurrently maintain the sales, satisfying consumers’ needs and preventing COVID-19, the objective of the research is set to study (1) new normal consumer behavior in flea markets, (2) consumer behavior in deciding to purchase products and services in flea markets during COVID-19 outbreak which is the basis of set marketing mix, and (3) retailer marketing strategy. Primary data and secondary data are collected for this research. Primary data is collected by survey method by asking sample group to complete 400 questionnaires and the information thereof is analysed by descriptive method.

The research finds that the majority of questionnaire answers show the new normal consumer behavior in flea markets during COVID-19 outbreak are (1) the majority of consumers wear masks but do not have a temperature check, wash hands every time they visit flea markets, nor do they stay home to prevent COVID-19 spread, and, on top of the aforementioned, there was no social distancing; (2) consumer behavior in deciding to purchase products and services in flea markets reflects the totality of decisions which are (i) whether – yes, (ii) why – nearby and cheap, (iii) when – every time there is a flea market, (iv) where – flea market near home or office, (v) how – paid in cash, (vi) how much - 200 - 500bht/visit, (vii) how often – 2 – 3 time/week, and (viii) how long – 30 – 60minutes/visit; and (3) in relation to retail marketing mix, retail strategy consists of store differentiation and positioning which focuses on benefits in consistent with new normal particularly social distancing and such strategy aligns with retail marketing mix for (i) Distribution (location) and service assortment, (ii) Product assortment: increasing fresh produce, daily items and products for COVID-19 prevention or new normal, (iii) Promotion or Communication using promotion mix to support new normal, increase sales and profits (how much, how, how long), provide pre-purchase and post-purchase services, and (iv) Price: at the same price or at lower price.

Index Terms - Consumer Behavior, Flea Market, Retailing Marketing Strategy
I. INTRODUCTION

The second easing of lockdown restrictions under decree under the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situation, B.E. 2548 from 3 May 2020 allows flea markets to sell only the essentials (food and daily essential items), but imposed preventative measures, namely controlled entrances and exits, temperature checks for service providers and consumers, social distancing while choosing and paying for products. These preventative measures require 5sq.m. of space for 1 person rendering a third of service space in flea markets unusable, but the number of consumers (20,000 – 30,000 persons/day) has not reduced and the sellers would like to maintain the same amount of daily revenue at 600,000 – 10,000,000bht/day/flea market.

There are 15 types of flea market (Posttoday, 2019) which can be divided into 3 groups in accordance with (1) types of products: (i) green flea market, (ii) second hand flea market, (iv) specialty goods flea market, (2) locations: (i) train station, (ii) tollway, and (3) Artbox flea market (Posttoday, 2020). These 3 groups of flea markets contain 27 types of products, and Chatuchak market is the only flea market with all 27 types of products (Silapawattanatum, 2020).

The study of consumers behavior towards buying products and services in flea market is highly interesting due to the number of consumers and revenue and it has been a Thai way of life for several centuries. Hence, the studying of such consumer behavior during COVID-19 outbreak is critical since the measures imposed are to prevent COVID-19 in a cramped space at a reduced capacity on the provider’s side while the number of consumers remains the same. The result of this research can be used to create satisfaction amongst all the parties involved by delivering customer value utilizing buyer consumer behavior as a basis for retailer marketing strategy.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is the first thing marketers must understand how consumers think, feel and behave by offering definite customer value to target market. It is to study each customer and each customer group how to acquire, use and dispose products, services, activities, experiences, people, and ideas for personal consumption in order to satisfy consumers’ need over a period of time. Consumption in marketing means consuming or usage, and consumer in this context mean the ultimate consumer. Each consumer will make multiple decisions for purchases several times a day every day. The decision process is a point of interest for marketers as it can be examined pursuant to Model of Buyer Behavior.

![Figure 1. Model of Buyer Behavior](image)

The model starts from 2 stimuli which are (1) marketing stimuli employed by marketers though marketing mix (4P’s), product, price, place and promotion, for tangible goods, (2) other stimuli which can be internal stimuli or psychological factors and external factors, these 2 types of stimuli are utilised to create awareness of need arousal or situation. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Existence Relatedness-Growth Theory (ERG) are applied to accentuate awareness. Such awareness of need arousal or situation is sent to buyers, but each individual buyer reacts to stimuli differently and at a different degree. Buyer’s reaction depends on buyer’s characteristics and such characteristics are in accordance with 4 factors influencing consumer behavior (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Factors Influencing Consumer Behavior (Buyer’s Characteristics)](image)
After becoming aware of such needs, buyer’s decision process of 5 stages shall follow as shown below in Figure 4. The 5 stages are (1) recognition of needs according to theories and personal characteristics depending on 4 different factors embedded in each consumer, (2) information search to find available alternatives to satisfy needs, (3) evaluation of each alternative, (4) purchase decision which can be limited or complex decision making, and (5) postpurchase behavior reflecting a judgment between expectation score and perceived value score and the judgment or the result after the purchase is satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If the result is satisfactory, then there is a high chance of repurchase, whereas if the result is unsatisfactory, there is no chance of repurchase.

Figure 4. Buyer Decision Process

Purchase decision stage itself can be divided into 5 stages according to consumer behavior characteristics: (1) totality of decisions comprised of (i) whether, (ii) why, (iii) when, (iv) where, (v) how, (vi) how much, (vii) how often, and (viii) how long; (2) consumption consisting of (i) acquisition, (ii) usage and (iii) disposition; (3) offerings which are (i) goods, (ii) services, (iii) activities, (iv) experiences, (v) people, and (vi) ideas; (4) decision-making units who are (i) information gatherer, (ii) influencer, (iii) decider, (iv) purchaser, and (v) users; and (5) time which could be hours, days, weeks, months, and years (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Consumer Behavior Characteristics

Source: Kotler and Armstrong, p.216

2.2 Flea Market
2.2.1. What is flea market?
Flea market in this research means any market without any permanent fixture offering goods and services, such as fresh food, ready-to-eat food/cooked food, TV dinner, vegetables, fruits, meats, seafood, clothes, accessories, electronics, handbags, shoes, Buddha images for necklaces, tress, pets, furniture, herbs, toys, household items, essentials (TrueID, 2019). These items could be green products,
second-hand, products failing quality control (QC), inferior goods or goods produced or manufactured by SME; thus, these products are sold at a much lower price than market price.

The main difference of flea market from other markets is the opening hours of the flea market which occurs on the time and date as agreed. Flea market does not open every day, nor does it open all day – it only opens on certain day at certain time, e.g. every Saturday and Sunday at 6.00 -18.00.

Flea market during COVID-19 must be cleaned in accordance with sanitary guideline and sellers must be healthy. COVID-19 preventative measures have been imposed because flea markets are a crowded place (Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA), 2020) which can be a COVID-19 spreading point or cluster since they can open anywhere, including on footpath, in an empty parking space, countryside, downtown. Flea markets are ubiquitous in Thailand and they are a form of retailing.

2.2.2. What is retailing?
Retailing is all activities involved in selling goods and services directly to final consumers for their personal, non-business use. Retailers are business whose sales come primarily from retailing (Kotler and Armstrong, p.398). There are various criteria to divide categorise types of retailers. Table 1 shows current popular types of retailers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Type of Store Retailers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Specialty store:</strong> Narrow product line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department store:</strong> Several product lines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supermarket:</strong> Large, low-cost, low-margin, high-volume, self-service store designed to meet total needs for food and household products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convenience store:</strong> Small store in residential area, often open 24/7, limited line of high-turnover convenience products plus takeout.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drug store:</strong> Prescription and pharmacies, health and beauty aids, other personal care, small durable, miscellaneous items.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discount store:</strong> Standard or specialty merchandise, low-price, low-margin, high-volume stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extreme value or hard-discount store:</strong> A more restricted merchandise mix than discount stores but at even lower prices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Off-price retailer:</strong> Leftover goods, overruns, irregular merchandise sold at less than retail. Factory outlets; independent off-price retailers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superstore:</strong> Huge selling space, routinely purchased food and household items, plus services (laundry, shoe repair, dry cleaning, check cashing); Category killer (deep assortment in one category); combination store; hypermarket (huge stores that combine supermarket, discount, and warehouse retailing).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catalog showroom:</strong> Broad selection of high–markup, fast-moving, brand-name goods sold by catalog at a discount. Customer pick up merchandise at the store.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kotler and Keller, p.552
2.2.3. Retailer Marketing Strategy to Create Value for Target Retail Customers

In addition to studying current customers to ensure continuity of business, retailers have to seek new customers to enable business to expand. The said need of expansion means retailers must be able to create customer value to customers by deploying Retailer Marketing Mix. Retailers face major marketing decisions about segmentation and targeting, store differentiation and positioning, and the retail marketing mix. (Kotler and Armstrong; p.407) as shown in Figure 6.

![Figure 6. Retailer Marketing strategy](source)

Source; Kotler and Armstrong; p.407

### 2.2.3.1 Retail Strategy

#### 2.2.3.1.1 Retail segmentation and Targeting

(i) Besides the aforementioned factors influencing consumer behavior which renders buyers’ or consumers’ need and want to differ, there are also other influencing factors, such as resource, location; therefore, it is still necessary for marketers to transform heterogeneous buyers into homogeneous buyers to the extent that marketer can group them into smaller segments that can be reached more efficiently and effectively with products and services that match their unique needs (Kotler and Armstrong; p.214). To do so, marketers use 4 different segmentation variables (geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral variables) as shown in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Segmentation Variables for Consumer Market</th>
<th>Table 2 Major Segmentation Variables for Consumer Market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographic</td>
<td>World region or country: North America, Canada, Western Europe, Middle East, Pacific Rim, China, India, Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Country region: Pacific, Mountain, West North Central, West South Central, East North Central, East South Central, South Atlantic, Middle Atlantic, New England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City or metro size: Under 5,000; 5,000-20,000; 20,000-50,000; 50,000-100,000; 100,000-250,000; 250,000-500,000; 500,000-1,000,000; 1,000,000-4,000,000; over 4,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Density: Urban, suburban, exurban, rural</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Climate: Northern, southern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Age: Under 6, 6-11, 12-19, 20-34, 35-49, 50-64; 65 and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender: Male, Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family size: 1-2, 3-4, 5 or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family life cycle: Young single, married, no children; married with children; Single parents, unmarried couples; older, married, no children under 18, older, single; other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Income: *Under $20,000; $20,000-$30,000; $30,000-$50,000; $50,000-$100,000; $100,000-$250,000; over $250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupation: Professional and technical; managers, officials, and proprietors; clerical; sales; craftspeople; supervisors; farmers; students; homemakers; unemployed; retired</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education: Primary school or less; some high school; high school graduate; some college; college graduate; advanced degree</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religion: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Race: Asian, Hispanic, Black, white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generation: Baby boomer, Generation X, Millennial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nationality: North American, South American, British, French, German, Russian, Japanese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Psychographic
Social class
Lower lowers, upper lowers, working class, middle class, upper middles, lower uppers, upper uppers

Lifestyle
Achievers, strivers, survivors

Personality
Compulsive, outgoing, authoritarian, ambitious

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**Behavioral**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occasions</th>
<th>Regular occasion; special occasion; holiday; seasonal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Quality, service, economy, convenience, speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User status</td>
<td>Nonuser, ex-user, potential user, first-time user, regular user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User rates</td>
<td>Light user, medium user, heavy user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty status</td>
<td>None, medium, strong, absolute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness stage</td>
<td>Unaware, aware, informed, interested, desirous, intending to buy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude toward product</td>
<td>Enthusiastic, positive, indifferent, negative, hostile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kotler and Armstrong, p.216

(ii) Selecting Target Market Segments: a target market consists of a set of buyers who share common needs or characteristics that the company decides to serve (Kotler and Armstrong, p.225). Market targeting can be done 4 ways as shown in Figure 7.

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**Figure 7. Market Targeting Strategies**

Source: (Kotler and Armstrong, p.225-229)
2.2.3.1.2 Store Differentiation and Positioning

After selecting market target, retailers have to clearly define and profile their customers or buyers so they can create customer value specifically matching need and want of these customers or buyers. The said process is store differentiation and is then communicated to consumers via positioning.

Positioning is arranging for a product to occupy a clear, distinctive, and desirable place relative to competing products in the minds of target consumers. (Kotler and Armstrong, p.73) Figure 8 shows possible value propositions on which a company might position its products (green cells), lose value propositions (red cells) and has the best marginal proposition (yellow cell).

2.2.3.2 Retailer Marketing Mix

Retailer marketing mix is based on marketing mix (4Ps) which only not focuses on Product but also on price, promotion and distribution (location).

2.2.3.2.1 Product and Service Assortment

Product assortment must match buyer/consumer behavior in depth and breadth by concentrating on destination categories since they have the most influence on where customers choose to shop and their perception of a retailer.

Services assortment is what retailers need to decide how to mix services in their offer to customers as follows:
- Prepurchase services include accepting telephone and mail orders, advertising, window and interior display, fitting room, shopping hours, fashion shows, and trade-ins.
- Postpurchase services include shipping and delivery, gift wrapping, adjustments and returns, alterations and tailoring, installations, and engraving.
- Ancillary services include general information, check cashing, parking, restaurants, repair, interior decorating credit, rest room, and baby-attendant service. (Kotler and Keller, p.561)

2.2.3.2.2 Retail Pricing

Multiple factors must be taken into account for retail pricing, for example consumer cost, competition, credit, sales promotion law and most importantly price level, profits and volume which can be chosen between (1) high markups on lower volume (most specialty store) or (2) low markups on higher volume (mass merchandisers and discount store). (Kotler and Armstrong, p.411)

2.2.3.2.3 Promotion or Communications

Retailers use a wide range of communication tools, for instance ads, special sales, money-saving coupons, or email promotions, to generate traffic and purchases. (Kotler and Keller, p.562-563)

2.2.3.2.4 Distribution (location)

The three keys to retail success are often said to be “location, location, and location.” (Kotler and Keller, p.563) Retailers can choose to have their stores in locations as listed below.
- Central business districts. The oldest and most heavily trafficked city areas, often known as “downtown”.
- Regional shopping centers. Large suburban malls containing 40 to 200 stores, typically featuring one or two nationally known anchor stores or a combination of big-box stores and a great number of smaller stores, many under franchise operation.
- Community shopping centers. Smaller malls with one anchor store and 20 to 40 smaller stores.
- Shopping strips. A cluster of stores, usually in one long building, serving a neighborhood’s needs for groceries, hardware, laundry, shoe repair, and dry cleaning.
- A location within a larger store. Smaller concession spaces taken by well-known retailers within larger store, airports, or schools or “store-within-a-store.” Specialty retailers located within a department store.
2.3. Conceptual Framework

Customer behavior reflects

1. The totality of decisions
2. About the consumption
3. Of an offering
4. By decision-making units
5. Over time

Marketing strategies and tactics

2.4. Research Methodology

2.4.1 Type of information

This research will use 2 types of information as follows:

(1) Secondary data from various offline and online sources, e.g., books, journals, textbooks, articles, research, websites, internet, etc.,

(2) Primary data by way of survey method from questionnaires - respondents fill in their answers.

2.4.2 Population and Sample

The population for the research is Thai consumers who make purchases in flea market during COVID-19. As for sample group, since the population is not known for certain, the number of sample group must be ascertained by using Cochran’s sample size formula for categorical data for an alpha level a priori at .05 (error of 5%) = n0=(t)2*(p)(q)/(d)2=384 which produces the sample group number at 400.

Sampling method employed is non-probability with convenience sampling.

2.4.3 Statistical Tools

The research uses questionnaires which can be divided into 3 parts:

Part 1: Demographic factors of respondents or sample group (3 multiple choice questions)

Part 2: Buyer consumer behavior in flea market during COVID-19 in Thailand (26 close-ended questions (Hoyer and MacInnis, 2010))

- Consumer Behavior Characteristics (Hoyer and MacInnis, p.4)
  (i) The totality of decisions (8 multiple choice questions)
  (ii) About the consumption (3 multiple choice questions)
  (iii) Of an offering (6 multiple choice questions)
  (iv) By decision-making units (5 multiple choice questions)
  (v) Over time (5 multiple choice questions)
2.4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Quantitative analysis is applied to part 1 and 2 of the questionnaire in descriptive method, such as frequency, percentage mean and standard deviation (S.D.) then further analysis is applied to the scores of percentage of frequency which are divided into 5 interests of 20% and can be translated to the lowest (0% - 20%), low (21% - 40%), medium (41% - 60%), high (61% - 80%) and the highest (81% - 100%).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Flea Market

1. Flea Market is retailing.
2. Type of Store Retailers: Off-price Retailer
3. Retailer Marketing strategy
   3.1 Retail strategy
      3.1.1 Retail Segmentation and Targeting
         (1) Market segmentation: income variable
         Segment 1: Low Income (less than 100,000 bht/year) 14.5 M = 21.8% (TA-NAI-IT 2020.Jul2)
         Segment 2: Medium Income 50.3 M = 75.5%
         Segment 3: High Income (more than 140,000 bht/month) 1.8 M = 2.7%
         66.6 M = 100% (Wongpanya Tanakorn, Thai Population 2562 BE.) (Dec 31, 2019)

      (2) Selecting Target Market Segments
         : Concentrated (niche) marketing
         : Low income

3.1.2 Store Differentiation and Positioning
   Positioning: Benefit and Price.
   : more for less – new normal

3.2 Retailer Marketing Mix
3.2.1 Product and Service Assortment
   (1) Product Assortment
      Fresh food
      Clothes
      Essentials
      COVID-19 prevention items
      Ready-to-eat food/cooked food
      TV Dinner
      Vegetables
      Fruits
      Meat
      Seafood
      Accessories
      Electrics
      Shoes
      Pocket, purse, pouch, bag
      Toy
      Buddha image, small Buddha image
Retailer Marketing Strategy (from Figure 7)

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS OF BUYER CONSUMER BEHAVIOR FROM FIGURE 1.

**The environment**

- Marketing
- Stimuli
- Product
- Price
- Place
- Promotion
- Other Stimuli
- Economic
- Technological
- Social
- Cultural
- Physical
- Environment
- COVID-19

**Buyer’s black box**

- Buyer’s characteristics
- Buyer’s decision process
- Buyer response
- Buyer Consumer Behavior in Flea Market:
  - Frequency: Lowest
  - Low income

**Psychological**

- Motivation
- Perception
- Beliefs and attitudes
- Motivation
- Perception
- Beliefs and attitudes

**Buyer’s decision process**

- Frequency
- Inflation
- Buyer Consumer Behavior in Flea Market:
  - Frequency: Medium
  - Low income

**New Normal**

- Customer behavior reflects

**Figure 4. Buyer’s Decision Process**

**Figure 5. Consumer Behavior**

**Marketing strategies and tactics**

(1) General information

New normal consumer behavior in flea market during COVID-19 outbreak:

1. Temperature check
2. Wear mask
3. Wash hands every time they visit flea market
4. Stay home to prevent COVID-19 spread
5. Social distancing while choosing and paying for products
6. Register check-in/check-out

(2) Interior modification to prevent COVID-19 spread

1. Register at check-in and check-out points, temperature check, wear mask, wash hand,
2. Manage internal traffic, lay out and interior decoration for social distancing while choosing and paying for products

**3.2.2 Retail pricing**

- Low markup on higher volume
  - Mass merchandiser

**3.2.3 Promotion or communication**

Use a wide range of communication tools to generate traffic and purchases spreading: The internet, outdoor and community radio to inform consumer for:

1. Registration at check-in and check-out
2. Limited number of customers in store.
3. Reservation
* 4. Modify opening hours
* 5. Expand flea market area

**3.2.4 Distribution (location)**

In the view of the relationship between high traffic and high rents, retailer must decide on surveys of consumer shopping habits or consumer behavior.
IV. SUGGESTIONS

1. Study how customers prioritize retail marketing tools (product and service assortment, retail pricing, promotion and distribution (location) which can then be used to set the appropriate retail marketing mix.

2. Study promotion mix affecting the reaction of customers in their new normal practice and ensure that its effect on customers remains high or highest at all times – to emphasize store differentiation and positioning of more for less to for sustainable competitive advantage.

REFERENCES

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