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Factors Impacting Affecting Purchase Intention of Vegetarian Ready Meals' Customers in
Supermarkets of Sukhumvit area in Bangkok

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine the independent factors positively affecting purchase intention of vegetarian ready meals' customers in supermarkets of Sukhumvit area in Bangkok. Those independent factors were perceived availabilities, institutional trust, food shopping habits, agricultural practices concern, subjective norms, values, food safety, and attitude towards vegetarian ready meals. Total samples of 238 respondents were collected with survey questionnaire in supermarkets located in Sukhumvit area in Bangkok. The data sets utilized descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The researchers found that values accounted positively affecting purchase intention of vegetarian ready meals in supermarkets of Sukhumvit area in Bangkok with the statistical significance. There findings can be applied to vegetarian ready meals' business that the business owners or marketers should emphasize on creating values for vegetarian ready meals' products to increase sales.

Keywords: Vegetarian ready meals, Bangkok, Purchase intention

Introduction

The interests in food products with eco-friendly characteristics and certifications have grown in recent decades in industrialized countries (Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen, 2017). So-called 'vegetarian ready meals' products were like organic, pesticide free products, or food produced following integrated-pest-management practices, which were perceived by consumers as low-processed, naturally grown, and healthier than conventional food products (Steiner, Peschel, & Grebitus, 2017). Consumers are also

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increasingly demanding ready-to-eat products. In the era of urbanization, modern lifestyles tend to limit the time availability of consumers. Thus, convenience food allows consumers to save times for their everyday lives. Such products were often criticized for not being environmentally sustainable for their technological productions. Over the last several years, more consumers were interested in health and wellness in Thailand. The consumers were focusing on health, wellness, and well-being as a mega trend in 2018 (Pulkkanen, 2018). Health professionals appear to shift from being reactionary medicine to preventative medicine.

The previous research (Upadhyay, 2015) found that global vegetarian ready meals were expected to gain \$306 billion by 2020, increasingly at the rate of 4.1% during the forecast period from 2015 to 2020. The vegetarian ready meals can be stored and used a longer period of times than regular vegetarian meals. The growth of the vegetarian ready meals market would primarily be driven by the growing demand and the consumption of vegetarian ready meals in the developing markets across the Asian countries such as India and China. Increases in disposable incomes coupled with change in lifestyle and food habits were major factors that boost the market growth in these regions. Moreover, the rapid increase in retail chains including hypermarkets and supermarkets had bolstered the demand of vegetarian ready meals in the developing Asian countries (Sheetanshu, 2015).

According to the research Euromonitor (2017), Thais were generally familiar with vegetarian ready meals, especially young adults with busy lifestyles living in Bangkok and other urban areas. As the vegetarian ready meals' market matured, the consumers became more health conscious. Manufacturers were launching products with health benefits in an effort to cater for demanding of convenient meals or meals on the go. Introducing healthier products was also a strategy to target to urban life consumers, who were less attracted to ready meals because they generally preferred fresh foods. As the previous report (Sirikeratikul, 2018), in 2017, the ready-to-eat market reached sales of 51,000 tons and U.S. \$245 million. CP All continued to lead this market with a 42 percent market share. The company had succeeded by selling ready-to-eat-meals through its 7-Eleven convenience store outlets, which was the main distribution channel. Charoen Pokphand Foods led product sold in other distribution channels through its CP brand, followed by S&P Syndicate with its Quick Meal, frozen food line. The growth rate of the ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat market in 2017 was 10 percent. The three major producers which were strong brand reputation in Thailand were Charoen Pokphand Foods (Thailand) (CPF), S&P, and Thai Union as the biggest players on vegetarian ready to eat products. To illustrate, CP Balance was one of many examples, launched in 2015 and targeted primarily at working women by Charoen Pokphand Foods. The launch was supported by a marketing campaign called "Happy Diet", which received a warm response. In 2017, CP Balance products were widely available in modern grocery retailers such as Big C. In 2017, Charoen Pokphand Foods and S & P Syndicate, which together accounted for a 26% share of value sales, took the trend a step further by launching vegetarian, vegan, and organic ready meals. These products competed directly with products in foodservice establishments, which were usually the go-to places for vegetarian options. Vegetarianism was part of the Buddhist diet and is practiced periodically by Thais. Hence, such specialist product lines were expected to perform well.



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For some attributes, firms were able to follow specific public standards such as organic production. However, the integrated pest management on food was no unified and commonly agreed on its standards (Banterle & Stranieri, 2013). Understanding the pro-environmental behavior of convenience food consumers was particularly challenging because there was often a contradiction between being healthy and being eco-friendly with the time constraints imposed by lifestyles of consumers in large cities. Moreover, the loss of connection with nature that often arised in urban areas made it even more difficult for consumers to access sustainable options. Indeed, there was the need to find market solutions to accomplish both time-saving and eco-friendly needs of consumers (Ricci, Banterle, & Stranieri, 2018).

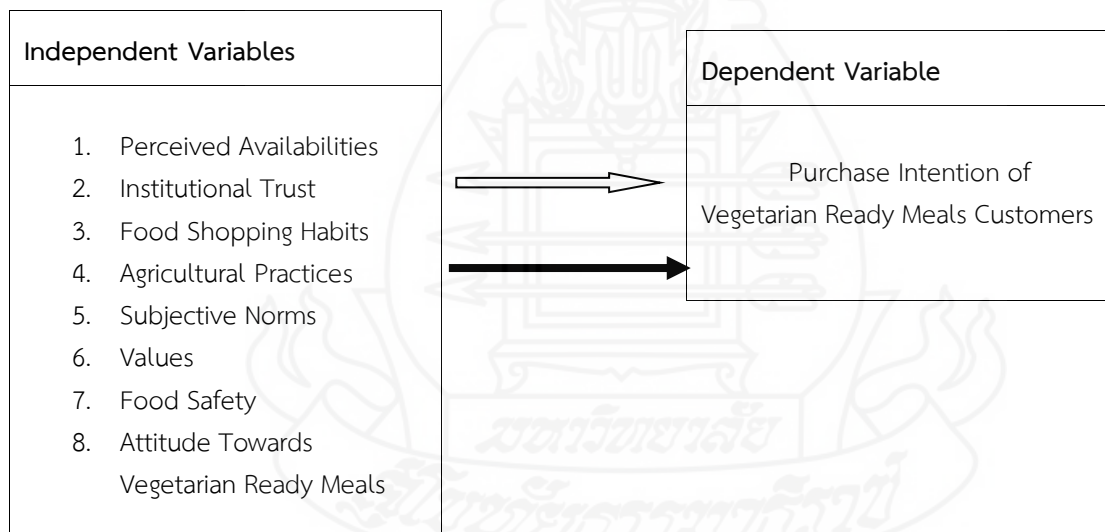
According to the previous study (Ryan & Casidy, 2018), Ryan and Casidy had contributed to theory and practice by examining the mechanisms and boundary conditions through which values affected consumer attitude and intention to consume vegetarian food which were constructed by consumer reasoning under varying levels of brand reputation. There were the relationships of branding factors affecting vegetarian ready meals consumptions (Ryan & Casidy, 2018). Ricci, Banterle, & Stranieri reported that the relevance of perceived behavioral control to the intention to buy integrated pest management (IPM) and minimally processed (MP) vegetables highlighted how product *perceived availabilities* was key to making sustainable choices, especially for convenience food Italian shoppers, whose *food shopping habits* were often characterized by time constraints in terms of product selection (Ricci et al., 2018). Moreover, their study indicated that *institutional trust* or trust in the supply chain-related agents – including IPM food processors and retailers brands and control institutions – were less concerned with the possible negative impacts on the environment and human health of *agricultural practices concern*, and, thus, showed a positive intention to purchase these products that provided intermediate levels of consumer warranty on such aspects (Ricci, Banterle, & Stranieri, 2018). Additionally, Sreen, Purbey, & Sadarangani found that collectivism was significantly related to attitude towards vegetarian ready meals and subjective norms of green purchase intention in India (Sreen, Purbey, & Sadarangani, 2018). Moreover, Ryan and Casidy adapted the behavioral reasoning theory framework and examined the mechanisms by which consumers' *values* affect their attitude and intention to consume organic food under varying levels of brand reputation from 617 respondents from Amazon's Mechanical Turk Platform (Ryan & Casidy, 2018). Lastly, Lee and Hwang focused on *food safety* and eco-friendliness, the two attributes of organic foods, to investigate how these attributes influenced consumers' perceptions of quality and value, which in turn increased purchase intention (Lee & Hwang, 2016).

Reason of Study and Conceptual Framework

The objective of this research was to study factors impacting purchase intention of vegetarian ready meals' customers in supermarkets of Sukhumvit area in Bangkok. The researchers hypothesized that perceived availabilities, institutional trust, food shopping habits, agricultural practices concern, subjective norms, values, food safety, and attitude towards vegetarian ready meals had positive impact on purchase intention of vegetarian ready meals' customers in supermarkets of Sukhumvit area in Bangkok.



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Research Methodology

This research applied the quantitative approach which included the survey method and the data collection was through questionnaires. Population of this study were supermarket shoppers in Sukhumvit area in Bangkok. The sample size was firstly calculated from 40 pilot questionnaires by using G* power version 3.1.9.2, created by Cohen (1977) and approved by several researchers such as Erdfelder, Faul, Buchner, & Lang (1996) and Wiratchai (2012). The calculation was with the Power ($1 - \beta$) of 0.95, Alpha (α) of 0.05, Number of Test Predictor of 8, Effect Size of 0.0992638 (Calculated by Partial R^2 of 0.09030025). As the result of G* power calculation, the minimum number of the total sample size was 238 (Cohen, 1977). Therefore, the numbers of survey collection from participants were a total of 238 set of questionnaires.



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The sample selection of the research was chosen by urban residents who had the experience to go shopping at supermarkets in Sukhumvit area. Sukhumvit is an exclusive district in Bangkok. It is the center of fancy apartments, villas, restaurants, bars, and clubs. There are many shopping malls and department stores throughout Sukhumvit Road such as Emporium, Terminal 21, or J Avenue (wikitravel, 2019). The researchers conducted survey questionnaires with the respondents who were consumers in supermarkets of Sukhumvit area in Bangkok such as Tops supermarket in Terminal 21, Villa market in Thong-lor Road, and Gourmet market in Sukhumvit 23, and Max value at Sukhumvit 71 for around 19-48 respondents for each area. The data were collected from the respondents who had potential to consume vegetarian ready to eat meals in those supermarkets. The total of usable 238 set of questionnaires were received.

After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed the data by using SPSS statistics version 25, the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of each factor was computed and had result value between 0.727-0.931. All of alpha coefficient was passed the suggested level of 0.65 (Nunnally, 1978) and had proven to be reliable.

Research Results

From the total of 238 respondents, most of them consisted of 63.9% females and 36.1% males, with the age between 24-29 years old which calculated as 24.8%. The majority was singles or 56.7%. Most of the respondents had bachelor's degrees accounted for 55%. Most of the respondents or about 51.3% were working as private employees; with the largest group of income range was between 15,001 to 30,000 baht with ratio 28.6%. Most of respondents chose to purchase vegetarian ready meals in supermarket at 62.6%. Around 63% of respondents purchased at Tops Supermarket. Moreover, the brand which most of respondents preferred to purchase vegetarian ready meals was CPF at 68.9%. Lastly, most respondents represented 34.5% for the budget that they preferred to spend vegetarian ready meals per meal on range of 51-70 baht.

In addition, based on hypothesis that perceived availabilities, institutional trust, food shopping habits, agricultural practices concern, subjective norms, values, food safety, and attitude towards vegetarian ready meals had positive impact on purchase intention of vegetarian ready meals' customers in supermarkets of Sukhumvit area in Bangkok, the analysis results could be concluded that there was only values ($\beta = 0.298$) that had positive effect on purchase intention at statistically significant level of .01. Moreover, values was explained the positive impact on purchase intention at 41.6%. Also, the result of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of each independent variable were not exceeded by 4, which meant that there were no Multicollinearity (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). The standard error was ± 0.294 by the following equation; Y (Purchase Intention) = 1.064 + 0.298 (Values)



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Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis (Modified Model)

Dependent Variable : Purchase Intention, $R = 0.645$, $R^2 = 0.416$, Constant(a) = 1.064						
Independent Variables	β	Std. Error	T	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)						
Perceived Availabilities (PA)						
Institutional Trust (IT)						
Food Shopping Habits (FSH)						
Agricultural Practices Concern (APC)						
Subjective Norms (SN)						
Values (VA)						
Food Safety (FS)						
Attitude Towards Vegetarian Ready Meals (AT)						

**significant at the .01 level

Discussion

Based on the hypothesis that perceived availabilities, institutional trust, food shopping habits, agricultural practices concern, subjective norms, values, food safety, and attitude towards vegetarian ready meals had positive impact on purchase intention of vegetarian ready meals in supermarkets of Sukhumvit area in Bangkok, the analysis results could be concluded that there was only one independent variable; *values* had positive effect on purchase intention of consumers in supermarkets at 41.6%. The results supported the previous research that values was an important factor affecting food consumption as they could reduce 'reasons against' and enhance 'reason for' consuming food which in turns led to positive attitude and purchase intention (Ryan & Casidy, 2018). Values was the significant factor positively affecting vegetarian ready meals in this research, which was similar to the research result of Ryan & Casidy (2018) that the consumers' values affect their attitude and intention to consume organic food under varying levels of brand reputation from 617 respondents from Amazon's Mechanical Turk Platform (Ryan & Casidy, 2018). Moreover, this result was confirmed that consumers have been increasingly demanding ready-to-eat products, especially in urban environment, where modern lifestyles tend to limit their available time (Ricci, Banterle, & Stranieri, 2018). However, the result was not confirmed that *perceived availabilities, food shopping habits, institutional trust, and agricultural practices concern* were the keys to



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making sustainable choices characterized by time constraints in terms of product selection (Ricci, Banterle, & Stranieri, 2018). Furthermore, the result of this research was not supported that *subjective norms, food safety, and attitude towards vegetarian ready meals* impacting purchase intention of vegetarian ready meals of the customers (Lee & Hwang, 2016; Sreen, Purbey, & Sadarangani, 2018). This might be because the perceptions of the consumers in Thailand may see only *values* was the most important in purchasing vegetarian ready meals in this era. If the vegetarian ready meals' products occupy more market penetration in the future, the consumers in Thailand may see other factors impacting their purchase intention of the products.

Recommendations

For managerial implication, the results of this research may help vegetarian ready meals' business owners, marketers, or retailers to make investment decisions more on values since this factor had positive impact on purchase intention of the consumers. The business owners, marketers, or retailers should emphasize the values of vegetarian ready meals to increase the sales and the products were also healthier for consumers and could promote good health behavioral consumption to the societies as well. For more inclusive and practical recommendation, the business owners, marketers, or retailers should emphasize on values for their customers that if the consumers choose vegetarian ready meals, they would save the nature, respect for other creatures, care for future generations, and focus to have good health. Practitioners should get a better picture of how to promote healthy products in Thailand by understanding the consumers' values towards healthy products with the help of this research's results. Future research could examine how brands, genders, ethnic groups may have negative or positive effect toward the customers' purchase intention. A longitudinal study can be performed to see the impact of the shift in values on purchase intention of the consumers over time.

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