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THE EFFECT OF RISK AND IMAGE ON REPURCHASE INTENTION OF STREET FOOD IN THE COVID-19 ERA

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to examine relationships among risk, street food image and repurchase intention by proposing and testing a conceptual model. The data collected from 239 respondents or Thai tourists is analysed by using structural equation modelling analysis. The results of this study indicate a good fit for the proposed model. And the result reveals that both risk and street food image have significant associations affecting intention to repurchase street food in the era of Covid-19. Finally, these findings help street food entrepreneurs to formulate an appropriate street food image as well as to reduce Thai tourists' perceived risk for establishing a trust in order to enhance consumer repurchases.*

Keywords: risk, image, repurchase intention, street food, the Covid-19 era.

1. Introduction

Tourism is considered as one of the largest economic sectors in the world as well as has expanded to become a driving force for Thailand's economy. Receipts from tourism rose dramatically from million bath in 2019 to reach million bath by 2020 indicating an increase of tourists by about 20% in 2019 (Department of Tourism, 2019). However, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic poses a threat to the global tourism industry since the end of year 2019 and as we can easily observe from the number of international tourists and the decrease in tourism revenue. According to World Tourism Barometer, the report indicates that the number of international tourists declined about 65 percent in the first half of 2020 over the same period last year. The destinations also reported that international tourist arrivals significantly decrease about 93 percent in June, 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNWTO, 2020). It is predicted that international tourism declines over 70 percent in 2020

with 120 million jobs at risks. Thus, Thailand should take domestic tourism in consideration in order to increase destinations' income, employment and government revenues in the era of Covid-19.

It is undeniable that food tourism is the most dynamic and creative section of tourism since 2012, as mentioned by the Global Report of United Nations World Organization (UNWTO, 2012). Food tourism has been gaining popularity recently in Thailand (Lunchaprasith & Macleod, 2018). According to Anan Chaiyasan (2020), street food is one of the most rapidly expanding sectors of the food tourism. Additionally, the governmental sectors are eager to develop and strengthen food tourism in Thailand because food is necessity for human life as well as unique and local foods can give experiences to tourists (Boonpienpon, 2020). This type of tourism, food tourism can generate income, provide employment opportunities to the rural and to empower other fields related to tourism sector, for example agriculture (Nguyen, Dang & Ngo, 2019). Therefore, it is undeniable that street food has been considered one of the most important sectors in the tourism industry.

The present study aims to investigate relationships perceived risk from Thai tourists, street food image and intention to repurchase by proposing and testing a model.

2. Literature Review

As mentioned, the main purpose of this study was to develop and test a theoretical model, which represents the role of risk and street food image in contributing to Thai tourists' repurchase intention in the era of Covid-19. In literature review, the author discussed the three variables including risk, street food image and repurchase intention. The authors also defined and described in details on each variable with the supporting literature done by others.

According to Rane (2011), street foods refer to ready-to-eat foods and drinks that prepared at home or on streets. They also consumed on the streets with a little preparation or without further preparation. Rogerio et al. (2018) informed that street food is consumed daily by 2.5 billion people. Additionally, the street food industry has offered new employment opportunities. As mentioned by Cohen and Tinker (1985), the street food industry has been considered as a pervasive and essential feature of third world cities. Basinski (2014) asserted that street food provides an alternative for family income when there are immigration movements.

Customer loyalty is considered one of the most studied areas in the literature of consumer behaviour (Suhartanto, Brien, Primiana, Wibisono & Triyuni., 2019). Repurchase intention refers to the individual consumer's judgement about repeating buy the product or service again in the same shop (William & Auchil, 2002). Similarly, repurchase intention in this study is defined as individual customers' repeat purchases towards street foods. There are several factors influencing their repurchases towards street foods in the post Covid-19 era. This study integrates two main factors including perceived risk and street food image that affect Thai customers repurchase towards street food vendors.

Risk has been considered one of the most important factors explaining Thai tourists' repurchase intention towards street foods in the era of Covid-19. According to Teng (2005), risk refers to a tourist perception on uncertainty of an activity. Risk is defined as the probability of an undesirable incident leading to the possible negative consequences of customer behaviour, as stated by Laws and Prideaux (2005). Reichel et al., 2007 defined risk as customers' perceived overall negativity of an action that if beyond an acceptable level might affect travel behaviour.

Other researchers indicated that risk perception is defined as the subjective evaluation and expectation of loss influencing consumer behaviour (Quintel et al., 2010), in this study repurchase intentions. Although there are several dimensions of risk in the literature such as social-psychological risk, psychological risk, financial risk, performance risk and security risk, this study focused on physical and health risk due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Thailand.

As mentioned by Woosnam et al. (2015), security and safety have been considered as an important factor influencing travelling to other destinations. Other researchers asserted that perceived risk is a key determinant of consumer behaviour ((Mansfeld & Pizam, 2006; Scott, Laws, & Prideaux, 2013) and decision making (George, 2010; Lepp, Gibson, & Lane, 2011).

A number of studies have attempted to examine the relationship between risk and behavioural intentions but limited studies focus on the street food industry. In examining the impact of risk on repurchase intention, Gupta, Khanna and Gupta (2018) verified that consumers' levels of risk significantly affected their behavioural intentions in the context of street food. Chang and Chen (2008) asserted that a decrease in perceived risk can lead to an increase in purchase probability. Various studies also suggested that risk has direct effect on consumer loyalty in the context of environment-friendly electronics products (Marakanon & Panjakajornsak, 2014) and service industry (e.g. Lai-Ming Tam (2012), Tuu et al. (2011)). Therefore, it can be assumed that there is a significant relationship between risk and customer loyalty.

The other variable influencing repurchase intention in the context of street food is street food image. Image refers to a set of opinions, thoughts and actions that a person keeps considering an object (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Based on this definition, street food image in this study is defined as a set of opinions, thoughts and actions that Thai tourists keep considering about street foods. As you know, not only a positive image can help firms to increase competitive advantage but also it encourages customers to re-purchase, as confirmed by Porter and Claycomb (1997) and Johnson, Anderssen, Lervik and Cha (2001). Recently, Yasami P., Promsivapallop, P. and Kannaovakun, P. (2020) also stated that tourists with more favorable image has high perceived in loyalty. Thus, street food image can be a determinant of Thai tourists' intentions to repurchase street foods.

Proposed Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Development

As presented in Figure 1, the model was used to test the conceptual ideas and objectives in the present study. The main interest was to comprehend the associations among street food image, and perceived risk towards street food in generating Thai tourists’ intentions to repurchase. A total of three hypotheses was developed to evaluate the proposed model.

Hypothesis 1 Perceived risk significantly affects street food image in the post Covid-19 era

Hypothesis 2 Perceived risk towards street food significantly affects intention to repurchase in the post Covid-19 era

Hypothesis 3 Street food image significantly affects intention to repurchase in the post Covid-19 era

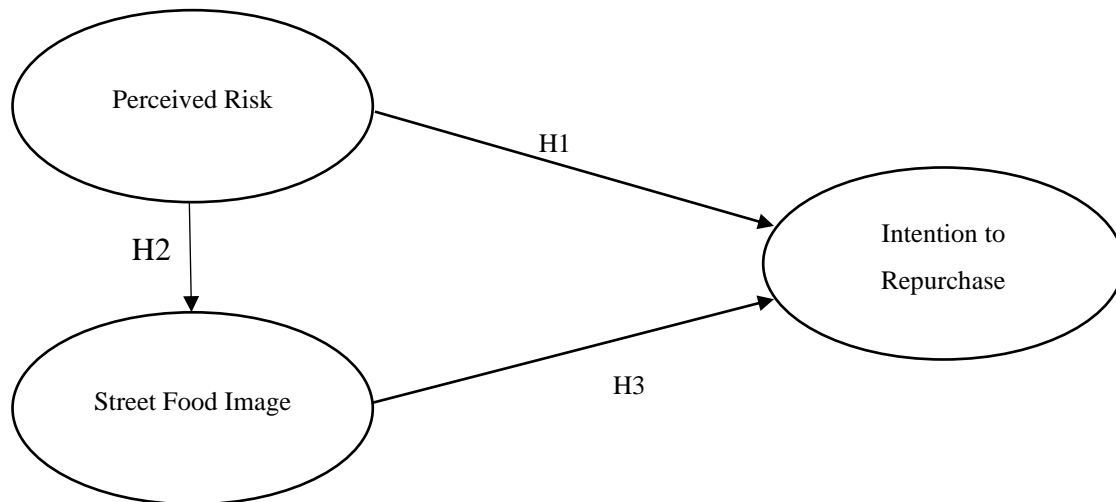


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

2.1 Problem Statement

There are several reasons explaining the importance of better understand the critical success factors influencing Thai tourists' intention to repurchase street food in Thailand, especially in the era of Covid-19. First, food tourism has emerged as one of the fastest growing sections of tourism industry. A significant amount of attention being to it is resulted from researchers, policy-makers and stakeholders. However, the limited number of studies examining the effects of perceived risk and street food image utilized primarily samples of Thai tourists in the Covid-19 pandemic in Thailand. Thus, a need of prominence of the issue in food tourism is evident from the prominence of the issue. Second, the increasing competition among existing vendors in street food market place has had major implications for customers including choices of street food destinations, safer food, greater value for money and other augmented services. The street food vendors or stalls in Thailand are now attempting to find the key competitive advantages so as to attract customers as well as to sustain their businesses in the long term, especially in surviving in the era of Covid-19. Although low-cost leadership through price may help them to improve their market share, the risk of having a negative impact on destination image, particularly in this Covid-19 era is caused by this price strategy. Thus, customer loyalty in terms of repurchase intentions can be seen as an important prerequisite for the survival of street food in the era of Covid-19. Therefore, this research focusing on customer repurchase is needed for adding existing limited studies in order to help street vendors and stakeholders deeper understand how customers have loyalty in terms of repurchase intention.

This study was designed to fill these gaps as well as facilitate better understand of how street food image and perceived risk towards street food and its consequences from the Thai tourist perceptions perspective in the post Covid-19 era. Particularly, the objectives of this study were to examine relationships among street food image, perceived risk toward street food and repurchase intention by proposing and testing a conceptual model.

3. Method

3.1 Materials

3.1.1 Samples

The target population for this study is Thai tourists at Bangkok's Chinatown night food street who serve as respondents. The population was chosen due to factors like street food experience and they are Thai tourists. The researchers decided to apply close-ended questions because it is easier to use it online as well as it saves participants' time as well as effort when answering the questions in the era of Covid-19.

A common rule of thumb is that SEM studies should include a minimum sample size of 100, suggested by Boomsma (1985). Similarly, Hair et al. (2006) suggested that sample size of SEM should be ranged from 100 to 200. The same authors further noted that sample size should be large enough or at least 5 times of the number of parameters. 245 usable samples were obtained after the total of 355 questionnaires were distributed. As recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), the author eliminated those with missing data. Thus, 239 were used for data analysis, indicating a 69.1 % response rate that met the mentioned criteria.

3.1.2 Site

A survey was conducted using a convenience-sampling approach. For this survey, Chinatown night food street or Yaowarat road was chosen for distributing questionnaires. Yaowarat road is considered one of the most famous street food places in Bangkok. Tourists seem to enjoy mixing with locals to experience something traditional such as shops selling Chinese herbal medicine, goldsmith shops and more than 100 types of Street food stalls at night.

3.1.3 Procedures

A self-administered survey questionnaire was decided to use an online-based survey in the present study. The research team delivered questionnaires to Thai tourists at Yaowarat road. They were asked to fill out the questionnaire by presenting QR code. A detailed description of the survey was provided to them.

3.2 Measurement

The questionnaire had three main sections including description of the research, questions of variables and questions relating to demographic information. The well-validated items for study constructs were adopted based on the existing literature and were included in the questionnaire. The items with five-point Likert-type scales from "Extremely disagree" (1) to "Extremely agree" (5) were utilized to evaluate study constructs. In specific, five items for perceived risk were adopted from Crooks et al. (2010) and Tsaour et al. (1997). Four previously validated items from a study of Baloglu and McCleary (1999) were employed to measure street food image, respectively. Lastly, four-item measures for repurchase intention were employed from Chen and Chen (2010) and Tsai & Huang (2007). Therefore, the measurement scales adapted in this study in this study had high applicability in tourism settings. After that, a pre-test was conducted with tourists, academics and industry professionals in tourism in order to enhance face and content validity. Finally, the initial version of the survey questionnaire was slightly improved according to their feedback.

3.3 Data Analysis

This study used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) as well as Analysis of Moments Structure (AMOS 23.0) software in order to analyse data. The SPSS was used for generating the descriptive and inferential statistics while AMOS was used to conduct a two-stage structural equation modelling (SEM) procedure, as suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) in order to test the hypothesized relationships.

4. Results and Discussion

Respondents' profiles

From a total of 239 valid responses, about 65 % of Thai tourists were male and 35% were female. The majority of Thai tourists, or 59 % were 26-30 years old as well as 76.3 percent were single. The sample was generally well-educated with bachelor's degree holders accounting for 75 %. Company employees or about 59% accounted of the largest group of occupations, followed by students (15%).

Measurement model results

The values of skewness and kurtosis were examined and appropriate for data analyses. A measurement model was first assessed before estimating the structural model. A good fit to the data was yielded by the measurement model ($\chi^2 = 347.103$, $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.925, GFI=0.907, NFI=0.949, RMSEA=0.048). The factor loadings for the indicators for each variable are higher than the recommended level of 0.7 and were all significant ($p < .01$). Also, Cronbach's alpha values for the constructs exceed the minimum threshold of .70, as recommended by Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998). These values indicated internal consistency in measurement items. For the composite reliability, these values were computed using factor loadings and measurement errors for the constructs and ranged from .871 to .971. Thus, the values were acceptable, exceeding the recommended cut-off .60 (Bagozzi & Yi 1988). Finally, the values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were calculated and fell between .695 and .845. The values were all above .50 and also greater than the square of correlation between pairs of constructs. Therefore, the convergent and discriminant validity were evident, as suggested by Hair et al. (1998) and Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Model evaluation and hypotheses testing

For the second step, a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation procedure was run and the results showed a good model fit ($X^2 = 321.413$, $p < 0.001$, CFI=0.921, GFI=0.891, NFI=0.905, RFI=.900, RMSEA=0.084) and the proposed model accounted for the variance in explaining repurchase intention (R^2 in the original model = .640). Then, the hypothesized relationships were tested and presented the empirical findings from the SEM, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of hypotheses testing results

Hypotheses	Estimates	T-value	Hypothesis result
H1: Risk --> Street food image	0.27	3.761**	Supported
H2: Risk --> Repurchase intention	0.66	8.278**	Supported
H3: Street food image --> Repurchase intention	0.78	18.971**	Supported

Note: ** $p < 0.01$

The hypothesis testing found risk was significantly and positively impacting street food image with completely standardized coefficient of 0.27 ($p < 0.01$), respectively. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported. The relationship between risk and repurchase intention was then positive and significant ($\beta = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$) and Hypothesis 2 is also supported. Finally, street food image was significantly and positively predicted by repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.78$, $p < 0.01$) which confirms the establishment of Hypothesis 3.

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to develop a conceptual model explicating Thai tourists' repurchase intention formation by integrating the concept of risk and image in the street food industry in the era of Covid-19. This study went on to successfully incorporate perceived risk and street food image into the conceptual framework explaining repurchase intention formation. Specifically, the result of this study contributes to the very limited literature on food travelers' repurchase intention formation in the street food industry. The finding revealed that Thai tourists' perceived risk significantly and positively affected their intentions to repurchase street foods. The empirical results in the literature provide evidence supporting the finding of this study that risk had the direct relationship to tourist loyalty (Gupta, Khanna and Gupta, 2018; Marakanon, L. & Paniakajornsak, 2017; Scridon, M.A., Achim, S.A., Pintea, M.O. & Gavriletea, M.D., 2019).

The following finding revealed that there is a significant relationship between Thai tourists' perceived risk and street food image. Also, the result presented that street food image significantly affects Thai tourists' intentions to repurchase street foods. This result is consistent with previous studies supporting the relationship between the perceived risk and image (Yasami P., Promsivapallop, P. and Kannaovakun, P., 2020; Johnson, Anderssen, Lervik and Cha, 2001).

Finally, the findings of this study can help both researchers and practitioners' deeper understanding how to improve street food image in order to gain their intentions to repurchase street foods. Also, understanding how to reduce Thai tourists' perceived risk help them to repurchase street foods.

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