The influence of service marketing mix on Korean cuisine traveling intention among the generation Z of Thai population

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Abstract

PURPOSES: To investigate the level of Korean cuisine traveling intention, compare Korean cuisine traveling intention with social-economic background, and study the influence of service marketing mix on Korean cuisine traveling intention among generation Z of Thai population. **METHODS:** It was a sample survey research. The questionnaires were collected from 709 respondents who were generation Z of Thai population which were selected by multistage sampling technique. **RESULTS**: It was found that generation Z of Thai population had a high level of Korean cuisine traveling intention. Generation Z of Thai population who had different genders were different in Korean cuisine traveling intention significantly (p<0.05). The service marketing mix influenced Korean cuisine traveling intention among generation Z of Thai population significantly (p<0.01). **THEORETICAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**: Travel agencies or people involved in the tourism business could use the research results as guidelines for appropriately organizing Korean cuisine traveling for generation Z of Thai population.

Keywords: Service marketing mix, cuisine traveling intention, generation Z of Thai population

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บทคัดย่อ

วัตถุประสงค์ เพื่อศึกษาระดับความตั้งใจในการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอาหารเกาหลี เปรียบเทียบความตั้งใจในการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอาหารเกาหลีกับตัวแปรทางสังคม-เศรษฐกิจ และศึกษาอิทธิพลของส่วนประสมการตลาดกับความตั้งใจในการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอาหารเกาหลีของประชากรไทยรุ่นแซด **วิธีการวิจัย** การสำรวจจากตัวอย่าง เลือกตัวอย่างแบบหลายขั้นตอน   จำนวน 709 คน เก็บข้อมูลด้วยแบบสอบถาม **ผลการวิจัย** ประชากรไทยรุ่นแซดตั้งใจท่องเที่ยวเชิงอาหารเกาหลีระดับสูง   ประชากรไทยรุ่นแซดที่มีเพศแตกต่างกันตั้งใจท่องเที่ยวเชิงอาหารเกาหลีแตกต่างกัน อย่างมีนัยสำคัญ (p<0.05) และส่วนประสมการตลาดบริการมีอิทธิพลกับความตั้งใจท่องเที่ยวเชิงอาหารเกาหลีของประชากรไทยรุ่นแซดอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ (*p*<0.01) **นัยทางทฤษฎี/นโยบาย** หน่วยงานหรือผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวสามารถนำผลการวิจัยเป็นแนวทางการจัดบริการการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอาหารเกาหลีกับประชากรไทยรุ่นแซดได้อย่างเหมาะสม

คำสำคัญ: ส่วนประสมการตลาดบริการ ความตั้งใจในการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอาหาร ประชากรไทยรุ่นแซด

Introduction

Food and tourism have been interlinked and frequently mentioned in various studies as well as in tourism activities. The terminology associated with food tourism is varied and used interchangeably, such as culinary tourism and gastronomy tourism. However, the meaning of such, given by the World Food Travel Association (2024), "Food tourism is the act of traveling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place" was applied in this study as it seems to be the most simple definition covering all dimensions of this research.

A lot of countries have taken food as one of the key tourism campaigns in order to attract visitors to their nation. Food tourism is advantageous at both the local and the national level, bringing economic development, poverty mitigation, and cultural heritage promotion (World Tourism Organization, 2017). South Korea, one of the most well-known tourist destinations, has also initiated and promoted food tourism with strong support from the government. In 2009, the country inaugurated the "Hansik Globalization Project," aiming for promoting Korean food culture domestically and internationally (World Tourism Organization, 2012). This project involved collaboration among key organizations, such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, local governments, and CEOs from the food industry. The Korea Tourism Organization also established gastronomic tours and engaged celebrities and TV shows as ways to promote public awareness. Later, in 2010, with the support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, a non-profit organization, called "Korean Food Foundation" (renamed to Korean Food Promotion in 2017), was established and aimed to promote people's well-being and strengthen the Korean food and its related industry (Korean Food Promotion Institute, 2024). In order to broaden Korean food culture, the institution has planned and constructed a wide range of activities . These activities include setting up a Korean food gallery and exhibition and establishing the Hansik Learning Center where they provide professional food training to other educational institutions. They have also consulted and supported the expansion of Korean food by collaborating with hotels in other countries.

The researchers were interested in studying the influence of service marketing mix on Korean cuisine traveling intention among the generation Z Thai population because they have grown up with the internet and technology. K-pop idols and K-dramas have also become more popular and have increased interest in traveling aboard to explore new culture. Korea is one of the most popular countries among Thai people.

Research objectives

1. To investigate the level of Korean cuisine traveling intention among the generation Z of Thai population.

2. To compare Korean cuisine traveling intention with the generation Z of Thai population's social-economic variables.

3. To study the influence between service marketing mix and Korean cuisine traveling intention among the generation Z of Thai population.

Literature review

1. Food tourism and traveling intention to a country of food origin

Food is one of the main factors visitors consider when deciding their destination choices (Galati et al, 2023). A lot of people choose to obtain real food experiences from a country of origin where they can touch and sense the culture behind each type of cuisine. Food, as a determining variable for traveling intention, has been examined in two main angles, tourist perspective and destination perspective. A study by Pu et al., (2024), focusing on tourist perspective, suggested that traveling intention to a country of food origin is influenced by food experience. The food experience is derived from four elements: sensory food experience, affective food experience, behavioral food experience, and intellectual food experience. Sensory food experience involves physical food contact, such as the aspects of the visual and the smell. Affective food experience engages emotional experience associated with food, such as enjoyment. Behavioral food experience is related to food activities, such as cooking participation. The last construct, intellectual food experience, encompasses cognition about food and its background history. This concept, therefore, illustrates the two-sided aspects of gaining food experience through tangible and intangible practices. Similarly, Rousta and Jamshidi (2020) proposed that tourist traveling intention is positively associated with their attitudes towards local food.

Other destination-focused studies deal mainly with the relationship between destination image and tourist travel intention. The popularity of a Korean TV drama series, "Daejanggeum," drew global attention to have an eye on Korean cuisine (Kim et al., 2012), and that positively strengthened the national food image. Promsivapallop and Kannaovakun (2019) proposed five destination food image dimensions, namely, restaurant service, food taste, health and hygiene, variety and table manners, and unique cultural experience. These factors influence tourist food preference and food consumption. Chatterjee and Suklabaidya (2020) further stated that food image has an influence on traveling intention to visit the two popular cities, New York and New Delhi. The research applied different cuisine image dimensions covering both tangible and

intangible criteria, such as history and culture, food tour, variety of food, food quality, reasonable price, easy access to restaurants, and food taste.

Nevertheless, theories and practices previously mentioned seem to merely emphasize one particular research area which drives people to visit a food destination. In order to convey a clearer understanding as a holistic view, this needs a refined research perspective. The authors, therefore, applied service marketing mix as a grounded theory, elaborating its role on traveling intention to a food destination. Although there has been similar research undertaken previously, its approach is still limited and should be investigated more in different contexts. In this study, South Korea was chosen as the destination country, and respondents were Thai undergraduate students representing generation Z of Thai population. South Korea is one of the most popular destinations among Thai people, among

teenagers in particular. This is possibly a result of K-pop idols' influence on youngsters, and that could further lead to preference for Korean food.

2. Service marketing mix in food tourism

Service marketing mix has been well researched and connected to different sides of tourism, such as tourist satisfaction. However, very few researchers have related it with food tourism. This research, therefore, fills this gap by investigating whether each element of service marketing mix has its influence on traveling intention. Rahman et al. (2019) investigated the relationship between service marketing factors and tourist satisfaction. Based on this study, the authors have adopted and reinterpreted their summary of what should be included in each service marketing mix factor, as demonstrated in Table1.

Table 1 Summary of service marketing mix factors and determinants in food tourism

Service marketing mix factors	Determinants in food tourism
Product	- Local food and its services available in tourist attractions, food quality
Price	- Food cost, ticket cost, staying cost
Place (or distribution)	- Service providers (such as restaurants, street food vendors, etc,) - Food distribution channel (such as in food festivals)
Promotion	- Promotional message, leaflets and

Table 1 (continued)

Service marketing mix factors	Determinants in food tourism
	brochures, and social media
People	- Friendly staff members who put a priority on tourists
Process	- Easy planning to visit, tickets processing, booking through media
Physical evidence	- Promised services, knowledge and experience, and support services

Research conceptual framework

Independent variables   Dependent variable

Social-economic background

Service marketing mix
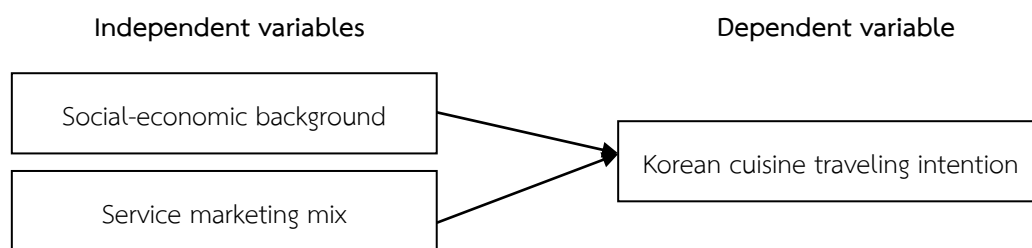
Korean cuisine traveling intention

Figure 1 Research conceptual framework

Research hypotheses

1. The generation Z of Thai population, who have different Social-economic background, are different in Korean cuisine traveling intention.

2. Service marketing mix influences the generation Z of Thai population's Korean cuisine traveling intention.

Research methodology

The research was a sample survey of 709 persons from the population of 7,670,354 generation Z of Thai population. (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2023). The sample size was calculated using G*Power Computer Software Program, by setting a confidence level of 95%, effect size = 0.25, and Power $(1 - \beta)$ = 0.95 (Buchner, 2010). While the maximum sample size was 400 people, the actual sample size was increased to 720 people in the case of missing data.

Multistage sampling technique was applied as follows:

Step 1, cluster random sampling in seven areas which were 1) Central region, 2) region, 3) Southern region, 4) North-eastern region, 5) Eastern region, 6) Western region, and 7) one special administrative region.

Step 2, simple random sampling by drawing three provinces from each region and three districts from the special administrative region; and

Step 3, purposive sampling, generation Z who were Thais and had cuisine traveling experience.

Variables in this research were separated into two types which were independent variables being social-economic variables: gender, age, educational level, family income, family hometown on the one hand, and service marketing mix on the other. The dependent variable was Korean cuisine traveling intention. (Figure 1)

Research questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part 1: Five social-economic variables. Part 2: 49 service marketing mix items; and Part 3: 20 Korean cuisine traveling intention items. Part 2 and Part 3 used 5 rating scales from the lowest to the highest. The criteria for interpreting research results were as follows:

1.00–1.80 refer to the lowest level

1.81–2.60 refer to a low level

2.61–3.40 refer to a moderate level

3.41–4.20 refer to a high level

4.21–5.00 refer to the highest level

Assessment for the research instrument consisted of content validity checking by an index of item-objective congruence from five experts, selecting questions that were consistent with the research objectives, then modified according to the experts' recommendations and tested with 33 generation Z of Thai population (Chakrapani, 2011) with the same characteristics as this research sample. The reliability of the research instrument was assessed by Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which were 0.988 for service marketing mix and 0.986 for Korean cuisine traveling intention. Both of these indicated that the quality of research instrument passed the criterion of at least 0.70 (Cronbach, 1990).

Data were collected from two data sources, Firstly, a secondary data source from which researchers collected concepts, theories, and related research from books, textbooks, websites, and academic journals. These guided the researchers to develop the research instrument and the conceptual framework for this research. Secondly, a primary data source which the researchers collected by the questionnaire. The research data was collected from offline and online channels for around eight weeks, 715 questionnaires being returned, representing a response rate of 99.31%, and 709 completed questionnaires were selected, representing a rate of 98.47%.

Research results

It was revealed that most of the generation Z of Thai population were female (61.80%), were 19-21 years old (49.10%), undergraduate level (88.90%), and family income range 45,001 – 55,000 Baht per month (26.20%). Moreover, their family's hometown was mostly in Bangkok (25.40%). The details are shown in Table 2.

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The analysis of service marketing mix and Korean cuisine traveling intention among generation Z of Thai population found that service marketing mix had a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.04, SD = 0.734) and the generation Z of Thai population had a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.08, SD = 0.785) for Korean cuisine traveling intention. The details are shown in Table 3

Table 2 Frequency and percentage of generation Z of Thai population's social-economic variables

Social-economic variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	1) Male	271	38.20
	2) Female	438	61.80
Age	1) 18 years old or below	36	5.10
	2) 19 – 21 years old	348	49.10
	3) 22 – 24 years old	301	42.50
	4) 25 – 27 years old	24	3.40
Educational level	1) Below undergraduate	67	9.40
	2) Undergraduate	630	88.90
	3) Upper undergraduate	12	1.70
Family income	1) 15,000 Baht or below	135	19.00
	2) 15,001 – 25,000 Baht	116	16.40
	3) 25,001 – 35,000 Baht	112	15.80
	4) 35,001 – 45,000 Baht	100	14.10
	5) 45,001 – 55,000 Baht	186	26.20
	6) 55,001 Baht or upper	60	8.50
Family hometown	1) Bangkok	180	25.40
	2) Central region	174	24.50
	3) Northern region	53	7.50
	4) Southern region	89	12.60
	5) North-eastern region	138	19.50
	6) Eastern region	62	8.70
	7) Western region	13	1.80
Total		709	100.00

Table 3 Minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of service marketing mix, and Korean cuisine traveling intention among generation Z of Thai population

variables	min	max	mean	SD	Level
Service marketing mix	1.00	5.00	4.04	0.734	High
Korean cuisine traveling intention	1.00	5.00	4.08	0.785	High

The comparative analysis of social-economic background among the generation Z Thai sample showed that Thai generation Z members who had different genders had different Korean cuisine traveling intention ($p<0.05$), generation Z Thai females having a higher Korean cuisine traveling intention level than the generation Z Thai males. Those who had different age, educational level, family income, and family hometown did not have different Korean cuisine traveling intention. The details are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Comparison of Korean cuisine traveling intention with generation Z of Thai population's social-economic variables

Social-economic variables		Korean cuisine traveling intention			Statistical test		
		n	M	SD	t/ F	p	
Gender	1) Male	271	3.99	0.825	-2.512	0.012	
	2) Female	438	4.14	0.754			
Age	1) 18 years old or below	36	4.10	0.757	0.245	0.756	
	2) 19 – 21 years old	348	4.09	0.807			
	3) 22 – 24 years old	301	4.05	0.777			
	4) 25 – 27 years old	24	4.21	0.596			
Education al level	1) Below undergraduate	67	4.09	0.762	0.005	0.995	
	2) Undergraduate	630	4.08	0.781			
	3) Upper undergraduate	12	4.06	1.132			
Family income	1) 15,000 Baht or below	135	3.99	0.847	0.907	0.476	
	2) 15,001 – 25,000 Baht	116	4.06	0.733			
	3) 25,001 – 35,000 Baht	112	4.10	0.818			
	4) 35,001 – 45,000 Baht	100	4.19	0.712			
	5) 45,001 – 55,000 Baht	186	4.11	0.785			
	6) 55,001 Baht or upper	60	4.01	0.788			

Table 4 (continued)

Social-economic variables		Korean cuisine traveling intention			Statistical test	
		n	M	SD	t/ F	p
Family hometown	1) Bangkok	180	4.00	0.772	0.626	0.710
	2) Central region	174	4.14	0.785		
	3) Northern region	53	4.11	0.886		
	4) Southern region	89	4.08	0.714		
	5) North-eastern region	138	4.12	0.783		
	6) Eastern region	62	4.09	0.840		
	7) Western region	13	3.93	0.794		

The analysis of the influence of service marketing mix on Korean cuisine traveling intention among generation Z of Thai sample showed that service marketing mix influenced Korean cuisine traveling intention among the generation Z of Thais (p<0.01). When considering the components of service marketing mix, it was found that price (b = 0.093), place (b = 0.127), people (b = 0.288) and physical evidence (b = 0.312) had a significant influence on Korean cuisine traveling intention among generation Z of Thai sample (p<0.01). The details are shown in Table 5. The predictable equation for service marketing mix and Korean cuisine traveling intention was as follows:

Korean cuisine traveling intention = 0.239 + 0.093*X_2 + 0.127*X_3 + 0.288*X_5 + 0.312*X_7

Table 5 Influence of service marketing mix on Korean cuisine traveling intention among the generation Z of Thai sample

13	b	S.E.	β	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.239	0.067		3.582	0.000		
Product (x_1)	0.004	0.024	0.004	0.162	0.871	0.385	2.599
Price (x_2)	0.093	0.026	0.096	3.610	0.000	0.308	3.251
Place (x_3)	0.127	0.031	0.132	4.074	0.000	0.209	4.788
Promotion (x_4)	0.044	0.023	0.049	1.946	0.052	0.347	2.881
People (x_5)	0.288	0.035	0.304	8.359	0.000	0.165	6.053
Process (x_6)	0.078	0.040	0.080	1.951	0.051	0.130	7.692
Physical Evidence (x_7)	0.312	0.037	0.323	8.493	0.000	0.152	6.601

R = 0.920, R^2 = 0.847, Adj.R^2 = 0.845, SE_{est} = 0.309, F = 553.434, p = 0.000

Research conclusion and discussion

This research revealed three main findings: Generation Z of Thai population high intention to travel for Korean cuisine, gender differences, and service marketing impacts on travel intention. Generation Z of Thai population appeared to have a high level of intention to travel to Korea for food experiences. This goes along with the global trend where food tourism is one of the main factors for travel intention (Martin et al., 2021). Secondly, different genders resulted in different levels of travel intention, with females being higher than males. This highlights the importance of considering gender perspective in tourism in order to better plan marketing strategies (Reisinger & Crotts, 2009). Lastly, service marketing mix influenced generation Z of Thai population travel intention. This adds up to an understanding of the role of service marketing mix and its impact on travel behavior, the similar manner as its influence on customer satisfaction (Othman et al., 2020).

1. Theoretical implications

The conceptual framework of this study demonstrates the association of service marketing principles with travel intention, a research area that is still limited. This, therefore, enhances the understanding of food tourism research.

Moreover, the study also displays the significance of different gender and its influence on travel intention. Furthermore, this study brings to light the generation Z of Thai population which is a significant current influence and future target of Korea tourism.

2. Practical implications

The research findings provide some key valuable insights that can be used for tourism management. First of all, marketing plans should be designed specifically for each market segment by taking gender and age into consideration. People of different age ranges tend to have experienced different technology, economy, and social norms. As a result, their travel intentions seem to be influenced by different factors. For generation Z of Thai population, which has grown up with the internet and technology, K-pop idols and K-dramas have also become more popular. The admiration of those influencers can affect a follower's travel intention to visit Korea (Kim et al., 2022). Nowadays, K-pop idols do not only sing and dance, but they also reveal their daily life activities through their communication channels, including what they eat and where they visit for food. This indirectly stimulates and persuades their followers to search for the same experience. For

international visitors who want to have the same experience as their idols, they need to plan a trip, buy a flight ticket, pay for accommodations, and definitely search for food. This means a huge volume of inbound tourism receipts for Korea. Governments of other countries could take this as a case study in planning a national budget for supporting the music industry and using idols as a food tourism promoter. Similarly, drama series promoting local food with worldwide streaming platforms, such as Netflix, should get strong support from the government. In this way, people can start learning about other countries' cultures even though they might not have been to that country before. This strategy is beneficial for both domestic and international tourism.

In addition, the seven elements of the service marketing mix should be considered in detail when planning a food tourism marketing campaign. Generation Z are those who value authenticity and originality of local cuisine available at a tourist destination (Kılıç et al., 2021). Food experience activities should be designed by responding to this preference, such as tasting food (as a product) in local communities rather than in a fine-dining restaurant. Those available foods should

be offered at a reasonable price as most of generation Z Thai population are still studying or working at a first stage of work where they are not likely to be able to afford high-priced cuisine. When traveling abroad, they also have to prepare a budget for other expenses, such as flight tickets and accommodations. Therefore, this factor should be considered carefully. Accessibility of tourist destinations (place) should be well planned and managed. This actually involves government planning on tourism infrastructure, including the transportation network (road, railway, airport, city sky train, and subway), telecommunications, accommodations (hotel and other types of accommodation), restaurants, and bars. Promotional efforts should focus on online communication as generation Z are accustomed to technology and online communication channels, such as application X (known as Twitter) where ongoing issues or campaigns could go viral overnight. The remaining three factors; people, process, and physical evidence, can be grouped as the overall experience tourists gain from a destination. At the same time as consuming products, they interact with local people, exchange information about food and culture, and learn about local people's language and gestures while delivering services. Local people, therefore, play a significant role

in providing both tangible and intangible offerings to tourists.

Research limitation

This research adopted a sample survey approach with offline and online questionnaires. Future research could be done by interview of the generation Z as well as relevant people, such as government officials, tourism marketers, and local people in order to get a deeper understanding of other variables that could drive travel intention.

Recommendations

1. Recommendations for policy makers.

The organizations and/or people who are involved in tourism or cuisine tourism could apply the research results as the cuisine traveling guidelines for designing the operational plans based on

service marketing mix for promoting Korean cuisine tourism.

Travel agencies or people involved in the tourism business could use the research results as guidelines for organizing Korean cuisine traveling for generation Z of Thai population.

2. Recommendations for future research:

More variables such as perception, attitude, motivation, service quality, cultural experience etc. could be investigated if any of them could influence Korean cuisine traveling intention.

The research with the same conceptual framework could be done with different sample groups, e.g. adolescents, working age, sliver age and generation Y etc. This can result in an expansion of knowledge about Korean cuisine traveling intention.

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