The impact of economic factors on street food consumer choice in Nong Khai Municipality, Nong Khai Province, Thailand

Sakkarin Nonthapot[a*]

[a]Indo-China Country International Trade and Economic Research Sector, Faculty of Integrated Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Nong Khai Campus, Thailand

C H R O N I C L E	A B S T R A C T
	The objective of this research is to test the impact of economic factors on the service marketing mix for consumers in choosing street food in Nong Khai Municipality in the Nong Khai province of Thailand. Service marketing involves 7Ps in the study. The method involved a survey of 400 respondents from 3 areas with quota sampling. The results revealed that economic factors had positive and direct effects on the total service marketing mix and positive indirect effects on each element of the service marketing mix. The economic factor with the greatest effect was People, followed by Product, and Physical Evidence and Presentation, respectively. The study results show that there is a need to focus on all of elements of the service marketing mix for the street food business including the quality of service, food quality and cleanliness.

1. Introduction

The expansion of urban society has increased the demand for restaurant food. A busy lifestyle and smaller family size have encouraged people to eat outside, especially at street food restaurants, rather than to cook at home as it is more convenient, saves time, and offers more choices. Each individual has his/her own consumption preference. Furthermore, children and teenagers who are living in the city consume less traditional food because they have less time to prepare delicate meals. For all of these reasons, there are more and more promotions of fast food, instant food, and pre-cooked food which have resulted in increased consumption at street food restaurants. Therefore, street food has become as one of the most popular businesses in Thailand. In addition, Thailand is one of the countries that is famous for street food; it was ranked first in the World's 23 Best Cities for Street Food in 2018 (CNN, 2018(. Furthermore, the Virtual Tourist website mentioned that Bangkok is truly a heaven on earth for street food. Moreover, it is not only popular for foreign tourists, but also for local Thai people. Nong Khai is one of the provinces where most consumers, both local residence and Thai and foreign tourists, enjoy eating street food. Consequently, the number of street food restaurants has increased, which also reflects the support and promotion by the province and related agencies. Festivals are organized every year such as the Balloon Festival, the Prap Haw Monument, the Provincial Red Cross Fair, the End of Buddhist Lent Day and the

Rocket Festival. Furthermore, Nong Khai Province stays at the 7th rank in the world's best destinations as a "second home" for American senior citizens in a bimonthly US magazine "Modern Maturity" 2001 (ODYYSY Media Group, 2018). It is clear that tourists visit Nong Khai to experience the way of life and traditional food, which has increased the number of street food entrepreneurs.

A survey of street food in Nong Khai District, Nong Khai Municipality in Nong Khai province shows that street food restaurants are located in diffuse clusters. Fig. 1 shows the different areas, A is the area next to Payanak City Gate intersection. It is a wide quad as it was a former gas station and some street food restaurants are located in this area. From A, going along Soi Prachak Silapakhom, there is a two-lane road going straight to B and C where street food restaurants are located along with the road on the sidewalk. Area B is in front of Nong Khai Municipality while area C is in front of Hua Khiao Kong Hug School (Chinese), next to Wat Srisaket. Most of them are open from 17.00 to 24.00hr. At the time of the survey, there were lots of customers in each area (Fig. 1).
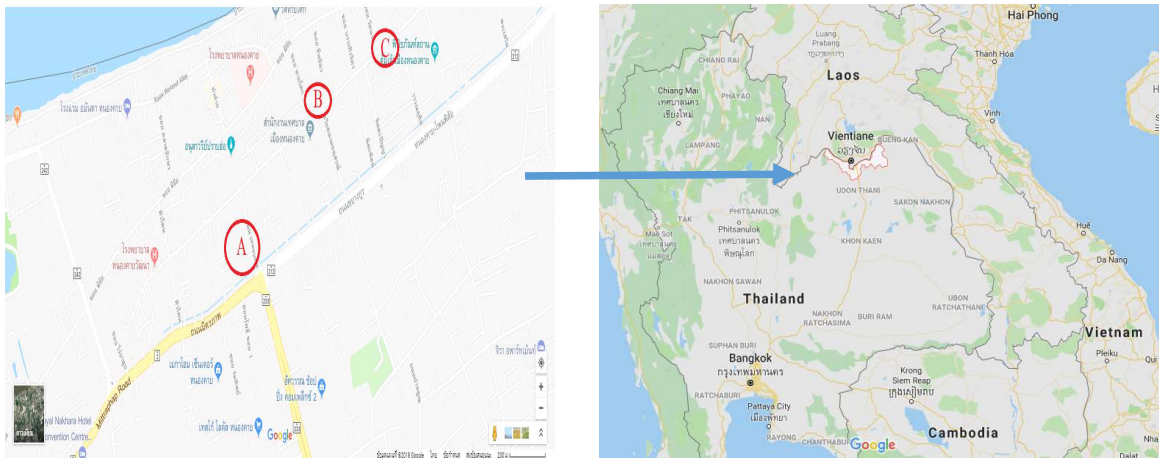

Fig. 1. Map of street food restaurants in Nong Khai Municipality)Google Maps, 2561)

Currently, street food is very popular for Thai and foreign tourists because it is convenient, easy to eat, quick, and varied. Consequently, more and more street food restaurants have emerged to meet consumer demand very well. Street food marketing is the force to steer expenditure by influencing the decision making of customers to consume street food in Nong Khai Municipality. Thus, it is likely that the street food business in Nong Khai Municipality area and the surrounding region will expand in the future. The study on consumer behavior is based on the principle of demand (Shaffner et al., 1998: P. 28) as it influences consumer decision making, particularly in regard to the marketing mix, which influences their decisions about street food consumption)Kotler, 1997, 2012). However, there are limitations in the study of Nong Khai Province area. Therefore, this research aims to determine the impacts of the economic factors that affect street food consumption in Nong Khai Municipality, Nong Khai Province by analyzing the marketing mix (7Ps). This information would be very useful for street food businesses to improve business and develop dishes, the government sector and related agencies to promote street food business in Nong Khai province, and Nong Khai Municipality to set a policy to upgrade street food in Nong Khai Province.

2. Literature review and Related Researches

2.1 The Demand for Food Products

The demand for food products refers to the amount of food that consumers want to purchase at different price levels, in a period of time where purchasing power and other related factors are held constant. The reasonable behavior of consumers follows the law of demand; the amount of food that the consumers

want to buy in a specific period varies with the product price. It can be said that as the product price increases, consumers will consume less of that product. On the other hand, if the price decreases, consumers will consume more of that product)Shaffner et al., 1998: P. 28(. The determinants of demand refer to the factors affecting the quantity of food consumers want to buy, which vary because of the different behavior of each consumer and the period of time. The determinants consist of the price of the product or service, the consumer's income, the price of other related products and services (substitute products), consumer taste, and other factors. Nevertheless, customer demand relies on other factors such as spending behavior and economic status, which may cause a change in demand and consumption behavior.

2.2 Marketing Service Mix Concepts and Theories

Marketing refers to the business activities in regard to price, promotion, distribution, product value, administration, and ideas for the target market to achieve the organization's objectives. Activities comprise the marketing mix, which is a controllable variable that the organization should employ to respond to the demand of the marketing targets (Zeithamal & Bitner, 2002). The concepts related to service businesses consist of the marketing mix, or the 7 Ps, which are used in setting marketing strategies. The marketing mix includes Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence and Presentation, and Process (Kotler, 2012). The organization must plan an appropriate marketing service mix for strategic marketing planning such as selling a product that fulfills consumer demand, selling a product at a reasonable price, and distributing the products to suit customer purchasing behavior and provide convenience. Therefore, the service mix of Kotler (2012) is consistent to apply in the case of street food consumption.

2.3 Literature Review

From the researches in Thailand studying the factors affecting street food, it was found that various demographic factors including gender, age, career, education, and monthly income, of Thai and foreign consumers affected food consumption choices. Moreover, there were some correlations between the marketing mix (7 Ps), including Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence and Presentation, and Process, and satisfaction and food consumption choice behavior)Boonrin, 2 0 1 ; Ratnitipong, 2011; Yoophothong, 2014; Taweepadoong, 2016). When considering the economic factors affecting street food consumption choices, it was found that price (Yoophothong, 2 0 1 4) and income (Taweepadoong, 2016) most affected street food consumption. However, there was a gap in the study, especially in the context of Nong Khai Municipality, where other economic factors were found to influence the decision to consume street food. For this reason, exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were conducted in regard to the economic factors, comprising consumer income, consumer preference, population size and structure, business competition and future circumstance, and the national economy)Shaffner et al., 1 9 9 8 : P.28), and the marketing service mix, which includes Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence, and Process. The service process by Kotler (2012), is shown in the research concept (Fig. 2).
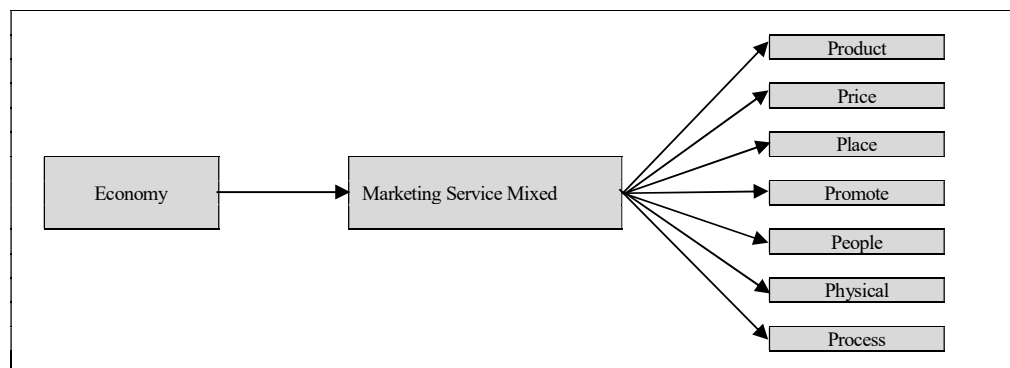

Fig. 2. Conceptual research framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample group

The population was an unknown number of people who were living or staying in Nong Khai Municipality area and had consumed street food in Nong Khai Municipality area. Therefore, the sample group was people who were living or staying in Nong Khai Municipality area and had consumed street food in Nong Khai Municipality area. The confidence level was 95% and the acceptable error was not exceeding 0.05)e=0.05), so, n = 386. To avoid any error from incomplete questionnaire responses, another 14 sets of the questionnaire were prepared. The total number of questionnaires was 400 sets. This was consistent with the studies of Nonthapot (2017); Nonthapot et al. (2018(. Furthermore, the researcher applied the convenience sampling method to collect data from the three areas, Phayanak City Gate Intersection (from the Phayanak City Gate Intersection to Prap Haw Monument), Soi Prachak Silapakhom to Nong Khai Municipality Office, and in front of Nong Khai Municipality Office to Hua Khiao Kong Hug School (Chinese) to obtain the 400 samples. The survey results showed that the ratio of street food consumers was 3:4:3 (from the survey) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample collection ratio

Areas	Number (Samples)	
	Weekend 40%	Weekday 60%
Phayanak City Gate Intersection	48	72
Soi Prachak Silapakhom to Nong Khai Municipality Office	64	96
Nong Khai Municipality Office to Hua Khiao Kong Hug School (Chinese School)	48	72
Total	160	240

Source: Survey and calculation

The steps were as follows.

1) The demographic survey was prepared and the questionnaire was created to distribute to people who were living in Nong Khai Municipality in Nong Khai Province. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, the researcher asked five experts to test its validity to acquire the Index of Item Objective Congruence (I.O.C.) applying Rovinelli & Hambleton method (1977). The results showed that the value was higher than 0.85, which indicates the reliability of the questionnaire.

2) The researcher tried out 30 sets of questionnaire and tested the reliability by employing Cronbach's Alpha, which was 0.8 (higher than 0.70) indicting the high level of reliability of the questionnaire (Turner & Carlson, 2003). Data were then collected and the quantity data analysis was conducted.

3.3 Research tools

A questionnaire was used as the research tool. The collected data were divided into three parts.

Part 1 included the questions about demographic information, which included gender, age, education, monthly income and career of the respondent consumers.

Part 2 included the questions about the marketing service mix (7Ps) affecting street food consumption in Nong Khai Municipality, Nong Khai Province.

Part 3 included the questions about economic factors affecting street food consumption choice in Nong Khai Municipality, Nong Khai Province.

For Part 2 and 3, the answers were in a Likert Scale pattern and the level of decision making was as follows: 5 - The Highest, 4 - High, 3 - Moderate, 2 - Low, and 1 - The Lowest.

3.4 Data analysis

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

The personal information related to the primary factors and behavior of consumers who had consumed street food in Nong Khai Municipality, Nong Khai Province included gender, age, education, income, and career. They were objective questions that were analyzed by frequency and percentage.

Inference Statistics Analysis

This involved the analysis of the marketing mix (7Ps) and economic factors. Data from Part 2 and 3 of the questionnaires were estimated using Structure Equation Modeling, Partial Least Square based on the Variance Based Model developed from the Least Square Method (Chin, et al., 1996: p.21-44), and analyzed with Warp PLS 6.0.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic information

From 400 samples, it was found that 53.5% of people resided in Nong Khai Municipality area, Nong Khai Province, were male (from 398 samples). Most people were 21-40 years old (48.2%). 55% had graduated from the primary school/high school/ or with a degree or equivalent. The average income was 5,001-10,000 Baht per month (37.4 %) and finally, 33% were employees in private companies.

4.2 Results of the analysis of the economic factors affecting the marketing service mix for street food consumption choice in Nong Khai Municipality, Nong Khai Province

The results of the model revealed that the Average Path Coefficient (APC) was 0.643 (P<0.01) whereas the Average R-square and Average Adjusted R-square was 0.43 (P<0.01). The structure was a reflective model which required convergent validity and discriminant validity. The criterion of convergent validity is an indicator loading that is more than 0.50 with statistical significance at more than 99 for all items (P-value < 0.001). The determination of Indicator Loading showing validity is based on Chin (1996b), (Lauro & Vinzi (2004), Henseler et al. (2009) and Kittimetheekul et al. (2017). The results are shown in Table 2. From Table 2, economic factors, comprising consumer income, consumer preference, population size and structure in Nong Khai District, business competition, and national economic status, had loadings from 0.66 with the confidence level at 99. It indicates that these factors affected the marketing service strategies. These strategies were determined by the marketing mix (7Ps): Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence and Presentation, and Process, where the loading was more than 0.69, except for promotion, for which the loading was 0.50 with the confidence level at 99. When considering each item of the marketing mix, it was found that each item had a loading of 0.66 with the confidence level at 99. The discriminant validity of the latent variables in the reflective model and the variable correlation, including the reliability of the model from Table 3, include the following: the Composite Reliability (CR), the Average Variance Extract (AVE), Cronbach's Alpha, Q^2, and R^2. The lowest CR was 0.83 (it should not be lower than 0.60). All AVEs were 0.50 while all Cronbach's Alphas were over 0.75. Q^2 was higher than 0 and all R^2 values were higher than 0.20 (Lauro & Vinzi, 2004; Henseler et al., 2009). However, all R^2 were higher than 0.2, except for the latent variable (MarketS) which was $R^2 = 0.12$. Nevertheless, it was considered that the average R^2 was 0.43. When considering the overview, it

was found that all CR values were higher than 0.60 and all AVE values were higher than 0.50. All Cronbach's Alphas were higher than 0.60 and all Q^2 were higher than 0. All of these indicate that the estimation using the model was able to predict the internal variables very well. This confirmed that the explanation of the estimation result with PLS-SEM was reliable.

Table 2
Statistics showing the convergent validity of the reflective variable scale

Construct	Loading	S.E	P - value
Product			
1. Taste of food	0.65	0.05	< 0.01
2. Cleanliness of food	0.72	0.05	< 0.01
3. Appropriate quantity of food	0.75	0.05	< 0.01
4. Fresh and quality raw materials	0.78	0.05	< 0.01
5. Variety of choices	0.71	0.05	< 0.01
Price			
1. Reasonable price to quality	0.65	0.05	< 0.01
2. Reasonable price to quantity	0.74	0.05	< 0.01
3. Different price of the same type of food	0.72	0.05	< 0.01
4. Appropriate price of each type of food	0.78	0.05	< 0.01
5. Different price of different types of food	0.78	0.05	< 0.01
Place			
1. Close location to the residence	0.65	0.05	< 0.01
2. Travel convenience	0.76	0.05	< 0.01
3. Safe location	0.81	0.05	< 0.01
4. Sufficient space to service customers	0.76	0.05	< 0.01
5. Many types of street food in one location	0.70	0.05	< 0.01
Promotion (Promote)			
1. Public relations on internet	0.74	0.05	< 0.01
2. Discount for checking in on social media	0.80	0.05	< 0.01
3. Discount during festivals	0.82	0.05	< 0.01
4. Voucher promotion	0.86	0.05	< 0.01
5. Food order via telephone	0.79	0.05	< 0.01
People			
1. Carefulness of seller to customer	0.80	0.05	< 0.01
2. Neat and clean seller's clothing	0.77	0.05	< 0.01
3. Cooking skill of seller	0.77	0.05	< 0.01
4. Good human relationship of the seller	0.77	0.05	< 0.01
5. Food decoration skill of the seller	0.79	0.05	< 0.01
Physical Evidence and Presentation (Physical)			
1. Cleanliness	0.77	0.05	< 0.01
2. Unique decoration	0.76	0.05	< 0.01
3. Menu list with photos	0.78	0.05	< 0.01
4. Unique and recognized sign	0.78	0.05	< 0.01
5. Clean cutlery such as plates, spoons, and forks	0.71	0.05	< 0.01
Process (Process)			
1. Convenience for food order	0.67	0.05	< 0.01
2. Speed of service	0.72	0.05	< 0.01
3. Clear price list	0.76	0.05	< 0.01
4. Accurate queue management	0.81	0.05	< 0.01
5. Welcomed by staff	0.75	0.05	< 0.01
Economy			
1. Consumer income	0.71	0.05	< 0.01
2. Consumer preference	0.80	0.05	< 0.01
3. Population size and structure in Nong Khai District	0.70	0.05	< 0.01
4. Competitor restaurants	0.67	0.05	< 0.01
5. National economic status	0.66	0.05	< 0.01
Marketing Service Strategies (MarketS)			
1. Product	0.73	0.05	< 0.01
2. Price	0.70	0.05	< 0.01
3. Place	0.69	0.05	< 0.01
4. Promotion	0.50	0.05	< 0.01
5. People	0.77	0.05	< 0.01
6. Physical	0.73	0.05	< 0.01
7. Process	0.69	0.05	< 0.01

Source: Calculation

Table 3
Discriminant validity statistical results

Construct	CR	R^2	AVE	Cronbach Alpha	Q^2
Economy	0.83		0.50	0.75	
MarketS	0.86	0.12	0.50	0.81	0.12
Product	0.85	0.54	0.52	0.85	0.54
Price	0.86	0.46	0.54	0.86	0.47
Place	0.86	0.47	0.54	0.90	0.47
Promote	0.90	0.25	0.65	0.86	0.25
People	0.89	0.60	0.61	0.87	0.60
Physical	0.87	0.53	0.54	0.82	0.53
Product	0.86	0.48	0.55	0.80	0.48

Source: From calculation

According to Table 4, the estimation of cross construct correlation reveals that the Square root AVE shown in Table 4 was higher than all AVE values in Table 2. Therefore, it shows the discriminant validation of all constructs. All Square root AVE values were higher than 0.50, as shown in Table 4. Thus, the scale of this research had discriminant validation that was reliable. This led to the analysis of the results is shown in Fig. 3. It is evident that economic factors affected marketing service strategies measured with the marketing mix 7Ps, where the coefficient was 0.35 at the significance level of 0.01. In addition, marketing service strategies influenced all seven components of the marketing mix: Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence and Presentation, and Process. People had the biggest effect (0.78 at the significance level of 0.01), followed by Product and Physical Evidence and Presentation which had the same coefficient at 0.73 with the significance level at 0.01. Promotion affected street food consumption behavior the least, as the coefficient was 0.50 with the significance level at 0.01. Likewise, when considering the entire equity structure, it was found that the empirical data supported all hypotheses or that the hypotheses were consistent with the economic factors affecting the marketing service strategies that were the result of consumer behavior for street food consumption.

Table 4
Cross construct correlation

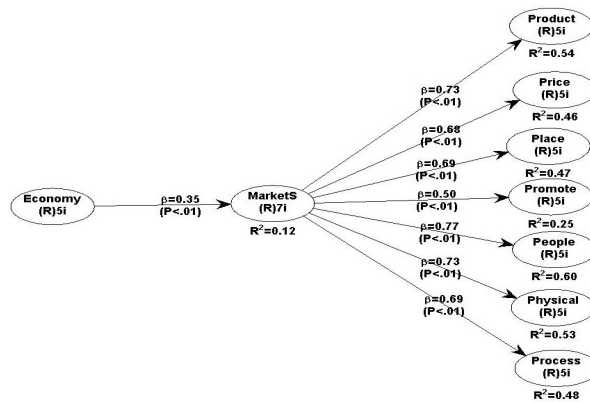| Construct	Economy	Product	Price	Place	Promote	People	Physical	Process	MarketS
Economy	(0.71)								
Product	0.22	(0.72)							
Price	0.21	0.62	(0.74)						
Place	0.26	0.41	0.41	(0.74)					
Promotion	0.09	0.22	0.24	0.38	(0.80)				
People	0.28	0.44	0.40	0.45	0.29	(0.78)			
Physical	0.23	0.41	0.30	0.35	0.22	0.55	(0.75)		
Process	0.31	0.34	0.29	0.31	0.23	0.505	0.60	(0.74)	
MarketS	0.34	0.73	0.68	0.69	0.49	0.775	0.73	0.69	(0.69)

Source: From calculation

Fig. 3. Estimation Results of PLS-SEM

Table 5
Results of Effect Size

Effects	Direct effects	Indirect effects	Total effects	P-value	F² effect size
Economy → MarketS	0.35		0.35	0.01	0.12
MarketS → Product	0.73		0.73	0.01	0.54
MarketS → Price	0.68		0.68	0.01	0.464
MarketS → Place	0.69		0.69	0.01	0.47
MarketS → Promote	0.50		0.50	0.01	0.25
MarketS → People	0.78		0.78	0.01	0.60
MarketS → Physical	0.73		0.73	0.01	0.53
MarketS → Process	0.69		0.69	0.01	0.48
Economy → Product		0.26	0.26	0.01	0.06
Economy → Price		0.24	0.24	0.01	0.05
Economy → Place		0.24	0.24	0.01	0.06
Economy → Promote		0.18	0.18	0.01	0.02
Economy → People		0.28	0.28	0.01	0.08
Economy → Physical		0.26	0.26	0.01	0.06
Economy → Process		0.24	0.24	0.01	0.08

Source: From calculation

In addition, when considering the direct and indirect effects, and the overall influence of economic factors affecting the marketing service mix, as shown in Table 5, it was found that economic factors had direct impacts on marketing service strategies (MarketS). Moreover, they had indirect impacts on Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence, and Process. The sizes of both the indirect and the overall impact were 0.26, 0.24, 0.24, 0.18, 0.28, 0.26, and 0.24 respectively at the confidence level of 99 percent. Similarly, marketing service strategies had direct and overall impacts on Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence, and Process at 0.35, 0.73, 0.68, 0.69, 0.50, 0.78, 0.73, and 0.69 respectively.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of the Structural Equation Model (SEM) show the influence of economic factors including consumer income, consumer preference, population size and structure in Nong Khai District, business competition, and national economic status, which affected the marketing service mix of street food consumers in Nong Khai Municipality. The 7Ps, or the marketing mix, comprised Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence, and Process, where each item was measured by the five observation variables. The estimation result of SEM indicated that the Average R-Square was 0.43, which is at a moderate level. When considering the overview, it was found that all CR values were higher than 0.60. All AVE values were higher than 0.50 while all Cronbach's Alphas were higher than 0.60 as well. This indicates that the estimation predicted the internal variables efficiently)Chin, 1998a). Consequently, the explanation of the PLS-SEM was reliable. The findings show that economic factors (from demand theory) had direct effects on the overall marketing service mix and indirect effects on all of the components of the marketing mix, including Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Evidence, and Process. It affected People the most, followed by Product and Physical evidence and presentation. While, promotion was the component of the marketing mix that had the least effect from the economic factors at the confidence level of 99 percent. This indicates that marketing service mix planning for the street food business should focus on all marketing service strategies while give priority to People, Products, and Physical evidence and Presentation.

In regard to people, the results indicated that street food consumers were concerned about services that promote food (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011). For this reason, all entrepreneurs should enhance competitiveness in service by responding to target group demand. It is clear that street food consumers were affected by the attention the seller gave to customers, neat and clean clothing, cooking skill, good human relations, and the food presentation skill of the seller. All of the factors encouraged the customers to search for

information before making decisions to consume products. As a result, entrepreneurs must prepare street food information well to fulfill the expectations of the customers. In regard to the product, the quality of food was a factor that affected the frequency of customer consumption. Thus, the quality of food in terms of taste, hygiene, appropriate quantity, the freshness and quality of raw materials, and the variety of dishes should be taken into consideration. Furthermore, entrepreneurs should maintain high standards of taste, hygiene, and raw materials while the quantity of food must correspond with the cost. The key marketing mix factor for street food consumers was Physical Evidence and Presentation which refers to the visible characteristics that indicate the quality of the street food service. Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) classified this factor into two main types: first, service landscapes that include the physical environments related to the service location such as buildings and decoration; and second, the other tangible factors such as name card or staff clothing. Therefore, entrepreneurs should pay close attention to the cleanliness and hygiene of the venue related to customer service although street food restaurants provide services at a nonpermanent venue. Outstanding and unique name cards and clothing might attract more consumers. The economic factors, which consist of consumer income, preference, population size and structure in Nong Khai District, business competition, and national economic status, affected the marketing service mix when selecting street food consumption. Thus, entrepreneurs should be mindful of all factors, especially People, Product, and Physical Evidence and Presentation. Related government departments should promote and support service skills, enhance expertise in customer service, standardize the quality of restaurants to guarantee the standard of street food restaurants and facilitate access and availability of street food restaurants to respond to customer demand.

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