A causal relationship model of purchasing behavior of consumers in Thailand regarding processed fish products

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ABSTRACT

This research developed a causal relationship model of purchasing behavior of consumers in Thailand regarding processed fish products. The research sample of 700 consumers of fish products in the southern part of the country was recruited using a multi-stage sampling method. The results indicate that the model was consistent with the empirical data ($\chi^2 = 1960.84, df = 403, \chi^2 / df = 4.87, RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, SRMR = 0.06$).

The results of data analysis showed that factors related to both consumers and external factors had direct and statistically significant influence on the consumer purchasing behavior of processed fish products. The factors related to consumer comprised—perception of product quality, effect of family member, mood-related product, attitude of consumer, and health consciousness—had a direct and positive influence on consumer purchasing behavior at levels of 0.397, 0.163, 0.145, 0.144, and 0.099 respectively.

The external factors—suitability of product price and suitability of store environment—directly and positively influenced consumer purchasing behavior at levels of 0.290 and 0.156, respectively. In addition, the consumer purchasing behavior regarding processed fish products was indirectly but positively and significantly influenced by factors related to the consumers and the external factors. Consumer family members, consumer experience, and perception of product quality had an indirect but positive influence on consumer purchasing behavior at levels of 0.082, 0.074, and 0.013, respectively. The external factors of suitability of product price and convenience-related product indirectly but positively influenced the purchasing behavior of consumers at levels of 0.318 and 0.277, respectively. The results also showed that these causal variables could mutually explain 58 percent of the variance of consumer purchasing behavior regarding processed fish products.

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Introduction

Currently, the food industry generates a large amount of revenue for the country. Processed fish products such as Surimi, are processed by mixing with various food components to make ready-to-cook food products, which are widely accepted as part of the present day fast pace of living. Most people are faced with time constraints and
need to attend to a variety of activities. This context has contributed to a continuing growth in sales of processed fish products. This is confirmed by the sale value of processed fish products in 2010 and 2013, of 1,471 million baht and 2,159 million baht, respectively (Euromonitor International, 2014, pp. 4–5).

Despite the continuing popularity of processed fish products, the business still has problems with unequal sales of certain products which are not regularly sold. Some products have very low sales and some have relatively low sales, while some have pretty high sales. The low volume products cut down the overall product sales. As a result, a business may fail to achieve its overall sales target. It is important that the seafood processing business operators know what factors affect consumer purchasing behavior regarding processed fish products. Research on the buying behavior of the consumers of processed fish products is needed in enabling the entrepreneurs in this area who access the findings and solutions to use them as a means of achieving their sales goal. Therefore, they will be able to apply this knowledge to develop their sales activities to meet their business target by turning the low-volume products into high-volume products, and at the same time, meet the needs of and satisfy their consumers.

However, research on the buying behavior of processed aquatic products in the past has been relatively limited. In addition, in the research done by Choo, Chung, and Pysarchik (2004) and Brćić-Štipčević and Petljak (2013), some factors of consumer behavior such as health considerations, consumer experience, emotions associated with the product, product quality awareness, and effect of family members were not studied. Therefore, the current research aimed to consider these various factors to give an overall view and understanding of the consumer purchasing behavior regarding processed fish products. This research is hoped to fill the gaps in consumer behavior research for appropriate solutions to sales problems associated with processed fish products. This research aimed to develop a causal relationship model of consumer purchasing behavior toward processed fish products in Thailand.

### Literature Review

The consumer behavior of purchasing processed fish products is related to several types of variables including: 1) external factors, such as convenience related product, price suitability, and suitability of the shop environment; 2) factors related to consumers, such as effect of family members, consumer attitudes, product-quality awareness, emotions associated with the product, consumer experience, and health considerations; and 3) the decision making process, for example, awareness of the problem and searching for information (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

#### External Factors

Convenience-related product refers to the simplicity, speed, and convenience of purchasing and cooking processed fish products. Kotler and Keller (2009) concluded that the factor of convenience-related product influences several factors such as consumer attitudes, health consciousness, consumer experience, emotions associated with the product, and effect of family members. In addition, the findings from previous research showed that convenience related to product influences purchasing behavior regarding food products (Fitzgerald, Heary, Nixon, & Kelly, 2010; Olsen, 2003, pp. 199–203, 205–207).

Suitability of product price refers to the consistency of the price and value of processed fish products offered for sale at the outlet. Kotler and Keller (2009) explain that proper pricing influences the factors such as the consumers’ emotions associated with the product, product quality awareness, and effect of family members. This concept is in line with the findings of Honkanen and Frewer (2009) and Radder and le Roux (2005) that the optimum pricing influences consumers to make a purchase.

Suitability of store environment refers to the consistency of the store environment to consumer demand. In general, consumers will evaluate the environment outside the store before deciding whether they should step in. If the shop organizes both its external and internal environment well, the consumers will decide to enter the shop; if the inside of the store presents the product and creates a positive mood, the decision to make a purchase is easier. This is consistent with Turley and Miliman’s (2000) and Chebat and Michon’s (2003) findings which assert that if the store provides the environment, both external and internal, to attract customers appropriately, it will motivate customers to buy more products.

#### Factors Related to Consumers

The consumer, walking into any store after having a general idea of the product, usually has certain attitudes toward the product that may be positive or negative. This is a result of the store environment. If the supplier is able to provide the most positive environment, it can motivate consumers to be more likely to make a purchase. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) assert that one’s attitude influences one’s behavior. Olsen (2003, pp. 199–201, 206–207) and Pieniak, Verbeke, Vanhonacker, Guerrero, and Hersleth (2009) in their studies assert that consumer attitude, based on an analysis of the overall store environment influences purchasing behavior.

In general, individual family members influence each other and they have to make a decision together. This concept is in line with the findings of Chikweche and Fletcher (2010) and Fitzgerald et al. (2010), showing that most purchasing behaviors are influenced by family members. Chidlers and Rao (1992) found that the influence of family members is a factor that affects product recognition of the consumers. In addition, the effect of family members is also a factor affecting the perception of product quality and attitudes of consumers (Caruana & Vassallo, 2003; Hsieh, Chiu, & Lin, 2006; Labrecque & Ricard, 2001).

Perception of product quality normally depends on the senses perceived through the eyes, nose, mouth, and skin. Therefore, if the manufacturer can develop products to meet the needs of consumers through their sensory organs, sales of goods will be higher. Honkanen and Frewer (2009) and Radder and le Roux (2005) believe that the consumer decision to buy or not to buy a product is mostly the result
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