

Media Exposure Behavior of Tourists on Public Relations Media for Thai Food

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to study media exposure of tourists on public relations media of Thai food to global market. This research was conducted using questionnaires, which were offered in 3 languages: Thai, English, and Chinese. The population was 372 tourists of the Nongnooch Tropical Garden, Pattaya in September 2016. The results are presented as percentage, mean, and correlations analysis. The study indicates that majority of the tourists have received Thai food information via smartphone in their countries. Most of the respondents access information from website. The remaining media are social media, e.g., Facebook, YouTube, Line, Twitter, Blog, webboard, and WeChat. The results show that the tourists are most interested in learning Thai food cooking technique from public relations media, followed by history, culture, and nutrition of Thai food, and local or regional Thai food, respectively. The tourists consider an attraction of audio and visual media as the most important factor affecting their decision-making on media selection. Other factors are an ease to access to the information, modernization, reliability and accuracy of information, easy to exchange and add information, and an interaction with the media. Correlation analysis between tourist's characters and Thai food training programs were also presented in this paper.

Keywords: Thai cuisine, online media, choice of media, communication channel.

1. INTRODUCTION

A study of Thai food production in industrial level by Nopparatnaraporn (2000) reports that an export of Thai food products earns a low benefit; although, Thai food has a high potential as exported good as well as high quality production technology. Thus, there was a strategic plan to create popularity of Thai food among foreigners within a 10 years period by supporting Thai food research, building Thai restaurant network,

starting a new market, and conducting public relations of Thai food. Jawasit et al. (2002) proposed marketing research on international consumption behavior of Thai food and image building pattern for Thai food. Moreover, industries are interested in a development of Thai food recipes for ready-to-cook Thai food products, reported by Varanyanond et al. (2003). In order to promote Thai food to the world, it is necessary to disseminate Thai food research to Thais and foreigners via various form of media. One of which is an internet, which is a worldwide and publicly accessible media. It also has a high potential to address a global audience.

In 2010, our research team developed and designed e-learning for Thai food, which was delivered via www.thaifoodtolearn.com. The program provides the best media channel to globally promote Thai food. The e-learning courses were used as teaching tools in Australia at the TAFE NSW-Northern Sydney Institute in Sydney, together with demonstration of Thai food product developed as a result of the research project. Many students and chefs at the institute, both Thais and foreigners, participated in the event. In addition, the study indicates that Social Media such as Facebook, blog, webboard, and YouTube have been parts of daily basis for people living aboard. Not only that, social media has been used as a channel for business and customer interaction. It has been studied by Wahyono et al. (2017). Thus, we have developed compact version of e-learning video and posted on YouTube. In 2013, following the Thai food to learn project, we studied public relations of health benefit of Thai food via internet. As a consequence, we published video on social media, and tested the media on study groups in Philippines and Indonesia. The results indicate that the public relations of health benefit of Thai food via online media is suitable, convenience, accessible, and reliable. Moreover, the results from previous studies can help develop integrated media for dissemination of the state-of-the-art knowledge basis on Thai food to global market.

For the communication aspect, there are three types of media exposure, regardless of behavior and reasons of media exposure, as reported in Pongpaitoon, D. (2001). One of which is a mass communication in which information is delivered by mass media. Others are personal communication and specific media such as pamphlet, poster, manual, and exhibition. The personal communication can be in a form of direct contact or group contact of community public. Communication via various form of media as well as variety of media exposure is the best channel to disseminate information to a specific target groups. Research project on promotion of Thai food to global market is using the same concept in which Thai food knowledge is collected and developed into different form of media, followed by distributing the media through various communication channels. However, it is necessary to understand media exposure behavior of the target groups prior to development of the media. Thus, the information will quickly and directly be delivered to the target groups. On the other hands, audiences can easily access to the right information as they need.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research aims to study media exposure behavior of Thai and foreign tourists at the Nongnooch Tropical Garden in Pattaya, Chonburi province, on public relations of Thai food. The results will be further applied to the Media Development for Knowledge Transfer and Public Relations of Thai Food to Global Market research project, which is supported by the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT).

3. RESEARCH TOOL AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research tool

A questionnaire was used as a research tool in the study. It consists of 5 parts as listed in the following:

Part 1 Background information

Part 2 Media exposure behavior

Part 3 Demand for information on Thai food via media

Part 4 Factors affecting selection of a media form

Part 5 Suggestions

The questionnaires are offered in three languages: Thai, English, and Chinese.

3.2 Study group

A study area is at the Nongnooch Tropical Garden in Pattaya, Chonburi province. The questionnaires were performed on individual, group of tourists, and tour guides, both Thais and foreigners, who visited the Nongnooch Tropical Garden on 19th-21st September 2016.

3.3 Research procedure

3.3.1 Surveying and selection a location unit within the Nongnooch Tropical Garden to collect data from tourists and tour guides.

3.3.2 Creating a questionnaire for a media exposure behavior on Thai food

3.3.3 Collecting data on media exposure behavior of the tourists and tour guides at the Nongnooch Tropical Garden via an interview and the questionnaire.

3.3.4 Grouping and analyzing the data by nationality including Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Korean, British, American, Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Russia.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results are divided into 5 parts based on the content of the questionnaire, as described in the following:

4.1 Part 1 Background information

Background information is described into 2 categories: personal information and general information on Thai food.

There is a total of 372 respondents participated in the study. A 62.9 percent of the respondents are males, which equals to a number of 234 persons. Majority of the respondents, 37.4% or 139 people, are in between an age of 25-34 years old. A 29.8 percent of the respondents are Chinese, which is 111 respondents. A 51.6 percent of the respondents (192 persons) hold bachelor's degrees.

A questionnaire on Thai food consumption and experience of tourists consists of questions on favorite cuisine, Thai food experience including frequency and location of Thai food consumption, and tourist's experience on Thai food cooking class. Results indicate that 70 of 372 respondents like Thai food, which is considered as 18.8 percent of the respondents. Other favorite cuisines after Thai food are Indian and Japanese with percentages of 11.8 (44 respondents) and 6.2 (23 respondents), respectively. Majority of the respondents, 69.4% or 258 persons, have had Thai food. A percentage of 21.5 respondents (80 participants), have Thai food 3 times per week. Restaurant is a place where most of the respondents, 72.6% or 270 persons, have Thai food. There are 10.5 percent of the respondents, which is 39 persons, have ever

participated in Thai food cooking activities. In addition, 43 percent of the respondents would like to attend Thai food training, in which a half-day training is the most favorable answer (16.1%; 60 respondents). Results also indicate that 50.5 percent of the respondents (188 persons) consume Thai food because of its deliciousness and an ability to experience Thailand through Thai food, respectively. In addition, results indicate that Tom Yum Kung is the most well-known dish among tourists in which 72.8 percent of the respondents responded to the dish. The least known dish is Kaeng Panang, which is known among only 27.4 percent of the respondents. Tom Yum Kung and Kaeng Panang are the most and the least tried dishes of the respondents, respectively, whereas Tom Yum Kung and Kanom Jean-Nam Ya are the most and the least favorite, respectively. The last result of Part 1 questionnaire states that majority of the respondents, 41.1 percent, are not interested in ready-to-cook Thai food sauce, while 35.5 percent of the respondents are interested in Tom Yum sauce.

4.2 Part 2 Media exposure behavior

Results of the Part 2 questionnaires is regarding to the media exposure behavior of the respondents on information about Thai food and type of media used to receive the information. The results show that a 36.3 percent of the respondents have received information about Thai food on media in their countries, while the 32.5 percent have received the information in Thailand. A 42.5 percent of the respondents would like to receive information about Thai food. In addition, a 42.4 percent of the respondents receive news less than one day per week. A majority of the respondents, with a percentage of 38.4, receives news at home, followed by an internet café and office, respectively.

According to the questionnaire on communication channel, most of the respondents receive news from smartphone or mobile device (e.g., cellphone and tablet), both inside and outside of their home countries with percentage of 63.2 and 31.1, respectively. Laptop is the least accessible device for receiving news from inside and outside of their countries with 39.8 and 19.6 percent of the respondents, respectively. The results from a types of media questionnaire indicate that the respondents mostly received news inside their countries via website and social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Line, Twitter, blog, webboard, and WeChat, with $\bar{x} = 2.80$ for both results.

4.3 Part 3 Demand for information on Thai food via media

The study on tourist's demand for Thai food information through public relations media indicates that most of the respondents would like to receive information on cooking technique of Thai food for consumption ($\bar{x} = 3.09$), followed by history, tradition, and culture of Thai food as well as nutrition of Thai food ($\bar{x} = 3.08$).

4.4 Part 4 Factors affecting selection of a media

Results show that tourists pay attention to every factor related to selection of media formats. The factors include attraction of audio and visual media; interaction with media; accessibility, reliability, accuracy, and modernization of information; exchange of information; and accessibility of the media. According to responses on the questionnaire, the most important factor is an attraction of audio and visual media ($\bar{x} = 3.42$), followed by ease of access to the information ($\bar{x} = 3.37$). On the other hand, tourists pay least attention to an ability to interact with the media.

In addition, researchers performed a correlation analysis between characteristic of receivers and learning of Thai food. The characteristics are age, gender, nationality, and educational level. Learning of Thai food includes an interest in Thai food training and Thai food training program. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Correlation analysis between characteristic of receivers and learning of Thai food

Characteristic of receivers	Learning of Thai food	
	Interest in Thai food training	Thai food training program
Gender	.187	.002*
Age	.124	.003*
Nationality	.002*	.000*
Educational level	.175	.122

* a significance level of 0.05

A correlation value between nationality and interest in Thai food training is less than 0.05. Similarly, gender, age, and nationality have a correlation value of less than 0.05 with Thai food training program. According to the analysis, it means that nationality has a strong correlation with an interest in Thai food training ($P < 0.05$). Moreover, Thai food training program also has strong correlations with gender, age, and nationality.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The research focuses on media exposure behavior of foreigners, at tourist attraction place in Thailand, on public relations media of Thai food to global market. The study indicates that tourists mostly accept online media via smartphone. It suggests that development of media for knowledge transfer and public relations of Thai food should focus on online media. Results also indicate suitable contents for public relations of Thai food to tourists based on tourists' interests from the most to the least interesting topics as shown in the following:

- 1) Cooking technique of Thai food for consumption
- 2) History, tradition, and culture of Thai food
- 3) Nutrition of Thai food
- 4) Local and four regional Thai food
- 5) Thai restaurants in other countries
- 6) Identity of Thai food
- 7) Health benefits of Thai food
- 8) Herbs in Thai food

The study of factors affecting a decision-making of media selection indicates that tourists consider an attraction of audio and visual media as the most important factor, followed by an ease of information accessibility, modernization of information, reliable and accuracy of information, exchangeable information, accessible media, and interaction with the media, respectively. As a summary, tourists are most interested in high quality, clear, and attractive broadcast media as well as a variety of online media utilization.

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