INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION AFFECTING THE PROCESS OF BUYING DECISIONS IN THAI CUISINE RESTAURANTS IN BANGKOK PRIOR AND DURING COVID 19

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ABSTRACT

This paper studied the influence of integrated marketing communication on the process of buying decisions in Thai cuisine restaurants, specifically in department stores among customers in Bangkok prior to and during COVID 19. Convenience sampling was employed, and the total sample size was 239 customers who bought food and services from Thai Cuisine restaurants prior to and during the COVID 19 pandemic in Bangkok. In quantitative research methods, the data is collected by a questionnaire and analyzed by statistical techniques including percentage, standard deviation, a paired-sample t-test, F-test, and multiple regression. The findings revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in the level of importance in the process of buying decisions, in terms of purchase decisions made in the case of prior to COVID 19 and direct marketing in the case of during COVID 19. There was no difference between genders in the integrated marketing communication in both periods. Moreover, advertisement only had a statistical influence on information search prior to COVID 19 and had no statistical influence on the process of buying decisions during the crisis. Personal selling had a statistical influence on purchase decisions and post-purchase behavior prior to COVID 19, whilst it also had a statistical influence on the alternative evaluation stage, purchase decisions and post-purchase behavior during COVID 19. Direct marketing had a statistical influence on information search, alternative evaluation, and post-purchase behavior prior to COVID 19, and it only had a statistical influence on information search and alternative evaluation during COVID 19. The suggestion is that restaurant owners might ensure that their customers make more confident purchasing selections by enhancing the aforementioned factors, including public relations and sales promotions before COVID 19 and only sales promotions during the COVID 19 crisis.

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Introduction

The coronavirus situation leads to many challenges for marketing, in terms of marketing mix, marketing communication, and consumer behavior (Murphy, Naert, & Strong, 2020). Policymakers need to understand this situation has been leading to the effect of financial problems and behavior modification will still have enormous social and economic impacts, such as in the affected areas of radical changes in consumer behavior, like a sudden increase in changes to consumption patterns. The authors also mentioned that most of the marketing theories assumed that everything was constrained or could not be interrupted by any virus. Although the situation is still ongoing, a few researchers are trying to study the issue of the spread of the coronavirus (COVID 19) that affects various factors, such as Tucker and Yu (2020), who are studying the first impact of social constraints from the Coronavirus. The authors studied the effect on consumer brands in the United States in a retail trade survey in the first three weeks of March 2020 and found that the nation's overall demands declined markedly from various restrictive policies. However, there are only a few data sets about the restaurant trade that focus specifically on delivery because of that limited scope. Finally, large retailers are affected by government restrictions, especially full-service stores. The study of the impact of the Coronavirus on Husanat's Malaysian e-business and team (2020) found that the country's economic growth has diminished, and the broader e-commerce business is suffering as major retailers have temporarily closed their stores. Aside from that, small and medium-sized retailers are struggling with the situation due to low footfall in their stores. In addition, online businesses are not yet on the list of research.

In Thailand, there are more than 320,000 restaurants around the country. In 2019, there were 70,419 new restaurants opened, which was double the amount from 2018. Bangkok is the city that has the most restaurants opened in Thailand (Wongnai.com cited in Rotchana, 2020). The restaurant business is particularly important in Thailand's hospitality industry and economic system. Because there are a lot of players in this industry, from small businesses such as street food stalls to international chain companies, this creates a linkage to several business sectors in the country. The volume of the restaurant industry was calculated as 4.7% of Thailand's GDP. The restaurant industry in Thailand has been estimated to be expanded at 1.4–2.4% in 2019, which means that the volume could be up to 437,000-441,000 million baht (MarketingOops, 2020). This is because the players in the market have seen that food is a main physiological need for humans. Everyone needs to eat food to survive, and therefore, in this industry, there are always new players who enter the industry. Also, according to the results from the "Economy and Society of Thai Family Survey" (2008-2018), Thai families have increased their average spending on eating out and buying takeaway food by up to 6.5%, which is more than is spent on cooking at home, which expanded by only 2.1%. This is because of changes in customers' lifestyles in that they want speed and convenience when consuming food (GSB Research, 2019), including newly developed technology that assists customers to easily receive relevant information from businesses to make informed choices and helps businesses to reach potential customers (Department of Business Development, 2019).

From the new normal trends above, business and marketing teams must adjust the communication methods to promote their business, as the new normal lifestyle creates new normal marketing trends (Brand Buffet, 2020). The first of these trends is experimental marketing, which focuses on providing customers with emotional benefits from the company's products and services, such as having staff provide extra services for tailoring the customers' dining experience to create more value in the products and services. Due to COVID 19, people are afraid of joining group activities, and therefore they do not want to get closer to other people as a result, meaning that customers will have more interest in contactless (touch-free) actions when consuming. Therefore, marketers need to adjust marketing strategies to support the changes in customers' lifestyles and behavior. Secondly, from a collectivism and individualist standpoint, Thai people favored social gatherings and enjoyed engaging in other people which are behaviors that go against individualism. However, COVID 19 is making people change their lifestyles and behaviors, and one of the important changes is working from home or online studying, which makes people less focused on self-image because they do not have to present a good self-appearance as they did when they attended social activities. As a result, any marketing initiatives that emphasize consumers' social status and self-image will need to modify their business model and marketing strategies. Thirdly, the end of the new-oriented - People, especially Gen Y, who will change their behaviors from their current "happy now" mentality in that they are willing to pay a high price in exchange for a once in a lifetime experience. This generation has not normally been focused on saving money because they are in the period of life where they are earning money, so they spend money just for today. However, due to COVID 19, a crisis that has caused some individuals to lose their jobs or have lower incomes, they will start to worry more about saving and will seek out several sources of income to carry out their long-term plans. As a result, people's lifestyles will increasingly require goods and services that have long-term advantages, such as conserving money, life insurance, health items for enhancing the immune system, eating for good health rather than merely happiness, good flavor, and being attractive (instragrammable). Marketers will need to keep an eye on new normal trends and develop marketing strategies to support customers' insights.

Even though COVID-19 will end, there will be an economic crisis that is a result of the Coronavirus outbreak (MarketingOops, 2020). People will therefore be more concerned about their money and spending, and as a result, will switch from dining out 3–4 times a week to instead relying more on cooking at home or choosing individual menu items that are easy to consume rather than multiple dishes when dining out, which is likely to be another coming trend. Makro Horeca Academy (2020) stated that consumers' new lifestyles that are concerned with healthy living would create new trends in the foodservice industry, which are: 1) Ongoing consumers still worry about their health and safety, so it will be the owner's responsibility to communicate with them about the positive action they have taken; 2) Smart Consumers will become more important as people would like to know the transparency of the product offered; and 3) Local Consumption - People will tend to consume more local or neighborhood products from businesses located near their home or workplace. Food Institute (2020), apart from

developing online communication channels and conducting business partnerships, food service businesses will need to establish customers' "trust and confidence" in their brands by conducting food safety checks and providing information about their products and venues. Food safety and hygiene will be one of the most important decision-making factors for customers when deciding to buy any foodservice products (Kasikorn Research Center, 2020). Searching through several relevant documents, we have found that effective behavioral interventions, which are effective crisis communicators, involve speed, honesty, credibility, attention, and the promotion of helpful individual actions. As such, this research aims to study the impact of demographic and integrated marketing communication on the process of buying decisions in restaurants among customers in Bangkok. The anticipated result might help restaurants better understand what customers want from them as they make purchasing decisions once their lifestyles and behaviors change as a consequence of COVID 19.

Literature Review

   Demographic Factors and Buying Behaviors after the COVID 19

   Mitchell, Yang, Behr, Deluca and Schaffer (2020) who studied "Self-reported food choices prior to and during the COVID 19 lockdown" found that stressful situations like the outbreak of COVID 19 can lead to changes in food choices, especially high-yield food choices that are high in fat or sugar. Food data from a digital behavioral weight loss program with a meal recording interface were analyzed to assess self-reported food choices from March 5 to March 11 (Pre-COVID) and during the first week of COVID 19 restrictions (March 12-March 18 (During COVID)). The authors also found that fresh fruit and vegetable consumption was lower than prior to and during the COVID pandemic, while the consumption of red meat and starchy vegetables increased. There were more men than women who increased their consumption of red and processed meat. The overall amount of fruit and vegetable intake changed less in participants aged 66 and over compared to younger participants. A percentage of older participants reported that their consumption of lean meats and starchy vegetables had increased. However, these groups have little change in those who are of a younger demographic. More participants aged 18–35 had reduced their consumption of caffeine, desserts, lean meats, and salads compared to older participants. Therefore, it can be concluded that the consumption of certain groups changed during the outbreak of COVID restrictions. This result was consistent with the findings implied by the work of Elmer, Mepham and Stadtfeld (2020), who studied "Students under lockdown: Comparisons of students' social networks and mental health prior to and during the COVID-19 crisis in Switzerland." The authors found that students' social networks and mental health before and at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic changed in multiple dimensions concerning social networks (interaction, friendship, social support, co-studying) and mental health indicators (depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness) within two cohorts of Swiss undergraduate students experiencing a crisis and made additional comparisons to an earlier cohort which did not experience a crisis. The authors also found that interaction and co-studying networks had become sparser and that more students were studying alone. Furthermore, students' levels

of stress, anxiety, loneliness, and depressive symptoms got worse, compared to measures taken before the crisis. Stressors shifted from fears of missing out on a social life to worries about health, family, friends, and their future. Moreover, female students appeared to have worse mental health trajectories when controlling for different levels of social integration and COVID 19 related stressors. In conclusion, there were differences in the behavior of people prior to and during the COVID-19 lockdown according to demographic factors. Therefore, this study will propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: There are differences in the process of buying decisions in restaurants among customers prior to and during COVID-19 according to the differences in demographic factors.

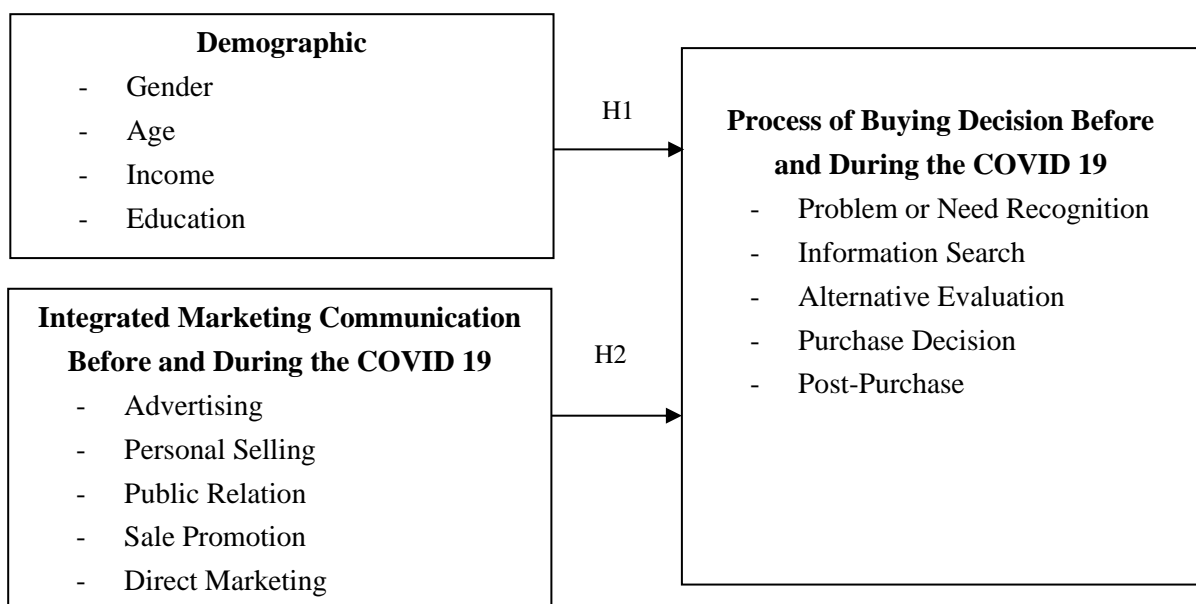**Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)**

The integrated marketing communications (IMC) selection criteria, which marketers can use to assess how effectively and efficiently they have put together their IMC programs, will see an increase in the variety of new digital options that will be added to the traditional media and communication options already available to marketers in the future of advertising and marketing communications. In order to capture consumer demands and communication goals at various stages of the consumer choice process, IMC attribution must therefore make use of several variables (Mihartm, 2012).

Witoowinit and Intuluck (2020) studied demographic factors and integrated marketing communications on buying decisions among 388 customers in Bangkok towards halal products based on different generations. The investigation of Witoowinit and Intuluck (2020) was a binary logistic regression analysis to test the hypotheses, and the result indicated that personal selling and direct marketing had a positive impact on buying decisions of halal products. Similarly, Ratchavieng (2019) studied the integrated marketing communication model towards health among 697 elderly care businesses in Thailand. The exploratory and confirmatory methods were employed to confirm the determinants which were appropriate to communicate with the participants. The study of Ratchavieng (2019) found that using electronic media, combined with other promotions, and employing personal selling to share the information, was responsible for more than 10 percent of the variance in the integrated marketing communication model to communicate with the participants. Furthermore, Rodplang and Pathomsirikul (2017) investigated the integrated marketing communication model of hotel businesses in Thailand based on 600 Thai and 600 foreign tourists. Structural equation modeling was employed to explain the impact among the variables, with the result showing that the integrated marketing communication model had a positive influence on brand value and success in the marketing of hotels directly and indirectly. The studies of Witoowinit and Intuluck (2020), Ratchavieng (2018), and Rodplang and Pathomsirikul (2017) were aligned with Uthaiwan, Thongrawd, Thianthai and Gun (2017) and investigated the demographic factors which influenced the integrated marketing communications based on 385 consumers of the Central Plaza department store. The t-test and ANOVA were employed as the techniques to test the impact of these factors. The results found that the differences in demographic factors such as gender, age, and income indicate a significantly different influence on the perception of integrated marketing communications, and integrated marketing

communications also changed the consumer's behaviors in terms of purchasing products, selecting the brand, and amount of buying (Uthaiwan et al., 2017).

Potjanajaruwit (2017) also researched the impact of an integrated marketing communication strategy on decision-making behavior towards education at Rajabhat University in Thailand among 400 students. The result of this study implied that the integrated marketing communication strategy had an influence on the decision-making behavior to choose education at Rajabhat University both positively and significantly. The investigation of Laopasae and Pasunon (2015), who studied the integrated marketing communication which related to 350 customers in terms of decision-making in deciding to use the Bank of Ayudhya Public Company Limited Kanchanaburi credit service, The study employed ANOVA, based on LSD, and indicated that advertising, public relations, personal selling, direct marketing, and sales promotions had a positive influence on decision making in terms of credibility, service process, service charge, and service of employees significantly. Similarly, Wongsala (2013) explored the impact of integrated marketing communication on the decision to buy pizza among 400 end-users in Bangkok. Wongsala (2013) remarked that the result found in this study was that advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, word of mouth, and event marketing were the factors that encouraged a buying decision among customers. According to the literature review based on the service industry, the author found that the demographic factors and the impact of integrated marketing communication had a positive impact on buying decision behavior among consumers. A few scholars studied the process of buying decisions based on demographic and integrated marketing communications, especially the comparison between pre and current COVID-19 trends. Therefore, Therefore, this study will propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Integrated marketing communication has an impact on the process of buying decisions prior to and during the COVID 19 situation.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework for this study

Objective

This investigation primarily aims to study the influence of integrated marketing communication on the process of buying decisions in Thai cuisine restaurants in department stores among customers in Bangkok prior to and during COVID 19.

Method

This research is designed to do surveys by choosing the right tool for this project and aims to employ the t-test to explain the impact of demographic and integrated marketing communication on the process of buying decisions. Furthermore, ANOVA is used to compare the various factors of demographics, integrated marketing communications, and the process of buying decisions prior to and during COVID 19, as well as the influence of integrated marketing communication on the process of buying decisions in restaurants among customers prior to and during COVID 19. This study relies primarily on the collection and analysis of primary data, which comes from all tested measurements. To determine whether the desired relationships exist, the derived data are analyzed using statistical techniques such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation (SD), a paired-sample t-test, F-test and multiple regression analysis. In the process of testing the accuracy of the tool (Content Validity), the draft of the questionnaire was tested to find the directness of the tool according to the content. The main purpose was to check the suitability of the language used in the questionnaire with the method of finding the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) in which three research experts or people who are specialized in the regarding topic were invited to check the content accuracy to adjust and improve the developed questionnaire according to their recommendations. The construct and items of variables Porcu, Del Barrio-García, and Kitchen (2017) and Wang, Wu, and Yuan (2019) and Dahiya and Gayatri (2018) including:

Table 1 Construct and items of variables

Construct (Developers)	Items number	α
Advertising	5 items	.750
(Porcu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019)	- You are aware of advertisements for Thai restaurants in department stores.	
	- You are aware of advertisements for Thai restaurants in department stores via mass media such as radio and television	
	- You are aware of advertisements for Thai restaurants in department stores via print media such as newspapers, magazines, and brochures.	
	- You are aware of advertisements for Thai restaurants in department stores via personal channel such as famous people, celebrities, and other people.	
	- You are aware of advertisements for Thai restaurants in department stores via social media such as Facebook, Line program, Instagram, and Twitter.	

Table 1 Construct and items of variables (Cont.)

Construct (Developers)	Items number	α
Personal Selling (Porcu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019)	5 items - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store because of sales staff at the point of purchase. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store from the staff who provided good service and polite. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store from staff who can recommend products of the restaurant. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store from staff who serve with fast service. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store from staff who are appropriately dressed.	.803
Public Relation (Porcu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019)	4 items - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store that uses public relation through various media. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store because of product display. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store with a product or service launched by a reputable presenter. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store with publicity that the product has a standard and safety in products and services.	.807
Sale Promotion (Porcu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019)	5 items - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store because of an interesting product presentation. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store because of its locations and convenience for purchase. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store because of its modern and novelty. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store because of a well-known restaurant's brand. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store because of a special discount.	.806
Direct Marketing Promotion (Porcu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019)	3 items - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store that provides information to customers in various online communication channels such as Facebook, Line, etc. - You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store. That offers food services over the phone.	.700

Table 1 Construct and items of variables (Cont.)

Construct (Developers)	Items number	α
Direct Marketing Promotion (Porcu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019)	- You decided to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store with delivery of brochures to customers.	
Problem or Need Recognition (Dahiya & Gayatri, 2018)	4 items - You want to eat Thai food in a department store. - You use a Thai restaurant in a department store for convenience. - You would like to use a Thai restaurant in a department store that meets your needs. - You want to use the service of a Thai restaurant in a department store that is exotic.	.757
Information Search (Dahiya & Gayatri, 2018)	4 items - You have inquired information about products and services from the restaurants - You asked for information from people who have had experience dining there. - You can find information of the restaurants from various media. - You went to explore the restaurant before choosing to use the service at a Thai restaurant in that department store.	.832
Alternative Evaluation	3 items - You have considered choosing a Thai restaurant in a department store based on all the information that has been collected. - You have brought information that you have consulted with other people in order to consider choosing the service of Thai restaurants in the department store. - You have brought the information obtained in order to consider when choosing a Thai restaurant in a department store to use.	.907
Purchase Decision	5 items - You decide to use the service based on the image of the restaurant. - You decide to use the service because you expect that it will worth spending on the products and services from the restaurant. - You decide to use the service from a restaurant that has a staff that provides detailed information and cares about customers. - You decide to use the service because the shop has systematically organized and fast service. - You decide to use the service because the restaurant has a clean and safety protocol.	.930

Table 1 Construct and items of variables (Cont.)

Construct (Developers)	Items number	α
Post-Purchase	4 items	.910
	- You are satisfied with the quality of products and services that you received.	
	- You are satisfied with the service of the staff.	
	- You will for sure recommend others to use the service from the restaurant	
	- You will come back to use Thai Cuisine restaurants in department stores in Bangkok again.	

The Primary data gathered through the distribution of questionnaires in Thai cuisine restaurants located in Bangkok department stores. As a result, the results were representative of consumers aged 18 and up who purchased foods and services from Thai cuisine restaurants and either visited or had recently visited the targeted sites in Bangkok prior to and during COVID 19. Each research subject was then classified by demographic data. From this data collection, the study collected a total of 400 questionnaires and distributed questionnaires from November 1st to 30th, 2020. Furthermore, this study was distributed according to the Simple Random Sampling from 50 districts of Bangkok and pick up 5 districts from a lucky draw includes Bang Kapi, Bang Na, Khan Na Yao, Din Daeng, and Bang Khen, and then set the quota of 80 participants per each district to be a target sample and collect the data based on convenience sampling. However, due to the spread of COVID 19, a total of 239 questionnaires were returned (59.75 percent of the response rate), which is within the range of an acceptable sample size proposed by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2018). Prior to the analysis, the data assumptions were tested in terms of normal distribution, outliers, multicollinearity, linearity, and autocorrelation. Due to this, 39 questionnaires were moved from the study due to the outlier problem. In this study, all data assumptions were found to be within the acceptable criteria. A total of 200 questionnaires (50 percent of the data collected) were analyzed in this study.

Population: Consumers who bought food and services from Thai -cuisine restaurants prior to and during COVID 19.

Sample: Consumers of Thai-cuisine restaurants that are located in department stores in Bangkok

Sampling: The sample in this research is the population representative of Thai consumers who have used Thai Cuisine restaurants located in the department stores prior to and during the COVID 19 pandemic in Bangkok. Due to the large population of the capital city, the exact number is 18,000 shops, which fit the criteria throughout Bangkok (Rotchana, 2020). From that, the sample size can be calculated from the formula of Cranmer (Cochran, 1953 cited in Cochran, 2007), with a 95% confidence level. Therefore, the sample size that must be collected is a certain number derived from the calculation (400 samples). First, restaurants are selected using simple random sampling from 50 districts of Bangkok and using the lucky draw to pick up 5 districts from a lucky draw includes Bang Kapi, Bang

Na, Khan Na Yao, Din Daeng, and Bang Khen, and then set the quota of 80 participants per each district to be a target sample. Then, questionnaires were distributed via working-in and collecting the data based on convenience sampling from consumers of Thai-cuisine restaurants that are located in department stores in tarted area from 5 districts. The study followed the ethical guidelines and has been reviewed and approved according to the Standard Operating Procedures by the Ethical Committee of the Research Institute of Rangsit University based on the Declaration of Helsinki and Good Clinical Practice with the Documentary Proof of Exemption Number (DPE.No.) DPE.RSUERB2021-046.

Findings

According to the table 1, the total respondents of 239 who were presented showed that most respondents were female (60.7 percent), from generation Z (72.0 percent), and had an average monthly income of less than 15,000 baht (71.1 percent). The majority of respondents (49.8 percent) had completed their undergraduate education.

Table 2 Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Categories	Frequencies	Percent
Gender	Male	94	39.3
	Female	145	60.7
Age	Gen X	38	15.9
	Gen Y	29	12.1
	Gen Z	172	72.0
Income per month	Less than 15,000 Baht	170	71.1
	15,001-20,000 Baht	18	7.5
	20,001-25,000 Baht	5	2.1
	25,001-30,000 Baht	10	4.2
	30,001 Baht or more	36	15.1
Educational Level	Primary/intermediary	85	35.6
	Undergraduate	119	49.8
	Postgraduate	30	12.6
	Others	5	2.1

The following part of the descriptive statistics is the analysis of the respondents' attitude towards variables used in this study, including the process of the buying decision (need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior) and integrated marketing communication (advertising, personal selling, public relations, sale promotion, and direct marketing) prior to and during COVID 19. The findings showed that for the process of the buying decision, The statistics used in the test were a paired-sample t-test and an F-test, and the summary of results is as follows:

Table 3 Summarizes of gender variable differences influencing purchasing decisions prior to and during the COVID 19.

Gender	Need Recognition Prior to COVID 19		Need Recognition During COVID 19		T	sig
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.		
Male	4.76	1.41	4.25	1.55	.107	.915
Female	4.74	1.52	3.88	1.54	1.66	.098
	Information Search Prior to COVID 19		Information Search During COVID 19		T	sig
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.		
Male	4.51	1.36	4.20	1.41	1.56	.119
Female	4.19	1.45	4.09	1.49	.529	.597
	Alternative Evaluation Prior to COVID 19		Alternative Evaluation During COVID 19		T	sig
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.		
Male	4.50	1.39	4.27	1.34	.622	.535
Female	4.37	1.49	4.20	1.27	.334	.739
	Purchase decision Prior to COVID 19		Purchase decision During COVID 19		T	sig
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.		
Male	5.08	1.46	5.06	1.41	1.01	.314
Female	4.87	1.52	4.72	1.57	1.54	.126
	Post purchase Prior to COVID 19		Post purchase During COVID 19		T	sig
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.		
Male	4.85	1.41	4.64	1.40	1.43	.153
Female	4.56	1.39	4.36	1.41	1.36	.176

According to Table 3 found that a paired-sample t-test indicates nonsignificant differences between and female in terms of the process of the buying decision (need recognition, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior).

Table 4 Summarizes of age, income, and education level variable differences influencing purchasing decisions prior to and during the COVID 19.

		Need recognition - Prior to COVID 19					Need recognition - During COVID 19				
		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	Between groups	21.84	2	10.92	5.21	.006**	7.37	2	3.69	1.54	.213
	Within groups	412.84	197	2.10			471.06	197	2.39		
	Total	434.69	199				478.43	199			
Income	Between groups	24.25	4	6.06	2.88	.024*	20.38	4	5.10	2.17	.074
	Within groups	410.43	195	2.11			458.04	195	2.35		
	Total	434.69	199				478.43	199			
Education	Between groups	30.74	4	10.25	4.97	.002**	17.86	4	5.95	2.53	.058
	Within groups	403.95	195	2.06			460.57	195	2.35		
	Total	434.69	199				478.43	199			
		Information search - Prior to COVID 19					Information search - During COVID 19				
		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	Between groups	2.50	2	1.25	.616	.541	8.307	2	4.15	1.99	.140
	Within groups	399.50	197	2.03			412.05	197	2.09		
	Total	402.00	199				420.36	199			
Income	Between groups	9.75	4	2.44	1.21	.307	15.96	4	3.99	1.92	.108
	Within groups	392.25	195	2.01			404.40	195	2.07		
	Total	402.00	199				420.36	199			
Education	Between groups	30.74	4	10.25	4.97	.002**	17.86	4	5.95	2.53	.058
	Within groups	403.95	195	2.06			460.57	195	2.35		
	Total	434.69	199				478.43	199			

Table 4 Summarizes of age, income, and education level variable differences influencing purchasing decisions prior to and during the COVID 19 (Cont.)

		Alternative Evaluation - Prior to COVID 19					Alternative Evaluation - During COVID 19				
		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	Between groups	7.11	2	3.56	1.70	.186	10.07	2	5.04	3.07	**.049***
	Within groups	412.94	197	2.10			322.99	197	1.64		
	Total	420.05	199				333.06	199			
Income	Between groups	8.38	4	2.10	.99	.413	18.37	4	4.59	2.85	**.025***
	Within groups	411.68	195	2.11			314.69	195	1.61		
	Total	420.05	199				333.06	199			
Education	Between groups	23.97	3	7.99	3.95	**.009****	12.55	3	4.18	2.56	.056
	Within groups	396.08	196	2.02			320.50	196	1.64		
	Total	420.05	199				333.06	199			
		Purchase decision- Prior to COVID 19					**Purchase decision - During COVID 19**				
		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	Between groups	24.44	2	12.22	5.70	**.004****	28.99	2	14.50	6.68	**.002****
	Within groups	422.16	197	2.14			427.71	197	2.17		
	Total	446.60	199				456.70	199			
Income	Between groups	21.52	4	5.38	2.47	**.046***	31.39	4	7.85	3.60	**.007****
	Within groups	425.08	195	2.18			425.31	195	2.18		
	Total	446.60	199				456.70	199			
Education	Between groups	32.45	3	10.82	5.12	**.002****	36.54	3	12.18	5.68	**.001****
	Within groups	414.15	196	2.11			420.16	196	2.14		
	Total	446.60	199				456.70	199			

Table 4 Summarizes of age, income, and education level variable differences influencing purchasing decisions prior to and during the COVID 19 (Cont.)

		Purchase decision- Prior to COVID 19					Purchase decision - During COVID 19				
		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	Between groups	24.44	2	12.22	5.70	**.004****	28.99	2	14.50	6.68	**.002****
	Within groups	422.16	197	2.14			427.71	197	2.17		
	Total	446.60	199				456.70	199			
Income	Between groups	21.52	4	5.38	2.47	**.046***	31.39	4	7.85	3.60	**.007****
	Within groups	425.08	195	2.18			425.31	195	2.18		
	Total	446.60	199				456.70	199			
Education	Between groups	30.74	4	10.25	4.97	**.002****	17.86	4	5.95	2.53	.058
	Within groups	403.95	195	2.06			460.57	195	2.35		
	Total	434.69	199				478.43	199			
		Post purchase- Prior to COVID 19					Post purchase- During COVID 19				
		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Age	Between groups	13.60	2	6.80	3.54	**.031***	14.95	2	7.48	3.88	**.022***
	Within groups	378.02	197	1.92			379.40	197	1.93		
	Total	391.62	199				394.35	199			
Income	Between groups	21.15	4	5.29	2.78	**.028***	30.08	4	7.52	4.03	**.004****
	Within groups	370.47	195	1.90			364.27	195	1.87		
	Total	391.62	199				394.35	199			
Education	Between groups	34.80	3	11.60	6.37	**.000*****	23.29	3	7.76	4.10	**.008****
	Within groups	356.82	196	1.82			371.06	196	1.89		
	Total	391.62	199				394.35	199			

According to Table 4, it was found that there was significant differences in need recognition. During the information search process, it was discovered that education was the only factor influencing the differences between groups prior to COVID 19. The only alternative evaluation derived prior to

COVID 19 revealed that the only factor that showed a significant difference between groups was education (F = 3.95, p-value 0.05), followed by age (F = 3.07, p-value 0.05) and income (F = 2.85, p-value 0.05). The remaining factors showed a non-significant difference between groups. The process of making a purchase decision both prior to and during COVID 19 indicates that age (F = 5.70, p-value 0.05), income (F = 2.47, p-value 0.05), and education (F = 5.12, p-value 0.05) show significantly different patterns between groups. In addition, the factors of age (F = 6.68, p-value 0.05), income (F = 3.60, p-value 0.05), and education (F = 5.68, p-value 0.05) were taken into consideration. Finally, the post-purchase process discovered that education (F = 6.37, p-value 0.05), age (F = 3.54, p-value 0.05), and income (F = 2.78, p-value 0.05) indicate considerably different between groups for prior to COVID 19 and age (F = 3.88, p-value 0.05), income (F = 4.03, p-value 0.05), and education (F = 4.10, p-value 0.05) suggest significantly different groups for the period during COVID 19.

According to Hair et al. (2018) mentions the three steps that researcher need to examine the data includes the evaluating of missing data, identifying of outliers, and testing of the assumptions the important statistical assumptions. 1) Evaluating of missing data. The reason of evaluating of missing data not only checking the errors in data collection, but also prepare the remedies for dealing with it in the analysis. 2) Identifying of outliers. The outliers represent to the situation that one or more variable tangibly different from the other observations in terms of extreme value. Hair et al. (2018) suggested to detect the outlier based on observing the standardized variable values exceeding ±2.5 and Mahalanobis value exceeding than 4 to clean the data before testing the important statistical assumptions, and 3) Testing of the assumptions the four important statistical assumptions and indicates that the set of data demonstrates normality, homoscedasticity, linearity, and absence of correlated errors.

Table 5 Summarizes the impact of integrated marketing communications variables on the process of buying decisions prior to and during the COVID 19 (Standardized Coefficients)

Independent variable	(Prior to COVID 19)					(During COVID 19)				
	Need Recognition	Information Search	Alternative Evaluation	Purchase Decision	Post Purchase	Need Recognition	Information Search	Alternative Evaluation	Purchase Decision	Post Purchase
Advertising	.035	.159	.024	-.072	-.007	-.071	.114	-.069	-.032	.016
Personal selling	.094	.013*	.011	.216*	.128*	.107	.098	.165*	.292*	.119*
Public Relations	.218*	.189	.201*	.200*	.285*	.381*	.279*	.126	.198*	.303*
Promotion	.563*	.370*	.458*	.624*	.513*	.412*	.296*	.412*	.499*	.440*
Direct Marketing	.024	.255*	.259*	.022	.082*	-.053	.149*	.153*	.005	.086

(*P < .05),

According to table 5, the summary of the impact of integrated marketing communications variables on the process of buying decisions prior to and during COVID 19 presented that integrated marketing communication had an impact on the process of buying decisions only in case of public

relations and promotion prior to and during COVID 19 in terms of need recognition with a statistical significance at the level of.05. that integrated marketing communication had an impact on the process of buying decisions only in case of the advertising, public relations, sale promotion, and direct marketing prior to COVID 19 in terms of information search with the statistical significance at the level of.05. This also had an impact only in case of the public relations, sale promotion, and direct marketing during COVID 19 in terms of the alternative evaluation with the statistical significance at the level of.05, while it had an impact only in case of the personal selling, sale promotion, and direct marketing during COVID 19 in terms of the alternative evaluation with the statistical significance at the level of.05. Furthermore, this had an impact on the personal selling, public relations, and sales promotion prior to and during COVID 19 in terms of purchase decisions with a statistical significance level of.05. Finally, integrated marketing communication influenced the process of purchasing decisions prior to COVID 19 in terms of post-purchase with a statistical significance of.05. A total of four variables of integrated marketing communication (personal selling, public relations, promotion, and direct marketing) significantly influenced the post-purchase with a statistically significant level of.05, while only three variables of integrated marketing communication (personal selling, public relations, and promotion) significantly influenced the post-purchase behavior during COVID 19.

Discussion

This study had two main hypotheses, which are as follows; H1) there are differences in the process of buying decisions in restaurants among customers prior to and during COVID 19 according to the demographic factors. H2) integrated marketing communication has an impact on the process of buying decisions prior to and during COVID 19. The discussion of the findings is presented in the following section: the first section is to understand the differences in the process of buying decisions in restaurants among customers prior to and during COVID 19 according to the demographic variables, the second section is to understand the direct influence of integrated marketing communication on the process of buying decisions prior to and during COVID 19.

The understanding of the differences in the process of buying decisions in restaurants among customers prior to and during COVID 19 according to the demographic variables gave the following results. According to the study, there were no statistically significant differences between gender on the level of importance in the integrated marketing communications prior to and during COVID 19, while there were statistically significant differences between other demographic variables on the level of importance in the process of buying decisions prior to COVID 19 with the exception information search. There were statistically significant differences between other demographic variables on the level of importance in the process of buying decisions during COVID 19 with the exception need recognition and information search which was partially consistent with the previous studies (Mitchell et al, 2020; Elmer et al, 2020). These previous findings all confirmed that there were differences in the process of

buying decisions in restaurants among the customers prior to and during COVID 19 according to the demographic factors.

The understanding of the direct influence of integrated marketing communication on the process of buying decisions prior to and during COVID 19 gave the following results. In the case of prior to COVID 19, the study found that public relations and promotion had significantly influenced on need recognition. Furthermore, advertising, public relations, promotion, and direct marketing had significantly influence on information search. Moreover, only public relations, promotion, and direct marketing had significantly influenced on alternative evaluation while personal selling, public relations, and promotion had significantly influenced on purchase decision. In case of during COVID 19 the study found that only public relations and promotion had significantly influenced on need recognition. Public relations, promotion, and direct marketing had a significant influence on information search. Personal selling, promotion, and direct marketing had significant influence on alternative evaluation while personal selling, public relations, and promotion had a significant influence on purchase decision. Lastly, personal selling, public relations, and promotion had a significant influence on post-purchase behavior. The results were partially consistent with the previous literature on integrated marketing communication and the process of buying decision (Witoowinit & Intuluck, 2020; Ratchavieng, 2019; Rodplang & Pathomsirikul, 2017; Uthaiwan et al., 2017; Potjanajaruwit, 2017; Laopasae & Pasunon, 2015; Wongsala, 2013).

Recommendations

The study has offered some recommendations regarding the findings of the study, which can be divided into two sections: recommendations for business implications and for future studies. The details are presented as follows: 1) The current study was conducted with consumers who bought food and services from Thai cuisine restaurants prior to and during COVID 19. Therefore, the study can be theoretically used to expand the understanding of decision-making behavior among consumers in Bangkok, and the results are expected to generalize from this sample to the target population of the study.

In the field of marketing research, the findings have made a significant contribution to customer's decision behavior theory as well as the study of integrated marketing communication, especially in the case of Thai cuisine restaurants. According to a series of empirical tests and the research hypotheses, the findings suggested that public relations and promotion had a statistical influence on the level of importance in all five stages of the buying decision process in the case of COVID 19, while only promotion had a statistical influence on the level of importance in all five stages of the buying decision process in the case of COVID 19.

Moreover, advertising only had a statistical influence on information search prior to COVID-19 and had no statistical influence on the process of buying decisions during the crisis. Personal selling had a statistical influence on purchase decisions and post-purchase behavior prior to COVID 19, while

it had a statistical influence on the alternative evaluation stage, purchase decisions, and post-purchase behavior during COVID 19. Direct marketing had a statistical influence on information search, alternative evaluation, and post-purchase behavior prior to COVID 19, and it only had a statistical influence on information search and alternative evaluation during COVID 19. This means that public relations and sales promotions are the main marketing communication tools to drive buying decision processes prior to COVID 19. Public relations from various media, product displays, and reputable presenters must be used to convey the messages about the standards and safety of products and services in the case of COVID 19. In terms of sales promotion, an interesting product presentation, store locations, and special discounts should be considered both prior to and during COVID 19. In conclusion, restaurant owners could ensure their consumers' buying decisions by improving the mentioned variables, namely public relations, and sale promotion, in the case of prior to COVID 19, and only sale promotion during COVID 19. Based on the derived findings, this research expands the understanding of the causal relationship between the selected variables.

Yet the explanatory power is theoretically limited to the effects of these variables in Thai cuisine restaurants, especially in Bangkok during the spread of COVID 19 and the sample size was not equally weighted between the two generations. As a result, the study must be retested after COVID 19 to confirm the results using different settings because the study aims to investigate a series of connected correlations among a set of variables and the data collection procedure must be well-planned to ensure the balance of the targeted sample. Moreover, other distinctive research settings can be added to improve the explanatory power of the study. According to the findings, the study explored only the direct relationships among the variables. The way to improve the study would be to employ distinctive research techniques such as qualitative research methods. While the cross-sectional technique is theoretically appropriate now, further study should pay attention to a wide variety of research methods, such as qualitative research with an in-depth understanding of the topic. Nevertheless, gathering data from a single or key informant in the same period might emerge a common method variance in which affects the interpretation (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Thoumrungroje, 2018).

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