

INDIAN RESTAURANT BUSINESS IN THAILAND

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Abstract: The research showed that most of the Thai consumers have ranked the factors related to the uniqueness or the authenticity of the food to be most important for them while selecting to dine at the ethnic restaurants. The consumers are aware that ethnic food are difficult to cook at home and ranked the factors related to the food authenticity, uniqueness and appearance of the food to be the most important factor of dining at ethnic restaurants.

The ethnic restaurants have the high scope in to maintain the product differentiation strategy by maintaining their food authenticity, food appearance and uniqueness in order to serve wide range of consumers. The consumers have ranked the factors related to the exchange of culture to be next highest important after then food authenticity. The ethnic restaurant has the advantage of consisting ethnic culture over the other restaurants. This differentiated feature of the ethnic restaurant has been useful in gaining and attracting their customers.

The consumers feel of being a part of ethnic culture while dining at the ethnic restaurants. The display of ethnic culture can be enhanced by creating the ethnic atmosphere in the restaurant, displaying cultural pictures on the walls and the menu cards, using of the physical tangibles including the eating equipments and the playing of ethnic music in the background of the restaurant. The consumers have ranked the factors enhancing the creation of ethnic atmosphere to be the next important factor following the exchange of culture.

This study provides information which facilitates better understandings of Thai consumers and their behaviors in the selection of restaurants. There are several suggestions which can be drawn from the results of this study. As Thai consumers give high importance to the restaurant image, the restaurants are advised to focus in all the elements which would contribute to improve the restaurants image. The managements of ethnic restaurants are advised to maintain their product differentiation strategy by providing the authentic taste. The food authenticity, uniqueness of food and appearance of food are the most important factors that Thai consumers consider to be important while dining at the ethnic restaurants.

The research was conducted in the city of Bangkok. Further research could be conducted at the other provinces of Thailand to find out more about Thai consumers.

Keywords: Indian Restaurant Business, ethnic restaurants.

1. INTRODUCTION

The food and restaurant industry has been growing over the recent years in Thailand, with the increase in number of Indian community; there have been the significant opportunities for the Indian restaurants in Thailand. This research focuses on the small Indian vegetarian restaurant in Thailand. This study explores the available opportunities for the small ethnic restaurants in Thailand to expand in order to increase their revenue. This chapter provides the overview of research problem, the background of study and research objectives. The overview of research design used to carry out this research. The chapter is followed by the discussion on the significance and limitations of the study and the list of definition for the key terms used in the research. The chapter is concluded with the overview of the organization of this research.

1.1 Research problem

According to Sheth et al. (2011), the success of a service oriented firm consists of the two main aspects which are customer satisfaction and marketing strategy. The use of strategic planning for marketing and expansion decisions in the small firms are not as strong as in large firms. Hence, small firms are disadvantaged to large firms.

This research focuses on the small Indian vegetarian restaurant in Thailand and seeks for the answer that,

“Do opportunities for significant expansion of an Indian vegetarian restaurant exist in Thailand?”

1.2 Back ground of the research

Zheng (2010) stated that “Restaurants provide a mix of products and services, which represent both tangible and intangible values.” According to Yuntao (2005), In Thailand restaurants could be classified into 4 main segments which are Fine dining, casual dining, Quick Service Restaurant and street vendors. Fine dining could be referred to dining in the luxury restaurants such as restaurant in the hotel where consumer seeks for quality food prepared by skilled chef. Casual dining is considered to be dining in the restaurant where full service are provided at the table such as MK restaurant, sizzle, Fuji, Ra- Cha, Zen and etc. The third segment is Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) where consumer expect quick food such as Mcdonald, KFC, Dunkin Donut and etc. The last segment referred as the street vendors, and noodle shops.

Sachasiri (2003) discussed that, in the earlier years, the service sector was considered insignificant in Thailand. However, Euromonitor (2011) suggests that most of the Thai consumers spend their incomes on dining at chained and independent restaurant. Food and beverages industry is the highest spending industry for the Thai consumers, followed by the clothing, footwear and housing (see appendix1). The increase in numbers of food servicing option is one of the reasons that the small restaurants are likely to be at a disadvantage to big chain restaurants.

The New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (2011) discussed in their export guide of food and beverages that, there is a growing interest in healthy foods, in line with global shifts towards health consciousness in Thailand. Sunanta (2005) stated that there is a significant increase in the number of vegetarians in Thailand. However, Thailand does not fall in the world top 20 vegetarian country. (see appendix4)

The increase in number of external culture and religions in Thailand increases the demand for vegetarian restaurants. The existing vegetarian restaurants in Thailand are rather small which mainly focuses on the special ethnic group of customers. With food service industry being one of the most significant industries in Thailand that generates high income, it is very essential for the small ethnic restaurants to expand in order to survive and to be able to compete with other competitors in the industry. Euromonitor (2011) illustrated that consumer of Thailand prefer chain and well-known brand restaurants for both there dine - in and take away (see appendix 2). This includes the café and fast food restaurants, leaving lesser option for small ethnic restaurant to capture their market.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To identify an appropriate target market of Indian vegetarian restaurant in Thailand.
- To determine Thai consumer’s decision criteria in restaurant choice.
- To identify which information source(s) strongly influence the consumers’ decision in the context of restaurant.
- To determine the degree of variety seeking behavior of Thai consumers in the context of restaurant choice.
- To observe and monitor the customer’s reactions on introducing changes to the existing branch of a small ethnic restaurant.

1.4 Overview of the Research Design

This research was conducted by using quantitative methodology. The research was started by conducting secondary research, collecting secondary data through the sources such as internet, magazine, library and newspaper. According to Maylor et al. (2005) “Where why and how questions are generally followed by qualitative research and, what where and when questions are generally followed quantitative research”. Saunder (2003) further said that “In inductive is collected using interviews & observations, etc. to analyze and developed into theory, with the objective of gaining a deep understanding of a phenomenon”. The research was conducted quantitatively using the questionnaire as the research instrument surveying the consumers of different age, gender, income and occupation. The Quota sampling and convenience sampling technique of non – probability sampling was used in this research. Collected primary data were analyzed using “descriptive statistic” and cross tabulation techniques.

1.5 Significance of study

This study is beneficial to the small and ethnic restaurants in Thailand to understand consumers' preferences and opinions on their choice and related issues in selecting their restaurant and food services. This research would also help those small firms to survive against the high competitions and economy crises. This study could be used for further research and it may be applicable to measure a similar issue.

1.6 Limitations of the study

This research was conducted under the limitations of time and budgets. The research was conducted within a low limited budget and within the limited time of around 10 weeks. The research has been limited to the city of Bangkok, Thailand. The results from this research are based on the selected population and it is very difficult to make any kind of general conclusion upon the results. The research is limited to the expanding opportunity in the context of restaurant and might not be generalized to the other service industries. However the research could be used as the pilot for future study and in larger number of population. The findings of this research may have wider application in the other small ethnic restaurant in Thailand.

1.7 Definition of Terms

- Affective – a person's general feelings of favorable or unfavorable towards some stimulus object (Fishbein, 1980)
- Buyer's black box - buyer's consciousness that producers or sellers cannot know or expect and has no control on the consumers. (Kotler, 2001)
- Customer satisfaction – A feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance in relation to his/her expectation. Satisfied customers experience a "pleasurable level of consumption related fulfillment." (Arnould, 2001)
- Ethnic Restaurants - Restaurants that feature foods of different nationality or cuisines associated with particular culture. (Michael, 2003)
- Niche Market – Businesses that operates in relatively small market having differentiate characteristics that make their prices behave differently than in larger markets. (Bailey, 2008)

1.8 Organization of this research

This introduction chapter has provided the introduction and overview of this research. The following chapter 2 provides the detailed review to the relevant literatures. The second chapter discussed in details the relevant theory applied in this research. The chapter 2 is followed by the methodology chapter where the details of research methods, research design, target population, samples, research instruments, data collections, and proposed data analyses method are discussed. The methodology chapter is followed by the data analyses chapter. The data analyses chapter discussed in detail the analyses of collected primary data. The data analyses chapter is followed by the conclusion and recommendation chapter, where the conclusion of this research is derived and discussed in detail. The chapter ends with the recommendation provided upon the research outcomes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discussed in details the relevant literatures and various related studies in the area of restaurants. The chapter starts with the possible expanding technique for the small ethnic restaurant and the related theories. The second part of the chapter discussed about the consumers' satisfaction in the context of restaurant associating with the Servqual model and the Mehrabian-Russel (M-R) theory. The chapter is followed by the discussing in detail the factors affecting the consumers' decision towards the choice of restaurant and the various ethnic restaurants in Thailand. The discussion is followed by the detail on the variety seeking behavior in the context of restaurant, discussing the main consumer's segmentation in Thailand, their life style, their media habits and decision criteria in context of restaurants. The chapter ended by discussing about the Niche market pricing and strategy.

2.1 What makes a company excellent?

Kotler (1991) has discussed the answer to this interesting question. He pointed the role of the company's employees and their commitment in creating customer satisfaction. He further discussed the importance of a company in responding and adapting to a continuously changing market. Mintzberg et al., (2003) and Thompson (1998) supported the discussion on the importance of strategies and its role to achieve the success in an organization. Strategic planning enables the company

to select and organize its business in a systematic and theoretical approach and is a very important tool to enhance the decision making. Ward and Lewandowska (2008) stated that “Well-justified decisions and clearly defined strategies are vital if the firm is to achieve its goals and objectives while optimizing the use of its resources.

There are several past studies which discussed the possible business development strategies. One of the famous theories is the Ansoff product-market expansion frame work. Igor Ansoff introduced a matrix frame work in 1957 which appeared in the Harvard Business Review. Later in 1965, this matrix was published in a book by called Corporate Strategy.



Source: Ansoff (1957) pp.113-124

This research focuses on the Growth Strategies in order to expand the small ethnic restaurant.. According to the Ansoff matrix, one of the expanding options is market development. As in Thailand there are limited number of Indian Vegetarian restaurant, opening a new branch could enable the company to gain the first mover advantage. The restaurant is also planning to introduce changes to gain more penetration through the existing market.

The theory of Porter’s generic competitive strategies is another useful model to enhance the growth strategy of the restaurant.



Source: Michael E. Porter (1985), *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, p. 12.

Being the first mover to the new market would allow the restaurant to have cost leadership advantage over the follower competitors. As a small ethnic restaurant, the main target segments to be served are the majority of customers from a particular ethnic group; the restaurant is operating in the Niche market. Focused differentiation strategy is another available option to the restaurant to maintain the competitive advantage over the competitors. The restaurant could maintain their uniqueness and focus in increasing their point of difference to hold the competitive advantage over the competitors.

2.2 Consumers’ satisfaction in the context of restaurant

In order to be able to create a point of difference, it is very important for the small ethnic restaurant to clearly understand their point of parity and the things that their consumers look for within the restaurants. Learning from customer feedbacks about the level of their satisfaction is very essential for any company.

Buttle (1996) opined that service quality is “regarded as a driver of corporate marketing and financial performance”. Ghobadian et al. (1994) added that service quality affects the consumer’s repurchase intention. Moore (1987) discussed that a company could benefit the lasting competitive advantage through service differentiation. Parasuraman et al.(1988) suggests the SERVQUAL conceptual model to be used as a framework to understand and measure the service quality. This model look at the five dimensions of service quality which are: Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy.

2.2.1 Servqual model in restaurant

There have been similar researches conducted in the past to study on the small ethnic restaurants. Zheng (2010) had used the servqual model to measure the service quality of international restaurants in Bangkok. Ryu et al. (2010) had also used the servqual model in his research title as “the influence of the quality of the physical environment, food, and service on restaurant image, customer perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioral intentions”. This research was done to study the Chinese restaurant in USA. Walailuck(2002) had done another research using the servqual model to study the service quality of fast-food restaurants in Bangkok. There have been few researches on small ethnic restaurants. Jang (2010) had studied the effect of authentic atmosphere in ethnic restaurant, the investigation was done on a Chinese restaurant in USA. Sheth et al. (2011) had conducted a research on handler’s hygiene practice in small restaurant where the study was focused on the restaurant of Vadodara. Bharath (2004) had conducted a research on perceptions of Indian restaurants in America. But until today, there have been little research on the Indian vegetarian restaurant in Thailand.

In restaurants, tangible could be referred to the appearance of physical facilities, the design of the table, and eating equipments. It also includes the looks of all the personnel involved such as the reception, the waitress and the cashier. Tangibles could also be referred to the communication materials such as menu card, and the pictures on the walls. Reliability could be referred to the ability to provide the services in the dependable and accurate way. Such services could be serving the ordered food on time, serving the good and fresh quality of food, maintaining the good level of hygiene. Responsiveness could be referred to the willingness to serve customers and provide them with the help as promptly as possible. Assurance in restaurants could mean the ability of employees to create and convey the trust and confidence in the customer assuring them that all their requested service would be provided in the best way that the restaurant can. Empathy could be referred to showing of care and respect to all the customer requests, such as canceling of an order, understanding the personal values and reason of the customers rather than thinking in the business perspective. These are how servqual model could be useful in measuring the customer satisfaction in the restaurant.

2.2.2 The Mehrabian-Russel (M-R) theory

Ethnic restaurants form as a representative of a specific culture. Cobe (2004) and Wood et al. (2007) discussed that ethnic restaurants may serve many local customer as a way to connect, interact and learn the foreign cultures. There is a specific expectation on the authentic food and atmosphere to be served in the ethnic restaurants. George (2001) investigated the importance of environmental authenticity in a Chinese restaurant and found that customers do prefer the ethic restaurant to have a certain extend of authentic appearance.

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) suggested a framework to analyze the effects of atmosphere and environments on individuals. The model emphasizes on the role of nonverbal responses to environmental factors. This framework studies the individual’s reaction to their environment along the three dimensions which are: Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance (PAD). The pleasure dimension refers to the individual feeling whether they perceive the environment as enjoyable or not enjoyable. In restaurant, playing of popular music could enhance the customer’s enjoyment and the unpopular music could diminish it. In an Indian restaurant, the Indian culture could be displayed by playing of Indian classical music to create the peaceful atmosphere and to give the customer the feel of being in India. The second dimension, arousal relates on how much the environment and atmosphere could stimulate the action of the individual. A study of Milliman (1982) on the effects on music in supermarket has revealed that playing of slow music makes customer walk slower. This could be applied to a restaurant where playing soft music could make customer stay longer in the restaurant. The third dimension, dominance refers to whether the individual feel in control or under control in an environment. Referring to a study of Jang (2010), which suggested the different possible ways to display culture in an ethnic restaurant, in an Indian restaurant, other than playing soft Indian music, the Indian style furnishing could be used as a way to create authentic atmosphere. Displaying of Indian painting around the walls and displaying Indian style of menu card are the other ways to

create the authentic atmosphere. Thus, the Mehrabian-Russel framework could be helpful to study the customer satisfaction in an ethnic restaurant.

2.3 Factors affecting the consumer's decision towards the choice of restaurant

Many previous studies had discussed the possible factors affecting the consumer's decision towards the choice of restaurant. There are various factors other than the Servqual service model discussed earlier in this chapter. In an ethnic restaurant, the authenticity of food is one of the important factors. Kuznesof et al (1997) stated that "authenticity of the food is related to the use, the recipe ingredients, methods of cooking, and means of serving consumed by the population or inhabitants of a specific country and filled with traditional lifestyles. Yuntao (2005) conducted a research on the consumer's preference on dining out at ethnic restaurant suggested that: factors as authenticity of food, cultural familiarity, appearance of food and difficulty in preparing at home to be the main factors affecting the consumer's decision in dining at the ethnic restaurants.

In the study of Bharath et al(2004), it is stated that the American consumers visit Indian restaurant to enjoy the cross cultural interaction and view their dining experience as an integral part of who they are. Learning and getting familiar with other culture while dining would add another dimension to a dining out experience, hence cultural familiarity is an important factor affecting the consumers' decision towards the choice of restaurant. The Appearance of food is the nature of food as visual attributes. Mckee (1990) pointed that appearance of a food product would determine one's initial reaction to the food. In the simpler world- if the food looks good, consumers think it would taste good. A study of Shusheela (1998) supported that food appearance is an important factor for consumers seeking ethnic entrees. It is a part of Thai, Caribbean and many ethnic cooking styles to use the decorating and gardening element such as colorful sculptured fruits, chilies and vegetables to decorate the food in order to improve its appearance, making the food more attractive and irresistible.

A Restaurant USA magazine, National Restaurant association (2000) reveals that difficulty in preparing ethnic food at home is one of the important factors affecting consumers' decision towards the choice of ethnic restaurant. Ethnic restaurants are the best place where the authentic foods are found. Yuntao(2005) further discussed that consumers believes that ethnic food characterized hot, spicy or mild with unique pleasant flavors are difficult, lesser likely and time consuming to be prepared at home, hence dining such food at the ethnic restaurant has been the better option.

Shusheela (1998) further discussed that consumers who want to discover more ethnic tastes would become exposed to ethnic flavors and learn to enjoy them. The restaurant USA magazine by National Restaurant association (2000) further mentioned that the variety in menu is one of the important factors affecting the consumers' decision towards the choice of restaurant. In order to be a part of new experience, the consumer seeks for the different type of foods from which they have been accustomed. The Italian food, French food and Spanish food are said to be highly innovative and trendy appealing and those foods are perceived to be always changing as chefs invent new dishes or modify traditional ones. Thus, variety of menu is an important factor.

The study of Zheng (2010) had suggested the factors like parking facility and restaurant location to be an important factor towards the consumers' decision towards the choice of restaurant. As in Thailand car is a common mode of transport, consumers expects the restaurants to provide the parking facility to assist the convenience of the consumers that are visiting with family. Consumers that seek for the quality ethnic restaurants are often ready to travel distance to reach to the restaurants. However, the locations of the restaurant are expected to be good, safe and easy to locate.

Fieldhouse (1995) mentioned that healthy alternative appeal is a segment of consumer interest. The past research by Zheng (2010) shows that young age group of female are more health conscious in choosing their diet than the male. Having of the healthy alternative in the restaurant allow the consumer with the options to choose from the menu such has lower-fat items, fresh, natural, unprocessed food, organic fruits and vegetable. Hence, healthy alternative is an important factor affecting the consumer decision towards the choice of restaurant. As this research focused on the Indian vegetarian restaurant in Thailand, the vegetarian food are considered to be healthy and are likely to meet up with the health requirement for all age group.

The study of Bharath et al (2004) has pointed out the factors of food portion size and the value of money to be the important factor affecting the consumers' decision towards the choice of the restaurant. Zheng (2010) related the

consumer's income to the consumers' decision towards the restaurant choice. The price of the food in the ethnic restaurants are generally higher than the other restaurant as they provide the authentic food and atmosphere, however most of the ethnic restaurant satisfy the consumers with the food portion and hence they receive the worth value of money. Zheng further discussed that factor of consumers' level of study to be important which would affect their decision towards the choice of restaurant. Education level influences the ideology, the social status, the surrounding people, and self-cultivation of the person, which, to some extent, determine the job, income, and social class. The consumers with good education background are more likely to have higher service consumption skill and seek for better consumption quality.

The frequency of using restaurant and dine-out services behavior of the consumers is also one of the most important factors that affect the consumers' decision towards the choice of restaurant. Consumers who consume the dining services of restaurant regularly are likely to seek for higher service level and seek for more variety in the choice of restaurant than the lesser frequent consumers. Nevertheless, all the consumers seek to be the part of new experience and expect for improvement in everyone of their dining out occasions.

Bharath et al (2004) also pointed out the factors related to the cleanliness and hygiene to be important that would affect the consumer's decision towards the choice of restaurant. This includes the cleanliness of restrooms in the restaurants, the food handlers as well as the overall cleanliness of the restaurant.

2.4 Ethnic Foods in Thailand

As a multi-cultural country, Thailand population consists of many ethnic groups. Ethnic restaurant sector in Thailand is strongly influenced by the development of tourism. Wood et al. (2007) stated that "ethnic restaurants not only serve as eating establishments, but also function as cultural ambassadors that communicate foreign food and culture to local customers".

Thai Food

Thai food is often known as flavorful and spicy. Rice is the staple food with side dishes includes stir-fried vegetables and curries. Thai food's main ingredients are consists of coconut milk, lemongrass, garlic, ginger root and Thai chilies.

Chinese Food

As per Chinese concept, the use of food as medicine is based on five element concepts, which are water, fire, wood, metal and earth. The Chinese categorized food into five tastes: sourness, sweetness, bitterness, acridness and saltiness. As Chinese community forms the second largest in the overall Thai populations, quality Chinese food are widely found in Thailand.

Japanese Food

Japanese food focuses on health with low fat. The Japanese community has been quietly settled into Thailand over the last few years. Food variations include hand rolls, in which fish or vegetables are rolled into a cylindrical shape and wrapped in seaweed.

Italian Food

Italian food has been one of the favorite foods for Thai community. Italian restaurants are found all over the places in Thailand. The taste of Italian herbs, cheese, cream and sauces has been popular among the Thai consumers.

Indian Food

As among the whole population of Thailand, the ethnic group of Indian falls in the 3rd largest population (see appendix 3), this research focuses on the case study of a small Indian restaurant in Thailand.

India is known as the spice capital of the world. Indian dishes are ranged differently according to the different region. The typical south Indian dishes are very spicy includes the curry with rice while the staple food for north Indian food is Roti/ bread /Nan made of wheat with vegetables. Indian food also well known for the variety of sweet dishes made of milk and nuts.

2.5 *Variety seeking behavior in the choice of restaurant*

2.5.1 Thai consumers' segmentations and life style

A study of Warde (2000) assessed the difference between the eating habits of western and Asian consumers. The Asian consumers tend to like hot, spicy, pungent food and prefer to eat vegetables or meat with rice. The oil content are more in the Asian dishes compared to the western, and most of the dishes are fried, served with the spicy condiment. Shane (2005) described that Western consumers generally consume more of dairy products such as cheese and butter in the complimentary of oil. Most of them prefer heavy foods like pies and stews to stir fry or grilled food. They also prefer boiled vegetables and over roasted-meat.

According to Euromonitor (2011), the Thai consumer segmentations are divided into 8 groups (see appendix 5). The kids of age range 3 to 8 years and the babies' infants are highly dependent on their parents, and holds little money of their own. However they could effectively use the "pester power" to convince their parents the things they want. They mostly consume snack foods and made little contributions in choosing the restaurants. The next segment is the tweenagers consists of young population age from 9 to 12. This group of population has their own money from the weekly or monthly allowances to spend; the Thai's tweens tend to eat out in fast food shops such as McDonald's, KFC and others. The next segment is the teenagers, who also has the money from their weekly or monthly allowances and who might also work part time. These group of population are in the trend to try new things and to maintain their "cool" image to be accepted by the peers, hence they has the wide range of restaurant choice.

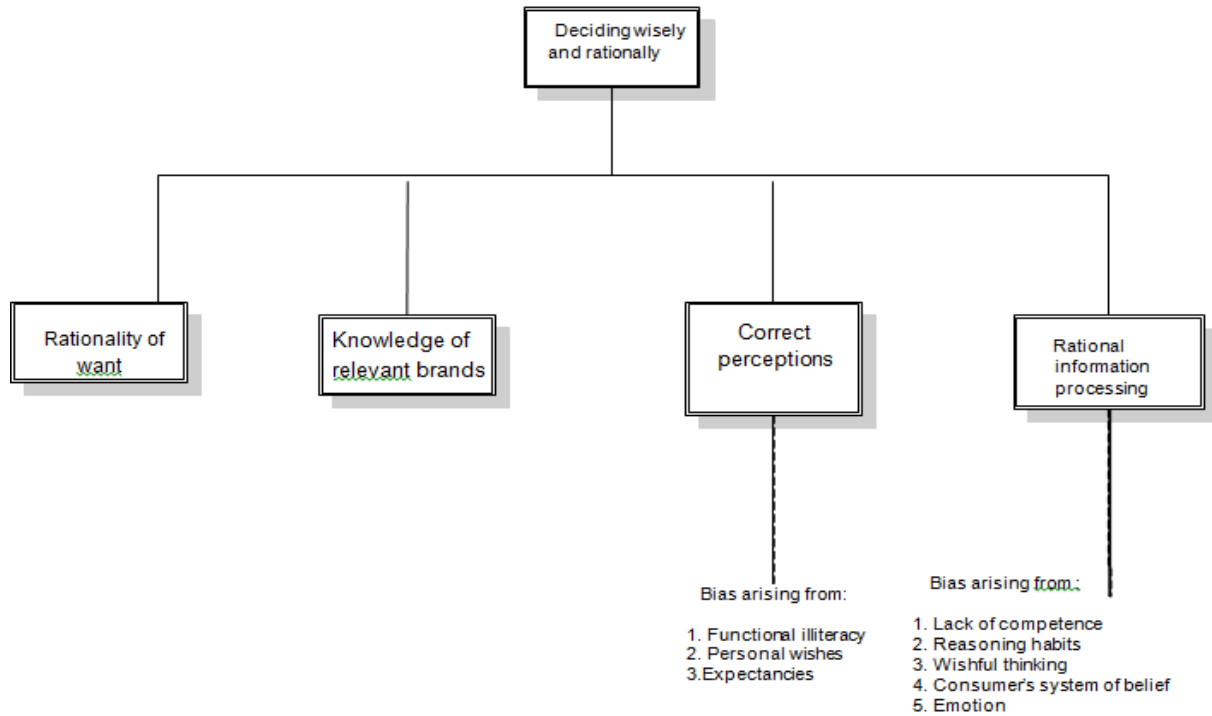
The next segment according to the Euro monitor (2011) are the population aging from 20-40, these are the working population, who select their restaurants according to their convenience during their working period. But however during leisure time and to socialize with friends, they had chosen to dine at variety restaurants. After the age of 30, most female become extra health conscious and they spend highly on anti-aging cosmetics. The married population would choose to dine at the family restaurants like MK, Fuji, Oishi and others with their family. The next segment is the middle age population. This segment of people are very health conscious, they spend their most of the leisure time in gym and golf club in order to stay fit and young. Most of the people from this segment consume strictly nutritious foods. However their spending power is higher than any other segment and they are likely to choose to dine at the luxury restaurants. The next segments are the old aged people who are retired from work, living on pension or family incomes. The dine-out habit of such people is rare and mostly with their family. However some of the old aged people dine-out regularly at their convenient shop or any particular restaurant that suits their nutrition needs. They hardly make any variety choice in selecting their restaurants.

Despite the large numbers of people still living in the rural areas, the trends indicated in the euromonitor (2011) that Thailand is becoming urbanized. The expansion of industrial and commercial activities is considered to be the main reason for the recent huge flow of migrants into Bangkok and metropolitan areas.

There are varieties of restaurants available in Thailand to suits the different life style of Thai consumers. The selection of restaurant could be varied by the demographics of the consumers and the source of information about the restaurant. O'Shaughnessy (1987) discussed the role of emotions and rationality in consuming decision. Emotions could be used in many ways by the restaurants to communicate and induce the feel of hunger to the consumers. The use of emotion elements such as color, odor, and realistic food image could be very useful to communicate the taste to the consumer and hence induces the feel of hunger.

Other than the different emotional appeals used in the advertising. O'Shaughnessy(1987) discussed that the rational factors like knowledge of brand or brand awareness of the restaurant is also an important factor for the consumer's decision towards restaurant. Ryu et. al.(2010) supported that the restaurant image is one of the important factor for the consumer's decision towards restaurant. Different consumers may perceive different kind of needs and wants at different time, as in the context of restaurant, different consumer may perceive to eat different kind of foods to fulfill their hunger in different ways, hence the rationality of want also an important factor for consumer's decision towards restaurant. Some health-conscious consumers may only want to go to healthy or vegetarian restaurant.

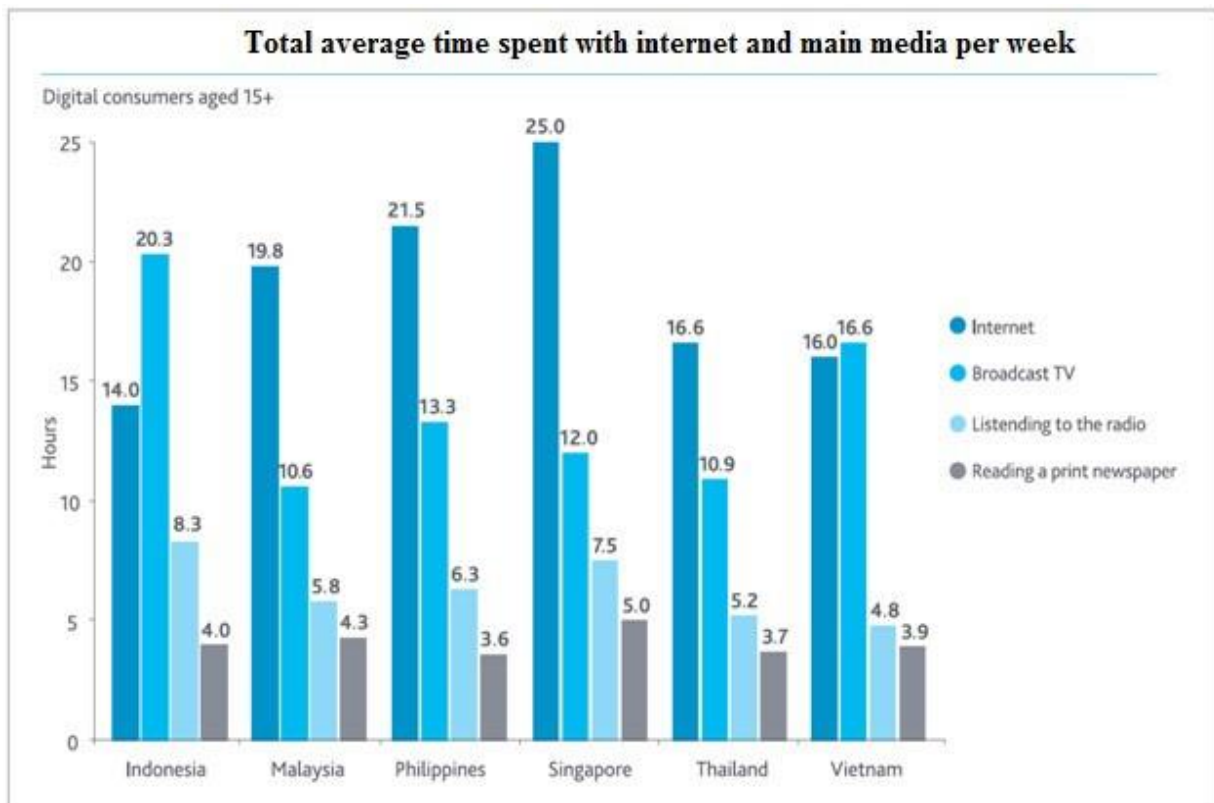
The following diagram summarized the factors affecting the rationality in buying discussed by John O'Shaughnessy (1987).



Other than the reasons discussed above, consumers may also make their restaurant choice according to their perception towards a restaurant, if they have liked using the service from one restaurant in their past, they might go to the same place again and again without any rational reasons.

2.5.2 The media habits of Thai consumers

The picture below illustrates the media habits of Southeast Asia countries, compiled by Nielson Company (2011).



According to the Neilson company (2011), Thai consumers spend most of their time on the internet. Therefore the strongest source of information that the consumer would receive is through internet in the form of social media (Facebook), 4 shared and YouTube (see appendix 6). However, Neilson (2011) has discussed that online advertising expenditure in the Southeast Asia are growing in the slow pace. The online media's share of total advertising in Singapore is 6.9 percent of the total amount spent in advertising while in Thailand and Malaysia, the online advertising represents less than one percent of the total advertising spent. The older population or those who has limited knowledge about the using of internet would still continue to gain information from the broadcast television. The broadcast television is the second strongest source of information to the Thai consumers. As radio is one of the widely spread and economic media, it is the third strongest source of information to the Thai consumers. Newspaper is the strongest media among other printed medium advertising such as magazines, brochure and etc since it is widely distribute from door to door and most of the consumer has the habit of reading news paper hence it is the fourth strongest source of information to the Thai consumers.

2.5.3 Consumers buying behaviors and decision making

Kotler (2001) discussed that consumer buying behavior and decision making can be viewed systematically considering the three dimensions of input, transformer process and output. The figure below illustrates the buyer behavior model compiled by Kotler (2001).

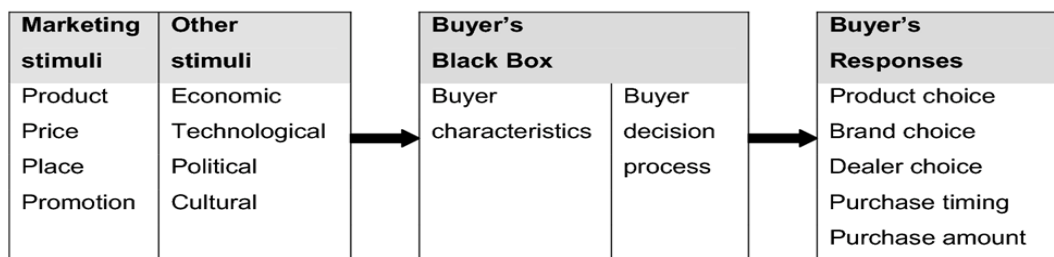


Figure 2: Model of buying behaviour
Source: Kotler P., 2001, Principles of Marketing)

According to this theory, the starting point of consumer's decision is influenced by the marketing strategies, the 4 Ps of product, price, place and promotion along with the external environmental factors such as Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environments. These factors act as the input to the knowledge of consumers. These factors enter the buyer's "black box" and produce the buyer's responses. Buyer's black box or buyer's consciousness is the thing that producers or sellers cannot know or expect and has no control on the consumers. Its mainly depend on the consumers and it differ from individuals to individuals. The buyers must try to find out the buyer's consciousness and thoughts by studying the consumer's behaviors. The buyer's characteristic can be influenced by the demographic factors, social factor, psychological factors, and personal factors of the consumers. The buyer's characteristic generates the buying decision process. The buying decision process consists of problem recognition, information search, evaluation, decision and post purchase behaviors. These decision processes leads to the buyer's response as the output. The buyer's response can be in the form of product choice, brand choice, dealer choice, purchase timing and purchase amount. This is how Kotler (2001) suggested the buyer behavior model.

Yuntao (2005) discussed that, in the context of restaurant, marketing stimuli would includes the variety of menu, the differentiated and authentic taste, the price and portion of the food, the location of the restaurant, the display of culture, and the atmosphere inside the restaurants. William et al. (1995) further discussed that, the advertising of restaurant in all the media creates brand awareness, brand familiarity and restaurant image to the consumers and is a strong factor among the marketing stimuli that would provide knowledge about the restaurant services and affect the consumers' decision making. The consumer's black box which would lead to decision making would includes the consumer's personal and psychological characteristic as the health conscious consumers would seek for the restaurants with healthy options. A study of Bharath et al. (2007) revealed that some consumers would have personal requirement of rest room facility in the restaurant. The culture of consumer also affect their decision, as some culture prefer self service more than being served, hence for them service quality would not be the main factor affecting their choice, they would rather seek to dine at self-service restaurants. The social factor strongly affects the consumer decision in context of restaurant, as certain age group of Thai consumers has a strong believe in socialization and maintaining their social image. Consumers with good income would select the restaurant with parking facilities. Bettman et al. (1987) supported that social class, gender relative income level and involvement level are the important factor that would affect consumer's decision.

Techathanaphanit (2009) conducted a research on Thai consumers' attitude towards drinking yogurt, and found out that there is no significant relationship between favorite brand and drinking behavior, this can be conclude that Thai consumers give little importance to branding an brand image, they select their consumption on their requirements and do not hesitate in switching new brand and trying new brands. The study further revealed that there is significant relationship between favorite taste and consumption decision; Thai consumers consider the taste of the food to be important while making the consuming decision. The study also revealed that there is the significant relationship between product availability and the consumption decision; Thai consumers consider location to be important while making the consumption decision.

Referring to the Thai segmentations discussed earlier in the chapter, the trend of having fewer children has enabled many Thai parents with higher disposable incomes to invest more in their children. Many now tend to purchase higher quality products at reasonable prices. The Tweenagers (children age 9-12) tend to be more self-conscious in terms of appearance and in how they were perceived by others. They were often influenced by music stars, movie stars, TV characters and the other popular kids at school. The teenagers are grown up in a world flooded with computers, the internet and technology. They are very comfortable using nearly all new gadgets and technologies. The segment of young adult falling in the age group of 20-30 years old, these young adults who are in the process of higher education or the ones who gaining income from their first job usually often buy their cloths, footwear and necessary items from flea markets or cheap retail stores. The people in their late twenties with growing disposable income would drive the demand for laptops, cameras, smart phones along with the products that enhance the appearance or image such as cosmetics and toiletries. The people of age group from 30 to 40, has the high disposable income and generate high volume of sales. However they don't spend to their fullest, they tend to save money for the future and children. The people of age beyond 40 and the above have the highest purchasing power as by the age of early 50, their children tend to complete master degrees allowing them to spend highest for their personal expend freely rather than worrying about the saving. However most of the spending of this segment are in the health s products, medical services, vitamins and dietary supplements.

2.6 Niche market pricing and strategy

As discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, the Indian vegetarian restaurant business falls in the niche market, Bailey (2008) opined that niche market are relatively small market having a few characteristics that make their prices behave differently than in larger markets. As small number of people consumes the product of niche market, those consumers are usually willing to pay above the average market price of those products. In the context of restaurant, the consumers who are seeking to consume Indian vegetarian food at the Indian ethnic restaurant would be willing to pay the price for the food even if the price at the ethnic restaurant is higher than the price of food from other places. The consumers who need to consume the Indian vegetarian food at the Indian ethnic restaurants are likely to pay for the food even if there is a slight change in the price. The main reason is that Indian restaurants could be easy to find in many locations, but consumers who are strictly vegetarians would only seek to consume at the vegetarian restaurants. So although the number of consumers would be lesser comparing to other restaurants, the ethnic restaurant has the advantage of differentiated product. Niche market businesses exhibit inelastic demand.

Bailey (2008) further suggests that in order to survive in long run, the niche market businesses need to determine the strategy to keep competitors away from entering the market. This could be done through maintaining the product differentiation. The niche market businesses although enjoys the inelastic demand, but there is less flexibility in the market price of their products. They are suggested to earn by setting aside some other prices over the price of product. They are also suggested to continue to increase the demand for their product to keep the prices and sales stable. The demand could be generated by increasing marketing and advertising.

2.7 Overview of the methodology chapter

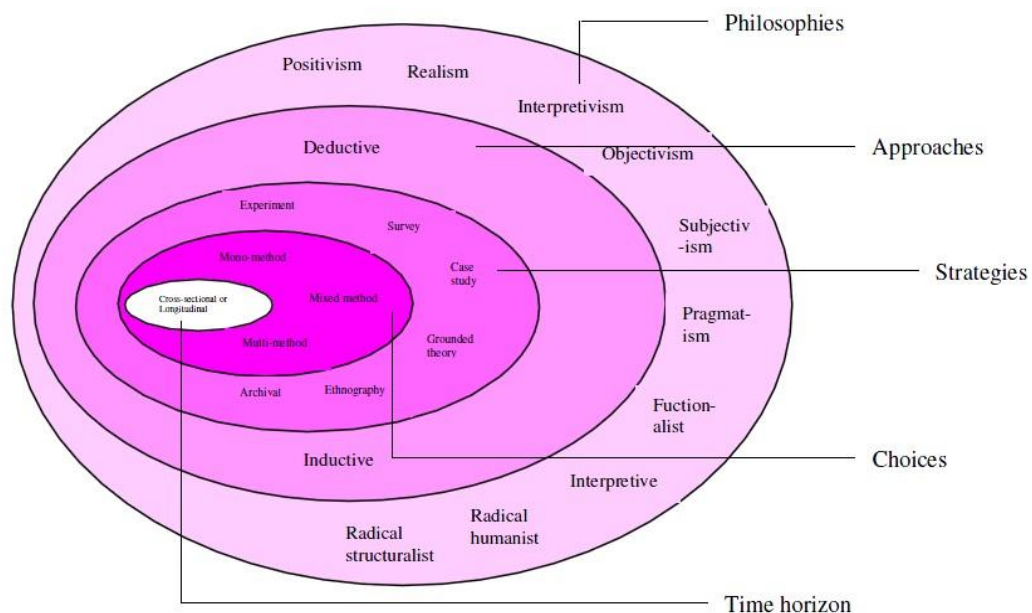
This chapter discussed in detail the relevant literatures and various related studies in the area of restaurants. The next chapter discusses in detail about the research design and the collection of data. The chapter begins with the discussion on the options available for the research designs and methodology followed by the best suited methods and design for this research. The chapter is followed by the discussion of the research samples, research instrument, pretest and the collection of data and the method to be used for data analyses. The chapter ended with the discussion of the relevant ethical issues related to this research.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter discussed in detail the methodology used in this research. The chapter starts with the options available for research methodology, followed by discussing in detail the differences in the available options, its purposes and determined the best suited option for this research for the research philosophy, the research approach, research design, the research strategy, the research sample, the sample size and sampling procedures. The detail of research instrument, pretest, the collection of data and the method to be used for data analyses is also discussed. The chapter ended by discussing about the relevant ethical issues related to this research.

3.1 The options available for research methodology

The figure below, by Saunders et al. (2007) illustrates the options of methodology in different layers and approaches. To conduct an academic research, it is a must to consider the appropriate methodology option, as it is the heart of the research where a proper research plan would enable the researcher to find the answer to the research question. The figure below looks like the research onion, it shows the steps to be considered for the research methodology prior to the data collections and analysis techniques could be determined.



Source: Saunders et al. (2007, p.132)

3.2 Research philosophy

Although the figure on the previous page suggests many research philosophies, the main research philosophies used in business research are the positivism and the interpretive. The interpretive research philosophy referred to the researches that are carried on the basis of understanding and interpretation of a specific group of sample. The philosophy best suited for this research would be the positivism. Levin (1988) discussed that “Positivists are the group of researcher who believe that reality is stable and could be observed and described from an objective viewpoint”. Positivism research involves manipulation of reality with the variations to suits the different situation. It involves the use of historical data and theories and the result of such research is often repeatable and reusable for the future studies. As this research studies the customer’s behaviors and reactions to support the decisions of expanding opportunity of the ethnic restaurant in Thailand using the existing theories discussed in chapter 2, the research is more suited to be conducted using the positivism philosophy. There are the assumptions that customers’ behaviors are predictable and understandable.

3.3 Research Approach

There are two main research approaches that are commonly used in the academic researches which are the deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning. As this research involves the study of customer’s satisfaction and customer’s decision

making basing on the past theories, deductive reasoning is the best suited approach. The positivism researches usually use the deductive reasoning approach where theories and conceptual framework are built before conducting the primary research. The results of the primary research are treated as a confirmation and validation of those existing theories in order to provide further recommendations on the research matter. Hence, deductive reasoning approach is used in this study of the small ethnic restaurant.

3.4 Research Design

The three most well-known research designs are the descriptive research, the exploratory research and the causal research. Descriptive research also known as the statistical research, it involves the studying on data in the numerical form. The descriptive research is used to find the answers the questions of who, what, where, when, and how. As the objective of this research is to find the answer to the question such as, what are the customer's reaction to the introduction of changes and what are the most important factors of customer's satisfaction, and their degree of variety seeking in the context of restaurants and the overarching question of what is the best expanding strategy for the Indian vegetarian restaurant in Thailand, hence, having the question starting with "what", this research is best suited to use the descriptive research design.

3.5 Research Strategy

Secondary research was conducted using the data available from the euromonitor database and the previous published journal articles to study the life style of consumer in Thailand and their eating habits. To conduct the primary research, there are two main well known strategies which are the quantitative and the qualitative research. This research was carried out by using the quantitative strategy. Jang (2010) and Zheng (2010) carried out the similar researches using the quantitative strategy. The quantitative research is concerned with the outcome rather than process, the outcome of this research strategy would answer the 'what' questions to meet the objectives of this research. A research using positivism philosophy, deductive reasoning approach and descriptive design always leads to using of quantitative strategy. This research strategy involves analyzing of numerical data and provides the frequency of occurrence which would answer the objective questions on the important factors of consumer's decision criteria and the degree of variety seeking towards the decision of restaurant choice in Thailand. Hence, quantitative strategy is the best suited strategy to conduct the primary research for this study.

3.6 Target population and research sample

Veal (2005) has defined the term population as "the total of category of subject that is the focus of attention in particular research project". This research focuses on the population of customers who have experience in using the service from an ethnic restaurant and the Thai consumers from the city of Bangkok. Sekaran (2003) stated that "Sampling is a process of choosing a sufficient number of elements/cases/individuals from the population, where population is the entire group of people, events, or elements of interest that researcher desires to investigate". The Quota sampling and convenience sampling technique of non – probability sampling was used in this research. In this research, sample were selected from the population of restaurant customer and the general consumers in the city of Bangkok with the variation in age group, gender, monthly income, level of education, occupation and the frequency of using restaurant services focusing on the sample with age over 15. The frequency of using restaurant services would have a significant impact in this finding.

3.7 Sample size and Sampling procedure

The primary sampling frame of this research would be the location of the Indian vegetarian restaurant in Thailand as well as the public places such as the train stations, the department stores and university. As quantitative research requires large amount of sample to produce the useful analyses, keeping the limitations of budget and time into consideration, the feasible sample size for this research would be 180. This research selects the sample size on the cost basis approach. Probability sampling would produce a good analyses in a quantitative, but as the list of consumers are unknown, non-probability technique of sampling is more suitable for this research. In the non-probability category, the convenience sampling and the quota sampling techniques would be best suited for this research. The consumers who would reach the requirement of the quota for experiencing the service of a restaurant and has the age of above 15 were approached and asked do to the survey on their convenience. The consumers who have age above 15 were selected by the researcher because consumers below the age of 15 were not likely to have personal income. The samples were required to have some

amount of income to be able to select their own choice of restaurants. The samples were different age group of Thai consumers from 15-20, 20-30, 30-40 and above 40 as these are the main segmentations of Thai consumers which would make great contribution in selection of restaurants. Samples of different age group would have different monthly income, this research focus on wide range of consumers having income from below 8,000 baht, 8,000 -15,000 baht, 16,000-25,000 baht and over 25,000 baht. The research also consider the level of education of the samples, selecting the samples that has the level of education below bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree or equivalent, master degree or equivalent and doctorate degree or equivalent. The samples were also selected by their occupation from self-employed, government employee, employee of private company, housewife and student. At least the sample of 20 from each age group, monthly income, level of education and occupation were selected to meet the total quota of 180.

3.8 Research Instrument

As the target population of this research is Thai consumers, the most appropriate research instrument is the questionnaire. Thailand falling in the Far East region of the world consists of the high context culture. According to Thai culture, Thai consumers are not explicit with their feelings and emotions. They are shy to express their feelings and belief in creating long term relationship. The researcher has conducted a pilot test by interviewing Thai consumers and found out that interviewing method is not very suitable to Thai culture as Thai consumers prefer writing their views rather than talking them out explicitly. Therefore questionnaire survey is the most suited research instrument for this research.

The questionnaire of this research was designed into 3 parts. The questionnaire starts by asking the frequency of dining out of the respondents. The respondents were given to select among the option of least frequent as once a month, 2-3 times a month, once a week to the most frequent of more than once a week. The questionnaire mainly consists of the coded-questions where the respondents were asked to rank their preferences according to their likes and past experiences. Veal (2005) stated that "ranking is the method to rank items in order to importance and is a relatively straightforward method". The questions in the part 1 are about the ethnic restaurants in Thailand. This part is sub divided to 2 questions. The first question in the part 1 is about different ethnic restaurants in Thailand asking the respondents to rank their preferences to dine-at the most, their highest preferences being numbered 1 and their least preferences being number 6. The respondents were given the "others" option to fill in any other preferences that have not been pre-coded. The second question of the part 1 is about the consumer's experiences at the ethnic restaurants. The respondents were given 9 factors that would affect the consumer's experiences and decision making toward the ethnic restaurants. These 9 factors were selected based on literature reviewed and the past thesis by Yuntao (2005). The respondents were asked to rank about the things they like the most about dining at the ethnic restaurant, their highest preference being numbered 1 and least preference being numbered 9.

The part 2 of the questionnaire is about the general decision criteria of the Thai consumers and the degree of variety seeking behavior in the context of the restaurant choice. This part is subdivided into 5 questions. The first question in the part 2 asks about the information source that would influence the Thai's consumers towards the decision of restaurant choice. The coded options were taken from the reviewed of Thai consumer's media habits discussed in the chapter2. The respondents were given the "others" option to specify any other media that would influence their decision. The respondents were asked to rank from the most strongly influencing to be numbered 1 to the least influencing being numbered 8. The second question in this part asked about the general factors which would influence the consumers decision towards the any restaurant other than the food quality, in order to find what others factor are important for thai consumer to their variety seeking behavior toward the restaurant choice. The respondents were given 11 coded factors, based on the reviewed literatures and the past thesis by Techathanapanit (2009). The respondents were asked to rank their preferences on which of those 11 factors most strongly influence their decision of restaurant choice, most strongly influencing being numbered 1 and least strongly influencing being numbered 11.

The third question in the part 2 consists of short questions on dining behaviors of the consumer relating to their variety seeking behavior. The questions were based on the thesis by Yuntao (2005) and some were added by the researcher. The 5 points Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree were used to find out the respondent's closest opinion towards the questions.

The criteria for marking those scales are as follow.

Strongly agree	5	points
Agree	4	points
Neutral	3	points
Disagree	2	points
Strongly disagree	1	point

The fourth question of the part 2 asked about the degree of the respondents in changing of restaurants. The options were set qualitatively rather than asking them the frequency as once or twice per periods. The options were rather set to find out whether which age group, which gender, with which income and education level has which type of restaurants changing behavior? The different group of consumers rather has different degree of changing behavior; some always look to dine at the same restaurants some always look for new restaurants. Some would have their set of favorite restaurants from where they get to select to eat different kind of food and enjoy the variety of menus. Some would have more than one restaurant to choose for same kind of food and hence this type of seekers has the largest degree of variety in selecting their restaurants.

The fifth question of the part 2 is an open-ended question. Veal (2005) has discussed that “Open- ended question is one where the interviewer asked the questions without any prompt in regard to the range of answers to be expected and wrote down the answers verbatim”. The respondents were given a 5 line space, to freely write their opinions and views about why would or would not they often change their restaurant. This question enables the respondents to write freely and discuss any other issued and factors that have not been coded in the previous part of questionnaires.

The part 3 of the questionnaire is about the personal details of the respondents. This part consists of 5 questions. The first question asked about the gender of the respondents, the second question asked about the age group, followed by the average income, the level of education and the occupation. The questionnaire is enclosed in the appendix 7.

3.9 Pretest

Pretest is a step taken before the collection of actual primary data. The pretest is also known as the pilot test. Veal (2005) explained that pilot surveys are small scale trial run of a large survey. The pilot test of this research was conducted by selecting the sample of 8 respondents who consumed at an ethnic restaurant in Bangkok. Out of the 8 respondents, 5 respondents were male and 3 were female. 1 was below the age of 20, 2 were from the age group of 20-30, 3 were from the age group of 30-40 and 2 were aged over 40. The pretest did not resulted in any significance change to the questionnaire. However prior to the designing of questionnaire, 5 consumers of an ethnic restaurant were interviewed. The pilot interview revealed that as a part of the Thai culture, the consumers were not comfortable in talking out their views and opinions. This led to the designing of questionnaire to suit the consumers' familiarity in surveying method and life style which had resulted positively in encouraging them to participate.

3.10 Collection of data

The secondary data was collected from several sources including previous thesis, text book, general book, journals, articles, the internet and the online databases. Thesis, text books and general books were borrowed from St. Gabriel's Library, Assumption University of Thailand. Journal articles and online databases were browsed from the internet. Many other sources of secondary data such as food magazines, newspaper and friend's advices were also reviewed.

The collection of primary data was done after the pretest by distributing the designed questionnaire. The collection was administrated by the researcher. The selected samples were approached and asked to spend around 5 minutes to answer the questionnaire. The respondents were mainly the Thai consumers from the public places such as train stations and department stores including the students and instructors of Assumption University.

3.11 Proposed data analyses techniques

There are several techniques to analyze the quantitative data. The well known techniques are the hypothesis testing and the “descriptive statistic”. In order to test hypothesis, there are several statistical analyses methods, such as Pearson

correlation and Spearman's rank correlation test. These are computed based on the two sets of scores. If the two set of variables are highly related, a correlation coefficient would be near +1 or -1. Mann-Whitney U test is another analysis technique available to use to determine whether there is any significant difference between the mean score of two types of respondents. The technique that was used in this research is "descriptive statistic". This technique uses the frequencies and percentages of the respondents' answers to analyze and provide the summary of the questionnaire results. The Cross-Tabulations technique was also used in this research to compare the results from different demographic profiles. The researcher used the SPSS data analyses software to assist the numerical calculations.

3.12 Ethical issues

There are few ethical issues to be considered while carrying out this research such as the transparency and the honesty. The consumers may not have full knowledge about the restaurant and would tend to give the opinion and feedback judging upon the experience of services they have got during their dining. Some consumers may not be honest with their answers as they might decide emotionally rather than rationally. Some consumers might not aware of their choices and degree of variety seeking behavior in context of restaurant choices; they were asked to recall their experiences upon the short period of time basing on the coded questions in the questionnaire which may lead to inaccuracy.

3.13 Overview of the data analyses chapter

This chapter discussed in detail the research design and the collection of data. The next chapter discusses in detail the analyses of the collected datum which results into the conclusion of this research. The chapter begins by illustrating the frequencies of the Thai consumers who participated in the survey in the form of pie-charts and bar-charts. The chapter is then followed by the discussion about each answer to the questions in the questionnaire in the form of tables, charts and cross tabulation.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

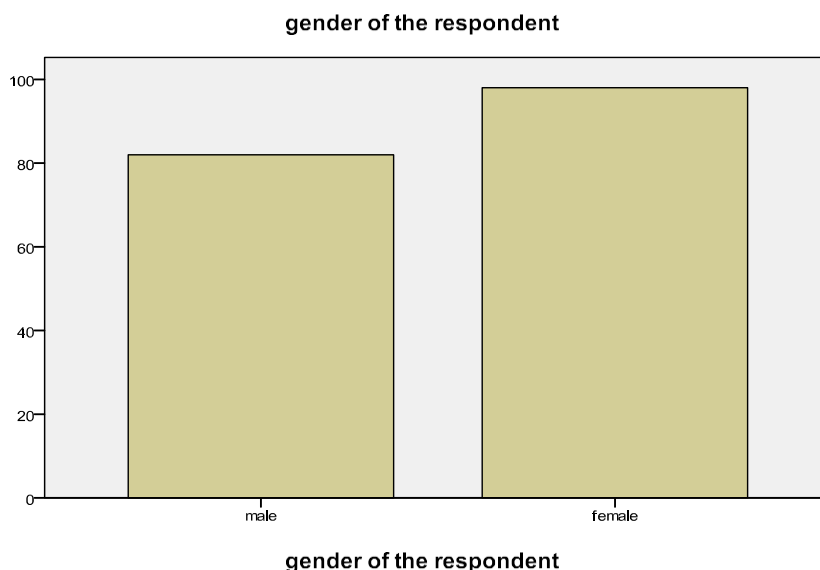
This chapter discussed about the results of the research. The data were collected from the questionnaire attached in the appendix 7. The summaries of the respondent's answers are presented in this chapter. The chapter begins with illustrating the frequency of respondents in form of bar-chart and pie charts. The chapter is then followed by the discussion in the detail each answer to the questions in the questionnaire in the form of table and cross tabulation.

4.1 Demographic data of the respondents

In total 180 samples were collected consists of respondents from many age groups, monthly income, level of education and occupations.

Gender

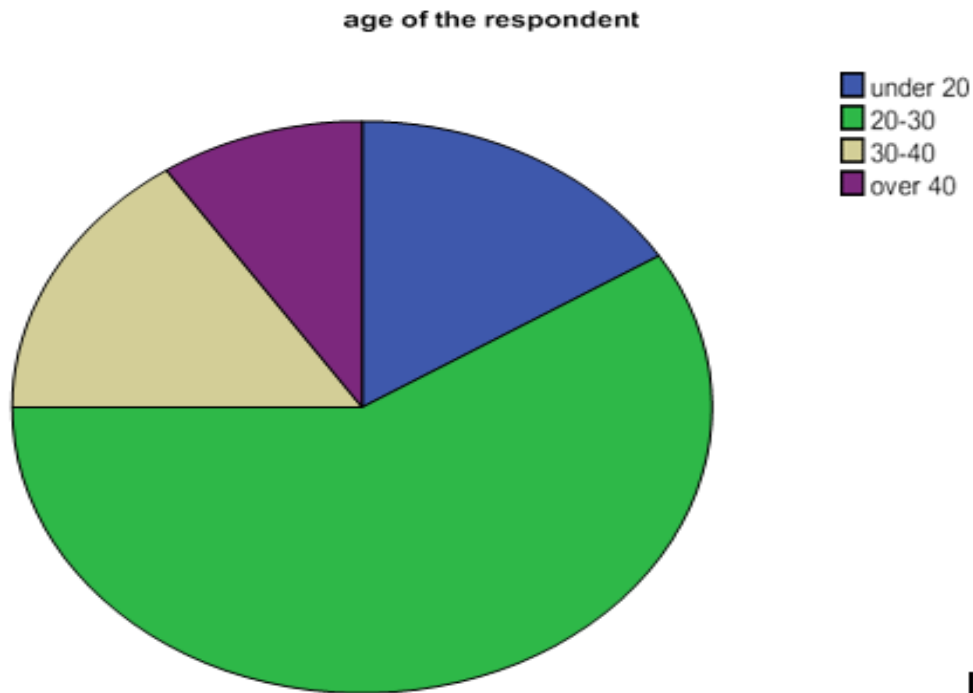
The figure 4.1.1 below illustrates the summary of gender of the respondents in the form of bar- chart.



The figure 4.1.1 shows that out of the total 180 respondents, 98 of them were female and 80 were male.

Age

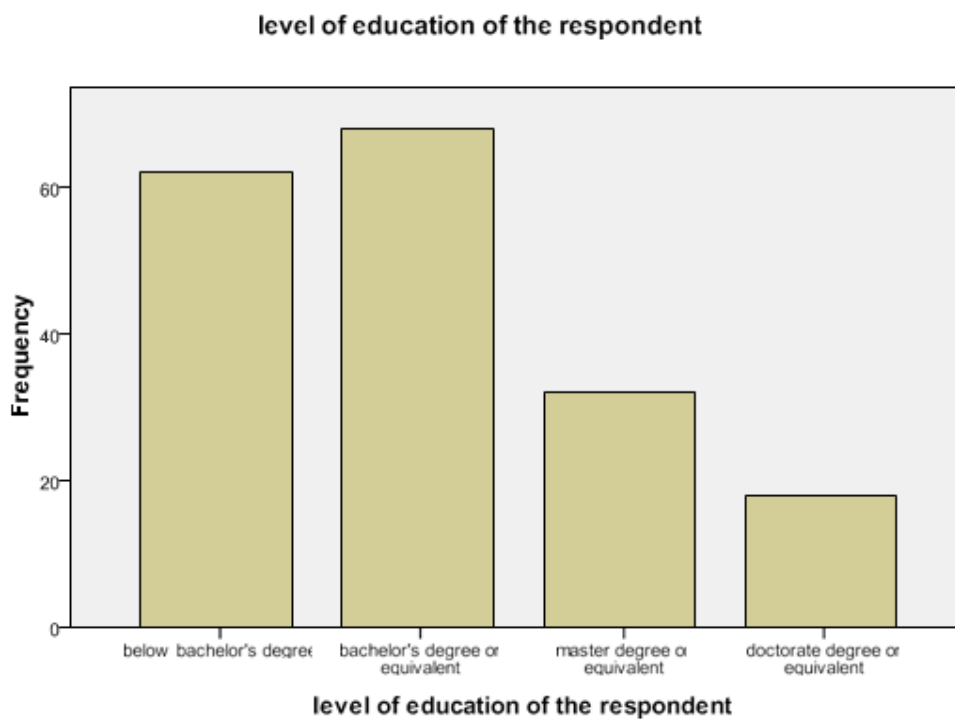
The figure 4.1.2 illustrates the summary of age of the respondents in the form of pie-chart



The figure shows that majority of the respondents were from the age group of 20-30. Out of the total of 180 respondents, 29 were from the age group of 15 to 20, 106 were from the age group of 20-30, 28 were from the age group of 30-40 and 17 were from the over 40.

Level of education

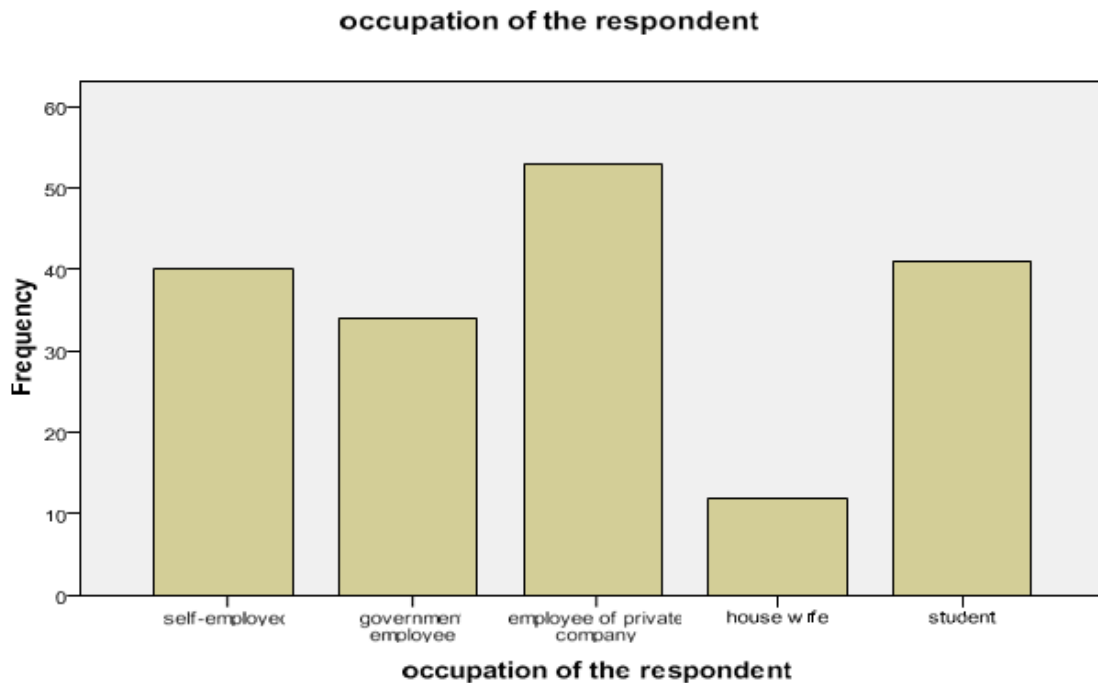
The figure 4.1.3 below illustrates the summary of level of education of the respondents in the form of bar-chart.



The bar -chart summarizes that out of the 180 respondents, the level of education of 62 were below the bachelor’s degree. 68 of the respondents have the bachelor’s degree or equivalent. 32 of the respondents have the master degree or equivalent and 18 of them holds the doctorate degree.

Occupation

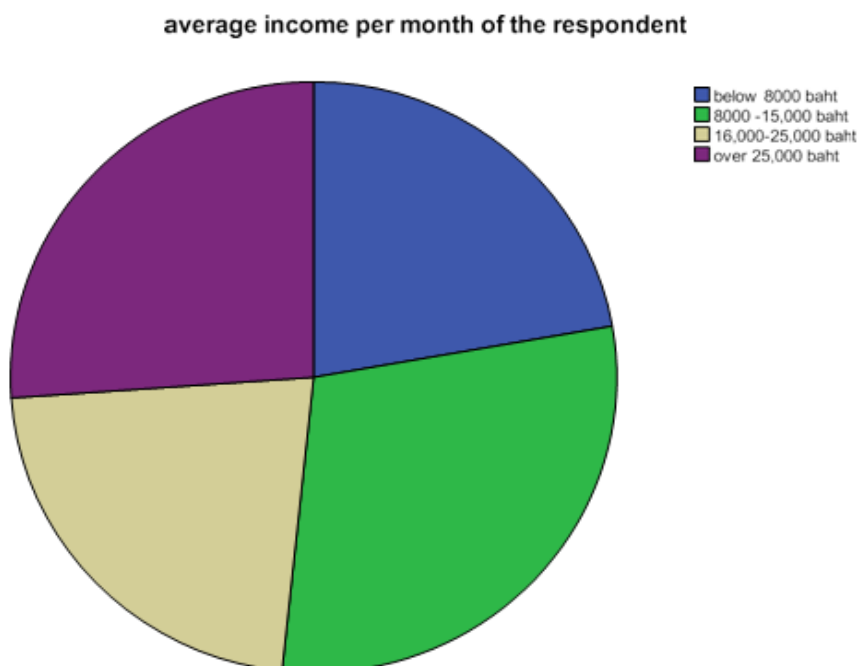
The figure 4.1.4 below illustrates the summary of occupation of the respondents in the form of bar-chart.



The bar – chart summarizes that out of the 180 respondents, 40 were self-employed, 34 were the government employee, 53 were the employee of private companies, 12 were the house wives and 41 were the students. The majority of the respondents were the employee of the private companies.

Average income per month

The figure 4.1.5 below illustrates the summary of average income per month of the respondents in the form of pie-chart.



The pie - chart summarizes that out of the 180 respondents, 40 have the average income per month below 8,000 baht, 53 have the average income per month in the range of 8,000- 15,000 baht, 40 have the average income per month in the range of 16,000 – 25,000 baht and 47 of the respondents have the average income per month over 25,000 baht. The majority of the respondents have the average income per month around 8,000-15,000 baht.

The average income per month and age of the respondents

The table 4.1.1 below summarized the average income per month and the age of the respondents.

average income per month of the respondent and age of the respondent						
		age of the respondent				Total
		under	20-30	30-40	over	
average income per month of the respondent	below 8000 baht	19	19	2	0	40
	8000 -15,000 baht	6	42	2	3	53
	16,000-25,000 baht	2	24	12	2	40
	over 25,000 baht	2	21	12	12	47
Total		29	106	28	17	180

The table 4.1.1 shows that most of the respondents aging below 20 have the average income per month of below 8,000 baht. Most of the respondent aging over 40 being the most experienced worker and earns over 25,000 baht per month as it can be seen in the last column of the table, respondents of age over 40, 12 out of 17 have the average income over 25,000baht per month. Most of the young adults’ population agings between 20-30 have the highest average income of 8,000-15,000 baht which could be from their first jobs or part time jobs during higher education. The population in the thirties age earn further more than the twenties, having the average income around 16,000-25,000 baht per month and above.

The Average income per month and level of education of the respondents

The table 4.1.2 below summarized the average income per month and the level of education of the respondents.

average income per month of the respondent and level of education of the respondent						
		level of education of the respondent				Total
		below bachelor's degree	bachelor's degree or equivalent	master degree or equivalent	doctorate degree or equivalent	
average income per month of the respondent	below 8000 baht	21	18	1	0	40
	8000 -15,000 baht	22	26	5	0	53
	16,000-25,000 baht	9	13	12	6	40
	over 25,000 baht	10	11	14	12	47
Total		62	68	32	18	180

The table 4.1.2 summarizes that highest number of respondents having the average income per month below 8000 baht are the one with below bachelor’s degree level of education. However some Thai consumers of below bachelor’s degree level of education manage to earn over 25,000 baht per month. The respondents with bachelor’s degree or equivalent averagely earn around 15,000 baht per month. And majority of respondents having the master’s degree and above are managed to earn over 25,000 baht per month.

Average income per month and occupation of the respondents

The table 4.1.3 below summarized the average income per month and occupation of the respondents.

average income per month of the respondent and occupation of the respondent							
		occupation of the respondent					Total
		self-employed	government employee	employee of private company	house wife	student	
average income per month of the respondent	below 8000 baht	7	9	3	1	20	40
	8000 -15,000 baht	10	21	9	2	11	53
	16,000-25,000 baht	10	1	19	4	6	40
	over 25,000 baht	13	3	22	5	4	47
Total		40	34	53	12	41	

The table 4.1.3 shows that highest level of average monthly income is earned by the employee of private company. Also out of the 40 respondents that are self employed, 13 of them earn over 25,000 per month. So self-employed and employee of private company are the highest earner of Thailand and has the highest purchasing power. The government employees earn the average amount of 8,000 to 15,000 baht. Most of the working students earn below 8,000 baht and the working house wife also manage to earn over 25,000 baht.

Occupation and the level of education of the respondents

The table 4.1.4 below summarized the occupation and the level of education of the respondents.

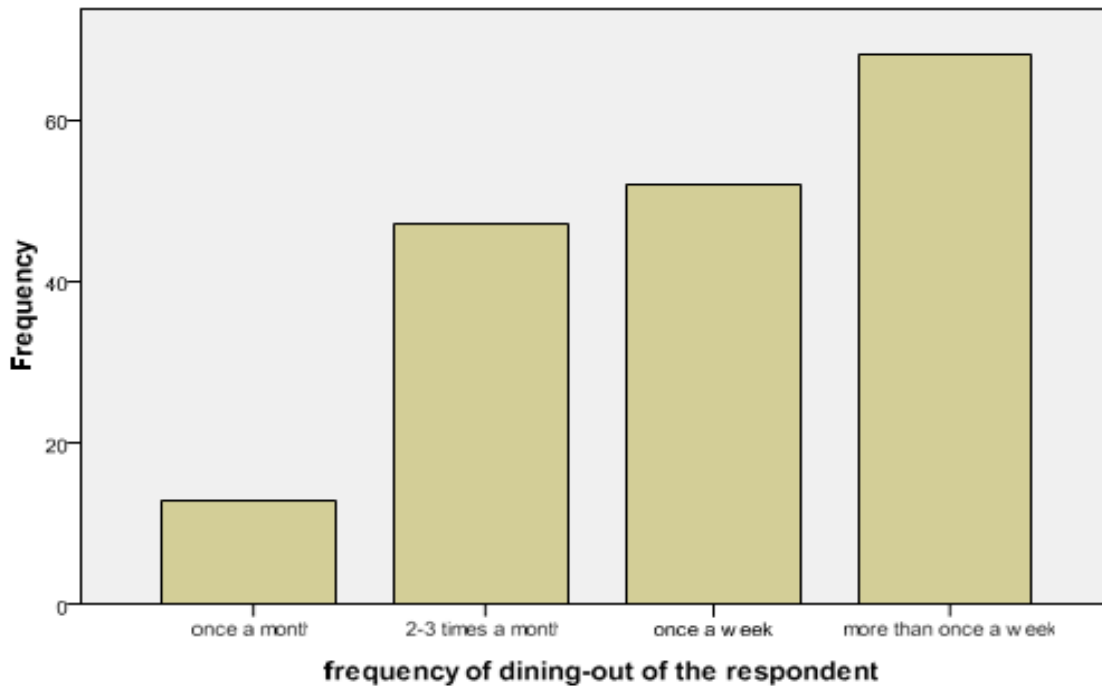
Occupation of the respondent and level of education of the respondent						
		level of education of the respondent				Total
		below bachelor's degree	bachelor's degree or equivalent	master degree or equivalent	doctorate degree or equivalent	
occupation of the respondent	self-employed	7	21	6	6	40
	government employee	16	15	1	2	34
	employee of private company	9	16	20	8	53
	house wife	5	1	4	2	12
	student	25	15	1	0	41
Total		62	68	32	18	180

The table 4.1.4 shows that respondents with below bachelor’s degrees were mostly students or the government employees. The respondents with the bachelor’s degree or equivalent in Thailand are mostly self-employed, followed by the employee of private company. While the majority of respondents with master degree and high are mainly the employee of private company. The respondents with doctorate degree or equivalent are mostly employee of private institutions Thailand.

4.2 Frequency of dining-out

The first question in the questionnaire was about the frequency of dining-out. The figure 4.2.1 below illustrates the summary of frequency of dining-out of the respondents in the form of bar – chart.

frequency of dining-out of the respondent



The figure shows that out of the 180 respondents, 13 of the respondents dine- out once a month, 47 of the respondents dine out 2-3 times a month, 52 of the respondents dine out once a week and 68 of the respondents dine out more than once a week.

Frequency of dining out and age of the respondents

The table 4.2.1 summaries the frequency of dining out and the age of the respondents.

frequency of dining-out of the respondent and age of the respondent						
		age of the respondent				
		under 20	20-30	30-40	over 40	Total
frequency of dining-out of the respondent	once a month	2	4	5	2	13
	2-3 times a month	10	30	6	1	47
	once a week	5	31	8	8	52
	more than once a week	12	41	9	6	68
Total		29	106	28	17	180

From this table it can be seen that younger respondents consumer the service of restaurants more than the older respondents.

Frequency of dining out and the average income per month of the respondents

The table 4.2.2 summarized the frequency of dining-out and the average income per month of the respondents.

frequency of dining-out of the respondent and average income per month of the respondent						
		average income per month of the respondent				Total
		below 8000 baht	8000 -15,000 baht	16,000-25,000 baht	over 25,000 baht	
frequency of dining-out of the respondent	once a month	2	2	6	3	13
	2-3 times a month	15	11	11	10	47
	once a week	13	18	4	17	52
	more than once a week	10	22	19	17	68
Total		40	53	40	47	180

Looking at the table 4.2.2 it can be seen that average income of the respondents has no significant effects on the frequency of dining out of the Thai consumers. Consumers with every level of average income dine-out differently at their convenience.

Frequency of dining out and the level of education

The table 4.2.3 below summarized the frequency of dining out and the level of education

frequency of dining-out of the respondent and occupation of the respondent							
		occupation of the respondent					Total
		self-employed	government employee	employee of private company	house wife	student	
frequency of dining-out of the respondent	once a month	4	1	4	3	1	13
	2-3 times a month	7	9	19	1	11	47
	once a week	11	14	12	5	10	52
	more than once a week	18	10	18	3	19	68
Total		40	34	53	12	41	1

Looking at the table 4.2.3 it can be seen that consumers with master and higher level of education are less frequent in dining out than the consumers with bachelor's and lower level of education.

Frequency of dining out and occupation

The table 4.2.4 below summarized the frequency of dining out and the occupation of the respondents.

frequency of dining-out of the respondent and occupation of the respondent							
		occupation of the respondent					
		self-employed	government employee	employee of private company	house wife	student	Total
frequency of dining-out of the respondent	once a month	4	1	4	3	1	13
	2-3 times a month	7	9	19	1	11	47
	once a week	11	14	12	5	10	52
	more than once a week	18	10	18	3	19	68
Total		40	34	53	12	41	180

The table 4.2.4 shows that students are the most frequent in dining out followed by the government employee. The employees are the one who dine out more frequent as their busy schedules would not allow them enough time to prepare food at home, while house wives are the least frequent to dine- out as they mainly get to dine out with their family, and most of the time prepare meals at home. The self-employed consumers has the freedom to choose to dine-out whenever they wish to, and the result shows that the self-employed respondents has more variety in the frequency of dining out.

4.3.1 The ethnic restaurants in Thailand

The table 4.3.1.1 below summarized in the form of percentage, the ethnic restaurants in Thailand that each respondents preferred to dine-at.

Rank	Thai restaurant	Chinese restaurant	Japanese restaurant	Italian restaurant	Indian restaurant	Other restaurants
1 st	39.4 %	8.9%	17.2%	16.7%	15%	2.2%
2 nd	29.4%	15.6%	24.2%	21.1%	7.80%	1.7%
3 rd	15.6%	28.9%	24.2%	25.6%	5%	0.6%
4 th	8.6%	28.3%	12.8%	34.4%	12.8%	2.8%
5 th	5.6%	16.1%	17.8%	2.2%	51.1%	7.2%
6 th	1.1%	2.2%	3.3%	0%	8.4%	85.6%

From the table 4.3.1.1 it can be seen that most of the respondents ranked Thai restaurants to be their highest preferred ethnic restaurant. The Japanese restaurants have been the 2nd highest preferred restaurant by the Thai consumers. The respondents gave the comment that Japanese food are healthy and provide great variety for health conscious people. Chinese restaurants are the 3rd highest preferred restaurants among the Thai consumers. As the data in appendix 3 shows that Chinese ethnic group is the 2nd highest populations in Thailand, the Thai culture has been greatly influenced by Chinese culture and Chinese food. The Italian food has been the 4th highest preferred restaurant by Thai consumer followed by the Indian restaurants being the 5th highest. The respondents were also asked to specify the other restaurants preferred by them, which mostly are Korean, Arabic, Mexican, Russian and Vietnamese.

Frequency of dining out and Indian restaurant

The table 4.3.1.2 below summarized the frequency of dining out and the preference of the Indian restaurants of the respondents.

Indian restaurant and frequency of dining-out of the respondent						
		frequency of dining-out of the respondent				
		once a month	2-3 times a month	once a week	more than once a week	Total
Indian restaurant	1st	5	4	9	9	27
	2nd	0	4	4	6	14
	3rd	1	3	2	3	9
	4th	1	6	10	6	23
	5th	5	26	22	39	92
	6th	1	4	5	4	14
Total		13	47	52	68	180

From the table 4.3.1.2 above it can be seen that the frequent dining out consumers has ranked the Indian restaurants to be their 1st preference. It means that Indian restaurants in Thailand have the scope to attract the frequent consumers. The least frequent consumers are likely to choose to dine at their favorite restaurants than seeking for variety in restaurant choice.

Indian restaurant and average income per month of the respondents

The table 4.3.1.3 below summarized the average income per month and the preference of the Indian restaurants of the respondents.

Indian restaurant and average income per month of the respondent						
		average income per month of the respondent				
		below 8000 baht	8000 -15,000 baht	16,000-25,000 baht	over 25,000 baht	Total
Indian restaurant	1st	5	8	5	9	27
	2nd	2	4	4	4	14
	3rd	2	1	2	4	9
	4th	5	5	4	9	23
	5th	20	30	22	20	92
	6th	5	5	3	1	14
Total		40	53	40	47	180

From the table 4.3.1.3 above it can be seen that average income per month of the respondents has no significant effects on the preference of restaurants. The result of this primary research agrees the secondary research that self image is everything for Thai consumers. The population earning any level of income would be ready to spend their earned amount for their food and leisure. However the consumer earning the low income of below 8000 baht per month are not likely to prefer dining at ethnic restaurants, if they are their highest preference would be the Thai restaurants.

4.3.2 Factors that respondents considered important while dining at ethnic restaurants

The researcher summarized 9 most important factors (being labeled a-i below) from various reviewed literature which are important while dining at ethnic restaurants. The 4.3.2.1 summarized in the form of percentages the factors that respondents considered to be important ranking their highest preference being numbered 1 and their least preferences being numbered 9.

- a = Appearance of the ethnic food
- b = Ethnic food are difficult to prepare at home
- c = Eating at ethnic restaurant is a way of exchanging culture
- d = The uniqueness of the food
- e = The physical tangibles of the restaurant (including the unique eating equipments)
- f = The display of ethnic culture on the walls and menu cards

- g = The ethnic music and television channel played in the restaurant background
- h = The feel of being a part of ethnic culture
- I = The clues of authentic cooking that I get by eating at ethnic restaurant

Table 4.3.2.1

Rank	a	B	c	d	e	f	g	h	I
1 st	22.2 %	15%	7.8%	41.7%	2.2%	2.2%	0.6%	3.3%	3.9%
2 nd	25%	17.8%	4.4%	23.3%	10.6%	7.2%	3.9%	2.8%	6.1%
3 rd	18.3%	17.8%	12.2%	11.7%	9.4%	13.3%	5.6%	7.2%	3.3%
4 th	8.3%	15%	11.1%	10.0%	12.2%	8.3%	6.7%	12.3%	15%
5 th	6.7%	7.2%	23.3%	4.4%	16.1%	10.6%	6.1%	16.7%	10%
6 th	5.6%	8.3%	12.2%	2.8%	8.9%	18.9%	15.6%	15%	15%
7 th	2.8%	1.1%	9.4%	3.9%	15%	15.6%	21.1%	12.8%	17.2%
8 th	2.8%	7.8%	5%	2.2%	21.7%	14.4%	20.0%	20%	6.7%
9 th	8.3%	10%	14.4%	0%	3.9%	9.4%	20.6%	10%	22.8%

From the table 4.3.2.1 it can be seen that the uniqueness of the food or the authenticity of the food has been ranked as the highest important factor to be considered by the Thai consumers while dining at the ethnic restaurants. The factor that the ethnic food are difficult to prepare at home and the appearance of the ethnic food have been ranked as the second and the third highest important. It can be seen that the factors related to the quality of food has been the main reasons for the Thai consumers to dine at the ethnic restaurant. There is the scope for the ethnic restaurant to maintain their uniqueness and differentiated services to survive the high competition.

The result from the table 4.3.2.1 also showed that following from the factors related to the quality of the food, the Thai consumers have ranked the factors like dining at ethnic restaurants give the feel of being a part of ethnic culture and is a way of exchanging culture to be the next highest. As ethnic restaurant is different from other restaurant consumers get to feel and learn the ethnic culture by dining at the ethnic restaurants.

Apart from the factors related to the quality of the food and the exchange of culture, the Thai consumers have ranked the factors as the physical tangibles, the ethnic music, the display on the walls or menu cards and factors related to ethnic atmosphere to be the next highest important factor to be considered while dining at the ethnic restaurants. The ethnic restaurants provide the consumers with the ethnic atmosphere to give the real feel of being a part of ethnic culture, and allow the consumers to try using the unique eating equipments.

Frequency of dining-out and the uniqueness of the food

The table 4.3.2.2 below summarized the frequency of dining out of the respondent and the uniqueness of the food.

uniqueness of the food and frequency of dining-out of the respondent						
		frequency of dining-out of the respondent				Total
		once a month	2-3 times a month	once a week	more than once a week	
uniqueness of the food	1st	3	18	14	40	75
	2nd	4	11	20	7	42
	3rd	2	6	6	7	21
	4th	1	5	3	9	18
	5th	1	1	4	2	8
	6th	0	0	2	3	5
	7th	2	2	3	0	7
	8th	0	4	0	0	4
Total		13	47	52	68	180

From the table 4.3.2.2 it can be seen that the most frequent dining out consumers has ranked the uniqueness or the authenticity of the food to be the 1st important factor for them in dining at the ethnic restaurants. The frequent dining out consumer seeks to taste of the different kind of food and hence the uniqueness of the food has to be maintained by the ethnic restaurants.

Age of the respondents and the uniqueness of the food

The table 4.3.2.3 summarized age of the respondents and the uniqueness of the food.

uniqueness of the food and age of the respondent						
		age of the respondent				Total
		under 20	20-30	30-40	over 40	
uniqueness of the food	1st	14	44	14	3	75
	2nd	0	33	2	7	42
	3rd	2	11	6	2	21
	4th	8	7	3	0	18
	5th	1	2	2	3	8
	6th	2	2	1	0	5
	7th	0	5	0	2	7
	8th	2	2	0	0	4
Total		29	106	28	17	180

The tables showed that the uniqueness of the food is not very important to the respondents of older age group of over 40. The respondents with doctor degree or equivalent and age over 40 years old, has ranked the factors as dining at ethnic restaurants is a way to exchange and feel the ethnic culture to be more important factor while dining the ethnic restaurants than the respondents of younger age who look to taste new foods. The physical tangible factor also has been ranked important by the respondents from the younger age group and the young adults.

4.4 The information sources that influence the consumers’ decision towards the choice of restaurant

There are many possible information sources that would reach the consumer and lead them toward their selection of restaurant. The table 4.4.1 summarized in the form of percentages the information sources that strongly influence the consumers’ decision towards the choice of restaurant. The most strongly influencing source being ranked as number 1 and the least influencing source being ranked number 8.

- a = Restaurant review in the newspaper,
- b = Restaurant review in the food guides,
- c = Restaurant review in the magazines,
- d = Advertisement in newspapers, magazines, food guides or television,
- e = Restaurant information from internet,
- f = Hearing from other’s experience
- g = Self-exploring by walking or passing through the places,
- h = others

Rank	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
1st	2.8%	4.4 %	1.1%	10.6%	23.9%	42.8 %	14.4%	0%
2nd	2.2%	12.2 %	6.1%	21.1%	17.2%	22.2%	18.9%	0%
3rd	6.1%	16.1%	15%	18.9%	17.2%	11.7%	12.8%	2.8%
4th	20.6%	10%	14.4%	13.3%	15%	10%	16.1%	1.1%

5th	19.4%	20.6%	27.2%	15.6%	5%	3.3%	7.2%	1.1%
6th	14.4%	27.8%	22.8%	12.8%	8.9%	7.2%	5%	0.6%
7th	30.6%	8.3%	13.3 %	7.2%	11.7%	2.2%	23.9%	2.8%
8th	3.9%	0.6%	0 %	0.6%	1.1%	0.6%	1.7%	91.7%

From the table 4.4.1 it can be seen that the respondents have ranked hearing from other’s experience to be the strongest information source that influence them towards the decision of restaurant choice. The information spread through word of mouth is one of the strong mean of communication for the Thai consumers. The respondents have ranked the advertisements in various channels including television to be the second strongest source that would influence them in the selection of restaurant. This shows that the restaurants that spend money in commercial advertisements are in the advantage over gaining the public awareness. The restaurant information over the internet has been ranked to be the third strongest source of information source followed by the restaurant review in newspaper, the restaurant review in the magazines and the restaurants review in the food guides. The self-exploring by walking or passing through the places are more common for tourist rather than the residential Thai consumers, hence this factor has been ranked to be least influencing factor in the selection of restaurant. The other means of communications were asked to specify by the respondents which mostly were specified as personal invitations and through parties, which falls under the word of mouth factor which is the highest ranked. The newspapers in Thailand are mainly read by the older age of the population while the younger age of population would gain information over the internet. Since the section 4.1 has specified that majority of the respondents are the young people of age group 20-30 years old, internet has been ranked to be the stronger information source than the newspaper and magazines.

4.5 Factors influencing the consumer’s restaurant choice other than the quality of food

The section 4.3.2 discussed about the factors consumers considered to be important while dining at ethnic restaurants, this section discuss about the consumer decision criteria towards all restaurants not considering the quality of the food. The respondents were given pre coded 11 factors selected by the researcher through several reviewed literatures. The results have been summarized in table 4.5.1 below. (a = Restaurant Image, b= Friendliness of staff (responsive, empathy), c= Service quality (reliability, assurance), d= Location of the restaurant, e= Parking facility, f = Price and food portion, g = Quality of physical environment, h= Healthy options, i= Variety in menu, j= Cleanliness and Hygiene, k= Cleanliness of the rest room)

Rank	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k
1 st	16.1%	5.6%	15.6%	12.8%	2.2%	8.3%	2.2%	13.3%	7.2%	15.6%	0%
2 nd	5.6%	4.4%	15.0%	11.1%	6.1%	15.6%	7.2%	10.0%	15.0%	7.2%	2.8%
3 rd	10.6%	5.0%	10.0%	8.3%	7.2%	15.6%	3.3%	7.8%	13.3%	15.0%	3.9%
4 th	2.8%	10.0%	8.2%	6.1%	8.3%	11.1%	8.9%	12.8%	9.4%	15.0%	7.2%
5 th	8.3%	10.6%	14.4%	7.2%	7.2%	13.9%	8.9%	13.3%	5.0%	6.7%	5.6%
6 th	3.3%	13.9%	7.8%	7.8%	1.1%	7.2%	16.1%	10.0%	10.0%	12.2%	9.4%
7 th	8.9%	2.8%	8.3%	7.2%	8.9%	12.2%	7.8%	6.1%	9.4%	8.9%	21.1%
8 th	6.7%	12.2%	7.2%	6.1%	8.9%	6.7%	13.9%	6.1%	11.1%	7.2%	13.9%
9 th	7.2%	10.6%	6.7%	15.0%	8.3%	3.9%	18.9%	6.7%	9.4%	3.3%	8.3%
10 th	14.4%	15.0%	4.4%	12.8%	16.7%	1.7%	5.6%	6.7%	6.1%	6.1%	11.7%
11 th	16.1%	10.0%	2.2%	5.6%	25.0%	3.9%	7.2%	7.2%	3.9%	2.8%	16.1%

From the table 4.5.1 it can be seen that parking facility has been ranked by most of the respondents to be the least important factor affecting their decision towards restaurant choice. This is because majority of the participants in this research are from the young age people who might not own a car and would prefer using public transports hence parking facility is not the very important factor to be considered by them. The table 4.5.2 below summarized the parking facility and the average income per month of the respondents.

parking facility and average income per month of the respondent						
		average income per month of the respondent				Total
		below 8000 baht	8000 -15,000 baht	16,000-25,000 baht	over 25,000 baht	
parking facility	1st	0	0	1	3	4
	2nd	2	3	1	5	11
	3rd	3	2	4	4	13
	4th	6	5	2	2	15
	5th	2	5	3	3	13
	6th	0	1	0	1	2
	7th	3	8	2	3	16
	8th	5	4	2	5	16
	9th	2	7	1	5	15
	10th	7	6	10	7	30
	11th	10	12	14	9	45
Total		40	53	40	47	180

From the table 4.5.2 it is clearly seen that consumers with high income over 25,000 baht per month has ranked the parking facility to be the most important factor in their decision of restaurant choice.

The table 4.5.3 below summarized the frequency of dining out of the respondents and the location of the restaurant.

location of the restaurant and frequency of dining-out of the respondent						
		frequency of dining-out of the respondent				Total
		once a month	2-3 times a month	once a week	more than once a week	
location of the restaurant	1st	1	4	11	7	23
	2nd	0	2	5	13	20
	3rd	1	10	1	3	15
	4th	2	1	6	2	11
	5th	0	3	4	6	13
	6th	2	0	0	12	14
	7th	2	5	3	3	13
	8th	1	3	3	4	11
	9th	1	12	7	7	27
	10th	3	4	11	5	23
	11th	0	3	1	6	10
Total		13	47	52	68	180

From the table 4.5.3 it can be seen that the respondents who dine out least frequently have not shown the importance to the location of the restaurant. Such consumers who dine out once or a couple times a month would look to eat the food are ready to go to dine at any location ,hence least frequent diner have not ranked the factor location to be important. The more frequent dine out consumers has ranked location of the restaurant to be most important as they have to dine out regularly they seek for restaurants with their convenient location.

The table 4.5.4 below summarized the average income per month of the respondent and the price and food portion factor.

price and food portion and average income per month of the respondent						
		average income per month of the respondent				Total
		below 8000 baht	8000 - 15,000 baht	16,000- 25,000 baht	over 25,000 baht	
price and food portion	1st	7	5	2	1	15
	2nd	2	13	4	9	28
	3rd	5	11	6	6	28
	4th	2	9	5	4	20
	5th	7	3	6	9	25
	6th	7	0	2	4	13
	7th	3	6	10	3	22
	8th	2	2	5	3	12
	9th	3	1	0	3	7
	10th	2	0	0	1	3
	11th	0	3	0	4	7
Total		40	53	40	47	180

The table 4.5.4 shows that respondents with income below 8,000 baht per month and 8,000 to 15,000 baht per month have ranked the factor price and food portion to be more important than the respondents with higher income. The consumers with lesser income are more price conscious and consider price and food portion before selecting their restaurant to dine than the consumer with higher income.

The table 4.5.5 below summarized the healthy option and the age of the respondents

healthy options and age of the respondent						
		age of the respondent				Total
		under 20	20-30	30-40	over 40	
healthy options	1st	8	5	4	7	24
	2nd	5	9	4	0	18
	3rd	0	12	0	2	14
	4th	4	10	7	2	23
	5th	2	16	3	3	24
	6th	1	16	1	0	18
	7th	2	8	0	1	11
	8th	0	6	4	1	11
	9th	3	7	2	0	12
	10th	3	9	0	0	12
	11th	1	8	3	1	13
Total		29	106	28	17	180

The table 4.5.5 shows that out of the 17 respondents ageing over 40, 7 of them have ranked healthy option to be the most important factor to be considered while selecting restaurant. It is good to see that majority of the younger respondents have also ranked healthy option to be the most important factor. This indicates that more of Thai consumers are being health conscious in the present days. It is very important for all type of restaurants to provide the healthy option in their menu to meet the present Thai consumers' needs.

The table 4.5.6 below summarized level of education of the respondents and the healthy options.

healthy options and level of education of the respondent						
		level of education of the respondent				Total
		below bachelor's degree	bachelor's degree or equivalent	master degree or equivalent	doctorate degree or equivalent	
healthy options	1st	6	7	3	8	24
	2nd	10	2	4	2	18
	3rd	7	6	1	0	14
	4th	6	8	6	3	23
	5th	7	12	3	2	24
	6th	1	14	3	0	18
	7th	5	1	4	1	11
	8th	7	2	2	0	11
	9th	4	7	1	0	12
	10th	6	5	1	0	12
	11th	3	4	4	2	13
Total		62	68	32	18	180

The table 4.5.6 shows that the consumers with doctor degree have ranked the healthy options to be the highest important factor to be considered while selecting restaurants. It is surprised to see that respondents with master degree or equivalent have consider healthy option in the restaurant to be least important compared to the below bachelor’s respondents and the respondents that have bachelor’s degree or equivalent. It is good to see that majority of present Thai consumers have ranked healthy option in the restaurant to be important while considering the choice of the restaurant.

The table 4.5.7 below summarized the level of education of the respondents and the restaurant image.

restaurant image and level of education of the respondent						
		level of education of the respondent				Total
		below bachelor's degree	bachelor's degree or equivalent	master degree or equivalent	doctorate degree or equivalent	
restaurant image	1st	10	9	8	2	29
	2nd	3	3	2	2	10
	3rd	5	8	4	2	19
	4th	4	1	0	0	5
	5th	7	6	2	0	15
	6th	0	2	1	3	6
	7th	6	5	3	2	16
	8th	2	7	1	2	12
	9th	4	4	4	1	13
	10th	13	10	3	0	26
	11th	8	13	4	4	29
Total		62	68	32	18	180

The secondary research from the euromonitor (2010) has discussed that self-image is everything for Thai consumers. Thai consumers consider their self image before taking any kind of actions and are ready to select those actions which would improve their self image. The table 4.5.7 shows that the result of this research agrees with the result of the secondary research. From the table it can be seen that most of the respondents consider the restaurant image to be most important factor to be considered while selecting restaurants and the image of the restaurant that they choose to dine at would affect their personal image.

The table 4.5.8 summarized the frequency of dining out of the respondents and the variety in menu.

variety in menu and frequency of dining-out of the respondent						
		frequency of dining-out of the respondent				Total
		once a month	2-3 times a month	once a week	more than once a week	
variety in menu	1st	0	8	0	5	13
	2nd	1	9	11	6	27
	3rd	4	5	7	8	24
	4th	2	2	4	9	17
	5th	1	5	2	1	9
	6th	1	5	7	5	18
	7th	0	4	6	7	17
	8th	0	2	7	11	20
	9th	4	6	3	4	17
	10th	0	0	3	8	11
	11th	0	1	2	4	7
Total		13	47	52	68	180

The table 4.5.1 has indicated that variety of menu has been the least important factor ranked by the respondents. The table 4.5.8 has summarized that, the factor variety in menu is important for the frequent dining out consumers. As consumers who use the services at restaurants often would seek to try different types of services and different types of menus more than the less frequent dining out consumers. The less frequent dining out consumers are likely to seek for their favorite menus whenever they dine out, as these consumers become more frequent towards a restaurant, they then seek for variety in menu in order to taste something new.

The table 4.5.1 has indicated that majority of the respondents has ranked the factor cleanliness and hygiene to be 3rd important while considering the choice of restaurant. Cleanliness is the common factor considered by all type of the respondents and mostly all the restaurants in Thailand maintain good level of cleanliness and hygiene. The result shows than more number of female considered cleanliness of rest room to be important in higher rank than male respondents. The result in the table 4.5.1 also shows that factors like service quality and friendliness of staff are ranked to be in the mid important factor considered by the respondents. The result shows that younger respondents gave little importance to service quality as they are more interested in restaurant image and variety in menu as well as they are more familiar to the self service atmosphere than the older respondents.

4.6 Respondents’ opinions on their variety seeking behavior in the restaurant choice

The table 4.6.1 summarized in the form of percentages the respondent’s answer to the 5 point Likert scale questions.

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
1. I look to taste new kind of food every time I dine-out	2.2%	17.2%	25.0%	46.7%	8.9 %
2. I always look to eat in different restaurants	2.8%	22.8%	35.6%	27.2%	11.7%
3. when I am hungry I just eat in any restaurant that is available	3.3%	15.6%	30.6%	31.7%	18.9%

4. I think having a wider range of restaurant choice reflects my personality	3.3%	14.4%	36.1%	34.4%	11.7%
5. I think everyone should change their restaurants often.	3.3%	35.6%	23.9%	25.0%	12.2%

Looking at the table 4.6.1, firstly it can be seen that Thai consumers do not like to answer in extreme options and hence most the answer scattered between the Likert scale point 2-4, from disagree, neutral and agree. Most of the respondents agreed that they look to try new food every time they dine-out, however this trying of new food could mean the trying of new menus rather than changing of the restaurants. Majority of the respondents agreed that when they are hungry they would just select to dine in the restaurant available in the near location at the time of hunger.

The table 4.6.2 below summarized the respondents' opinion whether having wide range of restaurant choice reflect their personality and the frequency of dining- out of the respondent.

Having wide range of restaurant choice reflects personality and frequency of dining-out of the respondent						
		frequency of dining-out of the respondent				Total
		once a month	2-3 times a month	once a week	more than once a week	
I think having wider range of restaurant choice reflects my personality	strongly disagree	1	0	4	1	6
	disagree	5	6	11	4	26
	neutral	2	18	17	28	65
	agree	3	17	15	27	62
	strongly agree	2	6	5	8	21
Total		13	47	52	68	180

From the table 4.6.2 it can be seen that majority of consumers with frequent dining out habit agreed that having wider range of restaurant choice reflects their personality, while the respondents with less frequent dining out habit are neutral about this factor.

The table 4.6.3 summarized the respondent's level of education and their opinion on the factor that having wide range of restaurant choice would reflect their personality.

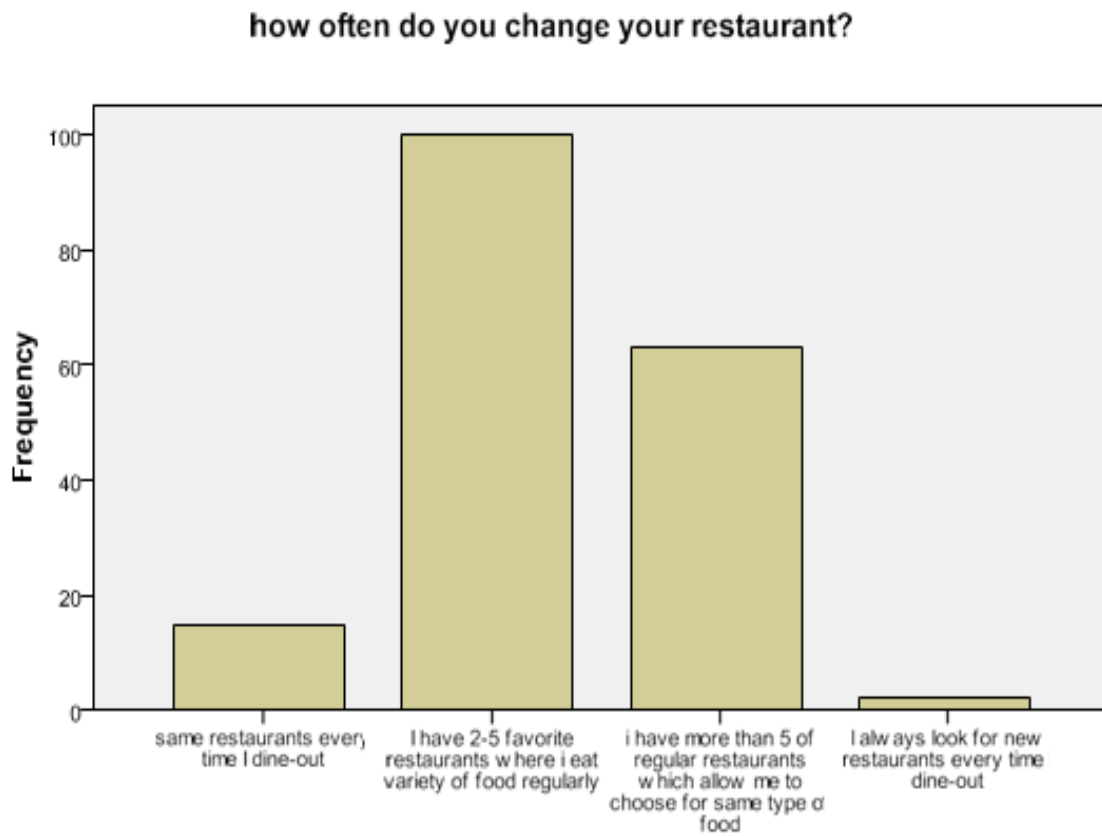
Having wide range of restaurant choice reflects personality and level of education of the respondent						
Count						
		level of education of the respondent				Total
		below bachelor's degree	bachelor's degree or equivalent	master degree or equivalent	doctorate degree or equivalent	
I think having wider range of restaurant choice reflects my personality	strongly disagree	5	0	1	0	6
	disagree	7	6	7	6	26
	neutral	17	28	12	8	65
	agree	24	24	10	4	62
	strongly agree	9	10	2	0	21
Total		62	68	32	18	180

The results from the table 4.6.3 showed that respondents with lower level of education have given more importance to the personality than the respondents with higher education level. The majority respondents with master and doctorate degree are neutral and disagree on the factor that having wide range of restaurant choice would reflects their personality.

The result from the table 4.6.1 shows that most of the respondents disagree that everyone should change their restaurant often. The respondents with more frequent dining-out habit agreed on the point that everyone should change their restaurants often to look and try for new taste.

4.7 How often do Thai consumers change their restaurants?

The respondents were asked about their restaurant changing behavior, some of the consumers would choose to dine at the same restaurant every time they dine out, some would have few of their favorite restaurant among which they select to eat different menus. For example Mr. A look to dine at the same restaurant every time he dine-out while Mr. B has few of favorite restaurants among which he chose to dine different kind of food such has one restaurant for Thai food, one restaurant for Italian, one for fast food etc. The other option given to the respondent is that they have more lists of restaurants from where they can select to eat the same kind of food. Example Mr. C has around 10 regular restaurants, which allow him to choose from 2 favorite Italian restaurants, 3 favorite Thai restaurants, 3 fast food restaurants and 2 Indian restaurants. The respondents were also given the option of looking to dine at the new restaurant every time they dine- out. The result is illustrated in the figure 4.7.1 below in the form of bar-chart.



how often do you change your restaurant?

From the figure 4.7.1 it can be seen that out of the 180 respondents, 15 of them looks to dine in the same restaurants every time they dine out.100 respondents have 2-5 favorite restaurants from where they select to dine variety of food regularly.63 of the respondents have more than 5 restaurants which allow them to choose to dine their favorite food. 2 of the respondents always look for new restaurants every time they dine out. The results showed that Thai consumers mostly look to dine at the favorite and regular restaurant which has a good restaurant image and knows their taste rather than selecting to eat in new restaurants.

The table 4.7.1 summarized the age of the respondents and their answer to the question of how often do they change their restaurants?

How often do you change your restaurant? and age of the respondent						
		age of the respondent				Total
		under 20	20-30	30-40	over 40	
How often do you change your restaurant?	same restaurants every time I dine-out	2	6	2	5	15
	I have 2-5 favorite restaurants where i eat variety of food regularly	13	67	15	5	100
	I have more than 5 of regular restaurants which allow me to choose for same type of food	13	32	11	7	63
	I always look for new restaurants every time I dine- out	1	1	0	0	2
	Total	29	106	28	17	180

The table 4.7.1 showed that more of the respondents who look to dine at the same restaurant every time they dine out are from the older age respondents (5 out of 17). The older age population believes in getting served by their known and favorite restaurants rather than looking to try new restaurants. The older respondents look to try new tastes but also most of the respondents indicated that they look for new tastes but not in the new restaurants. Hence it can be said that Thai consumers prefer dining at their known and favorite restaurants.

The table 4.7.2 below summarized the frequency of dine out of the respondents and the answer to the question of how often do they change their restaurants?

How often do you change your restaurant? and frequency of dining-out of the respondent						
		frequency of dining-out of the respondent				Total
		once a month	2-3 times a month	once a week	more than once a week	
How often do you change your restaurant?	same restaurants every time I dine-out	4	3	6	2	15
	I have 2-5 favorite restaurants where i eat	9	28	29	34	00

	variety of food regularly					
	I have more than 5 of regular restaurants which allow me to choose for same type of food	0	16	17	30	63
	I always look for new restaurants every time I dine-out	0	0	0	2	2
Total		13	47	52	68	

From the table it can be seen that the respondents with less frequent dining out habit as once a month, look to dine at the same restaurants and the respondents with more frequent dining habit have more of their regular restaurants which allow them to choose to dine their favorite food.

In the last part of the questionnaire, the respondents were given the free space to write their views on why would or would not they change their restaurant. Majority of the respondents wrote that main reason for them to change restaurant is to try or taste new food, but they would prefer dining at their favorite restaurants that they like the services and would try the variety of menus in them. They suggested that restaurants should provide variety of menus and excellent service quality to maintain their customers. One of the respondents wrote that “I would not often change my restaurant because I am familiar with the same restaurant and food. If I am satisfied with that restaurant, it is difficult of me to change.” From this in can be generally concluded that most of the Thai consumers like to eat at their favorite restaurant and try for variety of menu rather than often changing their restaurants.

4.8 Overview of the conclusions and recommendations chapter

This data analyses chapter discussed in detail the answers to each question in the questionnaire to derive the research results in the form of table, charts and cross tabulation. The next chapter discussed in detail the conclusion of the research, the answers to the research objective and the recommendation both to restaurant industry in Thailand as well as the suggestion for further study to the researchers.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discussed about the conclusion of the research. The chapter discussed in detail the answers to the research objectives. The second part of the chapter discussed the recommendations provided by the researcher after looking at the result from data analyses. The chapter ended by discussing about the area for future studies.

5.1 Conclusion

There are limited Indian restaurants in Thailand comparing to the other ethnic restaurants. The result from the data analyses has shown that other than the Thai restaurants, the Thai consumers prefer Japanese restaurant, Chinese restaurants and Italian restaurants. The Indian restaurant has been ranked the 5th position among the ethnic restaurants preferred by the Thai consumers. The data from appendix 3 showed that Thailand has the 3rd highest Indian population, the Chinese being the second. The country Thailand has mostly influenced by the Chinese culture all around thus the Chinese restaurants has the advantage over the Indian restaurants. The Indian restaurants are depended on the local Indian consumers and the tourist. The Indian restaurants in Thailand operate as a niche market business. It captures relatively small market through the product differentiation. The foods in the Indian vegetarian restaurants are highly differentiated than the food at other restaurants. Providing the vegetarian menus is an important advantage to the restaurant as the result of this research has revealed that Thai consumers of all age in the present days are more health conscious and majority of the consumers who participated in the survey of this research have ranked the healthy option to be important factor considered by them while selecting the restaurants in the 4th highest position among the other factors.

The result of the research showed that most of the Thai consumers have ranked the factors related to the uniqueness or the authenticity of the food to be most important for them while selecting to dine at the ethnic restaurants. The consumers are aware that ethnic food are difficult to cook at home and ranked the factors related to the food authenticity, uniqueness

and appearance of the food to be the most important factor of dining at ethnic restaurants. The ethnic restaurants have the high scope in to maintain the product differentiation strategy by maintaining their food authenticity, food appearance and uniqueness in order to serve wide range of consumers. The consumers have ranked the factors related to the exchange of culture to be next highest important after then food authenticity. The ethnic restaurant has the advantage of consisting ethnic culture over the other restaurants. This differentiated feature of the ethnic restaurant has been useful in gaining and attracting their customers. The consumers feel of being a part of ethnic culture while dining at the ethnic restaurants. The display of ethnic culture can be enhanced by creating the ethnic atmosphere in the restaurant, displaying cultural pictures on the walls and the menu cards, using of the physical tangibles including the eating equipments and the playing of ethnic music in the background of the restaurant. The consumers have ranked the factors enhancing the creation of ethnic atmosphere to be the next important factor following the exchange of culture.

5.2 Answers to the research objectives

Objective 1: To identify an appropriate target market of Indian vegetarian restaurant in Thailand.

The result of the research has revealed that 15 % of the Thai consumers who have participated in the survey have ranked the Indian restaurant to be their highest preference.

The majority of the Thai consumers have ranked the Indian restaurant to be the 5th highest preferred among the Thai, Chinese, Japanese and Italian ethnic restaurants. The Indian vegetarian restaurant in Thailand runs in the form of niche market business, where though it captures relatively small market but have the great scope to earn profit by the differentiation strategy. The result of the research showed that the consumers with more frequent dine-out habit of once and more than once a week are among the respondents who have ranked Indian restaurants in their higher level of preference. This shows that although majority of consumers does not highly prefer the Indian restaurants but there is scope for the frequent dining out consumers to like and prefer the Indian restaurants. The research also revealed that the average income per month of the consumers doesn't have much impact on their choice of restaurant. The Indian vegetarian can be benefited from this result, as it operate in the form of niche market business the price is inelastic and it can raise its price whenever required without affecting their customer's preferences and the demand of their food.

Objective 2: To determine Thai consumer's decision criteria in restaurant choice.

The result of the research showed that other than the quality of the food, the restaurant image has been the factor ranked to be highest important by the majority of the Thai consumers who have participated in this survey. As the result of the secondary research from euromonitor (2010) discussed that self image means everything to the present Thai consumers, most of the Thai consumer consider the image of the restaurant they select to dine would affect their personal image. The restaurants with good reputation are advantaged over the new restaurants. The factors assisting the creation of restaurant image such has the cleanliness and hygiene, the friendliness of staff and the service quality are ranked to be the following highest important factor. The consumers with high average income per month have ranked the parking facility factor to be in the higher rank of importance for them while selecting their restaurants while the respondents with younger age and lower income have ranked parking facilities to be least important as they are more likely to use the public transports. It is good to see that all type of the respondents whether they are young or old, with any type of monthly income and any level of education have ranked the factor healthy option to be in the higher rank of the importance. This showed that most of the present Thai consumers are health conscious and give priority to health. This leaves the scope for all the restaurants to provide healthy options in their menu. The vegetarians food are considered to be healthy than the non vegetarian and hence this point favors the Indian vegetarian restaurant. The consumers with frequent dining out habit have ranked the factor variety in menu to be important in the higher rank as the more frequent dining out seeks for new kind of food for the change of taste. The result also revealed that the locations of the restaurant are more important to the consumer with frequent dining out habit than to the consumers with less frequent dining habit. Most of the consumers with the less frequent dining habit have mentioned that they are ready to travel to any location to dine their favorite food once a while. Most of the female consumers has ranked the factor cleanliness of restroom to be important than the male consumers.

Objective 3: To identify which information source(s) strongly influence the consumers' decision in the context of restaurant.

The results showed that most of the Thai consumers preferred hearing from the other's experience to be the strongest source of information that would lead them towards the selection of restaurants. The advertisements over the various media including television have been ranked to be the second strongest information source. These have resulted in the

scope for the restaurants to spend money on television advertisement in order to capture larger markets. The word of mouth has been ranked as the strongest media to spread information among the Thai consumers. With the fast changing technology, internet has been ranked to be the third strongest source of information, followed by the restaurant review in the newspaper, the magazines and the food guides. Internet has been the useful media to communicate among the young consumers which could be access at anytime and anywhere. The fast changing technology such as the 3G, wifi, smart phones and tablets have assisted the wider use of internet.

Objective 4: To determine the degree of variety seeking behavior of Thai consumers in the context of restaurant choice.

Most of the Thai consumer who have participated in the survey had agreed that they look to taste new kind of food every time they dine out but that could be the new food, new menu from the same restaurants. Most of the respondents had disagreed that they look to eat in different restaurants every time they dine out. Most of them agreed that when they are hungry to just eat at any restaurant that is available in the time of hunger. Majority of consumers with frequent dining out habit agreed that having wider range of restaurant choice reflects their personality, while the respondents with less frequent dining out habit are neutral about this factor. Most of the respondents with master and doctorate degree are neutral and disagree on the factor that having wide range of restaurant choice would reflects their personality. The overall results showed that Thai consumers mostly look to dine at the favorite and regular restaurant which has a good restaurant image and knows their taste rather than selecting to eat in new restaurants.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendation to the restaurant businesses in Thailand

This study provides information which facilitates better understandings of Thai consumers and their behaviors in the selection of restaurants. There are several suggestions which can be drawn from the results of this study. As Thai consumers give high importance to the restaurant image, the restaurants are advised to focus in all the elements which would contribute to improve the restaurants image. The managements of ethnic restaurants are advised to maintain their product differentiation strategy by providing the authentic taste. The food authenticity, uniqueness of food and appearance of food are the most important factors that Thai consumers consider to be important while dining at the ethnic restaurants. The playing of ethnic music and the using of ethnic physical tangibles enhance the display of ethnic culture and contributes in creating the point of different for the ethnic restaurants. As ethnic restaurants run in the form of niche market business, the prices of the food has lesser elasticity compared to the other restaurants. The restaurant managements have the advantage of varying the prices whenever required. Other than the word of mouth, advertisement on television has been ranked to be strongest source of information which would influence the Thai consumers towards the choice of restaurant, the restaurant managers are advised that in order to capture larger market, spending money on television advertising could be useful media. As most of the Thai consumers do not like to change their restaurants often, they look for variety of menus in their favorite restaurants, the restaurants manager are advised to provide the variety range of menu. The staff should be trained to be friendly, responsive and empathic to the customers, which would lead to better service quality. All the restaurants are advised to provide the healthy options in their menu as in the present days, Thai consumers of every age are more health conscious and seek for the healthy options in the menu of the restaurants. The restaurants should also consider serving the larger portion of food in the same price, as most of the consumers who participated in this research have ranked price and food portion to be important while selecting their restaurants. The restaurants are also advised to maintain all kinds of cleanliness and hygiene at every part of the restaurant including the restroom as that would improve their restaurant image. Finally, to facilitate the older age consumers with higher average income per month who might own the cars, the restaurants are advised to also provide the parking facilities to create higher customer's satisfaction. These are the possible changes that the restaurants are advised to introduce to their existing business for the improvement and expanding.

Other than introducing of changes to the existing business the Indian vegetarian restaurant is also advised to consider opening new branches at different location as the result of the research showed that consumers with frequent dining out habit have considered the location of restaurant to be important while selecting their restaurant. In Thailand other than the Indian restaurants, majority of the consumers have preferred Thai, Chinese, Japanese and Italian restaurants. It is advised to the Indian vegetarian restaurant to try the different kind of ethnic food, as the Indian restaurant has been ranked at the 5th position in consumers' preference. There is the scope for the restaurant business to try different kind of food and to step out from running the business in niche market. There is the scope for the business to make more profit by selling the local Thai food, as it has been ranked to be the highest preferred food by the Thai consumers.

5.3.2 Suggestions for future studies

The main focus of this research is on small ethnic restaurants in Thailand. The result of this research is cannot be generalized. Similar research could be conducted in other country where the populations and ethnic groups would be different. As the country with more number of Indian consumers would have different preferences towards Indian restaurants. The research was conducted with the limitation of time and budget. Further and deeper research on the consumer's behavior in the context of restaurant could be conducted with higher budgets and time. The research was conducted in the city of Bangkok. Further research could be conducted at the other provinces of Thailand to find out more about Thai consumers. The sampling of this research has been done basing on the previous studies. Further research with different sampling techniques could be done to gain the different results.

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