

**THE INFLUENCE OF ONLINE REVIEWS TOWARD OFFICE
WORKERS' INTENTION TO VISIT PUBS AND RESTAURANTS
AT NIGHT IN BANGKOK AREA**



**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
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entitled
**THE INFLUENCE OF ONLINE REVIEWS TOWARD OFFICE
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AT NIGHT IN BANGKOK AREA**

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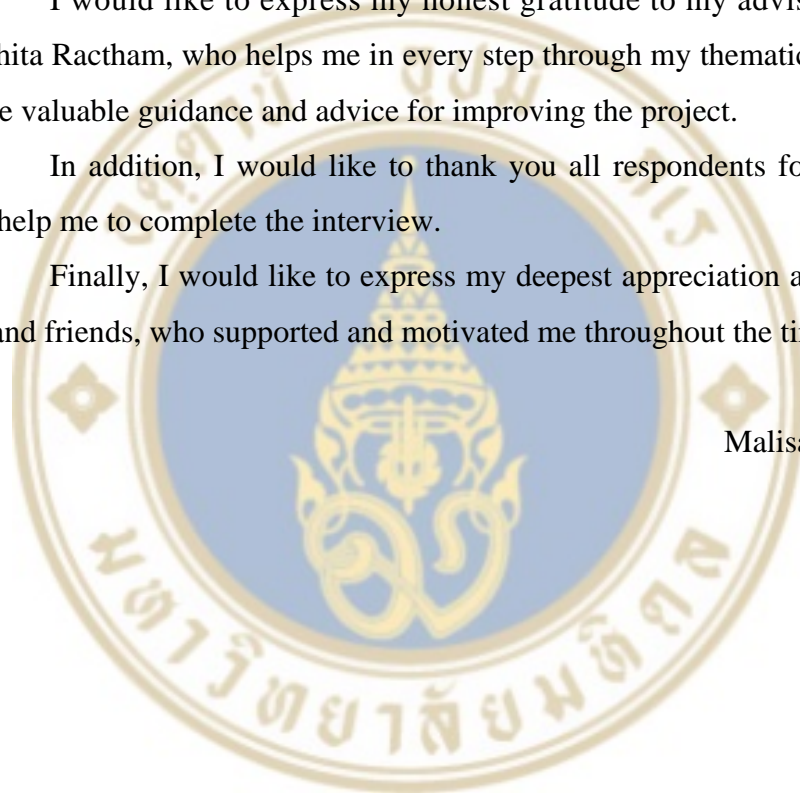
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ABSTRACT

According to internet usage growth in Thailand, online consumer review becomes an essential part that influences customer to make decision to the brand or product. Online customer review is a tool that consumer can share their experiences about the brand which could be positive or negative aspect. Therefore, this study aims to find out the influence of online reviews toward office workers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants at night in Bangkok area. This research collects data by using in-depth interview that method helps the author deeply understand consumers.

The main purpose of this study is to find relationship between key online consumer review variables; consumer characteristic, eWOM, review sources, content quality, and awareness towards office workers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants at night in Bangkok area. The finding is useful for the restaurant businesses in Thailand, especially the pub and restaurant, to explore new marketing channel about their restaurant by using online consumer review to attract prospect customers.

KEY WORDS: Online Consumer Reviews/ Pub and Restaurant/ eWOM and Intention to Visit

35 pages

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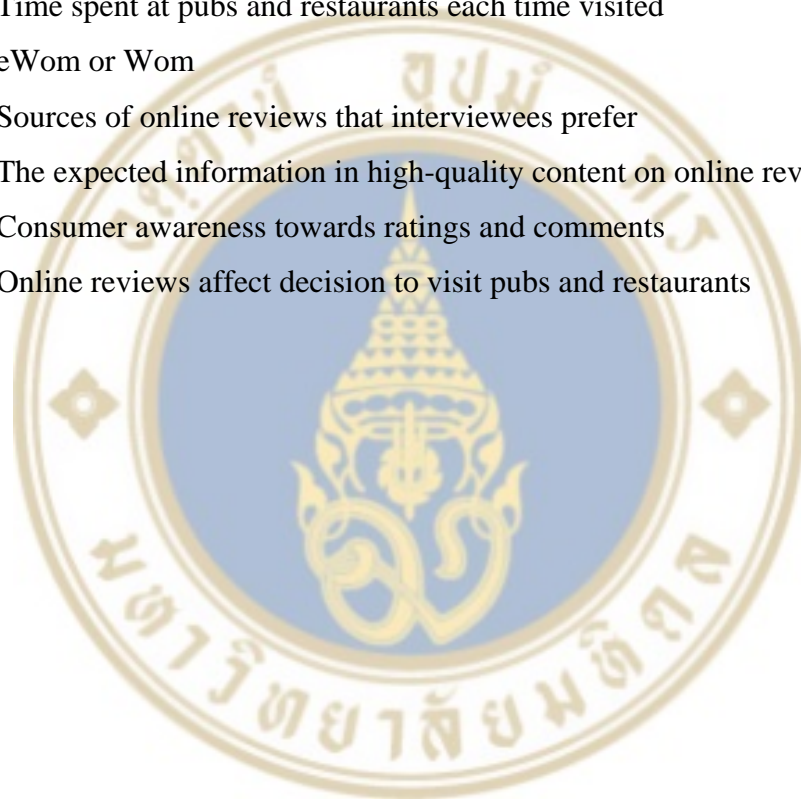
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, internet seems to be the most powerful tool in many industries because people consider internet as an indispensable part of their lives. Therefore, online products or service reviews are playing an important role to the consumers' purchase decision. Previously, consumers' purchase decisions were made upon advertisements from TV, radio, and newspapers, product information at stores, or even word of mouth. Most of internet users visit websites of the product or service that they are interested as a way to seek for reviews from other consumers who had bought the product or tried the service, then consider all the information they got before making a decision to buy. Approximately 58.2% of internet users in Thailand, who bought products or used services online in the past, would read customer reviews and comments on the internet before buying such products or services (Electronic Transaction Development Agency, 2016).

Previously, in the restaurant industry, there was not so much information about food, atmosphere, or service of restaurants on the internet. Recommendations were mainly made from word of mouth, brochures, or TV shows. Nowadays, many restaurants start to use online marketing to attract more customers. Online reviews on websites or review applications, both negative and positive, become one of the factors that influence consumers' intention to buy or use any services in the form of electronic word of mouth. Online restaurant reviews can be found on many platforms such as on websites e.g. Pantip.com, social media e.g. Facebook page, or mobile application e.g. Wongnai, Openrice. There are also many factors of online reviews that might have effects on consumers' purchasing intention, for example pictures in the review, the use of language, contents, as well as the review writer. These factors directly determine the quality of online restaurant reviews whether they are effective and influential or not.

In 2015, restaurant and chain restaurant businesses in Thailand grew about 4.0-6.8%. In 2014, restaurants, which had a market share around 70% and a market value at approximately 267,000-275,000 million Baht, grew from around 2.9-5.9% (Kasikorn research center, 2015). It is widely perceived that restaurants have a significantly high rate of competitors. Restaurant owners need to be well aware of their competitive advantages and make their restaurants creatively different from the others. As this study focuses on pubs and restaurants, alcohol beverages are another factor that attracts customers to visit the restaurant. According to Kasikorn research center, whisky market has a market value around 100,000 million baht which grows 3-5% per year. As for beer market, it has a market value around 135,000 million baht growing 5-10% per year.

This study will scope on office workers in Bangkok area. According to the statistics from Thai internet users' profiles in 2015, 56.5% of internet users in Thailand were office workers and 53.8% of the users were from Bangkok. This group of users used the internet more than users in other career paths. When looking more closely, it can be said that the more income, the more internet usage. Office workers in Thailand mostly work around 40-49 hours per week (Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, 2016). After work, many people try to avoid traffic jams by finding some other activities to do and wait until the traffic starts to get better. One of the most common activities in which office workers enjoy doing after work is hanging out with colleagues and friends in pubs and restaurants just for relaxation – drinking, chitchatting, or even getting drunk. Another reason is that a lifestyle of people in Bangkok has changed into a more capitalist way – people work hard to earn more money while also eat out more often especially for dinner. Approximately 59% of Thais have dinner outside and 30% have dinner outside on Monday to Thursday (Nielsen Research, 2010).

This research provides pub and restaurant entrepreneurs in Bangkok area with useful information that will allow them to be conscious about effects of online reviews, which could be the effective marketing tool to attract prospect customers. Correspondingly, online marketers, food bloggers, restaurant review websites, and restaurant review applications will also be aware of the impacts of online reviews. This research can be employed as a guide for online review research in the future.

1.2 Research Problem

It is vitally important for entrepreneurs in pub and restaurant industry to be alert to aspects that attract customers to their restaurants. As the world changes – people have their own smartphones, online marketing becomes the seemingly easiest way to reach and attract them. This research will analyze the effects of online reviews or motivation that influence the consumers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants after work while at the same time also study the type of online reviews that affect consumers the most.

1.3 Research Objective

This research will analyze the effects of online reviews or motivation that influence the consumers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants after work. It will also study the type of online reviews that affects consumers the most to see what key factors for online pub and restaurant reviews, which have impacts on consumers' attitudes, are.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of the research, it can be concluded into the research questions as follows;

1. How online consumer reviews have an impact towards office workers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants in Bangkok area at night?
2. What are the key factors of online pub and restaurant reviews that affect consumers' attitudes?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Consumer Behavior

Food is one of basic human needs for food benefits human in physical growth, gives them energy to perform tasks, and protects them from diseases. In the past, people prepared food and cooked in their shelters as a family activity; however, now that the society has changed, people tend to buy food from outside or eat outside at the restaurants.

The growth of Thai economy enables Thai people to step into a capitalist society which has gradually urged consumers to change their behaviors over time. People work outside to be able to effort their living expenses allowing them to find it easier to buy food from outside instead of buying ingredients, preparing, and cooking at home. This definitely affects the behaviors of consumers particularly for those who live in Bangkok. As claimed, the consumers' frequency in visiting Thai restaurant is 1 to 2 times per month, which occurs mostly on Saturdays and Sundays between 17.01 to 20.00 hours (Thongkum, 2003). Because of the change in social conditions such as hastiness in working lifestyles, and increasing needs in places to relax and hang out with friends and families after long working hours, the consumers' behaviors have been shaped and gradually changed over time. Thus, these are the reasons why restaurant businesses are exponentially growing.

Competitiveness among restaurants is even more intense because new entrants tend to easily find their ways into the market. To invest in a new restaurant requires not too large budget and the return of the investment is rather short comparing to other types of businesses. As a result, both existing and recent restaurants need an effective strategy to get most of the market share. Small restaurants are also an alternative choice for customers who focus on lower prices. These small restaurants have to maintain their restaurant standards – clean and healthy including all the staff, chefs, and materials and ingredients in order to keep their existing customers. They need to have a plan which

is strategically wise enough to attract customers while also capacitate them to think about the restaurants as the first choice that comes up in their minds.

The number of people dinning out in Bangkok is continuously increasing especially among office workers due to the fact that the society has changed – people work outside and spare no time to cook at home (Somanapun and Kongsawaskiat, 2015). Restaurant industry in Bangkok has started to grow continuingly recently. Locations and recommendations from well-known people hugely affect customers' decision on the restaurant. Moreover, restaurant promotion, customer loyalty and trust are also the factors that influence them to eat out. The frequency of consumers eating at restaurants for the purpose of meeting and gathering with friends and family is approximately 1-2 times in weekdays and weekends. Customer satisfaction relies mainly on the taste of food, restaurant atmosphere, and services.

2.2 Impact of Online Consumer Review

As consumers' behaviors have changed, consumers are eager to acquire as much information as they can before making any decision in their lives from typical routine activities like shopping – considering pros and cons of different brands and products to even more demanding tasks like comparing and choosing schools for children. There are two types of online reviews, which are consumer-generated reviews that are based on real consumers' experiences and reviews from professional editors. These two types of online reviews have different influences on consumers (Hu, Bose, Sian Koh, and Liu, 2012). User-generated reviews can be a rich source of information, though sometimes they can be useless and may contain biased judgements towards certain products or services. Generally, consumers tend to rely more on peer-to-peer reviews of products and services they are interested in rather than advertisements. This study divides the information search into two categories: internal and external. To clarify, internal information is from past incidents, former experiences, and memory whereas external information is from materials like advertisements and catalogs. According to this research, there are 4 categories of consumers' behaviors that can assist in determining motives in reading consumer-generated reviews: risk reduction, reduction of search

time, dissonance reduction, and group influence (Parikh, Behnke, Vorvoreanu, Almanza, and Nelson, 2014).

Editor reviews in traditional media such as newspapers and magazines have a significant influence on the popularity of the product. For instance, The New York Times' food editor, Craig Claiborne, wrote a review about three restaurants and gave them star ratings (Claiborne, 1963). Later, the restaurant reviews in the newspaper gained many responses from readers, and within a few years, Claiborne became "The man who could make or break restaurants" (Manville, 1968).

Online reviews from customers and online reviews from editors attract consumers in different ways. Customers' online reviews have attracted more consumers to visit the restaurant's website, while the reviews and ratings from editors have negative impacts on consumers' decision making (Zhang, Ye, Law, and Li, 2010). Another research showed that, most of consumers prefer peer reviews to experts' or editorial reviews (Smith, et al, 2005), and give them more credits than reviews from marketers (Smith, and Menon & Sivakumar, 2005).

Electronic word of mouth has massive impacts on restaurant businesses, which can be beneficial to be employed as a marketing strategy. Due to the expansion of today's internet usage, consumers everywhere are looking for more insightful information. Most of the restaurants' online reviews are able to answer consumers' questions like what to eat tonight, which restaurant they should go, where the restaurant is, what time it is open or close or even what food they should order. Online reviews would allow consumers to have some ideas about experiences they are expecting from using such products and services.

In Thailand, approximately 58.2% of internet users who bought or used products or services online in the past would read customer reviews and comments on the internet before purchasing products or services (Electronic Transaction Development Agency, 2016). Referring to the term "word of mouth", it is a type of communication that influences consumers' intention to buy and to make decisions on one product (Richinx, 1983). Word-of-mouth communication is widely accepted as a traditional marketing research, and found that communication affects consumer attitudes toward products and services (Shavit, Swan, Lowery, and Wank, 1994). At present, word of mouth transforms into Electronic word of mouth on online reviews and ratings on website

platforms (Chatterjee,2001). Negative or positive statements on the internet are also known as eWOM or online word of mouth (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Unlike WOM, eWOM is a text-based message (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004) that can influence consumers' attention (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Product and service reviews can easily be accessed by consumers. In addition, this kind of reviews also provides buyers with greater choices needed for their decision making. Consumers rely heavily on opinions from websites in order to decide upon anything they come across in lives from regular everyday decisions to vital ones like investments (Hu, Bose, Sian Koh, and Liu, 2012). The user-generated reviews can be a rich source of information; however sometimes can be pointless or biased. Consumers rather count on peer-to-peer reviews of products or services they are interested than they do on advertisements. This study has divided the information search into two parts: internal and external. To emphasize, internal information is based on the past events, experiences and memory while external information is gathered mainly from advertisements and catalogs.

Roberson (1976) and Brooker (1981) stated that people try to look for information as much as possible for high involvement products in order to minimize risks and reduce uncertainty. Thus, eWOM is a potent way for people to search for information to compare and evaluate alternative merchadises before making any decision (Cheewaudomsap, 2015).

An online review is part of external information. When consumers find difficulties in making any decisions about any products, they will search for external information (Parikh, Behnke, Vorvoreanu, Almanza, and Nelson, 2014). Online consumer reviewers deliver additional user oriented information which provides either positivity or negativity of products (Hu, Bose, Sian Koh, and Liu, 2012). Referring to Miniard and Cohen (1983, 171), it has been stated that “consumers’ behavior is influenced by concerns over what others might think of them or how others might act toward them as a function of their product choice and usage”. By sensing and telling themselves that many other people also buy the same product or service, the majority of people regard reviewers as influencers who lead them to the purchase. Besides, peer consumers also provide buyers with more credible information which adds more value to the product (Cohen and Golden, 1972).

Consumer-generated contents can be in various forms of media and types of websites (Gretzel, 2006). E word of mouth is a form of contents that are created as online reviews and ratings (Chatterjee, 2001). Online reviews are mostly consisted of two parts: 1) content about products and services and 2) recommendations (Park, Lee & Han, 2007). It is obvious that some consumers write some reviews online in a way that discourages other consumers from using or purchasing such products or services. Online consumer reviews influence consumers in different ways due to each reviewer's perspective which provides indirect experiences to the reader (Bickart & Schindler, 2001).

Nowadays, when consumers purchase products, they tend to rely more on online review to help them make decision (Park, Kim & Han, 2007). Travel industry seems to be the industry that most consumers use reviews to make their travel decisions. Approximately 50% of travel purchasers visit online review sources such as message boards, forums, or online communities that provide travel information to help them on their travel purchase. One in three of those purchasers said online reviews helped with their purchase decisions (Compete, Inc., 2006). Another one in three of the purchasers said that consumers' opinions on online review changed their minds about the products they wanted to purchase and influenced them tremendously in decision making. After the purchase, around 25% of them said that they also posted an online consumer review (Gretzel, and Kyung Hyan, 2008).

Another research shows that more than 80% of people who shop online use online reviews from other consumers when they make purchase decision (Forrester, 2006). Almost 60% of consumers like to read reviews that are from other consumers on websites, as well as reviews which show high conversion rates of review experiences (eMarketer, 2007). Comparing to internet consumers in Thailand, around 58.2% of them read customer reviews and comments on the internet before buying such products or services (Electronic Transaction Development Agency, 2016). These researches clearly reveal that online consumer reviews play an important role in consumers' decision making.

Most of online customer reviews have positive impacts on restaurant performance on net sales, guest counts, and average check. Restaurants with an excellent certificate potentially receive a large number of reviews which definitely influence net sales and guest counts comparing to those restaurants without an excellent certificate (Kim, Li, and Brymer, 2016). When talking about restaurant businesses in Thailand,

the most popular one is undoubtedly Japanese restaurants (Kasikorn research center, 2015). The researches that focus on sushi restaurants in Thailand, which belongs to another sector in restaurant industry parted from pub and restaurant sector, found that the relationship of five variables that impact the purchase intention are E word of mouth, source credibility, source expertise, valence, and volume (Cheewaudomsap, 2015).

The result of online reviews created by real consumers of restaurants has more reliability to prospect customers. Additionally, significant factors that influence consumers' intention are E word of mouth (online review), source credibility, and volume of online consumer reviews. Similarly to the previous study by Xinyuan (Roy) Zhao et al. (2015), it pointed out that usefulness, reviewer expertise, timeliness, volume, valence and comprehensiveness of online reviews have huge impacts on travelers' intentions and decisions towards online hotel booking. Consumers' opinions in socially-based websites strongly shape purchasers' feelings, customer engagement and consumers' decision when making any purchase (Karakaya and Barnes, 2010).

2.3 Conceptual Framework

According to the theories from the researches above, the relationship between factors of online reviews affecting intentions of office workers in Bangkok to visit pubs and restaurants at night are as follow:

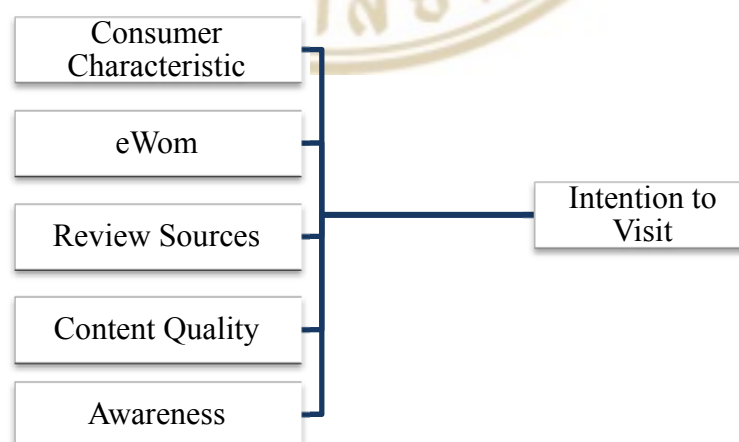


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methods for this study, the influence of online reviews toward office workers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants at night in Bangkok area, would be most appropriate to answer the proposed research question in order to observe the participants' behaviors. This study focuses on consumers' behaviors and experiences before making a decision. Participants might not notice or be aware of the impacts of online consumer reviews on their decisions. In-depth interview will be used in this observation.

3.1 Population and Sample

Thirty samples of office workers in Bangkok area who normally visit pubs and restaurants after work were selected to ensure that enough information could be gathered. In fact, this is close to normal distribution test and can be used in statistical analysis. The research requires samples to be those who use internet, social networks, or restaurant review applications to find information or read online consumer reviews before they make a decision. The samples must experience using internet, social networks, or restaurant review applications as a way to find consumers' online reviews for at least 6 months to ensure that the participants know what consumers' online reviews are. Snowball sampling technique will be employed in this research. This technique will assist the researcher in interviewing those participants who meet the standard and ask them to introduce other participants, which will facilitate the interview to be more in-depth (Atkinson and Flint, 2001) as well as get more involvement from the participants.

3.2 Research Tool

This research will give each participant an in-depth interview by making an appointment with each participant first for personal meeting to get more details and to observe his/her lifestyles and behaviors. If any participants find it inconvenient to meet in person, the interviewer will, instead, turn to an alternative choice – an internet interview such as video call on LINE application or Skype to enable the interview to sense like real in-person interview most. The interview questions will cover 6 main points: 1) Participants' lifestyles such as activities after work or on weekends 2) Participants' behaviors of using online consumer reviews 3) Attitudes of the participants towards pubs and restaurants 4) Factors of online reviews that stimulate the participants to make a decision 5) Types of information on online reviews that affect their decision making and 6) The participants' personal information and backgrounds.

Table 3.1 The in-depth interview questions

Related Framework	Questions
Consumer Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often do you eat out at night? • How often do you go to pubs and restaurants? • Do you read online pub and restaurant reviews?
eWom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever visited pubs and restaurants just because you have read online reviews? • Do those online reviews you have read convince you to visit pubs and restaurants? • In your opinion, what make online reviews different from reviews from friends or other sources?
Review Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you read online reviews? (e.g. Online magazines, review applications, social media, websites) • Why do you choose to read online reviews on those sources? • Are there any differences between online reviews and reviews from other sources that affect your intention to visit pubs and restaurants?

Table 3.1 The in-depth interview questions (cont.)

Related Framework	Questions
Review Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think online reviews are a reliable source? • Do you prefer online reviews from online publishers or consumers? (e.g. Reviews from celebrities or reviews from friends) and what are the reasons?
Content Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the reasons why online reviews make you want to visit pubs and restaurants? (e.g. Nice photos, easy-to-read writing style, plenty information, high ratings) • What are the characteristics of online reviews that you expect?
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the reasons that make you believe in online pub and restaurant reviews? • What do you think about ratings in online reviews? Does it affect your decision? • How do you think about pubs and restaurants that have many online review contents or high content share number? • Do you think online pub and restaurant reviews affect your decision to visit pubs and restaurants?

Table 3.2 The demographic questions

Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age	<input type="checkbox"/> 15-20 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 21-25 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 26-30 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 years old <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 years old <input type="checkbox"/> over 50 years old

Table 3.2 The demographic questions (cont.)

Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than High school <input type="checkbox"/> High school <input type="checkbox"/> Bachelor's degree <input type="checkbox"/> Master's degree <input type="checkbox"/> Ph.D.
Working hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 8.00-17.00 <input type="checkbox"/> 9.00-18.00 <input type="checkbox"/> 10.00-19.00 <input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify)
Personal Income (Monthly)	<input type="checkbox"/> Below or equal 15,000 THB <input type="checkbox"/> 15,001-30,000 THB <input type="checkbox"/> 30,001-45,000 THB <input type="checkbox"/> 45,001-60,000 THB <input type="checkbox"/> More than 60,001 THB

The questions could more or less depend on the participants' answers. The researcher might add more questions to get more details, including questions regarding to participants' lifestyles, personal information and backgrounds. The interview will take about 20 to 30 minutes to be conducted and will be recorded along the interview to ensure that all the information will be collected and no important topic will be missed out.

3.3 Data Sources

Data sources are the primary data that come from in-depth interviews which are conducted by the researcher from these 30 participants.

3.4 Data Analysis

This research will observe the data from many sources such as websites or tools that the participants use to read online reviews about pubs and restaurants, including overall interviews in person (Promma and Worapichet, 2015). The interview topic will be adjusted depending on the participants in order to make the participants reveal their

opinions and feelings as much as they want (Jantawanich, 2010). The data will be collected and analyzed; if there is any data conflict or missing, the researcher will correct immediately. Then, it will be categorized and matched with the objectives of the study, compared and connected to the relation of the subject matter along with the methods from literature reviews that the researcher has studied to answer the proposed research questions.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Within this chapter, the focus will be on the analysis and the explanation of the qualitative data collected from the participants according to the research methodology. The interview results were retrieved from 30 participants—office workers in Bangkok area who have read pub and restaurant online reviews. Most of the participants use social media, online applications, and other online channels every day. Since these participants mostly use social media as their main source of information in order to make a decision on buying products or services, it would be interesting to see if online reviews for pub and restaurant have any influence towards their intentions to visit pubs and restaurants at night in Bangkok area.

Table 4.1 Participant's Biography

Participant No.	Gender	Age	Job Seniority	Working Hours
1	Male	31-40	Manager	other
2	Female	26-30	Employee	10.00-19.00
3	Female	26-30	Employee	other
4	Male	31-40	Director	other
5	Female	26-30	Employee	10.00-19.00
6	Male	31-40	Employee	10.00-19.00
7	Male	26-30	Manager	8.00-17.00
8	Male	26-30	Supervisor	9.00-18.00
9	Female	26-30	Employee	10.00-19.00
10	Female	31-40	Employee	other
11	Female	26-30	Employee	8.00-17.00
12	Female	31-40	Manager	8.00-17.00
13	Female	26-30	Employee	8.00-17.00

Table 4.1 Participant's Biography (cont.)

Participant No.	Gender	Age	Job Seniority	Working Hours
14	Female	26-30	Employee	other
15	Female	26-30	Employee	10.00-19.00
16	Female	21-25	Employee	10.00-19.00
17	Male	26-30	Employee	other
18	Female	26-30	Employee	9.00-18.00
19	Female	26-30	Employee	10.00-19.00
20	Female	26-30	Employee	9.00-18.00
21	Female	31-40	Employee	10.00-19.00
22	Male	31-40	Supervisor	9.00-18.00
23	Male	31-40	Manager	10.00-19.00
24	Female	31-40	Employee	10.00-19.00
25	Female	41-50	Manager	9.00-18.00
26	Female	31-40	Manager	8.00-17.00
27	Female	31-40	Supervisor	10.00-19.00
28	Male	26-30	Employee	9.00-18.00
29	Female	26-30	Supervisor	9.00-18.00
30	Male	31-40	Supervisor	10.00-19.00

Twenty out of thirty of participants are female or 66.7% and ten are male or 33.3%. Most of the participants are between 26-40 years of age and have graduated in either bachelor's or master's degree. Eighteen participants work as an employee while six are managers, five are supervisors, and one is a director. Forty percent of the participants work around 9 hours per day, between 8.00 - 19.00 hrs. and the rest's working hours depend on their work each day.

4.1 Consumer Characteristics

From personal interviews, it was found that most of the participants eat out at night around 3-5 time per week, but visit pubs and restaurants fewer than twice or only once per week. The reasons of visiting such places at night are mainly gathering with colleges after work, reuniting with school friends, celebrating or partying on special occasions. According to the interviews, most of them tend to visit pubs and restaurants after 20.00 hrs. and usually spend around 3-4 hours there.

Periods of time that interviewees visit pubs and restaurants

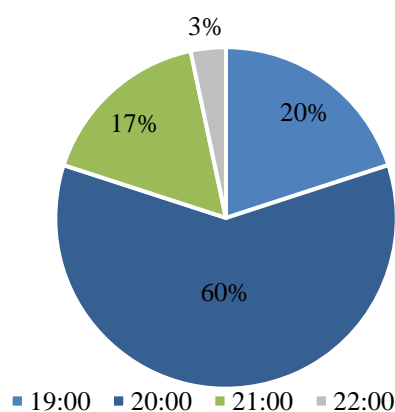


Figure 4.1 Periods of time that interviewees visit pubs and restaurants

Time spent at pubs and restaurants each time visited

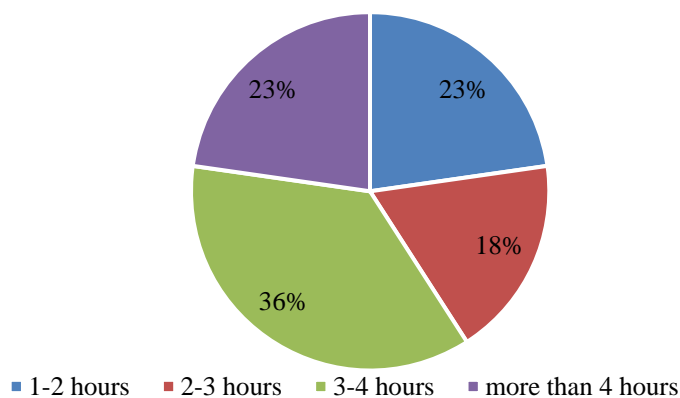


Figure 4.2 Time spent at pubs and restaurants each time visited

“Most of the time, I go to pubs and restaurants with friends because pubs and restaurants have good food and music, in which we can talk to each other and sit for a while without moving to anywhere else.” (Participant 1)

“When we have a party, such as a farewell or a birthday party, we always go to pubs and restaurants.” (Participant 4)

Participants have read pub and restaurant online reviews from various sources such as Pantip.com, WongNai, ChillPaiNai, BKK Menu, Facebook fanpages or contents shared on Facebook.

“I’ve read some—mostly are from what my friends on Facebook shared” (Participant 19)

“Yes, I have read pub and restaurant online reviews from WongNai and ChillPaiNai; and if I am interested, I will go on Google to search for more information from the restaurant’s name.” (Participant 20)

4.2 E-Word of Mouth

From many research mentioned above, eWom has a great impact to consumers’ intention to buy. When reading pub and restaurant online reviews, most of the Participants agree that those online reviews affect their decisions to visit pubs and restaurants. More interestingly, most of them have visited pubs and restaurants merely because of online reviews. However, there are also other reasons to pay importance to such as invitations from friends, current trends, and social influences. From the interviews, 21 out of 30 participants believe in eWom whereas 13 out of 30 participants believe in their friends’ recommendations or original Wom.

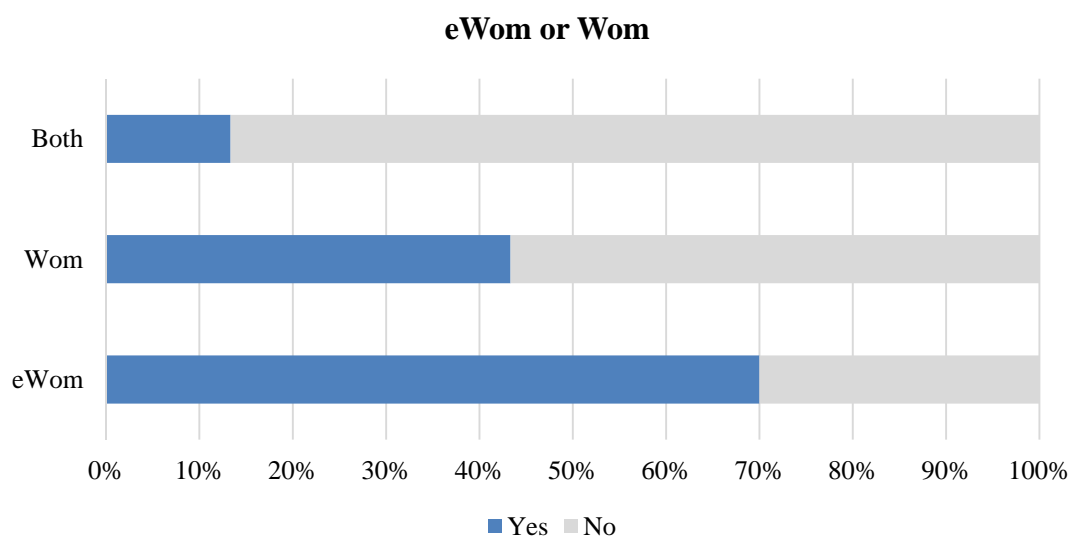


Figure 4.3 eWom or Wom

“Yes, I have visited pubs and restaurants because I’ve read their online reviews. I think online reviews have a good way of presentation as they affect our minds to go find out more. Moreover, when I see many people go to any restaurant, it makes me feel like I have to go there too! Or otherwise I’d be out of trends.” (Participant 14)

“I read reviews just for fun. I like to collect reviews of the restaurant that I am really interested in—this place looks good, that place looks cool, and later when want to meet with friends, I’ll go back and search for that restaurant later. (Participant 19)

“eWom or online reviews give us the fact, because those things let us know the details and see pictures about such pubs and restaurants. Wom or reviews from friends, however, would be more about feeling—how they feel about the restaurant and their opinions, which could be positive or negative.” (Participant 23)

Moreover, participants agree that any online reviews that could convince them to visit pubs and restaurants must depend on various factors such as review comments, pictures, promotion and other factors like friends’ opinions towards such restaurants. Pubs’ and restaurants’ atmosphere is a major factor that most reviewees mentioned about.

“Yes, those online reviews convince me to visit. Nice pictures make me want to go there and take pictures. The taste of food is not that convincing because pictures

cannot tell how it tastes, but pictures can tell the atmosphere, decoration, and restaurant style.” (Participant 2)

“If the review is good, I might want to try visiting there myself. Other than the pubs and restaurants that I normally visit, I want to know some other new places. I can also compare them to those restaurants that I’ve visited for the future references to recommend to my friends on special occasions.” (Participant 9)

“I think if I read online reviews, it might convince me to visit because in the review we can see the restaurant’s atmosphere, menu, as well as the comments from their customers” (Participant 14)

According to the research, it was found that many people would believe those who share the same characteristics and lifestyles more than ones who have different characteristics.

“I would believe reviews from friends not only their words of mouth, but also what they share on their social media. I believe that my friends and I have the same style—know what we like or dislike.” (Participant 28)

Regarding to the interviewees’ demographic, the youngest female participant (participant 16) whose age is between 21-25 years old and the oldest participant (participant 25) who is between 41-50 years of age, have interestingly contrast information. The youngest participant relies on eWom more than Wom and has an intention to visit pubs and restaurants after reading online reviews. On the other hand, the oldest participant relies on Wom more than eWom and does not have an intention to visit pubs or restaurants after reading online reviews.

4.3 Review Sources

Online review sources can be separated into two categories which were mentioned earlier, but reviews can be offline such as reviews from friends as well. After interviewing the participants, it reveals that online reviews from different sources can affect their intention to visit differently. Participants choose to believe words of mouth from friends more than online reviews from publishers or celebrities. They found that most of online reviews from publisher or celebrities present only a good side of pubs

and restaurants while online reviews from real consumers such as in Pantip website or friends' posts on social media are more reliable.

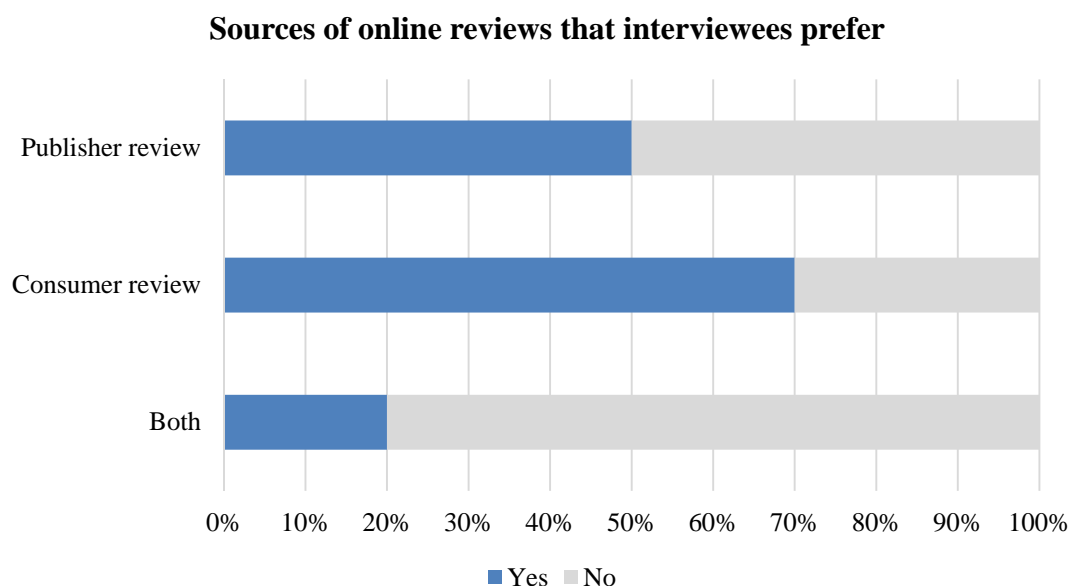


Figure 4.4 Sources of online reviews that interviewees prefer

“I think reviews from the internet may have some influencers’ reviews, which may say only the positive side of the place. Listening to words from friends can influence me to visit the place more than reading reviews from the internet.” (Participant 1)

“Most of the reviews from publishers, bloggers, or celebrities are always in the positive side, which sometimes a lot of details are hidden under the carpet. This makes their online reviews unreliable for me—or I can say that less reliable than reading reviews from real consumers or friends. For friends, I know what’s their favorite taste and style of pubs and restaurants, so I can rely on my friends’ reviews no matter they are good or bad.” (Participant 9)

“Online reviews for me, I think there are more perspectives of views from online viewers—different opinions from different points of view along with nice pictures to attract us. We can compare many restaurants at the same time with more information before making decision. But for the word of mouth, it’s only one point of view. Plus, our preferences might be different from friends.” (Participant 12)

“When reading reviews on the internet, sometimes I find places that I have never heard of. They are different from friends’ reviews or recommendations because when friends recommend any place, they know my taste—what I like and I don’t like. So, it’s like friends choosing the place that they think suits me which allows me to trust them more than reviews from the internet. But as I said, sometimes online reviews bring me to new places which leads to great excitement.” (Participant 19)

There are many sources of reviews that participants have mentioned both online and offline. However, recently people spend time more on their mobile phones, tablets or computers at work, so it is easier that online reviews will come to their minds first whenever they want to make a decision to visit pubs and restaurants. For the sample participants who are in Bangkok area, they mentioned about WongNai website and application most, then Pantip, Bkkmenu, ChillPaiNai, Facebook, and other websites and applications.

“Before, I used to read restaurant reviews from magazines, but recently I don’t buy magazines anymore—I read from the internet for example, WongNai instead. I would read in WongNai first and then read comments and search for more information from other sources later.” (Participant 18)

“I prefer WongNai, EDT website, to those high-ranking websites like Kapook because WongNai has comments from customers.” (Participant 9)

“Because I mostly work at my computer all day long, so most of the interviews I’ve read are from the internet. Sometimes when I use public transportation or go to shopping malls, I see some advertisements. They are not reviews, but somehow capture my attention. I’d remember the restaurants’ name and menu, and search for reviews later on the internet.” (Participant 8)

Review sources are also different in many of participants’ intention to visit pub and restaurant as well. Some platforms only provide the place’s information, with no customers’ comments. Sometimes the very same pubs and restaurants which get positive comments on one website can have negative comments on the other websites. Most of the participant said that, they might consider pubs and restaurants that their friends recommend first, then look for online reviews to help them make a decision.

“Online reviews from different sources also provide different information; sometimes one website says the food is delicious, but another review doesn’t say so. So, I would go to taste it by myself.” (Participant 7)

“For me, sources of online reviews definitely affect my decision. Some reviews have very convincing pictures, useful contents, but some customers’ reviews are negative. I still might want to go there, though. If there are a lot of negative comments, I may change my mind and look for another pub or restaurant that is similar to that one, but receives more positive comments.” (Participant 9)

“I think different platforms give different impacts. Facebook and IG can create only attraction and awareness because posts are fed automatically. But Pantip is a place where I intend to search for information. Therefore, the information and comments there would be more helpful for my decision making.” (Participant 12)

“I can separate review into 3 types: reviews from magazines, reviews from friends, and online reviews. For magazines, it is only one-way communication—we wouldn’t know how people who have been there felt about the place. For friends’ reviews, sometimes they said it is good but I might not like what they like. For online reviews, it seems to be the best for me because online reviews provide overall information, pictures, and contact details which allow you to contact the place directly.” (Participant 14)

“I might trust my friends’ recommendation first, then Pantip website. For Pantip website, I like to read reviews there because there are many comments from different people, which is better than the reviews on Facebook. Reviews on Facebook seem to have only a positive side and are rather commercial. If I cannot find any interesting restaurants, I will go to WongNai to find the place first and then Google for more information later.” (Participant 18)

4.4 Content Quality

Online review content is the main thing that will draw the readers’ attention and convince them to follow and visit pubs and restaurants. The reason that online reviews make people want to visit pubs and restaurants vary from nice pictures, rich information, impact topic, ratings, real customers’ reviews, quality of reviewers, to the language that reviewers use.

“If there are a lot of positive comments, I’d like to visit that place. It shows that this place has a good feedback and I can have a high expectation. Moreover, if I see nice pictures, I will feel like I really, really want to go there!” (Participant 9)

“Pictures in reviews would catch my eyes first! Then, I will pay attention to sources of reviews, the number of reviewers, and comments. If the restaurant gets an overall rating at 5 stars with just one person giving it 1-star rating, I will want to know why.” (Participant 10)

“Pictures and titles are the first thing that makes me interested and want to read more. Mood and tone of the pictures and the presentation style are the second thing. For the writer or the source of information, I don’t pay much attention—only pictures and contents are considered important to me. The language and tone are not a problem as long as the writer provides enough information. Comments from customers also make reviews more reliable.” (Participant 19)

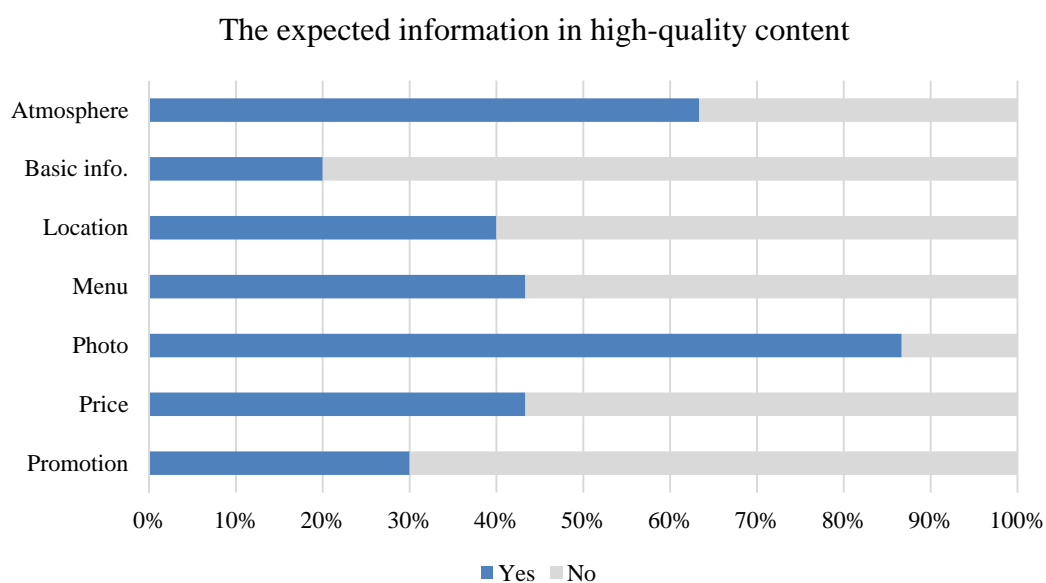


Figure 4.5 The expected information in high-quality content on online reviews

Refer to the research of this study, 86.6% of the participants mentioned that the first thing that capture their attention is photos, then comes the atmosphere of the restaurant, overall price of the menu and then the location.

Moreover, because the interview questions are open-end questions, many participants mentioned about many more details such as types of online media that capture their attention e.g. videos that could be useful as a new mean to present the atmosphere, style, and music of such pubs and restaurants. Apart from that, information about food and beverage is also important. Five interviewees prefer to go to any pubs and restaurants that carry their favorite beverage brands or new brands for them to try.

Moreover, seven out of ten male participants do not care about the price; however, some of them still show some concerns towards promotion. The linkage between personal income and the price on online reviews are related. These participants who have high personal income did not mention about price or promotion on online reviews. They tend to concern more about the atmosphere, location, and parking area. Promotion is another key that also encourages customers to visit and buy more products and services. Nine participants said that good promotion caught their attention to click on such online reviews to read and learn more about that place. Eight out of thirty participants show concerns towards types of music and bands that pubs and restaurants have. Two of the master's degree male participant who share the same age between 31-40 have big concern towards football match as they both agree that it genuinely affect their intention to visit pubs and restaurants.

4.5 Awareness

Online reviews might be reliable or unreliable depending on many factors. Sources of the reviews, ratings, the number of reviewers, the number of comments, or the number of shares social media can be one of those factors that affect review readers' decisions. From the interviews, it was found that most of the participant will trust online reviews that come from real customers, while still like to read online reviews from publishers or advertisements that contain nicer pictures. They read online reviews from more than one sources when they want to make a decision.

“If there are a lot of share numbers, I may think it is a marketing post for sure, which can be from promotion. This is good as it can attract customers, but it also makes people want to search for more reviews as well. If there are a lot of reviews, I feel that this place is better. Many online reviews are from personal experiences and

different perspectives; some might go for food, some might go for drinks or music. Many reviews from different customers' experiences make me feel like this place is really awesome.” (Participant 9)

“I will see the source of the review first, if in Pantip website, I would believe. The pictures don't have to be nice, meaning that the reviewer is not a professional photographer working for marketing companies or any sort. Then I'll search more from other sources.” (Participant 10)

“Ratings do have effects sometimes, but not as much as comments from real customers. If that place is where my friends have already been and recommended to me, I won't have to read reviews much. However, if I have to be the one who recommends any place to my friends, I will choose the best place.” (Participant 19)

As for the interview questions which focus on consumer awareness of pub and restaurant ratings and consumers' comments towards online reviews, 53.3% of the participants concern about comments whether they are positive or negative. They also read through all the comments before making any decision. Another 56.6% think that rating which consumers give to pubs and restaurants in online reviews are important and helpful for them to make a decision. The number of both ratings and comments are not significantly different much and only 26.6% concern about both comments and ratings.

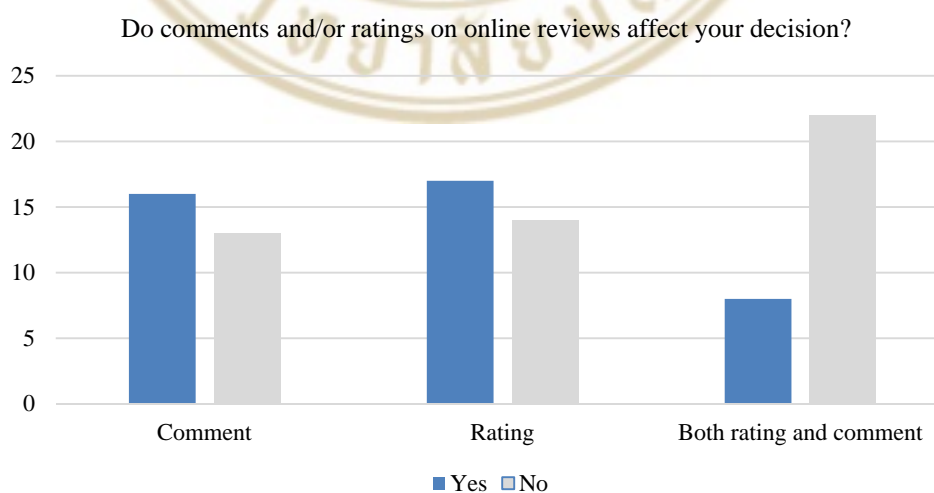


Figure 4.6 Consumer awareness towards ratings and comments

Most of the interviewees said that in their opinions, online reviews affect their decision to visit pubs and restaurants because online reviews provide enough information to help them compare, plan, and make a decision. Sometimes they try to decide between restaurants that they have tried and ones that their friends recommend: they use online reviews as additional information not to make a decision.

“Definitely yes, online reviews affect my intention to visit pubs and restaurants. I think most people read reviews before visiting instead of walking in without knowing anything about that place.” (Participant 4)

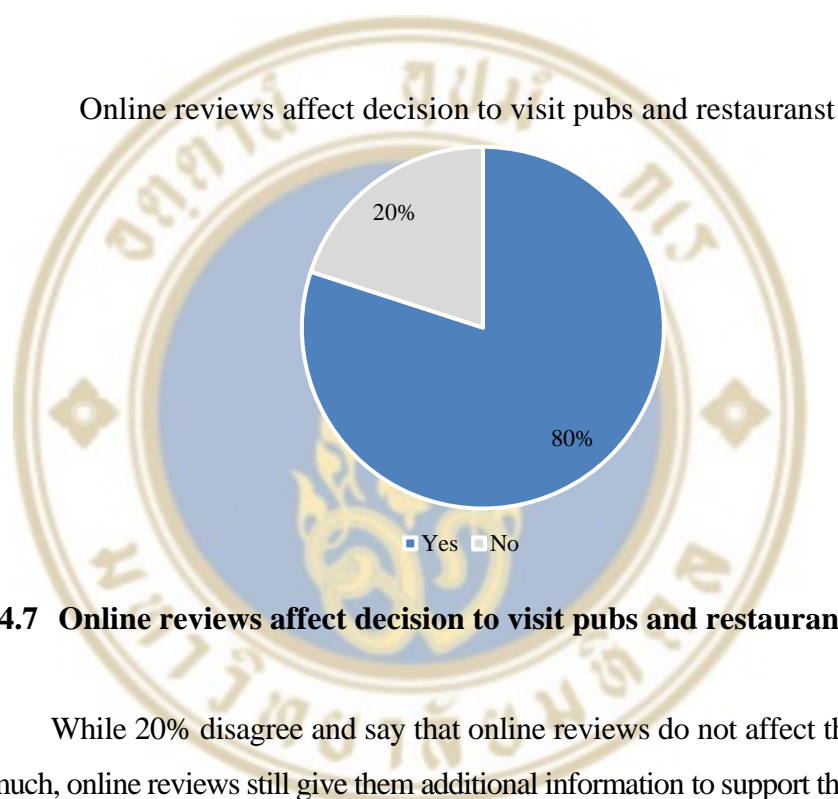


Figure 4.7 Online reviews affect decision to visit pubs and restaurants

While 20% disagree and say that online reviews do not affect their intentions to visit much, online reviews still give them additional information to support their decisions.

“They don’t really affect, because after I have read online reviews, I will ask others again to make sure this place is really as good as they said.” (Participant 3)

“Online reviews affect my decision about 40%—it is more like advertisements that introduce me to good new places to hangout. If those reviews caught my attention, I would search for more information and more reviews from real customers from other sources. However, at the end I would gather all those reviews and comments to make a final decision.” (Participant 19)

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

From the research finding, participants mostly read pubs' and restaurants' online reviews from social media, websites, and applications in order to find some places for hang out on special occasions. Therefore, it could be assumed that consumers want to gather all the information of pubs and restaurants before making a decision to visit. The research of Park, Kim & Han said, when consumers purchase products, they tend to rely more on online reviews to help them make a decision. This research stated five important factors of online reviews that might influence Bangkok office workers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants. They are consumer characteristics, eWom or Electronic Word-of-Mouth, review sources, content quality, and awareness.

Consumer characteristics such as a period of working time, personal income, personal behavior, and age range affect their intention to visit pubs and restaurants after reading online reviews. However, what they expect from the contents of online reviews is different. Consumers with high income would not concern much about the price or promotion; in contrast, consumers with lower income would concern about price, promotion, and location.

eWom or Electronic Word-of-Mouth affect their intention to visit pubs and restaurants, especially those from friends or relatives. From this research, it was found that most of the participants agree that online reviews convince them to visit the place. However, if those reviews are from friends or relatives, it will make them perceive these online reviews more reliable. 86.67% of the participants said they have visited pubs and restaurants because they have read online reviews.

Review sources are one of the most important factors that consumers concern. Refer to the literature review of Hu, Bose, Sian Koh, and Liu, 2012, it was stated that there are two types of online review sources, which influence consumers differently: reviews from consumers' experiences and reviews from professional editors or publishers.

This study found that people prefer to rely on consumers' reviews rather than publishers' reviews. Consumers believe that reviews from publishers show only a positive side, while reviews from real consumers would show both positive and negative side enabling them to be much more reliable.

Content Quality is also another factor that influences consumers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants. In this study, it was found that there are many details in online reviews that consumers expect. The following things are what online reviews should include as part of the content to make them more interesting and useful. The first one is photos. Online reviews that have nice and clear photos will be able to draw consumers' attention more than ones that do not have any nice photos. Photos can be seen at the first glance and urge customers to click on the content to read more. Since online reviews of pubs and restaurants are intangible, photos should tell as much as possible about the restaurants like atmosphere, decoration and style, food and beverage, and the restaurant's environment. Video reviews should be able to represent these elements as well. The second one is the atmosphere of the place. Most consumers want to know the atmosphere of pubs and restaurants before making a decision. Menu, location, price, promotion, and other basic information are also important, but not as much as photos and atmosphere.

Awareness of pubs and restaurants that consumers perceive consists of ratings from customers, customers' comments, number of reviews, number of shares on social media and number of likes. This study found that, consumers believe in customers' ratings, comments, and number of reviews more than number of shares and likes on social media. Online reviews with many shares and likes would catch their attention, but they believe those reviews are paid to be appeared as an advertisement. Compare to the number of online reviews (volume), which reviewers wrote from their experiences, the more online reviews mean the more real customers' experiences. Ratings and comments are also important factors. Ratings may not be as obvious as comments, but they can display the overall satisfaction of customers—how high they rank such pubs and restaurants. This helps make it easier for consumers to filter their choices from ratings. People prefer to read online reviews with comments from consumers to get both positive and negative sides of comments about such places and compare them before making a decision. If there are too many positive comments with no negative comments at all, consumers

may think such online reviews are not that reliable. On the other hand, if there are many negative comments, consumers will eliminate that place from their lists.

5.2 Recommendation

After analyzing research finding, it was found that online reviews influence office workers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants at night in Bangkok area. Therefore, the researcher would recommend pub and restaurant business owners concern all the following five factors: consumer characteristics, eWom, review sources, content quality, and awareness.

Consumer characteristics are one of the factors that might change over time. From the interviews, it was found that pubs and restaurants seem to be where people gather on special occasions such as farewell dinners, birthday parties, celebrations, or any other sport events. Therefore, pub and restaurant owners should be well prepared for these special occasions to give consumers full services. Once customers receive impressing services, they would revisit the place. On the other hand, customers might be ones who generate eWom such as online reviews by posting their photos, checking in to pubs and restaurants, or recommending to their friends.

People enjoy reading online reviews from publishers because the contents are well-written and featured photos are nice with full information. However, when they search for more information to help them make a decision, they would look for online reviews from real consumers. Therefore, pub and restaurant business owners should start from hiring publishers to compose online reviews for them first, in order to promote and advertise their places. Once consumers read publishers' influencing reviews, real consumers' reviews and eWom will then be generated automatically.

Online review contents have to be helpful. Review contents should describe the atmosphere along with some photos. Since pubs and restaurants are places for hanging out on special occasions, people tend to stay there longer than they do at regular restaurants to enjoy music and atmosphere. Consumers prefer reviews that show the atmosphere of the place, music, people, food and beverage etc.

Since online reviews affect the consumers' intention to visit pubs and restaurants, pub and restaurant business owners or marketing companies can use online reviews as

a tool to send all the information to consumers. Since eWom, ratings, and positive comments affect consumers' intention to visit such places, pub and restaurant business owners should find a way to encourage their customers to get involved such as checking in, posting photos on social media, or writing short online reviews. Those ratings and positive comments are mostly from impressive services that customer received. Thus, pubs and restaurants must maintain their service standards to always be above customers' expectations to satisfy both their existing and new customers.

5.3 Limitation

Due to the limited time, this research only interviewed 30 interviewees. This is considered a rather small group comparing to the whole population, meaning that it may not be able to represent all of office workers in Bangkok. Most of the participants are between 26-40 years old; therefore, the result is limited to the group of participants. Finding participants to participate in the in-depth interview was restricted. The place and time for the interview appointment were also limited. The interview questions need to be adapted to interviewees' background. Besides, the interviewer and interviewees may not understand the questions and some technical terms in the interview in the same way; therefore, the participants may give answers based on their personal understanding.

5.4 Further Research

According to this research, it was found that no interviewee mentioned about pubs' and restaurants' fanpages themselves. Even though specific pubs' and restaurants' websites or their fan pages provide more information such as ratings, comments, menu, prices, and promotion, it seems like most consumers prefer reading online reviews from publishers and consumers' websites, from Facebook fan pages or from online applications more. In further research, it should study more on reasons why consumers choose to read reviews from other sources more than pubs' and restaurants' Facebook fan pages or websites themselves.

Moreover, it would be more productive if the researcher uses both quantitative and qualitative method in order to study the relations of the variables. The recommendation

for the future research would be that it should conduct a questionnaire. This research gets to study only a specific group of people, office workers in Bangkok area who have intention to visit pubs and restaurants at night. The sample size should be expanded to other areas not just in Bangkok, and not only office workers but also other different occupations should be including in order to get variety of results and to represent the whole population. The research areas could be on another kind of specific restaurants instead of pubs and restaurants at night. Besides, this research could be an idea to other businesses that use online consumers' reviews.



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