

**PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING:
THAI CONSUMERS SINCE THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK**

The image shows a large, faint watermark of the Mahidol University logo in the background. The logo is circular with a blue center containing a golden emblem of a stupa. The Thai text 'มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล' (Mahidol University) is written around the perimeter of the circle.

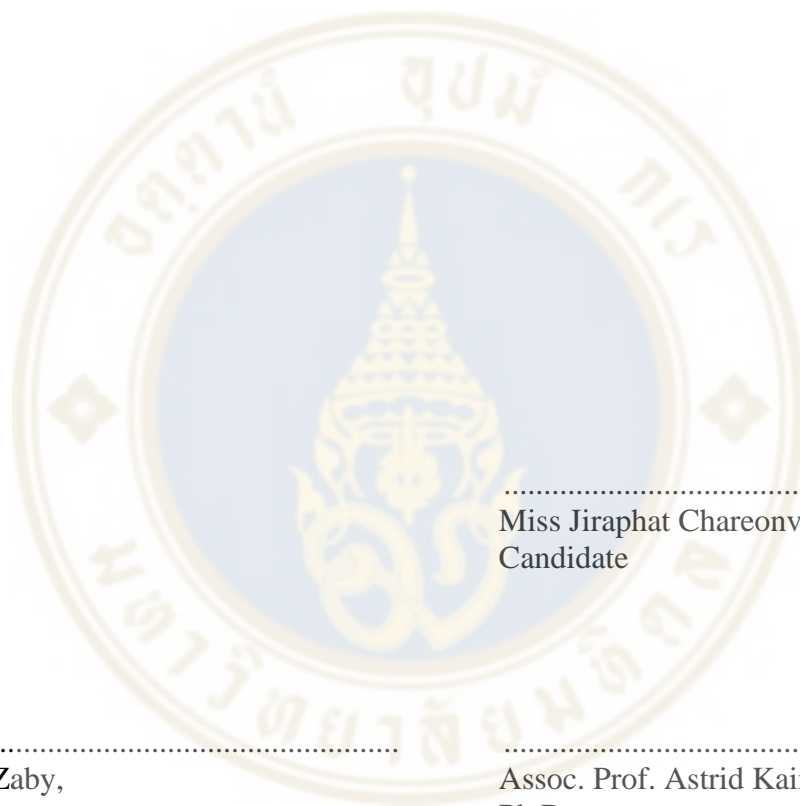
JIRAPHAT CHAREONVOOTITAM

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THAI CONSUMERS SINCE THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK**

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.....
Miss Jiraphat Chareonvootitam
Candidate

.....
Simon Zaby,
Ph.D.
Advisor

.....
Assoc. Prof. Astrid Kainzbauer,
Ph.D.
Chairperson

.....
Assoc. Prof. Vichita Ractham,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

.....
Detlef Reis,
Ph.D.
Committee member

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Jiraphat Chareonvootitam

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JIRAPHAT CHAREONVOOTITAM 6249178

M.M. (MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: PH.D., SIMON M. ZABY, Ph.D.,
ASSOC. PROF. ASTRID KAINZBAUER, Ph.D., PH.D., DETLEF REIS, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Coronavirus disease has caused disruptions in how consumers live their lives. Their lifestyles have changed resulting in changes in their perceptions towards online shopping. The purpose of this research is to help business owners and marketers to understand more about the changes in consumer perceptions particularly towards shopping online which plays a significant role during the pandemic. Qualitative research by an in-depth interview was conducted with ten participants. The samples of consumers are selected with diverse genders and ages to have unbiased responses.

Interestingly, home appliances, food and beverages, fruits, and products for hobbies have increased demands during the lockdown. Health consciousness and convenience play more important influencing consumer perceptions towards shopping on the Internet. While prices and promotions, variety of products, and cost and time-saving to traveling to offline stores are still the important factors. Businesses are suggested to develop their product portfolio reflecting the up-to-date situation. Products' reviews and promotions are recommended to implement in the platform of online stores. The design of online platforms should be user-friendly. Importantly, it is necessary to have 24/7 service available to respond to customers in online businesses.

KEY WORDS: Online Shopping/ Consumer Perceptions/ E-Commerce/ Coronavirus/
New Normal

24 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to World Health Organization (2020), Coronavirus disease or COVID-19 is a newly discovered disease, found in 2019, which causes mild to serious respiratory illness to people who get infected by this virus. This virus has spread globally and caused disruptions in how consumers live their lives (Sheth, 2020). Economies around the world also got impacted by this COVID-19 outbreak which results in changes in consumer behavior (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). It is important for all businesses and marketers to be aware of these changes in consumer behavior in order to understand customers' perceptions, needs, and wants after they have experienced COVID-19 outbreak. The better businesses understand and respond to customer needs and wants, the better they can achieve customer satisfaction (LaBarbera & David, 1983). According to Malik et al. (2014), understanding consumer perceptions is important to marketers since it determines the behavior of consumers.

During COVID-19 pandemic, most consumers have learned new ways to live their lives due to travel limitations and more flexibility of time in their daily lives from the lockdown. Consumers have integrated their work and life each day (Sheth, 2020). Most of all activities happened at home which include shopping activity as well. In the past, consumers chose to purchase things via online channels due to the advantages that they perceived in many aspects. Consumers preferred to shop online since it could save their traveling time and cost (Hsiao, 2009). Moreover, online channels allowed them to seek products with the best price across different sellers which allowed them to get better prices than their purchases at physical stores (Shanthi & Kannaiah, 2015). The online channel also provided consumers convenience for their purchase processes especially in searching information for luxurious products (Xia, Alvin, & Yingjian, 2013). In addition, the variety of product availability was one main factor that motivated consumers in the past to purchase things online (Levin, Levin, & Heath, 2003).

However, since COVID-19 outbreak, the factors that motivate people to make an online purchase have changed. Health concerns and fear of the virus cause the demand increase in alternative distribution channels such as online channels (Pantano, Pizzi, Scarpi, & Dennis, 2020). Consumers' decision of making a purchase via the online channel is not only limited to the younger generation, but it also happened to all generations due to a prolonged period of lockdown which allows most consumers to adopt newer technologies to make their lives more convenient (Sheth, 2020). According to Severinus, et al. (2020), products' price and consumers' safety become major reasons for their purchase behavior rather than the advantage of time-saving in traveling to physical stores. Given the economic impacts from COVID-19, consumers are more price-conscious and usage of online channels can allow them to compare prices of products across different sellers in order to get a great deal.

The purpose of this research is to help business owners and marketers understand more about consumer perceptions since COVID-19 outbreak which cause changes in their shopping habits. Understanding these changes in consumer perceptions towards their purchase behavior will allow companies to adapt themselves and respond to consumer needs and wants with the right actions in order to make businesses survive during the changes in consumer behavior which may become a new normal in the future.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

An increase in online shopping, as a result of higher Internet usage, has enabled consumers to purchase things at any time. Consumers can access the Internet by using any devices which have Internet provided such as personal computers and mobile phones (Kau, Tang, & Ghose, 2003). According to Changchit (2006), e-commerce which is referred to an application of the Internet to businesses has become a widely used channel for many businesses. In order to make a business successful, understanding consumer perceptions towards online shopping is important. It can increase the chance to retain and attract customers.

According to Shanthi and Kannaiah (2015), consumers' way of shopping has changed from the past. Consumers tend to move towards more online shopping since it provides them convenience with more choices of products availability and advantages of cost-saving in both traveling and product price when compared to a purchase at physical stores. Particularly in the circumstance of COVID-19 pandemic, Donthu and Gustafsson (2020) stated that consumer behaviors have changed. They have realized new ways of living during the lockdown (Sheth, 2020). In addition, Pantano et al. (2020) has described that the advantages of online shopping have been discovered by many consumers during their quarantine. Some of them decided to switch from offline to online shopping due to benefits from cashless payment and home deliveries which provide them convenience. According to Sheth (2020), main causes of consumer habits disruptions include four factors. The first one is changes in a social context. The second one is new technology implementation. The third one is consumer behavior limitation caused by new regulations of the pandemic. The last one is an unpredictable context of the situation. It is important to understand consumer perceptions since it is one of the main factors which determine their behavior. The chance of business success increases when strong consumer perceptions are built upon products or services (Malik, Ghafoor, & Iqbal, 2014).

Many past pieces of research explained that convenience is one of primary advantages which motivate consumers to shop online. It is a key motivation for consumers, especially for convenience shoppers, to purchase things in both online channel and physical stores (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). According to Shanthi and Kannaiah (2015), consumers perceive online shopping as a convenient channel to purchase things since they do not need to travel to physical stores. Their traveling effort to visit the stores is reduced where their purchase decision can be made at home when they shop online. The study of Morganosky and Cude (2000) also supported that consumers are motivated to buy things, particularly groceries, online by convenience and time saving from not traveling to physical stores. This finding is consistent with the study by Hsiao (2009) which found that consumers perceived time and cost-saving from not traveling to offline stores to buy products as advantages of online shopping even though they need to wait for product delivery. According to Xia et al. (2013), convenience is valuable for online shoppers, especially in the luxury product category. The products can be ordered anywhere anytime with cost and time saving from not traveling to the stores. The study by Donthu and Garcia (1999) supported that convenience is more valuable for internet shoppers than those shoppers who do not normally buy things online.

Apart from convenience, consumers perceived product availability as another main advantage of shopping online. More choices of available products on the Internet motivates consumers, especially those variety seekers who always search for alternatives across retailers, to make a purchase decision (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004). Levin et al. (2003) supported that consumers perceive online shopping to provide more variety of choices than physical stores. Consumers perceived online shopping as a channel with a broad selection of products with sufficient information given on the Internet (Shanthi & Kannaiah, 2015). In addition, consumers can easily compare products across different online stores before making a purchase decision (Shanthi & Kannaiah, 2015). Besides, in the case a business has a limited number of physical stores located such as luxury stores, online channels can be a solution to make consumers easily access the stores to buy items with choices of product selection (Xia, Alvin, & Yingjian, 2013). Moreover, Eastman et al. (2009) described that consumers who normally purchase things online tend to have more variety-seeking

behavior than those consumers who normally do not shop online. The time spent for product comparison across retailers for online shoppers is longer than non-online shoppers.

According to Brynjolfsson and Smith (2000), consumers perceive online shopping as a shopping channel which provides them a better price where they can compare prices among different sellers. They believe that lower cost of operating an online channel would enable sellers to offer them products with a better deal. Consumers' purchase decision in online shopping is more influenced by price than trust, time, and privacy (Severinus, Faisal, Rumaizi, & Yusoff, 2020). Shanthi and Kannaiah (2015) also supported that consumers perceive online shopping as a channel that provides them products with better prices than offline. According to Xia et al. (2013), consumers are price-conscious with the desire to compare prices across different vendors to get the best deal, especially in luxury product categories.

Consumer attitudes towards online shopping are another factor that determines their purchase behavior. According to Xia et al. (2013), consumers can perceive online shopping as a tool to bring them relaxation and happiness when they are shopping online. Some consumers feel more comfortable and enjoyable to shop online than offline since they can explore product variety without any pressure from salespersons. Also, consumers have the freedom to explore products with all information provided on the Internet. This finding is consistent with the study of Shanthi and Kannaiah (2015) where it is found that consumers feel a sense of greater control over their shopping when they experience shopping online.

Most all past research was studied before COVID-19, the great pandemic. According to Sheth (2020), social distancing and lockdown during the outbreak have changed consumer behaviors due to more time flexibility and limitation in traveling. The way of living has changed. Consumers cannot go to physical stores for shopping, so marketers need to adapt their business to offer products via online channels to be consistent with new consumer behaviors. Many consumers adopt new technology and learn how to do online shopping during prolonged periods of lockdown. Given consumer habits have changed, it is important for businesses to understand perceptions of consumers towards online shopping nowadays.

There are very few studies exploring perceptions of consumers towards online shopping since the great pandemic. Eger et al. (2021) found that health and economic fears played an important role in changing consumer behaviors during COVID-19 pandemic. Convenience and product availability are still primary advantages of online shopping that consumers perceive when they decide to buy things online during the pandemic. Both of them are important factors to consumers during COVID-19 outbreak due to limited accessibility to physical stores and fear of the virus. According the Sheth (2020), consumers perceived online shopping as a convenient channel during this time since many of them learn and adopt newer technologies in their daily lives when they stay home. The digital technology embracement allowed consumers to change their existing habits to live more with the online world.

According to Roggeveen and Sethuraman (2020), it is likely that new consumer habits from the change of consumer behaviors will become a new normal way of living after COVID-19 pandemic. New ways of shopping possibly become common in the long run. Many activities including shopping are more likely to be processed through the Internet at home. These consumer behavior changes could be a shift to a new common way of living. The study by Sheth (2020) supported that consumer shopping behavior will change in the long term since many technologies were adopted during the lockdown which created new consumer behaviors.

In past research, there was a question left to answer whether consumer behaviors will be permanently changed (Sheth, 2020). Also, with a lack of research related to consumer perceptions towards shopping online since COVID-19 outbreak, it leaves an opportunity to explore more about how consumers perceive shopping online compared to shopping at physical stores in Thailand. It is possible that consumer behaviors will become new habits which marketers would need to understand their perceptions towards their habits of shopping online.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to *Figure 3.1*, factors which influenced consumer perceptions towards online shopping in the past include convenience, cost and time saving, variety of products, price, and their feeling. However, there is a change in how consumers think and act towards how to purchase things after the spread of COVID-19 (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). Therefore, consumer perceptions after the pandemic are studied in order to be aware of how consumers think about online shopping these days. The result of this research is aimed to allow businesses to understand consumers and perform better.

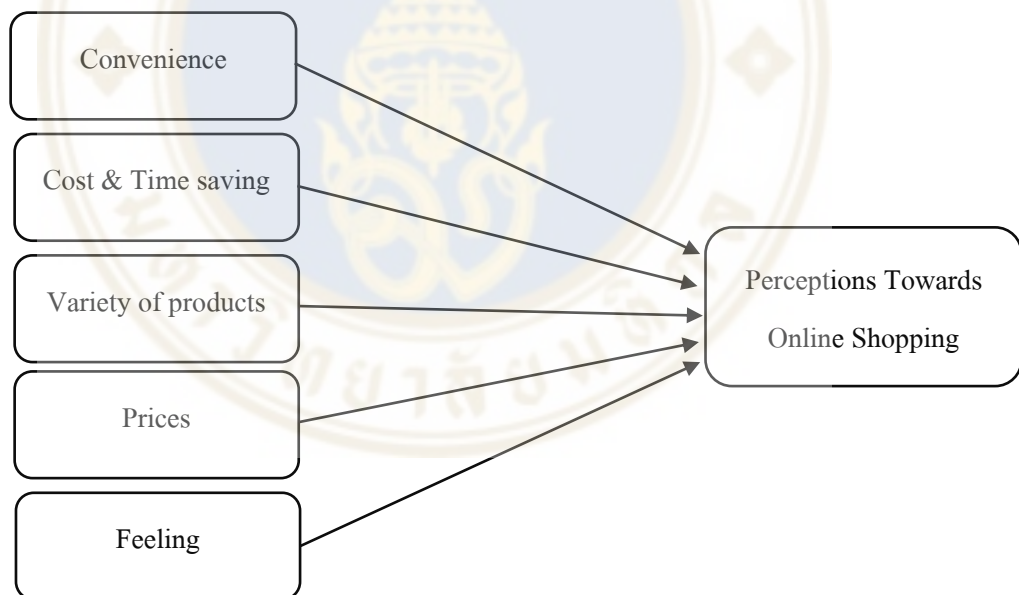


Figure 3.1 Past Conceptual Model of Consumer Perceptions

(based on Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004; Shanthy and Kannaiah, 2015;

Morganosky & Cude, 2000; Hsiao, 2009; Xia et al., 2013; Donthu & Garcia, 1999;

Levin et al., 2003; Brynjolfsson and Smith, 2000)

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), insights of consumer perceptions can be obtained by conducting qualitative research. The technique could be an in-depth interview which allows researchers to explore consumer perspectives in an early stage. The relation of consumer perceptions towards online shopping after the great pandemic has not been largely investigated before. There are very few pieces of research conducted on the same or similar topic, so an in-depth interview would allow this research to obtain more insightful perspectives of consumers. Although there are some studies (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020; Sheth, 2020; Eger et al., 2021) conducting about the perspectives towards online shopping related to the pandemic, however, the time frames of those studies are during the beginning of the pandemic. The current approach is more focused on consumer perceptions after an early stage of the pandemic, and therefore it is important to obtain information by conducting interviews in order to maximize an ability to understand how people think about shopping online during this time when people are in the lockdown period. They need to live their lives doing many activities at home. The semi-structured in-depth interview technique is applied to obtain broader perspectives from the interview. In addition, this technique allows interviewees to elaborate their answers in order to gain more insightful data (Blee & Taylor, 2002).

In this study, there are ten interviewees who are representatives of Thai consumers. Six of them are consumers who experienced shopping online and another four of them rarely shopped online. The interviews were conducted via phone call in the lockdown period due to limitations in conducting face-to-face interviews during the pandemic. The samples of consumers are chosen based on diversity of gender and age in order to avoid biased responses. Interviewees' genders are varied from male, female, and LGBT. They were selected to be interviewed by different age ranges from 27 to 64 years old. With a variety of genders and age ranges of interviewees, unbiased information with broader aspects was gained from the interviews.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS – QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

This research aims to gain insights of consumer perceptions towards shopping online after Coronavirus has spread. In-depth interviews were conducted with a total of ten people. Interviewees' gender and age vary in order to gain different aspects regarding online shopping. Male, female, and LGBT were all included in the interviews. The age of interviewees ranges from 27 to 64 years old. The interviewees details are described in *Table 4.1*.

Table 4.1 Interviewees Details

Interviewee No.	Gender	Age
Interviewee 1	Female	37
Interviewee 2	Male	29
Interviewee 3	LGBT	30
Interviewee 4	Female	39
Interviewee 5	Male	32
Interviewee 6	Female	35
Interviewee 7	Female	27
Interviewee 8	Female	27
Interviewee 9	Female	64
Interviewee 10	Female	36

The purpose of presenting findings and analysis in this chapter is to understand more about consumer perceptions towards online shopping after the spread of COVID-19. The findings are discussed in different topics including products/ services in online shopping, perceived benefits, and risks of online shopping, purchase frequency, the possibility of continuing online shopping, and change in perceptions.

4.1 Products/ Services in Online Shopping

The products that interviewees purchased online before and after the beginning of the pandemic are different. Before COVID-19 spread, clothes, accessories, and cosmetics had been bought online due to the necessity that people need to use when they get out of their houses.

However, when people were limited to staying at home, their shopping habits changed. The products which were frequently purchased online when they were staying at home included home appliances, food, beverages, fruits, and those items for hobbies. Interviewees 3 and 10 stopped buying clothes and accessories during the lockdown since there was no occasion for them to use these products. Interviewees 7 and 8 have found out planting trees as their new favourite hobby during their self-quarantine at home. Therefore, they started to buy trees and tree pots. Interviewee 10 also shared that she applied many online yoga courses since she could not do yoga at her regular places outside the home. The online shopping habits of many consumers changed after the pandemic had started due to their lifestyles' change from spending time outside to doing everything at home. In addition, Interviewee 5 has used delivery service more frequently during the lockdown. This service was used more often since he would like to avoid going out and interacting with people outside the home. This implies that he became more health-conscious.

4.2 Perceived Benefits and Risks of Online Shopping

Due to changes in consumer lifestyles during the lockdown, perceived benefits and risks of online shopping were viewed differently compared to regular situations without COVID-19. Some benefits and risks are playing more important roles when consumers make a purchase decision, while some are less important.

Before the pandemic started, consumers had perceived online stores as a shopping channel that provided them advantages of better prices with many available online promotions, variety of choices, more access to information search, convenience, and time-saving in traveling to stores. Interviewee 3 always bought clothes and accessories from online channels rather than offline ones, since it provided him more variety of choices. Also, products from online purchases always provided him with

better prices and promotions. Interviewee 8 always bought clothes, shoes, and cosmetics online before there was the pandemic. She preferred to shop online since there were more choices of selection than those stores in shopping malls. Interviewee 10 had experienced online shopping before COVID-19 started. Shopping online provided her more variety of products with price comparisons among different stores. Also, it helped her save on travel costs and time to offline stores very much. Interviewees 2 and 5 normally bought electric products on the Internet only since they could easily search and compare the price of products among different online shops in order to get the best deal. In addition, purchasing products online was convenient which could save them traveling time to the stores. Altogether, better price and promotion, variety of choices, and cost and time-saving in traveling to offline stores have been important factors that influenced people to purchase things online instead of offline before the pandemic.

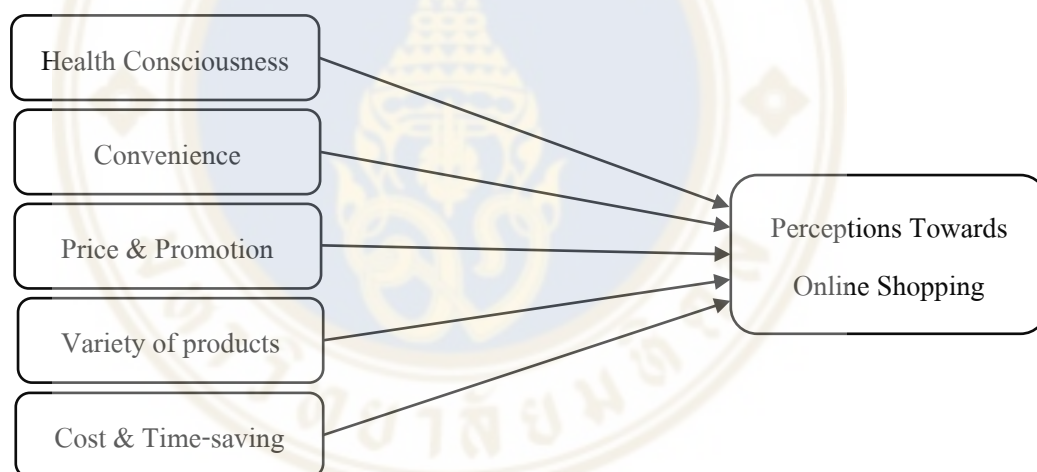


Figure 4.1 Conceptual Model of Consumer Perceptions Since COVID-19 Outbreak

As shown in *Figure 4.1*, after COVID-19 had started, people are more aware of their health consciousness. Hence, it became significantly important for them to make a decision to purchase products online. Convenience, better prices and promotions, variety of choices, and cost and time-saving in traveling are still important advantages for consumers to decide to purchase things online. Due to the increased difficulty in spending time outside the home, online shopping can make their life a lot

safer by purchasing products with less risk of getting the virus. Interviewees 4, 6, 7, and 9, who rarely purchased items online before the pandemic, had tried online shopping during the lockdown due to their health consciousness. They found it very convenient. Pandemic made them realize that there is no need to waste one's time by traveling to many stores while completing a shopping list. Besides, in the past, they were worried about the quality of products which were sold on the Internet. They were afraid that those products' actual appearance might look differently from pictures provided by sellers. However, when they had a chance to try online purchases, the quality of products which they received was acceptable and worth the money they paid. This happened since their perceived risk was reduced from going through customers' reviews. In addition, Interviewee 7 started to enjoy online shopping since the stores are open 24/7. Shopping online can help her relax from stress late at night after she has finished her work.

Consumers' perceived risks of online shopping in the pre-pandemic world included uncertainty of product quality and appearance, lack of shopping experience, and long delivery times. Interviewee 1 had bad experiences because of the incorrect size of received products. Interviewees 4, 6, 7, and 8 preferred to buy clothes at malls since there is a better overall shopping experience. For instance, they could try on products. They perceived it safer to buy at stores, as it enabled them to ensure the correct product size. Interviewees 4 and 5 were worried about long delivery times. In addition, interviewee 8 emphasized that she would not buy products online if she was in an urgency to use those products. She would decide to shop at offline stores in order to get those products immediately.

After COVID-19 had spread, concerns of the virus from packages and messengers became another risk of online shopping. Interviewees 1, 5, 6, 9, and 10 shared that they are afraid of the virus that may come with packages and delivery persons. Online shopping can facilitate them in not going out and avoiding contacting people, however, they also feel that they are still not 100% safe from COVID-19 since those viruses can also come with the packages and riders. Besides, the concern of receiving damaged products has been mentioned. Interviewee 7 purchased mangosteens online and they were not in a good condition upon delivery. The appearance was largely different from the photos provided by the seller.

4.3 Purchase Frequency

Some interviewees who already shopped online in the pre-pandemic world increased the frequency. All participants who rarely used the Internet to buy something started doing so in the light of the virus.

Those who normally have been purchasing products online even though there was no pandemic include Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, and 10. Interviewees 1's and 2's online purchase frequency remained the same since their lifestyle did not change much from before. They normally preferred to buy things online. While Interviewees 5 and 10 were shopping online more often since they needed to order food online every day due to the difficulty of going out. However, Interviewees 3 and 8 agreed that they purchased things on the Internet less often since there were fewer opportunities to wear new clothes and accessories.

Meanwhile, Interviewees 4, 6, 7, and 9 were consumers who had just adopted online shopping technology and enjoyed it. All of them were unsure of the product quality in the past, which caused them not to experience online shopping. However, after trying online purchases since the pandemic has spread, they found out that the product quality was acceptable if they had explored enough customers' reviews. All of them enjoyed and plan to continue purchasing products online.

4.4 Possibility of Continuing Online Shopping

All 10 interviewees will continue to shop online in the future even if the pandemic situation gets better. Interviewees who have been purchasing products online since there was no COVID-19 will never stop this online shopping since it provides them many advantages. Instead of going to many different places in order to complete their shopping lists, they can just explore products on the Internet and purchase all their planned items. This makes them view an online channel as a one-stop shop. Also, the price of products on the Internet mostly is cheaper with better promotions than offline stores. Importantly, purchasing things online is more convenient compared to offline. Interestingly, Interviewees 3 and 8 who often bought new clothes and accessories in the pre-pandemic period think that they will probably purchase products online more often when the situation is getting better. They

elaborated that there will be more occasions for them to use the products they purchased on the Internet.

Interviewees 4, 6, 7, and 9 who normally did not shop online shared the same opinion that they will continue shopping online in the future. They got familiar with it and enjoyed the priceworthy products they received. Once they found out that shopping on the Internet was not as bad as they had thought in the past, they enjoyed purchasing items online to gain advantages of a better deal, more variety of products, time-saving, and convenience.

4.5 Change in Perceptions

The majority of participants who have already engaged in online shopping before have an unchanged perception. They perceived online shopping as their preferred purchase channel due to the advantages of shopping online, such as better prices and promotions, variety of choices, more access to information, convenience, and time and cost-saving in traveling. Only some of them who viewed online shopping, in the situation before and after COVID-19 has spread, differently. Interviewee 1 perceived online shopping as a shopping channel that provided her with a variety of choices. However, currently, she viewed online shopping as a channel that makes her life safer. Interviewee 5 currently viewed online shopping even more positively since he found out that many online shops offer more competitive prices than before.

All participants who just started to shop online since COVID-19 changed their perception in a positive direction. Internet shops are no longer seen as untrustworthy and of low quality. Interviewees 4 and 6 enjoyed promotions and good deals available online. They perceived online shopping as another trusted purchase channel that makes all shopping activities more convenient. Interviewee 7 was satisfied with various choices available in online channels which makes her purchase both necessary and unnecessary things. She has changed her perceptions of online shopping from just an alternative shopping experience. Interviewee 9 perceived online shopping as an unnecessary shopping channel in the past but now as another shopping channel that can make her life a lot easier.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

Changes in people's lifestyle after the spread of COVID-19 caused the change in people's shopping habits. This finding was also mentioned by Sheth (2020) that the outbreak has changed consumers behavior. Products which their demands increase during the lockdown include home appliances, food and beverages, fruits, and products for hobbies. In addition, the way consumers perceive online shopping is different compared to the pre-pandemic situation. Aligning with the study by Eger et al. (2021), health consciousness and convenience became significantly important factors that make consumers have a positive attitude towards online shopping. While prices and promotions, variety of products, and cost and time-saving to traveling to offline stores also positively influence people's perceptions towards shopping on the Internet. However, people's concerns about the virus which may come with packages and delivery persons were raised. Besides, receiving damaged products was also mentioned as another risk of online shopping. To the best of my knowledge, these concerns were not mentioned in any past research.

All respondents who rarely purchased products online in the past had adopted the technology of online shopping during the lockdown and enjoyed it. This finding is aligned with the study of Pantano et al. (2020) which found that many consumers discovered advantages of online shopping during their quarantine. Their trust in product quality increased when they explored customer reviews before making a purchase decision. While, the online-purchase frequency of those participants who have bought products on the Internet, since there was no COVID-19, varies. Some of them remained the same frequency as their shopping habits did not change much from the past. Some of them purchased items online more often during COVID-19 since the lockdown and virus concerns limited them not to go out to complete their shopping list at physical stores. Whereas, some of them bought products on the Internet less often

since there is no occasion to use new products such as new clothes. All participants intend to continue shopping online in the future due to all mentioned advantages of online shopping over the offline one. The changes in consumer behaviors tend to be new common ways of living as same as the finding in the study of Roggeveen and Sethuraman (2020) which stated that consumers' new habits will permanently exist. They perceived online shopping as more than just an alternative purchase channel.

In this study, the primary advantages of online channels in consumer perceptions include health consciousness and convenience. Prices and promotions, variety of products, and cost and time-saving to traveling to offline stores are considered as secondary advantages for them to purchase products online. This finding is different from the study of Eger et al. (2021) which mentioned that product availability is still a primary advantage during the pandemic situation.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The majority of products which were purchased during the spread of COVID-19 are different from those in the pre-pandemic period. People tend to buy items for private consumption such as home appliances and products for hobbies rather than those for public-consumption products such as clothes and accessories. This demonstrates that most people's purchases depend on the situation in each period. Therefore, companies are suggested to develop their product portfolio reflecting the current situation. For example, clothes-offering companies may consider casual wear instead of fashionable clothes in the pandemic world. Restaurants that offered only buffet lines may consider ready meals during the situation. This will help companies to turn the situation into an opportunity to retain existing customers as well as attract new customers.

Online channels can facilitate consumers in terms of convenience and the virus concerns outside the home. It also provides shoppers cost and time-saving to traveling to stores and more variety of products together with better prices and promotions. However, purchasing products on the Internet cannot provide the ability to touch and see actual products and customers also need to wait sometimes to receive the items. This research only studied insights of online channels in consumer

perceptions. The insights of offline channel can be investigated in future research. Companies who are deciding whether having online or offline stores are better would need to compare the advantages of these two shopping channels.

After COVID-19 had spread and people's lifestyle changed to stay more at home, online channel became significantly more important which all businesses are recommended to adopt this technology. Without online channels, companies will face the problem of losing sales from physical stores due to limitations in traveling there. In addition, since customers' trust towards product quality can be improved by seeing other customers' reviews, companies are suggested to include product reviews and ratings in online stores. Prices and promotions can draw customers into online stores very well as most customers compare prices before making a purchase decision. However, it can be only a short-term benefit. Customers can switch their purchase decision to anywhere, where better prices and promotions are given, anytime. Importantly, since convenience became very important to consumers to make a purchase decision, companies should make their online channels as convenient as they can. Especially for new adopters of online channels, they are more likely to enjoy this channel when using the technology to buy products is not difficult for them. Therefore, companies should design their online platform as user-friendly as possible. The order process, such as adding products into the cart and payment, should also be easy for customers to order products online. The call-to-action buttons, such as "Add to cart" and "Buy now", are highly recommended to be on all pages during customer journeys on online channels. Options for payment should be offered since different people have different preferred payment channels such as cash-on-delivery, credit card, and transfer payment. Moreover, since new online-channel adopters have a higher uncertainty level towards product quality, there should be photos of products from all angles so that they can easily see products as closely as in-store shopping. Altogether, consumers seem to give more importance to the convenience and their life safety than the prices of products. As long as companies' offers through online purchase can provide them ease and convenience in their purchasing process, prices tend to be a secondary factor that influences consumers' purchase decisions. Hence, how the company will make consumers' purchasing process convenient is considered

very important. Information of all products such as price and product size should be clearly mentioned for the ease of customers' search.

Besides, since consumers are more likely to stay at home and they have unlimited time to access online channel, it is necessary for online businesses to have 24/7 service available to respond to them. In terms of the concern of damaged products and packages which were raised during the pandemic world, companies should make sure that their products are well protected by the packages they selected. Lastly, the concern of viruses that may come with packages and deliveries cannot be avoided. However, companies may communicate their care to customers by posting a way to reduce the risk of these viruses such as spraying alcohol before unpacking the packages.

Some of these changes in online shopping tend to be a new normal way of living that companies should learn to adapt themselves in order to survive in the e-commerce landscape. Understanding and responding to consumer perceptions and needs in the right way will help companies to have more opportunities to improve their businesses during unexpected situations such as in the pandemic time.

5.3 Limitations and Outlook for Future Research

Consumer perceptions towards online shopping after the spread out of COVID-19 was learned in this paper from conducting interviews with consumers in Bangkok, Thailand. However, the findings may be different in different contexts. Only consumers' aspects are included in this paper. Further research can broaden scopes by investigating the business owners' perspectives. The interview questions for further research are included in *Appendix A, Questions for Online Business Owners – for future study*. In addition, the samples of 10 respondents in this study may be too small and not represent the whole population. Future research can be enlarged to collect data from more participants. Lastly, this research only studied consumer perceptions towards online channels while the offline channel was not investigated here. The scope of offline channels can be further explored in future studies.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Questions for Consumers

Questions
1. Have you purchased products online in the past three months?
2. What did you normally buy online and offline before the pandemic?
3. What do you normally buy online and offline during/ after the pandemic?
4. What were the benefits and risks of online purchase for those items you bought before the pandemic?
5. What were the benefits and risks of online purchase for those items you bought before the pandemic?
6. How often do you purchase products online? Is it more often than before the pandemic? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes, why do you purchase products online more often?
7. How do you think about online purchases before the pandemic? Which kind of feelings did you have when you were shopping online before the pandemic?
8. How do you think about online purchases during/ after the pandemic? Which kind of feelings do you have when you are shopping online during/ after the pandemic?
9. Do you think that your perceptions towards online shopping when COVID-19 began have been changed from before the pandemic? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes, how did it change?
10. Will you continue shopping online this often after COVID-19? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Please elaborate on the reasons for your answer.
11. Please give one sentence if you would need to talk about your perceptions towards online shopping before the pandemic.
12. Please give one sentence if you would need to talk about your perceptions towards offline shopping during/ after the pandemic

Questions for Online Business Owners – for future study

Questions
1. What is your business?
2. Do you have both physical stores and online stores? ○ Is your answer the same for both before and during the pandemic?
3. How is your business during the pandemic? ○ Is it different if you compare it with the situation before the pandemic?
4. What do you think about consumers' online shopping perceptions during the pandemic? ○ Please elaborate your answer with the evidence you experience with your customers.
5. Do you think that consumer perceptions have changed during/ after the pandemic? ○ If yes, please explain how do they change? ○ How do you manage in response to the change in consumer perceptions towards online shopping?
6. How do you think about the changes in consumer perceptions towards their shopping? Do you think it will be permanent or temporary? Please elaborate on your answer.
7. Please give one sentence if you would need to talk about consumer perceptions towards online shopping before the pandemic.
8. Please give one sentence if you would need to talk about consumer perceptions towards online shopping during/ after the pandemic.