

**MARKETING IMPROVEMENT CONSIDERING CUSTOMER
PREFERENCE AND AWARENESS OF A GAS STATION
IN THE COUNTRYSIDE OF THAILAND**



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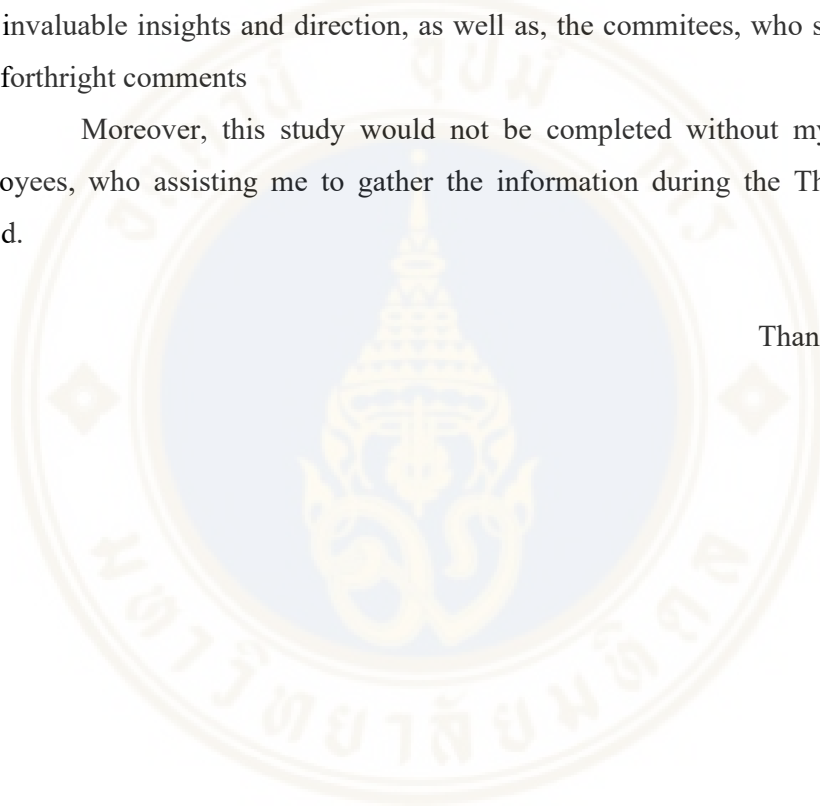
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AND AWARENESS OF A GAS STATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE OF
THAILAND**

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ABSTRACT

As the number of vehicles on the road rises, both commercially and tourism, the demand for fuel in Thailand has risen by an average of 2.11% for the past 20 years, according to Department of energy business (DOEB). This creates opportunities for gas station operators to expand their businesses. However, it also created the highly competitive industry in gas station sector, especially, the rivalry of gas station business in the countryside. The customers tend to choose the best gas station within 1 hour driving range to stop and rest from travelling. Moreover, the bargaining power of customers is also high. They may find it easy to switch to new, better, or cheaper competitors. The high investment costs and intense competition have led some operators to fail, underscoring the need to understand consumer behavior and preferences to develop effective brand strategies to create a competitive advantage. This study investigates the factors influencing consumer preferences when choosing gas stations in countryside Thailand and identifies effective marketing strategies to penetrate them.

**KEY WORDS: GAS STATION/ PETROL STATION/ CUSTOMER PREFERENCE/
MARKETING COMMUNICATION/ MARGETING STRATEGY**

47 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Problems

The gas station is a facility that sells fuel and engine lubricants for motor vehicles. They were introduced to Thailand due to the arrival of the automobiles in the 1920s. The earliest gas stations were simple setups, often a part of general stores and workshops. After World War II, Thailand experienced economic growth, leading to an increase in vehicle ownership and the government started to invest in infrastructure, including roads. The major international oil companies like Shell and Caltex began establishing gas stations. In the 1970s to 1990s, due to the expansion of the economic boom, the gas stations became more standardised by providing amenities such as convenience stores, restrooms, and service bays becoming common. Thai companies like PTT, Bangchak began to enter the market to compete with the foreign firms. Since the 2000s, PTT has become the dominant player in this business sector.

Due to the massive use of vehicles, both commercially and tourism nowadays has led the industry to grow significantly. According to the Department of Energy Policy and Planning office (EPPO), Thailand's oil products demand has increased an average of 2.11% for the past 20 years as follows below table.

TABLE 2.4-1Y: DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF CRUDE OIL AND OIL PRODUCTS

Unit : BARRELS/DAY

Update Date : 2024-05-17

Request Date : 2021-06-17

YEAR	CRUDE OIL BALANCE			OIL PRODUCTS				OIL PRODUCTS				EXPORT	DEMAND	
	PROD.	IMPORT	EXPORT	THROUGHPUT	PRODUCTION	IMPORT	SUPPLY	CONSUMPTION	MOGAS	DIESEL OIL	OTHERS			
1986	34,304	145,335		172,385	183,905	45,050	228,955	231,709	39,098	98,861	93,750			231,709
1987	31,918	161,404		176,604	187,459	69,790	257,249	252,520	44,746	110,776	96,999			252,520
1988	37,099	154,906		181,639	194,912	91,542	286,454	286,768	50,230	125,185	111,352			286,768
1989	39,792	204,186		212,889	228,736	111,110	339,846	341,588	57,240	149,051	135,296		169	341,757
1990	43,238	210,001		220,367	250,756	158,052	408,808	411,876	63,533	171,081	177,263		415	412,292
1991	46,257	220,739		227,483	268,648	164,190	432,838	437,149	67,039	171,470	198,640		761	437,910
1992	52,847	277,502		292,386	343,165	161,173	504,338	485,490	74,497	177,929	233,064		10,241	495,730
1993	53,718	323,859		356,354	399,453	185,519	584,972	548,503	84,641	207,358	256,505			564,992
1994	57,168	372,886	684	411,074	449,450	190,555	630,004	605,282	96,347	228,994	279,941		11,831	617,113
1995	53,727	452,115	3,496	484,790	524,431	193,276	717,707	676,848	108,447	269,149	299,252		18,448	695,296
1996	62,058	633,170	8,213	658,883	692,379	157,980	850,359	749,315	118,887	306,350	324,078		77,037	826,352
1997	72,264	728,758	9,804	767,461	807,784	76,959	884,742	799,152	126,747	302,168	370,238		103,971	903,123
1998	75,761	679,729	10,281	722,671	762,154	40,116	802,270	728,204	123,525	263,653	341,026		93,931	822,135
1999	83,636	698,896	10,620	728,662	796,173	55,450	851,623	763,152	121,065	263,773	378,314		121,228	884,380
2000	110,157	673,134	36,886	729,228	823,606	93,516	917,121	742,511	116,198	257,522	368,791		122,708	865,219
2001	113,761	712,401	38,189	743,640	843,491	75,722	919,213	727,748	118,162	262,551	347,036		138,653	866,402
2002	129,292	728,532	51,412	775,695	856,359	68,801	925,160	759,070	126,243	277,160	355,667		135,556	894,626
2003	158,985	775,870	66,800	829,717	906,899	68,884	975,784	804,962	131,569	302,675	370,718		126,489	931,452
2004	153,719	869,925	58,400	902,323	931,303	78,229	1,009,532	857,813	131,648	337,400	388,765		140,161	997,975
2005	183,377	827,702	65,580	892,306	917,400	79,279	996,679	861,073	124,900	337,884	398,290		137,030	998,103
2006	204,199	829,300	65,441	907,423	939,972	72,098	1,012,070	848,643	124,332	316,822	407,489		171,896	1,020,539
2007	213,408	804,242	52,046	892,222	950,133	54,517	1,004,650	846,582	126,428	322,438	397,716		169,540	1,016,122
2008	228,828	811,561	45,863	902,032	955,653	38,981	994,634	807,410	122,368	303,312	381,730		210,711	1,018,121
2009	237,941	803,362	41,067	914,143	1,007,439	44,764	1,052,202	830,403	129,661	318,357	382,386		240,450	1,070,854
2010	241,801	816,201	29,957	953,387	1,010,235	84,724	1,094,959	884,834	127,806	318,720	438,308		241,369	1,126,203
2011	224,128	794,226	32,503	929,141	1,058,696	97,941	1,156,637	925,867	126,331	330,955	468,581		223,593	1,149,460
2012	238,616	860,211	41,037	971,683	1,107,868	113,492	1,221,360	989,134	132,410	353,641	503,083		259,099	1,248,232
2013	240,640	868,040	25,285	1,016,961	1,296,881	134,922	1,431,802	969,032	139,340	360,277	469,415		266,328	1,235,360
2014	232,851	804,912	6,685	960,946	1,337,713	185,366	1,523,079	1,037,210	146,578	363,319	527,314		251,517	1,288,728
2015	248,016	875,430	790	1,066,308	1,456,566	152,479	1,609,046	1,049,836	165,981	378,108	505,746		288,427	1,338,263
2016	257,569	853,665	34,658	1,022,431	1,426,646	178,261	1,604,907	1,100,343	182,304	389,554	528,485		234,533	1,334,875
2017	239,820	906,987	32,685	1,064,427	1,499,030	184,952	1,683,983	1,116,352	189,079	401,106	526,167		260,250	1,376,602
2018	228,210	951,075	28,622	1,093,215	1,588,727	189,237	1,777,965	1,142,793	195,315	406,991	540,488		284,240	1,427,033
2019	228,221	854,908	27,781	989,716	1,530,948	233,771	1,764,719	1,155,975	202,485	424,167	520,324		224,405	1,380,380
2020	201,863	845,075	24,568	981,750	1,461,705	245,193	1,706,898	1,045,660	199,490	411,727	434,444		236,502	1,282,163
2021	177,169	863,200	16,174	976,175	1,435,058	314,578	1,749,636	1,057,138	182,585	397,254	477,300		247,331	1,304,469
2022	143,306	913,263	14,280	1,020,888	1,452,390	288,732	1,741,122	1,133,822	189,671	459,644	484,508		197,244	1,331,066
2023	136,183	962,155	11,479	1,054,166	1,507,967	248,051	1,756,018	1,128,592	197,223	433,576	497,793		241,614	1,370,205

Source : Department of Energy Business (DOEB)
 Compiled by : Energy Policy and Planning Office (EPPO)

Figure 1.1 The demand and supply of crude oil and oil products

To respond to the increasing demand of the oil, the oil distributors have expanded their gas station business to provide the oil products to the customers. These create competitiveness in the industry sector. The rivalry of gas station business is highly competitive. The competitors of gas station business, especially, the gas stations in the countryside, are the gas stations within 1 hour driving. The customers tend to choose the best gas station within 1 hour driving range to stop and rest from travelling. Moreover, the bargaining power of customers is also high. They may find it easy to switch to new, better, or cheaper competitors.

Although the level of demand for oil products has increased continuously, the oil products contain a mixture of BTEX hydrocarbons (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylenes) which can cause problems to the health and environment. Especially environmental impact, oil drilling and exhaust emission disrupt wildlives, wildlands, and climate change. These create the rising demand for environment-friendly electric vehicles which are alternative products for internal combustion engine vehicles that consume oil products. Furthermore, the rising fuel price is also the key restraints for the market. The upcoming trend of electric vehicles makes some of the investors have started to establish the EV stations that are the indirect competitors of gas stations. So, many gas station businesses need to improve themselves to increase their total revenue and keep their competitive level.

There are many solutions to improve the gas station business, for example, offering more products and services could increase the competitive ability of the station, and increase attractiveness, transactions, sales, as well as profit margins from the customers who visit the station. For instance, many gas stations provide convenience stores, which may sell confections, beverages, tobacco products, snacks, coffee, newspapers, magazines, and, in some cases, a small selection of grocery items, such as milk. Some also sell LPG or CNG and have added shops to their primary business. Conversely, some chain stores, such as supermarkets, cafés, or other stores and services. Improving the other facilities in the station are often paid close attention to which aim for the quality of customer experience, such as, clean restrooms, green areas, the continuity of buildings, etc. These qualities could attract the interest of the customers. Or installing EV charger stations to support electric vehicles.



Figure 1.2 The convenience stores and EV charger station in gas stations

Finally, the stations need to analyse the customer's behaviour to choose the gas station and make the marketing plans to increase awareness and interests of customers, considering all the factors that influenced the customer preferences and expectations which affect decision making, what is the best marketing strategy needed for the improvement of gas stations in the countryside of Thailand.

1.2 Research questions

1. What are factors that influenced the customer's decision making to choose the gas station in the countryside of Thailand?
2. What is the best marketing strategy needed for the improvement of gas stations in the countryside of Thailand?

1.3 Research objectives

1. To study the factors which affect the customer's decision making to choose the gas station in the countryside of Thailand
2. To study the types of marketing communications that efficiently increase awareness and interests of customers

1.4 Scope of the study

The customers used as a case study would be the customers who visit Thana Power Service Part., Ltd., a medium-size gas station business located in Klonyai, Trat. The co-partner of the company is Shell (Thailand) co., Ltd.

1.5 Expected benefits

1. Identification of specific factors that influence the decision making of the gas station's customers.
2. Insights of gas station's customer preferences and behaviour.
3. Recommendations for marketing strategies for the gas station in the countryside of Thailand which could increase customers' awareness and interest.
4. Guideline for increasing the awareness and interest of the gas station in the countryside of Thailand.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Under the research topic of “Marketing improvement considering customer’s decisions and awareness: A case study of the gas station in the countryside of Thailand”, all relevant facts, concepts, theories, and previous researchers are described in this chapter, as follows.

- 2.1 Comparison of 5 major brands in gas station business in 2024
- 2.2 Concept of consumer decision making process
- 2.3 Concept of analysis of consumer behaviour
- 2.4 The factor influencing consumer preference in choosing a gas station in Thailand
- 2.5 Concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)
- 2.6 Marketing strategies

2.1 Comparison of 5 major brands in gas station business in 2024 (Saowaluck Khetsungneon, 2024)

2.1.1 PTT Public Company Limited

PTT is the largest oil company in Thailand. It captures the major market share in the industry and also has the most stations among the players, 2,570 stations. It has been known for extensive network and brand recognition and its offering of a wide range of services, including convenience stores, especially its partnership with 7-11 from CP ALL Co., Ltd., and its authentic café, Café Amazon.



Figure 2.1 A PTT gas station

2.1.2 Bangchak Corporation

Bangchak has been known for its commitment to green energy like biofuels and sustainability. It usually offers the Greenovative experience feature that focuses on eco-friendly practices. After Taking over ESSO, it has been operating the second numerous gas stations of 2,221.



Figure 2.2 A Bangchak gas station

2.1.3 PTG Energy

The newest comer of the market who is rapidly growing. It has been expanding its network aggressively and offers various customer loyalty programs. Within 10 years, PTG has become one of the most numerous gas stations of 2,181 with its strategy to establish the stations on secondary avenues.



Figure 2.3 A PT gas station

2.1.4 Shell Thailand:

Shell is a significant international player with the strongest presence in Thailand. It offers high-quality fuels and lubricant under Shell V-Power marketing brand. Although the company was introduced to the Thailand market for a long time, it has only 700 stations.



Figure 2.4 A Shell gas station

2.1.5 Caltex:

Caltex is also one of the long-standing international oil companies in the Thailand market. But it has only 450 stations, mostly within Bangkok and surrounding areas. However, after being taken over by Star Petroleum Refining Public Company Limited (SPRC), it plans to expand the new station to the countryside.



Figure 2.5 A Caltex gas station

2.2 Concept of consumer decision making process

The consumer decision-making process involves five basic steps. This is the process by which consumers evaluate making a purchasing decision.

2.2.1 Problem recognition

The first step of the consumer decision-making process is recognizing the need for a service or product. Need recognition, whether prompted internally or externally, results in the same response: a want. To influence consumers at this stage, since internal stimulus comes from within and includes basic impulses like hunger or a change in lifestyle, focus your sales and marketing efforts on external stimulus. Develop a comprehensive brand campaign to build brand awareness and recognition—you want consumers to know you and trust you. Most importantly, you want them to feel like they have a problem only you can solve.

2.2.2 Information search

When researching their options, consumers again rely on internal and external factors, as well as past interactions with a product or brand, both positive and negative. In the information stage, they may browse through options at a physical location or consult online resources, such as Google or customer reviews. Your job as a brand is to give the potential customer access to the information they want, with the hopes that they decide to purchase your product or service. Create a funnel and plan out the types of content that people will need. Present yourself as a trustworthy source of knowledge and information. Another important strategy is word of mouth—since consumers trust each other more than they do businesses, make sure to include consumer-generated content, like customer reviews or video testimonials, on your website.

2.2.3 Alternatives evaluation

At this point in the consumer decision-making process, prospective buyers have developed criteria for what they want in a product. Now they weigh their prospective choices against comparable alternatives. Alternatives may present themselves in the form of lower prices, additional product benefits, product availability, or something as personal as colour or style options. Your marketing material should be geared towards

convincing consumers that your product is superior to other alternatives. Be ready to overcome objections—e.g., in sales calls, know your competitors so you can answer questions and compare benefits.

2.2.4 Purchase decision

This is the moment the consumer has been waiting for: the purchase. Once they have gathered all the facts, including feedback from previous customers, consumers should arrive at a logical conclusion on the product or service to purchase. If you've done your job correctly, the consumer will recognize that your product is the best option and decide to purchase it.

2.2.5 Post-purchase evaluation

This part of the consumer decision-making process involves reflection from both the consumer and the seller. As a seller, you should try to gauge the following:

- Did the purchase meet the need the consumer identified?
- Is the customer happy with the purchase?
- How can you continue to engage with this customer?

Remember, it's your job to ensure your customer continues to have a positive experience with your product. Post-purchase engagement could include follow-up emails, discount coupons, and newsletters to entice the customer to make an additional purchase. You want to gain life-long customers, and in an age where anyone can leave an online review, it's more important than ever to keep customers happy.

2.3 Concept of analysis of consumer behaviour

Consumer behaviour refers to a decision and an action of the consumer in relation to a purchase of products or services. An analysis of consumer behaviour is research to study the consumer desire and behaviour to purchase the products and services. Understanding consumer behaviour helps the marketers to come up with the marketing strategy that can efficiently address the consumer satisfaction. A typical set of questions as part of the analysis of consumer behaviour comprises 6Ws and 1H.

- The consumers (Who): To get the demographic characteristics of consumers: gender, age, income, and occupation.
- The products (What): To get to know what the consumer wants.
- The reasons (Why): To study what the reasons behind product purchase are: basic needs and psychological needs.
- The influencers (Whom): To know whether there are other persons who influence the intent of purchase.
- The timing (When): To know when, which period, how often the consumer buys products.
- The channel (Where): To know which channel the consumer uses to get information for facilitating the decision making.
- The method (How)

2.4 The factor influencing consumer preference in choosing a gas station in Thailand (Pharima Phongphanich, 2022)

The background of the theoretical framework based on theoretical concept and previous studies, antecedents of consumer preference in this study are brand trust, product quality, price and promotion, service quality, and location.

Consumers normally implement preferences when they go for comparing different alternatives and choices (Shihab, 2022). Consumer preferences are defined as the subjective (individual) tastes, as measured by utility, of various bundles of goods. They permit the consumer to rank these bundles of goods according to the levels of utility they give the consumer. However, that preferences are independent of income and prices. Ability to purchase goods does not determine a consumer's likes or dislikes (Saji, 2021).

2.4.1 Brand Trust

Customers' confidence in companies or their goods is referred to as trust. Several outcomes, including brand recognition and decision-making, would result from the customers' trust in the product quality (Nurhasanah, Mahliza, Nugroho, & Yananto)

(2021). Brand trust is how customers feel about a specific brand (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Based on the knowledge and experiences that influence a product's performance, consumers build their points of view. Consumers' expectations that a product can keep its promise to them are referred to as their trust in a brand. Product performance and brand trust are closely related. The expectation that the other party will act in accordance with consumers' demands and desires helps to establish trust (Han & Sung, 2008).

Customers' decisions might be influenced by brand trust in either a favorable or bad way. Customers will consider returning and repurchasing if they feel that brands can satisfy their expectations in terms of product quality or security (Amron, 2018). On the other hand, if it turns the other way, brands will lose customer trust, and customers may think twice about returning. Additionally, trust is a feeling of confidence consumers have in companies or goods, and it is seen to be the most important component in decision-making (Mullasatsarathorn, 2022).

2.4.2 Product Quality

According to research by Putra, one of the most significant variables influencing a customer's decision toward a brand is the quality of the product. Customer perception of the brand is improved through greater product and service quality (Putra, 2017). One of the key drivers affecting the engine's operational performance is the quality of the fuel. It is described in terms of several high-quality attributes. About 20 different qualities are used to determine the quality of gasoline and diesel; their specific values and standards are listed in the quality certificates used for each type of fuel. Ordinary users may struggle to understand these complex criteria, and the effect of low gasoline quality on a vehicle's technical condition may not become obvious right away but rather over time. Because of this, some consumers choose purchasing less expensive fuels with questionable quality. However, some are concerned about the quality, they prefer premium fuels (Matijošius & Sokolovskij, 2008).

2.4.3 Price and Promotion

One of the factors influencing purchase decisions is price. Price as heuristic cues is more easily observed than quality (Yoon, Oh, Song, Kim, & Kim, 2014). According to Wijaya, price is the amount of money to be paid by a customer to obtain product

benefits. Reasonable price results in greater value by customers and can increase purchase decisions of consumers. If prices are offered in accordance with benefits perceived by consumers, they will make purchase decisions easily (Wijaya, 2011). Another factor affecting purchase decisions of customers is promotion. According to (Zikmud, 2011) states that sale is the communication function of a company which is responsible to inform, persuade and invite prospective customers. (Brata, Husani, & Ali, 2017) points high degree of correlation has positive relationship. This result of the study shows the better promotion, the more positive the purchase decision of customers. Promotion is one of the factors determining the success of sales strategy. If a company has a better product quality, unfortunately customers do not get information about that. It will be difficult to make purchase decisions for customers. Besides, a study says that purchasing a bundle is more likely on sale, particularly offered to hedonic rather than utilitarian components. This finding concludes that promotion is more effective in making purchases, it indicates that promotional programs give significant effect to purchase decisions (Kivetz & Zheng, 2017).

2.4.4 Service Quality

Service can be defined into so many definitions and one of them according to Virima. (2019), can refer to a perception of customers on how good or bad the customers are served by the specific brand. From the customers' perspective, service quality means how well the goods/services provided by the organization meet or exceed customer expectations. In the context of this research, the service would be a variety of service that the gas station offers, out of filling gas to the consumer. This service might include car window cleaning, car care, cleanliness of the toilet, restaurants, mini-marts, car service, and others (Khumpuang, 2002). When it comes to customers, it is their perceptions of the quality of service one offers that determines success. The final measure of quality customer service is simply how the customer perceives it. Perceptions are considered relative to expectations. Customers perceive service in terms of the quality of the service they receive and whether or not they are satisfied with their experiences (Gil, 2008).

2.4.5 Location

Site selection is important because whether leased or purchased, the success or failure of a retail business depends on its location. “Location, location, location” is a mantra for retail success. Store location is a retailer’s most costly and long-term marketing-mix decision. Unlike a bad pricing or promotional decision, a poor store location adversely affects retailer performance for several years (Yaasamoah, 2015). We know that retailers prefer to locate close to consumers but doing so exposes them to competition from other retailers that also want to be close to consumers. From the retailer’s point-of-view, proximity to consumers means proximity to other stores. In relation to retail filling stations, customers are vehicles, proximity to these vehicles is locating filling stations close to main roads (WP, 2021).

2.5 Concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

Integrated marketing communication is defined as an activity meant to convey the message and create the understanding and acceptance between business units and consumers with the ultimate goal to obtain satisfactory responses. Integrated marketing communication is one of the marketing tools to be utilised with the other 3 tools to address consumers’ needs, including Product, Price, and Place. The communication itself will be used to send the information of products and services to the consumers for getting the acknowledgement of the products and leads to the intents of purchase. In order to have efficient communication, all marketing tools need to be extensively understood in relation to strength, weakness, advantages, and disadvantages so that the most appropriate tool can be selected to best fit the business objectives. It can then be said that integrated marketing communication is an integration of communication science and marketing science.

At the core of marketing communications is a collection of tools and methods through which organisations communicate with their audiences. This is referred to as the marketing communications mix (MC mix).

2.5.1 Advertising

Advertising is far more than just a form of impersonal, paid-for communication. It draws from popular culture, but it also plays a significant role in shaping the cultural landscape. And, with the development of digital technology, its cultural influence is only expanding.

Advertising is highly effective as an initial tool used to create awareness about an organisation's offering. It also plays a part in creating consumer interest and desire. Importantly, it is also a primary tool for helping reinforce a purchase after the event and can be used to positively affirm to consumers that they have made the right decision. Although traditional modes of advertising have a weak influence at the point of purchase, online and digital advertising is changing this. Display pop-ups that encourage an immediate purchase, often through a time-based window, are blurring the lines between advertising, direct mail and sales promotion, and in-app purchases use similar strategies.

2.5.2 Sales promotion

Sales promotions are short-term incentives that aim to stimulate sales and increase customer demand. Sales promotion is often used as a tool of immediacy in order to encourage customers to act in the moment, to make larger purchases, and/or to make repeat purchases. The main advantage of sales promotion is the short-term sales boost that can be achieved when customers take advantage of an offer.

Sales promotions are also an important aspect of non-commercial marketing communications campaigns. For example, public health campaigns on safe sex might include the distribution of free contraceptives, or anti-smoking campaigns might offer free nicotine replacement products.

One of the most common strategies in marketing communications is to combine sales promotion with advertising to stimulate interest and desire.

2.5.3 Public relations (PR)

PR involves communications released by the organisation that are designed to help improve and promote its image. It is about building good relations with the organisation's target audiences (not just customers) through obtaining favourable

publicity, building and maintaining a positive corporate image, and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories, and events.

PR activities are primarily used for creating awareness. PR is also an effective tool post-purchase, where it covers areas such as after-sales services and handling customer complaints.

In the internet age, PR has become a much more important element of the MC mix. The need to manage and control the flow of information about an organisation has become more critical in the light of social media and other sites that provide a platform for those that might seek to challenge, question or undermine the reputation of the organisation.

2.5.4 Direct marketing

Direct marketing (incorporating interactive and database marketing) is an approach that seeks to target individual customers with personalised messages and to build lasting relationships. Direct marketing can be directed at a named person who may have a personal interest in the products or services being offered. However, the effectiveness of direct mail is debatable as much of it ends up unopened or misdirected. Moreover, a lot of time and resources are required to manage and update direct mail databases.

Direct marketing is a primary tool used to build awareness and interest in an offering. It is a method that can target individual customers and convey significant amounts of information compared to advertising. As such, direct marketing is often a supplementary tool for communicating an organisation's offerings.

2.5.5 Personal selling

Personal selling involves interpersonal communication between the organisation and external parties. As such, personal selling is a two-way communications tool that provides the opportunity for customers to pose questions, make a comment, express an objection, or indicate their reactions through their body language and nonverbal responses such as gestures. Moreover, the salesperson has the advantage of receiving instant feedback through interaction with customers, which is not the case when using mass media.

Personal selling is the most effective tool during the purchase stage. This is understandable as the interaction with the customer, and the ability to modify and personalise the brand message, is much more achievable.

2.6 Marketing strategies

A marketing strategy refers to a business's overall game plan to facilitate the buying and selling of its products or services. A marketing strategy determines how to reach prospective consumers and turn them into customers.

The main types of marketing can be broadly divided into two categories: traditional marketing and digital marketing.

- **Traditional marketing:** This type relies on offline channels to reach its target audience and consumers. Examples include print (newspapers, magazines, brochures), broadcast (TV, radio commercials), direct mail (catalogues, coupons), outdoor advertising (billboards, bus ads) and in-person or online public relations (press releases, media events).
- **Digital marketing:** This type uses and takes place on online channels to connect with consumers. It includes content marketing (blog posts, articles, videos), social media marketing (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), search engine optimization (SEO) for better search ranking, search engine marketing (paid ads on search results), email marketing, affiliate marketing (partnering with other websites) and mobile marketing (text messages, apps).

2.6.1 Social media marketing

71% of small-to-mid-sized businesses use social media for marketing, and 60% reported success with social media ads, according to these small business marketing statistics. This high percentage comes as no surprise. Social media marketing is one of the most influential ways to use digital marketing to increase visibility and gain traffic to your website. More so, it can be a valuable lead generation method, a sales channel, an audience insights tool and a customer service outlet.

From Instagram Reels to TikTok, your options of getting in front of new audiences are endless. Ensure you strategically choose which channels you focus most on, based on your target audience. If you aim to reach a professional audience, LinkedIn

is a must for creating a company page. Social media platforms are a great way to secure a first-mover advantage, a concept in marketing and business when companies are the first to market in a specific product category. The speed at which it's possible to generate and distribute multimedia content on social media is ideal for this.

Video marketing is a format that is becoming more heavily favoured on social media as users consume more content on their mobile devices (this marketing strategy also works well if you're focusing on mobile marketing), so consider this as an important form of content creation in your marketing strategy. This marketing strategy also allows brands to tap into the phenomenon of viral content. While not easy to achieve, it can have a dramatic impact on key marketing metrics and KPIs, such as website traffic, and brand visibility.

Social media advertising is another component that should not be overlooked. For example, advertising on Facebook can drastically increase new customers. Want to try Facebook advertising for your business? Facebook Ads by Wix directly connects to your website to set up and optimise your campaigns. Remarketing on social media channels is a highly effective way to bring people back to your website to complete a purchase.

Shell
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Only at Shell, Only for You.
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Figure 2.6 Shell social media ads

2.6.2 Search engine optimization (SEO)

Search engines are filled with micro-moments. These are high intent instances when someone wants to learn, buy or do something. By optimising your chances of ranking higher on search engines to show up at these instances, you're practising search engine optimization SEO.

Search engine optimization (SEO) can be used as a core marketing strategy or a marketing tactic. In either case, a solid SEO strategy centres around making a brand's content desirable, discoverable and accessible for web users via search engines like Google and Bing. Like inbound marketing, the most effective SEO strategies will include a great deal of audience research (typically with keyword research) and will be designed to ensure the brand has competitive visibility within the target audience.

SEO strategists tend to focus on industry specialisms and niches, such as technical SEO. Taking this approach can help brands to concentrate knowledge, utilise the most effective SEO tools, and best satisfy user intent.

Using SEO techniques, you'll direct the right kind of traffic to your site. People who find you through searches already arrive at your business website with intent. Driving traffic to your website isn't the only significant benefit. Bottom line sales also improve with SEO. In fact, 70% of online marketers say that "SEO is better than PPC advertising for generating sales."

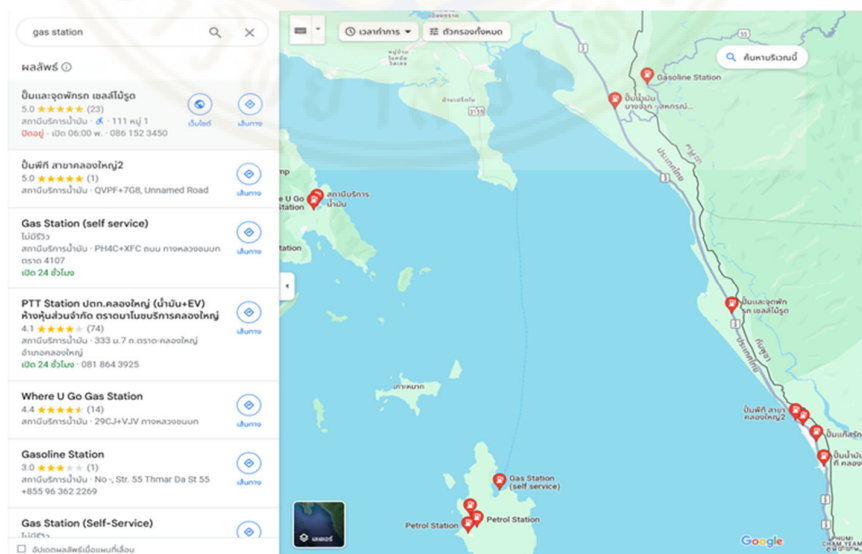


Figure 2.7 Google map search on “Gas station”

2.6.3 Earned media and PR

After you've launched your business and website, it's time to spread the word. Gaining positive publicity and traction from media outlets will create the buzz around your business to get the attention of the masses. Business marketing strategies within this realm come in varying forms, including TV, newspapers, radio and podcasts.

Ideally, the press and publicity you acquire are organic (unpaid), but even if you're considering working with a paid PR agency, the ROI can prove worthy. Bill Gates himself said, "If I only had two dollars left, I would spend one dollar on PR. It's an effective way to take your marketing communication to the next level.

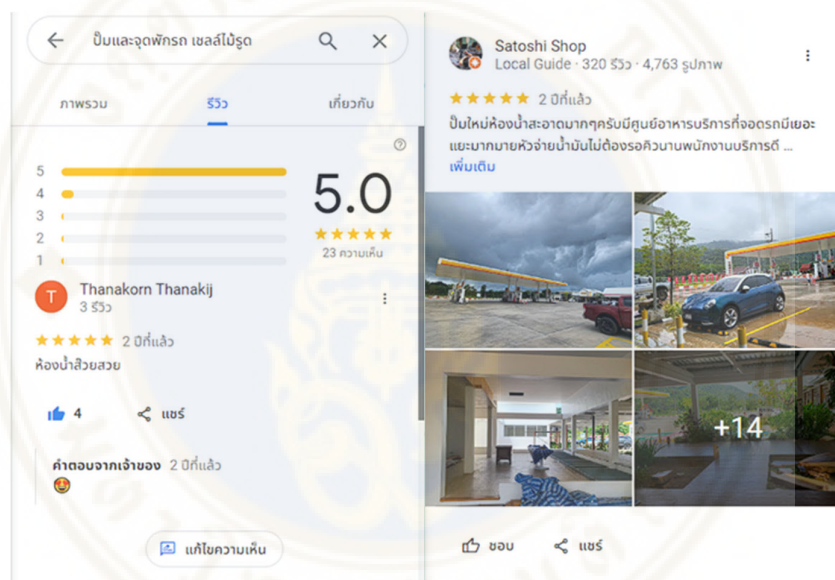


Figure 2.8 Review on Google maps site

2.6.4 Advertising

There are numerous types of advertising to consider for your business. From social media advertising to TV and print advertising, the options for advertising campaigns greatly vary. One thing is clear, online advertising is a powerful way to get your audience's attention. Its digital technology helps you better target, track and measure the results of your paid marketing investment.

Learning how to advertise on Google early on will significantly benefit your growth within digital advertising. Since Google is the largest search engine globally, you want to stay ahead of the competition and show up for strategic keywords related

to your offerings with Google ads. Advertising on Google and many social media platforms is also known as Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising.

To choose the proper advertising methods for your business, consider:

- Your audience
- Costs and budget
- Timing and length of your campaign
- Creative assets available



Figure 2.9 Gas station outdoor advertisement sign

2.6.5 Content marketing

In the past decade, there's been a shift in the marketing mindset. Today we see a rise in blogs, podcasts and webinars that are engaging and inclusive to audiences—so they feel more connected with brands.

Creating valuable and informative content has become a win-win especially when it comes to developing and improving customer engagement. Content marketing creates a strategic opportunity for your business to connect with a customer meaningfully.

Content marketing also helps you generate awareness, become an authority and tell a story. Focusing on this strategy early on is handy for other marketing ideas, as you can share your content on social media or in email newsletters later. The most popular content strategies are:

- Content writing
- Infographics
- Video marketing
- Starting a podcast



Figure 2.10 Gas station TikTok contents

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on quantitative research to collect information about what are factors that influenced the customer's decision making to choose the gas station and what is the best marketing strategy needed for the improvement of gas stations in the countryside of Thailand by using the research questionnaires as a tool.

3.1 Research methodology

Research methodology will be described as follows.

Step 1 Literature review

Step 2 Define customer behaviour for choosing gas stations in the countryside of Thailand

Step 3 Collect the data

Step 4 Analyse, process the data, and finding

3.1.1 Step 1 Literature review

The study relevant theories are reviewed in Chapter II and used as the guideline to design in this research.

3.1.2 Step 2 Define customer behaviour for choosing gas stations in the countryside of Thailand

- Step 2.1 Identify the customer preferences

According to the consumer decision making process, the first step is recognizing the customer need for a service or product. What problems that are wanted to be solved or needs that must to be satisfied.

- Step 2.2 Identify customer penetration tools

After problem recognition, the customers would do some information research and evaluate the alternative. What the most popular method of customer use to search for gas station during travelling.

3.1.3 Step 3 Collect data

The data is collected using research questionnaires from the customer who visit Thana Powerservice part., ltd. in the September 2024 to October 2024 which has a large number of tourists.

The research questionnaires will be created using google form as follows below.

Table 3.1 Show the list the question of Demographic Information and answer

No.	Question	Answers
1.	Gender	- Female - Male - Other
2.	Age	- <=23 - 24-32 - 33-45 - 46-60 - >60
3.	Income level	- <=15,000 THB - 1.1. - 30,001-45,000 - >45,000
4.	Type of vehicle	- Sedan - SUV - Pickup truck

Table 3.2 Show the list the question of Part 2 – Part 4

Part 2 - Customer preference						
Direction: Please check (✓) based on what extent you agree to the following statements using the following scales: 5 - Strongly agree 4 – Agree 3 – Neutral 2 – Disagree 1 - Strongly disagree						
Subject		Scales				
Brand trust						
1	Brand reputation is important to me.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I feel that brand is related to product quality.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I usually use only my preferred specific brands.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I prefer not to go to the brands that I am not familiar with.	5	4	3	2	1
Product quality						
1	I believe that fuels can affect vehicle engines.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I think that different brands have different qualities of fuels.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I prefer to fill premium fuels.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I prefer to go to the station that offers variety of products and services.	5	4	3	2	1
Service quality						
1	I believe that employees should be in good manner, helpful, and active.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I believe that employees should have the specific knowledge about products and services, and know the promotions.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I believe that employees should be clean.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I prefer to go to the station that provide good service experience.	5	4	3	2	1
Price and promotion						
1	I am very concerned about gas price.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I usually go to the gas station that has the best promotion at that time.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I prefer to go to a gas station that offers me a free bottle of water.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I prefer to go to a gas station that has discount for the other products or services.	5	4	3	2	1

Table 3.2 Show the list the question of Part 2 – Part 4 (cont.)

Part 2 - Customer preference						
Subject		Scales				
Location						
1	I prefer to go to the gas station that is easy to access.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I prefer to go to the gas station that is nearest to me.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I prefer to go to the gas station that is easy to find.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I prefer to go to the gas station that is outstanding.	5	4	3	2	1
Part 3 - Marketing communication						
Social media marketing						
1	I am usually active on Facebook.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I usually look for news and update through Facebook.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I prefer using the businesses that are socially active on their Facebook page.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I prefer the businesses that have good reviews on their Facebook page.	5	4	3	2	1
Search engine optimization						
1	I always use the Google search for searching information.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I always use the Google maps while driving.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I prefer the businesses that provide good information on their Google maps site.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I prefer the businesses that have good reviews on their Google maps site.	5	4	3	2	1
Earned media and PR						
1	I usually follow the path that reviewed in the tourism blogs.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I would give it a try, if someone I know suggest me.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I would give it a try, if the business participates in the activities that I am interested in.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I would give it a try, if there are a lot of cars park in the area.	5	4	3	2	1

Table 3.2 Show the list the question of Part 2 – Part 4 (cont.)

Part 3 - Marketing communication						
Subject		Scales				
Advertising						
1	I usually see the signs during driving.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I often stop scrolling and pay attention to sponsored posts on Facebook.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I usually click on the first suggestion of Google search/maps.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I tend to choose the business that get promoted.	5	4	3	2	1
Content marketing						
1	I often engage and likely to interact with content.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I usually seek for tourism content through Facebook.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I usually seek for tourism content through TikTok.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I usually seek for tourism content through YouTube.	5	4	3	2	1
Part 4 - Consumer decision making process						
Need recognition						
1	I usually use a gas station every 1-2 hour.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I usually use a gas station when I need to use the restroom.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I usually use a gas station when I want to buy food, drinks, or snacks.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I usually use a gas station when the gas nearly run out.	5	4	3	2	1
Information search						
1	I always plan for the stops before going on a trip.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I start looking for the nearest gas station in Google maps when I want to stop at the gas station.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I start looking for the nearest gas station sign when I want to stop at the gas station.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I rely on familiarity or previous experience when looking for a gas station.	5	4	3	2	1

Table 3.2 Show the list the question of Part 2 – Part 4 (cont.)

Part 4 - Consumer decision making process						
Subject		Scales				
Evaluation of alternatives						
1	I prefer to go to the station that has minimart.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I prefer to go to the station that has café.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I prefer to go to the station that has restaurants or food kiosks.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I prefer to go to the station that has automotive services or car wash service.	5	4	3	2	1
5	I prefer to go to the station that has ATM.	5	4	3	2	1
6	I prefer to go to the station that has Souvenir shops.	5	4	3	2	1
7	I prefer to go to a gas station that has good traffic management.	5	4	3	2	1
8	I prefer to go to the station that has clean restrooms.	5	4	3	2	1
9	I prefer to go to the station that has good area for resting.	5	4	3	2	1
10	I prefer to go to the station that has good overall image of gas station.	5	4	3	2	1

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter focuses on finding the factors that influenced the customer's decision making to choose the gas station in the countryside of Thailand.

4.1 Respondents

Regarding the questionnaire, there are 92 online respondents giving the answer to the questionnaire.

4.2 Demographic questions

Based on the demographic questions, from Figure 4.1, there are 45.7% of the total respondents that are women or 42 respondents, there are 52.2% of the total respondents that are men or 48 respondents, and there are 2.2% of the total respondents that are others or 2 respondents. Next, Figure 4.2, the range of ages respondents, most of the respondents are those respondents that are 24-32 years old, which counted 70.7% or 65 respondents. While the second largest group is the people in 46-60 years old, which counted 17.4% of the total respondents or 16 people. Next is 33-45 years old, which counted 8.7% or 8 people. Then is more than 60 years old, which counted 2.2% or 2 people, and the smallest group is the people under or in the ages of 23 years old, which counted 1.1% or 1 person. For the status, Figure 4.3, the incomes of the respondents are mainly having 15,001-30,000 baht in the percentage of 45.7% or 42 respondents, while 20.7% of the total respondent or 19 people are in the range of 30,001-45,000 baht and more than 45,000 baht, 13% of the total respondents or 12 people are having the income less than or equal 15,000 baht. For the vehicles, Figure 4.4, there were 58.7% of the total respondents or 54 respondents that use a sedan, there were

28.3% of the total respondents or 26 respondents that use a SUV, and there were 13% of the total respondents or 12 respondents that use a pickup truck.

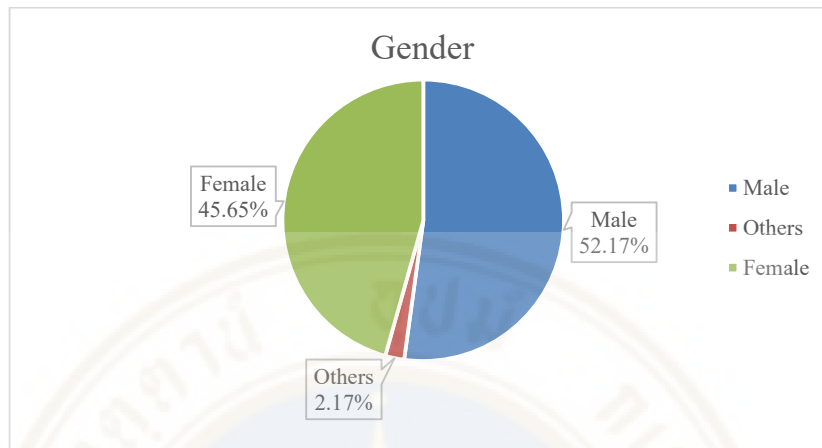


Figure 4.1 Demographic question 1 in quantitative research "Gender" (n = 92)

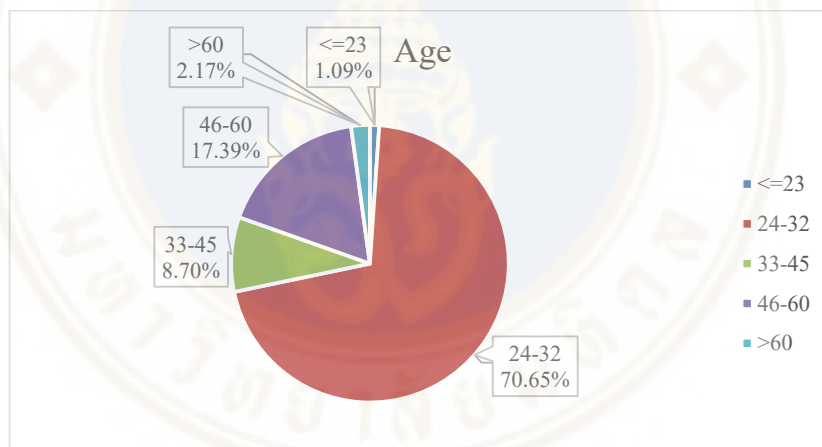


Figure 4.2 Demographic question 2 in quantitative research "Age" (n = 92)

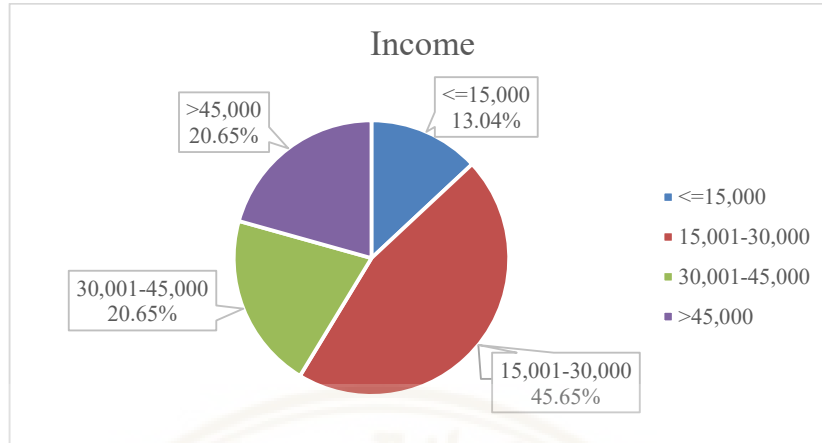


Figure 4.3 Demographic question 3 in quantitative research “Income” (n = 92)

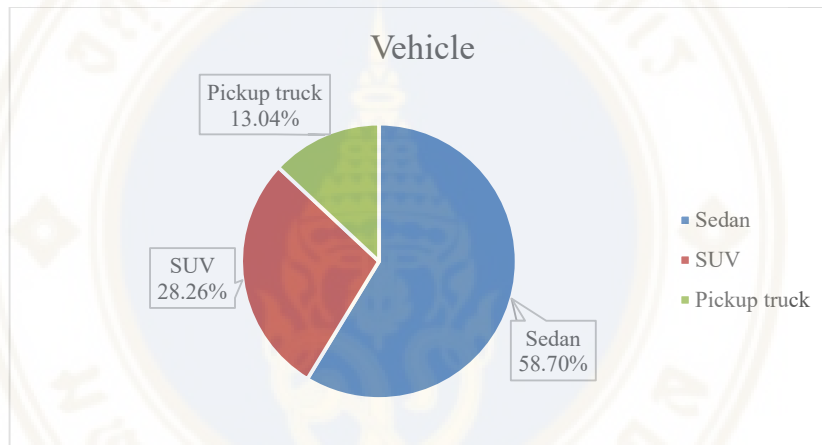


Figure 4.4 Demographic question 4 in quantitative research “Vehicle” (n = 92)

4.3 Customer preferences questions

Regarding the data from the questionnaire, each of statements about customer preferences is analyzed using mean analysis following table below.

Table 4.1 Table of mean score of customer preferences statements

Mean of statements					
Variable	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Brand trust	Brand reputation is important to me.	2	5	4.2173	0.8052
	I feel that brand is related to product quality.	1	5	4.1087	0.8902
	I usually use only my preferred specific brands.	1	5	3.9565	1.0417
	I prefer not to go to the brands that I am not familiar with.	1	5	4.3152	0.8588
				4.1494	
Product quality	I believe that fuels can affect vehicle engines.	1	5	3.9783	1.0732
	I think that different brands have different qualities of fuels.	1	5	4.6413	0.867
	I prefer to fill premium fuels.	1	5	3.25	1.1385
	I prefer to go to the station that offers variety of products and services.	1	5	3.978	1.0481
				3.9619	
Service quality	I believe that employees should be in good manner, helpful, and active.	1	5	4.4674	0.9607
	I believe that employees should have the specific knowledge about products and services, and know the promotions.	1	5	4.3152	0.9199
	I believe that employees should be clean.	1	5	4.3187	0.8629
	I prefer to go to the station that provide good service experience.	1	5	4.3516	0.9302
				4.3632	

Table 4.1 Table of mean score of customer preferences statements (cont.)

Mean of statements					
Variable	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	SD
	I am very concerned about gas price.	1	5	3.9891	1.2291
	I usually go to the gas station that has the best promotion at that time.	1	5	3.4396	1.1971
Price and promotion	I prefer to go to a gas station that offers me a free bottle of water.	1	5	3.1522	1.2848
	I prefer to go to a gas station that has discount for the other products or services.	1	5	3.3587	1.1757
				3.4849	
Location	I prefer to go to the gas station that is easy to access.	1	5	4.3587	1.0992
	I prefer to go to the gas station that is nearest to me.	1	5	3.9783	1.1514
	I prefer to go to the gas station that is easy to find.	1	5	4.0761	1.1251
	I prefer to go to the gas station that is outstanding.	1	5	3.5824	1.1394
				3.9989	

According to table 4.1, the statement that has the highest mean score is the statement from Product quality, “I think that different brands have different qualities of fuels.”, which received a 4.6413 mean score. Followed by “I believe that employees should be in good manner, helpful, and active.”, which received a 4.4674 mean score from Service quality and “I prefer to go to the gas station that is easy to access.”, which received a 4.3587 mean score from Location respectively. While the lowest mean score is the statement from Price and promotion, “I prefer to go to a gas station that offers me a free bottle of water.”, which received only 3.1522 of the mean score. Followed by “I prefer to fill premium fuels.”, which received a 3.25 mean score from Product quality and “I prefer to go to a gas station that has discount for the other products or services.”, which received a 3.3587 mean score from Price and promotion respectively.

However, Service quality seems to be the variable that has the highest score of mean statement by 4.3632. Following by Brand trust with 4.1494, Location with 3.9989, and Product quality with 3.9619 mean scores. Lastly, Price and promotion variable have the lowest mean score when comparing the other variables by only 3.4849.

4.4 Marketing communication

Regarding the data from the questionnaire, each of statements about marketing communication is analyzed using mean analysis following table below.

Table 4.2 Table of mean score of marketing communication statements

Mean of statements					
Variable	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Need recognition	I usually use a gas station every 1-2 hour.	1	5	2.4783	1.0883
	I usually use a gas station when I need to use the restroom.	1	5	3.5604	1.1311
	I usually use a gas station when I want to buy food, drinks, or snacks.	1	5	3.5385	0.9868
	I usually use a gas station when the gas nearly run out.	1	5	4.3804	0.8949
					3.4894
Information search	I always plan for the stops before going on a trip.	2	5	4.2308	0.878
	I start looking for the nearest gas station in Google maps when I want to stop at the gas station.	1	5	3.9348	0.9869
	I start looking for the nearest gas station sign when I want to stop at the gas station.	1	5	4	1.0529
	I rely on familiarity or previous experience when looking for a gas station.	1	5	4.1087	0.9607
					4.0686
Evaluation of alternatives	I prefer to go to the station that has minimart.	1	5	3.956	1.1184
	I prefer to go to the station that has café.	1	5	3.7935	1.2383
	I prefer to go to the station that has restaurants or food kiosks.	1	5	3.5217	1.2201
	I prefer to go to the station that has automotive services or car wash service.	1	5	2.6957	1.1491
	I prefer to go to the station that has ATM.	1	5	3.4835	1.2168
	I prefer to go to the station that has Souvenir shops.	1	5	2.663	1.1729
	I prefer to go to a gas station that has good traffic management.	1	5	4.0761	0.9806
	I prefer to go to the station that has clean restrooms.	1	5	4.6087	0.8841
	I prefer to go to the station that has good area for resting.	1	5	3.8261	1.1666
	I prefer to go to the station that has good overall image of gas station.	1	5	4.2283	0.9567
				3.6853	

According to table 4.3, the statement that has the highest mean score is the statement from Evaluation of alternatives, “I prefer to go to the station that has clean restrooms.”, which received a 4.6087 mean score. Followed by “I usually use a gas station when the gas nearly run out.”, which received a 4.3804 mean score from Need recognition and “I always plan for the stops before going on a trip.”, which received a 4.2308 mean score from Information search respectively. While the lowest mean score is the statement from Need recognition, “I usually use a gas station every 1-2 hour.”, which received only 2.4783 of the mean score. Followed by “I prefer to go to the station that has Souvenir shops.”, which received a 2.663 mean score and “I prefer to go to the station that has automotive services or car wash service.”, which received a 2.6957 mean score from Evaluation of alternatives respectively.

However, Information search seems to be the variable that has the highest score of mean statement by 4.0686. Evaluation of alternatives is the second highest mean scores with 3.6853. Need recognition have the lowest mean score when comparing the other variables by only 3.4894.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Factors that influenced the customer's decision making to choose the gas station in the countryside of Thailand

After analyzing the data, we can draw out the factors that influenced the consumer preference in choosing a gas station in the countryside of Thailand. Based on findings from chapter 4, could be concluded as follows.

1. Service quality: The highest mean score on consumer preferences with the mean score of 4.3632. This can be interpreted that the factor that most influences the customer to choose the gas station is Service quality. Customer will prefer to choose which gas station that has high quality employees, such as, having a good manner, helpful and active, having knowledges about products and promotion, dressing in clean apparels, and providing a good experience on service. The business owner should always concern about employees' service and management. The periodic internal audit would be recommended, to ensure their performance would be keep in the highest possible level. Especially, the factor mentioned that the customers believe that employees should be in good manner, helpful, and active, which the statement has the highest mean score among this variable, could be clearly observed that the manner of employees is what people expect from the gas station and will return in customer impression and retention.

2. Brand trust: The second highest mean score of 4.1494 that influence customers. People in Thailand are very conscious when choosing on specific brand of gas station, as it could be implied that the customers prefer not to go to the brands that they are not familiar with, which the statement got the high mean score in this variable. The brand is believed by the customer that it's directly related to product quality. The customers are likely to choosing the gas station that they have a good perspective and confidence. In this case, the brand reputation is crucial. If the brand did something that create goodwill toward brand, the customers would be much likely to support. On the

other hand, if they did something bad, the customer would avoid the gas station. From the statement which got the lowest mean score, it could be observed that the customers are not that loyal to the specific brand. The owner should be careful not to create a bad reputation and maintain the standard and trustworthy of the gas station.

3. Location: The third highest factor that influences the consumer preference on choosing gas stations with the mean score of 3.9989. Customers are likely to choose the gas station that is easy to access and easy to find. The gas stations that are on the main street could benefit from these preferences. The business owner should give importance to the location and make their location easy to recognize and access. Making the gas station outstanding might not be the key success factor to emphasize the customers to choose the gas station as the statement, which has the lowest mean score, that asked about the preference for the outstanding of the gas station. However, the location of the gas stations that already exist could not be changed. By putting the effective pin of the location on the search engine, such as, Google Maps, could enhance the down point of the location. The customers could quickly view the location of the gas station before choosing to visit and guiding them to the location.

4. Product quality: The next order mean score on consumer preferences with mean score of 3.9619. Although the product quality is placed fourth on the factors that influence the customers on choosing the gas station, the consumer preference statement about different brands having different qualities of fuels, got the highest mean score among all the statements. It could be interpreted that the quality of fuels is important to the people in Thailand. Customers believe that the quality of the gasoline is one of the main factors determining the engine's performance. But, due to the rising of the fuel price, the premium fuels are not preferable anymore. Nevertheless, communication about fuel attributes and performance is still vital. The business owner should make the customer aware of their fuel quality in order to influence consumer decision making. Moreover, the variety of products and services in the gas station also have an effect on consumer preferences. The owner should try to offer more products and services to motivate consumers to visit the gas station aside of fuel products and generate more sales.

5. Price and promotion: The variable that has least influence on the consumer preference with the mean score only 3.4849. In this business sector, people might not be highly sensitive to the price and promotion, as the fuel is one of the

important things in many people's daily life, personally and commercially. Even though the customers are very concerned about the gas price, they just tend to use the lower quality fuel. Besides, the oil price is varied based on the global price. The business owner could not control about the price of the oil. Yet, the promotion still has an impact to the consumer decision making. It's essential for the business to provide the promotion and make it visible.

On visiting a gas station in countryside of Thailand, consumer preference for gas stations is primarily influenced by service quality, with customers valuing polite, knowledgeable, and well-presented employees. Brand trust also plays a strong role, as familiarity fosters confidence in fuel quality, though brand loyalty is not absolute. Location matters for ease of access, and clear online mapping can help make stations more noticeable. Fuel quality remains essential to consumers who see it as linked to engine performance, while price and promotions are less influential, as fuel is a daily necessity, and prices are largely uncontrollable. However, visible promotions can still impact customer choice.

5.2 The types of marketing communications that efficiently increase awareness and interests of customers

From the data on marketing communication, we can effectively communicate with customers based on consumer preferences in topic 5.1. the types of marketing communications that efficient could be concluded as follows.

1. Search engine optimization: The most effective ways to communicate with customers as it gets 4.1964, which is the highest mean score variable. From the statements which got the first and second highest mean score among statements in marketing communication respectively. The customers always use the Google maps for navigation while driving and always use the Google search for gathering information, it could be implied that the search engine facilitates people and is a part of people's daily lives. It's crucial to pin the location of the gas station into search engines, especially Google Maps. Additionally, presenting clear, helpful information and encouraging positive reviews on search engine platforms enhance visibility, affect customers' interest and make the gas station standouts from others.

2. Earned media and PR: The second highest mean score on marketing communications with the mean score of 3.6408. Word of mouth and goodwill towards business are vital, which could be observed that the customers would likely to be influenced by their relationship as they give the high score about giving it a try, if someone they know suggest them or if the business participates in the activities that they are interested in. However, these influences will be much higher if the customers having direct relationship to them, such as, recommendations from friends, family, or trusted connections play a significant role in influencing customer behaviour. By maintaining high quality service, resulting in customer impression could spread word of mouth, which increase awareness and interest of customers.

3. Social media marketing: The third type of marketing communicate that could penetrate the customers with the mean score of 3.6256. Since the incoming of social media, people are now spending more and more time on social media platforms as it can interpreted from a high mean score in statement about how they are active on Facebook. Utilizing a well-maintained Facebook page to share updates, promotions, and customer reviews could attract attention and reach a large number of audiences. Information and positive reviews on the Facebook page can help enhance customer perception but it's less effective than search engines like Google Maps in this business sector.

4. Advertising: The second least mean score by 3.1195 among all variable in marketing communications. The advertising would only be effective to the people who are interesting in the products as they give the lowest mean score among all statements about interaction with the sponsored posts on Facebook, as well as the statement about their preference on choosing the business that get promoted and clicking on the first suggestion of Google search/maps, which also got low mean scores. Nonetheless, the customers usually see the signs during driving, as the statement about the road sign got the third highest mean score among all statements. This support the fact that advertising only effective to the people who are interesting. However, although it's not effective, the advertising could increase awareness and reach a large number of audiences.

5. Content marketing: The last ranked marketing communication for getting the least mean score by only 3.0492. Although nowadays contents have increasing influences towards audiences and content marketing is becoming a good choice for marketers, it is least effective in this business sector. Aside from seeking for tourism content through YouTube, the other platforms got the low mean score, especially TikTok, which got the second lowest mean score among all statements. Furthermore, more than a half of the participants are not likely to engage and interact with the content as that it is placed the third lowest mean score from all statements. Therefore, it's hard for this business sector to create viral and spread the content to increase awareness of the gas station.

In effectively communicating with gas station customers in countryside of Thailand, the most impactful approach is Search Engine Optimization (SEO), especially using Google Maps, as it aligns with high consumer reliance on search engines for navigation and information. Earned Media and PR are also influential, with word of mouth and recommendations from known individuals fostering trust and interest. Social Media Marketing, particularly on Facebook, reaches a broad audience but is less effective than SEO in this sector. Advertising shows limited impact, mainly appealing to customers already interested in the product, though roadside signage does capture attention. Lastly, Content Marketing ranks lowest in effectiveness, as gas station customers are unlikely to engage with online content, especially on platforms like TikTok.

5.3 Consumer decision making process

Based on customer preference in topic 5.1 and marketing communication in topic 5.2, we can analyze the consumer decision making process according to the customer answers as follows.

1. Need recognition: The first step of consumer decision making process with the mean score of 3.4894. According to the results of the questionnaire, the customers usually recognize the need of the gas station when their vehicles' gas are nearly run out, as it gets the second highest score among all the statements. Moreover, the needs of the customers for the gas station are recognized not only for the fuel, but also for the other products and facilities, such as, restroom, food, drinks, snacks, or other services, which also get the high mean score. However, these stimuli are usually

prompted internally. This could be observed from the advertisement and content marketing from marketing communication. The customers give the low score from the aggressive marketing, such as, sponsored posts, and not likely to interact with contents.

2. Information search: The second step of consumer decision making process with mean score of 4.0686. This step gets the highest mean score among all variables in consumer decision making process. When researching their options, customers rely on both internal and external factors, as all the statements in this variable get the high mean score. They both choose from their past experience and familiarity and look for a sign or look in Google maps for the nearest gas station. Furthermore, this corresponds to customer preferences and marketing communications, for instance, Brand trust, and Search engine optimization that they are the highest mean score variables.

3. Evaluation of alternatives: The third step of consumer decision making process with the mean score of 3.6853. At this point in the consumer decision-making process, the customers most likely prefer the gas station with a clean restroom as it gets the highest mean score among all the statements. The support facilities like restroom, resting area, traffic management, and overall image of gas station play most significant role in evaluation process of the customers. Following by the food and beverage products like minimart, café, restaurants, and food kiosks. The other products and services have less effective impact the consumer decision-making.

The consumer decision-making process for gas stations consists of three key stages. Need recognition is primarily driven by internal stimuli, such as a vehicle running low on fuel, as well as the need for additional facilities like restrooms, food, and beverages. Information search, the most critical step, relies on both past experiences and external tools, with Google Maps and road signs being the most influential. Finally, in the evaluation of alternatives, customers prioritize gas stations with clean restrooms, convenient support facilities, and appealing overall environments, while food and beverage options serve as secondary considerations. These insights highlight the importance of aligning services and marketing efforts with customer priorities to effectively capture their interest and loyalty.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATION, LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 Recommendation

To effectively increase customer awareness and interest, gas stations in the countryside of Thailand should do as follows:

1. Leveraging search engine optimization (SEO): Gas stations should optimize online presence by ensuring their locations are accurately pinned on platforms like Google Maps, accompanied by comprehensive details such as opening hours, services, and reviews. Encouraging satisfied customers to leave positive reviews will enhance visibility, credibility and attract more visitors.

2. Enhancing the customer experience: This practice is equally important as leveraging the online presence utilizing SEO. This can be achieved by training employees to provide polite, knowledgeable, and active service and maintaining clean, well-equipped facilities. Including offering a variety of facilities and services, such as mini-marts, and food services. This practice also builds brand trust. Stations should foster a strong presence by consistency maintaining high service standards and cleanliness, which will help create a reliable and reputable brand image, as well as create goodwill and positive earned media.

3. Targeted advertising: Despite improving the quality and variety of the services and facilities, promoting them can also set a gas station apart and make the station more appealing. The advertisement, especially Roadside billboards and clear signage can attract passing drivers. Implementing effective roadside signage, such as banners and detailed directional signs, can both guide and attract travelers.

This recommendation could help to make the gas station a preferred stop. These integrated strategies can transform a rural gas station from a functional stop to a valued destination.

6.2 Limitation

In this study, there are some limitations that might affect the result of the data collection. The limitations are included as follows:

1. Data asymmetrical: 65 respondents from 92 samples are 24-32 years old, which counted 70.7%, so the result of the analysis turns out to be asymmetrical because this age range tends to have more influence on the analysis. However, their perspective could be used to forecast for the young generation, who would be the next purchasing power. Moreover, 54 respondents from 92 samples are sedan owner, which counted 58.7%, which conflicts with the major vehicle in Thailand, which is pickup truck.

2. Geographical differentiation: There might be differences in the result depending on the location of the gas station and respondents. The difference location may affect the customer behaviors and preferences.

6.3 Future research

The researcher suggests the following issues for the future research in order to achieve a better understanding and more accurate data collection.

1. Segmentation focusing: Scope down the target customer of the research. For instance, by targeting the tourists or the families, who have the most spending per head more than the other segmentation might have different behaviors and preferences, as well as marketing communication tools to attract more of their attention.

2. Geographical focusing: Scope down the target location of the research. For example, in east of Thailand, or target a single province. The different locations will have different customer behaviors and preferences. This could lower the fluctuation of the influence factors.

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