



Purchasing behavior in pork meat products among restaurant operators in Suratthani Province, Thailand

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Abstract

The objectives of this study are: 1) To examine the purchasing behavior of pork among restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province. 2) To investigate the factors related to the purchasing behavior of pork among restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province. This research is a quantitative study. The researcher utilized questionnaires to collect data. The sample used in this study consists of 300 restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province. The statistical methods used for analysis include frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and chi-square analysis. 1) The purchasing behavior of pork among restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province, reveals that the majority of respondents purchase pork by traveling to select and inspect the quality themselves at fresh markets/flea markets, as well as from shops opened by producers. The volume of pork purchased per time ranges from 5 to 10 kilograms, with purchases made every other day. Pork belly is the most frequently purchased cut. The primary considerations for selecting pork are product quality, cleanliness, and freshness. 2) Demographic characteristics such as gender, age, and education level do not have a statistically significant relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators at the 0.05 level. However, demographic characteristics such as the duration of business operation, type of restaurant, number of daily customers, and average daily income (in baht) are significantly related to the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators at the 0.05 level. 3) Overall motivational factors related to the product, product quality, price, distribution channels, and sales promotion do not have a statistically significant relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators at the 0.05 level. However, motivational factors related to the product, price, and sales promotion are significantly related to the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in terms of purchasing channels at the 0.05 level.

Keywords: Restaurant operators, pork meat, purchasing behavior

1. Introduction

The current economic climate presents numerous challenges for businesses. Amidst these circumstances, the Southeast Asian region has experienced relatively lesser impact compared to other regions globally. This is attributed to its inherent resilience and potential for recovery, enabling forecasts regarding the situation and opportunities for various industrial sectors in 2023 (National Electronics and Computer Technology Center, 2022) ^[5].

In October 2022, the Thai economy showed signs of recovery driven by domestic demand, including both private consumption and investment. It is projected that in 2023, the economy will expand at an annual rate of 3.5%. Furthermore, it is expected that 29.5 million international tourists will visit Thailand in 2023, representing a growth of 164.6% per year. Revenue from international tourism is anticipated to reach 1.30 trillion baht, an increase of 255.9% from 2022 (Minister of Finance, 2023).

The restaurant industry benefits from the normalization of domestic economic activities and the resurgence of tourism. According to a survey conducted by the National Statistical Office on Thai food consumption behavior, 59,066,157 people, accounting for 95.78% of the total population, consume meat and animal products (The Swine Raisers Association of Thailand, 2023) ^[10].

In 2023, pork consumption is projected to reach 1.30 million tons, an increase of 13.04% from 1.15 million tons in 2022. This growth is driven by economic recovery, particularly in the tourism and service sectors, leading to increased demand for pork. In terms of production, it is estimated that 17.47 million pigs will be produced in 2023, up 12.66% from 15.51 million in 2022. This increase is due to the rise in the number of breeding sows, which will enhance production capacity (The Swine Raisers Association of Thailand, 2023) ^[10].

Previous research has examined the costs associated with restaurant businesses, highlighting that raw material costs account for 25-30% of sales. Therefore, restaurant operators must meticulously plan their raw material management. Studying the factors influencing pork purchasing decisions among restaurant operators is directly beneficial to stakeholders in the pork industry, including both producers and traders. It provides insights into aligning with consumer demands and serves as a guideline for adapting to the current pork trade business environment.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the purchasing behavior of pork among restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province.
2. To investigate the factors related to the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province.

2. Literature Review

This research on the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province, incorporates relevant concepts, theories, and previous studies to guide this investigation. The literature review includes:

2.1. Concepts and theories related to purchasing behavior

2.1.1. Consumer Behavior Definition

Kotler and Keller (2009) ^[3] define consumer behavior as the process by which individuals, groups, and organizations select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants.

2.1.2. Stages of the Buying Decision Process

The consumer buying decision process is divided into five stages as follows (Kotler & Keller, 2012) ^[4]:

1. Need Recognition: This is the starting point of the

buying decision process, which can be triggered by internal or external stimuli, such as hunger or thirst.

2. Information Search: Once consumers recognize a need, they are likely to seek more information about the product.
3. Evaluation of Alternatives: Consumers process information about different brands and make comparative evaluations, involving complex and diverse processing methods.
4. Purchase Decision: Consumers form an intention to purchase the product they find most satisfying.
5. Post-Purchase Behavior: Consumers experience feelings toward the product that influence whether they will repurchase it and whether they will speak positively or negatively about the product to others.

2.2. Concepts and Theories on Entrepreneurial Characteristics

Hatten (2006) ^[2] defines an entrepreneur as an individual who seeks opportunities and benefits in business, possessing knowledge and understanding of finance, raw material management, and the ability to face risks in initiating or running a business. The behavioral characteristics of entrepreneurs are as follows:

1. Creation: Initiating and starting new businesses.
2. Innovation: Developing new products and managing organizations through innovative processes.
3. Risk Management: Taking responsibility for managing risks.
4. General Management: Implementing business management strategies.
5. Performance Intention: Aspiring for profitability.

2.3 General Knowledge about Pork Products

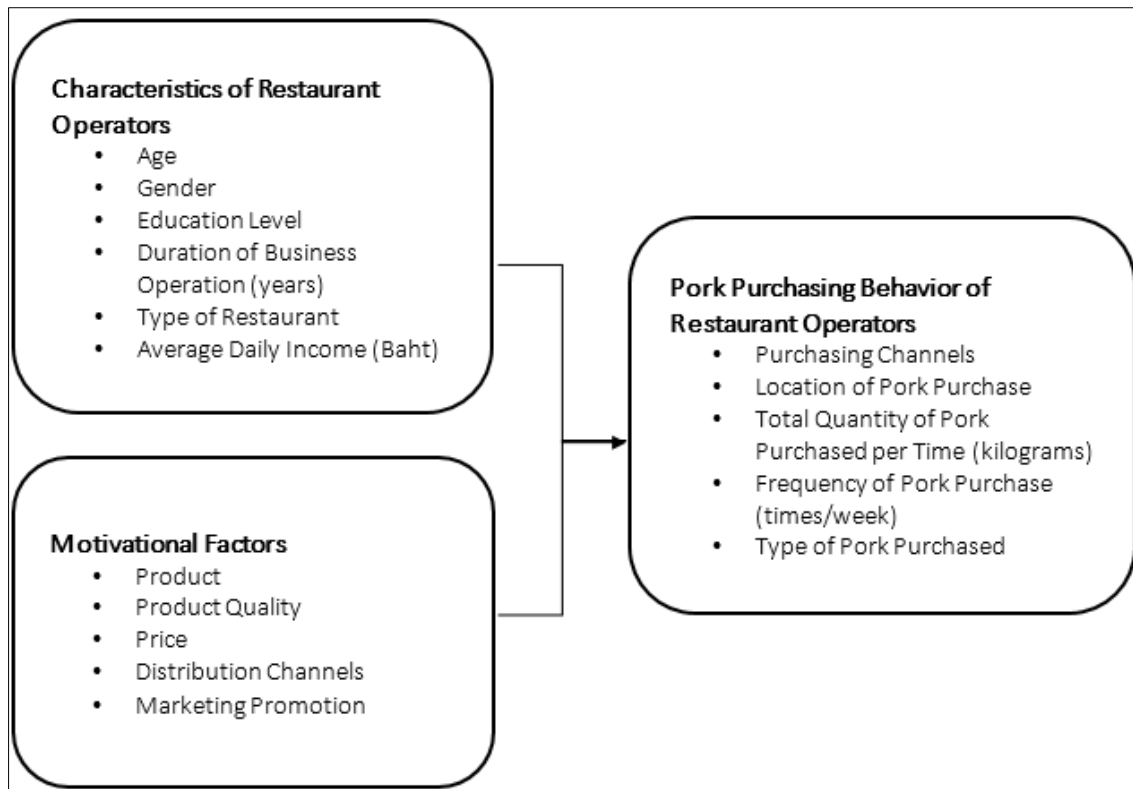
2.3.1. Pork Production

The pork production process (Pork, Pork Standard) involves converting live pigs into pork. This process takes place in slaughterhouses and includes measures to prevent contamination of meat by pathogens during production, ensuring the meat is of high quality and safe for consumers (The Swine Raisers Association of Thailand, 2017) ^[9].

2.3.2. Trends in Thailand for 2023

In terms of production, it is projected that in 2023, 17.47 million pigs will be produced, an increase of 12.66% from 15.51 million in 2022. Pork consumption is expected to reach 1.30 million tons, up 12.58% from 1.15 million tons in 2022. The export of chilled, frozen, and processed pork is expected to increase slightly or remain similar to 2022. The price of pork at the farm gate is anticipated to stabilize or decrease slightly compared to 2022, due to the expected increase in pork production, which aligns with the rising consumption demand.

2.4. Research Conceptual Framework



3. Research Methodology

3.1. Population and Sample Group

The population for this study consists of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province. The exact population size is unknown. The researcher used the G*Power software to determine the sample size, resulting in a total of 300 samples for this study.

3.2. Data Collection Instruments

This study is a quantitative research. The research instrument used in this study is a questionnaire concerning the characteristics and factors influencing the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province. The questionnaire is divided into three parts.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS software to process and analyze the collected data. The statistical methods used for analysis include:

- Descriptive Statistics: This method was used to analyze data related to the following:
 1. Characteristics of restaurant operators: percentage, mean, and standard deviation (S.D.).
 2. Motivational factors influencing pork purchasing behavior: percentage, mean, and standard deviation (S.D.).
 3. Pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators: percentage, mean, and standard deviation (S.D.).
- Inferential Statistics: This method was used to test the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables.

4. Results

This study investigates the “Pork Purchasing Behavior of Restaurant Operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province.” The researcher collected data through 300 questionnaires and analyzed the data using the SPSS software. The results of the data analysis are as follows:

4.1. Demographic Information of Respondents

The majority of the respondents were female, accounting for 187 individuals or 62.30%. Most respondents were aged between 20 and 30 years, totaling 189 individuals or 63.00%. Regarding educational level, 225 individuals or 75.00% had a bachelor's degree. In terms of business operation duration, 169 respondents or 56.30% had been operating their business for between 1 to 5 years. There were 90 restaurants or 30.00% that were classified as à la carte restaurants. Additionally, 111 restaurants or 37.00% had between 20 to 40 customers per day, and 129 respondents or 43.00% had an average daily income of 4,000 baht or more.

4.2. Motivational factors influencing pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani district, Surat Thani province

Table 1: Shows the motivational factors for pork purchasing among restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province

Motivational Factors	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level of Agreement
Product Factors	4.46	0.708	Very High
Product Quality Factors	4.56	0.679	Very High
Price Factors	4.38	0.791	Very High
Distribution Channel Factors	4.31	0.869	Very High
Marketing Promotion Factors	4.11	1.021	High
Overall	4.36	0.813	Very High

When considering the results of the study on the motivational factors for pork purchasing among restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province, which include product aspects, product quality, price, distribution channels, and sales promotion, it was found that the overall average was 4.36, corresponding to the highest level of agreement. When ranking the motivational factors for pork purchasing from highest to lowest, the sample prioritized product quality the most, with an average of 4.56. This was followed by product aspects with an average of 4.46, price with an average of 4.38, distribution channels with an average of 4.31, and sales promotion with an average of 4.11, respectively.

4.3 Purchasing behavior characteristics of Pork among restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani province

When considering the results of the study on the purchasing behavior characteristics of pork among restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province, it was found that the majority of respondents, 150 restaurants or

50.00%, travel to select and inspect the quality of pork themselves. They purchase pork from fresh markets/flea markets, totaling 92 restaurants or 30.70%, equal to those purchasing from shops opened by producers such as CP, Betagro, and others. The total quantity of pork purchased per time ranges from 5 to 10 kilograms, with 133 restaurants or 44.30%. Pork is purchased every other day by 119 respondents or 39.70%, with pork belly being the most frequently purchased cut, totaling 212 respondents or 25.80%. Pork is purchased with consideration of product quality, cleanliness, and freshness by 276 respondents or 29.80%. The problem identified was the high price of pork compared to market mechanisms, with 123 respondents or 24.60%.

4.4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Research Hypothesis 1: The characteristics of restaurant operators are related to the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province.

Table 2: Shows the relationship between the characteristics of restaurant operators and the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province

Pork Purchasing Behavior	Gender		Age		Education Level		Duration of Business Operation		Type of Restaurant		Average Daily Income (baht)	
	Chi-square	Sig.	Chi-square	Sig.	Chi-square	Sig.	Chi-square	Sig.	Chi-square	Sig.	Chi-square	Sig.
Purchasing Channels	1.316	0.581	15.886	0.415	18.878	0.044*	7.435	0.282	23.825	0.748	27.045	0.000*
Purchasing Locations	3.492	0.479	20.693	0.103	8.351	0.938	20.649	0.056	26.770	0.531	7.417	0.964
Total Quantity of Pork Purchased per Occasion (kg)	0.185	0.980	35.100	0.002*	21.429	0.016*	43.310	0.000*	87.351	0.000*	89.937	0.000*
Frequency of Pork Purchases (times/week)	3.245	0.518	30.905	0.056	22.630	0.012*	29.912	0.021*	52.274	0.004*	43.102	0.000*
Types of Pork Purchased	3.777	0.437	34.417	0.023*	15.200	0.510	14.024	0.229	23.407	0.712	17.533	0.352

*sig. Significant at the 0.05 level

From Table 2, it was found that the characteristics of restaurant operators do not differ significantly in their relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province, at the 0.05 level of statistical significance.

Research Hypothesis 2: Analyzing the relationship between the motivational factors of restaurant operators and their pork purchasing behavior regarding the purchasing channels in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province.

Table 3: Shows the relationship between the motivational factors of restaurant operators and their pork purchasing behavior in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province

Pork Purchasing Behavior	Purchasing Channels		Purchasing Locations		Total Quantity of Pork Purchased per Occasion (kg)		Frequency of Pork Purchases (times/week)		Types of Pork Purchased	
	Chi-square	Sig.	Chi-square	Sig.	Chi-square	Sig.	Chi-square	Sig.	Chi-square	Sig.
Product Factors	63.926	0.041*	61.045	0.251	82.073	0.139	40.113	0.784	61.539	0.969
Product Quality Factors	17.870	0.714	49.196	0.273	50.659	0.196	84.506	0.340	93.969	0.794
Price Factors	42.023	0.043*	62.691	0.098	50.869	0.169	47.283	0.659	94.564	0.579
Distribution Channel Factors	35.935	0.378	361.956	0.000*	39.714	0.479	99.981	0.085	66.634	0.958
Promotion Factors	56.991	0.042*	89.936	0.075	45.246	0.269	51.133	0.510	173.695	0.514

*sig. Significant at the 0.05 level

From Table 3, it was found that the motivational factors of restaurant operators do not differ significantly in their relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province, at the 0.05 level of statistical significance.

5. Discussion

5.1 Pork Purchasing Behavior of Restaurant Operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province

The study on the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani

Province, revealed that the majority of respondents purchase pork by traveling to select and inspect the quality themselves at fresh markets/flea markets, as well as from shops opened by producers such as CP, Betagro, and others. This may be because some pork vendors in fresh markets source their pork from companies like CP and Betagro, ensuring that the quality of the pork is consistent. Additionally, the brand communication from vendors in fresh markets informs consumers about the sources of production, thereby instilling confidence in the pork's quality despite differences in price and location. The total quantity of pork purchased per time ranges from 5 to 10 kilograms, with purchases made every other day. Pork belly is the most frequently purchased cut. The primary considerations for selecting pork are product quality, cleanliness, and freshness. This may be because each restaurant operator has different physical characteristics and environmental conditions, leading to variations in purchasing behavior. This aligns with the theory of Romtheera Jirawiphuset (2021) [7], who defined consumer behavior as the expression of individuals directly related to the use of economic goods and services, including the decision-making process that affects individual expressions, which vary among individuals.

5.2. The Relationship Between Demographic Characteristics and Pork Purchasing Behavior of Restaurant Operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province

The study of demographic characteristics revealed that gender, age, and education level do not significantly relate to the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province, at the 0.05 level of statistical significance. This may be because most respondents were female, aged between 20 and 30 years, and held a bachelor's degree. This demographic profile could reflect the current population distribution in Thailand, where females outnumber males, the predominant age group is under 30 years, and the basic education level is a bachelor's degree. Additionally, this age group is often starting businesses or inheriting family businesses.

In contrast, factors such as the duration of business operation, type of restaurant, number of daily customers, and average daily income show a more significant relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District. This relationship might be attributed to the awareness of daily income, estimated daily sales, knowledge of purchasing methods, and confidence in pork vendors regarding product, quality, price, and familiarity with the vendor. These findings align with Arinrada Chankasem (2019) [1], who studied the behavior influencing pork purchasing decisions among consumers in Tha Muang District, Kanchanaburi Province, and found that differences in gender did not affect the consumer behavior influencing pork purchasing decisions in Tha Muang District, Kanchanaburi Province.

5.3. The relationship between motivational factors and pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province

Product Factors: It was found that the freshness of the product did not have a significant relationship with pork purchasing behavior. However, the ability to select the desired size of pork cuts and the variety of products available were significantly related to the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators. This reflects the reality that operators

who wish to choose their preferred size of pork cuts must travel to purchase pork themselves and prefer to buy various products at a single location. The suitability of pork cuts for specific types of dishes and the variety of products available were significantly related to the frequency of pork purchases (times per week). This may be due to the diversity of menu items and the use of different pork cuts, which influences the frequency of pork purchases. This finding is consistent with Witchuda Madyan (2015) [11], who studied the chicken purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Satun District, Satun Province, and found that product factors such as the ability to choose specific parts were important to operators.

Product Quality: The cleanliness of the product, the credibility and traceability of the production source, and the brand reputation did not have a significant relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators. Most respondents already purchase pork from their regular suppliers, thus ensuring confidence in product quality. However, product standards were significantly related to the location of pork purchases. This indicates that operators seeking standardized raw materials to assure their customers prefer to purchase pork from locations with recognized standards. This reflects the reality that standardized packaging can preserve pork for longer periods. This finding is consistent with Witchuda Madyan (2015) [11], who found that quality factors such as halal certification and credible production sources were important to restaurant operators in Mueang Satun District, Satun Province, when purchasing chicken.

Price Factors: It was found that lower prices compared to other places, and clearly and accurately displayed price tags did not have a significant relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators. Most respondents already purchase pork from their regular suppliers, which often leads to special prices due to established relationships, allowing for price negotiation. However, prices that fluctuate according to market rates were significantly related to the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators. This reflects the reality that orders made via phone or online do not allow for price comparisons in person, leading to fewer price negotiations. The appropriateness of price relative to product quality and fluctuating market prices were significantly related to the frequency of pork purchases (times per week). When prices fluctuate frequently, operators tend to purchase pork more frequently. This finding is consistent with who studied the pork purchasing behavior of consumers in Hat Yai Municipality, Songkhla Province, and found that price was the most influential marketing factor. Consumers tend to purchase products that match their needs and align with their income levels. If a product is priced appropriately for the target consumer's income, the consumer can make a quicker purchasing decision.

Distribution Channel Factors: It was found that the location of pork vendors on main roads with easy access did not have a significant relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators. This may be due to the availability of pork delivery services, making the physical location of the vendor less important. However, proximity to the restaurant, air-conditioned facilities, and the ability to order via phone or online were significantly related to the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators. If the pork

vendor is close to the restaurant, operators prefer to select the pork themselves and choose convenient purchasing channels, such as air-conditioned facilities or phone/online ordering with delivery services. This aligns with Kotler's (2012) [4] theory, which states that physical evidence is a factor influencing customer service choices. It includes the physical aspects of a service business, such as the building, facilities, and equipment, which serve as symbols of service quality.

Promotion Factors: Discounts, pork trimming/cutting/mincing/grinding services, seller's friendliness, and service, as well as purchase contracts, did not have a significant relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators. Most pork vendors provide similar services, but customers tend to prioritize the cleanliness of the premises. Free giveaways, credit systems, free delivery services, and advertising/promotions were significantly related to the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators. Most operators delegate the delivery to the pork vendors for convenience, time-saving, and establishing credit for post-delivery payment. Advertising and promotions were also significantly related to the location where pork was purchased. Advertising by pork vendors helps operators quickly learn about new information and promotions. This finding aligns with Kotler's (2012) [4] theory that promotion involves communication between customers and service providers to create attitudes and purchasing behaviors. Effective communication should consider the appropriateness for customers, products, and competitors to achieve common objectives. Marketing promotion tools include advertising, sales promotions, personal selling, public relations, and word-of-mouth communication.

5.4. Recommendations for Pork Vendors

Based on the study of the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province, the following recommendations are made:

1. Pork vendors should consider appropriate marketing strategies tailored to gender and age demographics. Since most restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District are new and younger entrepreneurs, they have quick access to technology and information, possess strong purchasing power, and prioritize product quality over price.
2. Pork vendors should implement strategies to maintain store standards, obtain certification marks, and ensure the quality of pork. They should provide excellent service, offer prices that align with product quality, and engage in promotional activities such as trimming services, delivery, membership programs, discounts, or credit facilities for loyal customers.
3. From the study of motivational factors and the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, the following recommendations are made:

Product and Quality: Emphasize selecting fresh pork products and guarantee their freshness to build consumer confidence. Establish clear shelf-life guidelines for products or store pork in quantities that can be sold within a reasonable timeframe. Ensure that pork is stored in properly temperature-controlled environments to maintain freshness.

Price: Set pork prices in alignment with market reference prices, ensuring that they do not differ significantly from other vendors in different areas. Additionally, price setting

should consider the income levels of local consumers, enabling quicker purchasing decisions.

Distribution Channels: Pork vendors should ensure that their storefronts and storage areas are clean and hygienic. This might involve renovating the space to make it more attractive, which can help draw customer attention.

Promotion: Vendors should develop expertise in selecting and preparing pork cuts for customers. Additionally, vendors should leverage their experience to provide recommendations on the best cuts of pork for different types of dishes. They should also actively promote their offerings through advertisements, promotions, and discounts for regular customers, as well as organize special events during festive seasons to attract more customers.

5.5. Recommendations for future research

The researcher has the following recommendations for improving the study on the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province:

1. The sample groups should be proportionally divided, considering factors such as gender, age group, education level, and type of restaurant. This may impact the relationship with the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators.
2. Further in-depth or qualitative research should be conducted by interviewing sample groups to obtain more detailed information on the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province.
3. Additional studies should be conducted on other factors affecting the pork purchasing behavior of restaurant operators in Mueang Surat Thani District, Surat Thani Province. This information can be used to adjust strategic and marketing plans, potentially increasing the customer base for pork vendors in the future.
4. Future surveys could explore customer satisfaction with pork vendors and preferences for pork characteristics such as fat thickness, color, smell, and pricing. This would help identify which factors contribute to increased pork sales.
5. Other relevant variables should be studied, such as factors related to attitudes toward service, psychological factors, satisfaction factors, and the purchasing process. These factors are crucial in today's highly competitive pork vendor market and can significantly influence consumer purchasing decisions.

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