

## DETERMINANTS OF GENERATION Y CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY OF OTOP ORGANIC RICE

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### Abstract

Public awareness of environmental and health concerns encourages consumers to consider and consume more organic rice since Thai people eat rice in almost every meal. Small-to-medium-sized enterprises like OTOP organic rice entrepreneurs, having just as much responsibility to the problems as large corporations, generally lack marketing knowledge and skills. Therefore, objectives of this study are (1) to understand the influential factors of Thai Gen Y determining to buy OTOP organic rice; (2) to compare and prioritize each influential factor influencing satisfaction with and loyalty to OTOP organic rice; and (3) to provide decent marketing strategies for OTOP organic rice entrepreneurs. This study surveyed 328 Thai Gen Y in Thailand's Bangkok metropolitan area from January to February 2021. The high affection on both customer loyalty and satisfaction are four (out of ten) most important factors: texture-taste-smell, type of rice, promotion, and shop location having statistically significant differences at the level of 0.01. In addition, the ordering system is important to loyalty. The organic rice OTOP entrepreneurs, therefore, should give high priority to all five mentioned factors in order to create more satisfaction or loyalty by their customers. However, we found the factors such as growth location, nutrition, brand, seller, and packaging having low affection on both customer loyalty and customer satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Customer Satisfaction, Customer Loyalty, Gen Y, OTOP, Organic Rice

### Introduction

Rice is an important cash crop and exporting agricultural product of Thailand. During 2018-2020, Thailand can export rice with a total value of more than 400 billion baht, which is the highest exporting value of agricultural products of Thailand (Thailand

Ministry of Commerce, 2021). Moreover, Thailand is also the world's major rice exporter. With total rice exporting quantity of 45 million tons, Thailand is among the top 3 following India and Vietnam as the top rice exporters in the world market (United States Department of Agriculture, 2021). However,

the current competition in agricultural products is not on the quantity but the quality by focusing on value-adding. People are more concerned about health and environmental issues, seek food products with higher nutrition and are free from chemical residues (Thailand Rice Department, 2021).

Organic rice is rice obtained from the organic production process, a production method that does not use chemicals or synthetic substances such as chemical fertilizers or plant growth regulators, herbicides, and insecticides at all stages of production, including the storage of products (Tsakiridou et al., 2008). Organic products become public attention regarding both health and environmental concerns as they employ the environmentally sustainable process. However, this organic process creates higher production costs, and consumers need to pay a higher price to acquire such organic products (Barbosa et al., 2015).

There are many factors affecting customer satisfaction and customer loyalty to organic rice. Regarding the food product, food liking is the most important factor affecting the level of satisfaction. Food liking means the like of food taste (Liem & Russel, 2019). This is consistent with a previous study using the qualitative approach to find the determinants of food satisfaction. The results showed that there were many factors linked to the feeling of satisfaction. However, it is clear that the sensory experience is the main determinant of customer satisfaction with food (Andersen & Hyldig, 2015). Another study showed that

the sensory perception was thought of as the perceived quality of food though consumers may have a negative predisposition towards such food (José Sanzo et al., 2003). In many studies, the important determinant of satisfaction with food is taste (Radman, 2005).

Besides food taste, other factors that consumers consider in purchasing food include freshness, price, healthy diet, habit, and family (Lennernas et al., 1997). For various kinds of food, the important factors can be different. The important factors that consumers consider in purchasing fruits and vegetables are freshness, nutrition, and appearance (Wandel & Bugge, 1997). Meanwhile, the factors that consumers consider in purchasing fresh meat are freshness, taste, healthiness, quality, and free-of-hormones (Verbeke, 2001).

Moreover, the previous study about determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty in the rice industry reported that the effect of service quality on customer loyalty was mediated by customer satisfaction (Nugroho et al., 2020). Bad service quality can lead to customer dissatisfaction and the business will not be able to retain its customers.

Therefore, OTOP entrepreneurs must understand consumers' attitudes towards the consumption and purchase decision of organic rice. This understanding can help entrepreneurs to select and employ the right marketing strategies. Therefore, this paper aimed to examine the factors affecting customer satisfaction and customer loyalty of OTOP organic rice. There are 10 factors including

promotion, packaging, seller, brand image, growth location, type of rice, nutrition, texture-taste-smell, shop location, and payment order system.

The contribution of the study is generally to help local organic rice farmers better understand their customers to increase their sales volumes and eventually develop sustainable OTOP organic rice business.

### **Objectives**

1. Understand the influence factors of Thai Gen Y determine to buy organic rice.
2. Compare and prioritize each influence factor influencing customer satisfaction and customer loyalty of OTOP organic rice.
3. Provide decent marketing strategies for OTOP organic rice entrepreneurs to develop a sustainable OTOP organic rice business.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Promotion**

Promotion is an important consideration in developing marketing strategies as a component of marketing mixes or 4Ps. In general, organic food is usually priced over convention food. It is crucial to promote organic products so that potential customers can recognize them and get more information about such organic products (Dašić et al., 2019). The study about the impact of sale promotion of organic food shows that sale promotions can affect the purchase of organic food, especially for discounting and free giving away (Liang et al., 2017). Another study reports the promotion can positively affect

the level of customer satisfaction that would finally lead to a positive effect on behavioral intention (Kim et al., 2019).

#### **Packaging**

The package of products is what customers can see and can provide both an aesthetic look and crucial information about the product. Organic food requires clear communication, like product labeling that can offer valuable characteristics to attract customers (Cucchiara et al., 2015). The previous study about the purchase decision of organic rice shows that people consider the packaging that makes organic rice easy to be stored and it is moderately important to their purchase decision (Kusno et al., 2021). Another study shows the positive relationship between the organic label on the package of organic food and the level of customer satisfaction (Kim et al., 2013).

#### **Seller**

A seller or a salesperson interacts directly with customers during the process of purchase decision-making and should play an important role in customer satisfaction. The previous study shows that customers are more satisfied with customer-oriented salespersons, eventually leading to satisfaction with the product (Goff et al., 1997). Besides customer orientation, other behaviors of salespersons like ethical behavior and listening behavior are also important to the level of customer satisfaction (Zia & Akram, 2016).

#### **Brand Image**

The brand is crucial to business success and can be considered as a point that can differentiate the product offered by the

company from its competitors (Wood, 2000). The previous study shows the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and brand in terms of brand name and brand experience (Uca & Çavuşgil Köse, 2013). Moreover, both brand and trust are the important factors leading to customer loyalty in attitudinal loyalty, like commitment to the brand, and behavioral loyalty, as the intention to repurchase with the same brand (Taylor et al., 2004).

### **Growth Location (Origin)**

The origin of food, like the country of origin, is considered to be one of the credentials (Maesano et al., 2020). In the process of decision making, the experience attributes can be verified after the purchase in the period of consuming, but the credence attributes are difficult to be verified even after consuming (Loureiro & Umberger, 2007; Darby & Karni, 1973; Karunamoorthy & Till, 2002). The previous study shows that the customers are sometimes concerned about the origin of food rather than its brand in their purchase decision (Roosen et al., 2003).

### **Type of Rice**

There are many types of rice. The popularity of consuming different types of rice may be varied. In Thailand, white jasmine rice is the most popular type of rice due to its desirable properties in terms of tenderness and good smell (Thanananta et al., 2012). The previous study shows that the most popular type of rice is white jasmine rice, but they also consume the mix of white jasmine rice with other types of rice, including brown rice, rice berry

rice, and aromatic black rice (Ruekkasaem & Sasananan, 2017). Therefore, the different types of rice can alter the level of satisfaction in rice consumption.

### **Nutrition**

The important reason for purchasing organic food is that customers perceive that the organic food is more nutritious than their counterpart conventional food (Magkos et al., 2003). The customers who are aware of nutrient information or other related food information that is favorable to their health will have more positive attitudes (Kozup et al., 2003). Therefore, the visibility of nutrition values should help convince customers about the healthiness of organic food (Konuk, 2019).

### **Texture-Taste-Smell (TTS)**

People evaluate various factors that lead to the satisfaction level of food consumption. The previous study shows that the level of food satisfaction can be altered by the level of expectation, satiety, and healthiness, but the most important factor is the sensory experience (Andersen & Hyldig, 2015). The sensory experience in food includes taste and texture, smell, and temperature (Korsmeyer & Sutton, 2011). The important drivers in considering food choice are taste, smell, and appearance, which can be wholly known as food liking, but taste liking mostly contributes to food choices (Liem & Russel, 2019).

### **Shop Location**

Convenience in purchasing food may be an important factor considered by customers. Customers consider convenience as the ability to reduce their non-monetary costs in acquiring

specific goods or services. The level of convenience can considerably affect their evaluation of satisfaction level (Berry et al., 2002). In addition, the shop location can alter the level of customer satisfaction as it is a part of convenience for customers (Léo & Philippe, 2002).

### Order System

In off-line purchases, the shop location is considered by customers because they need to make an effort to visit the shop for purchasing goods. However, for online purchases, the order system is the interface that customers use to acquire goods. The previous study shows that the ease of the ordering system is one of the important factors in the decision-making process that affects customer satisfaction in online shopping (Karim, 2013). Moreover, the level of service reliability, like the accuracy of order fulfillment, is the crucial factor that can make customers feel satisfied or dissatisfied (Yang & Fang, 2004).

### Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

The above reviews are potential factors that may affect the level of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Kataria and Saini (2019) also showed the evidence about the mediation effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty. In their study, the impact of perceived value and perceived cost on customer loyalty is partially mediated by customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, the impact of lifestyle and brand trust on customer loyalty are fully mediated by customer satisfaction. Another study in the rice industry showed the effect of service quality on customer loyalty was mediated by customer satisfaction and bad service quality can lead to customer dissatisfaction and attribution (Nugroho et al., 2020).

Based on the above literature review, the conceptual framework can be illustrated in Figure 1.

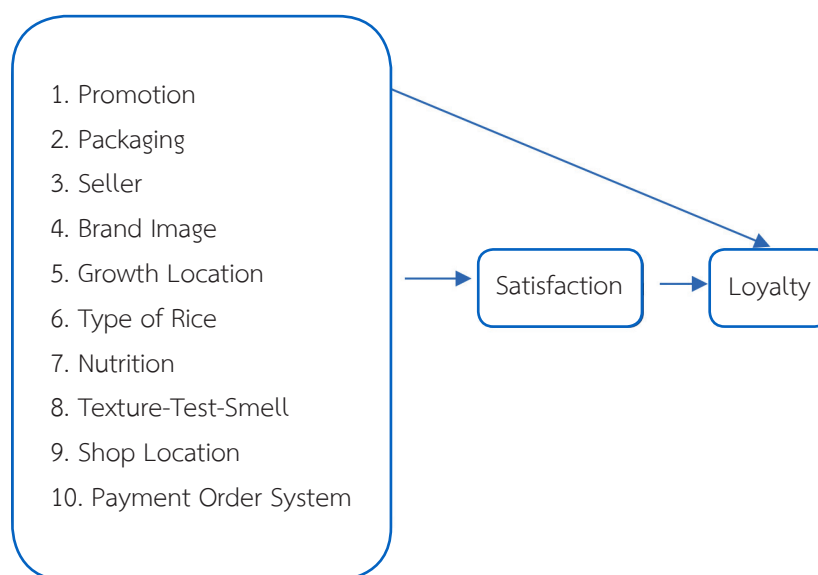


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

## Methodology

This study employs both qualitative and quantitative research designs. The qualitative research was employed to explore and identify possible influential factors affecting buying OTOP organic rice of Gen Y consumers. Then the quantitative research was applied to statistically confirm the effect of these key influential factors on satisfaction (short-term effect) and loyalty (long-term effect). Under the qualitative research design, a total of three focus groups and 25 in-depth interviews were conducted in December 2020 in the Bangkok metropolitan area. The population of both qualitative and quantitative research in this study is Thai people who have experience in purchasing and consuming OTOP organic rice. Moreover, this study focuses only on those who are 17-25 years old as they are the next generation, including university students and first jobbers. The quantitative research was conducted by a person-administered questionnaire survey. The data was collected from 328 Thai Gen Y who have experience in regularly purchasing and consuming OTOP organic rice in the Bangkok metropolitan area from January to February 2021. The sampling method is purposive sampling by selecting respondents who were eating organic rice regularly at least once a month and decided to purchase organic rice by themselves. The screening questions were included in the questionnaire to ensure that the respondents met the above criteria.

Based on the qualitative research findings, the questionnaire was designed to elicit Gen Y

organic rice consumers' journey and their views on organic rice, especially the influential factors. The questionnaire, therefore, was constructed and divided into three parts: (1) demographic profiles, (2) organic rice purchasing and consuming behavior and influential factors affecting customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (organized by customer's journey pattern), and (3) suggestions and recommendations on the influential factors of the organic rice. The content validity of a questionnaire was inspected by experts who have experience in the organic rice industry in Thailand. Moreover, to ensure the quality control of information in the data collection, an interviewer-administered questionnaire was employed. Each respondent was interviewed with voice-recording by a member of the research team.

After gathering the data, statistical methods such as Factor Analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) were applied to analyze the data. The confirmatory factor analysis is employed to determine a smaller set of influential factors. After that, the impact of these factors on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is examined by structural equation modeling. Then, the result from structural equation modeling (SEM) is further analyzed in the form of the total effect.

## Results and Discussion

The demographic profiles and general behavior in eating and purchasing organic rice of respondents are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1** Demographic Profiles and General Behaviors of Respondents (n = 328)

Variable	Number of Respondents	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
male	134	40.8
female	194	59.2
<b>Occupation</b>		
university student	257	78.4
first jobber	71	21.6
<b>Monthly Income</b>		
less than 12,000	51	15.6
12,000-15,000	131	39.9
15,001-20,000	88	26.8
more than 20,000	58	17.7
<b>Residence</b>		
inner BKK	177	54.0
outer BKK	63	19.2
outskirt	88	26.8
<b>Number of Family Members</b>		
1 person	56	17.1
2 persons	59	18.0
3 persons	63	19.2
more than 3 persons	150	45.7
<b>Frequency of Eating Organic Rice</b>		
less than once a week	22	6.7
once a week	83	25.3
2-3 times a week	101	30.8
every day	122	37.2
<b>Frequency of Purchasing Organic Rice</b>		
every week	42	12.8
every month	194	59.1
every two months	71	21.6
more than 2 months	21	6.4



From Table 1, out of 328 respondents who participated in the survey, the majority were female (59.2%), and their ages ranged from 17 to 25 years. The sample was all Thais and predominantly university students (78.4%; with the remaining 21.6% were first jobbers). 84.4% of the respondents had monthly income/allowance higher than 12,000 baht, while 15.6% of them had monthly income/allowance of less than 12,000 baht). 54.0% of the respondents stayed in inner BKK and 54.3% of the respondents had numbers of family members of less than or equal three persons. 93.3% of the respondents were eating organic rice at least once a week, while 37.2% of them were eating organic rice normally every day. Thus, 71.9% of the

respondents made purchases of organic rice at least once a month. The Cronbach's alpha in this study is 0.819 that exceeds the recommended level of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). The content validity came from the qualitative research findings and the expert reviews.

The result of confirmatory factor analysis shows that there are ten factors: Promotion, packaging, seller, brand image, growth location, type of rice, nutrition, texture-taste-smell, shop location, and payment & order system. These ten factors are included in the structural model with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The final structural model is shown in Figure 2, and the conventional model fit measures are reported in Table 2.

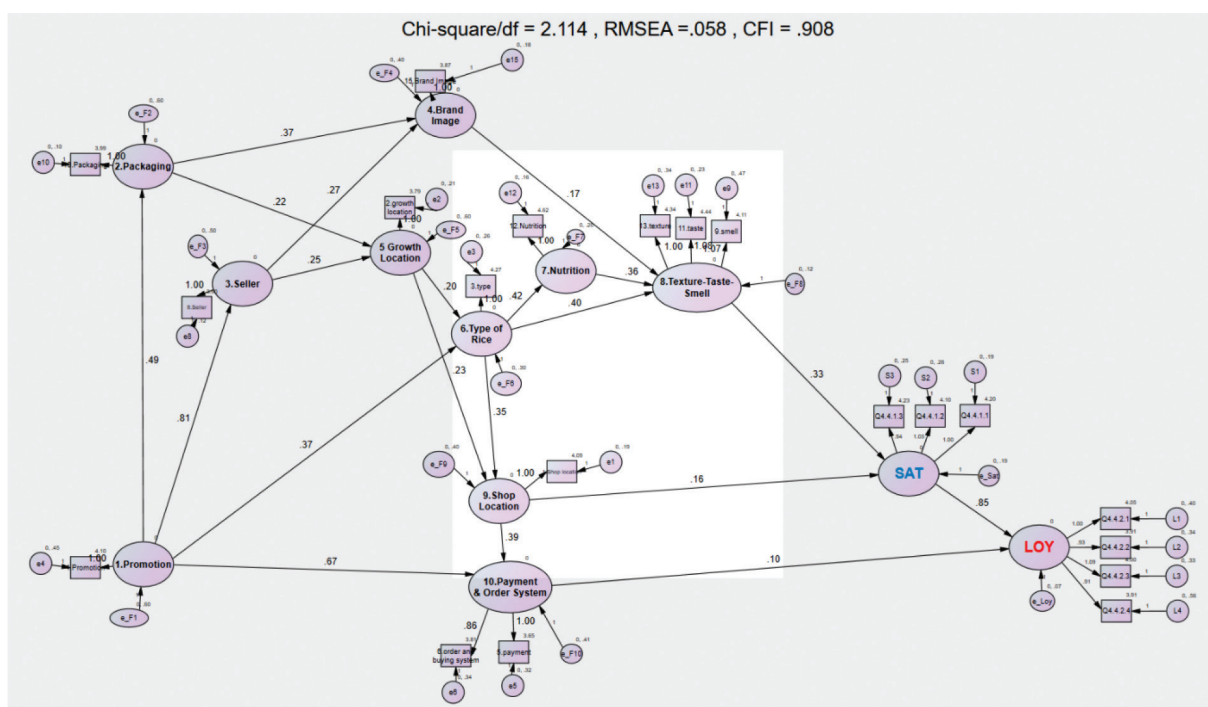


Figure 2 Structural model in AMOS



**Table 2** Model Fit Measures in AMOS

Measure	Estimate	Threshold
CMIN/DF	2.114	Between 1 and 3
CFI	0.908	> 0.95
SRMR	0.058	< 0.08
RMSEA	0.058	< 0.06
PClose	0.057	> 0.05

Based on the various model fit from structural equation modeling in Table 2, the minimum discrepancy per degree of freedom (CMIN/DF) is 2.114, which is within the suggested threshold. The comparative fit index (CFI) is 0.908, which is acceptable. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) is 0.058, and the Root Mean Squared Error Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.058. Both

show that the model fit is good as the error or residual is less than the suggested threshold. Finally, the p-value of the close-fitting model is 0.057, meaning that the alternative hypothesis that RMSEA is greater than 0.05 cannot be rejected at a 5% significance level. Overall, this can be concluded that the model fit is good. The standardized regression weights are reported in Table 3.

**Table 3** Standardized Regression Weights

Measure	Standardized Regression Weight	Critical Ratio
Seller <- Promotion	0.662	10.319*
Packaging <- Promotion	0.438	6.606*
Growth Location <- Seller	0.275	3.972*
Growth Location <- Packaging	0.224	3.237*
Type of Rice <- Growth Location	0.255	3.330*
Type of Rice <- Promotion	0.429	5.381*
Brand Image <- Packaging	0.410	5.887*
Nutrition <- Type of Rice	0.526	6.236*
Brand Image <- Seller	0.320	4.855*
TTS <- Type of Rice	0.472	4.770*
Shop Location <- Growth Location	0.263	3.315*
Shop Location <- Type of Rice	0.322	3.938*
TTS <- Brand Image	0.237	3.831*
Order System <- Shop Location	0.309	4.646*
Satisfaction <- TTS	0.375	5.059*
Order System <- Promotion	0.571	8.216*
Satisfaction <- Shop Location	0.236	3.217*
Loyalty <- Satisfaction	0.799	8.737*
Loyalty <- Order System	0.171	2.934*

\* indicates significant at 5% level

From Table 3, all regression weights are positive and statistically significant at 5% level, consistent with the expected sign from previous studies. In Table 4, we rank the values of Standardized Total Effects on Satisfaction (SAT) and Loyalty (LOY) in descending order.

From the standardized total effect in Table 4, the quadrant analysis is plotted in Figure 3 to show the combined standardized total effect on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty. The mean of total effects on loyalty is 0.17, and the mean of the total effect on satisfaction is 0.18. We use these values as the cutting point to divide the total effect into high level and low level, as shown in Figure 3.

In this study, customer loyalty means the long-term effect on customer engagement, and customer satisfaction is the short-term effect on customer engagement. The first quadrant (1<sup>st</sup>) represents the factors having high affection on both customer loyalty and customer satisfaction. The second quadrant (2<sup>nd</sup>) represents the factors having high affection on only customer satisfaction, The third quadrant (3<sup>rd</sup>) represents the factors having high affection on only customer loyalty. Finally, the fourth quadrant (4<sup>th</sup>) represents the factors having low affection on customer loyalty and customer satisfaction.

**Table 4** Standardized Total Effect on Satisfaction and Loyalty

Influential Factors	Standardized Total Effect on Satisfaction	Standardized Total Effect on Loyalty
Texture-Taste-Smell	0.375*	0.300*
Type of Rice	0.319*	0.272*
Shop Location	0.236*	0.241*
Promotion	0.212*	0.280*
Growth Location	0.143	0.133
Nutrition	0.126	0.101
Brand Image	0.089	0.071
Packaging	0.069	0.059
Seller	0.068	0.059
Order System	0.000	0.171*
<b>Cutting Point (mean)</b>	<b>0.180</b>	<b>0.170</b>

\* indicates the value higher than its cutting point

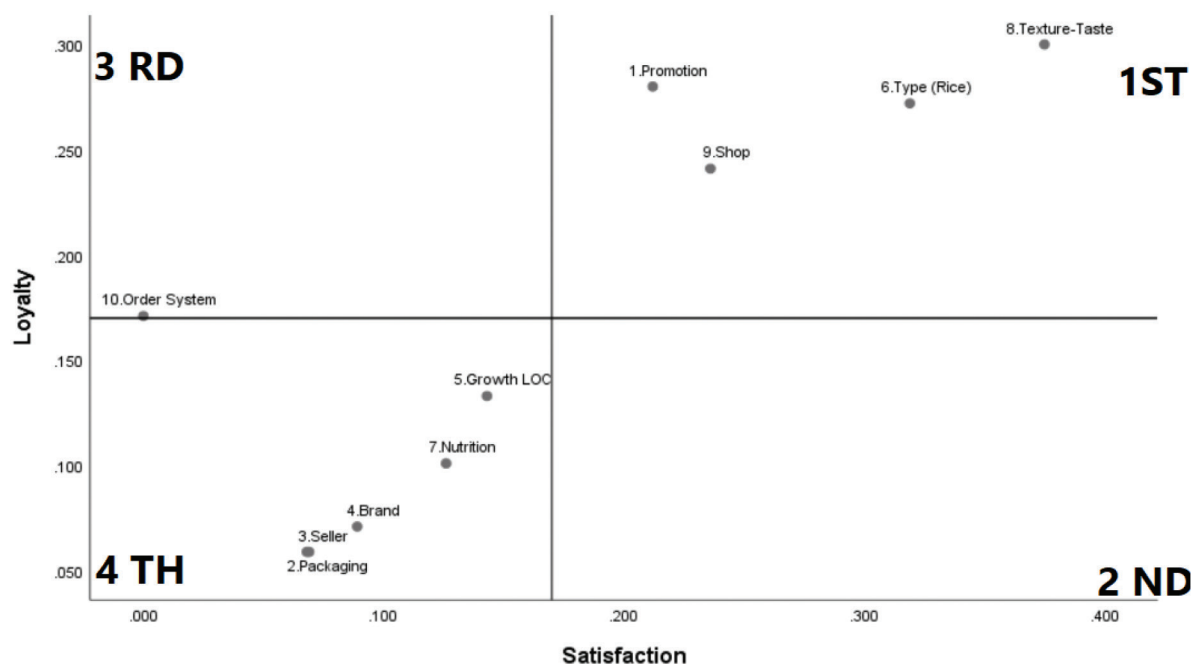


Figure 3 Quadrant analysis

## Conclusion

Based on the first quadrant (1<sup>st</sup>), there are four most important factors: Texture-Taste-Smell, type of rice, promotion, and shop location. These factors have high affection on both customer loyalty and customer satisfaction (long-term and short-term affection for customer engagement). Therefore, the organic rice OTOP entrepreneurs should emphasize these factors in their marketing strategies. Especially in terms of Texture-Taste-Smell, the product research and development should be used to ensure the good taste and smell of their organic rice. They also need to select the appropriate type of rice that serves the needs of consumers. Moreover, they need to make their products easily available for customers to acquire and always develop promotional campaigns for

their customers. Moreover, the order system is in the third quadrant (3<sup>rd</sup>), meaning that it is important to loyalty like the potential of product repurchase. Therefore, the organic rice OTOP entrepreneurs should ensure that they have a good order system in order to create more chances or repurchase by their existing customers.

Some marketing activities/strategies were suggested to a Thai local OTOP organic rice entrepreneur branded TK. All suggestions were under a limited budget of Thai local entrepreneurs. We suggested four activities to make awareness and remember the brand in Figure 4 as follows: (a) set up a billboard in the front of the main local market, (b) local transit, (c) staff uniform, and (d) poster on the public.

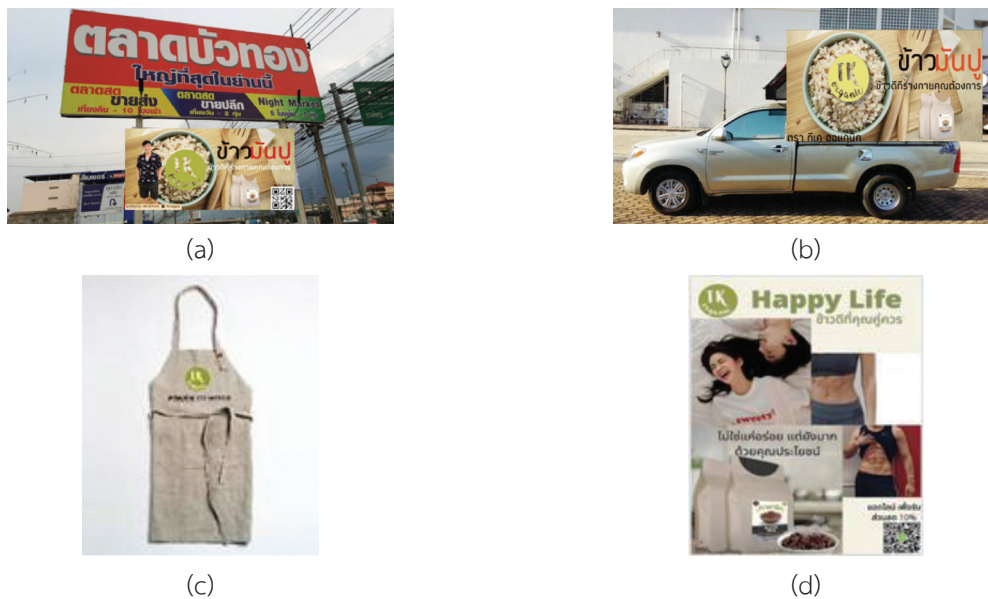


Figure 4 Recommended marketing activities for awareness stage

For the trial and consideration stage in the customer journey, we suggested three activities in Figure 5 as follows: (a) modified

packaging looking clear and modern, (b) valuable Message specific on Texture-Taste-Smell, and (c) independent booths.



Figure 5 Recommended marketing activities for trial and consideration stage

For the engagement stage in the customer journey, we suggested three activities in Figure 6 as follows: (a) Service Mind of Staff, (b) Variety

channels of ordering passed social media, and (c) Sponsorship in the local area.

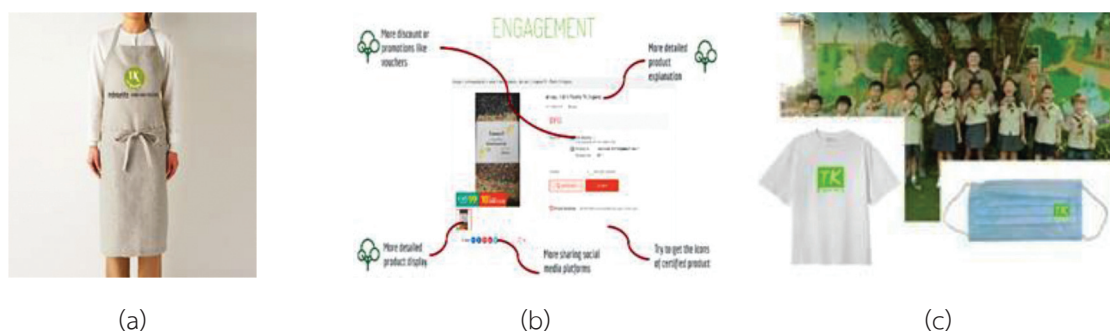


Figure 6 Recommended marketing activities for engagement stage

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