



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Solo Dining Behavior of Thai Solo Travelers in Bangkok

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This research aims to study general information factors, solo dining behavior, and attitudes toward solo dining among Thai solo travelers. Additionally, it examines demographic factors influencing solo dining behavior and attitudes toward solo dining among Thai solo travelers. The study employs a quantitative research approach, surveying 400 individuals who have dined alone and traveled alone in various areas of Bangkok. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents are female, aged 41–50 years old, single, living alone, holding a bachelor's degree, and earning a monthly income of over 35,000 THB. Most work in private companies or businesses, have very good physical health, and belong to the middle economic class. The majority prefer dining alone during dinner at restaurants for convenience, which leads to a positive solo dining experience and a high level of satisfaction. Regarding attitudes toward solo dining, the respondents expressed uncertainty. Furthermore, demographic factors such as gender, age, marital status, physical health, and economic status significantly influence solo dining behavior in terms of meal choices, dining locations, reasons, experience perception, and satisfaction levels. Additionally, gender, age, marital status, education level, monthly income, occupation, physical health, and economic status were found to influence attitudes toward solo dining differently.

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INTRODUCTION

Eating is a social activity that strengthens interpersonal relationships and holds greater significance beyond mere food consumption (Cruwys, Bevelander & Hermans, 2015). However, in modern society, lifestyles have changed, with an increasing number of nuclear families and individuals choosing to live alone. This shift in social structure has also influenced dining habits (Thai Heart Foundation, 2021). The rapid growth of single-person households and the increasing emphasis on individualistic lifestyles have contributed to the rise in solo dining preferences (Shin, 2017).

The social environment significantly influences eating behaviors. Dining with others who consume large portions often leads to increased food intake, while communal meals encourage dietary variety and mindful food choices. In contrast, individuals who frequently dine alone tend to opt for convenience foods such as instant meals, frozen foods, or ready-to-eat dishes, which are typically high in calories. This is particularly evident among those experiencing social isolation, as a lack of motivation in daily life may lead to poor nutritional choices, increased stress, and heightened risks of heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension (Thai Heart Foundation, 2021).

Consumer interest in dining out for relaxation has driven changes in the luxury restaurant sector, emphasizing the "social" aspect of eating out. Special attention has been given to solo dining in public spaces. In the past, dining alone was often associated with solitude. However, Koponen & Mustonen (2022) found that some individuals now actively seek out restaurants that accommodate solo diners, allowing them to immerse themselves in the aesthetic and calming aspects of the experience. As a

result, solo dining has increasingly become an experience centered on aesthetics and personal enjoyment.

A study on the health population in South Korea revealed that individuals who dine alone more than twice a day face a higher risk of heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol compared to those who consistently eat with others. This correlation is particularly strong among men, who are 45% more likely to become obese and 64% more likely to develop metabolic disorders. Other studies have also established links between solo dining and conditions such as depression, obesity, and abnormal body weight (Kwon et al., 2017).

A recent survey by the Hot Pepper Gourmet Eating Out Institute found that 23% of Japanese people dine out alone, an increase from 18% in 2018. Additionally, Pew Research Center (2019) reported that 38% of American adults aged 25–54 live alone, up from 29% in 1990 (VOA Thai, 2024). It is projected that by 2038, more than half of the Japanese population aged 15 and older will live in single-person households. As a result, consumption behaviors are changing, and businesses can no longer ignore the rise of the "solo society"—a trend driven by young, never-married individuals and elderly widowed persons living alone. This shift is not exclusive to Japan; in 2020, approximately 25% of the Chinese population was also living alone, and modern lifestyles have further increased the likelihood of solo dining (Buspathamrong, 2023).

In Thailand, the proportion of single-person households has also increased. According to the National Statistical Office, in 2022, there were over 7 million single-person households, accounting for 26.1% of all households, up from 16.4% in 2012. Most of these individuals are single. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, solo dining was often perceived as unusual, and some individuals felt self-conscious about eating alone in restaurants, fearing that others might view them as lonely. However, the pandemic changed everything. Social distancing became a necessity, and people became more accustomed to spending time alone. Dining out alone became a convenient and safe choice. Smartphones also played a key role in transforming the solo dining experience, serving as a "companion at the table" by providing access to social media, movies, or work-related tasks. As a result, solo dining is no longer just about being alone but is increasingly seen as a time for relaxation and personal management (BrandAge Marketing Resources, 2025).

From a tourism perspective, solo travel has gained rapid popularity in recent years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, which altered perceptions of personal time. Data from Booking.com revealed that the percentage of travelers opting for solo trips increased from 14% before the pandemic to 23% in 2021. Key factors driving this trend include the flexibility to travel without waiting for others, the freedom to set one's itinerary, and the ability to make spontaneous decisions. Technological advancements have also made solo travel more convenient, with applications such as Traveloka and Agoda facilitating comprehensive travel planning, from flight and accommodation bookings to local activity recommendations. Additionally, tools like Google Translate help overcome language barriers.

Content creators sharing solo travel experiences have further contributed to this trend, with influencers such as The Gaijin Trips, I Roam Alone, and Pigkaploy inspiring audiences and demonstrating that the solo traveler lifestyle is not only feasible but also fulfilling. These influencers have also leveraged their platforms to attract brand sponsorships, adding economic value to the trend. Consequently, businesses in the tourism industry must adapt to accommodate solo travelers, implementing tailored marketing strategies such as small-group tours that maintain a sense of exclusivity or specialized services for solo female travelers focusing on safety and comfort.

These factors illustrate how societal and lifestyle changes drive business adaptations. As solo dining continues to evolve in a positive direction, businesses must seize opportunities to enhance dining experiences and ensure enjoyable meals for solo diners. With the increasing number of solo travelers, there is a growing need for research on their dining behaviors. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the solo dining behavior of Thai solo travelers in Bangkok. The findings will be used to develop strategic business management approaches for restaurant operators, tourism businesses, and other relevant industries. Furthermore, the study will contribute to expanding academic

knowledge in this field, as research on solo dining and solo travel remains relatively limited. This presents an opportunity to build upon existing knowledge and establish new academic insights.

Research objectives

1. To examine demographic factors influencing solo dining behavior and attitudes toward solo dining among Thai solo travelers.
2. To study general information factors, solo dining behavior, and attitudes toward solo dining among Thai solo travelers.
3. To apply the study's findings as a guideline for developing business management strategies for restaurant operators, tourism businesses, and other related industries.

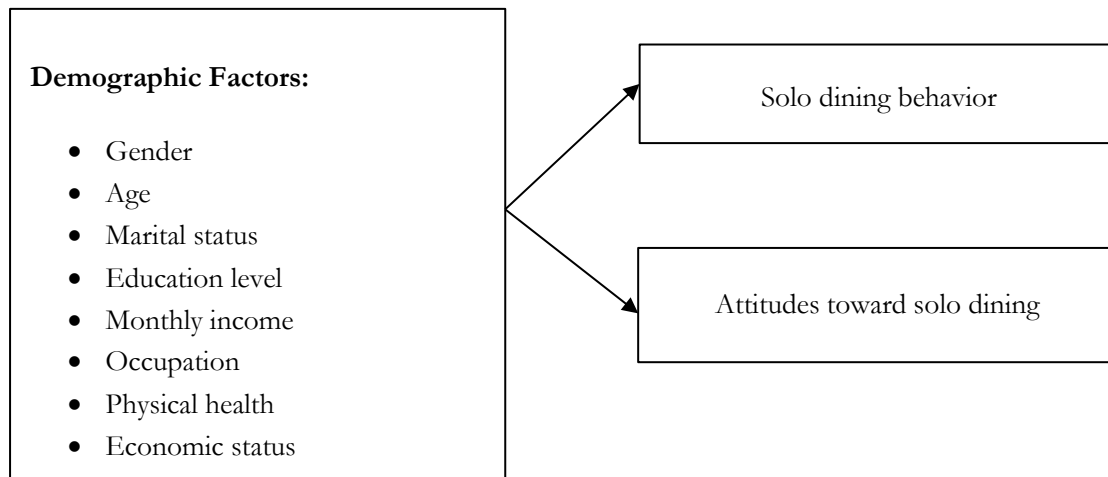


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

Research hypotheses

1. Differences in demographic factors influence variations in solo dining behavior.
2. Differences in demographic factors influence variations in attitudes toward solo dining.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Population and target group

1.1 The population of this study consists of Thai solo travelers. The exact number of this population is unknown.

1.2 The target group comprises individuals who have dined alone and traveled alone in various areas of Bangkok. The sample size was determined using Cochran's (1973) formula for an unknown population, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. The selected sample consists of 400 Thai solo travelers in Bangkok who have engaged in solo dining. The sampling method used is simple random sampling.

2. Research instrument

The research instrument used in this study is an online questionnaire designed based on theories, concepts, and relevant research. The questionnaire consists of three sections:

- Section 1: General information of respondents
- Section 2: Information on solo dining behavior
- Section 3: Attitudes toward solo dining

The questionnaire was subjected to content validity testing by experts, and its Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was calculated, yielding a validity score above 0.6. After validation, the

questionnaire underwent a trial test (Try Out) with individuals who had dined alone and traveled alone in Nonthaburi, a group with similar characteristics to the target sample.

To assess reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated, and the questionnaire achieved an internal consistency reliability score above 0.7. Once validated, the questionnaire was used for data collection.

3. Data collection

The researcher collected data independently by distributing an online questionnaire via QR codes to the target sample.

4. Data analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted using the following methods:

1. **Descriptive analysis:** The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze general information and solo dining behavior of respondents. The data is presented through frequency (Frequency) and percentage (Percentage). For analyzing attitudes toward solo dining, the researcher used mean (Mean) and standard deviation (Standard Deviation).
2. **Statistical inference:** The researcher used Independent Simple T-Test and One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) for statistical analysis, processed using SPSS Version 28.

RESULTS

1. **Personal information of respondents:** The findings indicate that the majority of respondents are female, aged 41–50 years old, single, holding a bachelor's degree, earning a monthly income of more than 35,000 THB, and working in private companies or businesses. Most respondents reported having very good physical health and a moderate economic status.
2. **Solo dining behavior of respondents:** The majority of respondents dine alone during dinner, primarily choosing restaurants for convenience. This leads to a positive solo dining experience and a high level of satisfaction.
3. **Attitudes toward solo dining:** The respondents expressed uncertainty about solo dining. A detailed analysis revealed that most respondents strongly agreed that when dining alone while traveling, they tend to pay attention to the nutritional value of their meals and choose solo dining to spend time with themselves and practice self-care. Additionally, they reported that they no longer feel afraid of dining alone while traveling.

However, respondents were uncertain whether solo dining during travel increases the risk of obesity. The social environment was found to have a significant influence on solo dining behavior. Additionally, most respondents disagreed that solo dining while traveling increases the risk of metabolic disorders such as hypertension, diabetes, and high cholesterol. They also disagreed that solo dining is solely caused by loneliness and that it increases the risk of depression.

Furthermore, respondents did not agree that solo dining while traveling leads to unhealthy food choices, such as consuming instant meals, frozen foods, or ready-to-eat meals. However, they acknowledged that solo dining while traveling may lead to lower nutritional intake.

4. Hypothesis testing results

4.1 Hypothesis 1: Differences in demographic factors influence variations in solo dining behavior among Thai solo travelers. The findings indicate that differences in gender, age, marital status, physical health, and economic status significantly influence solo dining

behavior in terms of meal choices, dining locations, reasons, experience perception, and satisfaction levels.

4.2 Hypothesis 2: Differences in demographic factors influence variations in attitudes toward solo dining among Thai solo travelers. The findings indicate that differences in gender, age, marital status, education level, monthly income, occupation, physical health, and economic status significantly influence attitudes toward solo dining.

Table 1: Shows the statistical significance levels in testing Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2.

Variables	Meal (Sig)	Frequency (Sig)	Reason (Sig)	Experience perception (Sig)	Satisfaction (Sig)	Solo dining (Sig)
Gender	0.03	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.05	0.01
Age	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00
Marital status	0.01	0.05	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.03
Education level	0.57	0.84	0.22	0.39	0.07	0.04
Monthly income	0.32	0.09	0.12	0.07	0.62	0.00
Occupation	0.43	0.73	0.65	0.32	0.43	0.00
Physical health	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.02	0.05	0.03
Economic status	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00

Table 2: Summarizes the results of testing Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2.

Variables	Meal	Frequency	Reason	Experience perception	Satisfaction	Solo dining
Gender	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Age	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marital status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education level	x	x	x	x	x	✓
Monthly income	x	x	x	x	x	✓
Occupation	x	x	x	x	x	✓
Physical health	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic status	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

DISCUSSION

The discussion of research findings is structured according to the research objectives as follows:

1. Study of general information, solo dining behavior, and attitudes toward solo dining among Thai solo travelers

The study found that the majority of respondents were female, aged 41–50, single, holding a bachelor's degree, earning a monthly income of more than 35,000 THB, and working in private businesses. They reported very good physical health and moderate economic status. Most respondents preferred dining alone during dinner at restaurants for convenience, leading to a positive solo dining experience and high satisfaction levels.

In terms of attitudes toward solo dining, respondents were uncertain about their views. It was found that travel environments and restaurant settings significantly influenced their solo dining experience. Solo dining presents both benefits and drawbacks for physical and mental health. The shift towards solo travel often stems from a desire to enhance personal well-being, making travelers more inclined to adjust their dining and travel behaviors to create meaningful personal experiences.

However, solo travelers do not always seek solitude. Sometimes, they desire social interactions and group activities, aligning with the findings of Brown, Buhalis & Beer (2020). Their study on enhancing the solo dining experience in restaurants found that, while solo travel is often celebrated, solo dining—especially in the evening—can cause discomfort due

to perceived social judgment. This discomfort can be mitigated through the use of personal items such as books or mobile phones.

Similarly, Moon, Bonn & Cho (2020) explored the enhancement of solo dining experiences through perceived territoriality and found that the physical layout of a restaurant positively affects a diner's perception, leading to greater satisfaction and a higher likelihood of returning. The study also revealed that solo diners' motivations significantly influence their perception of dining spaces.

2. Study of demographic factors influencing solo dining behavior and attitudes toward solo dining

The study found that demographic factors such as gender, age, marital status, physical health, and economic status significantly influenced solo dining behavior in terms of meal choices, dining locations, reasons, experience perception, and satisfaction levels. Furthermore, gender, age, marital status, education level, monthly income, occupation, physical health, and economic status influenced attitudes toward solo dining.

Solo dining and solo travel behaviors are not limited to specific genders or age groups. Moreover, solo dining is not exclusive to travel but also occurs in work environments due to time constraints, location limitations, the need for convenience, and the preference for personal space. These factors contribute to the varying motivations behind solo dining.

The findings suggest that solo dining and solo travel impact both physical and mental well-being, leading to both positive and negative experiences and levels of satisfaction. This aligns with the research of Lahad & May (2017), which examined solo dining, gender, and time perception in public spaces. Their study found that women dining alone in restaurants at night often feel more vulnerable.

Similarly, Seow & Brown (2017) studied Asian female solo travelers and found that when women have no choice but to dine alone, they tend to eat quickly to avoid emotional discomfort or safety concerns. This suggests that solo dining is associated with both internal and external physical and emotional impacts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for practical applications

1. Restaurant business operators can apply the research findings to design and modify restaurant spaces to better accommodate the needs of solo diners.
2. Public health agencies or nutrition-related organizations should communicate and promote awareness regarding the benefits and drawbacks of solo dining on consumer health.

Recommendations for future research

1. Future studies should apply this research framework to different geographic areas to allow for comparative analysis, enhancing the credibility of the findings.
2. Future research should focus on restaurant business operators to gain insights from their perspective and develop practical applications accordingly.
3. Qualitative research should be conducted to validate the findings through in-depth data analysis and to examine the impact of additional influencing factors.

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