

TRANSACTION COSTS AS BARRIER TO ACCESS TO OFFICIAL INFORMATION IN THAILAND

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Abstract: This study investigates both the supply side and demand side of the disclosure of official information according to the Official Information Act B.E. 2540 (1997) in Thailand. On the demand side, it makes the interviews with 8 offices in Chiang Mai about their provisions of official information. On the demand side, it observes the behaviors of 450 people who experience the information acquisition in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Lamphun. Then it calculates the transaction costs including information fee, travel cost, time cost and food cost. It uses Tobit model to quantify the determinants of these transaction costs. It discovers that income, difficulty of the acquisition process and the distance between residence of individuals who request for the information and related state agencies are significant drivers of the transaction costs. It recommends the government according to the demand from people that the provision of updated information online and through the Internet is the best way to reduce the transaction costs and achieve the ideology of the official information release aimed by the law.

Keywords: Official information; transaction cost; travel cost; time cost; food cost

1. INTRODUCTION

Transaction cost plays an important role in people's decision to do activities in the economy. Coase (1988) emphasizes that the transaction cost is crucial for resource allocation. His institutional approach to economics takes into account of the transaction cost that leads to law and regulation as tools to govern and allocate resources among people in the society. The change of transaction costs can very much alter the situations in the economy. According to him, the zero transaction cost will make the bargain between people and government the most efficient which leads to the free market such that prices are the only determinants of the resource allocation.

Butler-Bowdon (2017) supports the arguments of Coase such that economics can be well-understood just only when people learn about the transaction cost. He also mentions that the transaction cost is the ultimate

principle that can summarize the works of Coase for his whole life. The effect of high transaction cost prohibits people to access to some activities while the low transaction cost encourages people to access more to the activities. Even though zero transaction cost may be not true in reality, the use of transaction cost as a tool to control people's behaviors are effective.

Low transaction cost promotes free market. Friedman (1962) insists that free market and not the government is an only way to protect people's wealth and quality of life. This is accordant to Smith (1910) who emphasizes that the wealth of a nation is the wealth of people and not the wealth of government. Krugman (2009) also supports that the political values on the free market can avoid economic inequality in the society.

Low transaction cost also promotes innovation. Baumol (2010) emphasizes that economic growth relies very much on new ideas. Access to information can widen

ideas and generate innovation. Many pieces of innovation are kept confidential by government even though they are not that confidential which cannot be released to public. The information release will be a big pool of information that may boost ideas for people in the country to create innovation in a surprising scale. Lessons from released official information, such as technologies and operational experiences of nuclear power plants can also be learnt internationally to promote growth, prosperity, cautions and safety to mankind (Sudtasan and Suriya, 2014).

In Thailand, the access to official information is restricted until the announcement of the Official Information Act B.E. 2540 (1997). Massive amount of data and information must be released to public for free, or at least with low costs of enquiry. Before that, there are huge transaction costs for acquiring the data and information. Request letters from individuals are proceeded with long time in complicated compounds of official offices. Some are lost during the way. Some are ignored by no reason. Some are granted but at high cost of the release fee.

Such the transaction cost prevents the Thai to access to valuable information kept confidential by government. Statistical data from national surveys, data on number of population in each province, gross domestic product (GDP), Input-Output Table are hard to access. Summary reports of the meeting of Cabinets and other commissions are impossible to be accessed. International agreements made by Thailand and counterparts are recognized as assets of national security.

After the announcement of the Official Information Act in 1997, these kinds of data and information can be retrieved for free from the Internet. It opens up the opportunity for scholars to exploit official data and information to do research. It can be noticed that good econometric models at national level are created after this period for scholars have enough data to build the model. Social movements and protests due to the suspicious decisions of the government also emerge more aggressively after this period when people know what the government have made decisions on public and international affairs. Thailand seems to move toward a transparent country whose people can perform a check

and balance to the government through the release of the data and information.

However, the ideology of the transparency in Thailand is far to be reached. This is because there can be hidden transaction costs that are unobservable and prevent people to access to the data and information. Even though the law assures that people can request for the information and appoints a clear punishment to officials who do not imply the law, many pieces of information are not released to public by intentional delay or misguide in the processing. Most of the cases are related to scandals of the government or agents related to the government.

The doubt of the public that are not explained by the release of clear information can make the government more suspicious on corruptions. Something can lead to protests and fights between people and government. Even though in many cases, people are suppressed by superior power of the government, anger and misunderstanding still exist waiting for the next round of aggressive actions against the government. These are especially cases for people in rural and remote areas who cannot reach for the official information promptly and easily.

The difficulty to travel to access to official information is a crucial transaction cost. Even though the release of information is free or almost free, some pieces of information are not provided real-time on the Internet. On the website of official offices, the retrievable information may be two or three years lagged. Updated pieces of information, if needed by people, should be requested and acquired at the head quarter of the offices located in big cities.

Therefore, the travel cost and related expenditures are obviously the transaction cost for the acquisition of official information. Unfortunately, poor people cannot afford these costs and consequently they cannot access to the information. This generates at least two problems. First, they have no equal opportunity to access to the official information. Second, they may be misled by inaccurate information listen from other people and converted into anger to the government.

It is wise for the government to know, even though by theory people can freely access to the official

information, whether people can really access to the information. Are there barriers cause by misbehaviors of officials or hidden transaction costs including travel costs and related expenditures. Moreover, after the realization of these problems, the government should design easier and more flexible ways for people to access to the official information especially for those who live in remote areas.

This study aims to investigate the demand and supply of official information in order to study what information that people want and what information that can be disclosed by government agencies. Moreover, it tries to measure transaction costs to access to the official information and their determinants. It also suggests appropriate ways to provide official information to people that can help reducing the transaction costs and meet the need of people.

2. THE ESSENCE OF THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT, B.E. 2540 (1997)

2.1. The scope of official information disclosure

Official Information Act, B.E. 2540 (1997) assigns state agencies including central government, provincial government, local government, state enterprise, the state agency affiliated with the parliament, court that not regarding adjudication, organization of professional control, and independent agencies of the state and other agencies as stipulated in the ministerial regulations must disclose general information about the organization to people through the web site of the state agencies.

According to section 9 of the Act, a state agency shall make available at least the following official information for public inspection in accordance with the rules and procedure prescribed by the Board:

- (1) A result of consideration or a decision which has a direct effect on a private individual including a dissenting opinion and an order relating thereto;
- (2) A policy or an interpretation which does not fall within the scope of the requirement of publication in the Government Gazette;
- (3) A work-plan, project and annual expenditure estimate of the year of its preparation; (4) A

manual or order relating to work procedure of State officials which affects the rights and duties of private individuals;

- (5) The published material;
- (6) A concession contract, agreement of a monopolistic nature or joint venture agreement with a private individual for the provision of public services;
- (7) A resolution of the Council of Ministers or of such Board, Tribunal, Commission or Committee as established by law or by a resolution of the Council of Ministers; provided that the titles of the technical reports, fact reports or information relied on in such consideration shall also be specified;
- (8) Such other information as determined by the Board.

Some examples of general information about the organization to people including structure, authority, regulations, and information about the operation of the organization are the command duty officer that has direct effect on private sector, the project plan and the annual expenditure budget, the concession agreement or contract with private-sector or private-sector monopoly rights contract on providing public services, and the information about the procurement of current and backward.

In this case, if any part of the information made available for public inspection under section 9 is prohibited from disclosure under section 14 or section 15, it shall be deleted, omitted or effected in such other manners whatsoever so as not to disclose such part of the information. A person, whether interested in the matter concerned or not, has the right to inspect or obtain a copy or a certified copy of the information under paragraph one. In an appropriate case, a State agency may, with the approval of the Board, lay down the rules on the collection of fees therefor. For this purpose, regard shall also be had to the making of concession given to persons with low incomes, unless otherwise provided by specific law.

2.2. Disclosable information

However, there are historical documents and the information that government can disclose to people but

depend on discretion of the government such as personal information while person is normal person with Thai nationality or normal person without Thai nationality but live in Thailand.

Moreover, there are some kinds of information that government could not disclose to people such as information that may cause damage to the monarchy, information that will cause damage to national security, information to law enforcement performance degradation when exposed; lawsuit, inspection.

According to section 15 of the Act, a state agency or state official may issue an order prohibiting the disclosure of official information falling under any of the following descriptions, having regard to the performance of duties of the State agency under the law, public interests and the interests of the private individuals concerned:

- (1) The disclosure thereof will jeopardize the national security, international relations, or national economic or financial security;
- (2) The disclosure thereof will result in the decline in the efficiency of law enforcement or failure to achieve its objectives, whether or not it is related to litigation, protection, suppression, verification, inspection, or knowledge of the source of the information;
- (3) An opinion or advice given within the State agency with regard to the performance of any act, not including a technical report, fact report or information relied on for giving opinion or recommendation internally;
- (4) The disclosure thereof will endanger the life or safety of any person;
- (5) A medical report or personal information the disclosure of which will unreasonably encroach upon the right of privacy;
- (6) An official information protected by law against disclosure or an information given by a person and intended to be kept undisclosed;
- (7) Other cases as prescribed in the Royal Decree.

An order prohibiting the disclosure of official information may be issued subject to any condition. There shall also be stated therein the type of information and

the reasons for non-disclosure. It shall be deemed that the issuance of an order disclosing official information is the exclusive discretion of state officials in consecutive levels of command provided that, a person who makes a request for the information may appeal to the Information Disclosure Tribunal as provided in this Act.

2.3. The request for information

The request for information is compiled by section 11 and 12 of the Act. According to section 11 of the Act, if any official information is in a condition which can be easily damaged, a State agency may request for an extension of the period for its provision or may provide copies thereof in any such condition as to avoid damage thereto.

The official information provided by the State agency under paragraph one must be the information already subsisting in the condition ready for distribution without requiring new preparation, analysis, classification, compilation or creation, unless it is the case of transformation into a document from the information recorded in the visual or sound recording system, computer system or any other system as determined by the Board. If the State agency is of the opinion that the request is not for the benefit of trade and is necessary for the protection of the rights and liberties of such person or is beneficial to the public, the State agency may provide such information.

The provisions of paragraph three shall not prevent the State agency from creating new official information available to the person making the request if it is consistent with the usual powers and duties of such State agency.

The provisions of section 9 paragraph two, paragraph three and paragraph four shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the provision of the information under this section.

According to section 12 of the Act, in the case where a person makes a request for official information under section 11, the State agency receiving the request shall, notwithstanding that the requested information is in the control of the central office or a branch office of such agency or in control of other State agency, give advice for the purpose of submitting the request to the State

agency exercising the control of such information without delay.

If the State agency receiving the request is of the opinion that information for which the request is made is the information prepared by another State agency and prohibited from disclosure in accordance with Rule issued under section 16, it shall remit such request to the State agency preparing such information for further considering and making an order.

2.4. Complaint and punishment

According to section 13 of the Act, any person, who considers that a State agency fails to publish the information under section 7, fails to make the information available for public inspection under section 9, fails to provide him with the information under section 11, violates or fails to comply with this Act, or delays in performing its duties, or considers that he does not receive convenience without reasonable cause, is entitled to lodge a complaint with the Board, except where it is the case concerning the issuance of an order prohibiting the disclosure of information under section 15 or an order dismissing the objection under section 17 or an order refusing the correction, alteration or deletion of the personal information under section 25.

In the case where the complaint is lodged with the Board, the Board shall complete the consideration thereof within thirty days as from the date of the receipt of the complaint. In case of necessity, such period may be extended; provided that, the reason therefore is specified and the total period shall not exceed sixty days.

The act appoints the punishment for officials who do not follow the suit. According to section 41 of the Act, any person who disobey the restriction or condition of the official information release will be punished at least one year or fined for twenty thousand baht or both. This punishment is strong enough for an official who should obey the law and take action very carefully on any request of the information.

2.5. Limitation of the information disclosure

By the way, the information release can be limited by frequency of the request. According to section 11 of the

Act, if any person making a request for any official information other than the official information already published in the Government Gazette or already made available for public inspection or already made available for public studies under section 26 and such request makes a reasonably apprehensible mention of the intended information, the responsible state agency shall provide it to such person within a reasonable period of time, unless the request is made for an excessive amount or frequently without reasonable cause.

2.6. Protection of national secrets

It is quite risky and sensitive if a person requests for information that can be harmful to the nation. These pieces of information can be still kept secret by the law. According to section 16 of the Act, for the sake of practical clarity as to whether or not and on what conditions official information may be disclosed to any person and for the sake of expediency in having measures preventing its leakage, a state agency shall determine measures for the protection of such information in accordance with the Rule on Official Secrets Protection issued by the Council of Ministers.

According to section 17 of the Act, in the case where a State official is of the opinion that the disclosure of any official information may affect the interests of a person, the State official shall notify such person to present an objection within the specified period; provided that, reasonable time shall be given for this purpose which shall not be less than fifteen days as from the date of the receipt of the notification.

The person having been notified under paragraph one or a person knowing that the disclosure of any official information may affect his interests has the right to present an objection in writing against such disclosure to the responsible State official.

In the case where there is an objection, the responsible State official shall, without delay, consider the objection and notify the result thereof to the person presenting it. In the case where an order dismissing the objection is made, State officials shall not disclose such information until the period for an appeal under section

18 has elapsed or until the Information Disclosure Tribunal has made a decision permitting the disclosure of such information, as the case may be.

2.7. Criticism on the Act

In general, the Official Information Act B.E. 2540 (1997) is good for information disclosure to the public. Many kinds of information can be released to people without fear of violation of law. The release generates much benefits to the public especially scholars who use official data at national level to do research. It is clear that the punishment to officials who do not obey the law is strong enough to make them serve people with disclosable information quite fast.

However, the Act protects many kinds of undisclosed information. It is quite sensitive to judge what kind of information should be kept secret. In this case, people may challenge for the trial but the opportunity to win the case is narrow. It is still subjected to opinion to classify some kinds of information to be out of reach of the public especially those related to scandals of the government.

3. INFORMATION DISCLOSURE OF STATE AGENCIES

This section presents the supply side of the information disclosure of state agencies. This study makes interviews with 8 state agencies in Chiang Mai, Thailand. They are Provincial Labor Office, Provincial Commercial Office, Provincial Statistical Office, Provincial Industrial Office, Chief Financial Office Region 5, Provincial Administrative Organization, Provincial Agricultural Office and Provincial Public Health Office.

Questions in the interviews include types of requested information, type of disclosable and undisclosed information, frequency of information request, access cost, duration of the procedure, characteristics of people who request information, and channels for information disclosure. The details of the information disclosure of these state agencies are listed in Table 1.

4. TRANSACTION COSTS FOR ACQUIRING OFFICIAL INFORMATION

This section presents the demand side of information acquisition through the behaviors of 450 people observed in this study who experience the request of official information from state agencies in Upper Northern Thailand including Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Lamphun province. Then it also calculates the transaction costs associated with the information request.

4.1. Type of information

In Table 2, the most requested information by people is land and house information, 21.1 per cent. The second is civil registration information, 18.9 per cent. These two kinds of information account for 40 per cent of the requests. It shows that people are interested in their personal affairs since the requests are concentrated on the registration of land and house and personal registration. The investigation of corruptions is ess for it can be seen that the request for procurement information and construction project are combined only 4.4 per cent of the requests.

4.2. Motivations for information request

Motivations for information request can be grouped into 3 groups. The largest group is the information request for decision support, 55.56 per cent. The second largest group is the request to respond the duty or job, 31.11 per cent. The request from people who are affected from government projects are relatively small with 11.11 per cent.

4.3. Results of the information request

It is surprising that every request from every one is responded so well from state agencies. In Table 4, there is no single request that is rejected. The acceptance rate is 100 per cent.

4.4. The first transaction cost: The fee

According to the Official Information Act B.E. 2540 (1997), the information release must be free of charge or almost free. The survey result in Table 5 confirms that

Table 1
Information disclosure at some state agencies in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Questions	Provincial Labor Office	Provincial Commercial Office	Provincial Statistical Office	Provincial Industry Office
1. What is the major information that people ask for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate Policy Labor situation Information of Alien labor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial license Registration of intellectual property Consumer price index and construction materials index Border tradeInformation of AEC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statistic information such as the number of population, and the statistical data of each project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate of permission for business Registration of machinery Contract of rent trade of agency
2. What kind of information that can be disclosed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate Policy Labor situation Information of Alien labor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial license Registration of intellectual property Consumer price index and construction materials index Information of AEC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statistic information such as the number of population, and the statistic data of each project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificate of permission for business
3. What kind of information that cannot be disclosed?	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Border trade <p>This kind of information can be disclosed but not too much. It can be disclosed especially about general information. By the way, the information that related to other organizations cannot be disclosed due to security problem.</p>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration of machinery Contract of rent trade of agency
4. The average frequency of information request (times per month)	Less than 5 times per year	2 – 3 times per month	2 – 3 times per month (Some month has no request)	5 – 6 times per month
5. Any cost for the access to information	None	None	None	None
6. Duration of the procedure	Less than 30 minute because the agency had the data in data base already	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asked by Direct message via Facebook: immediately Walk-in to agency : less than 30 minute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not over a day in case of having data already On the other hand, in case of having no data, the officer will suggest people to ask for information at other related agencies. 	20 – 30 minute
7. What kind of people those ask for information?	Student	Entrepreneur Most age between 25 to 40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Private and state organization 	Private or state organization
8. What are the other channels for disclosing the information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Facebook Phone Application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Facebook Phone Email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website Phone

Source: Survey in 2017 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Table 1
Information disclosure at some state agencies in Chiang Mai, Thailand (cont.)

Questions	Chief Financial Office Region 5	Provincial Administrative Organization	Provincial Agricultural Office	Provincial Public Health Office
1. What is the major information that people ask for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retirement procedure Disbursement procedure of state agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement information Information of check price Construction project Project auction Information of business registration Bidding document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant statistic Crop production situation General public relations such as Farmer registration, Registration of Community Enterprise, and Notifications of Plague and Pest infestation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information of consumer protection Information of Plague The number of patient
2. What kind of information that can be disclosed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retirement procedure Disbursement procedure of state agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement information Information of check price Construction project Project auction Information of business registration Bidding document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant statistic Crop production situation General public relations such as Agriculturist registration, Registration of Community Enterprise, and Notifications of Plague and Pest infestation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information of consumer protection
3. What kind of information that cannot be disclosed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal information such as Income of other people The reason of the leaving from the government organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal information such as The information about candidates of election in case of medical report or lawsuit besides working experiences or education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal information such as Personal information of farmer that consist of the number of identity card or address 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information of Plague because there must have official announcement for protect the panic of people The number of patient because of personal information
4. The average frequency of information request (times per month)	30 – 40 times per month	10 – 15 times per month	10 times per month	10 – 15 times per month
5. Any cost for the access to information	None (Some case people have to pay for printing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentary cost: 6 baht per piece of paper (including 5 baht of certificate and 1 baht of copy) 	None	None
6. Duration of the procedure	Less than 15 minute	1 – 2 hours (In case of information that has to be considered such as information of business registration or bidding document, the information has to be considered within 7 days)	5 – 10 minute	1 – 2 hours

contd. table

7. What kind of people those ask for information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Public · Government agency 	Entrepreneur both individual and corporate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Public · Government agency · Private company · Agriculturist · Student 	Public
8. What are the other channels for disclosing the information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Website · Phone · Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Website · Phone · Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Website · Facebook · Line · Billboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Website · Phone

Source: Survey in 2017 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Table 2
Type of Data

Type of information	Frequency (Persons)	Percentage
1. Land and house information	95	21.1
2. Civil registration information	85	18.9
3. Public health	35	7.8
4. Planning and budgeting information	25	5.6
5. Procurement information	10	2.2
6. Construction project	10	2.2
7. Public utility	10	2.2
8. Others	175	40.0
Total	450	100.0

Source: Survey

Table 3
Motivations for information request

Motivation	Frequency (Persons)	Percentage
1. Decision support	250	55.56
2. Response to duty or job	140	31.11
3. Impact of government projects	50	11.11
4. Others	10	2.22
Total	450	100.00

Source: Survey

Table 4
Results of the information request

Results	Frequency (Persons)	Percentage
Accepted	450	100.00
Rejected	0	0.00
Total	450	100.00

Source: Survey

95.56 per cent of the request are free of charge. Only 1.11 and 3.33 per cent of the requests are subjected to near free charge of 15 and 20 Baht which are less than one US dollar per request.

4.5. The second transaction cost: Travel costs

The second transaction cost is the travel cost. In table 6, people who make requests for information living not so far away from the state agencies. The average distance

Table 5
Information request fee

Fee (Baht)	Frequency (Persons)	Percentage
0 Baht	430	95.56
15Baht (Around 0.45 US dollar)	5	1.11
20Baht (Around 0.60 US dollar)	15	3.33
Total	450	100.00

Source: Survey

between their residence and the state agencies are around 15.89 kilometers. The maximum distance is just 50 kilometers. This is less than the distance between a province and another province. It means that people in a province are convenient enough to acquire information within their provinces.

The associated travel cost is around 127.56 Baht (around 3.87 US dollars) on average. The maximum is 400 Baht (around 12.12 US dollars). This travel cost is considerably high compared to the daily minimum wage of 300 Baht (around 9.09 US dollars).

Table 6
Distance between residence of people and state agencies and associated travel costs

Distance and travel cost	Frequency (Persons)	Minimum (Baht)	Maximum (Baht)	Standard Deviation (Baht)	Average
Distance (Kilometers)	450	2	50	10.59	15.89
Travel cost (Baht)	450	16 (USD 0.48)	400 (USD 12.12)	84.58 (USD 2.56)	127.56 (USD 3.87)

Source: Survey

4.6. The third transaction cost: Time cost

The third transaction cost is the time cost. This can be calculated by the time spent for the information acquisition times average income per minute, converted from monthly income. The average time cost presented in Table 7 is around 165.66 Baht (around USD 5.02) with the maximum of 682 Baht (around USD 20.67). Comparing to other transaction costs, the time cost is considerably higher. On average, it is around 30 per cent higher than the travel cost.

Table 7
Time cost for information acquisition

<i>Value of time</i>	<i>Frequency (Persons)</i>	<i>Minimum (Babt)</i>	<i>Maximum (Babt)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (Babt)</i>	<i>Average (Babt)</i>
Value of time	450	14 (USD 0.42)	682 (USD 20.67)	141.63 (USD 4.29)	165.66 (USD 5.02)

Source: Survey

4.7. The fourth transaction cost: Food and beverage expenditures

The fourth and final transaction cost is food and beverage expenditures. It may be quite unfamiliar with people outside Thailand why this kind of expenditures should be included into the transaction costs. The reason is usually the Thai cook at home. They rarely spend for having meals outside for they consider it as unnecessary expenditures that can be covered by cooking and dining at home. In their senses, having meal in a restaurant can cost 2 or 3 times more expensive than cooking at home.

In Table 8, it can be seen that the minimum cost is zero which means that people prepare lunch boxes from home, or rush to finish the information request and go back to dine at home. The average is around 10.22 Baht (around 0.31 US dollars). This food and beverage cost is lower than the travel cost on average.

Table 8
Food and beverage expenditures

<i>Food and beverage expenditures (Babt)</i>	<i>Frequency (Persons)</i>	<i>Minimum (Babt)</i>	<i>Maximum (Babt)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (Babt)</i>	<i>Average (Babt)</i>
Food and beverage expenditures	450	0 (USD 0)	300 (USD 9.09)	41.79 (USD 1.27)	10.22 (USD 0.31)

Source: Survey

5. DEMAND FOR INFORMATION RELEASE CHANNELS AND FACILITIES

It is quite clear that people need the government to provide information through the Internet, 7.58 points out of 10. This is because around 75 per cent of the Thai access to mobile broadband and around 45 per cent

access to fixed broadband in 2016 (Suriya et al, 2017). The access of digital content through mobile broadband also enhances people for the transition to the creative economy (Pruekruedee and Suriya, 2015). Moreover, the provision of digital content and official information online will promote e-Government service that brings about the good image of transparency and care for people (Pruekruedee, Suriya and Niwattisaiwong, 2015). Besides, Saha and Singh (2017) emphasizes that e-Government is a crucial part to build a smart city. Therefore, the improvement of the online digital content is the most responsive to the public demand for information acquisition.

The second channel is the One Stop Service Office, 6.79 points. It is also clear that people do not want to move from place to place within the huge compound of official offices to request multiple types of information. If the government can load all the necessary information that people frequently request at a place, then it is easier for people to come and get the information. This will also reduce travel cost and time cost considerably.

The third facilities is the provision of WiFi in the official compound, 6.62 points. Even though it is not a channel to deliver the information directly, it is a passage to access to online digital content through websites or social media. WiFi offloading can also help people reducing communication cost to connect to the Internet.

Table 9
Demand for information release channels and facilities

<i>Information release channels and facilities</i>	<i>Average score of the demand (Out of 10)</i>
1. Online Information through Internet	7.58
2. One Stop Service Office	6.79
3. WiFi	6.62
4. Call Center	5.61
5. Social Media Information	4.68

Source: Survey

6. DETERMINANTS OF TRANSACTION COSTS

The analysis of determinants of transaction costs uses the Tobit model, in Table 10, censoring only positive value

of the dependent variable (Transaction cost) with regressors including Gender (1 is male and 0 is female), age (years old), income (Baht), difficulty of information request (Likert scaled from 1 to 5), and distance between residence of individuals who request the information and state agencies (kilometers).

The results from the regression indicates that income, difficulty and distance are positively significant to the transaction cost at 99 per cent of confidence. Reasons behind these results are as follows: First, the higher income of an individual, the more time cost and food cost. This is because the time cost accounts for the opportunity cost for the income forgone. Moreover, a

richer man can spend more on lunch or dinner for dining outside.

Second, the more difficulty of the acquisition requires more time of the engagement. This is clearly an increasing time cost. Moreover, it may also increase the travel cost and food cost in case that a person needs to travel many times from home to state agencies for the procedure.

Third, the further distance between residence and state agencies apparently increase the travel and time cost. Thus, the higher transaction cost cannot be avoided for people in rural and remote area who have no choice to acquire the information online but just to travel into the city for the information.

Table 10
Determinants of transaction costs

<i>Dependent variable is Transaction Cost</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>z-Statistic</i>	<i>Prob</i>
Gender	1.462017	110.4636	0.013235	0.9894
Age	-0.021984	2.045155	-0.010749	0.9914
Income	0.010726	0.002819	3.805443	0.0001
Difficulty	143.6892	49.71675	2.890156	0.0039
Distance	21.48688	5.949764	3.611383	0.0003
Constant	-128.2676	242.2738	-0.529432	0.5965
<i>Error Distribution</i>				
SCALE:C(7)	199.3845	60.89984	3.273975	0.0011
R-squared	0.749501	Mean dependent var		608.5333
Adjusted R-squared	0.746108	S.D. dependent var		398.7070
S.E. of regression	200.8992	Akaike info criterion		13.45946
Sum squared resid	17879699	Schwarz criterion		13.52338
Log likelihood	-3021.378	Hannan-Quinn criter.		13.48465
Avg. log likelihood	-6.714174			
Left censored obs	0	Right censored obs		0
Uncensored obs	450	Total obs		450

Note: Tobit model with QML (Huber/White) standard errors & covariance

Source: Estimation by Eviews 3.0

7. CONCLUSIONS

Transaction cost is a barrier for the access to official information. Although, in Thailand, the Official Information Act B.E. 2540 (1997) states that official information must be released to public for free or almost free of charge, hidden transaction costs including travel cost, time cost and food cost prevent people to freely request for important information for their lives.

This study focuses both on supply and demand side. On the supply side, it makes the interviews with 8 state agencies in Chiang Mai, Thailand to observe types of information that can be disclosed to the public, frequency and channels of the requests, users and the associated fee. On the demand side, it investigates behaviors of 450 people who experience the information request with descriptive statistics, calculation of transaction costs and quantifying the determinants of the transaction costs by Tobit model.

The findings show that the information disclosure on the supply side is quite efficient. There is almost no fee for the information release. The atmosphere to serve people is friendly and welcoming. All may reflect the well-designed law such that the punishment to an official who does not obey the law is strong enough to prevent the misbehaving of them.

On the demand side, people are interested much on their personal affairs leaving the investigation of corruptions a small part for the information acquisition. Therefore, the expectation that the information disclosure will bring about the investigation of corruptions by the public is not quite true. It is surprising that no request is rejected. All are responsive very well but at high transaction costs.

A major part of the transaction costs is the time cost. It increases higher when an individual is rich and forgo the income for dealing with the information acquisition. Another part is the travel cost. The further distance leads to higher travel cost apparently and discourage people in rural and remote areas to come into cities to access to the official information. The last but not least is the food and beverage cost. The time-consuming process of the information request force people to dine outside. This drives the transaction cost up especially when the difficulty of the acquisition is higher and require more days to finish.

The recommendation is quite direct. The provision of digital information online and through the Internet is the best choice that can reduce the transaction cost. Nowadays, many pieces of information have been already provided online but not updated. Some pieces of information are two or three-year lagged. Therefore, the heart of the solution is the provision of updated information online.

For some kinds of information that cannot be provided online for some reasons such as sensitivity to national security or personal information that should not be accessible by other people, the creation of One Stop Service Office in the compound of the official offices is preferred by people. It will provide more convenience for people that can reduce the time cost and travel cost. These facilities, therefore, reduce the overall transaction costs and encourage people to access more to the official

information not only to serve for their personal affairs but also to seek for opportunities and ideas for innovation that ultimately improve their quality of lives.

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