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PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING STRATEGY FOR MANGOSTEEN PRODUCTS

CHUTIKARN SRIVIBOON¹

ABSTRACT

The research objectives aimed: 1) to create a product development strategy for mangosteen products; 2) to create a market development strategy for mangosteen products; and 3) to study marketing opportunities for mangosteens product for agriculturists in the Eastern Region, Thailand. Researchers utilised qualitative and quantitative research methods. In the qualitative approach, the main responders were processed mangosteen product distributors, agriculturists, experts and academics, while the sample in the quantitative method was a group of customers those who have bought or consumed processed mangosteen products from Eastern Region agriculturists. The researchers collected data from document analysis and in-depth interviews, creating an open stage for expressing opinions and questionnaires. Data collected from questionnaires was analysed by descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean and percentage. Measurement of influential levels of factors was validated by the triangulation method to interpret the answer of the research objective.

The findings revealed that: 1) the product development strategy for mangosteen products of agriculturists in Eastern Region, Thailand was to improve product quality in terms of packaging and branding; 2) the product development strategy for mangosteen products of agriculturists in Eastern Region, Thailand was to develop the market for mangosteen toffee and channels of distribution; and 3) there were marketing opportunities for mangosteen products of agriculturists in Eastern Region, Thailand since there was more production of healthy processed products and the consumption of mangosteen juice product had gained more popularity. In the next three years, five years and ten years, this will be even more popular because of the good quality of the products. In addition, products such as cosmetics and cleaning products are likely to gain more attention. By extracting the nutrition from the mangosteen peel, these can be used as ingredients in many products since mangosteen had many benefits both in terms of treatments and cosmetics. Therefore, mangosteen toffee had a bright future when compared to other fruit toffee in the market today.

Keywords: product development, marketing strategy, mangosteen products

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural products are potential products for export for Thailand. They help the country continually gain a lot of surplus in marketing profits. In 2012, the export value of Thailand reached 72,966 million US dollars. The total surplus in the year was 5,318 US dollars, which represented a surplus of agriculture product of 248 million US dollars. From the Food and Agriculture Organization information data for the year of 2002, the top four agriculture exporting countries in the world were the United States, France, the Netherlands, and Germany. Thailand was number 15 globally.

One of the Kingdom of Thailand's renowned tropical fruit is the mangosteen. It is delicious and also well-known for all Thai and foreigners. It is called as the "queen of tropical fruit" and was classified as a market fruit in high demand. Apart from being consumed by people in the country, mangosteen is also exported to other countries in many kinds, such as fresh fruits and frozen fruits; this has made more than 10 million Baht per year.

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Mangosteen is a seasonal fruit which produces fruit in May–September. The principle farmlands of mangosteen are located in Jantabiri, Rayong, Trad, Nakorn Sri Tammaraj, and Chumporn provinces. The farmlands of mangosteen are expanding, meaning that products of mangosteen are continually increasing as well. From 1998, an area yield was 73,100 Rai, increasing to 238,715 Rai in 2003 and expected to be 314,277 Rai in 2008 (Office of Agriculture Economics, 2547). The expansion of the farmlands has produced a product increase. The majority of the product has increased; most of them are for inland consumers according to the export and consumption statistical research of Office of Agriculture Economics, which has found that the consumption of mangosteen in the country had reached 89% – the rest (11%) are exported to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and China.

The type of mangosteen exporting can be classified into two types, fresh mangosteen and frozen mangosteen. The proportion of export are 98% of fresh mangosteen and the rest 2% is of frozen mangosteen. From the overall fresh mangosteen export, there is Hong Kong, which consumes most of the fresh mangosteen which is exported from Thailand, 67% of all fresh mangosteen. Frozen mangosteen has been imported by Japan, representing 98% of all frozen mangosteen.

The previous mangosteen strategy is to enhance the amount and value of mangosteen export. The vision of Thailand states that “Thailand must maintain itself as the leadership in valuable mangosteen producing and marketing of the world.” Therefore, mangosteen has been classified as a new product that has potential to be exported in the future. The expectation is to enhance value and the amount of mangosteen and all mangosteen products exporting during 2014–2016. The aim of the amount is to reach 28.94%; this is a 29.39% increase in terms of value. This shows the need to expand the market. Fresh mangosteen exportation is complicated due to the age and product life. It has to be kept at room temperature, and can be kept for only around seven days; after that the fruit will rot. The mangosteen proper storage and logistics is to keep the fruit at a temperature of around 13 degree Celsius and it has to be kept in a plastic punching bag; by doing so, it is possible to keep mangosteen for up to four weeks. However, frozen mangosteen can be stored longer. Similarly, frozen mangosteen can be exported further than fresh mangosteen. Besides, the prices of frozen mangosteen is higher than the fresh one at 44 Baht. For this reason, to export frozen mangosteen as the same amount as fresh mangosteen; however, frozen mangosteen will earn more profit than fresh mangosteen.

According to the aim of expansible exportation, it is necessary to acknowledge the factors which impact Thai mangosteen exporting and to acknowledge market partners of what support has impaired the exportation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- To develop a strategy for mangosteen processed products from Eastern Region agriculturists
- To create a market development strategy for mangosteen products from Eastern agriculturists
- To study marketing opportunities for mangosteen products from agriculturists in the Eastern Region

Population and Sample Group

The population are those customers those who buy or consume the processed mangosteen products from Eastern Region agriculturists.

For the sample group, the researcher researched customers who buy or consume the processed mangosteen product from Eastern Region agriculturists. It is not possible to specify the proper amount of the population. Hence, the researcher has used the determining sample size from Yamane, Taro. The sample size aims to find the numbers of the target group, in order to find the amount of the population by forecast population proportion who are interested; this is 0.5, with a confidential of 95%. Therefore, the overall target group are 400 people. This is established by using convenience sampling by collecting data with prepared questionnaires. The questionnaire was answered by those 400 product consumers.

Target Groups

For the selection of the case study, the researcher's criteria for choosing the case study is characterised by purposive sampling of the processed mangosteen product operators. The researcher's criteria for selecting the case study are as follows:

- Processed mangosteen product operators in the Eastern Region
- Community enterprise group of Eastern Region farmers
- People involved include academics, government officials, and scholars in the field
- Willingness to participate in the research programme

The main informants are the processed mangosteen product operators, farmers, community members, experts and scholars.

Data Collection and Tools Used to Gather Data

The researcher uses the method of data collection by analysis of documents (documentary study), in-depth interviews, community forums and questionnaires.

Documentary Analysis

For the process of preparation and data collection, the researcher used the method of secondary data collection with data research and collection from various associated documents, including academic papers, articles published in media, research, concepts, theories and articles. The content of these were analysed, then summarised and interpreted to answer the objectives and conclude the study results further.

In-depth Interview

Interviews were with the relevant agencies, including both the government sector and civil society, which was the key informants, the processed mangosteen product operators with the characteristics matching the research objectives. In-depth interviews with the key informants included the method of purposive sampling of the key informants related to this study. After the interviews, the selection method of snowball sampling was used for obtaining the samples in the past and at present, which were recommended by the key informants already interviewed, and are knowledgeable and experienced according to the study's objectives.

Community Forums

Data collection also took place by brainstorming from key informants available in greater numbers. The researcher explained the objectives to the target groups. Then small groups were divided up, consisting of up to ten persons per group for small group discussion. The community forums were organised three times as follows:

1. A forum to launch the programme with the participation of the key informants;

2. A forum to study basic information about the community enterprise group, group management, the production of processed mangosteen products, the item condition of processed mangosteen products of Eastern Region farmers;
3. A forum to conclude the programme.

Distribution of Questionnaires

A questionnaire about consumer satisfaction with packaging and the brands of processed mangosteen products of Eastern Region farmers. The characteristics of the questionnaire was as follows. Part 1 was general information on the respondents. The questionnaire was characterised by a check list using descriptive statistics. The general characteristics of data collected are presented in table form by using frequency and percentage. Part 2 covered consumer behaviour toward the processed mangosteen toffee products. The questionnaire was characterised by a check list, then concluding with a percentage. Part 3 covered the factors affecting the decision to buy mangosteen toffee products. The nature of the questionnaire is check list using methods to find the frequency, then concluding as a percentage. Part 4 is other suggestions with the nature of open-ended questionnaires using the method of content analysis.

FINDINGS

The Context of Products and Processed Products Made from Mangosteen

In product development, the members have developed packaging, brand logo, controlling of product standard and reconsidered the pricing. The variety of size and price were adjusted in appropriate ways. Market observation has been done before pricing and the results also used for cost calculations. Some business groups called for meetings to adjust the pricing and identify the distribution channels, while some other sole proprietorships do pricing based on market prices, the locations of productions and the location of the head office. The business group initiated and supported by the budget from local administrative organisations, such as sub-district administration organisations, provincial administration organisations and municipalities. Some of the businesses rent a place to operate the business, while some of them operate on the locations that are owned by one of the members of the group. Distribution channels in this study were identified as local coops, local food stores, souvenir stalls and department stores. Small business groups usually sell their products on their own premises in a type of small retail store. At the same time, well-known business groups usually ordered and visited the vender at their own factory. As the result of a lack in the variety of distribution channels and stores, the market for the processed mangosteen products in the east of the country cannot grow any further. Medium to large organisations always have more variety in terms of distribution channels.

Marketing and sales promotions are typically held via the events in exhibition centres such as the Impact Muang Thong Thani, and some local government locations where usually the OTOP exhibitions are usually held, where the activities such as pre-sale food tasting and occasional event food baskets are well presented and recognised.

The results of a study of packaging of the processed mangosteen products reveals that the processed mangosteen gum candy packaging is too simple and does not have a clear label. The label does not represent the identification of the brand or the product. Texts on the label are not clear and tiny and made the consumer always confused; they muddled them up with other branded processed mangosteen gum candy.

The majority of brands were self-designed with some help from educational organisations that provide the training on the topic of brand creating and development. The brands were regularly developed to identify the uniqueness of the business and follow the market trends. However, there are many business groups that sell their products with no

branding. Their products were simply produced and self-designed so their packaging and brand was referred to as unattractive and indistinguishable with no identity.

There are not many business groups managing and using the quality assurance system in the production processes, leading to an unequal standard of production. In addition, the lack of production technologies plus the high production costs decelerate the production and leads to an inability to satisfy market demand.

From the studies, there are many issues related to lack of development in many processes such as production, packaging and material preparation. A group of agriculturists who produce and sell the products from mangosteen also lack planning in the preparation of raw materials in a systematic way, which finally leads to the problem of storage of raw materials. Because of the volume of agricultural raw materials is not clear in each season and each year, it is impossible to plan production to meet market demand.

Strategy of Processed Mangosteen Product Development for Agriculturists in the East of Thailand

Product development recommends developing the mangosteen gum candy then bringing it back to the market with a new packaging design. A change of product format and adding new benefits, including the development and improvement of the quality of the product regularly would be crucial. The main elements can be concluded as follows:

Development of a Model for Product Development

The results of development of a model for product development aims to develop in both production and brand logo for the processed mangosteen product development for agriculturists in the East Region of Thailand. The procedures in developing a model for processed mangosteen product development are as follows:

Analysis of Packaging and Brand Logo for Processed Mangosteen Product

The data from the questionnaires illustrates the factors that go into making a decision to purchase a processed mangosteen gum candy product. The processed mangosteen gum candy is well recognised, tasty and high-quality. On the other hand, there are also many issues that prevent the processed mangosteen business from growing in the East Region of Thailand, such as unattractive packaging, inconvenient distribution channels, and limited numbers of sales stalls. From the analysis of the issues, the problems were identified as the unpleasant appearance of the packaging and the branding of the product. Therefore, processed mangosteen gum candy product development with the aim of re-entering the market should consider product development, redesigned packaging, and the creation of a unique brand logo. From the observation of processed mangosteen product, it was found that the processed mangosteen gum candy packaging is too simple and has unclear label. The label does not represent the identification of the brand or the product.

Sampling the Participating Products

In this study, the researchers decided to carry out purposive sampling, selecting a group of processed mangosteen business to participate the project on the basis of four major criteria. These are as follows. 1) The participant must be a local business group which sells processed mangosteen as a main product. 2) The participant must be a local business group which is located and operates in the East Region of Thailand. 3) The products and packaging of the participant's products must not be through any development before. 4) Participation must be voluntary.

Exploring the Issues and Needs of Original Processed Mangosteen Products Development

Based on the observation of issues and the needs of the processed mangosteen product development model, the results found that the previous version of packaging is an attractive sample with unclear label. The label does not represent the identification of the brand or the product. The text on the label is not clear and tiny, which made the consumer confused in terms of the identity of the branded processed mangosteen gum candy. There is a need to redesign the packaging; the entrepreneurs want the researcher to develop the label of the products to make them more memorable, distinctive, and unlike others.

Development of a Model for Processed Mangosteen Product Development

From the data from the survey about the details of a product, background, production process, ingredients and other related information via the in-depth interviews, as well as from studying documents and related literature about packaging design and graphics on the packaging, it can be concluded that the processed mangosteen product highlights the remarkable natural sweetness with the real mangosteen texture without artificial chemicals or contaminants. All ingredients must go through meticulous processes with full attention to product quality at all stages of the production, which makes these products different from the products of other groups. The study from related document found that the factors affecting purchase decisions are: 1) clear and distinctive illustration, which can possibly be a picture, photo or drawing on the package; 2) the packaging should be designed in some part to be transparent so the consumer can see the product inside clearly; 3) the packaging must protect and preserve the product inside; 4) important details about the ingredients must be clearly stated on the package; 5) the alphabets and all text on the package must be large and clear for reading; 6) the colour used on the package must be appropriate, outstanding and able to attract attention; 7) the overview of the packaging can indicate the uniqueness of the product clearly; and 8) the overview of packaging must be distinctive and unique.

A Model for Branding the Processed Mangosteen Product for Agriculturists in the East Region of Thailand

Critical information was analysed from the massive data from the survey about the details of a product, background, production process, ingredients and other related information via in-depth interviews, and from studying documents and related literatures about packaging design and graphics on the packaging; all the data was carefully analysed and conclusions drawn. The results of this were used to define the concept of development and to create the emblem for processed mangosteen products. The results of these studies can be concluded that the processed mangosteen product must highlight the remarkable natural sweetness from the real mangosteen texture without artificial chemicals or contaminants. All ingredients must go through meticulous processes with full attention to product quality at all stages of the production, which makes it different from the products of other companies.

The study from the related documents and literatures found that factors affecting the recognition of the consumers are as follows: 1) the brand logo must have fewer details; 2) the brand logo must have a unique character or identity that can clearly indicate and represent ownership; 3) the brand logo must have distinctive colours; 4) the brand logo must be meaningful; and 5) all letters or text which appear on the brand logo must be clearly visible.

Strategy for Processed Mangosteen Market Development in Eastern Thailand

The strategy for processed mangosteen market development uses integrated guidelines for a processed fruit market development and distribution channels that can be explained in detail as follows:

Guidelines for Processed Mangosteen Products Market Development

To develop the processed mangosteen products market, the researcher recommends continuously developing and improving the product quality and the following dimensions:

Product development should be done by focusing on its components, which consist of a combination of size, weight, shape, colour, smell and quality, and so on. Branding and the brand logo should be redesigned and changed to make it more attractive to the target groups while remain the distinctive identity, after consulting with academic professionals and marketing professionals. It is a good idea to prepare for several foreign language logos beside the Thai version. The product should be introduced and released through the online media since online marketing plays a crucial and unavoidable role. While the traditional public relations tools and options such as brochures and event-based marketing are also important and aim at the different purpose, creating the business identity and bringing the customers to touch and enabling the consumers to access the products. An outstandingly beautiful and well recognised image and reputation were created; the quality of the product will also be indicated. Then requesting the local related benchmark is recommended to be applied. This will make it possible to improve the processed mangosteen product quality into the top-ranking OTOP goods, with product quality control and the development of packaging benchmark. Redesigning the package and finding the appropriated packaging to suit each type of process mangosteen product. In addition, the seasonal or festival-based packaging should also be considered and prepared.

Guidelines for Development of Distribution Channels

Guidelines for the development of distribution channels recommend attacking the existing markets. There is a need for targeting the processed goods at the existing customer and raising sales numbers by using advertising, promotional campaign and product development. Market development is to introduce the product to new markets such as markets in different areas and different countries, as well as creating needs and trends via the creation of advertisement and public relations activities to boost new markets. Producers can select the potential locations to target the potential customers such as grocery stores, convenience stores, wholesalers, store type of sales kiosks, supermarkets, large stores, department stores, shopping stores, chain selling stalls, and convenience stores in the petrol stations. Product development, the processed mangosteen gum candy is the first product recommend to make changes such as repackaging, reforming and adding more values before re-entry into the market.

The quality of the product should be developed and improved consistently. Marketing channels, both domestically and abroad should be expanded. Producers should participate in events both governmental and private company events.

Producers can expand their distribution channels in more retail outlets, by searching and cooperating with the commercial partners, and the local provincial commercial administrative organisations. Then they can expand the processed mangosteen products that are made from organic ingredients to ASEAN, Europe, Japan, etc. To complete the project successfully and efficient results, a broad variety of public relations and marketing tools must be well prepared. The advertising and public relations via the television, radio, newspapers, magazines and online media are equally powerful as work partnerships with the local administrative firms to hold the commercial event with a contest and invite reporters to write news items.

The product qualifications and story should be introduced and released through the online media as the most powerful marketing tool. While the traditional public relations tools and options such as brochures and event-based marketing are also important and aim at a different purpose, creating the business identity and enabling the customers to touch and access the products. The entrepreneurs should be consistently applied with prototype products and the

suitable quality assurance system to the processed mangosteen production to popularise the product, maintain good image and keep good relations with the customers.

Market Feasibility of Processed Mangosteen Products for Agriculturist in Eastern Thailand

The research into product development and the processed mangosteen products market feasibility for agriculturists in the East Region of Thailand found that the feasibility in terms of product is in a positive trend because of the continuing emphasis on products promoting health. This would affect the rising numbers of healthy processed foods. Mangosteen drinks will be more popular from now to the future of three to ten years onward because of the benefits that mangosteen provides for health.

On the other hand, cosmetic goods currently in the cosmetic industry have paid high attention to the mangosteen as a valuable ingredient. Mangosteen, especially in the skin products that provide high Tannin and Xanthone extracts which are used as ingredients in many items with broad benefits both in terms of healing ability and beauty supplement. Processed mangosteen gum candy is another interesting product with a growing trend in the future. At present, the mangosteen gum candy producer numbers are steadily growing while the sales of this product are on the rise by seven percentage points each year.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The research of product development and the market opportunity for Eastern agriculturists is consistent with the research of Cholpassorn Sitthiwarongchai (2013) which studied the topic of capacity enhancement for agricultural workers in mangosteen products. The group discussion among a total of ten agriculturists and the food processing professionals were decided to use as part of the studies. The discussion gathered the needs of agriculturists and the local wisdoms to adapt and prepare the manual of four processing mangosteen products: 1) mangosteen soap; 2) mangosteen juice; 3) mangosteen gum candy; and 4) preserved mangosteen. The purpose of the research is to search for product development solutions. The results of the studies found that the guidelines for this product development is to improve the mangosteen gum candy product and re-entry the market. Repackaging, reformatting, adding new or joint ingredients or extracts to apply to product development, and quality control regularly were suggested with three elements: product development, brand logo and the product roles. Consistent with Sawasdhithut (1991), who claimed packaging as the most important factor of the product. There are many benefits of packaging that are obviously seen from many important export products which generate massive income to the country. Facilitating the logistic system to spend less time on shipping, protecting the product from the surrounded environments, for example. The first generation of packaging can keep the original qualification of the product only within a limited period. Then during the Industrial Revolution, the production became faster and produced goods in a large amount with lower cost. This led to the expanding of distribution channels to deliver goods to the customers within the shortest period. The packaging still plays an important role in protecting the product from the surrounded environment. In addition, Sonporn Kongjarearnkiat (1998: 7–8) claims the packaging as both the science and art of distribution to serve what the clients want at the appropriate cost.

Regarding the aim of the study of strategy of processed mangosteen product market development for the agriculturists in the East Region of Thailand, the result concluded with a suggestion for targeting the existing markets by focusing on selling in large amounts. Then the existing products should be introduced to open markets both domestically and abroad. The expanding new market idea is consistent with the Promshana (2006) reference to factors

affecting the marketing gap, which consists of competition within the market and pricing in the market.

In the imperfect competition market, the business that is stronger or has more advantages against the competitor would be able to set a higher price, which leads to the bigger gap with competitors (Rodvinit, 2006).

In addition, Sitthiwarongchai (2015) published a paper entitled “The Development of Cashew Products from the Small and Micro Company Enterprise Groups of Ranong Province, Thailand”; it claims that a majority of the sample agree to distribute and sell the products in the convenience stores. About 39.75 percentage of the interviewees that would also be advantageous to market expansion and market development. In 2002, Srisupha Sahachaiseree supports the idea of Peter F. Drucker, who refers to marketing as an attempt to expand sales at the highest speed.

A study of strategy for processed mangosteen product market development for the Eastern agriculturists in the dimension of distribution channels development found that processed mangosteen product market development should bring the existing product to sell in the new market, such as expanding into the new markets in new areas both domestically and internationally. Likewise, Bearden and La Forge (2004) recommend that market selecting is an attempt to improve and develop new products to use as a tool to access the customers and convince them of the benefits of the product. Jongsadhitwattana (2001) defines the meaning of product as goods or service which can be offered to call the attention to the products for their consumption in daily life and satisfy the customers. This can be concluded that product serve the customer needs in many ways, physical product, brand name, logo etc.

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