



Marketing Promotion with 8P's Strategy for Processed Palm Oil Products for Sustaining Small Business's Growth

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ABSTRACT

The lack of middleman for the products, various direct and indirect competitors, deteriorating economy and strict consumer protection law constraining the farmers to produce products that meet the legal standards have adversely affected the marketability of a palm oil-based soap product that can fulfill the need of health concerned customers. This paper studies a marketing mix or 8P's strategy consisted of the following. Product strategy; producing quality soaps with a variety of scents, more beneficial to users and meet the legal standard. Price strategy; setting reasonable prices, offering wholesale pricing on large quantities. Place strategy; creating digital channels in various platforms such as website and e-commerce. Promotion strategy; building a personal identity on digital media channel is an efficiency way to promote the products, reviewing products by bloggers or influencers in the digital society is helping consumers to know more about the products. Packaging strategy: presenting a beautiful package, choice of product differentiation using a natural packaging handmade can add more value to the soaps. Personal Strategy; selling products by the farmers or producers themselves by enhancing their aptitude, skills and good selling techniques. Public Relation Strategy; providing proper beneficial information to customer, create modern digital media channels to present the products, including website, Facebook platform and variety web forums. Power strategy; reorganizing and fortifying the network by fostering collaboration among the community, public and private sectors, with the aim of catalyzing sustainable growth and enhancing the resilience of the community-based system. It is envisioned that this strategy would create the desired impacts on the products' marketability and sustainability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Economic growth and development have consistently been propelled by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) [1] and crucial to most economies worldwide, and being an integral component [2]. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected small businesses more than their larger counterparts [3]. Moreover, the new norm of consumer behaviour with a buying pattern such as buying online has greatly changed the marketing activities than previously. Thus, the way to survive and to promote economic growth of business, SMEs need to build competitiveness and productivity that will allow them to compete in the international, national, and local markets [4].

1.1 Palm Oil Soap

In Thailand, oil palm has the highest yield per hectare [5]. Palm oil can be refined through chemical methods to produce palm oil soap. In the realm of daily human activities, soap stands out as an indispensable necessity. In

the craft of soap making, Palm Kernel Oil emerges as a versatile ingredient, endowed with numerous advantages [6]. It is a yellowish edible oil derived from the kernel of palm fruit [7], with the main fatty acid content in the form of lauric has good properties, namely hardening, cleaning and producing abundant foam [8], for making solid soap.

1.2 Customer Behaviour in the New Era

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in permanent behavioural changes by consumers since the beginning of 2020. It started to increase social distancing and totally lockdown affected not only the economic situation of the country, but also the consumer behavior forcing them to meet many of their needs through the digital marketing tools [9] which increase e-commerce significantly [10]. Consequently, impacting on consumer awareness and expertise in analyzing online consumer purchasing behavior and influencing the pace of decision-making when consumers are committed to buying goods and services.

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1.3 Marketing Strategy

Covid-19 crisis has changed the customers buying habits all over the world. The business which implements proper strategies is more likely to survive while other demise [11-12]. Effective tools of marketing and practices have a high potential on in facing risks and challenges imposed by the pandemic crisis [13] to secure business success. Marketing tools largely help to maintain the level of sales to stay float [9]. Thus, taking a serious marketing decision is critical for the business survival and growth both during and after the crisis. Effective marketing strategies enable small businesses to swiftly adapt to the volatile marketplace environment.

The fundamental concept of marketing is encapsulated in the marketing mix, which comprises a set of controllable tools employed by companies to elicit a response from the target market [14]. The marketing mix comprises eight elements, commonly referred to as the 8Ps. These include Product strategy, Price strategy, Place strategy, Promotion strategy, packaging strategy, Personal strategy, Public relation strategy, and Power strategy, dynamically influences customer choices and decisions to help firms to gain competitive advantage of their product and service to meet the current needs.

This paper studies the marketing mix (8Ps) tool for the potential of growth development for small business. Both Quantitative and Qualitative were used to collect data. The quantitative survey data were collected from 400 general product buyers on their purchasing behaviour. The sampling of 100 users surveyed the customer' satisfaction on the design of digital platform.

The qualitative protocol was developed based on interviews with 10 community oil palm owners and 15 soap sellers, utilizing purposive sampling. Additionally, two government personnel provided support in investigating the potential growth of these small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

2. FINDINGS

This study employed the framework of the eight factors of the marketing mix theory. The findings, derived from two distinct approaches—surveys targeting general product consumers and in-depth interviews involving community product producers, sellers, and government personnel—are presented below.

The results of customers' view on marketing strategy for Processed Palm Oil Products

Table 1 shows the results of customers' view on marketing strategy on the marketing mix (8Ps) elements.

The results suggest a unanimous recognition of the significance of all elements in the marketing mix strategy.

Table 1. The results of the customers' view on marketing strategy

Factor	Sample group (N=400)			
	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level of Agreement	Ranking
Product	4.28	.544	Strongly agree	2
Price	4.23	.595	Strongly agree	4
Place	4.41	.568	Strongly agree	1
Promotion	4.17	.672	Strongly agree	7
Packaging	4.25	.614	Strongly agree	3
Personal	4.17	.724	Strongly agree	6
Public relation	4.20	.667	Strongly agree	5
Power	4.07	.714	Strongly agree	8
Total average of 8 elements	4.22	.547	Strongly agree	

Among the eight factors, the place factor is the most important (1st rank). They strongly agreed that reliable marketplaces convenient for buying, positioned at the eye level and offering multi-channel for easy contact. The product factor is rank as number two. they strongly agreed that a variety of products, reliable for use with all skin types and presenting a good image of the product. The third rank is Packaging creation at 4.25. While price strategy is ranked as number four. It is a vital element through setting a reasonable price with suitable quality and quantity of products, and offering lower price compared with competitors, the correct price and easy to make payment. The fifth rank is the public relation factor. The participants strongly agreed that digital media presenting the right information for consumer, together with advertising the product and organizational images must be utilized in selling the products. The personal strategy was considered as the sixth important element. Full of product knowledge, experience and skills, using persuasive technique with polite and good human relations for long-term connection. Followed is the promotion strategy. The sample agreed that multi-digital media is significant for advertisement, including the campaign of discount promotion, providing trial product and attending exhibition in several places. Lastly, the power strategy was the lowest in ranking at the average of 4.07. The sub-factors of this category are business connection with other merchant, communication-based system with customers, and the negotiation between sellers and buyers.

The marketing strategy for Processed Palm Oil Products

The Product strategy is to enhance the quality of the product by offering a variety of scents and more benefits to users as it is made from pure natural palm kernel oil product which is kind to human skin. Moreover, to attain certification for locality-based trademarks, it is essential to adhere to legal standards while certifying community product standards and uniqueness. This involves highlighting the distinctive features of community products and adapting formulations to cater to a new target audience,

incorporating goat milk sourced from locally raised goats. Beyond those points, packaging is important to persuade the customer with a nice packaging design. Its design should look attractive to all customer types and meet the customer behaviour as they adore the luxury design made of friendly materials. The use of natural ingredients will match the customers' health concern.

The pricing strategy involves determining the cost of the product. Due to the low cost of the production process, it could be set at reasonable prices different to that of competitors with the same total net weight. Providing discounted wholesale rates for bulk orders and implementing seasonal price reductions to boost sales volume.

The place strategy involves creating digital channels across multiple platforms, including websites and e-commerce, to expand distribution channels. Presently, consumer preferences have shifted towards increased usage of social networks and online purchasing platforms like Facebook, Shopee, Lazada, websites, webboards, and others. All these digital channels are vital to distribute product to customers. Furthermore, the product could be sold by placing them with the local One Tambon One Product (OTOP) shop and souvenir shop.

The promotional strategy involves establishing awareness and cultivating a distinct personal identity through digital advertising platforms and promotional sales channels on social networks to enhance product visibility. Examining products through reviews by digital influencers or bloggers in the online community aids consumers in gaining better insights into products, fostering increased brand loyalty among customers.

The packaging strategy involves the creation of a more functional design, incorporating elements like natural hemp rope for securing the product. This approach not only lends a modern aesthetic but also aligns with environmentally friendly practices. The set kit packaging is reserved for special occasions such as Christmas, New Year, and birthdays, enhancing the overall presentation and appeal of the product.

Beside selling product online through digital platform, the Personal strategy could also help the farmers or producers themselves to market their products by enhancing their aptitude, skills and good selling techniques to save cost.

Public relation strategy provides proper beneficial information to customer and creates modern digital media channels to present the products, including Website, Facebook platform and variety web forums. It proves particularly advantageous for introducing new products and collaborating with specific marketplace websites to promote them effectively.

The power strategy involves establishing a robust network across the community, public, and private sectors to promote sustainable growth and enhance community-

based systems. It focuses on negotiating power between producers and buyers, particularly for unique products in the market, positioning them as 'shopping goods.' This approach is anticipated to yield positive impacts on the products.

Upon examining the marketing strategy and the elements of the marketing mix (8Ps), it can be concluded that products need to possess unique and distinctive features, new product development, brand and packaging design, distribution channels with digital platform are vital.

2.1 Design and Development of Brand and Packaging

The purpose of brand design, as shown in figure 1, is to ensure that the product could be sold in both locally and internationally by using the color representative of the red palm which is the main ingredient of the soap. It is designed to portray the meaning of femininity and gentleness on all skin types.



Fig.1. Branding.

The packaging always comes together with brand and logo from the in-depth interview with all the participants. The packaging design has 2 parts. First is the packaging structure with the dimension of 7.5 cm. x 3 cm. x 7.5 cm. and material is made from environmentally friendly material that is moisture proof. The second part is the graphic on the package which consist of the purpose, details, producers, manufacturing and expiry date, etc. Using the palm leave to present the main ingredient. It is as shown in figure 2.



Fig.2. Packaging

2.2 Design and Development of Digital Platform

To build awareness through advertising media to promote the products and collaborate with targeted market. The distribution of the products for the business is in the form of digital platform hosted on E-commerce system. Figure 3 to figure 5. are the prototype website, <http://www.farmgive>

mefarm1963.com. For other businesses who are interested to run their own channel, the design is simple and easy to apply and adjust for their purposes. They could add more products as they need. The design is from the small group interview.



Fig.3. Home page of the website.

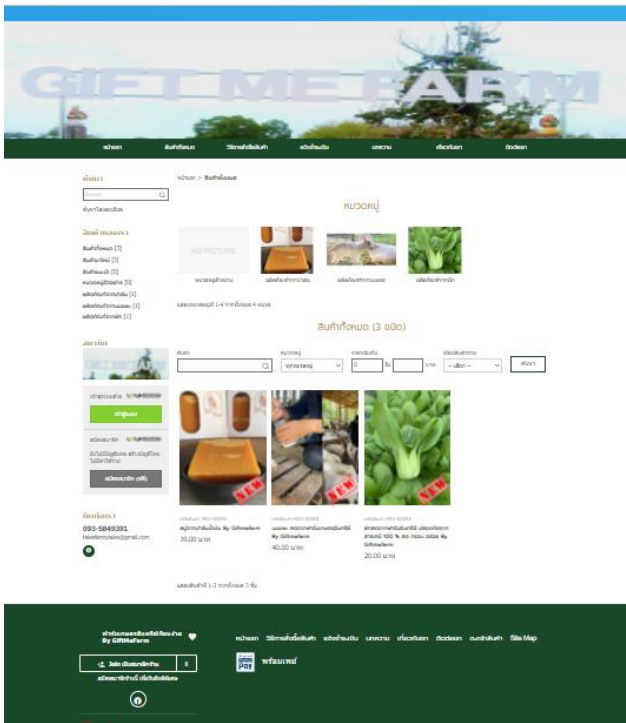


Fig.4. The order page of the website

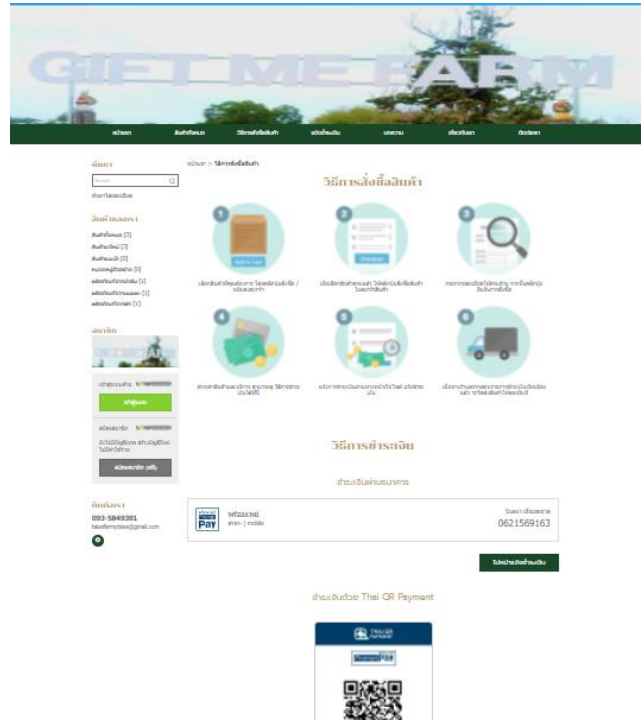


Fig.5. Paying page of the website.

2.3 Evaluation of the satisfaction of using digital platform

The data are collected from the 100 users of business e-commerce. Table 2 displays a condensed overview of the questionnaire-based system evaluation results.

Table 2. The outcomes stemming from the contentment with the digital platform

Evaluation list	Sample group (N=100)		
	\bar{x}	S.D.	Satisfaction level
Home page design	3.92	0.637	Very satisfied
Information	4.06	0.655	Very satisfied
Website accessibility	4.13	0.635	Very satisfied
Font style and Text format	4.13	0.610	Very satisfied
Graphic and Animation	4.01	0.648	Very satisfied
Total average of 4 aspects	4.05	0.534	Very satisfied

The results of the satisfaction of using the digital platform evaluation of the group of participants are presented in Table 2. Overall platform satisfaction is at a very satisfied level ($\bar{x}=4.05$). The satisfying evaluation results show fast and easy website accessible for everyone, all links allow users to click their way from page to page, the font style and text format are easy to read with a suitable size, style and color of the text, the information that present on website is up-to-date and reliable, while the graphic and animation of the website are attractive by using beautiful product images and finally the design of home page section are interesting with easy to read and relevant to products.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The survey and interview findings demonstrated that marketing mix (8Ps) strategy can influence greatly to the growth of the business. It can be summarized that the business should present a good variety of products and scents with more benefits, reliable and kind to all skin types. Applying legal criteria for certifying community product standards and uniqueness [15], while innovating new products to cater to the needs of emerging target demographics. The packaging design must be able to persuade the customer's interest to increase sales volume. The modernized packaging made with natural and environmentally friendly materials should be deployed. Establishing multiple distribution channels via online social networking, employing the e-commerce model, serves as a crucial platform for collaboration with prominent marketplace websites. This strategy aims to promote products effectively, differentiate from competitors, and enhance profitability [16]. By delivering accurate information to consumers and strategically advertising products and organizational images, businesses can effectively stand out in the market. Customers rely on diverse sources of pertinent information from various channels to inform their decision-making process when purchasing products or services [17]. It means that the small businesses which are not using technology of social media to support their marketing couldn't achieve good sales [18]. Beside selling product in online marketing through digital platform, utilizing the Personal element also could be an important factor for selling products by the farmers or producers themselves through the enhancement of their aptitude, skills, good selling techniques and polite and good human relations for a long-term connection. Using a promotion channel for advertisement consists of discount promotion campaign, delivering trial product and joining exhibition in different places are necessary. Creating awareness and building a personal identity on digital advertising media to promote the products, or reviewing products by bloggers or influencers in the digital society will help the consumers to know more about the products and to create more brand loyalty of customers.

The price strategy is a vital element. As the cost of production process is low, the business could offer a reasonable price lower than competitors. On the other hand, offering a wholesale pricing on large quantities and reducing the price during particular seasons could increase sales volume. Finally, enhancing community networking involves implementing a power strategy for business coordination with both public and private sectors. This approach aims to foster sustainable growth and reinforce the community-based system by facilitating communication among customers, sellers, and buyers. Leveraging technological platforms is an effective means for interaction and knowledge exchange, contributing to the mutual benefits derived from these initiatives [19].

The researcher has designed and developed Brand and Packaging, and Digital platform. A digital platform and website amplify the distribution channels for business products through e-commerce. The website pages comprise 1) The 'Homepage' menu displays information about product details, including palm oil-based soap and various community products. 2) 'The 'Product' menu showcases comprehensive information about our range, providing buyers with details on each product and guiding them through the seamless process of placing orders. 3) The term 'Payment' encompasses a reliable payment provider and the necessary procedures for making payments. 4) 'Result for successfully payment' shows the payment result, 5) The term 'Payment' encompasses a reliable payment provider and the necessary procedures for making payments. 6) The 'About Us' section provides details about the community business groups. 7) The 'Contact Us' feature enables buyers to communicate with product manufacturers by sending messages or emails, and utilizing LINE applications. This functionality is implemented using PHP and My Database (MySQL) to efficiently manage the website's data. The website prototype underwent testing, and its practical functionality was assessed prior to system installation for demonstration to business representatives. The evaluation involved 100 participants who expressed high satisfaction with the overall system performance, indicating excellent functionality

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