

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR THE PRODUCTS OF OCCUPATION PROMOTION COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE GROUP AT BAN NIKHOM, MUANG DISTRICT, SURAT THANI PROVINCE

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Abstract

This research aims to study and develop marketing operations, including advertising and public relations, for mushroom sausage products. It employs a mixed-method research approach, including qualitative research methods involving in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative research methods involve surveys to examine consumer behavior and preferences. The research findings reveal that there is a demand for creating a product brand identity and developing communication channels through both online and print media for mushroom sausage products. When collecting data from consumers, it is found that there is a high demand for products from community enterprises or community food products in general. Upon closer examination of each aspect, it is found that in terms of product, there is a distinct local identity. Regarding price, it is considered reasonable. In terms of distribution channels, products can be ordered online. As for sales promotion, product information is disseminated through online media platforms such as Facebook and Line.

Based on results of the data analysis, these findings can be used to develop marketing activities, including creating a product brand, naming the product, designing product labels, and improving packaging to convey the community's meaning and promote the livelihoods of rural community enterprises. Additionally, online advertising and public relations efforts have led to the establishment of a Facebook Fanpage for disseminating news and information.

Keywords: Marketing, Advertising and Public Relations, Community Enterprise

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Introduction

As per the Community Enterprise Promotion Act, the formation of community groups to generate income and occupations is considered a crucial approach to strengthening communities, as per the Community Enterprise Promotion Act. The act aims to enhance the business operations of community enterprises systematically and strengthen them. It promotes and supports community enterprises that are ready to operate as legal entities. (Department of Agricultural Extension, 2019).

Currently, due to economic and social conditions, the establishment of groups for producing goods and services faces relatively high competition, requiring constant development to achieve success and survival. One crucial aspect in elevating community products is marketing activities, advertising, and public relations. According to the study by Wandee Sutthinarakorn (2012), issues encountered in community enterprise groups include the fact that most marketing management still relies on government-sponsored events. Meanwhile, competition has increased due to the expansion of community enterprise groups, along with community products not reflecting the local identity. Products tend to have similar characteristics, and certified products still do not meet standards to the desired extent. The packaging also lacks attractive designs. Therefore, community enterprises should establish distribution channels, develop packaging, and enhance value creation, which

should also be promoted through websites to allow customers who are far away to access the products.

Marketing activities and communication strategies, including advertising and public relations, are considered essential components in presenting products and services and reaching the target audience. The marketing strategies and communication channels with consumers of community enterprises are critical in driving success. These are important aspects in introducing products and services to gain recognition by employing strategies to attract consumers and gain a competitive advantage, following the academic guidelines for promoting product development in marketing. These include communication, public relations, brand building, pricing, market testing, expanding marketing channels, and market research to align products with consumer needs (Community Enterprise Promotion Division, 2019)

The Occupation Promotion Community Enterprise Group at Ban Nikhom (Khun Thalee Mushroom Farm) is a community enterprise that has leveraged the potential of the community for developing products from mushrooms, such as mushroom sausages, fermented mushrooms, oyster mushrooms, crispy mushroom chips, Lingzhi mushroom tea, and Lingzhi mushroom soap. From the information provided by group representatives and area surveys, it was found that there is still a lack of development in marketing activities and public relations, such as only producing products based on customer

orders through private channels of group representatives. Although there is face-to-face communication, there hasn't been any production of advertising media. Logo design and standardized packaging are also yet to be developed. Due to these factors, there is a need to enhance product development and expand the market and increase customer bases in the future.

Researchers are therefore interested in studying the development of marketing activities and advertising and public relations for mushroom sausage products from the Ban Nikhom community enterprise group in Khun Thale Subdistrict, Mueang District, Surat Thani Province. Through the development of marketing activities, advertising, and public relations, sustainable efficiency in promoting the operations of community products from Khun Thale Subdistrict, Mueang District, Surat Thani Province, can be achieved.

Objectives

1. To develop marketing operations for mushroom sausage products of the community enterprise in Khun Thale, Mueang District, Surat Thani Province, which promotes livelihoods in the rural area.

2. To develop and produce advertising and public relations materials for the mushroom sausage products of the community enterprise in Khun Thale, Mueang District, Surat Thani Province, which promotes livelihoods in the rural area.

Literature Review

Concepts in Relation to Marketing Mix

Marketing is a social process and a management process to fulfill the needs and demands of an organization or business by creating and exchanging products and value (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). The marketing mix refers to a set of marketing tools that businesses use collectively to plan strategies to achieve marketing objectives, which involve responding to consumer needs Sereerat (2003) have explained each aspect of the marketing mix as follows:

1. Product: Products and services refer to what a business offers to satisfy customer needs. A product can include tangible items, services, ideas, places, organizations, or individuals. A product must be beneficial and valuable in the eyes of customers.

2. Price: Price is the monetary value of a product. It is one of the secondary aspects in the marketing mix and is created after the product. Price is the cost to customers. Consumers compare the value of a product with its price. If the value is higher than the price, it leads to purchase decisions. Price setting may use various methods or combinations, and price strategies are influenced by three key factors: costs, competitors' prices, and product replacement prices.

3. Place: Place refers to the operation of taking designated products to reach the target market. This doesn't just refer to the location but also considers how products will

be distributed through intermediaries and how movement will occur in the market. The distribution of products to the target market consists of two main components: the channel of distribution and the physical distribution.

4. Promotion: Promotion involves communication between the seller and the target market regarding the product to inform or persuade to create attitudes and buying behaviors, which is known as promotional marketing mix. It includes advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, and direct sales.

5. People: People are considered a critical component of business operations. Employee selection, training, and motivation are crucial for creating customer satisfaction above the competition.

6. Physical Evidence: Physical evidence refers to tangible cues that customers can perceive. It forms an integral part of the whole experience that the customer receives, and customers' physical evidence features that they are pleased with constitute the image of the business. Business owners can manage or enhance them.

7. Process: Process represents the service delivery processes to quickly and efficiently deliver quality service to impress customers. It must be easy to conduct service business, whether tangible or intangible.

Concepts Relating to Marketing Public Relations (MPR)

Marketing Public Relations (MPR) refers to the use of tools to communicate the organization's messages to target customer

groups in a manner that affects the success of the organization with a well-planned process, implementation steps, and evaluation aimed at achieving organizational goals. The objectives of MPR are to enhance and create a favorable attitude, interest, impression, trust, and a good image of the organization or its products and to provide knowledge about a particular issue or rectify any mistakes in a particular matter. Marketing Public Relations is important in several ways, as summarized by Pimolsindh (2013).

1. MPR can create a competitive advantage, differentiating products, services, personnel, and image characteristics from competitors.

2. MPR can add value to the product through the provision of valuable information that enhances the product in the form of marketing public relations. This can include news articles, advertorials, or celebrity endorsements.

3. Some products or services can't be advertised but rely on public relations to provide knowledge about them.

4. In today's society, driven by learning and knowledge, where consumers have better knowledge and seek continuous learning, public relations can be done most effectively, broadly, and extensively through various media, such as activities and events, creating a well-rounded form of marketing.

5. The knowledge-based society makes public relations more crucial in providing information that persuades and influences consumers and changes their lifestyles, concepts, and values.

6. Advancements in technology allow a diverse range of products to play a role in transforming lifestyles, concepts, and various values. Hence, public relations plays an important role in providing information and influencing consumers' acceptance and behavior changes.

7. Organizing public relations activities for marketing is the primary strategy for effective marketing communication to reach target groups efficiently.

In addition, there are various related studies such as the following: Marketing strategies for food products from the study by Suriyan Yiemtragoonkul and Alan Greenhill McAdam, in which they have improved and developed the pineapple pie product to have desirable characteristics such as taste, shape, and aroma. Furthermore, they have designed and developed suitable packaging.

Jakae (2022) in the study of community products, results of the experiment were new product models, developing packaging design, and develop new product brands and product advertisements via the website.

Sherawat et al. (2023) in the study of Agribusiness shows that enhancing market knowledge and product quality, conducting prior market research, adopting appropriate pricing strategies, implementing effective packaging, engaging in sales promotion, utilizing internet marketing, and conducting test marketing are essential for the successful launch of agri-products.

Palaniswamy and Raj (2022) in the study of social media among agriculturists in

South India, it was found that social media is an important tool for effective marketing communication. Bridging the social media knowledge gap among various stakeholders of the agriculture sector is a timely mandate. Shankar and Raj (2022) in a study on the perception and satisfaction of consumers, shows that location, product pricing, and advertising, as well as social influence and market-wide factors, have a significant impact on consumer behavior.

Gajalakshmi and Vinayagam (2022) in the study of the effects of social media marketing, it was found that social media is a modern tool for marketers who try every means to get the message out to the target markets

Methodology

This research employs a mixed-method approach with the following details

1. Qualitative Research: The qualitative research targets a population for study, specifically individuals providing key information. This population consists of members of the community enterprise promoting livelihoods in Ban Nikhom, Khun Thale Sub-district, Mueang District, Surat Thani Province, who are 18 years old and above. The total number of participants is 26. The research tools employed include in-depth interviews, observational methods, a questionnaire framework, and a data grouping recording form.

2. The quantitative research conducted in this study targeted a population aged 20 to 59 years residing in the Mueang District of

Surat Thani Province. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, with a confidence level of 95%, resulting in a total sample size of 400 individuals. The researchers will conduct purposive sampling, selecting individuals who have previous experience purchasing community products. The sample selection will be done randomly.

For the tools used, a questionnaire was employed, which underwent validity testing by three marketing and advertising/public relations experts. They found that the questionnaire had a high Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) with the research objectives. Additionally, reliability testing was conducted by administering the questionnaire to a pre-test group consisting of 30 individuals with characteristics similar to the sample group. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was calculated to be 0.961, indicating high internal consistency reliability, meeting the specified criteria. Therefore, the questionnaire is deemed suitable for use in the study.

The researchers analyze the data using frequency distribution tables to show percentages and mean. Then, they analyze, synthesize, and interpret the data. Additionally, they seek to understand the relationships in the study findings, summarizing them as key points for designing and producing advertising and public relations media in the next steps.

Results

1. Preliminary Information

1.1 Findings on Community-based Enterprise and Products

The study revealed that the highlighted product of the community-based enterprise is primarily composed of mushrooms and does not contain any animal products. It possesses a neutral taste that aligns with the preferences of consumers, particularly those interested in health and well-being. Advertising and public relations efforts mainly present an overview of the products derived from the community-based enterprise promoting rural livelihoods and the mushroom farm in Khun Thale. For instance, the marketing strategies often involve customers placing orders or pre-orders.

1.2 Study Results on Marketing Activities and Public Relations

The study revealed that the processed mushroom products from the Khun Thale Mushroom Farm, operated by the community or Khun Thale Mushroom farm, are currently lacking product labels to provide product information. The dissemination of information and news about these products mainly occurs through word of mouth within the network. Academic professionals who have engaged in studying the operations of the community-based enterprise are instrumental in this process. Additionally, contact and inquiries are made through personal phone calls and individual Line (a popular messaging application in Thailand) accounts of the group's representatives.

2. Information on the Needs of Producers and Consumers

2.1 Needs of group members in the community-based enterprise promoting rural

livelihoods, who are producers:

Regarding the need to develop marketing and public relations activities for mushroom sausage products, it was found that the members of the community-based enterprise promoting rural livelihoods, who are producers, have various requirements. These needs include:

- Creating product names
- Developing product logos and symbols
- Designing product labels
- Improving packaging

- Exploring online communication channels

- Developing various media presentation formats for advertising and public relations activities

2.2 Quantitative research methods

Quantitative research methods were employed to collect data. This involved using surveys to study the behavior and requirements of consumers from a sample group of 400 individuals. The research produced the following results:

Table 1 Consumer preferences for products from community enterprises or community-produced food items, categorized according to product aspects.

Product Aspect	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Need
Product Variety	3.79	0.819	high
Attractive Packaging	3.95	0.816	high
Branding and Logo	4.02	0.895	high
Taste	4.27	0.749	high
Long Shelf Life	3.91	0.847	high
Variety of Sizes	3.78	0.853	high
Product Standard Certifications	3.87	0.860	high
Distinct Local Identity	4.36	0.736	high
Natural Ingredients	4.34	0.758	high
Total	4.03	0.815	high

From Table 1, it is evident that the respondents in the survey mostly express a high level of interest in community enterprise products or community food

products, with the highest level of interest being in the “Distinct Local Identity” aspect. The least interest is seen in the “Variety of Sizes” aspect.

Table 2 Consumer preferences for community enterprise products or community-produced food items, categorized based on the aspect of pricing

Pricing	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Need
Appropriate Pricing	4.19	0.838	high
Multi-level Pricing	3.87	0.972	high
Diverse Channels of Payment	4.15	0.788	high
Consistent Pricing	3.86	0.861	high
Clear Displayed Prices	4.04	0.865	high
Total	4.02	0.716	high

From Table 2, it is found that the majority of respondents in the questionnaire express a high level of interest in community enterprise products or community food products,

particularly in terms of pricing. Among the pricing aspects, “Appropriate pricing” receives the highest level of interest, while “Consistent pricing” receives the least interest.

Table 3 Consumer preferences for community enterprise products or community-produced food items, categorized based on the aspect of distribution locations.

Location	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Need
Purchasing Convenience	3.94	0.949	high
Purchase Online	4.04	0.949	high
Clear Storefront Location	3.86	0.941	high
Delivery Service	3.78	0.734	high
Variety of Purchasing/Selling Channels	3.91	0.982	high
Total	3.91	0.843	high

From Table 3, it is evident that the majority of respondents in the questionnaire express a high level of interest in community enterprise products or community food products, particularly in terms of distribution

channels. Among the distribution channels, “Purchase Online” receives the highest level of interest, while “Delivery Service” receives the least interest.

Table 4 Consumer preferences for community enterprise products or community-produced food items, categorized based on the aspect of sales promotion.

Promotion	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Need
Product Recommendation and Consultation	3.80	0.654	high
Convenient Communication Channels with Sellers	3.89	0.929	high
Product Information Dissemination through Online Media (e.g., Facebook, Line)	4.03	0.947	high
Product Information Dissemination through Print Media (e.g., Posters, Vinyl, Brochures)	3.57	0.704	high
Showcase Products at Various Events	3.87	0.907	high
Diverse Advertising and Public Relations Media for Product Promotion	3.78	0.937	high
Offering Free Product Samples for Tasting	3.79	0.743	high
Promotional Activities (e.g., giveaways, discounts)	3.67	0.992	high
Total	3.80	0.770	high

From Table 4, it is observed that the majority of respondents in the questionnaire express a high level of interest in community enterprise products or community food products, particularly in terms of sales promotion. Among the sales promotion aspects, “Product Information Dissemination through Online Media (e.g., Facebook, Line)” receives the highest level of interest, while “Promotional Activities (e.g., giveaways, discounts)” receives the least interest.

3. Marketing Operations Development

3.1 Product Name

“Ban Nikohm Mushroom Sausage”

This name signifies the community and rural

enterprises that promote this product, and it also indicates the product type, which is mushroom sausage.

3.2 Logo

The logo features images of mushrooms like oyster mushrooms or angel mushrooms, which are the main ingredients of the product. It can also represent mushroom bags or clusters of growing mushrooms coming out of the bag.

3.3 Slogan

“High-Quality Community Products for Health Enthusiasts” This slogan communicates the product’s key features, emphasizing that it’s a mushroom sausage with no animal meat, fat, MSG, or preservatives.

3.4 Product Label

The label is designed with predominantly green, brown, and orange tones to highlight the product's key feature, which is its green and natural quality, signifying freshness.

3.5 Packaging

The packaging consists of two layers. The first layer is an air-sealed bag, and the second layer is a thick plastic pouch. The product label sticker is placed on top of the plastic pouch to protect the contents and display the product brand.



Figure 1 Original packaging and new packaging

4. Development and Production of Advertising and Public Relations Materials

4.1 Creation of a Facebook Fanpage named Ban Nikhom Mushroom Sausages and the production of online advertising and publicity materials such as banners.

4.2 Creation of Print Media such as table signs and X Stand signs for use in product displays, setting up booths to sell products at various events, and serving as promotional materials at sales points.



Figure 2 Advertisement example

Discussion

Based on the study findings, the researchers have utilized marketing mix theory, along with employing Marketing Public Relations, to strategize achieving marketing objectives. This involves creating product logos, improving packaging, and producing new advertising and public relations media to enhance consumer awareness. These efforts aim to add value and differentiate the product, similar to the following studies: The study by Duangjan et al. (2020), which indicated influential factors affecting the business operations of a product from a sub-district in the southern provinces of the Gulf of Thailand. Through logistic regression analysis, it was found that OTOP business operators should promote the development of product quality to meet higher standards, creating trust and acceptance

from customers. Additionally, there should be continuous efforts to differentiate products from competitors, leading to increased sales. Another study by Sherawat et al. (2023) In the study of Agribusiness, they show that enhancing market knowledge and product quality, conducting prior market research, adopting appropriate pricing strategies, implementing effective packaging, engaging in sales promotion, utilizing internet marketing, and conducting test marketing are all essential for the successful launch of agri-products.

The researcher has developed product labels and redesigned packaging to enhance beauty and suitability for product protection. This includes creating new product labels to display detailed product information, as related to the research and product improvement made by Jakae (2022). The

results of the experiment were the creation of new product models, the development of package design, and new product brands and product advertisements via the website.

In the aspect of advertising and public relations development, the study found that the group's sample desires the ability to make online purchases, seeks convenience in finding diverse sales channels, and wishes for online product information dissemination. This aligns with the trend of producers using online media as a primary communication method. To address these needs, the researcher created a Facebook Fanpage with the named Ban Nikhom Sausage Mushroom for advertising and online public relations. Various advertising media, such as banners, video clips, and static images, have been produced for online promotion. Additionally, product details are showcased through offline media, including table stands and X Stand signs used in product booths during various events.

The study emphasizes the importance of online platforms, such as Facebook and Line, in marketing and communication, consistent with the findings of other studies (Srinorajan, 2018), in which the "Online to Offline" approach of "smart farmer" is also highlighted, recognizing the interconnectedness of online and offline marketing activities. The strategies employed, including creating a Facebook Fanpage, Line Official, and various advertising materials, provide a comprehensive approach to online marketing (Somkeatkun and Ruengdet, 2020). The use of offline tools, such as table stands and X Stand signs, serves as a bridge

between the online and offline presence of the products.

In conclusion, the product development and advertising strategies address the identified needs of the community enterprise group, emphasizing a holistic approach that integrates both online and offline elements in marketing and communication efforts.

Conclusion

1. Marketing Operations Development

The researcher improved packaging and designed logos and labels using the product name "Ban Nikhom Mushroom Sausage". This conveys the meaning of the community and the community enterprise promoting livelihoods in Ban Nikhom, who are the producers. The logo design incorporates images of angel and oyster mushrooms, representing a primary ingredient in the product, placed prominently on the sausage part of the label. The label is designed in shades of green, brown, and orange to communicate the product's highlights, symbolizing nature and the tones of mushrooms yellow and orange, signifying the main ingredient and freshness. Information on the product label includes essential details such as ingredients, storage methods, recommendations, production date, expiration date, contact information, and product highlights.

2. Advertising and Public Relations Media Development

Development methods include the creation of a Facebook Fanpage named "Ban Nikhom Mushroom Sausage". Advertising and

PR materials ,such as banners, can be used or shared online through various channels. Signage with diverse designs is produced for advertising and PR purposes at distribution points, at storefronts and during participation in various exhibitions, including table stands and X-stand banners. These strategies aim to enhance market activities, improve product visibility, and effectively communicate with the target audience through both traditional and online media channels.

Acknowledgements

1. Integrated Management Planning

Recommendations from the research highlight the importance of aligning marketing activities and public relations with the production processes. Therefore, the community enterprise should develop a comprehensive management system, ensuring coherence among different aspects.

For instance, product promotion should align with production capacity, raw materials, and timeframes. Additionally, to ensure continuity and efficiency, clear responsibilities should be assigned to individuals overseeing communication, marketing, and various media. This will foster proactive communication and enhance operational efficiency.

2. Future Research Recommendations

Future research endeavors should delve into the area of operational planning and management development within community enterprises. This exploration should draw insights from consumer behavior, as the current research indicates that the popular products from community enterprises are fruit-based processed foods, typically ranging from 100 to 300 Baht per purchase. This information underscores the significance of studying marketing activities for upcoming ventures.

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