Analyzing Consumer Markets for Green Products with the Environmental Sustainability in Thailand

Manitchanan Chatthipmongkol, Channatcha Channarong

Southeast Asia University

E-mail: manitchananc@sau.ac.th

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์ตลาดผู้บริโภคสำหรับผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อม เช่น อาหารออร์แกนิก จักรยาน การรีไซเคิลของใช้แล้ว และการนวดแผนไทยและสปาที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความ ยั่งยืนของสิ่งแวดล้อมในประเทศไทย การศึกษานี้เป็นบทความวิชาการเพื่อสำรวจและหาข้อมูลจากการ รวบรวม ทุติยภูมิ ในระหว่างการศึกษาได้วิเคราะห์ทบทวนวรรณกรรม ทฤษฎี แนวคิดและหลักการที่เกี่ยวข้อง ผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมกำลังแพร่หลายมากขึ้นในกลุ่มผู้บริโภคตลาดสีเขียวของประเทศไทย เนื่องจากการตระหนักด้านสิ่งแวดล้อม ผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมสามารถสร้างมูลค่าโดยใช้โปรแกรม การตลาดสีเขียวภายใต้แนวคิดการตลาดที่ยั่งยืนในขณะที่หน่วยงานภาครัฐ องค์กร บริษัท และนักวิชาการ ตอบสนองต่อตลาดผู้บริโภคมากขึ้นสำหรับผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมรวมถึงผลลัพธ์ที่คุ้มค่าสำหรับ ความยั่งยืนของสิ่งแวดล้อม ธุรกิจจัดหาผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมเพื่อตอบสนองต่อโครงการกระตุ้น ของรัฐบาลไทยในด้านการปกป้องสิ่งแวดล้อม ดังนั้นผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมจึงเป็นที่นิยมมากขึ้นใน ตลาด ธุรกิจที่มีความรับผิดชอบจำนวนมากมีแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมจึงสามารถ สร้างความพึงพอใจต่อความต้องการของผู้บริโภคโดยการลดของเสียและป้องกันมลพิษจากกระบวนการผลิต อีกทั้งยังวางแผนกลยุทธ์การตลาดสีเขียวเพื่อเข้าถึงกลุ่มเป้าหมาย การศึกษานี้จัดทำขึ้นเพื่อสร้างโอกาสของ ผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมที่จะเติบโตในระบบเศรษฐกิจอุปสงค์ในประเทศไทยและปกป้องสิ่งแวดล้อม ควบคู่ไปกับทรัพยากรธรรมชาติ

คำสำคัญ: ตลาดผู้บริโภค, ความยั่งยืนด้านสิ่งแวดล้อม, ตลาดสีเขียว, ผลิตภัณฑ์ที่เป็นมิตรต่อสิ่งแวดล้อม

Abstract

The study aims to analyze consumer markets for green products such as organic foods, bikes or bicycles, recycling used items, and Thai Massage and Spa related to the environmental sustainability in Thailand. This study is an academic article to explore and obtain the data

from secondary collection. During the study, reviewing literature, involved theories, concepts and principles were analyzed. Green products are increasingly widespread among consumers in Thailand's green market according to their environmental awareness. Green products can build value through green marketing programs under a sustainable marketing concept while the government agencies, organizations, companies and academics more respond to consumer markets for green products, including value outcomes for the environmental sustainability. Businesses provide green products to react Thai government's stimulus programs on environmental protection therefore green products become more popular in the market. Many responsible businesses have green products' concept which can satisfy consumer needs by reducing waste and preventing pollution from the production process. They also plan green marketing strategy to access the target groups. This study is conducted to create an opportunity of green product to grow in the demand economy in Thailand and protect the environment, along with natural resources.

Keywords: consumer markets, environmental sustainability, green marketing, green products

Introduction

Presently, consumers have trouble in disposing of what still remains after the number of products has been consumed. A huge pile of waste comes from whatever people have used and disposed. Lifestyle of modern consumerism is damaging the environment and natural resources because of the increasing population. In terms of an expansion of the investment for the emerging markets of ASEAN, Thai industries aim to meet consumers' needs and satisfaction. The more quickly manufacturers expand, the more extremely the environment and natural resources are damaged. It is no doubt that the fast growth of factories and industries in the city causes an enormous imbalance in lifestyle. Unfortunately, manufacturing in present factories contributes to air, water and land pollution by smokestack emissions and disposal of toxic waste. Even many modern vehicles create hazardous smog contributing to the depletion of ozone in the upper atmosphere. Plastics and foams play an important part in daily life. Both plastics and foams' versatility allow them to be almost used in everything from electronic appliances to household products, even food packaging. It is understandable that non-biodegradable plastics and foams release carbon dioxide, definitely causing air pollution. Therefore, one of the best solutions for the environmental sustainability is that the government agencies, organizations, including firms should use green marketing

programs for preventing, reducing and controlling the environmental impacts. The green marketers intend to push out green marketing program for providing superior customer value to respond consumers' satisfaction through the marking mix of 4Ps – product, price, place and promotion – as a marketing stimulus (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

Apparently, the market growth of green products such as organic, bikes or bicycle, recycling used items, Thai Massage and Spa have tended upwards over recent years because many agencies, organizations and firms can connect with consumers by providing more efficient communication and more variety of their products with the environmental protection. According to consumer behavior of environmental awareness, a wide range of green products becomes trends in which consumers are greatly interested. The growth of green products, especially organic foods, bikes or bicycles, recycling used items, including Thai Massage and Spa can build a more potential green market to sustain the environment in Thailand.

Eating organic food has been popular since 2000. Consumers pay more attention to the relationship between their health and environment. According to the US Organic Trade Association, organic fruits and vegetables are valued at \$17.4 billion, 15% of total US production. Due to TechSci Research, global organic food production grew by 14% annually between 2016 and 2021.

With reference to traffic jam problems, air pollution, healthy trends, and conservation tourism, cycling has become well-known in the green market. It is common now for the domestic market to sell annually between 1.3 and 1.5 million bicycles.

With reference to the data from Investment Strategy and Policy Bureau reported by Smart SME Channel, Rong Kluea Market known as Ban Khlong Luek Border Market in Sa Kaeo province is Thailand's largest secondhand market with more than 3,000 shops where many secondhand items are sold to new users. Over 10 million baht are daily spent on secondhand items brought in through Cambodia. Most of those items are about 80% of various secondhand brand names and counterfeits such as all kind of bags, shoes, sneakers, jackets, and other articles of clothing.

As previously mentioned, the growth of green products in the green market also arises from Thai massage and Spa business. Thailand's income from Thai Massage and Spa business can be figured out more than 20 billion baht. Thai massage becomes more famous because consumers intend to prefer Thai massage and Spa which can make their body healthy.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study were: 1) to analyze consumer markets for green products with the environmental sustainability in Thailand, 2) to guide businesses and their environmental protection through green marketing efforts or activities, 3) to provide information for businesses related to interesting green products which firms can use to consider and produce green products to meet consumers' need.

Literature Review

Marketers should monitor consumer behavior to use and dispose of the product. The more quickly consumers dispose of a product, the sooner they will be back to repeat their purchase. If consumers throw the product away, the marketer needs to know how they dispose of it, especially if - like batteries, beverage containers, electronic equipment, and disposable diapers - it can damage the environment (Kotler & Keller, 2012). In recent years, sustainability has become a major concern for business and society. Ferrell, Throne & Ferrell (2011) define sustainability as the potential for long-term well-being of the natural environment, including all biological entities, as well as the interaction among nature and individuals, organizations, and business strategies; moreover, sustainability includes the assessment and improvement of business strategies, economic sectors, work practices, technologies, and lifestyles while maintaining the natural environment. Armstrong & Kotler (2007) demonstrate the environmental sustainability is a management approach that involves developing strategies that both sustain the environment and produce profits for the company. Most businesses are expected by employees, customers, suppliers, stockholders, regulators, politicians, lenders, and the rest to do the least damage of environment in the pursuit of productivity and profits.

Firms are able to use the grid to gauge their progress towards the environmental sustainability. Firstly, today's business can adopt pollution prevention involving waste and emission management by eliminating or minimizing before they have been created as a bigger problem of the environment. Companies emphasizing prevention have responded with "green marketing" programs – developing ecologically safer products, recyclable and biodegradable packaging, better pollution controls, and more energy-efficient operations (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007). Many businesses focus on environmentally responsible activities through green marketing in order to protect the environment and control uses of natural resources. The large amount of green products is provided for the environment sustainability. Green marketing is

a strategic process involving stakeholder assessment to create meaningful long-term relationships with customers, while maintaining, supporting, and enhancing the natural environment (Ferrell, Throne & Ferrell, 2011). Secondly, companies can practice product stewardship by reducing costs and minimizing not only pollution from production process, but also all environmental impacts for all entire product lifecycle. The number of products is easier designed to repair, reuse, and recycle for the environmental sustainability and financial savings. Companies are able to seek a bottom-line approach with making their commitment to the environmental sustainability. At the third level, companies think of the future and plan for new environmental technology to sustain the environment. Many organizations can develop products with new environmental technology through sustainable strategies. Finally, companies can develop a sustainable vision to show the way to the future. The company's vision guides the development of products or services, production processes, new technologies, and markets so as to not only reduce the environmental impacts, but also find out the solution of social and environmental problems.

Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan (2010) demonstrate that green products have some objectives different from other products as follows: 1) green products are made enough to meet customer needs without extravagance, 2) green products have to be rechecked any containing of chemicals causing the danger to humans and animals, 3) green products can recycle and reduce energy uses from production process which must be limited to use natural resources and carry sewerages away, 4) the packaging of green products are designed to use a few natural resources and not damage the environment, and 5) green products are prohibited to test or conduct research with animals in the laboratory. Therefore, organic foods, bikes or bicycles, recycling used items, including Thai Massage and Spa are green products as above mentioned. Organic foods can meet consumers with reducing the need for fertilizers and pesticides. Foods from organic farms, which use natural fertilizers and crop rotation, are also safe for consumers and the environment. Even bike or bicycle companies have often created marketing activities with cycling campaigns in order that consumers admire the nature and environment all the routes of cycling. Many companies have taken actions on cycling activities in a target consumer through marketing communication focusing on consumers' environmentally friendly attitude which appears to reduce the air pollution from carbon dioxide emission and solve traffic jam problem. Obviously, the used clothing, books, cars, and household items and others that are no longer of any use can be sold in the secondhand

shops, charity shops, eBay, Alibaba and similar websites, on which B2C and B2B transform worthless goods into valuable trade in the lateral recycling market. Thai Massage & Spa businesses are likely responsive to consumers with products and services involving the environmental protection. For instance, Thai massage and Spa business has mostly offered herbal products without any chemicals and harmfulness for the environment and consumers. Many well-known products such as shampoos, facial and skin care, cosmetics, oil massage, essential oils, aroma candles and incenses, and so on are made from the pure natural ingredients. It is undeniable that those are environmentally friendly products that help consumers balance their mind, body and emotions.

Material and Methods

This study is an academic article to explore and obtain the data from secondary collection. During the study, reviewing literature, involved theories, concepts and principles were analyzed. The main data of this study was collected with secondary information from various sources as follows: trade publications commercial data, research documents, newspapers, and other surveys which could be searched through websites and library.

Results

Nowadays, consumers have more environmental concern and awareness by using green products, especially organic foods, bikes, secondhand items, or Thai massage and Spa whose trends are highly booming in the green market. The products without toxic chemicals and harmful effects to the environment can respond to target consumers and satisfy them through green marketing programs.

Organic Foods

Organic foods come from farms designed to reduce pollution and encourage conservation of both soil and water by using natural fertilizers, including crop rotation. Therefore, organic foods are safe for the environment and consumers. Organic agriculture sector is fast growing in the global market. According to a report by Bangkok Post, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives received a budget allocation of 851 million baht to promote organic food products in 2022. The budget would go to support many projects related to organic food products as follows: 48 projects involving research development, innovation, database development and knowledge transfer to farmers, 21 projects developing organic food production, organic farming management, 25 projects improving marketing services and

organic farming standards.

The most expanded organic farms are tea and coffee; the second and third expanded organic farms are fruits and rice. Thailand has been a major exporter of fruits and vegetables and a producer of high-quality organic products with accreditations from Thai and International Institutes. Those farms had been certified by Organic Agriculture Certification Thailand, accredited by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). For ensuring the high quality of Thai organic markets, there is evidence to show many organic certification programs that require all organic products in Thailand to meet the standard regulations, for example: 1) Organic Thailand's Brand by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives in Thailand, 2) Food Safety by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives in Thailand, 3) Organic Agriculture Certification Thailand (A.C.T.) by Certified Organic, a member of IFOAM, 4) IFOAM Accredited by IFOAM, 5) USDA Organic by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 6) Bioagricert by Bioagricert S.r.l., Italy and ,7) Eco Cert by France. All of those certification programs show that organic products are manufactured without chemicals or harmful contaminants.

Thailand can produce organic foods and deliver superior perceived value to satisfy target consumers with high quality, especially Thai Jasmine rice products, which have been well-known around the world. Thai Jasmine rice has already been certified by USDA Organic, Bioagricert, Organic Agricultural Certification Thailand (A.C.T.), and Eco Cert according to the Department of International Trade Promotion, Royal Thai Government, therefore Thai Jasmine rice products can meet consumers' needs in the green market. It has been known that people in the region of ASEAN are accustomed to growing rice for living and trading. It is rich in natural resources and one of the world's major rice supplies which strengthen and stabilize the region's economy. Thailand is also one of the largest rice producers and exporters in the world. Although China is the world's biggest rice producer, it still imports rice from the other countries, particularly Thailand because of the higher consumption of population in the country. This great opportunity can lead Thai Jasmine rice products to meet potential consumers in the green market of China.

Besides, most consumers would prefer to buy organic foods because the spread of Covid-19 causes sudden changes in life. Eating organic foods is quite popular among new generations of consumers who pay attention to their health and have positive attitudes towards buying organic foods for the environmental sustainability. They will buy value-added

items labeled 'organic' because they want a good experience and a healthy lifestyle. They realize that good food must not have chemical residues. When there are the media, lifestyle bloggers on various social media also promote the trend of eating organic for good health, it is not doubtful that new generations of consumers are turning to buy more organic foods

Bikes or Bicycles

At the moment, Thailand has promoted walking and cycling to reduce the air pollution from emitting carbon dioxide of vehicles, to draw attention of the public for the environmental awareness, to save the energy consumption, and to solve the traffic jam problem, especially in Bangkok. The Thai Government agencies have taken actions seriously on many activities, together with public relations for walking and cycling in order that people have environmentally friendly attitude and behavior in walking and cycling rather than driving.

Besides, Tourism Authority Thailand has also supported people to ride bikes for domestic tourism through many projects and public relations. With regard to Tourism Authority Thailand, cycling is more popular for Thai consumers, increasingly riding bikes for domestic tourism and many people use bikes to travel within the country. The domestic tourism can build a great amount of million incomes. In addition, Thailand Cycling Club (TCC), an associate member of the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF), was found in 1991, provide the information about walking and cycling news, events, along with research articles. It encourages a walking and cycling community around the country, and also promotes walking and cycling in the effective ways: the solution of traffic jam and pollution problems contributing to global warming and climate change problems, the conservation of the environment and natural resources, including the energy savings.

According to business news reported by Bangkok Business Online, Thailand's bicycle market was worth from 3 billion baht to 5 billion baht and rose by 20% of the total market. The proportion of mass market to high-end market in Thailand's bicycle industry was three to one. Although Thailand had several bicycle companies such as LA Bicycle, Thai Bicycle Industry (Pheasant), Victory Cycle (Marawuti and Tiger brand), Raja Cycle (Meadow and Optima), Siam Cycle International (Turbo brand), and Siam Cycle Industrial, a large number of bicycle imports increased. Presently, the types of bike include as follows: 1) mountain bikes, 2) road bikes, 3) touring bikes, 4) city bikes, and 5) folding bikes. The sale volumes would be expected to increase by 50% of mountain bikes, 30% of road bikes, and 20% of other bikes. Bangkok Post, a business newspaper, reported that the average prices for mass market of bikes sold in

Thailand were between 8,000 and 20,000 baht, and the majority of people purchased bikes in this price range.

Secondhand or Used Products

In recent years, secondhand or used goods has been desired continuously in the market of lateral recycling – selling used goods on, giving them away to others, or exchanging them for other goods. In terms of recycling behavior, consumers intend to buy more recycling goods such as clothing, books, cars, and used household items. Those items are often contributed to charity shops when they are no longer of any use. Consumers buying used goods at charity shops are likely to save money whereas they are looking for something cool in good conditions. It is true that recycling used items are commonly less harmful for the environment than new items from factories. Buying more used goods is probably from consumers' environmental awareness.

Due to new technologies and social networks, both teenagers and working-aged people with recycling behavior prefer recycling things sold in the Internet. They become the largest and most powerful buyers in the lateral recycling market through social networks. Apparently, on-line trading of the used items is widespread for Thai consumers who want to transform their existing worthless goods into valuable goods for new users. A more recent arrival in the lateral recycling market is Alibaba, eBay, Shopee and similar websites, on which recycling consumers can buy and sell various used items. E-commerce can make billion amounts of money from buying and selling goods on the Internet. According to National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), more than 25 million consumers in Thailand used Internet service and more than 10 million products were sold in the Internet. With reference to the survey from National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) reported by NSTDA, it found that consumers in Thailand buying through Internet increased from 47.8% to 57.2%. Therefore, it is no doubt that recycling consumers' buying and selling through online trading have created a lucrative opportunity for green market.

The most popular secondhand market in Bangkok is Chatuchak Weekend Market where many thousand people visit during the weekend. The most popular secondhand items sold in this market are clothing, shoes, and bags. Chatuchak Weekend Market's item prices were more expensive than Rong Kluea Market's item prices. The secondhand clothes with brand names were the most popular items in terms of their cheap prices. The mass market of recycling clothes was intensely growing because clothes strongly affected consumers'

appearance. In addition, a great number of recycling clothes imported from Guangxi region in Southern China were the most popular in Thailand's lateral recycling market. According to the data from Kasikorn Research Center reported by Smart SME Channel, it found that the monthly average expense of Thai consumers for buying clothes was 440 baht per person. The average cost of women's used clothes was around 20 baht whereas it was sold between 100 and 200 baht in the retailing stores. As a result of survey, main consumers were between 18 and 35 years old and changed their fashion quickly. Because fashion trends came and went very quickly, it was not necessary for consumers to buy too much expensive clothing.

Thai Massage and Spa

Thailand has a global reputation in the field of Thai massage for healing some illness and relieving tiredness, stiffness and tension. Thai massage consisted of two types: massage for health and massage for healing. Thai massage is an ancient art using techniques of stretching and applying pressure to body's various areas. Acupressure on the appropriately reflex zones of head, neck, shoulder, foot, and muscle helps relief from pain, illness, and stress. In addition, it can relieve tension, revitalize, increase body's flexibility, and energize effect to mind and spirit.

For over 400 years, Thai herbal compress ball has been a Thai medicinal treatment which people know as a massage with hot press using a round herbal ball wrapped in cotton with various dried herbs inside. Thai herbal compress ball are made with the pure natural ingredients without chemicals and harmful effects to the environment and consumers. Furthermore, Thai herbal oils are popularly used in combination with massage to enhance the benefits of massage. Besides, many Thai Spa and herbs are well-known in the green market such as hair, facial and skin care products, cosmetics, aroma massage and essential oils, aroma candles and incenses, and others. The products are also made from many species of herbal plants which have been allowed to use as main ingredients without toxic chemicals. Thai herbal products become environmentally friendly due to using all natural raw materials in the production process.

A number of organic herbal farms are supported by the Ministry of Public Health to save Thailand's herbal plants. Many thousands of herbs planted on the farms can absorb more greenhouse gases and reduce the environmental impacts. The Ministry of Public Health provides almost 80 million baht for funding projects to protect and grow herbal plants at least 50 species each year. The Department of Development of Thai Traditional and Alternative

Medicine has currently declared 20 areas as herbal plant conservation zones to protect the endangered plants. The local communities are also encouraged to grow local herbs, which not only survive but thrive, and produce goods made from their locally herbal plants. For example, kaffir lime has still been used as a key ingredient for Thai massage oils, soaps, shampoos, and skin care products because of its various benefits – rejuvenating, refreshing, reducing body odor, including curing dandruff and rashes. In addition, kaffir lime can cure for scurvy caused from vitamin C deficiency.

Nowadays, kaffir lime products can protect workers from scurvy which happens frequently with the people working in polluted environments such as painting, digging mine, furnaces, cement industries, and other dangerous environments. Lemongrass is a very beneficial herb for nervous and immune system, cellular health, and healthy skin. Because lemongrass' scent helps to relieve minor headache and nausea, repel insects and mosquitos, including combat fatigue, stress, and anxiety, it is extensively used in essential oils, aroma massage oils, Thai herbal balms, and herbal scent refreshers. Moreover, Turmeric is commonly used in facial and body scrubs, masks, creams, soaps, skin care treatments and essential oils. Curcumin is the most important ingredient of Turmeric which has many various benefits such as anti-aging process, reducing inflammation, healing wounds, alleviating muscle pain, eliminating depression, and others.

Conclusion

The government agencies, organizations, firms, including consumers need to have much awareness of the environment and support the green products for reducing the environmental problems. A trend of green products can be observed to increase gradually because consumers have expressed more their concerns about the environment. It is possible that our environment can be intensely saved. The study's results showed that consumers who had awareness of good health and the environmental impacts would buy organic foods from farms without chemicals. Thailand's organic products could meet the standard regulations from many organic certification programs, accredited by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). Recycling used goods could be provided through websites or market places in Thailand. Although recycling markets were found everywhere in Thailand, a number of consumers with recycling behavior preferred to buy and sell secondhand goods on the Internet. With regard to public relations and activities from the government agencies and organizations, bikes were well-known in Thailand's green market. A reason of bikes'

popularity came from the solution of traffic jam and pollution problems. Many consumers usually used bicycles in their daily life by commuting from and to their home. Most cyclists also used bikes for domestic tourism. In addition, Thai massage and Spa products were famous all over the world because of their benefits such as relieving pains, stiffness, sprain, stressfulness, fatigue, and others. The products were mostly made from herbal plants on which consumers relied without harmful ingredients.

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