

IMPROVEMENT OF PRODUCTS AND MARKETING VALUE ADDED OF LOCAL COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE IN SUKHOTHAI PROVINCE

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are (1) To develop the marketing potential of community enterprises, enabling them to reach a wider market, build a quality brand, and increase competitiveness in both local and national markets. (2) To enhance knowledge and skills in using digital marketing tools, such as online sales platforms and social media, for product promotion. (3) To increase the income and sustainability of community enterprises by adjusting marketing strategies and building consumer confidence in the products. The sample used in the research included 20 entrepreneurs, community enterprise members, and community leaders, selected through a specific sampling method. The research tools consisted of interviews and group discussions. Data analysis was conducted by analyzing the main content and dividing it into sub-topics, starting with an overall analysis and proceeding to detailed sub-point analysis, following a qualitative research approach.

According to the research findings, it was found that in order to upgrade products and increase the market value of community enterprises in Sukhothai Province, it is essential to develop prototypes of traditional products based on local wisdom to preserve the uniqueness of community products. This can be achieved by applying marketing knowledge and utilizing technology. Training on the use of digital marketing tools for community enterprise members is crucial for accessing online markets and increasing market opportunities. Additionally, promoting market research to understand consumer needs and aligning products with market trends and demands is vital. Fostering networking with local organizations or business sectors that have the potential to assist in product distribution will create more opportunities for market expansion. Furthermore, enterprises should prioritize branding and maintaining product quality standards to build long-term trust. Enhancing the development of appealing packaging and designs will also increase the attractiveness and credibility of community enterprise products.

The focus is on improving product quality, building brand identity, and designing standout packaging, along with utilizing digital marketing channels. Marketing through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok helps reach a broader range of consumers. Creating compelling content, such as product demonstration videos or behind-the-scenes stories, can increase brand awareness and engage a wider audience. Collaboration between the community and external experts in areas such as design, market research, and technology will further enable community enterprises to create sustainability and effectively increase revenue.

Keywords: Improvement of products / marketing value added / local community enterprise

Introduction

The 20-Year National Strategic Plan (2018 - 2037) focuses on developing the country to achieve long-term stability, prosperity, and sustainability. One key aspect is adding product value through improving quality, packaging design, and branding, which enhances the competitiveness of community products in both domestic and international markets. Additionally, the strategy emphasizes basic economic development and social justice.

Upgrading community enterprise products helps increase income for local people, reduce inequality, and promote fairness in the economy. (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2018).

key feature in developing products and services. Examples include local weaving, organic rice products, pottery making, and cultural tourism. Over the years, the government and various agencies have promoted community enterprises to enhance the quality of life and generate income for the community through financial support, skills development, and marketing programs. Sukhothai's community enterprises play a crucial role in the local economy, as they bring together community members to generate income from natural resources. These enterprises offer a wide range of products and services, including agricultural products, cultural experiences, local wisdom, processed foods, handicrafts, and ecotourism.

However, Sukhothai's community enterprises face several challenges, primarily due to a lack of systematic business management knowledge, which hinders their competitiveness. Additionally, marketing is a significant obstacle, as most communities focus on selling local products and have limited access to national or international markets. Another major issue is the limited access to capital, which makes it difficult for these enterprises to expand or develop their products. The lack of knowledge in innovation and modern technology also results in products that lack the quality and appeal needed to succeed in broader markets. Furthermore, human resource management is a challenge, as younger generations often migrate to big cities for work, making it difficult to pass on local wisdom and skills.

Due to the various challenges faced by community enterprises in Sukhothai Province, there is an urgent need to upgrade products and increase their market value in order to enhance product competitiveness. Strengthening the capacity to access capital and leveraging technology will be key solutions to these issues, ultimately helping to fortify and empower community enterprises in Sukhothai.

Research Objectives

1. To develop the marketing potential of community enterprises, enabling them to reach a wider market, build a quality brand, and increase competitiveness in both local and national markets.
2. To enhance knowledge and skills in utilizing digital marketing tools, such as online sales platforms and social media, for product promotion.
3. To increase the income and sustainability of community enterprises by adjusting marketing strategies and building consumer confidence in the products.

Literature Review

1. Concept of Product Development

Product development refers to the process of improving, modifying, or changing products or services to meet consumer demands. This includes the development of new products, services, or packaging, which feature new or distinct characteristics that bring new benefits to customers. The ultimate goal is to increase customer satisfaction. Nowadays, businesses and community enterprises face fierce competition and rapid changes due to new technologies, pushing them to introduce new products to the market. However, introducing or improving new products requires innovation and the ability to meet consumer needs. New products can be categorized into three types (McCarthy & Pereault, Jr., 1991):

1.1 Innovative Product: This refers to a product that has never been introduced to the market before. It involves research and development, creativity, and originality, and is not yet available in the market.

1.2 Replacement or Modified Product: This type refers to a new product developed by changing or improving certain characteristics of an existing product. This development allows the product to better meet consumer needs and enhance customer satisfaction.

1.3 Imitative or Me-too Product: This refers to a new product introduced by a business that imitates an existing competitor's product, which is already popular with consumers. This strategy gives the business the opportunity to achieve high profits.

2. Related research

Panida Ninaron, Wareeya Khlungsaeng and Suwita Pruksaarporn (2021) conducted a study on the Study issues, approaches to enhance knowledge and understanding on the development of happiness capital to improve the quality of life of community-based tourism enterprise members in Phatthalung Province. The study found that studies on the concept of enhancing knowledge and understanding of the development of the capital of happiness to improve the quality of life of tourism enterprises by Phatthalung community. There are 2 sides: 1. There are 6 guidelines for enhancing cognition. 1) Community awareness 2) Self-reliance potential 3) Community environmental management capabilities 4) Community network success 5) Focusing on creative leadership.

Wanida Suwunniponth (2021) conducted a study on the Competitiveness Based on the Digital Economy Among Community Enterprises of Local Product Groups in Bangkok The results of the research show that the internal environment should entail proactive strategies to 1) develop brand value through consumer recognition 2) increase distribution channels through online exposure and 3) expand the market outside the community and globally through online media. Preventive strategies include 1) developing distinctive and unique storefronts 2) offering new products that differ from competitors 3) studying consumer behavior in the digital age and 4) building a customer database and good customer relations to build brand loyalty.

Research Methodology

This research follows a qualitative approach. The research methodology employed is as follows:

1. Population and sample

Population: The population for this research consisted of entrepreneurs and members of community enterprise groups in Sukhothai Province.

Sample: The research sample included 20 entrepreneurs and members of community enterprise groups, as well as community leaders.

2. Data collection

Qualitative Research involves a systematic process of data collection and interviews. The steps are as follows:

Step 1: The researcher contacted the target group of informants by telephone to request their cooperation in the interview. An appointment was scheduled to conduct the interview based on pre-prepared questions.

Step 2: The researcher conducted in-depth interviews using questions that were relevant to the study, focusing on creating interaction with the interviewee throughout the process. Interviewees were also given the opportunity to ask questions, exchange opinions, and jointly generate new information within the scope of the topic. The researcher sought detailed and clear responses that aligned with the core questions.

Step 3: Record the interview using tape recording with taking notes of important statements during the interview.

Step 4: After the interview, the researcher transcribed and reviewed the recorded interview for clarity. A questionnaire was then prepared to summarize key points from the interviews, categorized by the type of respondent. The data was subsequently analyzed for each question to draw conclusions and provide comprehensive research insights.

Step 5: Data were collected through a survey conducted between October 2023 and August 2024.

3. Data Analysis

3.1 In-depth Interviews: Data was collected through in-depth interviews, supported by document research. The data analysis method involved identifying key points from all interviews, followed by organizing these main issues into sub-issues and sub-topics for further exploration.

3.2 Focus Group Discussion Analysis: The researcher gathered data from focus group discussions, transcribing the recordings into text. Content analysis was then performed to extract key insights from the discussions.

Research Results

According to the results of the research on product upgrading and market value addition for community enterprises in Sukhothai Province, it was found that most entrepreneurial groups operate by organizing villagers and community members who have been involved in their craft, particularly pottery, from the past to the present. However, these groups frequently face various challenges due to limitations in resources, management, and market access, as outlined below:

1. Interview Analysis Results: Interviews with entrepreneurs, members of community enterprise groups, and community leaders revealed the following insights:

1.1 Community enterprises often face difficulties in accessing larger markets or reaching new consumer groups. Sales are frequently limited to the community or local markets, which restricts growth potential. There is also a lack of access to diverse marketing channels, including online platforms, and a shortage of business partners who can help distribute products more broadly.

1.2 The products produced may not meet market demand or have not been developed to align with modern consumer trends. The lack of sufficient data or market research prevents an understanding of current consumer preferences, making products less attractive or mismatched to the target audience. Additionally, there are challenges in updating product designs and differentiating the brand to remain competitive.

1.3 Community enterprises face intense competition from major manufacturers or similar products in the market. Due to their limited resources, community enterprises struggle to compete with large manufacturers that benefit from better cost management and more efficient marketing strategies. As a result, products from community enterprises often face challenges in securing a competitive market position.

1.4 Community enterprises lack strong networks and connections with consumers, which hinders their ability to expand their market reach. Without a robust network of supporters or business partners, it is difficult for these enterprises to distribute their products widely. Opportunities to collaborate with other organizations or businesses for co-marketing, product distribution, or the development of new channels are limited. Consequently, products from community enterprises are not widely disseminated.

From group discussions and exchanges of ideas, several lessons were extracted. One key suggestion for upgrading products and increasing the market value of community enterprises in Sukhothai Province is the need to develop prototypes of traditional products based on local wisdom, preserving the unique characteristics of these community products. This can be achieved by integrating marketing knowledge and leveraging technology.

Training in digital marketing tools for community enterprise members is essential to help them access online markets and expand their market opportunities. Additionally, promoting market research to better understand consumer needs and adapt products to align with market trends is crucial.

Fostering networks with local organizations or business sectors that have the capacity to assist in product distribution will also provide more opportunities for community enterprises to expand their reach. Emphasizing branding and maintaining consistent product quality standards will help build long-term trust. Moreover, focusing on developing attractive packaging and designs will increase the appeal and credibility of community enterprise products.

To upgrade products and increase the market value of community enterprises, emphasis should be placed on enhancing product quality, building strong brand identity, and designing distinctive packaging. The use of digital marketing channels, particularly through social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, is essential for reaching a broader range of consumers. Creating engaging content, such as product demonstration videos or behind-the-scenes stories, can help boost brand awareness and expand the audience. Collaboration between the community and external experts in areas such as design, market research, and the use of technology is also crucial. This partnership will enable community enterprises to create sustainability and effectively increase their revenue.

Discussion

According to the research findings, it was found that in order to upgrade products and increase the market value of community enterprises in Sukhothai Province, it is essential to develop prototypes of traditional products based on local wisdom to preserve the uniqueness of community products. This can be achieved by applying marketing knowledge and utilizing technology. Training on the use of digital marketing tools for community enterprise members is crucial for accessing online markets and increasing market opportunities. Additionally, promoting market research to understand consumer needs and aligning products with market trends and demands is vital. Fostering networking with local organizations or business sectors that have the potential to assist in product distribution will create more opportunities for market expansion. Furthermore, enterprises should prioritize branding and maintaining product quality standards to build long-term trust. Enhancing the development of appealing packaging and designs will also increase the attractiveness and credibility of community enterprise products. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Wanida Suwunniponth (2021) conducted a study on the Competitiveness Based on the Digital Economy Among Community Enterprises of Local Product Groups in Bangkok. The results of the research show that the internal environment should entail proactive strategies to 1) develop brand value through consumer recognition 2) increase distribution channels through online exposure and 3) expand the market outside the community and globally through online media. Preventive strategies include 1) developing distinctive and unique storefronts 2) offering new products that differ from competitors 3) studying consumer behavior in the digital age and 4) building a customer database and good customer relations to build brand loyalty.

Recommendations

1. Training on Quality Control: There should be training programs to educate community enterprises on quality control to ensure their products meet standards before they are released. This will help build consumer confidence and enhance competitiveness.



2. Skill Development for Online Sales: Community enterprises should be trained in selling products through various online channels, enabling them to manage and operate independently in the digital marketplace.

3. Product Development with Unique Identity: Community enterprises should focus on developing products that showcase unique identities and features to attract consumers. By utilizing locally available raw materials, products can be produced at a lower cost while highlighting the distinctiveness of the local area.

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