



THE CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP FACTORS AFFECTING THE BRAND LOYALTY TOWARDS THE THAI CANNED FRUIT AND VEGETABLES*

ปัจจัยความสัมพันธ์เชิงสาเหตุที่ส่งผลต่อความภักดีของผู้บริโภค
ที่มีต่อตราสินค้าผักและผลไม้กระป๋องของไทย



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Abstract

Objectives of this research article were to analyze the causal factors between brand awareness. Brand quality perception and brand connections that influenced brand loyalty of Thai canned fruits and vegetables. This was quantitative research using questionnaires to collect data from 600 consumers who were citizens of the United States, Australia, and Japan and analyzed the data using structural equation modeling analysis.

The Findings were found that the model consisted of the empirical data; Chi-square = 180.873, P-Value = 0.188, CMIN/df = 1.096, GFI = 0.965, CFI = 0.997, AGFI = 0.955, and RMSEA = 0.014. The primary result was brand awareness had a positive direct effect on brand perceived quality and brand association but was not on brand loyalty. In addition, brand perceived quality and brand association was the mediator variable, mediated a positive indirect effect of brand awareness on brand loyalty.

Keywords: Brand Loyalty; Brand Awareness; Perceived Quality; Brand Association

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยเชิงสาเหตุระหว่างการตระหนักรู้ต่อตราสินค้า การรับรู้คุณภาพตราสินค้า และสิ่งเชื่อมโยงกับตราสินค้าที่มีอิทธิพลต่อความภักดีในตราสินค้าผักและผลไม้กระป๋องของไทย เป็นการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณโดยใช้แบบสอบถามการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากผู้บริโภคจำนวน 600 คนซึ่งเป็นพลเมืองของประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกา ออสเตรเลีย และญี่ปุ่น และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยการวิเคราะห์แบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้าง

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า แบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้างมีความกลมกลืนสอดคล้องกับข้อมูลเชิงประจักษ์ โดยมีค่า $\text{Chi-square} = 180.873$ $\text{P-Value} = 0.188$ $\text{CMIN/df} = 1.096$ $\text{GFI} = 0.965$ $\text{CFI} = 0.997$, $\text{AGFI} = 0.955$ และ $\text{RMSEA} = 0.014$. อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ 0.05 ข้อค้นพบที่สำคัญที่ได้จากการวิจัย คือ ปัจจัยด้านการตระหนักรู้ต่อตราสินค้าส่งอิทธิพลทางตรงเชิงบวกกับปัจจัยด้านการรับรู้คุณภาพตราสินค้าและปัจจัยด้านสิ่งเชื่อมโยงกับตราสินค้า แต่ไม่ส่งอิทธิพลทางตรงกับความภักดีต่อตราสินค้า โดยส่งผ่านตัวแปรคั่นกลาง 2 ตัว คือ ปัจจัยด้านการรับรู้คุณภาพตราสินค้า และปัจจัยด้านสิ่งเชื่อมโยงกับตราสินค้า

คำสำคัญ: ความภักดีต่อตราสินค้า; การตระหนักรู้ต่อตราสินค้า; การรับรู้คุณภาพ; สิ่งเชื่อมโยงกับตราสินค้า

Introduction

The fruit and vegetable processing industry has a steady growth rate. Therefore, it represents an opportunity for Thai entrepreneurs to increase the export market share (National News Bureau of Thailand, 2023). In 2023, the export value of Thai fruit and vegetable processing is 2,483,303,006.49 US\$, an increase of about 30% from 2019. The top three of export value are the United States of America, Australia, and Japan. Concurrently, Thailand faces a number of obstacles in international trade that effect to strong brands (DITP, 2023). Consequently, Thai brands have to develop effective strategies, including brand loyalty as a competitive advantage (Izzo et al., 2023; Atilgan et al., 2005).

The various models for measuring brand equity have been developed (Chenhall & Langfield-Smith, 2007; Florence & Florence, 2020). A few studies have attempted to establish causal relationships between the constructs (Buil et al., 2013; Huang & Cai, 2015; Torres et al., 2015). Strong and positive brand equity creates competitive barriers for new competitors to enter the industry (Yoo et al., 2000), thereby providing a firm with competitive advantages. Therefore, it is



generally acknowledged that brand equity increases the value of a company (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2010).

The dominant research stranding in this perspective is rooted in cognitive psychology (Aaker, 1995). Due to the consumer-centric nature of the approach, the final dimension is typically omitted from the operationalization of the model. The separation between brand awareness and brand associations has not occurred in almost all previous empirical investigations, which contradicts the theory. According to empirical data and previous interviews with consumers regarding canned food products, consumers will exhibit brand-loyal sentiments and behaviors. They need to be aware of not only the brand but also the quality of the product. Therefore, this research aims to prove the theory about whether brand awareness directly or indirectly influences brand loyalty in order to generate the new academic knowledge and its application in brand management. (Aaker, 2010)

Research Objective

To analyze the causal relationship between brand awareness, brand perceived quality, and brand association influencing brand loyalty of Thai canned fruit and vegetables.

Research methodology

1. Research Design

This study areas are included the United States of America, Australia, and Japan, which is the top three export from Thailand between September to November 2022. (DITP, 2023)

2. Populations and Samples

2.1 The population is the citizenship of Americans, Australians, and Japanese who had purchased or consumed Thai canned fruit and vegetables product.

2.2 The sample includes Americans, Australians, and Japanese who consumed Thai canned fruit and vegetables. They are over 18 years old and can read and answer the questionnaire in English. Sample size: The number of respondents based on factor analysis research The sample size was determined



to be a very good 500 (Comrey & Lee, 2013). This study employed 600 people. The researcher employed a method of random sampling. The quota is 200 individuals per country.

3. Research Instrument

The tool was used as questionnaire. It consisted of three parts. Part I, screening information on experiences in purchasing or consuming Thai canned fruit and vegetables. Part II, the respondent's profile. Part III, the opinions on brand component that effects on brand loyalty using a 5-level rating scale.

The researcher submitted the draught questionnaire to be certified by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UTCC. After that, a preliminary quality check was conducted with content validity using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) method by five experts. The IOC value was between 0.60-0.80. The questionnaire with the Likert scale was used to check the reliability with a group with similar qualifications to the sample of 30 subjects. Considering the Cronbach alpha value of the entire questionnaire is 0.90.

In addition, a research instrument to verify the construct validity by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). All constructs have passed criteria the good fit model which recommended by Arbuckle (2016).

4. Data Collection

The data was collected by the research assistant, who has a master's degree. The questionnaire requires the following screening: 1. the citizens of the nation and 2. the experience of consuming Thai canned fruit and vegetables.

As a method of data acquisition, inquiring the general public by accidental. In addition, the assistance researcher requested cooperation from Thai canned fruit and vegetable stores in order to collect consumer information.

5. Data analysis and Statistics used to analyze the data

Demographic: Using a social science package program, gender, age, education level, occupation, and average monthly income were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The structural equation model with a statistical package operates the hypothesis test.



Results

Demographics profile

Respondents are United States, Australian, and Japanese citizens. Predominantly male (55.3%), aged 33–44 (64.0%), with less than a bachelor's degree (43.50%), and an average monthly income of \$4,501–5,500 (42.17%).

Structural Model

The Structural equation Model of factors on the brand loyalty of Thai canned fruits and vegetables after adjusting for the variances by modification index, the model analysis results are consistent with the empirical data. These statistics passed the established criteria, as shown in Figure 2, Table 1.

Table 1 The evaluate statistic of a good fit model

Fit Indices	Measure Value	Result	Summary	Reference
1. CMIN-p	> 0.05	0.188	Passed	Arbuckle (2016)
2. CMIN/DF	< 2.00	1.096	Passed	Arbuckle (2016)
3. GFI	> 0.90	0.965	Passed	Arbuckle (2016)
4. RMSEA	< 0.08	0.014	Passed	Arbuckle (2016)

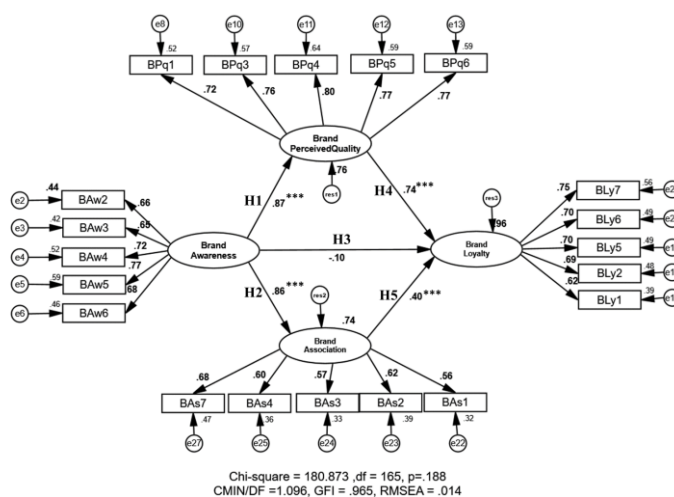


Figure 1 Structural equation model of factor affecting on brand loyalty

Table 2 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Variable	Standard DE	Standard IE	S.E.	t-value	P	Result
H1	BA <- BW	0.86	-	0.05	10.25	0.00*	Accept
H2	BP <- BW	0.87	-	0.07	12.86	0.00*	Accept

Table 2 Hypothesis Testing (Continued)

Hypothesis	Variable			Standard DE	Standard IE	S.E.	t-value	P	Result
H3	BL	<-	BW	-0.10	0.99	0.10	-0.82	0.41	Reject
H4	BL	<-	BP	0.74	-	0.05	9.53	0.00*	Accept
H5	BL	<-	BA	0.40	-	0.08	5.34	0.00*	Accept

According to Table 2 show the hypotheses testing; H1, H2, H4, and H5 were accepted but H5 was rejected:

Brand awareness (BW) has a positively direct effect on brand association (BA) and brand perceived quality (BP), with factor loading of 0.86 and 0.87 with statistic significant at 0.05, respectively.

Brand awareness doesn't have a direct effect on brand loyalty (the regression coefficient is -0.10), but there is an indirect effect through two mediators: brand perceived quality and brand association, which are 0.99 $[(0.87 \times 0.74) + (0.86 \times 0.40)]$.

Discussion

The research is based on the research assumptions set. The brand awareness has a significant positive direct effect on BA and BP. Moreover, BA and BP have a significant positive direct effect on BL.

According to Torres et al. (2015); Tran et al. (2019), brand awareness measures how well consumers recognize a brand and correctly associate it with a given good or service. For example, when someone says, “I want canned fruit imported from Asia,” you know the consumer is referring to canned fruit. There are many other brands that make canned fruit. But the branded products from Thailand have become one of the most recognizable brands. The more accustomed consumers are; the more likely they are to be with certain things. Consumers will trust them more.

The definition of BP is “the consumer's evaluation of a product's overall excellence or superiority” (Zeithaml, 1988). Previous research indicated that BP influences BL, and according to Torres et al. (2015), BP influences brand loyalty.

Meanwhile, BL derives from a positive attitude towards the brand and the decision to continuously purchase products and services (Atulkar, 2020). As a



consequence of the quality of responsive products or services, customers are promoted, whereas, the brand has a one of the components of developing brand equity that encouraged to repeat purchases by customers. and follow the brand's narratives (Taeshapotiwarakun, 2023; Shaalan et al., 2020).

BW has not a significant positively direct effect on BL. This may be the canned fruit and vegetables product has a specific characteristic; therefore, BW is influenced indirectly by BP and BA. Tan et al. (2011) who studied the hierarchical chain of consumer-based brand equity in the fast-food industry, reached similar conclusions. This study revealed that the BW influenced the BP, which in turn influenced the BL.

Body of Knowledge

From the results, to answer the third research objective shown in Figure 3, which was developed from the results of the research hypothesis testing,

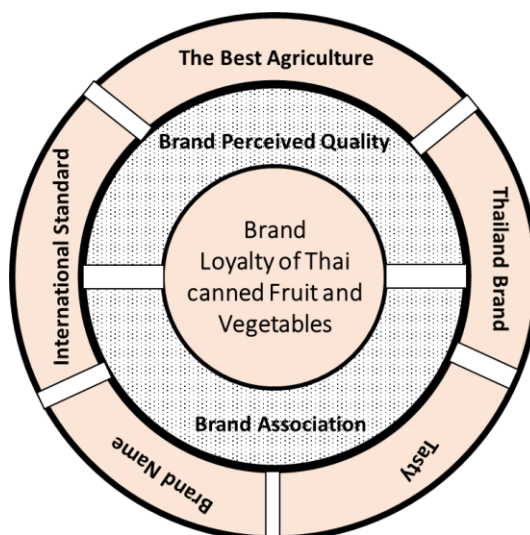


Figure 2 The brand loyalty of Thai canned fruit and vegetables

This is a result of the customer's prior contentment with the products and services received that cause confidence or trust in the brand, in addition to recommending the product or service to others.

BL for Thai canned fruit and vegetables should start by building brand awareness, namely: 1. country image; 2. brand name; and 3. international



standards. 4. Thailand brand symbol; and 5. tasty. These need to be built with the BP (product quality, nutrition, manufacturer quality) and the connection with the BA (social responsibility, quantity, packaging design, for example), which will lead to BL.

Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

Building brand loyalty for the canned fruit and vegetable product necessitates the incorporation of BW, BP, and BA, which will strengthen BL which can create a competitive advantage and contribute to a strong brand.

Operational Recommendations

Three factors (BW, BP, and BA) combine to create BL, which necessitates the marketing communication process that allows consumers to perceive diverse information. within those elements

Recommendations for Next Research

1. The coming up, there is a structural equation model of factors affecting the customer Loyalty should expand the population to more countries to cover all continents; this will be the generalization.

2. According to the results, BW has no significant positively direct effect on BL, most likely due to uncontrollable environmental factors. Therefore, the researcher believe that this is an intriguing topic that warrants further investigation. The generated variables were evaluated once more to corroborate the findings of this study.

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