

BUSINESS COMPETITIVENESS FOR THAI WHEY PROTEIN SUPPLEMENT PRODUCTS OF THE WHEY PROTEIN BUSINESS IN CHONBURI

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were 1) to study consumer behavior affecting the competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplement products in the market of whey protein sold through agents in fitness centers in Chonburi, 2) to study marketing mix strategies including products, prices, places (distribution channels), promotion, which affected the ability to increase the competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the market of whey protein sold through agents in fitness centers in Chonburi, 3) to study and analyze the five factors in Five Force Model, including rivalry within the same business, threat of new entrants, the bargaining power of buyers, the bargaining power of suppliers, and threat of substitute products, which led to determine the strategies to increase competitiveness. This study used mix methods by using both quantitative and qualitative research. Researcher collected questionnaires (quantitative research) from consumers. The obtained results from quantitative research were synthesized to design questions for in-depth interviews (qualitative research). The interviews were conducted to entrepreneurs who were distributors of whey protein supplement brands in fitness centers in Chonburi.

The research finding revealed that both consumer behavior and marketing mix in all respects had a positive impact on the competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplement in Chonburi. In addition, entrepreneurs could apply the analysis of the force factors in the business to use in business management and to determine the business competitive strategy of Thai brand whey protein supplement in the market for whey protein.

Keywords: Competitive strategy, Business competition, Supplementary business, Whey protein

Introduction

Due to the popularity of food supplements and health care of Thai people that are increasing every year making Thai people choose to eat more healthy food and exercise. Many of them choose to exercise, eat healthy food, resulting in emerging new businesses. One of them is “whey protein”, which is popular among a group of exercise-craze for weight training due to the performance in muscles strengthening. For whey protein business, there is still no clear market value figure

because it is a new market. The popularity of whey protein consumption has been cultured in the US with a market value of \$ 8 billion per year (Statista, 2018).

Tao Kae Noi Food & Marketing Public Company Limited, manufacturer and distributor of seasoned seaweed “Tao Kae Noi” and whey protein healthy drink “My whey”, has conducted a whey protein market survey and found that in Thailand there are 11 major brands for whey protein product: 7 of which are imported from Europe and America and the other 4 are Thai brands such as Fitwhey, Proflex,

WheyWWL and My whey. The said brands are businesses with an average lifespan of less than 10 years for this reason they are not well-known to Thai people or little known, moreover, these brands lack of sales channels in terms of advertising through print media, television and online media unlike the European and American whey protein brands that are familiar to Thai people for many decades. In addition, at present, there are other supplements that can provide protein substitutes such as soy protein, cereal, etc. Thai whey protein supplement business operators must be aware of the highly competitive business competition especially businesses that are dietary supplements that consumers focus on the results of changes in health and have a delicious taste. Thai people, therefore, use the research and product development team of Tao Kae Noi Company to develop whey protein formulas and flavors to meet the needs of consumers which result in good feedback because only online channel, in the first year, My Whey made sales of 50 million Baht (Brand Inside, 2018).

My Whey's next goal is to increase distribution through storefront and retailer sales in the fitness center including pharmacies etc. At present, My Whey business has successfully achieved marketing in Bangkok and metropolitan areas and aims to expand the market throughout the country, starting from the eastern region which is a tourist destination and upcountry resident, hoping to advertise for foreigners to have access to the products as well and continue to grow in ASEAN and Asia in the future.

From the importance of the above problems, the researcher intends to study the competitiveness of Thai brands whey protein supplements in the Thai whey protein market. The researcher

wishes to collect data from both entrepreneurs and consumers in Chonburi province as Chonburi is the most populous province in the eastern region and the country in the Eastern Economic Corridor Promotion Zone and is an important tourist destination with a lot of foreigner resident. The researcher foresaw that the study in this field will be beneficial to the Thai whey protein supplement business as a way to increase business competitiveness for entrepreneurs or to market in accordance with the needs of consumers of Thai brand whey protein supplements and to support higher competition with other protein products that can effectively replace whey protein and non-branded whey protein supplements. This research study can be used as a guideline for business success in the business of Thai brand whey protein supplements and is also a guideline for those interested.

Research Objectives

1. To study consumer behaviors that affect the ability to increase the competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the market of whey protein sold through a fitness representative in Chonburi.
2. To study marketing mix strategies: products, prices, distribution channels and marketing promotion that affects the ability to increase the competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the whey protein market that is distributed through a fitness representative in Chonburi.
3. To study and analyze Five force model: competition within the same business, new competitors, bargaining power of customers, bargaining power of the sellers, substitute products in order to formulate strategies to increase competitiveness.

Conceptual Framework of Research

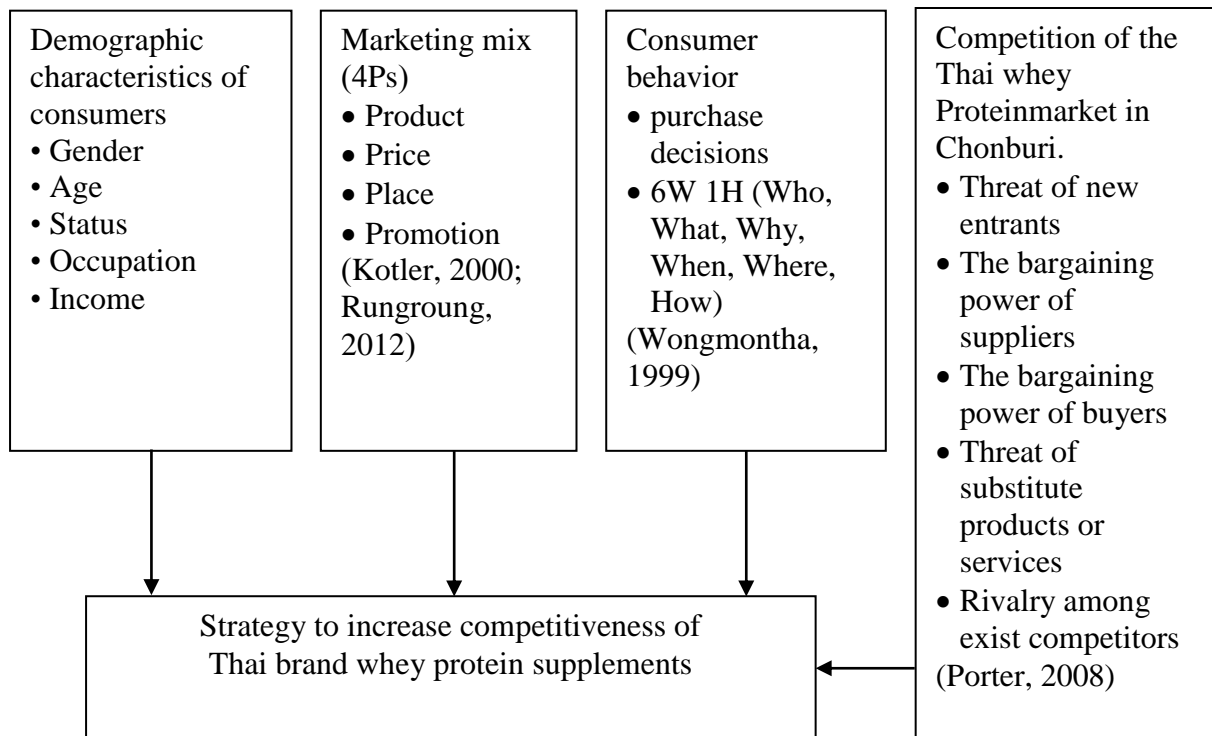


Figure 1 Expected Benefits from Research

Entrepreneurs will get guidance on how to run a successful business in the Thai brand whey protein supplement business.

Literature Review

Whey protein supplements

The first whey protein researcher from Mahidol University said when talking about whey protein, many Thai people are probably familiar with it or some might have previously consumed but if talking about the benefits of whey protein, the answer for most people would be about eating to build muscle for people who want to have a bigger body or tend to think that is suitable only for men, not for women. These are the ideas that most Thai people have today about whey protein. Some of which are still considered to be misunderstandings. Assistant Professor Dr.Chattapa Hutthakoson, Lecturer at the Department of Nutrition who in of research work of the

Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University incorporation with My Whey brand, regarding “The effect of whey protein intake on clinical health changes in overweight and obese groups”, a research that is safety ethics approved saying that Thai people are still misunderstood by advertising images that remember whey protein is the choice of people who exercise hard to strengthen their muscles. Which in fact, whey protein is still useful in many dimensions that Thai people are not aware of.

When talking about protein foods, Thais tend to think of animal proteins that have been cooked into various menus, which come with other nutrients such as saturated fats, trans fats. Meats that come with these fats provide high energy and calories but eating meat has the advantage of being able to chew, variety of flavors and fat helps to keep a stomach full in some extent. The source of whey

protein is cow's milk, which is also classified as an animal product. Whey protein can be divided into 3 types which are concentrated can be absorbed well for common people, isolated which is better absorbed and hydrolyzed which is absorbed well suitable for groups of people who have difficulty in protein digestion, mostly used as medical food (Nithisaiwong, 2015).

From the study on theory of whey protein supplements, it can be concluded that whey protein is a source of high-quality protein because it contains essential amino acids as well as other proteins that provide immunity benefits. The use of whey protein in the past is used as a source of protein to strengthen muscles, the strength of muscle mass. Later, when other components are discovered and found that they have the potential to use for medical benefits, then, whey protein was used for both animal and human studies. The said study has shown that whey protein has the potential and possible to be used in patients with certain diseases and believe that in the future, whey protein may be an alternative way to treat certain diseases or conditions in addition to modern treatment.

Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior refers to the behavior of individuals involved in the purchase and use of products and services. In which consumers may purchase products to meet personal satisfaction or to meet family or community needs (Sereerat, 2007).

Wongmontha (1999) mentions the analysis of consumer behavior that is a search or research about the buying and consumption behavior of consumers. Questions to find the behavior of consumers prefers to use 6W1H, which will help understand the behavior of consumers and enable businesses to find products or services that are good and consistent with the behavior of the consumer. Those questions are: Who constitutes the

market? What does the consumer buy? Why does the consumer buy? Who participates in the buying? When does the consumer buy? Where does the consumer buy? How does the consumer buy?

Marketing mix (4Ps)

Kotler and Keller (2012) said that the level of market ideas and theories divided into the first level: traditional marketing. This type of marketing has the main objective of raising awareness in brands that we used to be focused on. The marketing at this level will focus on the marketing mix.

1. Products

Must have quality and design that meets the needs of customers, or products or services purchased by individuals and organizations for use in the production of other products or in the course of business operations as well as the goods or services that the purchaser of the goods or services that the buyer uses for the production, service or operation of the business, or even if the product is the only component in the marketing mix but it is important and needed to be considered, such as: produce variety, brand name, quality, warranties, and returns (Jathulongkakul, 2000).

2. Price

The price must be suitable for the competitive position of the product and generate profit at an appropriate rate to the business or the amount that is collected as goods or services or the total value that the buyer exchanged in order to obtain benefits from possessing it or using products or services, or pricing policies or values of goods and services that are measured in monetary form. Price setting is very important to the business. The business is unable to determine the price of the product without a proper standard. Price considerations must take production costs, competition condition, expected profit, competitor's price into consideration. Therefore, the business must choose a suitable strategy for determining

the prices of products and services (Iranopphaiboon, 2011).

3. Place

The objective is to distribute products extensively and able to reach all target customers well or as a distribution channel, a route to move from the manufacturer to the consumer or customer which may either through the middleman or not. The distribution channels consist of manufacturers, consumers or industrial users or industrial consumers and middleman. Products that are widely distributed and easy to access will affect brand awareness. Selection of appropriate distribution channel is important to business unit profits as well as affecting other relevant marketing ingredients, such as pricing, advertising, product grades, or product distribution which is the activity that involves product movement from the manufacturer to the consumer or industrial users, transportation and storage of products. (Rungrong, 2012)

4. Promotion

Advertising, public relations, sale promotion and direct marketing are a marketing strategy that results in a higher market share in the

minds of customers compared to competitors or as contact activities that communicate to the target market in order to educate, persuade or accelerate necessity of the target market for the brand and products, or services, advertising, promotion or as a communication tool to create satisfaction for the brand or service in people's mind by using incentives to create a desire to raise awareness in products that are expected to influence feelings, beliefs, and purchasing habits (Thongrunroj, 2012).

Five force model

Porter (2008) developed analytical tools that were useful in exploring the competitive environment. Competitive environment is describing in the form of five basic competitive pressures: obstacles from new competitors in the market, bargaining power of vendors, factors of production, bargaining power of buyers, substitute products, increase in competition between businesses is more intense. These factors will consider the nature and extent of competition, such as the potential, industry profitability.

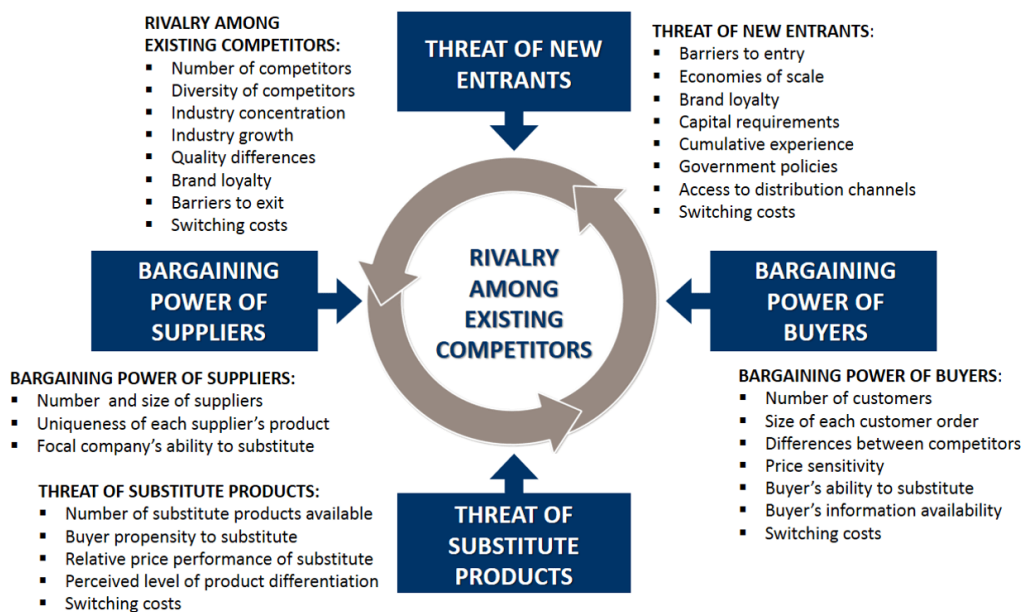


Figure 2 The diagram shows the model of the impact of 5 force on the competitive environment of the business industry (Porter, 2008).

Related Research

Jirathiticharoen (2012) has studied the integrated marketing communication on the decision to buy health food supplements for consumers in Pathum Thani Province. The results of the research are as follows: 1) The majority of the consumers of healthy dietary supplements are female, aged 41-45 years, and are employed by private company employees with a vocational education/ diploma level with monthly income 10,000-20,000 Baht. Most of the health lifestyle styles are health conscious but don't have time to exercise. Their personality is anxiety, stress about their health, feel that they are not taking care of themselves enough, must eat nutritional supplements. The consumer pay attention to factors of integrated marketing communication in word of mouth communication in majority. And respectively, in terms of sales by salespeople, sales promotion, activity marketing, public relations, advertising, online communication and direct marketing. Most of the consumer have behavior to choose to consume health food supplements for the prevention and treatment of diseases such as vitamin C, fish oil, lecithin, royal jelly. The reason for choosing to buy is that they want to take care of their health and friends or acquaintances recommend. Maximum of 500-1,000 Baht is spending per purchase of health food supplements, with a frequency of 1 purchase per month. The participants who make a decision to buy health supplements are friends or acquaintances. The places that choose to buy the most health food supplements are pharmacies. And most of the consumer will continue to buy supplementary food for health. 2) Personal factors, sex, occupation, education level, average monthly income, health lifestyle and the personality is related to the behavior of buying health food supplements in consumers in Pathum Thani Province. 3) Integrated marketing communication

factors that influence the decision to buy health food supplements consist of 5 factors which are direct marketing and activity marketing have the same influence. Advertising, sales promotions, sales by salespeople have influence in the opposite direction.

Phichayaphongsa (2015) has studied the business plan called One Click so chic, a dietary supplement that has been established to set goals and be a clear guideline for business operations. One Click so chic is a product that is easy to carry and convenient for consumers who use modern beauty supplements who look to enhance their beauty in a convenient, quick way. Conducting an analysis of the business overview, internal environment, external environment, analyze current competitors in the dietary supplement market in order to meet the needs of most consumer groups. A study of consumer demand from the questionnaire shows that at present, dietary supplements are very popular in the general public whether it is the need for nourishing the body or the need to enhance the beauty by taking supplementary food. Therefore, this business plan has made the business run correctly. And complete in every process, operate and meet the needs of customers in terms of product and distribution is convenient and fast to today's consumers.

Research Methodology

Operation procedures

Step 1 Review the literature on concepts, theories of marketing mixes, theories of consumer behavior, concepts about the whey protein supplement business. The 5 force model and related research to be used as basic information in creating a questionnaire.

Step 2 Create a quantitative questionnaire from literature review to collect data from consumers of Thai brand whey protein supplements in Chonburi.

Step 3 Collecting 400 sets of demand from Thai brand whey protein supplements consumers in Chonburi.

Step 4 Synthesize the data from a quantitative questionnaire to study the needs of Thai brand whey protein supplements consumers in Chonburi.

Step 5 Create an interview based on information obtained from literature reviews and consumer demand.

Step 5.1 Perform qualitative data collection by using consumer demand data combined with various theories, interviewing the opinions of 6 Thai whey protein brand distributors in Chonburi Fitness.

Step 5.2 Analyze the opinions of entrepreneurs about the competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplements in Chonburi.

Step 6 Obtain the capability of competitiveness of Thai whey protein supplements in the Thai whey protein market in Chonburi.

Population and sampling

The quantitative population used in this study is the population in Chonburi. Because the population size is large and the exact population is unknown, the researcher then calculated the sample using the formula of Cochran (1997) by specifying the proportion of the population equal to .50 at the confidence level of 95 percent and the tolerance level of 5 percent. The number of samples is at least 385. And for complete data collection, the researcher backed up 15 additional questionnaires, totaling 400, using purposive sampling only for consumers who bought whey protein supplement in supplement shop

in Chonburi.

Qualitative populations by choosing a sample from fitness center entrepreneurs who are whey protein supplements seller and choosing only the establishment that is a distributor of Thai brand whey protein supplements who has been operating in Chonburi for more than 3 years, a total of 6 places from 79 fitness establishments in Chonburi (Business registration, Chonburi Commercial Office, 2017). Morse (1994) states that data saturation will start from the number of interviewees of 6 or more.

Quality testing of data processing tools

1. Content validity: The researcher brought the questionnaires from document review and related research to the 6 advisors or experts to examine the content, questionnaire structure and language idiom improvement by using the Index of item objective congruence (IOC) with criteria for the evaluation of the questions calculated from the formula that will be between 0.00 and 1.00. Details of the criteria for consideration as follows: having an IOC of 0.5 or higher, the examination can be used but if it is less than 0.5, it should be considered to be revised, modified or eliminated.

2. Reliability test: conduct a pre-test and the data obtained to test the reliability of the 30 sets of questionnaire by evaluating item by item analysis according to the method of Cronbach to find Alpha coefficient with acceptable criteria greater than 0.70 to show that the questionnaire has sufficient reliability.

Table 1 Confidence Reliability of the Query

Factor	Questions (item)	Alpha coefficient (n = 30)
1. Demographic characteristics of consumers	5	0.843
2. Consumer behavior	7	0.939
3. Marketing mix (4P)	16	0.844
3.1 Product	5	0.826
3.2 Price	4	0.714
3.3 Place	3	0.792
3.4 Promotion	3	0.788
4. Five force model	14	0.881
4.1 Threat of new entrants	4	0.822
4.2 The bargaining power of suppliers	2	0.863
4.3 The bargaining power of buyers	3	0.754
4.4 Threat of substitute products or services	2	0.741
4.5 Rivalry among exist competitors	3	0.812

Data Analysis

Quantitative research

1. Analysis of demographic characteristics of the respondents by using frequency and percentage in interpretation and explain the data.
2. Analyzing consumer behavior data using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation in interpretation and explain the data.
3. Analysis of marketing mix data by using frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to interpret and explain the data.
4. Analysis of data on the competitive ability of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the whey protein market by using frequency, percentage, percentage, mean, and standard deviation in interpretation and explain the data.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research data analysis of which the researcher used the transcription and analyzed the content, article, definition, emotion including the hidden implication as well as giving examples of key words to show the clarity of the phenomenon that

occurred in which the transcription of the complete tape must be maintained in a natural manner and might be necessary to polish the language in order to get a more refined message but the keystone is to maintain the original content, original meaning and emotions of the speaker.

Results

Quantitative research results

1. Summary of demographic characteristics of respondents

From the analysis of the demographic data of consumers of whey protein supplements in Chonburi, from 400 respondents, it was found that the majority of the respondents were 305 males or 76.25%, 172 of them or around 43.0% are 20-30 years old. 220 of them or 55.0% are single. 131 of them or 32.75% are in private company employees and 131 of them or 32.50% having an average monthly income of 20,001-30,000 Baht.

2. Summary of consumer behavior information on buying Thai brand whey protein supplements
- From the analysis of the behavioral data on the purchase of Thai brand whey protein

supplements among all 400 respondents, it is found that most of them 263 people buy the supplement to build muscle, representing a percentage of 65.75. 181 of them or 45.25 buy concentrate whey protein concentrate. 153 of them or 38.25% order online and pay by credit card. 131 of them or 32.75% buy products at the beginning of the month. 208 of them or 52.00% are influenced by relatives or friends to buy.

3. Summary of marketing mix factors and the purchase decisions of whey protein supplements among Thai brand whey protein consumers.

3.1 Product marketing mix: The opinion level of respondents who want to be safe in consumption is the highest level, 367 people, representing 91.8 percent, with an average of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 0.40.

3.2 Price marketing mix: The opinions of the respondents want the price to be the most suitable with quality of 239 people, representing 59.8 percent, with an average of 3.49 and a standard deviation of 0.73.

3.3 Marketing mix of distribution channels: The opinion level of the respondents who want payment convenience is at the highest level, 178 persons, equivalent to 44.5 percent, with an average of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.77.

3.4 Marketing mix of sales promotion: The opinions of the respondents want to receive discounts is at the highest level, 364 people, representing 91.0 percent, with an average of 3.87 and a standard deviation of 0.46.

4. Summary of Five force factors from the viewpoint of consumers of Thai whey protein supplements

4.1 Five force factors regarding threats from new competitors: The opinions of the respondents show that interested in buying, if the store has a promotion is at highest level of 100 people, representing 25.0 percent,

with an average of 2.94, standard deviation equal to 0.80.

4.2 Five force factor regarding sellers bargaining power: The opinions of the respondents show that they are interested in buying when the store changes its source of raw materials, but the quality is still the same or better at the highest level, a total of 126 people, representing 3.15 percent with an average of 2.70 and a standard deviation of 1.10.

4.3 Five force factors regarding the bargaining power of buyers: The opinions of the respondents show that demand the shop to increase the distribution channels for convenience is at the highest level, a total of 365 people, representing a percentage of 91.3, average of 3.85 and standard deviation of 0.55.

4.4 Five force factors regarding the threat of substitute products: The opinions of the respondents show that interested in buying, if in the future there are new products that provide replacement protein whey protein at the same or cheaper price 129 people, representing 32.3 percent, with an average of 2.38. And the standard deviation is 1.07.

4.5 Five force factors regarding competition in the same industry: The opinions of the respondents show that consumers agreed if the stores increased distribution channels is at a high level of 146 people, representing 36.5 percent, with an average of 2.81 and a standard deviation of 0.82.

Qualitative research results

1. Summary of general information about the Thai brand whey protein supplement business: From the analysis of general data of the operators of all the interviewees of the 6 shops, most of them are in the 31-40 years old, the operation period is more than 6 years, the average monthly income is in the range of 20,001-30,000 Baht and 40,000 Baht up.

2. Summary of opinions of whey protein entrepreneurs regarding consumer behavior:

From the analysis of general information of the operators of the interviewees all 6 shops on consumer behavioral opinions ranking by importance: studying consumer behavior in determining marketing strategies, evaluating stockpiling of past sales, listening to feedback from customers for improvement, study the marketing strategies of competing brands, bring new products for sale to test consumer groups.

3. Summary of opinions of whey protein entrepreneurs regarding marketing mix with details in each aspect as follows:

3.1 Product marketing mix: All entrepreneurs commented that the marketing mix of products affects the business competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the selection of products to meet the needs of consumers.

3.2 Price marketing mix: All entrepreneurs commented that the marketing mix in terms of price affects the business competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplements in

terms of product pricing and preventing price cuts from competitors.

3.3 Distribution marketing mix: All entrepreneurs commented that the marketing mix of distribution affects the business competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplements in terms of access to products, including payment and delivery.

3.4 Marketing mix of sales promotion: All entrepreneurs commented that the marketing mix of wholesale promotion affects the ability to compete in the business of Thai brand whey protein supplements in terms of discounts and free gifts or accumulating points for redeeming products in future purchases.

In addition, the researchers found important issues from in-depth interviews that most entrepreneurs use in their business operations and as a competitive strategy are the distribution of products other than whey protein, free Shipping, online distribution channels and advertisements through social media etc.

Table 2 The Synthesis of Marketing Mix from Questionnaires and Data from Interviews

Marketing mix (4P)	Data from questionnaire	Data from interview	Analysis results
Product	Safe to consume. High protein and taste good.	FDA certified Variety in flavors Guaranteed by actor or celebrity	Consistent
Price	Quality and volume suitable to price. Different price to select.	Available in different size and flavors	Consistent
Place	Payment convenience. Order online. Free shipping.	Online distribution channel Credit card accept	Consistent
Promotion	Discount or free sample and various distribution channels.	Promotion set Free sample when buying in certain amount	Consistent

From the table 2, it is found that the marketing mix strategies chosen by the operators are product, price, distribution channel and sales

promotion which consistent with consumer demand information of Thai brand whey protein supplements.

4. Summarize the opinions of whey protein entrepreneurs about the force factors that affect the business competition, with details in each aspect as follows:

4.1 Force factors affecting business competition in new competitors: All entrepreneurs commented that force factors affecting business competition in new competitors have affected the ability to compete in the business of Thai brand whey protein supplements in evaluating competitors and selecting marketing strategies that are appropriate for existing customers.

4.2 Force factors that affect the bargaining business of buyers: All entrepreneurs commented that force factors affecting the business competitiveness of the buyer bargaining affect the ability to compete in the business of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the selection of sources of raw materials at low cost to avoid fluctuations in the prices of products.

4.3 Force factors affecting the bargaining business of sellers: All entrepreneurs commented that affect the business competition in the negotiation of the sellers do not affect the ability to compete in the business of Thai brand whey protein supplements in terms of increasing

distribution channels to facilitate convenience for consumers.

4.4 Force factors affecting competition in the substitute product industry: All entrepreneurs commented that force factors that affect the competition in the business of substitute products do not affect the ability to compete in the business of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the market of whey protein in Chonburi.

4.5 Force factors affecting the bargaining business of sellers: All entrepreneurs commented that force factors affecting the business competitiveness of wholesale bargains affect the ability to compete in the business of Thai brand whey protein supplements to impress the service and maintain the quality standards of products to maintain the existing customer base and attract new customers to come in the future.

In addition, the researchers found important issues from in-depth interviews that most entrepreneurs use in their business operations and as a competitive strategy are checking market prices before selling products, provide experimental products to consumers, etc.

Table 3 The synthesis of force factors from questionnaires and data from interviews

Five force model	Data from questionnaire	Data from interview	Analysis results
Threat of new entrants	Consumer wants to buy when new store has promotion	Launch new promotion to attract customer	Consistent
The bargaining power of suppliers	Consumer wants discount and free sample	Give free sample when purchasing in certain amount and earn point for next purchase	Consistent
The bargaining power of buyers	Consumer still buy when the store change material but still maintain same quality or better	Get in touch to many manufacturers to compare price and select the most less expensive one in relation to quality	Consistent

Table 3 (Continued)

Five force model	Data from questionnaire	Data from interview	Analysis results
Threat of substitute products or services	Consumer wants to other protein source that is less expensive than whey protein and substitute for whey protein	In terms of price and quantity, no product can be substitute to whey protein	Inconsistent
Rivalry among exist competitors	Consumer wants to buy from any shop that have more distribution channels and promotion and discount	Check market price before launching the product to the market, point collection for next purchase and to keep existing customer base	Consistent

From the table 3, it is found that force that entrepreneurs choose to use in term of new competitors, negotiating from buyers, negotiating from sellers or manufacturers and the competition in the same business is consistent with the information on demand of the Thai whey protein supplement consumers.

Discussion

Objective 1 To study consumer behaviors that affect the ability to increase the competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the market of whey protein sold through a fitness representative in Chonburi.

Most of customers of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the market of Chon Buri is male who love health and exercise regularly, aged between 20 to 40 years old and want to strengthen muscles for their look, nourishing the body. This conclusion consistent with the research of Jirathiticharoen (2012) who has studied the integrated marketing communication about the decision to purchase health food supplements for consumers in Pathum Thani Province. The research found that most consumers buy supplement as they want to take care of their health, with friends or acquaintances suggesting and maximum

amount of 500-1,000 Baht is spending per purchase of health food supplements, with a frequency of 1 purchase per month. Entrepreneurs can still use past sales and bestselling products, including the time when consumers choose to buy to evaluate stockpiling to reduce costs because whey protein is a consumable product with an expiration date. For this reason, the entrepreneurs need to increase sales promotion or increase sales channels in order to solve the problems of inventories as much as possible as consumers want to shop online and pay by credit card in the beginning of the month. Entrepreneurs can bring new products for sale and advertise through social media as an option and promote to consumers. This consistent with the research of Ananchokpathama (2015) who has studied the marketing mix and decision to buy products in Line gift shop, found that marketing mix factors about products, price, distribution channels and marketing promotion play a role in the decision-making process of buying products in the Line gift shop. There are sub-factors that the sample focus on is product variety, value for money, convenience in ordering and receiving products and the discounted price promotion but cannot conclude that

how much each of the factors is important for the decision making process in the Line gift shop. Product and marketing factors in providing discount and sales promotion are the factors that the samples give a lot of importance.

Objective 2 To study marketing mix strategies: products, prices, distribution channels and marketing promotion that affects the ability to increase the competitiveness of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the whey protein market that is distributed through a fitness representative in Chonburi.

From the analysis of the data of opinions of entrepreneurs who are distributors of Thai brand whey protein supplements in Chonburi regarding marketing mix factors, can discuss in 4 aspects as follows:

Product strategy: Whey protein supplements do not need to be distinct or different in packaging but consumers focus on the safety of consumption the most. Therefore, the entrepreneurs must use the method of presenting the product model to satisfy the consumers which are safety in consumption, tasty taste, and can be kept for a long time. Entrepreneurs can use various quality certificates as a hallmark of the product to increase brand reliability.

Price strategy: According to studies, it has been found that the operators in each store have similar prices which are not different to reduce sales competition undercut condition since there are many types of whey protein supplements, they will have different prices. The standard of price setting is that the entrepreneurs give value to their products and ensuring the consumers that the purchased product is of quality.

Distribution strategy: According to studies, it has been found that the distribution channels that operators choose are online sales, storefront, sale through strategic agents and suitable for a time when communicating

became without boundaries. We live in environment and lifestyle that come with internet, therefore, we are able to receive news quickly. Strategy implementation or distribution of products to meet the target group is a spread of advertising and truly present.

4 Marketing mix strategies are the basic strategy that entrepreneurs can apply to every business and in accordance with Thipsri (2015), who has studied about competitive advantage through strategic market management in the era of changing the economy of one Tambon One Product business in Chiang Rai Province. The study indicated that strategic marketing management in 4 areas, which are the product, distribution, marketing promotion and price, in order from highest to lowest, have a positive impact on the competitive advantage in the economy of the changing era of One Tambon One Business in Chiang Rai province. Through this information, entrepreneurs can use it as a guideline for business operations and formulating competitive strategies.

Objective 3 To study and analyze Five force model: competition within the same business, new competitors, bargaining power of customers, bargaining power of the sellers, substitute products in order to formulate strategies to increase competitiveness.

From the analysis of the data of the opinions of the entrepreneurs who are distributors in Chonburi regarding the factors of force, the conclusion is 5 results as follows:

1. Competitiveness with new competitor
According to studies, it has been found that entrepreneurs, who are distributors of Thai brand whey protein supplements, which already have customers in the market, can order a large number of products, resulting in lower product costs compared to new operators. It is not possible to sell products at the exact same price, as the quantity and cost may be

higher. The solution to the problem of competition with new competitors is as follows: Maintain the standard of the product to be stable or better than the previous one because the products that are sold are consumer goods that consumers want quality and safety as the main factors in choosing the product. Including building good relationships with customers in order to build loyalty to the product brand, creating a strong brand is another way when new entrepreneurs come in, but customers still use the service or loyal to the same product. Therefore, creating a brand to be distinctive and hard to imitate is an obstacle to the entry of new entrepreneurs. This consistent with Ongklerb's research (Ongklerb, 2012) that says "Quality inspections and sterilized processes through sterilized systems with expertise and know marketing and know consumers better". This is different in product innovation, making it difficult to imitate. New entrepreneurs, therefore, cannot play a role in the business. And also a creation of good trading potential, resulting in sustainable business operations.

2. Bargaining power from buyer

According to studies, it has been found that consumers are unable to bargain a lot of prices because each store has set similar selling prices which are not different. In order to reduce the price competition, undercut prices can be seen that using the group's internal sales price in many stores of the operator greatly reduces the bargaining power of the consumer price. Guidelines for solving bargaining problems from buyers are as follows:

Must first set a minimum profit price in order to bargain with the consumer in the event that the consumer wants to bargain on the bulk purchase or solve problems by sending out trial products in order to attract consumers in the next purchase, this will be a survey of product satisfaction from consumers

or with a small amount of free gifts, it is considered a marketing strategy for sales promotion in accordance with the quantitative data collected by the researcher from consumers of whey protein supplements. The research found that consumers who receive freebies or discounts when buying large quantities will come back to buy at the same store next time, therefore, when consumers decide to buy products, consumers use other factors to determine the decision to buy products other than price. Making a difference in service, product, packaging or the reputation of the operator also a factor in making consumer purchasing decisions which does not result in differences in the price in order to reduce bargain power from consumers, or selling a product at a price that is acceptable to the consumer and the price is within the criteria suitable for the quality of the product.

3. Bargaining power from seller or manufacturer

According to studies, it has been found that to be a distributor, you must order a minimum of the specified brands which the minimum may not be the cost that the dealer wants when compared to ordering a large number of goods, they will get a lower cost price which will affect the selling price. Guidelines for solving negotiation problems from vendors or manufacturers are as follows:

Distributors who sell the same or similar type of whey protein products can group together to order products from suppliers, to reduce bargaining power, allowing products to be purchased at a lower cost. And can change the order immediately when the seller has increased the price according to social trends, which is consistent with the research of Thongla (2011), which states that "the condition of cost fluctuations from the market price recognition. Assessment from market demand", there will be no problems in the bargaining power of the manufacturer due to having to deal with the suppliers of production

factors during periods of cost fluctuations challenge to be able to control production costs and sell products to maximize profit.

4. Substitute product

According to studies, it has been found that the operator views that at present there is no product to replace whey protein supplements. Both in terms of nutrition and value consistent with the quantitative data that the researcher has collected from consumers of whey protein supplements, it is found that consumers are interested in other products that can replace whey protein supplements in low level.

5. Competition in the same business

According to studies, it has been found that the nature of sales through distributors is only one of the sales channels. Increasing the competitiveness of the business can be done through various channels such as promotion via online media, free shipping or bringing actors and actresses to be presenter of the product. The sales through distributors require a higher cost than other sales channels. Which the main purpose of the operator may not want a lot of increased sales but is a product presentation to consumers through the eyes and be aware of the products sold in the community. Guidelines for solving competition problems in the same business are as follows:

The distributor must check the market price before selling the product in order to prevent the price-cutting problem and use all forms of promotion that can increase sales the most, such as using reviews from existing customers to attract new consumers, selling other types of products together with whey protein supplements as a promotion package, increase distribution channels through social media to promote brand recognition to consumers. This consistent with the research of Phichayaphongsa (2015) who has studied the One Click So Chic business plan that said “Setting goals and clear guidelines for

doing business is analysis of the current competitors in the market in order to meet the needs of the consumer groups as much as possible”. And also in accordance with the quantitative data that the researcher collected data from the consumer groups of whey protein supplements, found that consumers want brand operator to increase sales promotion and distribution channels for convenience to the customer at a high level.

Recommendations

From the research result of “The ability to compete in the business of Thai brand whey protein supplements in the whey protein market in Chonburi”, below are comments from entrepreneurs in the following topics:

1. Marketing mix

1.1 Products: There should be a beautiful, stable packaging because consumers want to be safe in consuming which operator must pay attention to the packaging including the quality and safety standards, such as FDA. This can be used as a selling point.

1.2 Price: Products sold through agents, the prices are quite standard and similar. Therefore, the quality of the products must be checked including the production date must not be near to the expiration date.

1.3 Distribution Channels: Selling through distributors is only one of the sales channels. There are many ways to increase business competitiveness. Which the main purpose of some operators may not want a lot of increased sales but what they want is product presentation to consumers through the eyes and for recognition of products sold in the community.

1.4 Sales promotion: Online advertising is a strategy used in conjunction with online distribution channels. This will require good communication and presenting directly to the consumer group.

2. Five force model

2.1 Competition with new competitors: Entrepreneurs must create good and stable brand image as this will reduce the chance that the consumer interested in the products of the new competitors when the existing brands in the market have quality and maintain the same standard or better.

2.2 Bargaining power from buyers: Entrepreneurs are able to solve immediate problems when consumers bargain on prices by giving away products or providing trial products, which are already costing in sales promotion. In addition, point collecting strategy also used to force consumers to come back to buy new products next time.

2.3 Bargaining power from vendors or manufacturers: Entrepreneurs can join groups with other operators in ordering or ordering to negotiate for lower costs. And compare prices from many manufacturers to make a decision.

2.4 Substitute products: Entrepreneurs must learn and monitor the situation regarding dietary supplements all the time in order to be prepared to deal with substitution products. And choose the marketing strategy that is appropriate for the situation.

2.5 Competition within the same business: If it is the same brand product, there will be the same cost. Entrepreneurs will have to use different promotions, such as matching the categories of products that sell well and cannot sell and reduce the price to solve the problem of inventories or use point collection strategy from product purchasing to enable consumers to return to buy again in the same store.

Recommendations for Further Study

1. This research is a study of consumers and entrepreneurs in Chonburi, so those interested to continue researching the target group should expand by geography to cover a comprehensive sample or study more in populations that are in different areas.

2. If the entrepreneurs have a business in the form of services such as fitness, together with the distribution of whey protein supplements, the user data should be collected in order to know the history and details of consumers to know the target group and be used to formulate marketing strategies for success.

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