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Processed Agricultural Product Branding Impact on Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty in Lamphun Province, Thailand

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Abstract:

This study aimed to determine factors of processed agricultural product branding that affect customer satisfaction and loyalty. This is quantitative research. The questionnaire was collected from 400 consumers with a history of purchasing processed agricultural products in Lamphun Province. The results of the path analysis have shown that (1) branding has a direct effect on customer satisfaction toward processed agricultural products, (2) branding indirectly affects customer loyalty toward processed agricultural products, and (3) customer satisfaction directly affects the customer loyalty toward processed agricultural products. Conclusively, the study's findings signify that farmers can benefit from applying the knowledge of branding to their businesses to help drive the economy, generate and distribute the income, and make a decent living.

Keywords: branding, processed agricultural products, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty.

加工农产品品牌对泰国南奔府客户满意度和忠诚度的影响

摘要:

本研究旨在确定影响客户满意度和忠诚度的加工农产品品牌因素。这是定量研究。该调查问卷收集了南奔省400名有购买加工农产品历史的消费者。路径分析结果表明：（1）品牌对顾客对加工农产品的满意度有直接影响；（2）品牌间接影响顾客对加工农产品的忠诚度；（3）顾客满意度直接影响顾客对加工农产品的忠诚度。农产品加工品。最后，该研究的结果表明，农民可以从将品牌知识应用到他们的企业中受益，帮助推动经济、创造和分配收入，并过上体面的生活。

关键词：品牌、加工农产品、客户满意度、客户忠诚度。

1. Introduction

Agriculture has been the foundation of Thailand's economy. It is an important part of the Thai production structure in terms of providing food security, income generation, and being a major source of employment. It has been reported that 35 % of the country's labor force is employed in the agricultural sector, especially in rural areas. Most rural households are engaged in farming and selling agricultural products; income from agriculture is their primary source of subsistence for family members (Petcharat et al., 2019). Therefore, the agricultural sector acts as a key driver of the country's economy. The urge to develop the economy from its fundamental root, that is, the entire group of farmers, is deemed mandatory. By setting policies to strengthen the local community's economy and create competency to compete in the market, the appropriate approach can lead to solutions to poverty and inequality to create opportunity and social equality (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2019).

Lamphun Province, Thailand, carries a variety of outstanding processed agricultural products that are considered to be among the top in the country (Agriculture and Cooperative Development Plan, Lamphun Province, 2018). Farmers in large-scale farming are adept in planting and processing quality agricultural products; however, they face difficulties marketing their merchandise. Their inability to distribute and compete has prevented them from becoming potential players in the market among other large and small competitors. The primary problem is lack of knowledge and skills in marketing. Despite government support in terms of funding, tools, and equipment (such as fruit dehydrators), there are various challenges in the process of introducing products to the market, meeting packaging standardization, creating brand identity, and conducting marketing management.

The process of successfully and efficiently introducing processed agricultural products to the market requires branding. Branding as a marketing strategy includes naming a brand, inventing slogan and logo design, creating packaging design, and boosting product value in conjunction with advertising products to the public through brand storytelling by focusing on particular messages intended to communicate to its audience (Oh et al., 2020). Branding establishes values and differentiates products from those of other competitors to create competitive advantages. Hence, it promotes brand attractiveness. Branded products can meet the needs of both direct and indirect marketing systems. Branding increases customer satisfaction and forms customer loyalty toward the brand in the long term (Thellefsen et al., 2013; O'Loughlin et al., 2004).

Thus, this study has been set out with the objective of modeling the process of bringing processed agricultural products into the market by using branding

strategy. The results of the research provide a comprehensive module for Thai farmers to apply to their own products efficiently. It is an approach to stimulate the community economy to create and distribute the income to the community members with sustainability.

2. Literature Review

The research has taken marketing management as a model in the process of bringing processed agricultural products to the market by branding to establish customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. There are three important variables: brand, consumer satisfaction, and brand loyalty.

2.1. Brand

Brand refers to the customer's experience influenced by images and symbols such as brand names, logos, and slogans (American Marketing Association, 2007). Brand can represent how trustworthy a product is. As a result, the consumers show their preferences, and the customer satisfaction is determined (Brick et al., 2018). Researchers have conducted several studies related to branding using surveys and experiments, both quantitatively and qualitatively (Holt, 2002; Oh et al., 2020; Keller, 2020). There are six components of branding:

2.1.1. Brand Naming

It can create value for a brand (Kohli, 1997). Brand naming must convey messages and present consumers with the product image (Kohli & Labahn, 1997). Brand naming is the first step in branding. Brand names embody legal significance as trademarks (Kohli & Suri, 2000). Brand names also represent the credibility and public image of a product. Brand naming should; therefore, be relevant to the product (Danesi, 2013), allowing consumers to clearly differentiate one from other competing brands (Song & Jeon, 2017).

2.1.2. Slogan

A slogan is generally a word or a short sentence describing the unique characteristics of a product (Danesi, 2013). The essence of slogans is a message expressed through images and words together. A slogan is a compelling marketing concept (Song & Jeon, 2017).

2.1.3. Logo Design

Logo design is a visible symbol of a product, such as a picture, diagram, which marks the brand (Thellefsen et al., 2013). Brand logo design, such as shapes and colors, is a representation of the brand image that can manipulate the consumer perception. Brands with a favorable image tend to generate more profits (Fajardo et al., 2016).

2.1.4. Packaging Design

Packaging design makes brands successful. Packaging acts as an agent to attract consumers and meet their needs. Products must be packaged with appropriate materials, sizes, and quantities. Therefore, packaging designers should design packaging according to the lifestyles of the target consumers (Vasileiadis et al., 2019).

2.1.5. Brand Equity

Brand equity is a particular way to add value to a product to create customer satisfaction and loyalty (Oh et al., 2020). It raises the consumer awareness of superiority in the product quality compared with that of competitors' products. Consequently, brand equity can lead to the consumers' intention to purchase (Azzari & Pelissari, 2020).

2.1.6. Storytelling

Storytelling tells a brand story by presenting unique characteristics relevant to the brand to enhance the brand image to increase customer satisfaction and lead to the brand loyalty (Mucundorfeanu, 2018; Oralkan, 2019). It also facilitates brand building, brand promotion, and serves as a strategic public relations practice for a product (Kang et al., 2020).

3. Relationship between Branding and Consumer Satisfaction

Brand image, advertising, and brand experiences are key factors that can affect customer satisfaction (O'Loughlin et al., 2004). Customer satisfaction is directly linked to customer loyalty (Pereira et al., 2018).

3.1. Relationship between Branding and Consumer Loyalty

Branding creates consumer perception of a product through brand names and logos, resulting in customer loyalty to the brand (Thellefsen et al., 2013). Branding forms a positive consumer-brand relationship and brand loyalty (Keller, 2020). The effectiveness of branding can be measured by consumer opinions such as perception, attitude, consumer-brand relationship, and customer loyalty (Oh et al., 2020).

3.2. Customer Satisfaction

Players in agricultural businesses should consider improving their processed products to increase the level of customer satisfaction (Alsemgeest & Smit, 2012), market share, and profitability (Ahmad, 2017). In addition, consumer satisfaction generates trade advantages through product distinctiveness (Palací et al., 2019).

Parasuraman et al. (1994) and Palací et al. (2019) noted that customer satisfaction is derived from specific characteristics and scope from both cognitive and affective nature. The cognitive process stems from consumer evaluations, whereas the affective process

emerges from the experiences of purchasing a product. There are two components of customer satisfaction:

3.2.1. Cognitive

Customer satisfaction is related to cognition of a product. As a result, it manifests itself in consumer behaviors through the expectation, comparison, and performance of the product (Palací et al., 2019). Oliver (1980) concluded that the cognitive element refers to the thought process in the product appraisal, focusing on customer expectations, perceived performance, and the product value that consumers receive.

3.2.2. Affective

Affective perspective refers to customers' subjective feelings, which can be amplified gradually through experiences and emotional assessment. It is the emotional connection between a consumer and a product or brand (Tsai et al., 2015), which can be either positive or negative (Palací et al., 2019). When a customer forms such an affective connection to a product, it can lead to future purchase intentions (Marti et al., 2008).

3.3. Relationship between Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty

At the product introduction stage, customer satisfaction and loyalty can be achieved by placing emphasis on the product or brand. It depends on the product development or line that appears in the market, which is a process of creating satisfaction. In the next step, when the product is developed even further until the brand reaches its successful point, a long-term satisfaction relationship resulting in greater customer loyalty can be established (Torres-Moraga et al., 2008).

Customer loyalty serves as an indicator of marketers. The concept of loyalty is another solid index used to develop competitive advantages and effective marketing strategies (Kim & Brown, 2012). The strategy of customer loyalty is an efficient means of increasing profitability. Businesses can determine the needs of their current and potential customers to be aligned with market trends (Zanchet & Paladini, 2019). Furthermore, customer loyalty is one of the prominent keys to maintaining costs because having existing customers costs less than investing to acquire new customers. Highly loyal customers demonstrate the same characteristics of emotional attachment to the brand and repeat purchase behavior (Kimura, 2022). There are two components of customer loyalty:

3.3.1. Repeat Purchase (Re-Purchase)

Customer loyalty is reflected through positive behaviors such as word-of-mouth referrals that result in repurchases (Cheng & Yu, 2021). It is the willingness of buyers to return to purchase a product or service again (Ehsan et al., 2019). Moreover, customer loyalty establishes a strong relationship with the brand. Customer loyalty prevents them from buying products or services from other brands (Nguyen et al., 2021).

3.3.2. Word-of-Mouth Communication

It is the intention to recommend products with emotional factors involved due to which consumers are more likely to recommend a brand to others (Huang et al., 2020). Loyalty can positively contribute to consumer attitudes toward brands (Irshad et al., 2015). Additionally, it is customers' sharing their product or service experiences (Nguyen et al., 2021) and an interactive process that helps brands maintain and develop long-term customer relationships (Scussel & Demo, 2019).

4. Hypotheses

The aforementioned reasoning allows us to establish prior hypotheses derived from theoretical contributions and empirical studies.

H1: Branding of processed agricultural products affects consumer satisfaction in Lamphun Province, Thailand.

H2: Branding of processed agricultural products affects consumer loyalty in Lamphun Province, Thailand.

H3: Customer satisfaction directly affects customer loyalty to processed agricultural products in Lamphun Province, Thailand.

5. Methodology

Consumers with a history of consuming processed agricultural products in Lamphun Province made up the study sample group. Since the exact amount of population was unknown, the calculation of Cochran (1953) was adapted to calculate the sample size - the sampling from infinite population. The sample size was 400. Using a simple random sampling method, the data were collected from the participants regardless of their gender, age, and location. The screening question was designed to ensure that only individuals who had previously purchased processed agricultural products in the province contribute further. A questionnaire was administered from the synthesis of the literature review. To test the validity of the developed questionnaire, the researchers consulted three experts to check the content validity to specify the index of item-objective congruence (IOC) to be greater than 0.50. The data obtained from the questionnaire were used to perform confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and path analysis to determine factors that affect customer satisfaction and loyalty toward processed agricultural products.

6. Results

The demographic information collected reveals that most respondents were male, aged between 21 and 30. These individuals also hold a Bachelor's degree and work as private company employees with incomes between 10,001 and 20,000 baht. Most of them buy processed agricultural products monthly from the marketplace of community enterprises mainly because

they believe that the products are organic and chemical free.

Rating scales toward product branding are at the highest level. The results reveal that the participants had the most opinions on the elements of packaging design, followed by logo design, creating brand values, slogans, brand naming, and brand storytelling, respectively (Table 1).

Rating scales toward customer satisfaction are at the highest level. The results affirm that the participants had the highest level of emotional satisfaction with purchasing processed agricultural products, followed by knowledge and understanding of processed products (Table 1).

Rating scales toward customer loyalty are at the highest level. The results demonstrate that the participants acted through word-of-mouth communication the most, followed by repurchasing processed agricultural products (Table 1).

Table 1. Description (Developed by the authors)

| Variable | Analysis results | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------|--------|
| | X | S.D. | Level | rating |
| Branding | 4.65 | 0.471 | highest | |
| Brand Naming | 4.64 | 0.519 | highest | 5 |
| Slogan | 4.66 | 0.514 | highest | 4 |
| Logo design | 4.68 | 0.511 | highest | 2 |
| Packaging design | 4.69 | 0.461 | highest | 1 |
| Brand Equity | 4.67 | 0.502 | highest | 3 |
| Storytelling | 4.57 | 0.607 | highest | 6 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 4.49 | 0.517 | highest | |
| Cognitive | 4.43 | 0.574 | highest | 2 |
| Affective | 4.55 | 0.538 | highest | 1 |
| Customer Loyalty | 4.20 | 0.567 | high | |
| Re-Purchase | 4.08 | 0.609 | high | 2 |
| Word of Mouth | 4.32 | 0.626 | highest | 1 |

6.1. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient

The researchers used Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient to determine the correlation coefficient between all observed variables. Considering the criteria, each correlation must not exceed 0.90. If the correlation is greater than 0.90, each observed variable is related to one another. The analytic results show that the correlation coefficients between all observed variables are between 0.314 and 0.861, which is considered to be in the acceptable range. Thus, all observed variables are not related to one another, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Pearson's Product - Moment Correlation Coefficient

| | Naming | Slogan | Logo | Packaging | Equity | Story | Cognitive | Affective | Repurchase | WOM |
|------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----|
| Naming | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Slogan | .819** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Logo | .765** | .778** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Packaging | .808** | .800** | .857** | 1 | | | | | | |
| Equity | .813** | .822** | .805** | .861** | 1 | | | | | |
| Story | .730** | .762** | .707** | .752** | .797** | 1 | | | | |
| Cognitive | .479** | .451** | .451** | .483** | .508** | .436** | 1 | | | |
| Affective | .623** | .590** | .581** | .621** | .609** | .530** | .726** | 1 | | |
| Repurchase | .357** | .318** | .314** | .343** | .367** | .357** | .562** | .501** | 1 | |
| WOM | .482** | .484** | .475** | .521** | .527** | .466** | .512** | .590** | .683** | 1 |

Source: Developed by the authors

Concordance of the causal model with the empirical data finding $\chi^2/d.f. = 2.599$ supported, RMSEA = 0.063 supported, CFI = 0.974 supported, TLI = 0.963 supported, and SRMR = 0.035 supported (Table 3).

Table 3. Concordance index statistics, empirical data

| Consistency Index | Accepted values are consistent | Statistics | Result |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| χ^2 . | near 0 | 83.193 | Supported |
| d.f. | - | 32 | |
| $\chi^2/d.f.$ | $2 < \chi^2/d.f. \leq 3$ | 2.599 | Supported |
| RMSEA | $0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.08$ | 0.063 | Supported |
| CFI | $0.90 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$ | 0.974 | Supported |
| TLI | $0.90 \leq TLI \leq 1.00$ | 0.963 | Supported |
| SRMR | $0 \leq SRMR \leq 0.08$ | 0.035 | Supported |

Source: Developed by the authors

6.2. Product Branding Model Validation Results

The results of estimating the factor loading, residual, and reliability of measuring the observed variables of the model are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Measurement item

| Construct | Measurement item | Factor loading | Residual | SE | t-value | R ² value Estimate |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------------|----------|-------|---------|-------------------------------|
| Branding | Naming | 0.883 | 0.219 | 0.022 | 40.617 | 0.781 |
| | Slogan | 0.889 | 0.210 | 0.019 | 47.759 | 0.790 |
| | Logo Design | 0.883 | 0.221 | 0.025 | 34.962 | 0.779 |
| | Packaging Design | 0.926 | 0.143 | 0.015 | 61.013 | 0.857 |
| | Brand Equity | 0.928 | 0.139 | 0.014 | 67.738 | 0.861 |
| | Storytelling | 0.833 | 0.306 | 0.026 | 32.428 | 0.694 |
| Customer Satisfaction | Cognitive | 0.798 | 0.363 | 0.029 | 27.300 | 0.637 |
| | Affective | 0.918 | 0.157 | 0.026 | 35.100 | 0.843 |
| Customer Loyalty | Re-Purchase | 0.780 | 0.392 | 0.033 | 23.494 | 0.608 |
| | Word of mouth | 0.881 | 0.223 | 0.030 | 28.923 | 0.777 |

Source: Developed by the authors

There were found six latent variables of branding: Brand Naming, Slogan, Logo Design, Packaging Design, Brand Equity, and Storytelling, with factor loadings of 0.883, 0.889, 0.883, 0.926, 0.928, and 0.833. The residual values were 0.219, 0.210, 0.221, 0.143, 0.139, and 0.306. The reliability values (R2) were 0.781, 0.790, 0.779, 0.857, 0.861, and 0.694.

In the latent variables of customer satisfaction, there were two observed variables: Cognitive and Affective, with factor loadings of 0.798 and 0.918. The residual values were 0.363 and 0.157. The reliability values (R2)

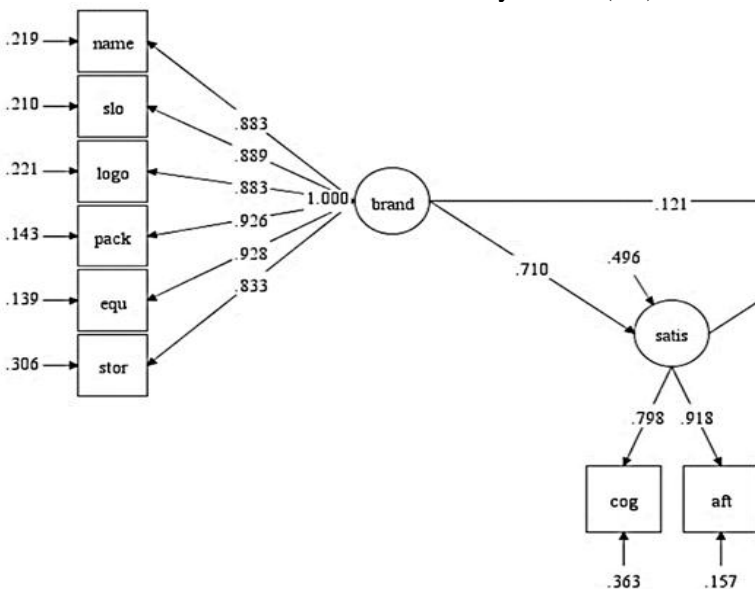


Figure 1. Component estimate value (SEM) (Developed by the authors)

were 0.637 and 0.843.

In the latent variable of customer loyalty, there were two observed variables: Re-Purchase and Word of Mouth with factor loadings of 0.780 and 0.881. The residual values were 0.392 and 0.223. The reliability values (R2) were 0.608 and 0.777.

6.3. Path Analysis

PA is a method for studying causal relations in a set of variables. There can be causal relationships between independent variables used to determine the variation of dependent variables. As a result, two paths of effects are present to be considered in the correlation sets of the independent and dependent variables: direct effect (DE) and indirect effect (IE) (Table 5).

Table 5. Dependent and independent variables (Developed by the authors)

| independent variable | Dependent variable | | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----|---------|----------------------|---------|---------|
| | Customer Satisfaction | | | Loyalty Satisfaction | | |
| | DE | IE | TE | DE | IE | TE |
| Branding | 0.710** | - | 0.710** | 0.121 | 0.469** | 0.590** |
| Satisfaction | | | | 0.660** | - | 0.660** |

** Sig. 0.01

H1: Branding directly affects customer satisfaction with processed agricultural products in Lamphun Province, Thailand, with statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

H2: Branding indirectly affects the customer loyalty to processed agricultural products in Lamphun Province, Thailand, with statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

H3: Customer satisfaction directly affects customer loyalty for processed agricultural products in Lamphun Province, Thailand, with statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

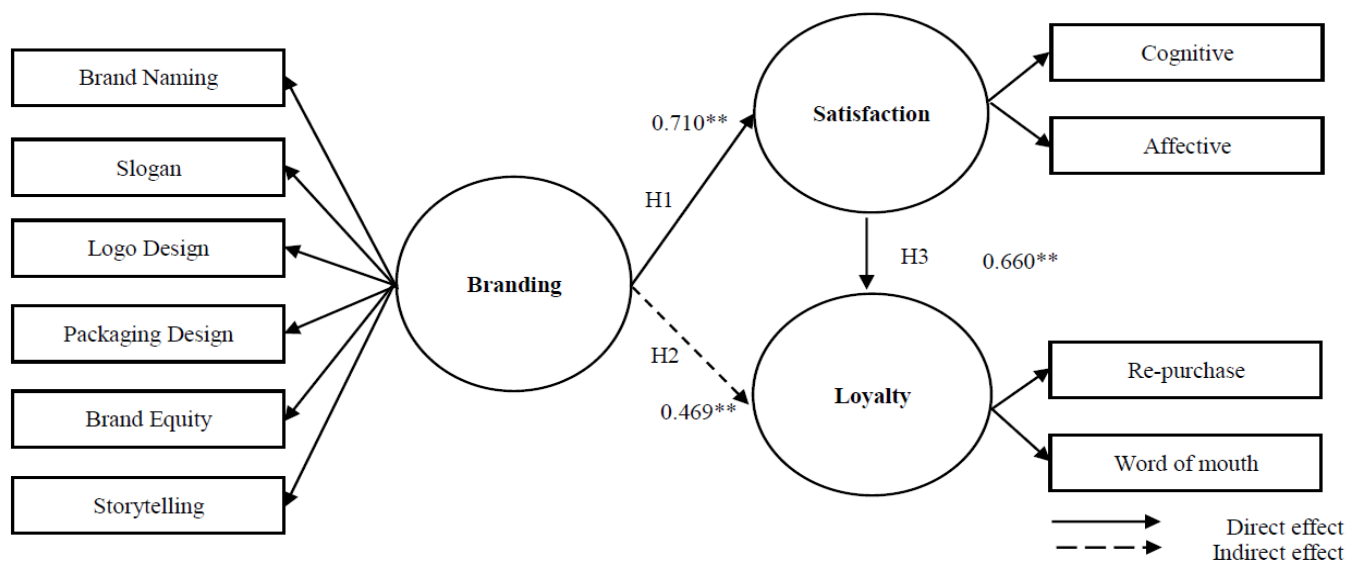


Figure 2. Path analysis (Developed by the authors)

7. Discussion

Branding has a direct effect on customer satisfaction with processed agricultural products, with a statistical significance level of 0.01. The process of branding involves naming a brand, inventing slogan and logo design, creating packaging design, positioning unique brand value, and brand storytelling, all of which can satisfy consumers who purchase processed agricultural products or brands. In accordance with O'Loughlin et al. (2004), many brands place great emphasis on branding and marketing by spending a large amount of money on branding campaigns to create brand distinctiveness. Thereby, communication to customers about the brand's uniqueness and authenticity occurs. Moreover, consumers' experience of consuming processed agricultural products from a familiar brand is also an important factor in building brand awareness and trust. It can create customer satisfaction and maintain a customer base, which is expressed as brand loyalty. According to Dardak and Quoquab (2010), businesses should focus on customer satisfaction and perceived value a customer has toward a product. The determinant of customer satisfaction with agricultural products is their overall perception of the products. Customer satisfaction is the overall attitude toward a brand after consumption of agricultural products.

Branding has indirect effects on customer loyalty toward processed agricultural products through consumer satisfaction, with a statistical significance level of 0.01. According to Dardak and Quoquab (2010), branding, thus, becomes a critical component of business strategy in the agricultural sector. Agroprocessing businesses need customer loyalty for repeat purchases. Furthermore, they must continue developing their processed agricultural products to keep customers coming back for more re-purchases. It is also important to promote customers' positive word-of-mouth dialogs about the values and characteristics of processed agricultural products in the form of reviews

from existing customers. In agreement with Pereira et al. (2018), branding is a marketing strategy linked to brand distinctiveness. Branding generates brand images, communication, and symbols, which affects customer loyalty.

Customer satisfaction has a direct effect on customer loyalty toward processed agricultural products, with a statistical significance level of 0.01. It is demonstrated in the form of affective satisfaction expressed in positive attitudes, contentment, and pleasant feelings, which all lead to customer loyalty. According to Torres-Moraga et al. (2008), product or brand development must be considered because customers place great importance on new, developed, or creative products that they will express as their satisfaction. The higher customer satisfaction, the higher their loyalty. For example, customers who have a good understanding and are content after their consumption of processed agricultural products will reflect their satisfaction through their loyalty: purchase repeat or word-of-mouth communication. According to Dardak and Quoquab (2010), positive experiences determine customer satisfaction and lead to brand loyalty.

8. Implications

8.1. Brand Equity

Farmers who produce processed food should prioritize the benefits of the product because consumers focus on the nutritional value. Consumers expect to gain such benefits when they purchase processed agricultural products, such as the benefits of having natural substances, being healthy, and being tasty. This will allow consumers to perceive the products as worthy and ultimately affect their purchasing decisions. In this regard, processed agricultural products must possess appealing appearances such as colors, shapes, and smells, which must be colors or flavors that are artificially enhanced as little as possible. Farmers must

try to make their brands stand out from competitors' brands, especially those in the same product line.

8.2. Packaging Design

The process of packaging design must take the product preservation into account. It also takes into consideration the design to protect the products inside from moisture, air, and dirt until they are safely delivered. Farmers should design packaging by implementing complete and clear product information, including but not limit to the product name, brand name, main components of the product, production location, contact channels, production date, expiration date, details on the product storage methods, and standard certificate. All of these factors will affect consumer confidence. The design should make packaging convenient to facilitate consumer handling. In addition, it is noteworthy that the attractive appearance of the packaging is the first consumers perceive visually, such as color tones distinguished from those of other competitors' packaging, natural tones, such as green, brown, yellow, and cream, which subconsciously link consumers to the natural and organic. Besides the exterior beauty, creativity should also be added to attract more attention. For example, the use of transparent packaging is encouraged to present the freshness of processed agricultural products. Adopting natural packing materials is also appealing as it advocates sustainable solutions for environmentally friendly packaging. The use of natural materials can stimulate consumer interest and affect purchase decisions.

8.3. Slogan

The slogan should be concise so that consumers can easily remember the intended message and the brand this slogan belongs to by the application of phonetic stylistic devices to make it recognizable and memorable. A slogan can have an explicit connection to a brand and show the strengths of processed agricultural products. Farmers may create a brand slogan that showcases the distinctive characteristics of each product and displays the distinctiveness of the product to consumers in a short and simple wording.

8.4. Logo Design

Farmers should consider designing their logos in an easily recognizable and uncomplicated format. For example, too many geometric shapes or colors in an image may easily escape one's memory and cause confusion. Active white space (AWS) can communicate product descriptions more clearly as the technique helps simplify the complexity of the logo. It also helps to increase the attractiveness. Brand logo design must be esthetic either by using a letter logo design or image logo design. The latter should adopt images, colors, and geometric shapes that are harmoniously blended. The logo design should not only be beautiful but also difficult to imitate. The logo; therefore, can act as a representative or ambassador of the brand.

8.5. Brand Naming

The brand name of processed agricultural products should accurately describe the characteristics of the products. It should also be unique and bear no similarity to other brands to avoid causing consumer confusion when consumers fail to distinguish between the products of one company and another. A brand name can be linked to the brand identity of processed agricultural products. A brand name should not be too lengthy as a brief version makes it easier for consumers to remember the name.

8.6. Storytelling

Through processed agricultural products, farmers can tell the story of their journey from growing vegetables to harvesting their produce, from meeting standardized protocols to sharing inherited knowledge. A unique production of processed agricultural products that looks reliable, practices good hygiene, and carries the wisdom of the community can make an excellent content. Moreover, there are numerous ways to tell a brand's story with the use of various forms of media, for instance, short videos at product exhibitions and print media with contact information.

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