



AMAR (Andalas Management Review)
Vol. 8, No. 2 (2024) Halaman 1-19
The Management Institute, Faculty of Economics, Universitas Andalas
ISSN (Print) 2476-9282 | ISSN (Online) 2548-155X

Coconut Entrepreneurs' Marketing Knowledge and Skill Development for Creative Tourism in Koh Samui

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Abstract

Nowadays, with crucial business competitions, entrepreneurs are obliged to possess marketing knowledge and skills in order for their business to survive and grow. Thus, the purpose of this research is to study marketing readiness of coconut products' entrepreneurs and to offer guidelines on marketing development and skill improvement for coconut entrepreneurs. The research tool is structural interviews by conducting data collection from in-depth interviews with 21 individuals whose names are in a list of information providers along with 3 focused groups being classified based on coconut products' operators. The findings show that coconut products' entrepreneurs possess insufficient knowledge and skills in marketing management, in another word, their readiness is dissatisfied. It is imperative that training programs be conducted to improve knowledge and skills through a curriculum on quality and product standard development; packaging design development; increasing distribution channels; product advertisement and public relation strategy development; and creative tourism. The curriculum is aimed to create outstanding points of Samui coconut product identity and the differences of Samui tourism being compared with others.

Keyword: Knowledge and Skill Development, Entrepreneurs, Creative Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Presently, tourism is a productive service that plays an important role not only on national revenues but also on increasing job opportunities. This is because expenses generated

by travelers create business expansions in producing both products and services to respond to their demands while providing them with different facilities that further lead to the link among tourism businesses i.e. hotels, restaurants and food places, travel agents, etc. (Sukhothai Thammathirat University, 2005:91). Fortunately, Thailand possesses natural attractive landscapes countrywide, especially the south where there are varieties of natural resources of spectacular seas and beaches that many are globally ranked in the first top 50. The southern most famous islands that attract both Thai and foreign tourists include Phuket, Pha-ngan and Samui. The island of Samui is globally well-known for being the tourism center of the south. Subsequently, there is a great deal of tourists, both domestic and international, visiting this island yearly (Sridokmai, K., & Sobhanaboon, P., 2016).

Samui District, SuratThani Province is one of the important tourist attractions having a reputation of beautiful nature with a variety of recreation places and being popular among national and international travelers. In addition, it also has an outstanding identity as the place of coconut plantations as well as the source of planting high grade coconuts (Samui Information, 2010). Thus, the main profession of its people is farming and trading. The area survey in 2011 has indicated that the major occupation of Samui people is coconut farming while their industrial sectors are mostly making furniture from coconut trunks whereas their agro-industry includes making coconut oil and dried coconut along with OTOP products that are made from processed coconut. These products create good revenues to the people. Products from processed coconut can be categorized into the following groups (1) food in terms of ingredients for cooking of main course, sweets, and drinks such as curry containing coconut milk for Thai noodle (Khanom Gean), coconut milk (as an ingredient of many of Thai cooking and sweets), sweets such as calamari, Thai rolled wafer (Tong Muan), coconut jelly, coconut sugar and coconut oil (used for cooking i.e. frying or stir-frying); (2) products for use/decoration such as handicraft of fruit trays, baskets, bags as well as souvenirs made from coconut hard-shells or trunks such as key chains, musical instrument (Saw-u), item containers, lamps, brooms; (3) health and beauty products such as coconut skin scrub cream, refined coconut oil, skin cream, etc. (Provincial Agricultural Extension Office, 2014). Factors affecting entrepreneurs in succeeding business operations include their management, plans, and methods of effectively and efficiently solving problems. The main problems of Samui coconut entrepreneurs are the insignificant difference of products that enable to identify their uniqueness or competitiveness of various aspects i.e. quality, pricing, services or additional number of producing when being compared with products of the nearby areas (Vimonmass, 2014). Another important problem is the entrepreneurs' insufficient knowledge on marketing,

for instance, product designs showing differences and values that enable to attract customers; product development of new characters; product quality preservation and development; creating differences to attract customers' attentions in which all these marketing knowledge can further create motivations toward targeted customer groups who want to purchase products or services in response to their self-satisfaction (Kotler, P. 1997: 92).

Obviously, entrepreneurs' skills in management are crucial in being a driving force for business operations, for example, skills in creation and initiation of ideas through presenting new products and services that consumers are able to acknowledge their differences as well as skills in stimulating competitions in order to develop both products and services in regard to quality and pricing which can further create readiness in performing under pressure in marketing competitions (Othaganon, B., 2014). Moreover, the development on knowledge and skills of different aspects is important and essential for entrepreneurs to accomplish their business. Of course, marketing skills are considered an important component in business driving force and its development. For those entrepreneurs who conduct analysis on business capacity by knowing that business advantages or strong points are the things that make their products different and prominent i.e. outstanding product qualities or services; advantages on prices making worthiness to the products or services; producing quality product to satisfy consumers leading to repurchasing decisions; advantages on location; providing better after-sale service to impress consumers; readiness and attentiveness in performing to the highest capabilities, these qualifications show that they possess competitive advantages in doing business. Successful business without development or ongoing plans can result in imitation by competitors making the competition lasts within a short period (Dess, G.G., Lumpkin, G.T., & Taylor, M.L., 2005). It can be seen in nowadays' marketing competitions of various businesses in Thailand such as hotels, tour guides, souvenirs, etc. where competency development on competitiveness increases and being offered to a great deal of tourists as well as consumers whose preferences varied because this country has many selective tourist attractions, especially natural ones that are popular among Thai and foreign tourists (Thailand Trade Machinery & Electronic, 2012).

Based on the above information, Samui coconut entrepreneurs' knowledge and skill development is focused with an aim to set the operational guidelines in order them to be prepared and ready for competitive marketing as well as to conduct self-development for business growth while enabling to upgrade their business and operational capacity. The information can also be parts of planning development for entrepreneurs to be ready with skills, knowledge, capacity, and operational characters of efficiency and continuously

improving their management. Hence, this study intends to investigate the coconut entrepreneurs' readiness on a marketing aspect and to recommend guidelines on the coconut entrepreneurs' development and upgrading marketing skills.

1.2 Literature Review

a. Theories on Entrepreneurs' Knowledge and Skills

Developing and increasing skills on various aspects of management are essential for successful business entrepreneurs and marketing skills are a prime factor in the achievement. Firm should invest more resources in marketing capabilities or human capital which is priority could be given to outside-in and inside-out (Mu, at al., 2018). This is because entrepreneurs who possess marketing knowledge, skills and also know the benefits of using proper media along with the combination of marketing and targeted customer approaches are encouraged to additionally possess creative ideas as well as abilities to conduct marketing opportunities for their products and services as well as brand creation and prominent aspects of products through making the differences. They are simultaneously able to make their business grow while becoming stronger and enabling to establish business competitiveness to be in line with the current competitions (Mcgugin Francis, 2007: 31-41). A growth in the entrepreneurs, market knowledge will reduce uncertainty and risk, assist in exploiting growth opportunities and help to better respond to market need (Mejri, K., 2018)

Knowledge and skill development is also crucial for the country's driving force whereas entrepreneurs' knowledge and skill development is a direction toward self-improvement in order to be consistent with changes of today's world. The significance of the entrepreneurs' knowledge and skill development can be described as followed (Industrial Development, 2015). First, increasing competitive capability and capacity as well as upgrading entrepreneurs' capacity to better their businesses. Second, efficiently and constantly operating the businesses progressively which is because the entrepreneurs are able to have clear directions and predict the next steps while having the abilities to always be ready and take proper actions on complicated matters. Last, helping entrepreneurs conduct self-development by bringing out potentials and fulfilling the operations while continuously improving their performances in order to reach the secured point and achievement. Moreover, market knowledge that thrived when entering the market of developed economies. When seeking to access more developed markets well-funded may invest in knowledge to augment limited market and internationalization knowledge (Mejri, K., 2018).

Today, the world is changing and human's way of life or lifestyle is also changing because of the effect of technologies and contemporary sciences. Of course, business operation

involves with changes that its processes and skills need to be adapted to grow and achieve the organization target. Entrepreneurs' knowledge and skill development becomes essential to help create identity of both business and the entrepreneurs as being perceived by consumers. In conducting the development, entrepreneurs open themselves for news and information to constantly create new knowledge while enabling to conduct data analysis as well as improving their knowledge and skills on various aspects such as operational strategies, investment plans, new product development, new business establishment, marketing, etc. in which such self-improvement is further applied for business transactions. In addition, entrepreneurs' knowledge and skill development becomes imperative because it makes them understand their consumers along with consumers' overall needs in which such understanding accordingly provides the entrepreneurs with opportunities to analyze their markets. All these can lead to a creation of new ideas being efficiently offered back to the targeted consumers (Bangkok SYNC.Com, 2016).

b. Marketing' Knowledge and Skills

Marketing is considered an important activity that routinely and increasingly involves consumers' lives. The significance of marketing is factors leading to changes in various following aspects: First, marketing significance toward business organizations such as being activities of generating incomes and profits to the organizations; creating value added to products and services; reducing cost per producing unit since marketing tools are used for its stimulation; increasing quantity in purchasing products and services; constantly conducting initiation and creation for development in a form of new products. Second, the significance toward societies by responding to consumers' continuous demands while making their living conditions better. Last, the significance toward an economic system in regard to people's employment and earnings which also include the fact that there are more circulation on producing factors (Bovee, at al., 1995). To be successful, entrepreneurs must adapt their marketing strategies to environmental changes. Because of, market knowledge is important and marketing is a function and a set of processes that enables the firm to create, communicate, and deliver value to its customers. Firm that develop a marketing competence are able to sustain the coordinated deployment of assets in a way that helps them achieve their goals (Arnett, D.B. & Wittmann, M.C., 2014). Marketing significance makes entrepreneurs become ready through learning different theories in order to upgrade their competitive capabilities including development aspects; products being processed into varieties of forms; creating new products to conduct value added to both the organization and brand creation of consumers' preferences (Dess, G.G., Lumpkin, G.T., & Taylor,M.L., 2005: p.426) . The

marketing literature has established the role of marketing capabilities in firm performance outcome such as firm performance generally and new product development performance more specifically (Mu, et al., 2018).

c. Creative Tourism Theories

Muttariga Prueksapong (2011) has stated that creative tourism is lifestyle tourism that makes travelers learn about the locals' ways of living which include living conditions, occupations, foods, handicrafts, and others that show the local and community's identity and uniqueness by focusing on the transaction between visitors and the locals through their speaking communication along with other experimenting activities of cooking, making handicrafts, living with the locals, home-stay touring which can make the travelers understand the locals' cultures and their uniqueness through the real experience or learning by practicing.

Ounlum, P. (2012) has defined creative tourism as a form of touring that opens an opportunity for tourists/ visitors to develop or utilize self-creative capacity or capability by participating in the locals' ways of life and gaining experience from such doing which is routinely performed by the locals.

Thongsamak et al., (2013) have expressed their ideas on creative tourism as a development tool in community tourism toward sustainability that has to depend on 6 aspects of development principles (1) development on tourism awareness (2) development on tourism resources (3) development on environment within tourist attractions (4) development on community participations (5) development on tourist markets and (6) development on travel business. The accomplishment of entrepreneurs' development can be seen from constant attractive tourism activities; the preservations of tourism resources; and, profit gaining among concerned operators. Entrepreneurs simultaneously have to increase their skills in order to make the differences in services to be in line with demands of various tourist groups while ensuring the least impact to the environment.

Creative tourism is therefore a form of new way of travelling that focuses on tourists being offered to learn history, cultures, community lifestyle and participating in local touring with opportunities for both tourists and local hosts to exchange knowledge where tourists learn, touch and are impressed with the local's uniqueness as well as experience gaining. The creative tourism can lead to sustainable community development in economy, society and cultures that further impacts the country's development (Thongsamak et al., 2013).

There are 5 characteristics of creative tourism (Seriwichaisawat, W., 2022)

1) Community participation

- 2) Utilization of the available resources
- 3) Activity arrangement of small groups
- 4) Offering travelers to learn, gain experience and employ creative ideas
- 5) Receiving supports from concerned agencies

Apart from the above characteristics, another major role of creative tourism is its capacity of being a mechanism in a driving force and a tourism development pattern to become more attractive. Such role comprises of the following characters (Wisuttiluck at., al. 2011): (1) there is a mutual bonding between visitors and hosts (the locals or community members) (2) there is the learning and exchanging of inter-culture (3) visitors are able to profoundly understand the hosts' cultures (4) visitors participate in activities instead of being viewers (5) visitors are provided with opportunities to improve their capacity in self creation while becoming parts of decision together with the hosts (6) visitors are aware of community values and help preserve them which lead to the balancing situation among economy, society, culture and environment.

Special characters of creative tourism can be described as the following (Richards, G., 2008).

1) It is a form of tourism that provides additional skills to tourists in which their skill development derives from the participations in tourism activities.

2) The main product of creative tourism is cultural skills and experience through the participations in tourism activities where the experience becomes a product.

3) This is the type of tourism that transfers the selling of touchable tourism resources to untouchable ones, in another word, from selling hard items to experience.

4) It is a tourism pattern that changes high level cultural products to daily cultural products so that tourists enable to learn, touch the feeling of being a local and easily comprehend the local cultures.

5) Creative tourism opens opportunities for tourists to join in local community tourism activities where they can have a real touch of the locals' lifestyle.

6) Creative tourism must be outstandingly different from tourism resources and be able to create identity of the tourist attractions knowing that most tourists look forward to new and different experience.

In addition, Richards has further explained creative tourism in a dimension of production and consumption that, in production, changes tend to direct toward presenting scarce places where hardly being seen routinely and, at the same time, tourists are provided more opportunities to touch the local cultural lifestyles whereas in consumption, tourists are

mostly middle class or creative tourism people who prefer to focus on local or native cultures as their attentions are the concept of being parts of the places they visits instead of just being outsiders who pay for a visit only.

There are 5 creative tourism components (Chinachot, P., & Chantuk, T., 2018)

1) Creative destination: areas are the prime factor that leads to creative tourism. Thus, the areas have to be developed and able to strike and attract travelers. However, the area arrangement must be in a form of environmental preservation in order to conduct sustainability. Components of creative destination must include creative perceptions to improve, conduct area value added, establish learning and creative atmosphere based on the existing resources as well as organizing various forms of creative activities.

2) Creative Entrepreneur: this is the heart of constructive economic driving force since entrepreneurs are creative conceptual leaders who enable to promote and encourage a creative development process of new innovations or products within the tourism industry. Moreover, entrepreneurs are the ones who can link with a coordination web and establish ideas together with other concerned sectors, then, come up with new perspectives toward the development of creative tourism.

3) Creative Locals: community people are the key for creative tourism development. The locals must be able to systematically organize their wisdoms. Simultaneously, they must be able to transfer knowledge, present ideas that have been adjusted and apply them to the current contexts.

4) Creative Activities & Products: the activities and products must be aimed for gaining experience and skills, in another word; it is a selling of untouchable things that what remains for visitors is positive impression and experience.

5) Creative Communication: communication is another main factor because an occurrence of creative tourism needs the understanding from all concerned parties which are community operators and government agency officials who must perform their parts in the same direction whereas tourists are also another party who need to communicate with others. Today, there are various effective channels of media that can penetrate into different targeted groups. Thus, communication technology can help travelers receive tourism information from both traditional ways i.e. newspapers, television programs, radio programs, leaflets, etc. and new ways such as social media. All these are ways of hosts' communication with visitors that subsequently enabling them to conveniently and actively approach the tourist attractions.

The purposes of creative tourism including:

1) Creating varieties of worthiness on cultures in which, apart from being reinforcement of affection toward community value, it is to encourage tourism capacity development so that visitors gain experience from their traveling. Participating in community tourism activities is a way of creating valuable experience to travelers as they learn from their true practices. Moreover, creative tourism aims to jointly conduct cultural experience between visitors and hosts. Learning about community history, cultures, lifestyle and uniqueness enable travelers to apply to their daily living. Community can additionally earn their living from creative tourism that further leads to sustainable tourism (Sangsanit, N., 2012)

2) Imagination and inspiration can be expressed through creative ideas (Wisuttiluck at., al.; 2011)

3) Area cultural resources of individuality and uniqueness can be extended and valuable to create memorable experience. Exchanging knowledge between visitors and the locals through a participation process can be organized via training arrangements on technique of providing hospitality to foreign tourists that the hosts are able to transmit their knowledge on cultures, history and lifestyle which is ways of creating good impression and hospitality as well as welcoming visitors. The consequence can be higher revenues from tourism and the future visit of more tourists.

2. METHOD

Qualitative research was employed and primary data collection was conducted with individuals on Samui Island during March and June 2016. The data collection was organized based on 2 formats.

2.1 In-depth interview: the interviews were conducted with 21 persons who were Samui coconut entrepreneurs and scholars from Community Development Department, Samui District and Social Welfare Department, the Office of Samui Municipality, as shown in Table 1. The research tool was a clear structural interview in which its content quality was examined by the relevant experts.

Table 1

A group of information providers who were individuals from government agencies
and coconut entrepreneurs

Positions	Number of Respondent	Agencies/Entrepreneurs
1. Community Development Scholar	1	Department of Social Welfare, the Office of Samui Municipality
2. Community Development Scholar	1	Samui District
3. Scholar from District Agricultural extension Office	1	Samui District
4. Business owner	7	Entrepreneurs of coconut sweet products
5. Business owner	7	Entrepreneurs of coconut hard shells, coconut trunks and coconut brooms
6. Business owner	4	Entrepreneurs of coconut beauty products

2.2 Focused group: The focused group was organized into 3 sub-groups of entrepreneurs with different products based on information shown in Table 1. The community development scholars from Samui District, and Social Welfare Department, Samui Municipality participated in the group discussion. The meeting aimed to present the outcomes of problems on entrepreneurs' marketing knowledge and skills obtained from the in-depth interviews and to reassure the result of this meeting so that the participants were able to add more problems while being clarified on the outcomes.

2.3 Data analysis and summaries: The data collections were organized through methods of interpretation and content analysis. Classification, categorization, connection and listing were done in a form of sentence writing or descriptive statements whereas the conclusion was based on the consistency and reasons being matched with the set issues of the research frame. Data inspection was managed via a method of data triangulation which consisted of two following parts. First, data triangulation on information was an inspection based on the information obtained from individuals where data of the same topic were collected from different tourism related groups who were from state, private, social and community sectors. Second, methodological triangulation was a monitoring on various methods of data collection

to gather all information on the same topic being collected from studying theories from various documents, in-depth interviews and focused group.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The findings on marketing readiness of Samui coconut products' entrepreneurs through in-depth interviews from a marketing aspect can be revealed as followed.

a. The marketing aspect of coconut sweet products' entrepreneurs

The targeted customer group is Thai tourists. The product outstanding points are the raw material freshness and its sorting quality for producing processes. The product strategy is brand labels such as a label of each sweet describing its formula and volume of ingredients being different based on transmitted knowledge from ancestors whereas methods and making processes are also varied. Pricing strategy is to set prices differently based on raw material, for example, an average price ranges between 120-150 Baht/kilo of Calamari. Strategy on distribution channels includes (a) direct channel: entrepreneurs sell directly to customers from their stores or postal mail as customers' orders (b) indirect channel: this is the sale through retail stores selling souvenir items around tourist attractions such as ship piers, Hintia Hinyai Site, etc. Marketing promotion strategy is various acts of public relation through different free-of-charge media such as Facebook, Line, etc. Marketing problems and obstacles include the product longevity and its surface such as in Calamari that result in its problems on distributions of sale to distant sources. Basic knowledge on creative tourism shows non availability.

The coconut sweet product entrepreneurs has determined their targeted customers clearly and their product outstanding points also clearly respond to customers' demands whereas their product strategy focuses on the unique taste that customers are able to identify differences among producers or product brands, however, problems on product longevity such as Calamari in which an expiration period is expected to be extended and the problems of its surface should be solved through producers' knowledge and skills. As per their pricing strategy, it is suitable and consistent with product quality while their distribution channels are both direct and indirect; yet, the distribution is still within a narrow scope due to certain limitations such as product longevity. Hence, their marketing promotion is also limited as their utilized media is still unable to reach wider targeted groups.

b. The marketing aspect of entrepreneurs of products made from coconut hard-shells, coconut trunks and product of coconut brooms

Targeted customer groups of coconut hard-shell products are foreign tourists, retail customers such as hotels, street vendors whereas targeted groups of coconut brooms are hotels in Samui District such as Zazen Boutique resort & Spa, Saithong Resort Hotel, etc. Product outstanding points include material and portions from unique and prominent local coconuts. Product strategy is set to focus on varieties of qualities and designs aimed to be proper for different types of usage. Pricing strategy is established on various prices based on product designs and sizes. Strategy on distribution channel is mostly the sale at entrepreneurs' shops and there might be through some retailers. Marketing

promotion strategy is not done through any advertisements or public relations as the only known promotion method is through words of mouth which leads to a reason why the products are unpopular. Marketing problems and obstacles include the need to conduct value added via packaging and making differences on the products to be more prominent while the problems of marketing promotion on advertisement and public relation should be looked into and solved. Basic knowledge on creative tourism is nonexistent.

Obviously, entrepreneurs of products made from coconut hard-shells, coconut trunks and product of coconut brooms have set their targeted customer groups clearly along with the product outstanding points that enable to respond to customers' purchasing purposes. Their product strategy is prominent designs although the Samui product identity is not totally clear. Their pricing strategy is varied based on product designs and sizes while their distribution channels are both direct and indirect but the indirect one is rather narrow as there have been only few retailers doing such distribution. Their marketing promotion is insufficient as the utilized media is unable to reach the targeted customer groups.

c. The marketing aspect of coconut beauty products' entrepreneurs

Targeted customer groups are foreign tourists, different business operators such as spas, hotels, etc. and general customers. Product outstanding points are (a) quality (b) varieties of products. Product strategy is determined on (1) quality which is focused on a producing process such as producing coconut oil under a natural process (2) varieties of products such as hair oil, body lotion, soup, liquid soap/shower gel, etc. Pricing strategy is setting the price differently based on categories and packaging sizes. Strategy on distribution channel consists of selling direct to customers through entrepreneurs' stores and indirect sale via retail shops of convenient stores or souvenir shops. Marketing promotion is conducted on public relation via free-of-charge media such as Facebook, Line, etc as well as words of mouth. Marketing problems and obstacles are the distribution channel and the unclear public relation, the need to develop product qualities, the indication of Samui coconut oil identity and the method of producing coconut oil to show its difference from others which helps in creating the value added as well as market extension to areas beyond Samui Island or expanding its customer base to more areas. Basic knowledge on creative tourism reveals non existence.

It can be seen that coconut beauty products' entrepreneurs have distinctly established their targeted group by focusing on product qualities; and, there are varieties of their items that enable to respond to customers' demands. Their product strategy emphasizes on qualities and a producing process using reliable standards to support the qualities and to ensure customers' trust. Their pricing strategy is varied based on product designs and sizes while their distribution channels are both direct and indirect selling in which the indirect one should be improved by distribution through middlemen with non availability of shops but they are able to distribute more. Their marketing promotion is rather limited as it is unable to widely reach general targeted customer groups. Online media is recommended to focus in order to gain wider markets.

3.2 Curriculum on knowledge and skill development for coconut products' entrepreneurs

Based on the above outcomes from the study regarding coconut product entrepreneurs' readiness on marketing for creative tourism, the capacity on marketing readiness has been evaluated along with problems or things that need to be improved by the entrepreneurs in order to offer guidelines for development and increasing their skills. Thus, a curriculum is organized for use in training and it is divided based on the group skills, as followed.

Table 2
Training Course for Coconut Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs' Grouping	Curriculum	Curriculum details
1. coconut sweet products	1.1 Extension on longevity especially of Calamari and its quality development on softening the content,	- Preparation of raw material and equipment used for scrambling - Methods in details on each step of scrambling by beginning with preparation of flour, coconut milk, sugar, corn/glucose syrup along with other ingredients and proportions which matter to Calamari's longevity and its softening.
	1.2 Packaging designs	- Definitions, significances components, types and benefits of packaging - Packaging designs - Using packaging as a marketing strategy - Value added creation through packaging - Packaging design for extension of longevity - Beautiful and prominent packaging design and becoming value added for being souvenir items
	1.3 Creative tourism	- Theories, principles, patterns and components of creative tourism - Designing experience of creative tourism - Characteristics of creative tourism products - Designing activities and coconut products to link with creative tourism
2. Products made from coconut hard-shells, trunks and product of coconut brooms	2.1 Product quality development (coconut brooms)	- Development on coconut brooms with quality, strength along with demonstrations and actual practices. - In order to respond to tourists' demands, demonstrations are conducted on different patterns of products such as baskets, bags, etc. which are made from coconut midribs.

Entrepreneurs' Grouping	Curriculum	Curriculum details
	2.2 Advertisement, public relation and distribution channels	- Modern management on marketing channels - Marketing promotion focusing on direct marketing - E-commerce for marketing development of creative tourism - Communication strategy on product brands for creative tourism
	2.3 Packaging designs (for coconut hard-shell and trunk products)	- Definitions, significances, components, types and benefits of packaging - Packaging designs - Using packaging as a marketing strategy - Value added creation via packaging - Packaging designs in response to tourists' demands
	2.4 Creative tourism	- Theories, principles, patterns and components of creative tourism - Designing experience of creative tourism - Characteristics of creative tourism products - Designing activities and coconut products to link with creative tourism
3. Coconut beauty products	3.1 Development on quality and standard of coconut oil products along with the value added creation	- Selecting coconuts for making the oil products - Steps of coconut peeling, scraping, and squeezing for coconut milk - Steps of storing coconut oil and eliminating dampness - Steps of bottling oil in containers - Product extension: from coconut oil to other beauty items such as soap, liquid soap/shower gel, lotion, shampoo, etc. - Guidelines on creating prominent products and making differences through clear identity of Samui coconut oil - Preparation on readiness toward food and drug standard and other standards, if necessary - Rules and conditions of food and drug standard
	3.2 Development on packaging designs	- Definitions, significances, types and benefits of packaging - Packaging designs - Using packaging as a marketing strategy

Entrepreneurs' Grouping	Curriculum	Curriculum details
		- Value added creation through packaging - Selecting proper packaging designs for coconut oil and other products - Designing label and placing important information on packages for creative tourism
	3.3 Distribution channels, advertisement and public relation	- Modern management on marketing channels - Marketing promotion focusing on the direct marketing - E-commerce for marketing development of creative tourism - Communication strategy on brands for creative tourism
	3.4 Creative tourism	- Theories, principles, patterns and components of creative tourism - Designing experience of creative tourism - Characteristics of creative tourism products - Designing activities and coconut products to link with creative tourism

Apart from organizing the training curriculum for entrepreneur' marketing skill improvement and development within each sub-strategy in order that they are able to garnish themselves with competitive capacity and marketing strength by dividing them into groups based on their operations, the researchers also participate in the training. It is expected that the trained entrepreneurs would utilize knowledge gained to apply in their business operations and design different activities in order travelers to participate, understand, gain experience and perceive value of each product as well as expose identity and uniqueness of Samui coconut oil products while creating prominent aspect and making differences on this tourism type.

4. CONCLUSION

Coconut product entrepreneurs' business operations clearly differ in terms of products and targeted customer groups in which outstanding or service points are varied comparing to competitors. The differences lead to dissimilar marketing strategies. A coconut product marketing strategy needs to have a set plan whereas adjustments on various aspects are required, as followed.

On an aspect of products, it becomes necessary to enhance 2 parts on marketing strategy development. Part 1 is to improve product quality to be in line with standards; and, technology is applied for use in the producing process in order to reduce cost and increase product efficiency as most existing processes are traditional local wisdoms. Certain required standards for food and beauty

products still need to be fulfilled. More varieties of products are also required to respond to customer demands whereas options, being prominent, different and acceptable by customers are also parts of the creations. Part 2 is product packaging development, for example, packaging of Calamari and other coconut sweets should reveal things of nature while its longevity should be extended whereas packages of coconut oil or other souvenirs made from coconut trunks are presently considered non-attractive that neither identifies uniqueness nor convenience for use. The improvement on all these aspects not only increases identity awareness of the products but also creates value added that some products might be able to set the price higher. Because of outstanding identity and uniqueness of Samui coconut products, their pricing can be increased or sellers can set their prices higher than those set by the system or market mechanism or middleman. Moreover, packaging is one of many ways that make people recognize Samui coconut products.

As for an aspect of product distribution or distribution channels, entrepreneurs mostly use a direct channel of selling from their own shops/ stores. Increasing distribution channels means more varieties of middleman which subsequently means more abilities to reach targeted customer groups who gain facility in purchasing such products. The result is more product sales. Thus, entrepreneurs should focus on targeted customer groups and improve distribution channels along with varieties of middleman who are later evaluated to be the most suitable for particular products. The new channel can also lead to an opening of new markets with new groups of customers which accordingly lead to revenues increasing.

The aspect of advertisement and public relation is currently one of the most important strategies in creating awareness and motivation among customers to buy products. There is not much specifically clear performance in this aspect for the coconut products and the existing tool does not seem to strongly reach the targeted customer groups. Therefore, it becomes essential to plan, improve and clarify this aspect in order to build customer awareness on the products' quality, value, and prominent points as well as to ensure to be in line with the targeted groups. After all, advertisement and public relation aspect is the reinforcement in product distributions.

On an aspect of creative tourism, most entrepreneurs do not seem to form any activities related to a producing process that offer visitors to participate although there are few who allow the participation but still with an unclear pattern. Since customers of coconut products are mostly tourists and most of its operators sell the products in their stores which are the same place of producing, creating prominent points and making a difference need creative tourism along with a marketing strategy to fulfill the task by presenting various activities where visitors can take parts by actual performing together with explaining and adding background of the products that relate to traditions and cultures or demonstrating the producing process to make travelers gain knowledge, experience as well as understand and realize the difficulty in the producing process. Value perception and positive impression are one of the marketing strategies in inviting customers to revisit the place or repurchase the products.

The results from studying marketing readiness among entrepreneurs on each aspect show the significance of knowledge and skill development on different marketing strategies which, in turn, are important to business existence whereas entrepreneurs' strength can lead them to business accomplishment in the crucial competitive market. This is in line with Ananpornjinda, N. (2012) who has described in his study on entrepreneurs' development strategies based on capacity gained from new entrepreneurs creation campaign (NEC) that the development method of training with knowledge gaining on various important aspects toward business operations such as package and packaging designs, processes of producing, service, distribution, etc. can result in capacity increasing among entrepreneurs and further affect the future economic expansion. This is consistent with Suwanpitakul, W., & Waisarayut, C. (2011) who have stated on guidelines for entrepreneurs' capacity enhancement of medium and small food business in Thailand that training programs that fit entrepreneurs' skills and capacities of each group are one of the methods for business capacity enhancements that can lead to the sustainability of business operations.

5. RECOMMENDATION

1. Government agencies should conduct training programs for entrepreneurs' marketing development and skill improvement in various aspects by grouping them based on the difference of products or services. Each topic of the marketing training should include different contents by focusing on the operators' needs as they can subsequently apply in their business transactions.
2. The government agencies are obliged to follow up on the training results to witness if the knowledge obtained has been efficiently and effectively benefited in business development.
3. Private sectors, especially tour agencies, should organize their tour programs that promote the selling of related coconut products, for example, arranging a tour program for tourists to see the locals' lifestyle, a tour program on Samui local cultures related to coconuts or a tour program where tourists take part in various ways of living or cultures, etc. The main aim is to support Samui coconut entrepreneurs.
4. Private sectors of hotels, resorts and spas should conduct public relation to their customers through creating awareness on the significance of coconut toward Samui Islanders' lifestyle and invite customers to buy the products. These private sectors should also support products related to coconut to be used in their business such as coconut oil or scrubbing products for spas, decorating rooms with souvenirs made from coconut, placing sweets with coconut ingredient as a snack in meeting or convention arrangements or in a set menu of restaurants, etc. All these are for marketing extensions that not only support entrepreneurs but also organize public relation for the products.

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