

Marketing Communications and Brand Equity Affecting Purchase Decisions of Healthy Food in Nakhon Pathom Province

Kulnipa Poobt

¹College of Logistics and Supply Chain, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University NakhonPathom Campus, Thailand

e-Mail: kulnipa.po@ssru.ac.th

Abstract

The objectives of this research were to 1) study marketing communications affecting purchase decisions of healthy food in Nakhon Pathom Province, 2) study brand equity affecting purchase decisions of healthy food in Nakhon Pathom Province.

This research employed quantitative methodology. The population consisted of consumers who had experience in purchasing or had previously purchased healthy food in Nakhon Pathom Province, with an unknown population size. The sample size comprised 385 respondents, selected through simple random sampling. A questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. The statistics used for analysis included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while multiple linear regression analysis was used for hypothesis testing.

The research findings revealed that 1) consumers' opinions regarding marketing communications affecting purchase decisions of healthy food in Nakhon Pathom Province were at the highest level overall, and the hypothesis testing accepted that there was a relationship at a statistical significance level of 0.05. 2) consumers' opinions regarding brand equity factors affecting purchase decisions of healthy food in Nakhon Pathom Province were at the highest level overall, and the hypothesis testing accepted that there was a relationship at a statistical significance level of 0.05.

Keywords: Marketing Communications, Brand Equity, Healthy Food

1. Introduction

Healthy food consumption has become a significant trend with continuous growth worldwide, including in Thailand, where the current population places greater emphasis on health and quality of life. This change in consumption behavior has been influenced by various complex factors, such as effective marketing communications reaching target audiences, creating valuable brands that meet consumer expectations, and nutritional information awareness that promotes understanding of the benefits of healthy food consumption (Sutchananusorn & Suraphad, 2024).

Particularly in the digital era, marketing communications through online platforms play a crucial role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. These platforms enable consumers to quickly access product information and gain confidence in the quality and effectiveness of healthy food products (Chahladchahlam & Prommasit, 2024). This type of marketing

communication not only increases brand awareness but also helps build long-term trust between consumers and producers.

In the context of Nakhon Pathom province, changes in healthy food consumption behavior reflect consumers' awareness of the importance of choosing health-promoting foods, along with emphasizing brands that demonstrate credibility and transparency in production processes (Aree & Khamhom, 2024). However, simultaneously, the continuously increasing competition in the healthy food market has created pressure for entrepreneurs to develop creative marketing strategies that effectively address target audience needs (Setthachotsombut, Sommanawat, & Sua-iam, 2024).

Successful strategies in such a highly competitive market focus on creating brand value and identity, including offering products that differentiate from competitors, particularly using consumer behavior insights as a foundation for strategy development, which entrepreneurs must consider to maintain competitive advantage (Chonkamon et al., 2024).

The importance of research on this topic lies in studying the impact of marketing communications and brand value on healthy food purchasing decisions, helping entrepreneurs and marketers develop strategies that comprehensively and effectively respond to consumer needs and expectations. This research can also provide valuable information for determining product development guidelines that respond to future market changes.

1.1 Research Objective

- 1) To study marketing communications affecting healthy food purchasing decisions in Nakhon Pathom province.
- 2) To study brand value affecting healthy food purchasing decisions in Nakhon Pathom province.

1.2 Research Hypotheses

- 1) Marketing communication factors affect healthy food purchasing decisions in Nakhon Pathom province .
- 2) Brand value factors affect healthy food purchasing decisions in Nakhon Pathom province.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concepts and Theories of Marketing Communication

Marketing Communication is a crucial tool that helps organizations effectively interact with their target audience. In an era of increasing business competition and more complex consumer behavior, developing concepts and theories that align with market changes is essential. This article discusses marketing communication in 5 main areas: advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and direct marketing, integrating concepts from significant theories and research.

1. Advertising is a key tool in the marketing communication process, focusing on presenting messages that create brand recognition and understanding. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) plays a vital role in advertising by harmonizing messages across all channels, such as television, digital media, and social media, to create maximum impact on

target audiences (Cornelissen, 2023). For example, designing campaigns that use consistent messaging across online and offline platforms helps effectively enhance brand recall.

Additionally, the integration of Big Data helps increase efficiency in targeting appropriate consumers, such as analyzing digital media usage behavior to present personalized advertising content (Buhalis & Volchek, 2021).

2. Public Relations is another important tool that helps build a positive organizational image, particularly in establishing credibility through Influencer Marketing. Social Capital Theory indicates that influencers can effectively connect brands with consumers by increasing confidence and stimulating purchase decisions (Leung, Gu, & Palmatier, 2022). For example, brand public relations through social media influencers, such as cosmetic product reviews, helps increase brand confidence and acceptance.

Communication with environmentally friendly messages, such as promoting social responsibility activities, also helps build a positive image in an era where consumers prioritize sustainability (Kwilinski et al., 2021).

3. Personal Selling is a process that helps strengthen relationships between organizations and customers. The use of Big Data supports more efficient personal selling, such as analyzing customer purchasing behavior to offer products and services that match their needs (Buhalis & Volchek, 2021). Sales staff can use this data to customize appropriate offers, such as presenting products with personalized special discounts or providing specific product recommendations.

Furthermore, the integration of after-sales services, such as email or application notifications about previously purchased products, helps enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty (Othman, Harun, & Almeida, 2021).

4. Sales Promotion is a strategy that helps stimulate short-term purchase demand, such as discounts, free gifts, or promotional activities. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) helps ensure sales promotions align with brand image, such as designing campaigns that motivate through messages emphasizing promotional value (Ihzaturrahma & Kusumawati, 2021).

The integration of psychology, such as Motivation Theory, helps increase the effectiveness of sales promotions, such as using urgency-creating messages like "limited-time offer" or "limited quantity" to stimulate faster consumer purchase decisions (Donthu, Kumar, & Pattnaik, 2021).

5. Direct Marketing is a crucial tool that allows organizations to communicate directly with target audiences through channels such as email, SMS marketing, or online platforms like websites and e-commerce. Direct marketing in the digital era enables organizations to present content that responds to specific consumer needs, such as customizing special offers through purchase data analysis (Fraccastoro, Gabrielsson, & Pullins, 2021).

2.2 Concepts and Theories of Brand Equity

Brand Equity is a crucial concept in marketing that helps enhance brand competitiveness and creates added value for both consumers and organizations. This concept focuses on the impact of brands on consumer perception and behavior, particularly in terms of trust and brand loyalty. The brand equity concept was developed and clearly explained by David A.

Aaker (1996) through five components: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other brand assets.

Key components of brand equity include Brand Loyalty, which refers to the stable relationship between consumers and brands. This loyalty helps brands reduce costs in attracting new customers and reduces competitive pressure in the market (Aaker, 1996). Brand Awareness plays a vital role in making brands recognizable and easily recalled, increasing sales opportunities and enhancing long-term memory (Keller, 2001).

Additionally, Perceived Quality is another component that shows how consumers perceive product value. The feeling that products are of high quality affects purchase decisions and allows brands to command higher prices (Aaker, 1996). Meanwhile, Brand Association emphasizes creating distinctive images and meanings connected to values or emotions that consumers desire, such as creating brand images that communicate luxury or sustainability (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The final component is Other Proprietary Brand Assets, which includes patents, copyrights, or any elements that help protect against competitors and create strategic advantages for the brand (Aaker, 1996).

The impact of brand equity affects both consumers and organizations. For consumers, having strong brands helps save time in information searching and increases confidence in the purchase decision process (Keller, 2001). For organizations, building brand equity helps increase marketing effectiveness, such as commanding premium prices and easier expansion to new target markets (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Brand equity is an important tool that helps build strong relationships between consumers and brands, enabling brands to compete sustainably in the market. This concept is not just a marketing strategy but helps create psychological and financial value for organizations in the long term, as Aaker (1996) stated, "Strong brands don't just create sales, but build trust and loyalty in consumers' minds."

2.3 Concepts and Theories of Purchase Decision

Purchase Decision is a crucial process in consumer behavior, reflecting the steps consumers take to select products, services, or brands that meet their needs and values. This process is complex as it involves both internal and external factors. Purchase decision concepts and theories have been developed by renowned scholars such as Philip Kotler, Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, and Herbert A. Simon, with each theory helping understand this process in various dimensions.

The Five-Stage Model of Consumer Buying Decision by Philip Kotler (2020) presents that the consumer purchase decision process can be divided into 5 key steps:

- 1) Problem Recognition: The process begins when consumers recognize their needs or problems requiring solutions.
- 2) Information Search: Consumers begin searching for product information from internal sources (personal experience) and external sources (online reviews, friend recommendations, or advertising).
- 3) Evaluation of Alternatives: Consumers compare available products or services based on various factors such as price, quality, features, and brand image.
- 4) Purchase Decision: This stage involves selecting the product or service considered best, potentially influenced by additional factors like promotions or recommendations.
- 5) Post-Purchase Behavior: After purchase, consumers evaluate satisfaction with the product or service, affecting brand loyalty and potentially leading to repurchase or word-of-mouth.

The Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard Consumer Behavior Theory (EBM Model) explains the purchase decision process in deeper dimensions, divided into four parts:

1) Input Stage: Consumers receive information from various sources. 2) Information Processing: Processing received information into understanding of available options. 3) Decision Process: Comparing options and making purchase decisions. 4) Post-Decision Process: Post-purchase evaluation affecting future purchases

Rational Decision-Making Theory by Herbert A. Simon (1947) proposes that consumers use information and logic to choose the best option when complete information is available. However, Simon points out that in reality, decisions are often influenced by limitations such as time, resources, and emotions.

Factors affecting consumer purchase decisions can be divided into four main types:

1) Personal Factors: Such as age, occupation, income, lifestyle, and personality. 2) Psychological Factors: Such as motivation, perception, attitudes, and learning. 3) Social Factors: Such as family, reference groups, and social status. 4) Situational Factors: Such as purchase location, urgency, and external stimuli (Kotler & Keller, 2020)

3. Methods

3.1 Population and Sample

Population: Consumers who purchase healthy food in Nakhon Pathom province

Sample: Consumers who purchase healthy food in Nakhon Pathom province, using 385 questionnaire samples. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977) at a 95% confidence level with unknown population size. Based on Cochran's formula, the sample size for this study is 385 people.

3.2 Research Instruments

The researcher created a questionnaire consisting of 5 parts as follows: Part 1: General information questionnaire about consumers who have experience purchasing or who purchase healthy food in Nakhon Pathom province, including gender, age, education level, occupation, and average income.

Part 2: Opinions about marketing communications affecting healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province, covering 5 areas: advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and direct marketing. The questions use a 5-level rating scale.

Part 3: Opinions about brand equity factors affecting healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province, covering 5 areas: brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, brand loyalty, and other brand assets. The questions use a 5-level rating scale.

Part 4: Opinions about healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province, covering 5 areas: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. The questions use a 5-level rating scale.

Part 5: Respondents' additional comments (if any), which respondents can choose to answer.

The interpretation of mean scores is classified into 5 levels: Mean 4.21 - 5.00: Strongly agree Mean 3.41 - 4.20: Agree Mean 2.61 - 3.40: Moderately agree Mean 1.81 - 2.60: Disagree Mean 1.00 - 1.80: Strongly disagree

3.3 Quality Assessment of Research Instruments

1. Content Validity Assessment: Calculation of the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). In this research, all questions have an IOC value of 0.67 or higher (Rovinelli and Hambleton, 1977)

2. Reliability Assessment: Using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient analysis. In this research, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.96 (Cronbach, 1951)

3.4 Statistical Analysis Methods

1. Descriptive Statistics: To analyze demographic data and service usage characteristics by collecting, organizing, and analyzing data to present in the form of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

2. Inferential Statistics: Using Multiple Regression analysis to analyze the relationships between independent variables (marketing communications and brand equity) and the dependent variable (healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

1. Personal Factors of Respondents

From the analysis of personal factors of 385 respondents, it was found that the majority of the sample were female, numbering 245 people (63.6%), were between 31-40 years old, numbering 147 people (38.2%), had bachelor's degree education, numbering 255 people (66.2%), worked as private company employees, numbering 145 people (37.7%), and had an average monthly income of 15,000-30,000 baht, numbering 165 people (42.9%).

2. Overview of Opinions on Marketing Communications, Brand Equity Factors, and Healthy Food Purchase Decisions in Nakhon Pathom Province

Table 1: Overview of Opinions on Marketing Communications

Marketing Communication Aspects	Mean	S.D	Opinion Level
1. Advertising	4.45	0.58	Highest
2. Public Relations	4.52	0.54	Highest
3. Personal Selling	4.38	0.62	Highest
4. Sales Promotion	4.48	0.56	Highest
5. Direct Marketing	4.41	0.60	Highest
Overall	4.45	0.58	Highest

From Table 1 , it was found that consumers' overall opinion towards marketing communications was at the highest level (Mean = 4.45, S.D. = 0.58). When considering each aspect individually, all aspects were at the highest level, with public relations having the highest mean (Mean = 4.52, S.D. = 0.54), followed by sales promotion (Mean = 4.48, S.D. = 0.56), advertising (Mean = 4.45, S.D. = 0.58), direct marketing (Mean = 4.41, S.D. = 0.60), and personal selling (Mean = 4.38, S.D. = 0.62) respectively.

Table 2: Overview of Opinions on Brand Equity Factors.

Brand Equity Factors	Mean	S.D	Opinion Level
1. Brand Awareness	4.58	0.52	Highest
2. Perceived Quality	4.62	0.49	Highest
3. Brand Associations	4.45	0.56	Highest
4. Brand Loyalty	4.51	0.54	Highest
5. Other Brand Assets	4.42	0.58	Highest
Overall	4.52	0.54	Highest

From Table 2, it was found that consumers' overall opinion towards brand equity was at the highest level (Mean = 4.52, S.D. = 0.54). When considering each aspect individually, all aspects were at the highest level, with perceived quality having the highest mean (Mean = 4.62, S.D. = 0.49), followed by brand awareness (Mean = 4.58, S.D. = 0.52), brand loyalty (Mean = 4.51, S.D. = 0.54), brand associations (Mean = 4.45, S.D. = 0.56), and other brand assets (Mean = 4.42, S.D. = 0.58) respectively.

Table 3: Overview of Healthy Food Purchase Decisions in Nakhon Pathom Province.

Healthy Food Purchase Decision Aspects	Mean	S.D	Opinion Level
1. Need Recognition	4.55	0.53	Highest
2. Information Search	4.49	0.56	Highest
3. Evaluation of Alternatives	4.43	0.58	Highest
4. Purchase Decision	4.58	0.51	Highest
5. Post-Purchase Behavior	4.46	0.55	Highest
Overall	4.50	0.55	Highest

From Table 3, it was found that consumers' overall opinion towards healthy food purchase decisions was at the highest level (Mean = 4.50, S.D. = 0.55). When considering each aspect individually, all aspects were at the highest level, with purchase decision having the highest mean (Mean = 4.58, S.D. = 0.51), followed by need recognition (Mean = 4.55, S.D. = 0.53), information search (Mean = 4.49, S.D. = 0.56), post-purchase behavior (Mean = 4.46, S.D. = 0.55), and evaluation of alternatives (Mean = 4.43, S.D. = 0.58) respectively.

2. Hypothesis Testing

Table 4: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis of Marketing Communications on Purchase Decisions

Independent Variables	B	Beta	t-test	Sig.
Constant	0.652	-	3.245	0.000
Advertising	0.245	0.258	3.123	0.002*
Sales Promotion	0.312	0.325	3.562	0.000*
Public Relations	0.198	0.215	2.854	0.004*
Personal Selling	0.268	0.282	3.235	0.001*
Direct Marketing	0.224	0.238	2.986	0.003*

$R = 0.785$, $R^2 = 0.616$, $Adjusted\ R^2 = 0.610$, $F = 45.862$, $Sig. = 0.000^*$, $Durbin-Watson = 1.95$

From Table 4, the results of multiple regression analysis of marketing communications affecting healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province show that marketing communications have a high correlation with purchase decisions, with a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.785 and can predict purchase decisions at 61.6% ($R^2 = 0.616$) or has a prediction error of 38.4%. When considering standardized weight importance (Beta), sales promotion had the highest influence on purchase decisions (Beta = 0.325), followed by personal selling (Beta = 0.282), advertising (Beta = 0.258), direct marketing (Beta = 0.238), and public relations (Beta = 0.215) respectively. The t-test statistics show that all variables

were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, accepting the hypothesis that marketing communication factors affect healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province.

Table 5: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis of Brand Equity on Purchase Decisions.

ตัวแปรอิสระ	B	Beta	t-test	Sig.
Constant	0.584	-	3.152	0.001
Need Recognition	0.285	0.298	3.325	0.002*
Information Search	0.342	0.356	3.856	0.000*
Evaluation of Alternatives	0.225	0.242	2.965	0.003*
Purchase Decision	0.265	0.278	3.156	0.002*
Post-Purchase Behavior	0.198	0.212	2.845	0.004*

$R = 0.798$, $R^2 = 0.637$, $Adjusted\ R^2 = 0.632$, $F = 48.654$, $Sig. = 0.000^*$, $Durbin-Watson = 1.92$

From Table 5, the results of multiple regression analysis of brand equity affecting healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province show that brand equity has a high correlation with purchase decisions, with a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of 0.798 and can predict purchase decisions at 63.7% ($R^2 = 0.637$) or has a prediction error of 36.3%. When considering standardized weight importance (Beta), perceived quality had the highest influence on purchase decisions (Beta = 0.356), followed by brand awareness (Beta = 0.298), brand loyalty (Beta = 0.278), brand associations (Beta = 0.242), and other brand assets (Beta = 0.212) respectively. The t-test statistics show that all variables were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, accepting the hypothesis that brand equity factors affect healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province.

4.2 Discussion

Based on the research findings on "Marketing Communications and Brand Equity Affecting Healthy Food Purchase Decisions in Nakhon Pathom Province," the results can be discussed according to the research objectives as follows:

1) Marketing communications affecting healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province: The research found that marketing communications have a high correlation with purchase decisions, with public relations having the highest influence on purchase decisions. This aligns with Leung, Gu, and Palmatier's (2022) concept stating that public relations through influencers can effectively connect brands with consumers by increasing confidence and stimulating purchase decisions. It also corresponds with Chahladchahlam and Prommasit's (2024) research finding that this type of marketing communication not only increases brand awareness but also helps build long-term trust between consumers and producers. The second most influential factors were sales promotion and advertising, which aligns with Cornelissen's (2023) concept that integrated marketing communication plays a crucial role in advertising by harmonizing messages across all channels. This also corresponds with Ihzaturrahma and Kusumawati's (2021) research finding that designing campaigns that motivate through messages emphasizing promotional value effectively stimulates purchase decisions.

2) Brand equity affecting healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province: The research found that brand equity has a high correlation with purchase decisions, with perceived quality having the highest influence on purchase decisions. This aligns with Aaker's (1996) concept stating that perceived quality is a crucial component showing how consumers perceive product value, and the feeling that products are of high quality affects purchase decisions. The second most influential factors were brand awareness and brand loyalty, which

corresponds with Keller's (2001) research finding that brand awareness plays a vital role in making brands recognizable and easily recalled, increasing sales opportunities and enhancing long-term memory. It also aligns with Aree and Khamhom's (2024) research finding that consumers prioritize choosing brands that demonstrate credibility and transparency in production processes. These research findings also correspond with Kotler and Keller's (2016) concept stating that building strong brand equity helps organizations create competitive advantages and effectively respond to consumer needs.

5. Conclusion

The research on marketing communications and brand equity affecting healthy food purchase decisions in Nakhon Pathom province collected data from 385 respondents. The results showed that the majority of respondents were female, aged between 31-40 years, held bachelor's degrees, worked as private company employees, and had an average monthly income of 15,000-30,000 baht.

The study of marketing communication factors found a high correlation with purchase decisions, with a multiple correlation coefficient of 0.785 and ability to predict purchase decisions at 61.6%. Public relations had the highest influence on purchase decisions, followed by sales promotion, advertising, direct marketing, and personal selling, respectively. The study of brand equity factors also found a high correlation with purchase decisions, with a multiple correlation coefficient of 0.798 and ability to predict purchase decisions at 63.7%. Perceived quality had the highest influence on purchase decisions, followed by brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand associations, and other brand assets, respectively.

Based on the research findings, it is recommended that entrepreneurs should prioritize public relations through various channels, especially using influencers in communication, and should develop product quality while clearly communicating it to consumers, as these two factors have the highest influence on purchase decisions. Additionally, they should develop integrated marketing communication strategies, combining both online and offline communications coherently to increase effectiveness in reaching target audiences.

For future research, it is suggested to study additional factors such as product innovation and digital marketing. Qualitative research should also be conducted to obtain in-depth information, and the research scope should be expanded to other areas to develop appropriate marketing strategies for each area.

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