Promoting Suitable Plant Varieties For Agricultural Areas With Salt water Encroachment Problems In Don Manora Sub-District Samut Songkhram Province

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Abstract

For about four decades Thailand is experiencing its nastiest scarcity of water. The capacity of its half of the water reservoirs stands below 50%. Due to the low level of river water, the saltwater of the ocean is creeping upstream and damaging the drinking water supplies. In Thailand near 11 million people are attached to crop production and farming. Therefore, the economy is expected to suffer from the saltwater encroachment problem. The current study examines that how the Thai government can control the water encroachment problem by promoting suitable plant activities like advertisement, branding and sales promotion. The present study examines the effect of advertisement, branding and sales promotion activities on customer loyalty. How product establishment mediates the relationship of branding, advertisement and sales promotion on customer loyalty. A total of 296 members of DRRAA (Department of Royal Rainmaking and Agricultural Aviation) and the Don Manora sub-district farmers were selected with the help of a simple random sampling technique. With the help of questionnaire data was collected. For the data analysis, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM-PLS) technique was used. The result of this study exposed that advertisement, branding and sales promotion significantly affect the product establishment. In turn, product establishment mediates the effect of the advertisement, branding and sales promotion on customer loyalty. The present study recommends that government can control the water encroachment problem by promoting suitable plant varieties. By adopting promotional activities like branding, advertisement and sales promotion

Keywords: Advertisement, branding, sales promotion, product establishment, customer loyalty, Thailand

1.0 Introduction

Organizations need to develop plans by which they can retain their customers. As a result, organizations and brands are turned towards profitability which is also dependent upon the factor
of customer loyalty (Perumal, Ali, & Shaarih, 2021). The customer who is loyal to a specific brand is willing to pay more for that specific brand. It is because such a customer perceives some value in that specific product or service. This specific value is also unique from other competitive brands as well. This uniqueness is derived from the factor of trust in the brand’s reliability. This is the favourable effect that is formed when a customer uses a certain brand (Teimouri, Fanae, Jenab, Khoury, & Moslehpour, 2016).

To create a customer into a loyal customer, it is important to create awareness among the customers. For this purpose, advertisement plays an important role. Advertisement plays important role in recall as well as recognition of the brand. The recall of the brand means when a customer sees a certain category of brand, he or she recalls that certain brand through a certain stimulus or cue (Perumal et al., 2021). A customer can recall any tangible product with the help of an advertisement. This advertisement plays a critical role to recall a certain brand with the help of symbols, brand name or colours. Moreover, the brand name is one of the most important elements of brand awareness which also plays a critical role in creating awareness among the customer. On the other hand, the advertisement of a certain product plays a very important role to create a certain image among the customers (Khurram, Qadeer, & Sheeraz, 2018).

Therefore, researchers have pointed out that awareness creation is the main purpose of advertisement. Moreover, advertisement is the outcome of communication. According to researchers, promotion, as well as advertising strategy, plays a very important role to develop the market position of an organization. In the development of marketing strategy one of the important roles is also played by the sales promotion strategy as well (Chakrabortty, Hossain, Farhad, Azad, & Islam, 2013). To change the buying behaviour of the customers, sales promotion plays a very important role. It also affects the frequency of the sale of the product as well. On the other hand, the customer who is loyal to the brand is also affected by the advertisement and sales promotion strategies. Such activities develop the specific image in the mind of the customer. Resultantly, the performance of ads and sales promotion may play an important role to turn a customer into a loyal customer (Rojuee & Rojuee, 2017).

In the service as well as product sector, a loyal customer is of high importance for the researchers as well as strategy developers. Therefore, this concept is of great importance for the last three decades. In this context, researchers have pointed that loyal customers bring several advantages to the organizations like greater leverage of trade, several new customers and reduction of cost as well (Ngo & Nguyen, 2016).

In Thailand agriculture is one of the very competitive industries. Thailand is a very fertile and plentiful country. It is one of the big exporters of agriculture. The jobs related to agriculture within Thailand also contributes a lot to the GDP of the country. More than 31% of the employment of Thailand is linked to the agriculture sector (Prathumchai, Polprasert, & Polprasert, 2016). Thus, present research explores the relationship among sales promotion, branding, advertisement and customer loyalty through product establishment. Moreover, present research tries to assess the mediating role of product establishment as well among the above-mentioned variables. In the latter half of the present research, the introduction regarding these variables and their relationships are mentioned.

2.0 Literature Review
Customer Loyalty: Relationship with Product Establishment

In past studies, researchers have given a lot of importance to the concept of customer loyalty. Scholars have defined customer loyalty as the deeply held commitment among customers to patronize or rebuy a service or product that is preferred consistently in the future. Thus, repetition of purchase took place despite the influence of the situation and potential market competitors that tend to switch the behaviour. There are two aspects of the definitions of loyalty. One is attitudinal loyalty and the other is behavioural loyalty (Ishak & Abd Ghani, 2013).

In the context of behavioural loyalty, there exist repeat purchases of a certain service or product. On the other attitudinal loyalty of the customer includes a certain degree of dispositional commitment in terms of value that is unique and associated with that certain product or service. We can take the example of a person who patronizes with only one service provider. There can be two justifications for that(Bricci, Fragata, & Antunes, 2016). One is that the person has a lack of knowledge as well as understanding regarding other service providers of the same kind of services. Therefore, that person has the habit to use that specific service. On the other hand, another explanation is that that person has used the services of a lot of service providers who are giving the same kind of services. That person has found a major difference in service, convenience, quality and so forth. Thus, that person has found this service provider that can be trusted and relied upon(Lai, 2015).

Whereas, one more possibility is that the person has developed very strong emotional ties with certain service providers. As a result, the brand effect is created which develop great commitment among the customer in the form of attitudinal loyalty. It also develops willingness among the customers not only to re-use the services of a certain service provider, but that person is also willing to pay more price for using those services from that specific service provider. Furthermore, the frequency of using that service from a certain service provider is also increased by the loyal customer(Nawaz, Jiang, Alam, & Nawaz, 2020). Thus, the sales of that service provider are increased.

H1: Product Establishment significantly affects Customer Loyalty.

Advertisement; Product establishment& Customer loyalty

Organizations conduct advertisements more and more with the help of multiple sources including social media, mass media, TV, radio and printing machine. We are exposed to a number of TV ads when are watching tv with our families, friends or someone else. Even when are walking and passing through the streets we go through a number of different billboards. In these conditions, we are exposed to the advertisement which has become important and necessary part of our lives. It is important for the organizations that people who are exposed to advertisements must perceive positive regarding the firm, they must learn it, memorize it and act accordingly(Frolova, 2014).

The experience of any product is created because expectations are caused by the advertisement. Marketers of the organizations in the service industry try to fulfil the customers’ needs through advertisements regarding service utilization. The main stage of motivation for the consumers in the service industry is to determine the motivation. It is also important to describe the motivation in the service sector which is very difficult(Dwivedi et al., 2021).
Information is required to the customers who are working in the organization as the directors to make suitable decisions regarding the organization. These kinds of employees most of the time understand the unique benefits of services and products that are being offered by the organization. Therefore, it is easy for them to develop the content of the ad for their organization. A number of scholars assessed the effect of advertisement on customer loyalty and found a positive relationship among them (Rahi, Ammara, & Qazi, 2021).

In the same context, another study was conducted that compared the usefulness of advertisement on the internet and its effect on the customers working in France and the USA. This study recommends that customers should be treated in different ways to make them loyal customers (Ariaei Monfared, 2015). It is key to note that advertisement plays a very important role in the improvement and development of the organization as well. It is because advertisement plays a very key role in the establishment of a product. Therefore, the attitude of the people is also altered because of any kind of advertisement. Therefore, there are a number of studies conducted to assess the relationship between customers loyalty and advertisement (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

As mentioned earlier that a number of empirical researches are conducted to assess the relationship between advertisement and customer loyalty. In this regard, the research has pointed out that advertisements created by the organization can help it in making a profit and developing the product. The organization needs to develop a strong message through advertisement because there is very tough competition in the local and international markets. Researchers also believed that customers are motivated to buy any product once they are exposed to any advertisement on a long-run basis. Moreover, customers are also looking for advertisements because they are looking for the best product. They believe that they can find a reliable product through advertisement (Agbeja, Adelakun, & Akinyemi, 2015).

H2: Advertisement significantly affects the product establishment.

**Brand awareness; Product establishment & Customer loyalty**

The establishment of products and the loyalty of customers both have an impact on brand awareness. The most important determinants of commitment as well as customer loyalty as reported by the researchers include brand awareness. It has similarities and consistency with the concept of relationship or one to one marketing (Ramachandran & Balasubramanian, 2020).

Organizations gain commitment of customers or customers loyalty through the brand awareness through the establishment of products because exchange relationship is created among the organization and customer which is valued highly by the stakeholders (Morgan and Hunt 1994). As loyalty is defined by the researchers as the regular desire of the organization to develop and maintain long term relationships with the customers. Therefore, commitment or loyalty is the regular as well as ongoing process to maintain valued relationships with the important customers of the organization. Researchers reported that in any business, product establishment has a positive effect on the relationship with their customers. Therefore, for the development of loyalty among the customers, it is key that organizations should focus on their product establishment. In this way, they can develop and evoke a high level of commitment among the customers (Bricci et al., 2016).
To establish and maintain the long-term brand relationship with the customers, it is key that organizations focus on determinants that can affect the customers' emotions which will lead to the development of commitment and loyalty among the customers. In this regard, scholars suggested that there is a positive association between the benefits that are provided to the customers and the loyalty of customers. Particularly, affective attachment is the key in the environment which is very uncertain. Therefore, there exists a positive relationship between the emotions of the customers and customer loyalty (Zhang et al., 2020).

The products or services which provide affection, joy, and happiness to the customers always have more loyalty and purchase by the customers. The price of the product can be a reason for which the customers may not purchase the product which they love. Generally, the product or service that will be having a high level of affection will be established more. As a result, customers will purchase more and will show high level of attitudinal loyalty as well (Kuleh, 2016). In this regard, the role of awareness of any brand cannot be neglected by the decision-makers of the organization. If there is a high level of awareness of the product, there is a high prediction that the product will be successful. Any organization can establish the product through brand awareness. Therefore, organizations must try to focus on the concept of product awareness among the customers. Moreover, scholars also pointed that customers who are aware of the product plays important role in the establishment of the product and services among the customers (Bougenville & Ruswanti, 2017; Huang & Sarigöllü, 2014).

H3: Brand awareness affects the product establishment.

Sales promotion; Product establishment & Customer loyalty

Scholars mentioned that sales promotion is the action of the marketer that has focused on the marketing that has a direct influence on the customer behaviour who are associated with the customers. It shows that sales promotion is the technique that is adopted by the organization to affect the behaviour of the customers and increase the sales of the product or services. In other words, sales promotion is dependent upon a number of different tools dependent upon the short-term incentives to stimulate purchase among the customers (Freeman & Glazer, 2015).

According to the above statement, the main goal of sales promotion is to develop short term sales in the market and focus is on short-term incentives. For the effective product or service establishment, these kinds of tools are being used by organizations on the regular basis in every kind of industry. The sales promotion provided by the organization to the customer can use monetary as well as non-monetary benefits. In this way, customers get hedonic benefits from the organization by using the product or utilizing the services. Such things may provide utranian benefits as well to the customers as well. The utranian benefits are referred to as saving cost, saving time, convenience shopping, and quality shopping and time (Okoye-Chine, 2021).

On the other hand, hedonic benefits are referred to as self-esteem, intrinsic stimulation, entertainment, exploration and value expression. Researchers have mentioned that promotion in the form of monetary benefits are the incentives that are transactional in nature and based on the incentives. In this kind of promotion immediate reward is provided to the customers which are utilized by the customers. Whereas, hedonic benefits are provided through non-monetary promotion. Thus, two different kinds of customer loyalty are developed by the organizations in
the form of loyal customers who are hardcore and brand switchers (Crespo-Almendros, Del Barrio-García, & Alcántara-Pilar, 2015).

Scholars have mentioned that repeat purchases of the product or service of the organization provide profit to the firm on a long-run basis. Commitment of the consumer is mainly connected to the repeat purchase of the organization. Whereas, for the repeat purchase of the product, commitment among the current customers of the organization is the key. Therefore, the decision-makers of the organization must focus on the development of marketing programs that are focused on the development of loyalty among customers by reinforcing the repeat purchase among them (Nagar, 2009). One important part of sales promotion is to develop repurchases among the customers but also to develop loyalty among the customer. Thus, the behaviour of the customers is highly affected by the sales promotion techniques of the organization (Vasić, Kilibarda, & Kaurin, 2019).

The consumer purchase decision is largely affected by the sales promotion technique adopted by the organization. It can affect the quantity, purchase time, price sensitivity of the customers and choice of the product or service. Whereas, sales promotion can affect purchase behaviour and develop customer loyalty as well. A number of past studies have focused on the impact of sales promotion on customer choice at the time when they are offered to the customers regardless of the type of sales promotion. Therefore, the relationship among these variables is widely discussed in past studies (Santini, Sampaio, Perin, Espartel, & Ladeira, 2015).

The loyal customer of any product or service will do repeat purchases of that particular service or product irrespective of whatever the price is being charged by the organization. One can say that the loyal customer is less sensitive to the price being charged by the organization. On the other hand, the customers who are switchers tend to switch brands when a product or service is unable to satisfy their needs. There are a number of factors that affect the decision of the customer to be a switcher or to be loyal. These factors include a promotion, service quality, price and product quality (Ramachandran & Balasubramanian, 2020).

To create loyalty among the customers, the sales promotion technique plays a very important role. It is because organizations not only gain the attention of the customers through sales promotion but also encourage them to purchase the product by providing them incentives. Past studies have reported the mixed result of sales promotion on the behaviour of the customer. Studies have revealed that sales promotion technique plays an important role to create identify loyal customers and brand switchers among the customers. Whereas, there are very few studies that have explored and compared among non-loyal and loyal customers (Fam et al., 2019). Therefore, organizations can use sales promotion as a tool to affect switchers and loyal customers.

H4: Sales promotion significantly affects the product establishment.

For mediation relationship of product establishment, the following hypotheses are developed

H5: Product establishment mediates the effect of advertisement on the brand loyalty
H6: Product establishment mediates the relationship between sales promotion and customer loyalty.

H7: Product establishment mediates the effect of Brand awareness on customer loyalty.

3.0 Research Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative research methodology to assess the relationship among the customer loyalty and other mentioned variables of the study. The data was collected from farmers of the Don Manora sub-district Samut Songkhram Province. For this purpose, cross-sectional data were collected from the respondents of the present study. The questionnaire was developed in the form of a Likert 5 scale to collect the data from the respondents. On this scale 5 represent strongly agreed by the respondent, 1 represent strongly disagreed and 3 shows the neutral opinion of the respondents.

For the collection of data, a convenience sampling technique was adopted by the researcher. This technique was adopted because it was the most appropriate technique to collect one to one data face from customers. For this purpose, data was distributed among 412 respondents. The usable questionnaire was received back in total were 296. The usable response rate was 71.8%. For the analysis of the gathered data, the study employed SPSS for the preliminary analysis and PLS 3 for the assessment of proposed hypotheses developed in the above section.

Theoretical Framework

The following framework is developed from the above-reviewed literature. Advertisement, branding and sales promotion are the independent variables. Product establishment is the mediating variable and customer loyalty is the dependent construct of current research.

Figure 1. Research Framework

4.0 Analysis Results

This study used PLS-SEM for the analysis of the data. The first step under PLS is known as the measurement model. Under the measurement model Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics (2009) has recommended assessing the values of CR and Cronbach Alpha. Under this criterion, the acceptable value of CR and composite reliability must be more than 0.70. In the latter half of the measurement model, this study assessed discriminant validity through HTMT ratio and Fornell
and Larcker (1980) criteria. Later, based upon the recommendations of Hult et al. (2018) this study assessed the values of Predictive relevance, testing hypothesis and assessment of variance.

Figure 2. Measurement Model

As mentioned earlier that the analysis of this study was carried out through PLS software as recommended by Ringle, Da Silva, and Bido (2015). The initial step of PLS is the measurement model which is used to investigate and to confirm the questionnaires and their factors. Moreover, the reliability of their items is also tested in the measurement model. Later the bootstrapping procedure was used with 5000 subsamples on 312 cases (Sarstedt, Hair, Ringle, Thiele, & Gudergan, 2016). In this procedure measurement of AVE, composite reliability, Cronbach Alpha and factor loading are involved.

Table 1 below and figure 2 also represents the factor loading of the present study. According to Sarstedt et al. (2016), the items having loading more than 0.60 must be retained. This criterion is fulfilled in the present study.

Table 1: Factor Loading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>BR</th>
<th>CL</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>SP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD1</td>
<td>0.899</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AD2</td>
<td>0.879</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD3</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.932</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.928</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.911</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CL1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.916</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.895</td>
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</table>
The next phase is to assess the reliability and validity of the data. For this purpose, Fornell and Larcker (1980) proposed that the value of AVE must be more than 0.50. Moreover, the value of CR and Cronbach Alpha must also be more than 0.70 (Ab Hamid, Sami, & Sidek, 2017). According to the values of table 2, all the values of AVE, Cronbach Alpha and CR are more than the threshold values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Reliability and Validity</th>
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<td>CL</td>
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</table>

After the assessment of convergent validity in the present model of the study, discriminant validity must be assessed. For this purpose, HTMT criteria and Fornell and Larcker (1980) were adopted in the present study. According to Fornell and Larcker (1980) criteria, the square root of AVE of the variable must be more than the correlation of remaining variables Ringle et al. (2015). Table 3 shows that the present criteria are fulfilled in the present study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Fornell and Larker (1982)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AD</td>
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</table>
After confirming Fornell and Larcker (1980) criteria, the next phase is to assess the discriminant validity through HTMT. Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) proposed to use HTMT criteria as it overcomes the weaknesses of Fornell and Larcker (1980) criteria. In this regard, few studies proposed the threshold value must be less than 0.90, whereas, some other proposed a value less than 0.85. According to the HTMT values mentioned in the table below, the threshold figure is fulfilled in the present study.

**Table 4: HTMT**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>AD</th>
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<th>CL</th>
<th>PE</th>
<th>SP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>0.292</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>0.605</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>0.388</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td>0.620</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>0.388</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td>0.612</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next phase is to assess the SEM through the structural model after the measurement of the measurement model. Bootstrapping procedure is used in the present study to assess the relationship among the proposed direct as well as indirect hypothesis.

**Figure 3. Structural Model**

Table 5 and 6 below shows the value of direct as well as the indirect hypothesis of the present study.

**Table 5: Direct Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HYP</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T St</th>
<th>P Values</th>
<th>Decision</th>
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</table>
Table 6: Mediation Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HYP</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>T Statistics</th>
<th>P Values</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>AD -&gt; PE -&gt; CL</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>2.916</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>SP -&gt; PE -&gt; CL</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>2.486</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7</td>
<td>BR -&gt; PE -&gt; CL</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>5.164</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the proposed hypotheses having $t$ values of more than 1.645 are supported. Whereas the rest of the hypotheses are not supported. As per the values, none of the proposed hypotheses is rejected. Later as part of the structural model, values of $R^2$ is assessed as recommended by Cohen, Cimbolic, Armeli, and Hettler (1998). According to the given criteria by Chin (1998) the $R^2$ value of 0.09 is considered as low, 0.13 as medium and 0.26 as the high. The value of the $R^2$ of the present study is mentioned in the table below. According to the values of $R^2$ in the table below, they are substantial.

Table 7: R Square

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>0.339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>0.429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above-mentioned values, CL and PE are affected 42.9% and 33.9% by the independent variables of the present study.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The basic aim of this study was to promote suitable plant varieties among the residents of the Don Manora Sub-district Samut Songkhram. For this purpose, the present study assessed the relationship between advertisement, sales promotion, branding, product establishment and loyalty. The gathered data was assessed using PLS-SEM. The findings of the present study revealed that the management of these villages should focus on the advertisement strategy. In this way, the people of these villages will get information regarding the plants and will be established among the people. Therefore, H1 proposed is supported with (Beta= 0.583, $t$=12.845). Later, the H2 proposed of the present study is also supported with (Beta=0.166, $t$=3.053). Moreover, H3 proposed in the present study is supported as well with (Beta= 0.418, $t$=5.921). These results show that the decision-makers should develop branding strategies for the plants that need to be promoted. As well results show that the product established in the village of plants will later turn the people into loyal users of those plants. In the end, the last direct proposed hypothesis is also supported with sales promotion strategies of plants playing important
role in product establishment (Beta= 0.203, t=2.85). All of these results are consistent with the findings of past studies like Schultz and Block (2012) and Luk and Yip, 2008.

The mediation hypothesis proposed in the present study is also supported by the findings of the present study. The findings reveal that product establishment mediates among advertisement, branding and sales promotion with (Beta= 0.097, t=2.916), (Beta=0.118, t= 2.486) and (Beta=0.243, t= 5.164).

There is the problem of the lack of promotion of plants in the Don Manora Sub-district Samut Songkhram village of Thailand. The findings of the present study show that the proper marketing strategies like sales promotion regarding the usage of plants can play an important role to promote the plants. On the other hand, advertisement strategies and proper branding of plants may also play an important role to promote the plants among the residents. The present study has a few loopholes and limitations as well. The present study should be conducted in developing countries like Nepal and Bhutan. On the other hand, sequential mediation with Word of mouth can be a good extension in this model. The findings of the present study can be helpful for the policymakers of Thailand to develop strategies by which they can promote the plants among villages.

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