

***A Community Market as Economic Foundation of Logistics Process Starting Point:
A Case Study of Community Market at Chachoengsao Municipal Stadium, Muang
District, Chachoengsao Province, Thailand***

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Abstract

A community market is the unique resource of economic rotation in the local community and is still well-accepted by the consumers among the growth of very big and highly competitive department stores. The study of the community market at Chachoengsao Municipality Stadium was conducted. The objectives of this study were 1) to study the context of the community market held in the area of Chachoengsao Municipal Stadium, 2) to study the levels of money spent on merchandise circulating through the community market, 3) to prepare a database regarding the market's direct effects on the community's economy, and 4) to study factors influencing the market's strengthening of the community. The research instruments were interviews with entrepreneurs/merchants and government officers. The data of income from merchandising was collected from the records of the Market Committee. The research subjects were 203 merchants at the community market in the area of Chachoengsao Municipal Stadium. The merchants consisted of permanent merchants and the agriculturalists selling organic agricultural products. The income from merchandising was 50 million baht per year; 40 million baht from permanent merchants of Community Enterprise Market, and 10 million baht from agriculturalists selling agricultural products. The selling point to make this community market very popular is the location in the community, convenient transportation, close to government offices, hospitals, and educational institutes. In addition, due to the good logistics, the consumers are satisfied with the fresh food and the price is reasonable, compared with the good quality.

Keyword: Community-Market/ Flee/Flea Market, Economic Foundation, Community Economics, Logistics.

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Introduction

The present researcher has studied a community market held in the area of Chachoengsao Municipal Stadium, which is located close to government offices, a hospital, educational institutes, shopping centers, and residences. As it is easy to access, many people go there to buy products, even though it is a traditional local open air market and not as comfortable and luxurious as a modern market or department store. Merchants bring their products from their own communities, in a total of 11 districts, to sell at the market. Typically, the products are laid on the ground or sold from temporary stalls, are packed back up when the market fair is over, and then the market place is cleared and transformed into an open area again, as usual. Within this community market, there are two discrete component markets, including the Community Enterprise Market, which has operated for more than 20 years, and the agricultural market, which started merchandising in December, 2014. These two component markets sell different kinds of products: the Community Enterprise Market sells a variety of consumer products, while the agricultural market consists of agriculturalist merchants selling their own chemical-free products, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as premium agricultural products. According to provincial policy, this market is monitored and supervised by the Provincial Administration Office, the Provincial Agricultural Extension Office, and the Provincial Public Health Office. Public health officers will randomly check the quality of these agricultural products. If chemical residues are found on their products twice, offending merchants will not be allowed to sell in this community market again. In fact, even before selling their agricultural products, merchants should submit them to the Provincial Public Health Office for checking. If they are found to be uncontaminated, they can then be sold at the market. All agriculturists selling in this market are selected by the Provincial Administration Office, and are given the logo "Chachoengsao High Safety Product" to certify that they sell high quality agricultural products. However, these standards are not emphasized for the consumer products in the Community Enterprise Market. Merchandise is available at the market fair three days per week, on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, from 5 a.m. to 11 a.m. Both component markets have their own committees that are responsible for management. The term of service for the Community Enterprise Market Committee is two years, whereas it is only one year for the agricultural market committee. New elections are held when their respective members' terms end.

Materials and Methods

The qualitative research used in this study was field work, which had four objectives: 1) to study the context of the community market held in the area of Chachoengsao Municipal Stadium, 2) to study the levels of money spent on merchandise circulating through the community market, 3) to prepare a database regarding the market's direct effects on the community's economy, and 4) to study factors influencing the market's strengthening of the community. The research subjects were officials of government agencies concerned with the promotion and care of the community market held in the area of Chachoengsao Municipal Stadium and entrepreneurs/merchants from the two component markets: the Community Enterprise Market and the agricultural market, both held in the area of Chachoengsao Municipal Stadium. The research sample was comprised of 10 officials from concerned government agencies, 149 merchants from the Community Enterprise Market, and 54 merchants from the agricultural market.

This field research was conducted according to the methodology of qualitative research, which emphasizes research flexibility. It is believed that the data found during research results in part from the interaction between researchers and their studied phenomenon, as well as the researchers' recollections of their experiences, both past and present. Beginning with data collection using the Holistic Approach, a researcher is the key instrument used to collect data without bias and to realize the importance of informants' opinions and perspectives (Chai Podhisita, 2011). The data collection was planned to be accomplished in several periods to help in understanding the system and process of merchandising in both markets. A device for recording needed to be prepared in advance: a mobile phone was used for taking photos and voice recordings, as well as field work notes. During non-participatory observation, the researcher acted as an outsider who frequently went to buy products at both markets, in order to become familiar to the merchants. The researcher collected data, took field work notes, recorded the amounts of merchants, committee members of both markets, officials, and other people. Also recorded were observations of the products and atmosphere of this market place. During data collection, the researcher analyzed the data without consideration of process separation. In order to examine data reliability, the researcher interviewed merchants and compared this data with that which was recorded in the Products Selling Record, Rental Fee Collecting Record, and Expenses for Market Management Record reports. As for the statistics used for data analysis, descriptive statistics were used for analyzing the context of the community market, as well as income from selling products. Content analysis was used for analyzing data from the interviews, and literature review of the research and related documents was also implemented.

Results

The following are observations regarding the context of the community market held in the area of Chachoengsao Community Stadium: the market fair was available three days per week, on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, from 5 a.m. to 11 a.m. There were two discrete component markets, with 203 merchants in the Community Enterprise Market (73.40%), and 54 merchants in the agricultural market (26.60%). The aggregate group of merchants from both markets included females (70.44%), and males (29.56%). The largest percentage of the merchants graduates of primary schools (44.03%), compared with those from high schools (33.96%) and those who graduated with a bachelor's degree or higher (22.01%). The distinguishing feature of the agricultural market was that it sold chemical-free products, which were randomly checked for chemical residues by concerned government agencies including the Provincial Public Health Office. At the agricultural market, the products which were sold the most were fresh fruits and hydroponic vegetables (46.30%), organic rice (11.11%), and the combination of raw and ripe mangoes as well as coconuts (7.41%), respectively. In terms of the levels of money spent on merchandise circulating through both markets, the overall grand total of sales was about 50 million baht. The total of sales for the Community Enterprise Market was higher than the total of sales for the agricultural market. At the Community Enterprise Market, the average monthly total of sales was about 3.33 million baht, and the overall total of sales for the year was about 40 million baht. At the agricultural market, the average monthly total of sales was about 900,000 baht, and the overall total of sales for the year was about 10 million baht. This result was accounted from the starting point of the logistic process, in that products from their sources had the ability to be distributed to

consumers rapidly. In addition, the products were fresh, good quality, and had a quality assurance mark. This resulted in satisfied consumers, and consequently, the community in each district was able to profit from sales of the merchandise. In terms of preparing a database regarding the market's direct effects on the community's economy, a database was created from lists of the names of 203 merchants from the two markets: 149 merchants from the Community Enterprise Market, and 54 merchants from the agricultural market, which identifies each merchant's address, contact number, sex, age, level of education, and type of products sold. Regarding factors influencing the market's strengthening of the community, there were six factors: 1) people in the community should have jobs, income, and good health, 2) merchants should be patient, enthusiastic, and adaptable to provide a variety of competitive products for customers' satisfaction, 3) products sold should be fresh, clean, good quality, and kept to the community standards, and 4) merchants should be honest and friendly salespeople.

Discussion

The products sold in this community market are essentially very fresh. The merchants had stated that fruits and vegetables were required to be picked in the evenings and cleaned to be ready for selling the following mornings. This degree of garden fresh produce is rarely found in department stores or general markets. In addition, in this community market, consumers are allowed to negotiate lower prices acceptable to both parties. As the merchants do not need to contact a middleman, they are able to reduce a price and give you more for free. In this market, family growers come to sell the products themselves; therefore, laborers are not needed. Furthermore, the elderly are given opportunities to make Thai desserts, which are products of time-consuming processes and seldom found in general markets. By involvement of the elderly, people can witness their value as they live their lives in meaningful ways, and, consequently, the next generation can also absorb Thai culture. The existence of this market is supported by the concerned government agencies' provision of the open-air market fair location. Their objectives in doing this are to give product makers the chance to meet customers while eliminating contact with middle-men. In addition to the quality of products, the products also come from a variety of localities in each season and are carefully selected in each district. This is also part of the charm of this place that we hardly ever find in department stores or general markets, and is consistent with Robinson (2000), who stated that a market fair becomes a cultural place which is able to express a community's identity, as well as the responsiveness between the society and the economy. Compared to activities of people in the conventional economic system, which is connected in every society, the behaviors found in a traditional market are derived from the local culture (Naruphon Duangwiset, 2008). Additionally, a market fair is also an inventive place for tourism and consumption (Rainab Sriaremhah, 2012), which conforms to Somrak Chaisingkananon's research (2006), which found that the activity of exchange has existed along with human society for a long time because humans cannot produce all things independently. The things normally exchanged are items concerning their basic necessities. A market is not only a place for exchanging products or services, but also has social, cultural, and economic meanings, which cannot be separated from each other. It is also a place of life, for the social interaction of people in various interesting patterns. If no one participated in its activities, a market would be just an empty space. Therefore, a community market is a place to create a cyclical economy, in a market fair that

influences the larger economy of a concerned community, and should be considered as a starting point of the logistic process.

Conclusion

In the future, the markets' products may be distributed to a wider area, from the local level on up to the provincial level, the national level, and even the international level. An information center should be created for sharing the data of production volume along with the amount of customers' demand, in order to assist distribution of products in large quantities to expected areas. In this way, it would be truly beneficial for agriculturalists and the community enterprise. However, the cost of transportation would also need to be considered. According to the sufficiency economy, merchandising in localities should be done to reduce the cost of transportation, but if there are surplus products, these could be distributed to other areas for sales. Therefore, the shelf-life of products should be prolonged, and better food-packaging should be developed to maintain the quality of products during delivery. In addition, information technology should be implemented to spread news thoroughly and rapidly to each market at the provincial level. Consequently, there are various fields to be developed, including agriculturalists' education, productivity, transportation for distribution, production, marketing, etc. Agriculturalists should follow innovative news. For example, presently, a freshpack, which is called Active Pak™, has been invented, by the Inno-freshpack research team, National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), and instructors at Kasetsart University, to prolong the shelf-life and maintain the nutrients of fresh products for customer satisfaction (Active Pak™, 2016, pp. 50-51).

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