Prediction Of Market Situation For Studying Elder Consumers' Health Care Product Usage Behaviors In Medical Clinics In Thailand

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Abstract

This research aims to study older consumers' health care product and service usage behavior in medical clinics in Thailand, applying prediction of market situation as an analysis frame. The goals of this research are 1) Studying older consumers' health care product and service usage behavior in medical clinics in Thailand and 2) Forecasting market situation in order to develop proper marketing strategies for elderly medical clinics in Thailand. The methodology of this research is applying quantitative research methods to forecast marketing situation, using a sampling group, which is the older population living in urban areas of Thailand, including Bangkok and metropolitan area and urban areas in provinces with high rate of older population, the total number of the samples is 400 (Alpha 0.05); descriptive statistics, Pearson product – moment correlation coefficient inferential statistics as well as Pearson's chi squared test statistical procedures are also applied in this research.

The results showed that older consumers in medical clinics in Thailand decide to purchase or consume the products by the principles of market situation prediction that establishes cause-effect relationship. Older consumers' purchase decision is chiefly influenced by health factors and logical factors, other less influential factors are emotional factors and social factors while economy factors have the least influence. If the entrepreneurs plan to maintain or expand elderly health care product markets, they should develop proper marketing strategies, emphasizing "Product" and "Place" factors.

Keywords: Market situation, elder consumer, health care product

Introduction

Thailand is currently facing demographic change, leading to the country becoming aging society. The 2012 Survey of Older Persons in Thailand conducted by National Statistical Office of Thailand showed that older people are accounting for approximately 12% of the country's population (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2013). National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand has also projected the median age of population in Thailand in 2000 – 2030 and the projection indicated that in 20 years, the median age of population in Thailand will be reaching 40, which means half of the population is age 40 and over, while the other half is under age 40. The aforementioned situation showed that the number of older persons in Thailand is constantly accelerating, as a result of technology advancement, education development and heath care system improvement. (National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand, 2013)

The aging demographic trend has various impacts on Thailand's social dimensions, for examples, impact on productivity of labor intensive industry sectors, impact on the government's social pensions management, impact on elderly citizen's wellness management as well as impact on measures, schemes and plans which could influence marketing strategies of business sectors (Suvinee Wivatvanit, 2012). However, the country's social management has been compelled to prepare for such situation for over a decade, and the government and private sectors have readily formulated measures to address the challenges posed by aging population in Thailand. The preparation is based on 3 strategies: well-being of older persons, requirements of the government and private resources for services that meet the needs of the older persons, and requirements of communities' care system for elderly. (Teerapol Toupunpanont, 2013)

Today, elderly health care trends are being applied as a measure for improving the quality of life of older persons and various healthy activities are being promoted to improve physical and mental wellness of the elderly. Since more and more older persons are facing health problems, due to lack of exercise, tension caused by society, family and economy problems as well as food safety problems, the government therefore need to encourage people to promote health and prevent illnesses by consuming healthy foods, use safe, healthy, chemical-free and environmental-friendly products, as well as exercise on regular basis. The aim is to help aging people maintain a good quality of life, for the purpose that the government would not need to place a massive budget to care for the older population. Medical clinics are considered

to be one of the instruments for issuing health advices and distributing health care products for the elderly, apart from the health products available in department stores and supermarkets. This will encourage the older consumers to have more confident in clinics' health advice services. (Danai Theewanda, and Malulee Seanjai, 2013)

Market situation of older consumers' health care product and service usage behavior in medical clinics in Thailand has become a major issue for entrepreneurs, especially those in medical clinic business. For the reason that elderly products and various aids to daily living for the elderly as well as elderly health care products like herbal supplements and vitamin supplements will be in high demand in the future (Apisit Chattananont, 2013). Thus, the study concerning main factors affecting the market situation analysis, also known as market situation prediction, will become a primary indicator for developing proper marketing strategies for the increasing number of older consumers who tends to purchase health care products through medical clinics' service. The entrepreneurs may apply this data to develop proper marketing strategies, fulfilling the product and service demand of older population in Thailand.

Considering aforementioned scenario, our research team is thus interested in studying the older consumers' health care product and service usage behaviors in medical clinics in Thailand. We planned to apply the principles of market situation prediction as our analysis frame, aiming to achieve 2 main goals: 1) Studying the older consumers' health care product and service usage behaviors in medical clinics in Thailand. 2) Forecasting market situation in order to develop proper marketing strategies for elderly medical clinics in Thailand. The frame of our research is illustrated in Figure 1.
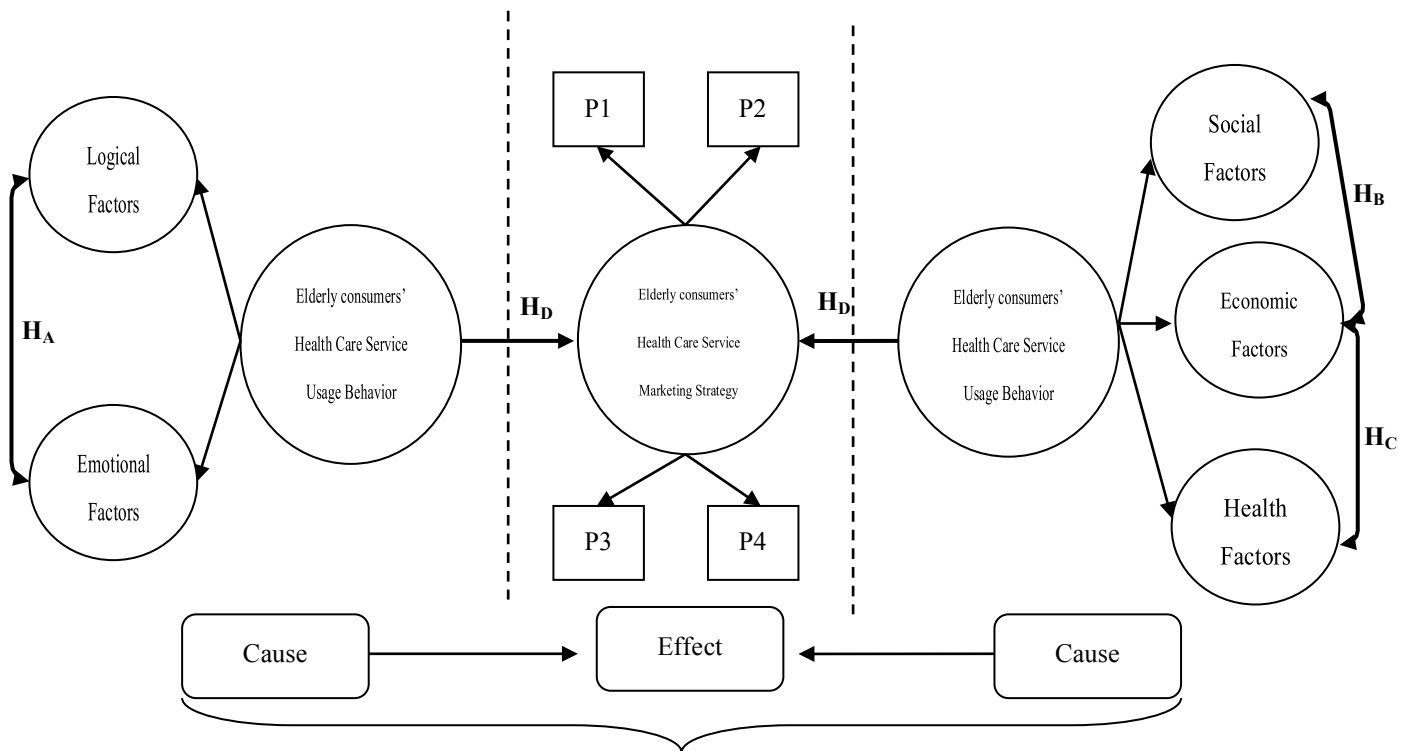
Prediction of Market Situation

Figure 1: Frame of the Research

Research Methodology

In this research, the research team applies quantitative research methods to analyze older consumers' health care product and service usage behaviors in medical clinics in Thailand, and then predicts the market situation using the sampling group. The sampling frame is the older population living in urban areas of Thailand, including Bangkok and metropolitan area and urban areas in the provinces with high rate of elderly population, namely capital district (Amphoe Mueang) of Chiang Mai Province, capital district of Khon Kaen Province, capital district of Surat Thani Province, and capital district of Phetchaburi Province. In analyzing sampling group, we apply the practices of probability sampling and stratified sampling (Thanin Silpjaru, 2007), using 400 samples (Alpha 0.05) (Taro Yamane, 1970; p.886 cited inYuth Kaivarn, 2006; p. 105 – 106). The research tools includes questionnaire regarding older consumers' health care product and service usage behaviors in medical clinics and elderly products marketing strategies based on 4Ps – Product, Price, Place, Promotion (Siriwan Serirath et al., 2009).

Statistics applied in the research are descriptive statistics which includes frequency,

percentage and standard deviation and inferential statistics which includes Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient variables relationship test (Puangratana Taweeratana., 2000) for hypothesis test for relationships between variables namely logical factors and emotional factors, social factors and economy factors, health factors and economy factors as well as Pearson's chi squared test statistical procedures (Apinant Jantanee, 2006; p. 90 – 92) for testing the influences of marketing strategies on older consumers' health care service usage behavior in medical clinics.

Conclusion

Part I, the characteristics of older consumers purchasing health care products in medical clinics are as following: The majority of the sampling group are female, with total number of 222 (55.50%); 198 are aged between 60 to 64 (49.50%); 207 are graduated with bachelor's degree (51.80%); 152 have been a government officer before their retirement (38.00%); 157 have monthly income of 10,001 – 20,000 THB (39.30%); 335 are married (83.80%); 387 are Buddhist (96.80%); 166 are vegetarian (41.50%); 220 consume healthy foods in order to maintain their physical wellness (55.00%); 291 are influenced by individual factors when making health care decision (72.80%).

Part II, Hypothesis testing for relationships between two variables, logical factors and emotional factors (H_A), (Tanyamas Woonsiri, 2011), see Figure 2.

(r) : 0.737**
P-value: .000
N : 400, **Correlation sig. at
0.01 level : Positive Correlations

H_A: Accept to Alternative hypothesis (P-value < Alpha 0.05)
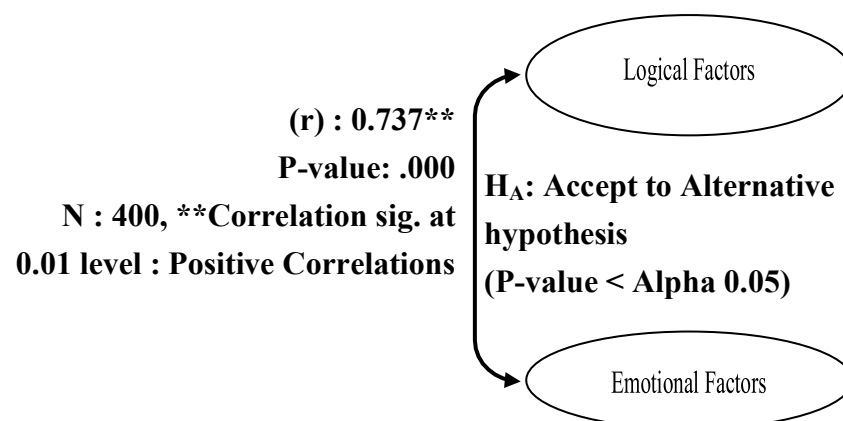
Logical Factors

Emotional Factors

Figure 2: Result of Statistical Test for Relationships between Two Variables, Logical Factors and Emotional Factors.

Part III, Hypothesis testing for relationships between Two variables, social factors and economic factors (H_B), (Kown & Suh, 2004), see Figure 3.

(r) : 0.782**
P-value: .000
N : 400, **Correlation sig. at
0.01 level : Positive
Correlations at Medium.

Social Factors

Economic Factors

H_B: Accept to Alternative
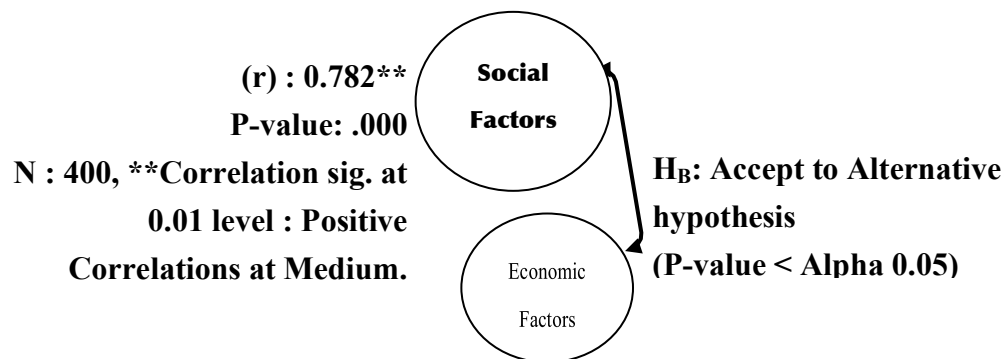**hypothesis**
(P-value < Alpha 0.05)

Figure 3: Result of Statistical Test for Relationships between Two Variables, Social Factors and Economic Factors.

Part IV, Hypothesis testing for relationships between two variables, health factors and economic factors (H_C), (Capps & Schmitz, 1991), see Figure 4.
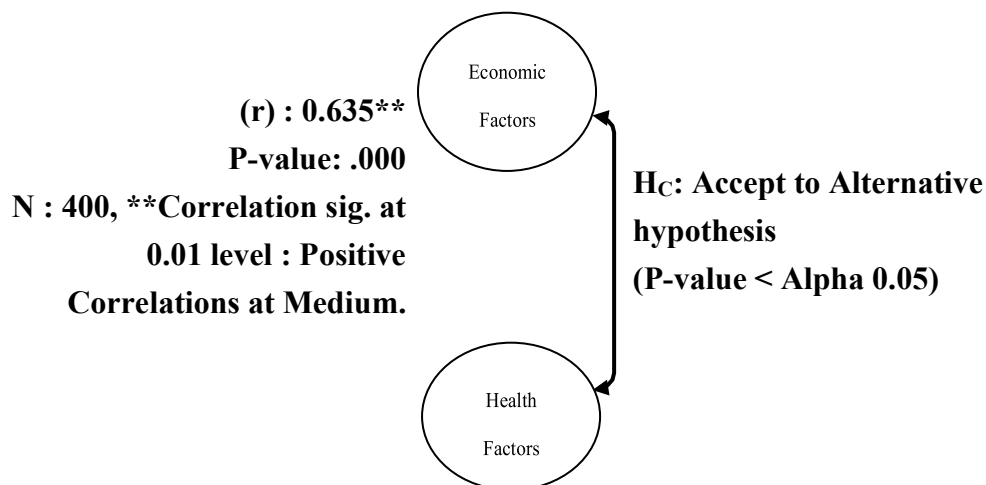
Economic Factors

(r) : 0.635**
P-value: .000
N : 400, **Correlation sig. at
0.01 level : Positive
Correlations at Medium.

H_C: Accept to Alternative
hypothesis
(P-value < Alpha 0.05)

Health Factors

Figure 4: Result of Statistical Test for Relationships between Two Variables, Health Factors and Economic Factors.

Part V, Test for the influences of marketing strategies on older consumers' health care product and service usage behavior in medical clinics (H_D) (Somkiat Rungnirattisai, 2011), see Figure

H_D: Accept to Alternative hypothesis (P-value < Alpha 0.05)

H_D: Accept to Alternative hypothesis (P-value < Alpha 0.05)

Pro   Price

Purchase Decision
- Logical Factors
- Emotional Factors
-

Marketing Strategies of Health Care Service

Purchase Decision
- Social Factors
- Economic Factors
-

Place   Promo

Pearson Chi-Square (X^2) : 53.078
P-value: .000
N : 400

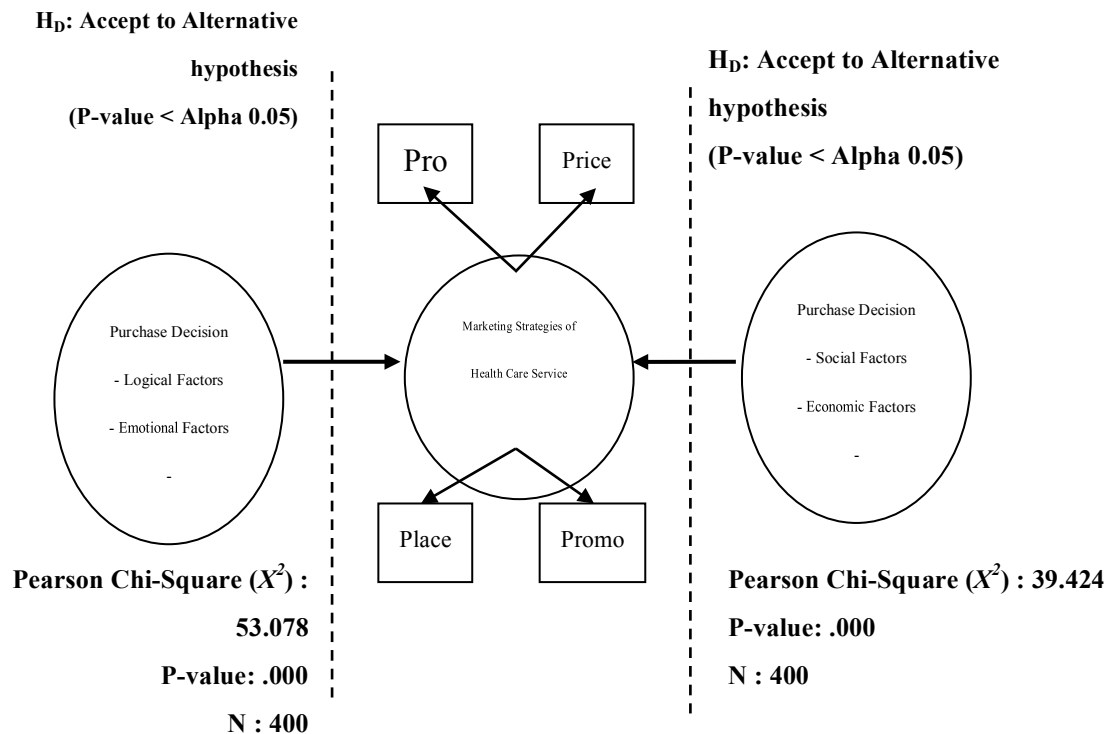Pearson Chi-Square (X^2) : 39.424
P-value: .000
N : 400

Figure 5: Result of the Statistical Test for the Influences of Marketing Strategies on Older Consumers' Health Care Product and Service Usage Behavior in Medical Clinics

Result and Discussion

The research of older consumers' health care service usage behaviors in medical clinics in Thailand concerns 5 kinds of product as following 1) Oral medication 2) Inhaled medication 3) Injection Medication 4) External medication e.g. cream, gel, ointment and 5) Suppository. Applying principles of market situation prediction, older consumers consider cause and effect before making purchase decision. The most common scenario is that the majority of older persons often have health problems; therefore they need to use services from medical clinics and purchase various health care products from the clinics in order to recover to health or alleviate illnesses. Hence, Thai elderly will purchase health care products only when their health are deteriorating or when they are suffer from personal health problems. Another scenario is that the consumers' friends or relatives persuade them to purchase health care products in medical clinics. When considering the factors that influence consumers' tendency to purchase health care products in medical clinics, the most important

factors turn out to be health factors and logical factors. Other less important factors are emotional factors and social factors, while the least important factors are economic factors. Therefore, if medical clinic entrepreneurs need to maintain or expand elderly health care products' market -- as the share of older population is unceasingly accelerating -- they need to develop marketing strategies that highlight "Product" factor, since effective products and fast medical services are the most important factors that influence older consumers' purchase decision. The factor of secondary importance is "Place". The distribution place must be clean and convenient, with sufficient space and good shelf displays that are managed to meet the physiological deficiencies of older consumers. "Price" and "Promotion", on the other hand, are not considered to be as important by older consumers when purchasing health care products in medical clinics. The reason is that the structure of health care product markets is rather close to the oligopoly market and the older consumers almost consider this kind of products to be a necessity-good; therefore, even when the price is high and no promotion is being offered, the consumers still regard it is necessary to acquire this kind of products.

Recommendation

The research showed that older consumers will start using services of medical clinics only when they have health problems, which means the decision-making factors of the Thai elderly are health factors and logical factors. Thus, all concerned parties, especially entrepreneurs, should focus on "Product" when they are developing their marketing strategies. The "Product" management needs to concentrate on manufacturing products that are effective and able to produce desired effect as well as providing fast medical service. Another important factor is "Place", the distribution place must be clean and convenient, with sufficient space and good shelf displays that are managed to meet the physiological deficiencies of older consumers.

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