

Participatory Action Research on Product Development of Seasoning Powder Production and Marketing in Yangloan Village, Kokphu Sub-district, Phuphan District, Sakonnakhon

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this Participatory Action Research (PAR) were to discover the needs and problems affecting production and marketing development of a seasoning powder product; to investigate guidelines for its development, production and marketing according to the needs of the networking community; and to evaluate the processes of planning, acting, observing and reflecting undertaken in its development and production. The target area was the Inpang Network at Yangloan village, Phuphan district, Sakonnakhon. The participants were four researchers, 10 local researchers and 20 key informants. The duration of the study was eight months. The results of the study indicated that the problems affecting the development of the seasoning powder occurred in its production and marketing stages. Therefore, there is a need to improve production by using more or better equipment in order to save energy in the stage of raw material preparation. Also, there is a need to seek more raw materials. The new product developed was an improved vegetarian seasoning powder and a new brand was created for its marketing development. A marketing channel was established via social media with the launch of the Yangloan webpage and a Facebook account for the product. Food recipes and demonstrations were uploaded to YouTube. Booths selling local-wisdom products were provided with public relations materials in the form of a big cut-out at the Kampoem intersection in Phupahan district, Sakonnakhon. A cut-out was also placed at the entrance of the enterprise's work premise. The local researchers were satisfied with

their participation in the product development process. The sales volume was significantly higher compared with that of the same period the previous year.

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INTRODUCTION

The results of a study on a new generation and local development from 2007 to 2010 (Vaseenonta, Chaochaikhong, & Khunwong, 2009) indicated how new generations may live successfully in local areas in many places of the Inpang network of Udonthani, Mukdaharn and Kalasin provinces. Especially in Sakonnakhon, the members of the Inpang network and the new generation living there have improved themselves. They have tried to create an economic foundation via community product development with local wisdom, local labour and local resources for sustainable development to stay on in the community. The Inpang network at Yangloan village at Kokphu sub-district, Phuphan district have applied local wisdom to create community products by blending sweet, oily and sour vegetables called seasoning powder or Phong Nua. It can be used in all recipes to add flavour to dishes, making them more delicious. The Inpang network community signified the possibility of improving the seasoning powder product with the participation of the new generation. They could use local community wisdom. However, the seasoning powder has faced many problems such as difficulty in procuring raw materials. This meant the powder was not sustainable and could not reach consumers. The standard of the raw materials and the acceptance of the product were additional problems. The

product is recognised only by people who are concerned about their health. It was believed that the product could be improved to extend demand as well as to improve its taste. Creating demand for the product was a goal of the people involved in this project. It is debatable if the seasoning powder will eventually be accepted by consumers and the market. If the product can generate a viable income, then its future will be stable. In terms of its benefits, consumption of this seasoning powder seems to have a positive effect on health. Sakonakhon Rajabhat University, as a university in the vicinity, took it upon itself to conduct Participatory Action Research to serve local needs for production development and to help the local community product gain marketing acceptance. This could lead to a fixed income for the community in the long run.

METHODOLOGY

Participatory Action Research was conducted by the people involved in producing and marketing the seasoning powder of the Inpang network. The concept of PAR as developed by Kemmis and McTaggart was applied in this study (Suwimon Wongwanit, 2007, p. 23). The processes were Plan, Act, Observe and Reflect.

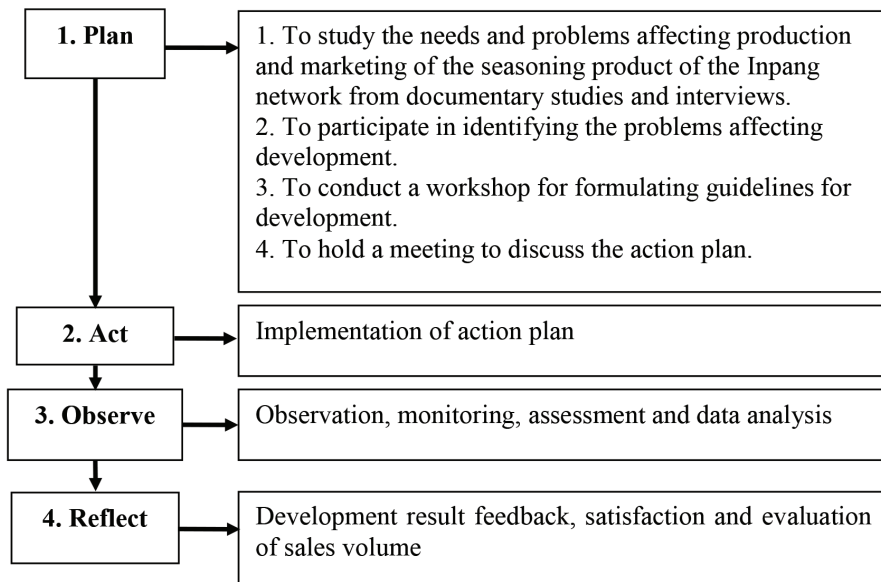


Fig.1: Methodological framework.

Conceptual Framework

This consisted of production and marketing development.

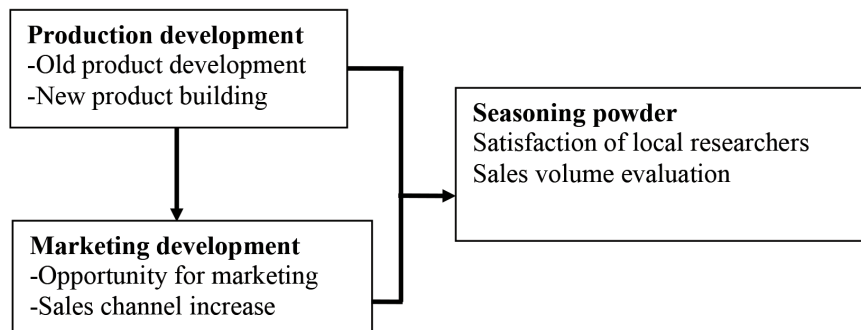


Fig.2: Conceptual framework.

Research Area

The target area was the Inpang network at Yangloan village, Kokphu sub-district, Phuphan district, Sakonnakorn.

Duration

The duration of the study was from October 2013 to May 2014, a period of eight months.

Participants

The participants were four researchers, 10 local researchers and 20 key informants.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to discover the needs and problems affecting

production and marketing development of a seasoning powder product; to investigate guidelines for its development, production and marketing according to the needs of the networking community; and to evaluate the processes of planning, acting, observing and reflecting undertaken in its development and production.

Expected Benefits of the Study

The following were the expected benefits of the study:

1. The seasoning powder of the Inpang network would be improved for production and marketing development.
2. The new generation who cooperated with locals in the product development of the Inpang network may live in the area.
3. The PAR process would be applied for improving the seasoning powder of the Inpang network.
4. Guidelines for improving the new product of the Inpang network would be provided.

RESULTS

The study of the needs and problems affecting the production and marketing development of the Inpang network indicated that the seasoning powder of Yangloan village, Kokphu sub-district, Phuphan District, Sakonnakorn was improved at different levels. The organisers and the leaders of the network needed

to improve the seasoning powder in its production and marketing stages to ensure its success in the future.

The following problems were detected: packaging was inadequate; the product needed acceptance building; and lack of knowledge of how to solve problems related to the production and marketing of the product. Problems related to the product were: maintenance of product quality; product acceptance building; and discovering the potential of the product.

Problems related to packaging were: the obviousness of the package and the image of the product. The marketing problems were: creating product acceptance and the sales channels. The problem concerning raw materials was possible insufficient local vegetables in the future. There was also a problem concerning availability of raw materials and another to do with lack of knowledge of the characteristics of the raw materials such as ageing.

The needs for development involved production and marketing development. Production improvement involved increasing production potential and new product development. Marketing improvement dealt with marketing channel increase and public relations.

The investigation of guidelines and directions for production and marketing development began with holding workshops. Production consisted of making provisions for saving energy in raw material preparation and seeking more raw materials. This could increase production and create a new vegetarian seasoning powder.

Marketing consisted of creating a new brand for the seasoning powder and increasing marketing channels. This could create a diverse and appealing brand. Diverse marketing channels could make sales convenient by taking advantage of rapid technological changes. Public relations consisted of placing big cut-outs and creating presence for the product through social media such as Facebook and YouTube, where videos of cooking demonstrations using the seasoning powder were uploaded.

Production development began with acquiring knowledge of vegetarian seasoning powders and then creating a

standard for one that was unique. A group of housewives sourced suitable areas for planting the raw materials and contacted the Inpang network members for more materials especially bananas for adding to the seasoning powder. Many new delicious dishes using the seasoning were added to the menu. The product was made to comply with the standards of the food and drug organisation. There was an increase in production of one raw material, sugar cane, with the use of a gliding machine. The gliding machine was sponsored by the Industrial Technology Faculty of Sakonnakhon Rajabhat University.



Fig.3: A crude gliding machine was given to the Yangloan Enterprise Seasoning Powder Housewives Group by the President of Sakonnakhon Rajabhat University.

Marketing development enabled an increase in sales channels. More sales booths were provided for local-wisdom products at the Isaan Monn Mung fair organised by Sakonnakhon Rajabhat University, Provincial Administration Organisation, Nakorn Sakonnakhon Municipality and a

number of educational institutions in the Northeastern region. The product sold by the group was 'Nua Vegetables Seasoning Powder'. Public relations using a webpage and Facebook was carried out to create brand recognition for the seasoning powder. New recipes and menus were presented

and demonstrated via YouTube to create demand among consumers. This could allow consumers to diversify their menus. Big cut-outs at the Kampoen intersection in Phuphan District, Sakonnakhon at the

entrance to the group’s work premise and at the intersection of the Student Development section at Sakonnakhon Rajabhat University were placed for propagandising the seasoning powder.



Fig.4: The new product brand of the housewives’ group at Yangloan Village.

Evaluation of the product development indicated the satisfaction of the local researchers with their participation in the project at this high level. There was

a significantly high number of purchase orders, leading to a higher sales volume compared with that of the same period the previous year.

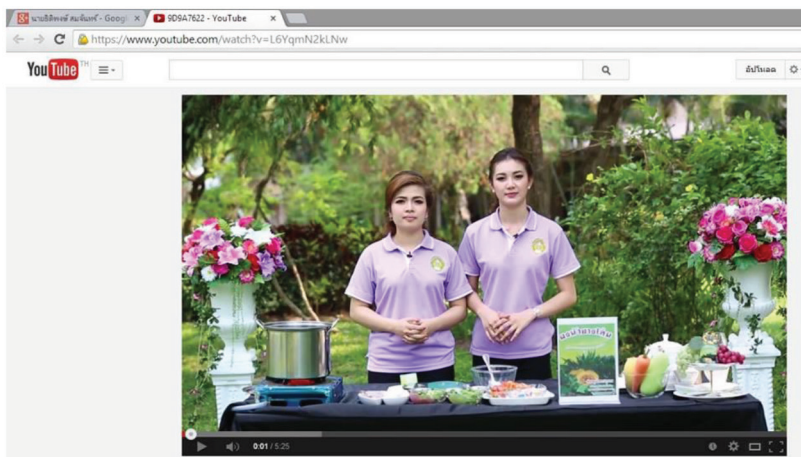


Fig.5: Food recipes and menu sets presented at the seasoning powder food demonstration.

DISCUSSION

The results of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) signified a high chance for growth of the seasoning powder if it continues to gain support. The following points are noted.

Firstly, the PAR was possible due to the collaboration between the researchers and their shared goals. The research team was aware of the need for mutual understanding and had to sacrifice their time in order to provide learning opportunities for one another. This PAR was a good opportunity for effective collaboration among the researchers, which was a good achievement. This outcome is supported by Somchai Chorsawai et al. (2003), who investigated the collaborative development process of a community of the potters in Kaeng sub-district, Muang district, Nakornsawan and reported that the community had benefitted from the PAR process that had used systematic learning. The researchers and the local researchers worked well together, treating one another with respect and fairness and keeping communication clear. This resulted in the appropriate product pattern for value addition in line with the processes of PAR. This brought mutual benefit to both sides and all the researchers were able to learn something of value; the researchers gained from participating in the research process while the local researchers gained from the exposure to proper product development. This mutual understanding allowed for good collaboration.

Secondly, the study exposed the problems related to the production and marketing of the seasoning powder and therefore, remedies could be designed. The problems unearthed had to do with product quality maintenance, product acceptance building and producing potential directions for future growth. Another problem was packaging, which needed improvement for a better presentation and image. The marketing problems revolved around product acceptance and product sales channels. Problems related to raw materials were the insufficient production of local vegetables, the materials not being ready for use and lacking knowledge of the characteristics of the vegetables such as when best to harvest them. Panutda Poonthonglang (2005, Abstract), who studied the development of mat weaving in Pragart village, Banragart sub-district, Bangbor district, Samutprakarn, also highlighted the lack of product knowledge, lack of skills for product improvement, low funds and ineffective management as obstacles to the growth of the cottage industry as a whole. In the case of the group that produced the seasoning powder, these problems were probably due to the fact that they just starting up their small business and had a long way to go in picking up skill, knowledge and experience. For such businesses at the initial point of start-up, more support is needed from the government and private sector for their future.

Thirdly, the investigation of the guidelines and directions for production and marketing development via the

workshop was beneficial for the local researchers. What they learnt was relevant to their real needs. Production needed to take into account the need to save energy for raw material preparation and more resources. This can increase production and create new vegetarian seasoning powders based on prior production knowledge. Rewat Suksikarn (2011) studied the development of shadow puppetry by the community of Pakphoon sub-district, Muang district, Nakhon Si Thammarat and highlighted the need for product improvement to be simplified while retaining the artistry of shadow puppet handicraft. The same applies in this case of a community's involvement in producing seasoning powder. This research also brought benefits to the community in the form of tangible product development. Therefore, this study of a community's real needs for product development does significantly meet the real needs of people.

Fourthly, the results of the study on marketing development indicated an increase in sales channels through sales booths for local-wisdom products. In addition, the main community enterprise product brand was provided via public relations through social media and Facebook. Food recipes and menu sets were presented and demonstrated through YouTube. Moreover, cut-outs were placed in many places as public relations tools to reach consumers, in line with Theeraphong Wasuntadilok's (2003) model for development, which studied the use of modern technology to promote silk and silk

product marketing in Bureeram. Modern technology connects people easily and conveniently, and therefore is an expedient marketing tool today.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several recommendations may be made based on the results of this study. Firstly, the group behind the production of the seasoning powder should plan for the continued improvement of the product to make it possible to reach a wider market and should ensure availability of sufficient raw materials for continued production. The group should learn how to use modern technology in order to be able to reach consumers directly. Secondly, educational institutions should support the efforts of small businesses to improve and market their products. It starts with the transfer of knowledge, implementation of ideas and monitoring of the work that is undertaken. Thirdly, government agencies at the local level should support small-enterprise groups by helping them with public relations. For instance, sales channels can be provided for these enterprises at community festivals.

Several recommendations are made for further study in this area. Firstly, the evaluation research should be long-term, with regular and adequate follow-up for sustainability. Secondly, comparison research should be conducted with other community enterprise groups. The successful groups should be studied as best practices for all to benefit from.

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