

**FOUR KEY FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE THAI PEOPLE TO
CONSUME SPORT NUTRITION PRODUCTS LESS THAN
PEOPLE IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**



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Wuttichai Chauthai

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WUTTICHAJ CHAUTHAI 5649156

M.M. (ENTREPRENEURSHIP MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASST. PROF. RANDALL SHANNON, PH.D. DR. POONPORN THAMSATITDEJ, PH.D. ASST. PROF. VICHITA RACTHAM, PH.D.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand Thai health conscious consumers, who live in Bangkok and actively exercise at fitness, towards purchasing and consuming behavior, which examined four key influencing factors including degree of consumer awareness, high price of products, difference in physical appearance preferences, and potential risk and side effects of sport nutrition products.

This research uses qualitative approach with total of 30 respondents by interviewing at fitness centers located within Bangkok district. The respondents divided into 4 groups including 20-29,30-39,40-49, and 50 above.

This study reveal that price of sport nutrition product have a strong association with customer buying decision. Moreover, degree of awareness towards sport nutrition products tends to have an issue with the consumers at the age 40 years old and above because the language barrier, and technological barrier. About physical appearance preferences, youngers tends to prioritize their sport nutrition product's objective as their physical appearance.

KEY WORDS: Sport Nutrition Product/ Health conscious/

31 Pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sport nutrition products including whey protein (bar and powder), pre-workout, post-workout, and other vitamins have been moving from niches markets of gyms and health stores to mass-market outlets around the world. With new ingredients, packaging designs and changing consumer behavior around the world, sport nutrition products are finding their way into supermarkets and convenience stores to serve higher consumer demand for healthy and convenient lifestyle solutions. Historically consumers of sport nutrition products have mostly been bodybuilders and athletes. However, nowadays, consumption toward sport nutrition products dramatically increased. Not only do bodybuilders and athletes consume such products anymore, but health conscious consumers also. After having been doing research and making an observation toward sport nutrition products consumption, I found out that values of consumption per household between developed and developing countries are really different. For those developed countries such as America, UK, Australia, or even countries in Europe, the values of consumption are much higher than those of developing countries as illustrated below in Figure 1.1.

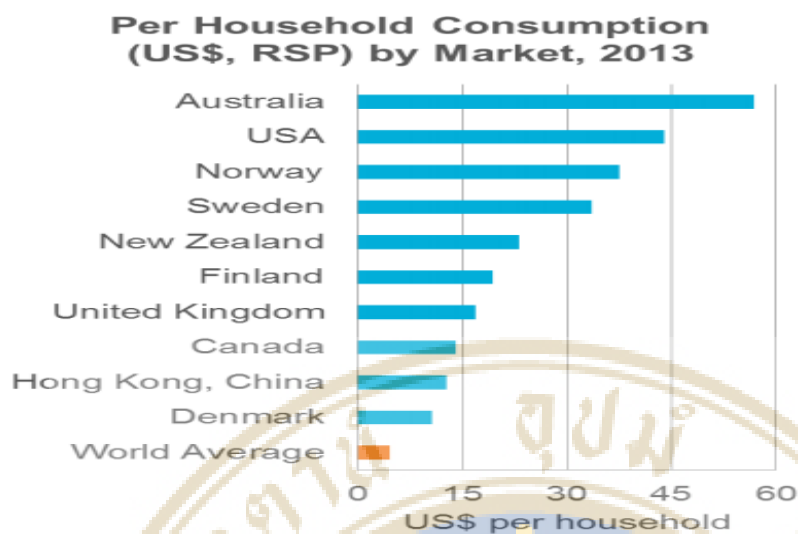


Figure 1.1 Sport Nutrition Production Per Household Consumption in 2013

According to the Figure 1.1, it is obvious that these developed countries, mainly Australia, Sweden, and New Zealand; show above of average value of household consumption. There are only two Asian countries; China and Hong Kong, which appear on the list. Other Asian countries are mostly around the average. In accordance with the journal article of Euromonitor International – “Trend in major sport nutrition markets and demographic”, it is mentioned that the market for sport nutrition products in 2013 worth around US\$8.8 billion as shown in Figure 1.2 and the sale will be dramatically increasing because of the increase in demand (Chris, 2014).

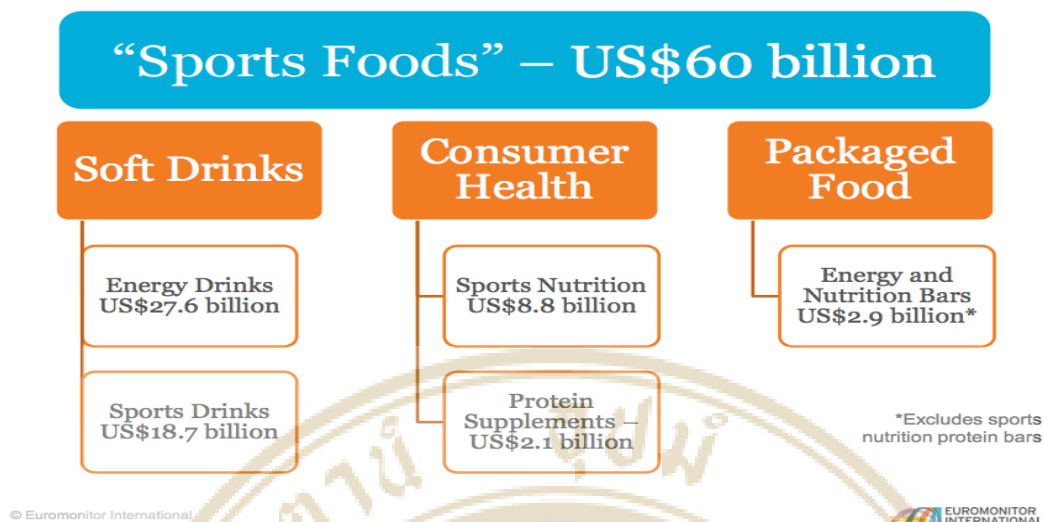


Figure 1.2 Sport Nutrition Product Sales in 2013

Moreover, the United States is the largest consumer, representing approximately two-thirds (60%) of the global sale as represented in (Figure 1.3).

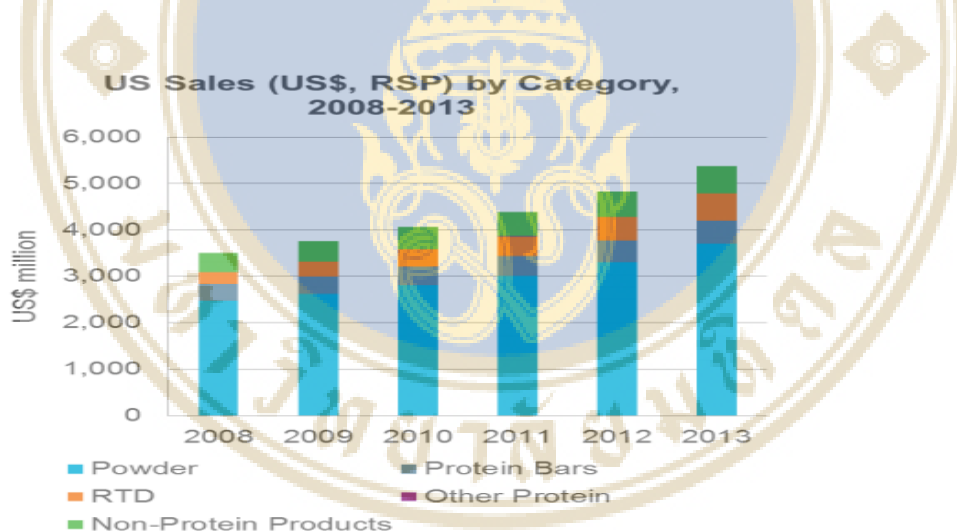


Figure 1.3 US Sales in sport nutrition product market

Consumers are increasingly demanding healthy and convenient lifestyle solutions, and sport nutrition products are options that meet this need. The consumers of sport nutrition food, drinks, and supplements can be segmented into four different groups including bodybuilder, pro/amateur athletes, recreational users and lifestyle users (International Markets Bureau- Overview of the Global Sport Nutrition Market,

August, 2010). Today, there are sport nutrition products that address almost every imaginable lifestyle issue, from energy booster to weight management, from anxiety control to sleep assistant and others. Sport nutrition products range over a wide variety of products including protein (powder, bar), pre-workout, post-workout, vitamins, ready do drink (RTD) and other vitamins. Consumption of sport nutrition product delivers benefits to consumers including health, and wellness (Bhuiyan, 2012). The journal article of “Development of Functional Beverage Based on Taste Preference”, sport nutrition product category is one the most significant drivers of new product development (NPD) as the consumers are 13.79% influenced by healthy factor. Recently, the trend of health consciousness becomes popular leading consumers to be more concerned about food and beverage they consumed. Therefore, the market for sport nutrition product is expected to dramatically increase due to an increasing trend of healthy lifestyle and fashion. Nowadays, fitness program becomes the center of attention in exercise and health industry. There are many kinds of products and services that are related to fitness program such as fitness center, healthy food, aerobic program, sport nutrition products and others. However, in Thailand, in contrary there are only small groups of people that consume sport nutrition products as represented in Figure 1.4.

Sports Nutrition Showing its Muscle

Sports Nutrition US\$m 2008-2013

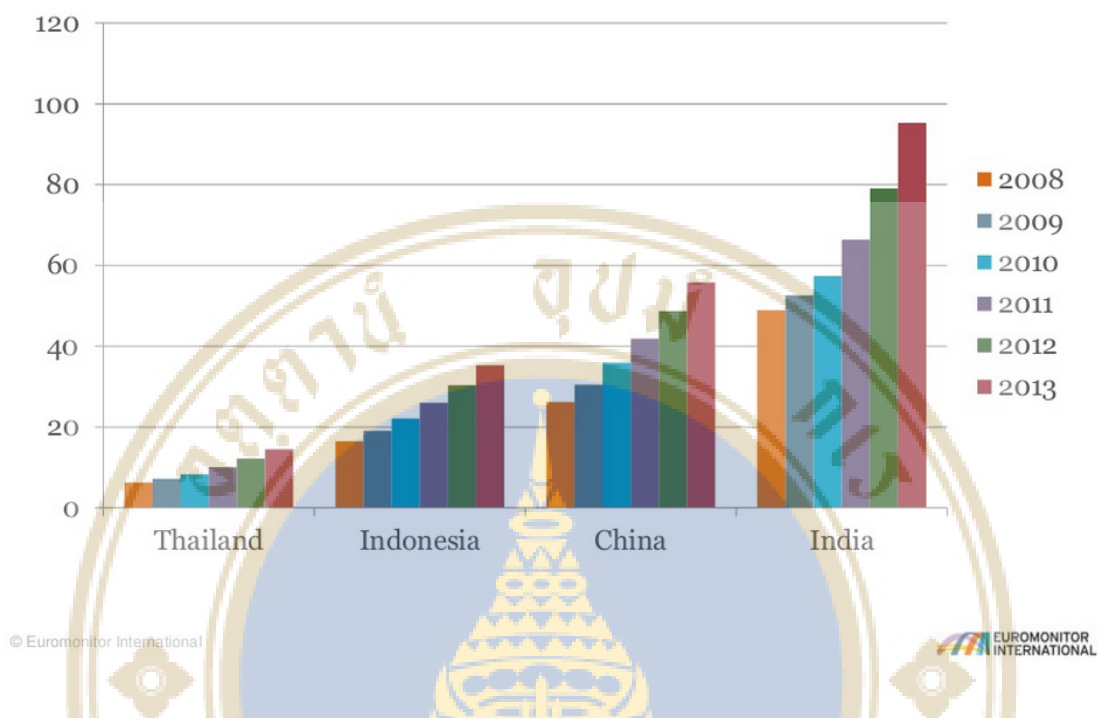


Figure 1.4 Sport Nutrition Product Sale in Asia

In Thailand, there is only one company that offers the sport nutrition products for health conscious people. Most of the consumers import products from foreigner's companies and brands such as Musashi, GNC, Muscle Tech, Gold Standard, and many other brands. The question of this study is that "why the consumption rate of sport nutrition products in Thailand compared with European are so much different, what are the factors contributed to this situation. According to Mintel's report cited in the journal article of "U.S. Food Link", annual growth rates in supplement beverage segment – powdered, liquid protein beverage, and others- have been above 20 per cent for each of the last five years (U.S. Food Link, 2011). In US, people started to consume more sport nutrition products, some consumers even add up whey protein bar as a meal replacement (Alexander S, 2009). However, in Thailand sport nutrition products could not sell much in Thailand as the sale of sport nutrition product in 2013 was roughly around \$20 Million as represented in Figure 1.4. Therefore, this thematic paper will be

researching why the rate of sport nutrition products consumption in Thailand is considerably low compared with USA, Australia, and other countries.

1.1 Problem Statement

The consumption rate of sport nutrition products in Thailand is considerably low compared with people in developed countries. Therefore, this study would like to know what are the main leading factors created such a situation.

1.2 Research Question

Why the rate of sport nutrition products consumption in Thailand is considerably low compared with USA, Australia, and other countries, what are the factors contributed to this situation.

1.3 Research Objectives

To study Thai health conscious consumers behavior towards consuming sport nutrition products

To analyze the main factors leading Thai consumers consumed less sport nutrition products

1.4 Research Scope

This research will be focusing on four age groups: 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50 years old or older, the total number of respondents is 30 people.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nowadays, sport nutrition products have been widely consumed and recommended as a source of substances to boost up health condition and prevent diseases. Furthermore, they have been widely used to achieve personal fitness purposes as well. The use of these sport nutrition products are prevalent among developed countries such as The U.S, UK, Australia and Canada. However, Thai people do not consume sport nutrition products as much as people in those developed countries. There are many possible explanations and factors to this situation. In this study, the main points will be focused on four potential key factors that contribute Thai people to consume less sport nutrition products than people in developed countries; degree of consumer awareness, high price of products, difference in physical appearance preferences, and potential risks and side effects of sport nutrition products.

2.1 Degree of consumer awareness

According to research in Thailand, there is almost none local sport nutrition product manufacturer. Most of the sport nutrition product brands; for example, Fit Whey, Freak Whey, GNC, Dymatize, and other brands, are only distributors of sport nutrition product brands around the world. The number of total sport nutrition product brands for Thais to select from is only dozen. The choices are very limited, and, most importantly, the degree of awareness of sport nutrition product is very low as well.

Why is the degree of awareness low?

2.1.1 Accessibility of sources of information

As far as the research has been conducted about sport nutrition product in many Thai websites, Thai library databases, and Thai magazines, the information and knowledge toward the sport nutrition products almost do not exist or extremely low. There are very few reliable sources of knowledge about them in Thai library and websites. The only place for Thais to get access to sport nutrition product sources of knowledge lies on the Internet from foreign sources only. There are some health and sport magazines circulating in Thai market as well. However, the market is very niche. There are so few people to actually purchase magazines monthly. Also, the prices of magazines are, mostly, still too expensive. Apart from the problem of diversity of information sources, most of the sources, especially on The Internet are written in English and have not been officially translated into Thai. Only few are in Thai, which creates language barrier to Thai consumers thereby impeding health conscious consumers to understand the context. This makes Thai consumers reluctant to purchase sport nutrition products.

2.1.2 Credibility of sources of information

Apart from the problem of accessibility, many sources of information about sport nutrition products, health issues and supplements are very unreliable. Most of them lack scientific information to back up their points. Many sources are mainly commercial and only attempt to sell their products without providing readers reliable and scientific-backed information regarding the products. With problem of credibility that many sources of information have, most of consumers would feel uncomfortable and would not purchase because of lack of trust.

2.2 High price of products

Good health and good look is what most people desire. The cost of health care is continuing to rise; as a consequence, consumers seek alternative form of supplement and medicine. The trend is reflected in an increase in sport nutrition products and supplement. However, there is only small group of people who can afford such products because of the price (Sharma 2005).

In average, the price of chicken breast per one kg is approximately 100-120 bath, which gives protein around 250 grams. However, one kg of whey protein costs around 1500-2000 Bath, which gives protein around 500 grams. Therefore, whey protein costs seven times higher than real chicken breast. Although the price of chicken breast is much cheaper, some group of people still prefer to consume sport nutrition product, whey protein, instead because it saves time, it is quick to intake, and it gives protein to the muscle to recover faster. As prices of sport nutrition products are quite expensive, some people especially young women tend to prefer other alternative that gives faster result with, sometimes, cheaper price. The study of “The Golden Era of Quick Fixes” is a good example to this. There is a trend of easy trips for cosmetic surgery. Cosmetic surgery has become a growing business in Thailand. According to The Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons of Thailand (2008), “attitudes among Thais towards cosmetic surgery have been transformed over the past decade, with cosmetic surgery clinics now mushrooming all over the country.”

2.3 Difference in physical appearance preference

People in different countries have different perception to body shape. Difference in physical appearance preferences shows obviously in actors, actresses, cartoons, and stars in certain countries. In Brazil, women are considered very beautiful if they are fit, strong, and muscular. In contrast, Thai people adore skinny or in-shape women, which is opposite to Brazilian perception toward beauty of women. In addition, most of men in the U.S. prefer to build their body to be as much muscular as possible. They want to get bigger and bigger. The bigger they are, the better it is. In the opposite side, Australian guys like to work out as well, but they prefer to have a moderate

muscular body, like fitness model. According to Wilkins et al, physical masculinity and femininity shape perceived attractiveness between countries is different. Cultural studies literature has suggested that stereotypes of Asians portray both genders as being feminine. According to Fujino (1992) and Williams (1994), Asian women are portrayed in the media as “exotic, subservient, or simply nice” (Mok, 1999, p. 107)—all feminine traits. Asian men, in contrast, are presented as lacking in the physical appearance and social skills needed to attract women (Mok, 1999, p. 107). In other words, they are seen as insufficiently masculine. As the masculinity is not a role model for Asian people, thus there is a high possibility that Asian people will consume considerably less of sport nutrition products like whey protein or pre and post-workout because they do not want to get big or look muscular.

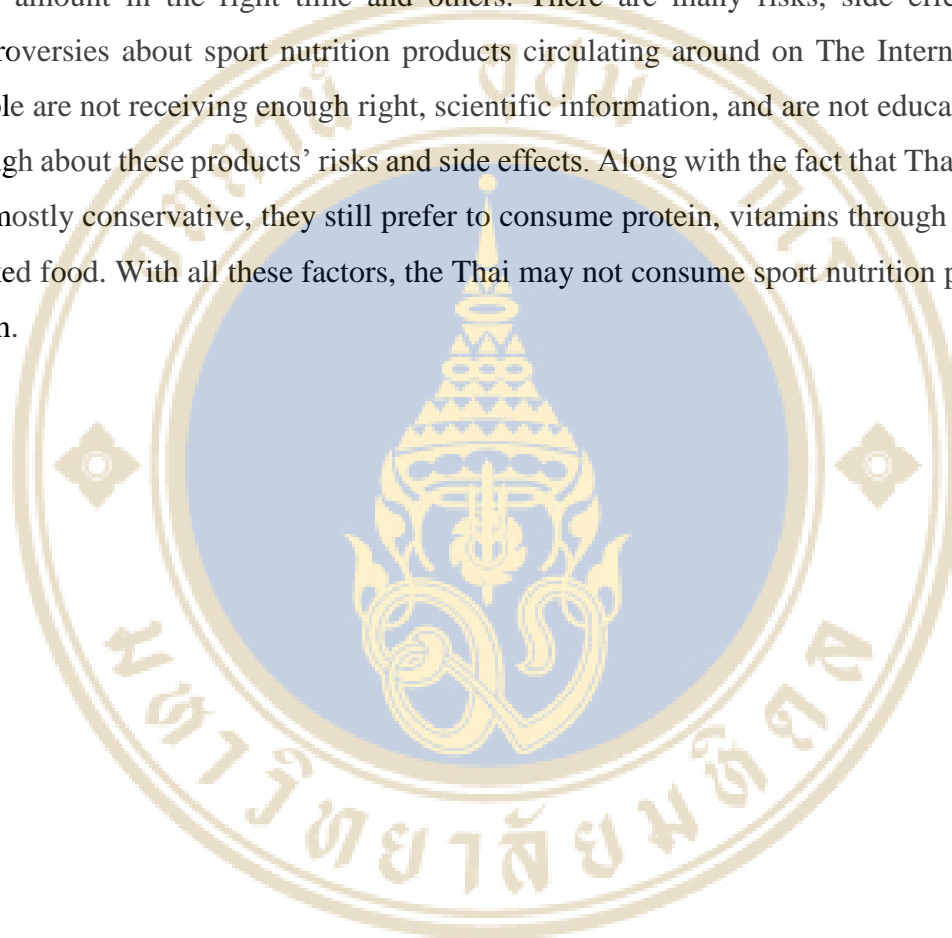
2.4 Potential risk and side effects of sport nutrition products

Sport nutrition products involve potential risks and side effects. There are many controversial issues circulating on The Internet about these kinds of products. Whey protein, for example, is considered one of the most consumable sport nutrition products on earth. However, some still opposes and says it is only a myth. According to the journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism, it found that whey protein helps reduce weight loss and gain muscle. However, it could post some side effects as well including stomach pain, cramps, reduced appetite, nausea, headache, and fatigue (Paul, 2006).

“Creatine Monohydrate”, another example, had been criticized for its ineffectiveness in helping athletes to perform before it was proven scientifically recently ten years ago that it actually boosts up athletes’ strength and power. Nowadays, it is one of the most important substances bodybuilders use to help boost up their muscle strength and build up muscle faster (Richard 2000, page2).

Exposures to sport nutrition products, supplements and whey protein (such as vitamins, herbs, protein powders, and botanicals) accounted for 35,000 calls to US poison control centers in 2011. Of these calls, more than 4,000 people were reportedly treated in health care facilities. More than 800 cases were described as having moderate to severe

outcomes, with four deaths reported to poison control center (American Cancer Society, 2013). Realistically, most people who suffer unexpected side effects, illness, or drug interaction from supplement do not call a poison control center or the supplement manufacturer. This means that the numbers we have are likely very low estimates of actual events. Some supplements can interfere with prescription or over-the-counter medications. It is not an easy task to choose the right supplements to consume at the right amount in the right time and others. There are many risks, side effects and controversies about sport nutrition products circulating around on The Internet. Thai people are not receiving enough right, scientific information, and are not educated well enough about these products' risks and side effects. Along with the fact that Thai people are mostly conservative, they still prefer to consume protein, vitamins through normal, cooked food. With all these factors, the Thai may not consume sport nutrition products much.



The factors that related to the hypothesis

Factor 1: Degree of consumer awareness

Hypothesis 1: Thai people are not aware of sport nutrition products very much because of low accessibility and low credibility of sources of information.

Factor 2: High price of products

Hypothesis 2: The consumption rate of sport nutrition products varies from consumers because of variation in income and salary.

Factor 3: Difference in physical appearance preferences

Hypothesis 3: Thais' perception toward the physical appearance preference is different from European's perception, which lead to lower consumption rate regarding sport nutrition products.

Factor 4: Potential risk and side effects of sport nutrition products

Hypothesis 4: The difference in consumers' age results in different consumption rate. Those aged between 20-40 years of age would probably have a positive perception toward consuming sport nutrition products thereby consuming more, while those 40 years old above might prefer consuming cooked, natural food.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

According to the diagnostic approach, this study aims to identify “Four key factors that contribute Thai people to consume sport nutrition products less than people in developed countries”. The methodology that is suitable for data collection and result orientation would be qualitative method that collects data by one to one in-depth interview. The results aim to determine the insight reason and influencing factor for purchasing sport nutrition product with participant’s reasons.

Research objective will concentrate on questions represented by 5W and 1H (Who, What, When, Where and Why + How) in order to find out the in-depth data and information to determine the insight reason and influencing factors regarding of purchasing sport nutrition drinks.

3.1 Population size and sample size

The participants consisted of adults aged 20 years or older residing in Bangkok province. They were divided into four age groups: 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, and 50 years or older. There are 30 respondents as total.

3.2 Qualitative Design

Qualitative research is used to collect relevant data and information to analyze why the consumption rate of sport nutrition product in Thailand is not as high as people in developed countries. The reason behind the use of qualitative method is to understand the feelings, values, and perception that underlie and influence Thai consumers behavior towards sport nutrition product. In-depth interview at fitness center around Bangkok including Fitness First, Power Zone Gym, and other local fitness will be used to analyze to find out reasons and factors why Thai consumers consume less

sport nutrition product compared with other foreign countries. The purpose of the interview is to identify consumer characteristics, which are associated with sport nutrition product and also the factors influencing the purchase of sport nutrition product by consumers who aged 20 years and above. An in-depth interview was designed to understand consumer perception toward sport and supplementary products. Questions including sport activities, goal for sport, perception toward supplementary products, and experience will be asking interview step by step started from the big picture and down to the specific question. The place for interview would be in fitness centers including True Fitness, Fitness First, Power Zone Gym and other local fitnesses. The intention of selecting different fitness is because the different group of participants may have different perceptions toward sport nutrition product. Also, in each fitness center, it holds different types of people with different social status and also different goals. Each fitness center will be significantly different in term of responses I would receive. The time taken for interview would be in the evening after work (18.00-20.00) when people usually go to fitness center to exercise. The date of collection data and interview originated between 1st March 2015 – 25th March 2015.

General questions

This part will be used to gain general information from the respondents.

- Do you eat healthy food?
- Why do you eat healthy food?
- Why do you exercise?
- What do you think about sport nutrition products?

Consumer behavior and the factors of making decision

This part will be used to understand consumer behavior in purchasing or not purchasing sport nutrition products for their specific consumption.

- What type of supplement have you consumed? What are the reasons behind the consumption?
- Do your family and friends consume sport nutrition products?

- Which brand do you consider as the top quality brand? Is it local or imported product?
- Where are the sources of information you use to find out about sport nutrition products before purchasing?
- Where do you purchase the sport nutrition products?
- Are sport nutrition products expensive?
- If sport nutrition products like supplements, or whey protein, give faster result, would you consume them?
- Are you afraid of risk of side effects on sport nutrition products?
- What do you prefer between eating nutritious, healthy cooked food, and use a lot of time to prepare with taking sport nutrition products that is more expensive, but saves a lot more time?

Please rate the level of importance for each criterion you use to make the decision to purchase the sport nutrition products (1-5 scale)

- ✓ Price
- ✓ Purpose & Function
- ✓ Brand
- ✓ Promotion and discount
- ✓ Ingredients
- ✓ Risk and side effect
- ✓ Place and availability of the product

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

According to the methodology, this research interviews 30 respondents who actively exercise and are a gym member at Power Zone Gym, Body Care Fitness, City Sport Club, and Fitness First (Mega Bangna branch). There are only 11 respondents (36%) that actually consumed sport nutrition products, while 19 respondents (63%) do not. The questions are focused on four main factors; degree of consumer awareness, high price of products, difference in physical appearance preference in countries, and potential risk and side effects of sport nutrition products.

4.1 Degree of consumer awareness

4.1.1 Accessibility

According to the interview, the study found that young consumers (20-39 years old) tend to have better access to sources of information regarding sport nutrition products. They tend to be more aware of sport nutrition products like multi-vitamins, supplements, whey protein, and other commonplace sport nutrition supplements, while people who are 40 years above seem to have a difficulty in accessing this information.

The study shows similar feedbacks from participants that language barrier, and technology barrier are the main causes of not being aware of sport nutrition products. Both on the Internet and in magazines, sections about sport nutrition products mostly are written in English language. There are only a few health magazines published in Thai language. Similarly, there are very websites about sport nutrition products and health written in Thai. Most of the sources, according from the interview, participants could find are manifested in English mostly. Most of them cannot use English well enough, thus they could not understand the context. This shows that language barrier is

one reason that lowers degree of awareness to consumers in Thailand about sport nutrition products. The research found that five participants with the age of 40 years and above do not know how to use a computer properly. They cannot get access a computer thereby receiving no updates or whatsoever from The Internet. This is another reason for low degree of awareness, which is technology barrier.

4.1.2 Credibility

Another important issue is unreliable information in sources. These participants can look for sport nutrition products to get information through magazines and books. Unfortunately, these participants mentioned that the magazines are mainly for commercial purposes and do not have much solid information (scientifically proven information) concerning their sport nutrition products' advertisings. For some magazines that have solid information, they still do not trust the information much because they are magazines, not academic papers backed by research. Credibility is one of the most important factors for consumers to purchase products. In short, research finding reveals that accessibility level to sport nutrition products is really low from technology barrier, language barrier, and unreliable sources of information.

4.2 High price of products

In order to analyze consumer behavior or to find the reason behind purchasing sport nutrition products, price is one of the main sources of decision-making. This research gathers salary data of 30 respondents by categorizing in five levels as follow;

Table 4.1 Salary affects their buying decision towards buying sport nutrition product

Income	Condition	20-29 Years		30-39 Years		40-49 Years		50 above Years	
		Male(6)	Female(4)	Male(5)	Female(5)	Male(3)	Female(3)	Male(3)	Female(1)
Less than 10,000 Baht	Consume								
	Not consume	5	3						
10,000-20,000 Baht	Consume	1		1					
	Not consume		1	1	2				
20,001-30,000 Baht	Consume			2					
	Not consume			1	3				
30,001-40,000 Baht	Consume					1	1	1	
	Not consume								
40,001-50,000 Baht	Consume					2	1		
	Not consume						1	1	1
More than 50,000 Baht	Consume							1	
	Not consume								
Total		6	4	5	5	3	3	3	1

4.2.1 Salary less than 10,000 Baht

There are eight respondents; five are male and three are female, who have an income or salary less than 10,000 Baht/month. It is quite interesting that during the age between 20-24 years old, the number of fitness members is much higher than that of people in the age between 25-29 years old. From asking fitness managers including Power Zone Gym, Body Care Fitness, City Sports and Fitness First regarding of the differences in number of gym members between 20-24 years old and 25-29 years old, fitness managers mostly said that the number of gym members between 20-24 years old is much higher because during the age of 20-24 years old, gym members are mostly university students, which probably have more free time than the gym member at age of 25-29 years old. While the ages of 25-29 are mostly university students that have just started working as an officer resulting in low time flexibility, fatigue and exhaustion from working and others.

Therefore, the respondents who have a salary or income less than 10,000 Baht/month are mostly unemployed and university students that still received money from their parents monthly. According to one of the interviewees, he is 24 years old studying in sport and science at University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce and being a fitness member at Power Zone Gym. He mentioned, "Sport nutrition products can

really enhance the result of exercising faster than consuming natural products; however the price of the nutrition products are extremely expensive and unaffordable”. He added, “My hometown is in north of Thailand (Chiang Mai), but my university is in Bangkok. I need to pay so many to study in Bangkok including rental fee, tuition fee, food and others. I do not have sufficient money to pay for extra. But if I have sufficient money, I would pay for it to get a faster result”. The other four males respondents also have a similar feedback towards the expensive price of the sport nutrition product. About three female respondents who have an income or salary less than 10,000 Baht/Month, one respondent has positive feedbacks towards consuming sport nutrition products, but with the high price of the product she could not afford consuming it. The other two respondents stated that they would rather collect sufficient money and receive a cosmetic surgery instead. They added that nowadays a cosmetic surgery becomes much cheaper compared with the past (started at only 3,000 Baht). The price of the surgery is not so different from that of consuming sport nutrition products, while a cosmetic surgery could really give much faster result.

4.2.2 Salary between 10,000 to 20,000 Baht/Month

There are two male respondents who consumed sport nutrition products; based on the category of salary between 10,000-20,000 Baht/Month. One respondent is in the age of 20-29 years old, while another is in the age of 30-39 years old. One of the male respondents who consumed sport nutrition products ranked the most important factor in purchasing sport nutrition product as price. He stated, “First couple times when I started buying sport nutrition products, it was so expensive because most of the products at the time were imported. However, nowadays sport nutrition products competition becomes fiercer. After that, Thai brands started to manufacture and sell in Thai market. Therefore, the price of sport nutrition products decreased significantly.” Another one who consumed sport nutrition product mentioned that he saw a great result of his friend consuming such products; therefore he wanted to give it a try. Nonetheless, still, he said that, it is quite costly but if the result of consuming is guaranteed then he is willing to pay. There are four respondents (one female respondent from 20-29 years old, one male & two female respondents from 30-39 years old) who do not consume sport

nutrition products. These four respondents perceived that the price of the sport nutrition products is quite expensive and unnecessary.

4.2.3 Salary between 20,000 to 30,000 Baht/Month

The total respondents consist of six people in this category; three males and three females. The age group is in between 30-39 years old. There are only two male respondents who consumed sport nutrition products, while the other four respondents do not consume such product. There is one respondent with the age of 35 years old, exercising at Fitness First at Mega Bangna who consumed sport nutrition products said, “The expenditure in each month of sport nutrition products is approximately 2,000 Baht or 10% of my income. Someone would say that 2,000 Baht spending on sport nutrition products is a lot of money or wasted; however, for me it is not expensive at all. Imagine if you walk into hospital with a bad health whether high blood pressure, obesity, respiratory and other problems, these symptoms cost a lot of more money much than consuming sport nutrition products to get good health and wellness. I used to have a problem regarding of being Sarcopenia, symptoms of muscle loss including musculoskeletal weakness and loss of stamina, the cost of therapy or consult the doctor was extremely expensive incomparable with sport nutrition product.” He concluded that sport nutrition products are actually not expensive for him but for others they might be expensive depending on purposes of consumption. Another respondent who consumed sport nutrition products mentioned, “the price of sport nutrition product selling in websites, sport department stores in many retailers including Central, THE MALL is expensive. It is much cheaper (20% or more) buying from personal training at fitness. About 4 respondents that do not consume sport nutrition products, they all implied that sport nutrition products are too expensive and unnecessary. We can enjoy good health and look better by simply exercising regularly and having healthy, nutritious foods.

4.2.4 Salary between 30,000 to 40,000 Baht/Month

The total respondents in this group consists of 3 people; one male & one female from the age group between 40-49 years old, and other one from the age of 50 years old above. The results of respondent’s feedback are quite interesting. All 3 respondents who consumed sport nutrition products enjoy good health. They believe

they get benefit from taking these sport nutrition products. They tend to care less about the price of products because what they care for more is end results in faster time.

4.2.5 Salary between 40,000 to 50,000 Baht/Month

There are six respondents who have a salary between 40,000-50,000 Baht/Month. Four respondents are in the age between 40-49 years old; two males and 1 female consumed sport nutrition products, and one female does not consume sport nutrition products. Moreover, there are two respondents (one male and one female) who are 50 years old above that do not consume sport nutrition products. Talking about the three respondents who consumed sport nutrition products, they said that they could afford buying sport nutrition products. However, there is one participant mentioned, “I always purchase sport nutrition products that are on sale or at their cheapest price compared with the products that give same benefit. Because I believe that the price difference is not about the formulation or ingredients inside, but it is about the brand of the product, I tend to be indifferent towards premium brands or heavily advertised brands.

4.2.6 Salary 50,000 Baht/Month or above

Out of 30 respondents, there is only one respondent who has a salary or income more than 50,000 Bath/moth. He is 53 years old who has suffered from being overweight. Nowadays, he is training at Fitness First at Mega Bangna with a personal trainer, who guides him on exercising and dieting program. He said, “I would do whatever it takes to be healthy, no matter how much I need to pay”. It seems like he has no problem spending on hiring a personal trainer and buying some sport nutrition products.

According to the research finding acquired from the interview, it is obvious that price of sport nutrition products is a very significant factor affecting purchasing decision of respondents. Those respondents who have limited income tend to be more cautious on spending thereby ignoring sport nutrition products. They tend to hold that clean, healthy foods are already abundant, thus they do not need to pay more. Some say they would like to purchase sport nutrition products because they think these products can help get faster result in gaining muscle and losing fat. However, respondents with

limited income still would not be able to afford. Those respondents with salary 40,000-50,000 and 50,000 Baht/Month up tend to share similar traits; they are willing to pay more to get faster result. There are only a few respondents in this group that say they would not purchase these products because they think these products are not effective. However, from research finding, high price of sport nutrition products seem to be another important barrier to consumers to purchase and actually consume the products.

4.3 Difference in physical appearance preferences

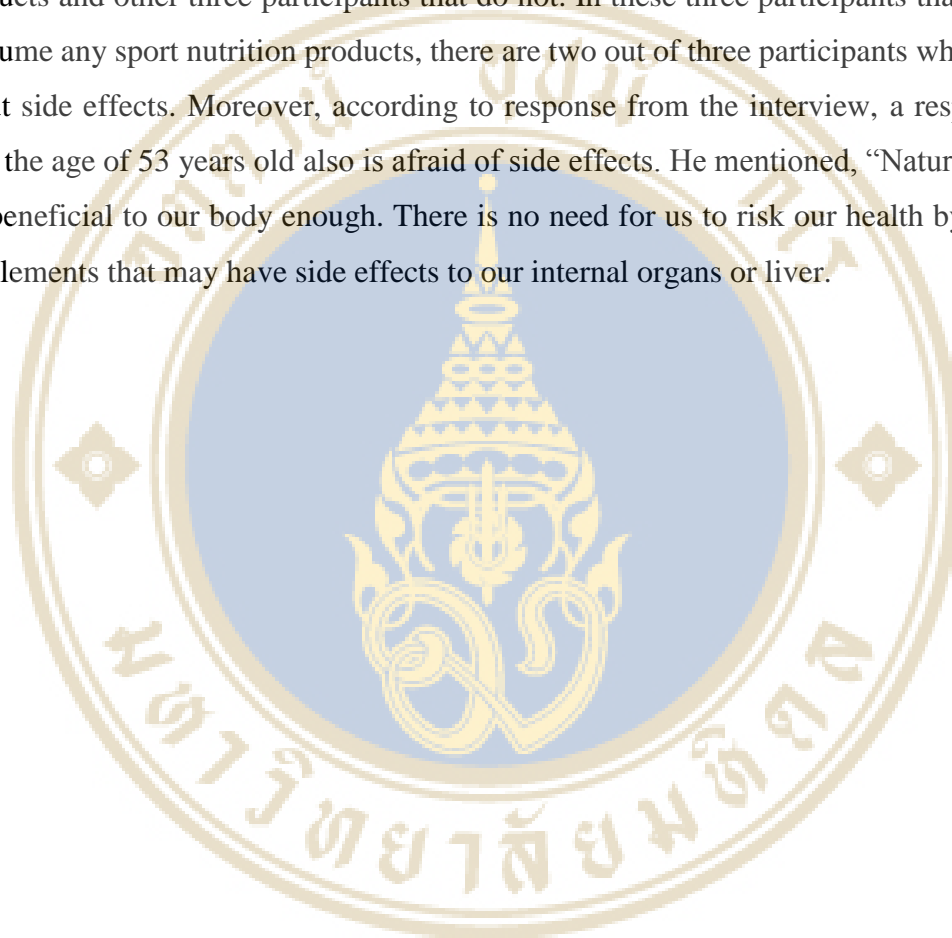
The finding is very similar to the hypothesis set beforehand that Thai people mostly perceive a skinny, but fit person to be good looking, while people in countries such as the US, UK, or Brazil, consider huge, muscular people to be attractive. Respondents of all ages respond very similarly. Most of them perceive that a good-looking person should look skinny, but fit. There is only one respondent out of 30 participants that perceives a good-looking person must look huge and very muscular. The reason behind consuming consistently is that he is about to compete in a bodybuilding competition. His monthly expenditure towards sport nutrition products is around 3,000 Baht excluded raw food and medicine expenditure. He mentioned “I am lucky enough to get some supports from the senior bodybuilder association, otherwise I would not be able to pay for the cost”. This is only one respondent aged between 20-40 years old who consumes sport nutrition products consistently. The rest consumes for a short period of time and stops. In addition, according to the interview with this group of respondents, they perceive that a good-looking person is fit, and only a little muscular. Because of this perception, they mostly mentioned they do not need to use sport nutrition products because these products are mostly for people who want to be very muscular. Actually, this is a misconception because sport nutrition products do not only answer those who want to build muscle fast, but also answer to every kind of fitness or physical appearance objective. Because of this very misconception most of respondents have, it results in low consumption rate of sport nutrition products in this sample group. In addition to misconception and different perception towards physical appearance preferences, the research found that respondents who are 40 years old and above concern

less about their physical appearance. They mostly concern about their health condition. They believe they do not need to consume any sport nutrition products. According to response from the interview, a 53 years old respondent said, “My dream to exercise and eat clean varies when I get older. I used to exercise because I want to have a good shape when I was a teenager, but, nowadays, I am 53 years old now- I wish only to have good health. That wish does not require me to take any sport nutrition products. I think only healthy diet is enough for me to achieve this goal”. Therefore, for this group of respondent, they seem to not need any sport nutrition products that much. The research also found that 80% of respondents (16 out of 20) between the ages of 20-40 years old mostly prioritize their exercise’s objective to get better shape both for male and for female. However, from the observation and interview - the study found that the people who consume sport nutrition products during 20-40 years old are casual users; they just try and stop when they cannot see results fast enough. Hence, the rate of consumption for this group of people is actually not promising. It is due to this misconception and perception to physical appearance preferences, varying objectives among older people and teenagers that make consumption rate of sport nutrition products in Thailand even lower.

4.4 Potential risk and side effects affected to buying decision

The study found that the perception towards potential risk and side effects heavily relies on the consumers who are 40 years old and above. While the young consumers (20 to 40 years old) do not concern much about potential risk and side effects towards consuming sport nutrition products. The interview of respondents aged between 20-29 years old who are members at Power Zone Gym, Body Care Fitness, City Sports and Fitness First shows an interesting finding. Out of 10 respondents in this group, there are 6 persons who are not afraid of potential risks and side effects from sport nutrition products. A respondent with the age of 24 years old, for example, mentioned that “He has studied about sport nutrition products for some time, and he knew that there are not many risks and side effects. I know that it is not severed and it rarely happens”. For another group, respondents aged between 30-39 years old, the research finding show

different result from the previous group. Five out of ten respondents in this section do not consume sport nutrition products, as they are afraid of risks and side effects that might occur. There are two respondents who mentioned in the same way regarding sport nutrition products are still very new for them. They are afraid to try these products because of potential side effects that might occur to them. In the group of respondents aged between 40-49 years old, there are three participants who consume sport nutrition products and other three participants that do not. In these three participants that do not consume any sport nutrition products, there are two out of three participants who worry about side effects. Moreover, according to response from the interview, a respondent with the age of 53 years old also is afraid of side effects. He mentioned, “Natural foods are beneficial to our body enough. There is no need for us to risk our health by taking supplements that may have side effects to our internal organs or liver.



CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The purpose of the paper is to determine the four key factors that contribute Thai people to consume sport nutrition products less than people in developed countries. The research combine the information regarding degree of awareness, high price of the product, difference in physical appearance preference, and potential risk & side effect of sport nutrition products.

The result will be able to be applied to give insight reasons and information to Thai companies that engages in sport nutrition industry and also to the people who are interest in sport nutrition product. The following recommendations will be useful to the sport nutrition product companies, in which they can use information to analyze what are the main problems of low consumption rate of sport nutrition products in Thailand.

5.1 Recommendation

5.1.1 Degree of consumer awareness

This study shows that degree of consumer awareness plays a significant role in purchasing sport nutrition products. Some Thai consumers have a difficulty in buying and selecting sport nutrition products because of the language barrier and technology barrier. People tend not to buy products if there is a confusion regarding the product detail. Therefore, source of information inside the website, magazine, and catalogue should have both Thai and English language. Thus, Thai consumers could understand the product, and finally make a purchase. About technology barrier, as some older people cannot use a computer to search for information. The sport nutrition products companies should educate or advertise more on magazines or news. By following these two recommendations, the target market will be bigger.

5.1.2 High price of products

The research represented that Thai consumers between 20 to 40 years old are quite sensitive to price. Some of respondents would like to consume sport nutrition products, but they could not afford it because the price of sport nutrition products is too expensive. Therefore, Thai sport nutrition companies might need to consider creating an event to promote sport nutrition products and educate new potential customers about the products. This not only boosts the overall sale, but also creates the brand awareness to new customers.

5.1.3 Difference in physical appearance preferences

According to the study, most of the respondents prefer to have a fit body rather than muscular look. Therefore, the sport nutrition products that targeted Thai people should be different from the product targeted other countries; USA, UK, Australia. The type of sport nutrition product that could be easily sold to Thai people should be related to fat loss, increase metabolism rate, and get fit and other loss. Moreover, sport nutrition products are quite variety, thus sport nutrition products

companies should educate consumers regarding the purpose and functionality in each product type.

5.1.4 Potential risk and side effects of sport nutrition products

The study found that the perception towards potential risk and side effects heavily relies on the consumers who are 40 years old and above. While the young consumers (20 to 40 years old) do not concern much about potential risk and side effects towards consuming sport nutrition products. Therefore, sport nutrition product companies should educate the older consumers to understand more about the risk and side effect. Because sport nutrition is not a medicine, therefore the risk and side effect is lower than medicines. By educating consumers, sport nutrition product companies can promote their brands, educate consumers, and increase the trust from customers as well.

5.2 Limitations

There are some limitations. Firstly, the interview take places at fitness center in Bangkok area including Power Zone gym, Body Care Fitness, City Sport Club, and Fitness First at Mega Bangna branch. The interviewing time take place in between 5.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m., therefore the study can capture the result only that period of time. Besides, there are respondents refused to have an in-depth interview because they were exercising and working out. Moreover, some of respondents participate to the interview, however they sometimes unwilling to answer the specific question. This study has interviewed only 30 respondents, which is quite small size and this perhaps made the result may not accurate and bias.

5.3 Future Research

Interviewing time is very important to gather data and insight information; therefore time arrangement will be more strategically organized in different period of time (morning, afternoon, and evening) so as to capture more variety of participants' results toward sport nutrition product. Moreover, scope of study will be more expanding not only in Bangkok but also in other provinces as well preventing the bias occurred from the interest in locations.



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