

MARKETING STRATEGIES OF DRIED FRUITS AMONG CHINESE CONSUMER

กลยุทธ์ทางการตลาดของผลไม้อบแห้งในกลุ่มผู้บริโภคชาวจีน

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ABSTRACT

The increasing demand for imported healthy snacks in the Chinese market has created a significant opportunity for Thai dried fruits. This study investigates the factors influencing Chinese consumers' purchasing intentions toward Thai dried fruits using a comprehensive framework that integrates demographic characteristics (gender, age, salary, occupation, and educational level) and the 4Ps marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion). Data were collected from 400 Chinese consumers through an online survey, and quantitative analysis was conducted to explore these factors. The results highlight that product quality and promotion have the strongest impact on purchasing intention, while demographic factors such as income and education level further shape consumer preferences. This study provides actionable insights for marketers to refine their strategies and align them with the growing demand for healthy and natural snack products in China.

Keywords: Thai dried fruits, purchasing intention, 4Ps, demographics, Chinese consumers

INTRODUCTION

China's economic growth and rising disposable income have led to an evolving consumption landscape, characterized by a preference for premium and healthy food products. Among these, dried fruits have emerged as a sought-after snack category due to their perceived health benefits and convenience. Thai dried fruits, known for their natural ingredients and unique flavors, have gained attention in the Chinese market. However, the purchasing intentions of Chinese consumers for Thai dried fruits remain underexplored.

This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the combined influence of demographic characteristics and the 4Ps marketing mix on purchasing intention. The research framework incorporates variables such as gender, age, income, occupation, and education, alongside key marketing factors like product quality, price strategies, distribution channels, and promotional

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efforts. By analyzing these variables, this study seeks to provide practical recommendations for Thai fruit exporters and marketers to effectively target Chinese consumers.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the factors influencing Chinese consumers' purchase intentions regarding Thai dried fruits.

Specific Objectives:

(1) To study the purchase intentions and factors influencing Chinese consumers' decisions to purchase Thai dried fruits through the lens of the marketing mix. This includes analyzing how product, price, place, and promotion influence consumer behavior.

(2) To analyze how demographic characteristics, including gender, age, income, occupation, and education level, interact with marketing mix factors to shape the purchase intentions of Chinese consumers.

By conducting this research, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of Chinese consumers' purchasing behavior, enabling Thai dried fruit brands to formulate effective marketing strategies tailored to the Chinese market.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the research objectives, the following hypotheses were developed to guide the analysis:

H1: Demographic characteristics of Chinese consumers, including gender, age, income, occupation, and education level, significantly influence their purchase intentions regarding Thai dried fruits.

H2: Product factors influence Chinese consumers' purchase intentions regarding Thai dried fruits.

H3: Price factors influence Chinese consumers' purchase intentions regarding Thai dried fruits.

H4: Place factors influence Chinese consumers' purchase intentions regarding Thai dried fruits.

H5: Promotion factors influence Chinese consumers' purchase intentions regarding Thai dried fruits.

This study aims to test the above hypotheses through empirical research to determine how demographic characteristics and aspects of the marketing mix influence Chinese consumers' decisions to purchase Thai dried fruits. This research will help clarify the key factors of marketing strategies and provide a scientific basis for the successful promotion of Thai dried fruits in the Chinese market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Demographic Factors in Marketing

Understanding demographic factors is fundamental for shaping marketing strategies effectively. Kotler and Keller (2016) highlight that statistical characteristics such as age, gender, income, occupation, and education significantly influence consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. For example, Lantos (2015) suggests that younger consumers, who are more influenced by social media and trends, show greater willingness to experiment with new products like exotic dried fruits. Gender distinctions also matter, with research indicating that female consumers tend to be more health-conscious, making them a key target for products marketed with health benefits (Solomon et al., 2019). Similarly, income and occupation influence purchasing power and preferences, where higher-income consumers prioritize quality over price, while professionals seek convenient, nutritious options.

Marketing Mix Theory: 4P Model

The 4P model, initially conceptualized by McCarthy, serves as the cornerstone of marketing strategies. Product quality is identified as a key determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty, especially for Thai dried fruits that must maintain natural taste and freshness (Kotler & Armstrong, 2014). Differentiation through organic certification or unique flavor profiles can further elevate their appeal. Pricing strategies, as defined by Kotler and Armstrong, must balance profit-oriented goals with affordability to cater to middle- and high-income groups. Distribution strategies emphasize both direct channels like e-commerce platforms (e.g., JD.com and Alibaba) and indirect channels through wholesalers and supermarkets to maximize accessibility. Promotion strategies, such as collaborations with influencers and digital campaigns, play a vital role in boosting brand recognition and driving sales (Chaffey, 2015; Solomon et al., 2019).

Consumer Purchase Intention

Consumer purchase intention is shaped by various personal, social, and psychological factors. Kotler (2003) identifies income, social influence, and health awareness as pivotal factors influencing consumer decisions. Psychological drivers, such as perceived health benefits, align with the rising trend of health-conscious consumption. The consumer decision-making process—from problem recognition to post-purchase evaluation—further emphasizes the importance of tailored marketing strategies. For instance, promotional activities like discounts and targeted advertising can effectively influence purchase decisions during different stages of the buying journey.

Dried Fruit Consumption in China

China's expanding fruit consumption market, fueled by rising incomes and urbanization, provides fertile ground for Thai dried fruits. Studies by Chaffey (2015) and Solomon et al. (2019)

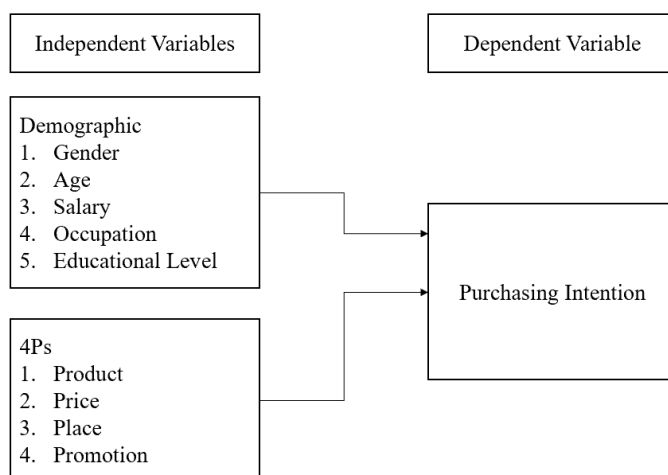
reveal that increasing health awareness and the pursuit of premium lifestyles are driving demand for healthy snacks. E-commerce platforms and cold chain logistics significantly enhance product accessibility and quality maintenance, ensuring Thai dried fruits remain competitive in a growing market.

Market Potential for Thai Dried Fruits

The market for Thai dried fruits in China is strengthened by trade agreements like the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA), which reduce tariffs and increase competitiveness. However, competition from other suppliers like Vietnam and Malaysia necessitates continuous innovation in quality and pricing strategies. Challenges such as logistics inefficiencies and limited consumer awareness also require targeted solutions, including investments in cold chain systems and educational campaigns highlighting the health and nutritional benefits of Thai dried fruits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research approach to systematically examine the factors influencing Chinese consumers' purchasing intentions regarding Thai dried fruits. The research utilizes the 4P marketing framework (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) alongside demographic variables such as gender, age, income, occupation, and education to understand consumer behavior and preferences.



Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using an online survey distributed across social media platforms and consumer forums popular in China. The survey consisted of structured questions designed to capture respondents' demographic characteristics, perceptions of the 4P factors, and their purchasing intentions toward Thai dried fruits. A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), was used to measure responses, ensuring uniformity and statistical

comparability.

Sampling

The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula at a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. Based on the formula, a representative sample of 400 respondents was identified. The respondents were selected to ensure diversity across income levels, occupations, and geographic locations within China, providing insights into varying consumer groups and their preferences.

Data Analysis Tools

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS software to ensure rigorous statistical analysis. Several methods were employed:

1. Descriptive Statistics: Used to summarize demographic data and responses related to 4P factors.
2. Reliability Testing: Cronbach's Alpha was applied to ensure internal consistency of the survey items.
3. Correlation Analysis: Pearson correlation was used to identify relationships between demographic factors, 4P variables, and purchasing intentions.
4. Regression Analysis: Multiple linear regression models were employed to assess the relative influence of independent variables (demographics and 4Ps) on the dependent variable (purchasing intention).

Justification for Methodology

The quantitative approach ensures objective measurement of the variables and provides statistically valid insights into the marketing factors influencing purchasing behavior. By integrating the 4P framework with demographic data, this study aims to provide actionable insights for Thai dried fruit exporters looking to penetrate the Chinese market. The use of widely accepted statistical methods further enhances the reliability and generalizability of the findings.

This methodology provides a robust framework for exploring the relationships between marketing strategies and consumer behavior, forming the basis for practical recommendations to optimize marketing efforts.

Research Findings

This study provides valuable insights into the motivations, preferences, and factors influencing Chinese consumers' purchasing intentions toward Thai dried fruits. Using the 4P marketing mix framework (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) and demographic characteristics as independent variables, the study identified several key findings.

Impact of Demographic Characteristics

Demographic factors, including income, occupation, and education level, significantly influence purchasing decisions. High-income consumers prioritize product quality, brand reputation, and health benefits, demonstrating a preference for premium Thai dried fruits. In contrast, middle- and low-income groups remain price-sensitive but respond positively to promotional discounts and smaller, affordable packaging. Occupation further differentiates purchasing behavior, with office workers and freelancers favoring healthy and convenient snacks, while small business owners exhibit interest in premium, unique products. Highly educated consumers emphasize health benefits and brand transparency, aligning with global health and wellness trends. Gender and age have a relatively minor effect on purchase intention, though younger consumers (aged 18–35) show higher engagement with social media marketing and innovative packaging designs.

Influence of Marketing Mix Factors

	(b)	SE	t	Sig.
Constant	3.201	0.129	24.822	0.000
Product	0.148	0.019	7.713	0.000
Price	0.094	0.020	4.717	0.000
Place	0.084	0.022	3.778	0.000
Promotion	0.079	0.021	3.755	0.000
R=0.566		Adjusted $R^2=0.314$		
$R^2=0.321$		SE=0.204		

1. Product Factors: Product quality emerged as the most significant variable influencing purchasing intentions ($b = 0.148$, $p < 0.01$). Attributes such as additive-free, natural ingredients, and innovative packaging resonate with health-conscious Chinese consumers. Younger buyers value trendy and unique packaging, while educated consumers prioritize transparent labeling of health benefits.

2. Price Factors: Price is the second most influential factor ($b = 0.094$, $p < 0.01$), particularly for middle- and low-income groups. Flexible pricing strategies, such as offering various package sizes, and time-limited discounts during major shopping events like “Double 11,” effectively boost purchase intention.

3. Place Factors: Convenience in distribution channels also significantly impacts purchasing decisions ($b = 0.084$, $p < 0.01$). E-commerce platforms dominate the market, with consumers favoring brands that utilize platforms like Tmall and JD.com. Livestreaming and social e-commerce are additional effective channels for engaging young buyers.

4. Promotion Factors: Although Promotion had the smallest coefficient ($b = 0.079$, $p < 0.01$), it remains critical for increasing brand visibility. Social media advertising, influencer marketing, and festival-specific campaigns effectively enhance purchase intention.

These findings validate the applicability of the 4P framework in the context of Thai dried fruits and provide actionable strategies for tailoring marketing efforts to meet the diverse needs of Chinese consumers.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study highlights the critical role of both demographic characteristics and the 4P marketing mix in shaping Chinese consumers' purchasing intentions for Thai dried fruits. The findings provide meaningful implications for businesses looking to penetrate or expand in the Chinese market.

First, the impact of demographic factors, particularly income, occupation, and education, underscores the importance of segmenting target markets effectively. High-income groups are drawn to premium products with superior quality, unique packaging, and health benefits, reflecting their willingness to pay a premium for imported goods. Businesses can capitalize on this segment by emphasizing the luxurious and health-centric attributes of Thai dried fruits and collaborating with luxury brands to create limited-edition offerings. On the other hand, middle- and low-income groups remain price-sensitive but exhibit strong interest in health-focused snacks. Brands targeting this segment should adopt flexible pricing strategies, such as offering smaller package sizes and frequent promotional discounts, to lower entry barriers while maintaining profitability.

The marketing mix also demonstrates a profound influence on purchase intention. Among the 4Ps:

Product emerges as the most significant factor, with consumers prioritizing quality, taste, and innovative packaging. The natural, additive-free nature of Thai dried fruits resonates with health-conscious buyers, while younger consumers seek visually appealing and trendy designs. These insights suggest that brands must focus on product differentiation through flavor innovations, transparent labeling, and eco-friendly packaging to attract diverse consumer groups.

Price, while secondary to product, remains a key determinant for price-sensitive segments. Promotional campaigns, especially during peak shopping seasons such as "Double 11," offer an

effective means of boosting sales and expanding market share. Dynamic pricing strategies, paired with tiered product offerings, can help brands reach a broader audience while maintaining premium appeal for high-income consumers.

Place is another crucial factor, reflecting the increasing dominance of e-commerce and the importance of omnichannel strategies in China. A strong presence on platforms like Tmall, JD.com, and Douyin is essential, particularly for engaging young, tech-savvy consumers. Offline channels, such as premium supermarkets and convenience stores, remain relevant for older and affluent buyers, particularly in metropolitan areas.

Promotion plays a significant role in building brand recognition and trust. Social media advertising and influencer collaborations are particularly effective in engaging younger audiences and amplifying product visibility. By leveraging the power of live-streaming and social e-commerce, brands can foster emotional connections with consumers, enhancing purchase intention and loyalty.

These findings collectively emphasize the need for businesses to adopt a differentiated and consumer-centric approach to marketing Thai dried fruits in China. By aligning product attributes, pricing, distribution, and promotion with consumer preferences, brands can strengthen their competitiveness in the rapidly evolving Chinese market.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights into the purchasing intentions of Chinese consumers for Thai dried fruits, several limitations must be addressed.

First, the research did not differentiate between high-end and low-end product categories. This lack of segmentation limits the precision of marketing strategy recommendations for different consumer groups. Future studies could explore how these product categories influence purchasing decisions differently and identify tailored strategies for each segment.

Second, the beta coefficient analysis revealed key influencing factors but lacked deeper exploration of their interactions. For instance, while product quality emerged as the most significant variable, its interaction with demographic characteristics such as education or income remains underexplored. Future research could examine these relationships to provide more nuanced insights. Additionally, secondary factors such as price and promotion were not analyzed in terms of their combined effects, which may reveal valuable synergies.

The sample's regional diversity was also limited, with an underrepresentation of consumers from rural areas and lower-tier cities. This may restrict the generalizability of the findings to urban, middle- to high-income populations. Expanding sample coverage to include these segments could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the market.

Lastly, this study focused on the 4P framework without considering other potentially influential variables, such as consumer trust, social influence, or perceived product value. Incorporating these factors in future research could enhance the explanatory power of the model and provide a more holistic view of consumer behavior. Addressing these limitations will not only refine theoretical insights but also strengthen the practical relevance of marketing strategies for Thai dried fruits in the Chinese market.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing Chinese consumers' purchasing intentions for Thai dried fruits, using demographic characteristics and the 4P marketing mix framework. The findings highlight the significant impact of product quality, price flexibility, distribution channels, and promotional efforts on consumer behavior, offering valuable insights for brands seeking to enter or expand in the Chinese market.

Product factors, particularly quality and packaging, emerged as the most influential drivers of purchase intention. Consumers prioritize health-centric attributes, such as additive-free and natural ingredients, while younger buyers value innovative and trendy designs. These insights underscore the importance of product differentiation and branding in appealing to diverse consumer segments.

Price, while secondary to product, remains a critical factor for middle- and low-income consumers. Flexible pricing strategies, combined with promotional discounts during peak shopping periods, can effectively attract these price-sensitive groups. Place factors further demonstrate the growing importance of e-commerce and omnichannel strategies, with platforms like Tmall and JD.com serving as essential sales channels. Additionally, promotion strategies, including influencer collaborations and live-streaming, play a key role in building brand visibility and trust, particularly among younger, tech-savvy audiences.

While the study offers actionable recommendations, it also identifies areas for improvement. Future research should incorporate additional variables such as consumer trust and explore interactions between demographic and marketing factors to provide a more nuanced understanding of consumer behavior. Expanding sample diversity to include rural and lower-tier city consumers can further enhance the generalizability of findings.

Overall, this study not only validates the applicability of the 4P framework in the Chinese market but also provides a roadmap for Thai dried fruit brands to optimize their marketing strategies, strengthen their competitiveness, and maximize consumer purchase intentions.

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