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INFLUENCING OF PACKAGING AND MARKETING COMMUNICATION
ON PERFORMANCE OF FOOD INDUSTRY: MEDIATING ROLE OF
COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE SUPPORT

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Keywords: Packaging, Marketing communication, Competitive advantage, Firm performance.

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine the role of packaging and marketing communication in performance of food industry. The relationship between packaging, marketing communication, competitive advantage and firm performance was examined. Data were collected from Thailand food industry employees. Questionnaire was used for data collection by using cross-sectional research design. Results of the study shows that; packaging has positive effect on firm performance. Marketing communication also has positive effect on firm performance. Additionally, packaging has positive effect on competitive advantage. Finally, marketing communication has positive effect on firm performance. Thus, packaging and marketing communication is most important to promote competitive advantage and firm performance in food industry.

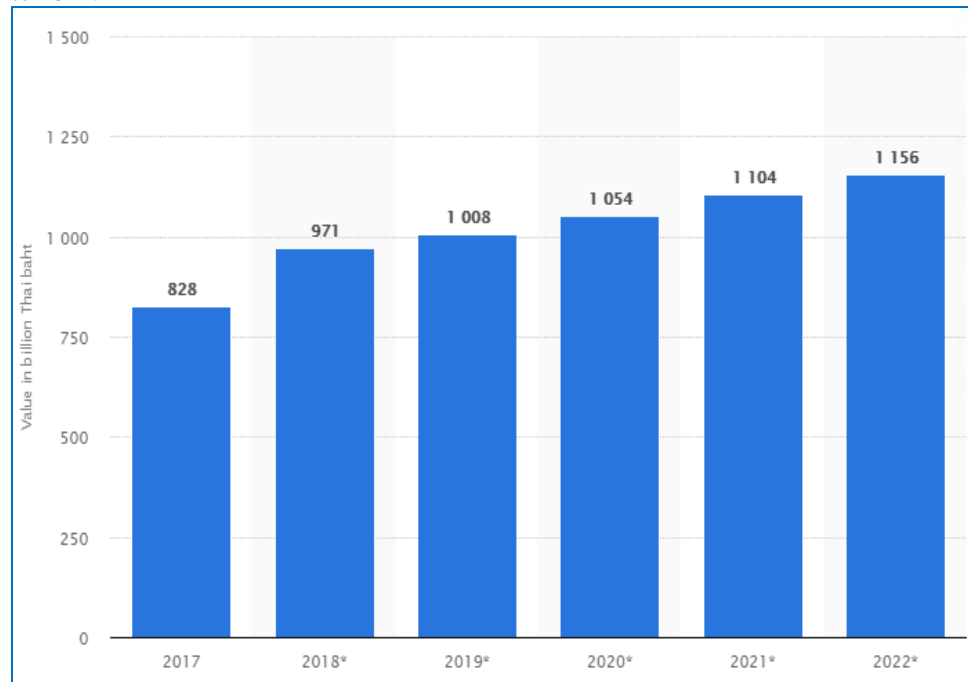
INTRODUCTION

Food industry is operating worldwide having significant important for the society. This industry provides the food products to the people which is the major necessity of every human being. As this industry is dealing with the products which are basic need of every human being, that is why this industry has major importance. To fulfill the need of people is the major concern of every country which require the services of food industry. Therefore, food industry has vital importance for the society (Panahi, Dehghani, Aghbashlo, Karimi, & Tabatabaei, 2020; Salim et al., 2018). Thus, it is important to promote food industry among the nations to fulfill the people needs. To fulfil the basic needs of people, this industry also has major important for the nation as well as for local people in relation to the revenue generation. This industry has vital importance for the people in a society because this is one of the industries which is working at each level. In various areas of the country, this industry providing several business opportunities for the people which has the ability to promote the welfare of the people. Because this industry is producing several job opportunities to the local people which lead to the economic welfare of the people.

This industry is also providing several opportunities related to entrepreneurship activities. The entrepreneurship activities produced by the food industry has major benefits to the people because the basic requirement of people is to become economically strong to spend a good life. Hence, in this direction, the current study fulfils this purpose of the people which has significant potential. Welfare of the people at local level also has the ability to promote welfare at national level. Because along with the local level, this study also enhancing the economic development by increasing the gross-domestic product (GDP). The income generating activities linked with the food industry has major importance for the economy and to enhance the level of GDP. Hence, food industry is most crucial industry in every country (Gullo, Tsamos, Hafner, Ge, & Tassou, 2017; Xu et al., 2019). Number of people are linked with this industry and earning through job opportunities as well as through various entrepreneurship activities. As there is an important relationship between entrepreneurship and food industry (Erista, Andadari, Usmanij, & Ratten, 2020).

Food industry also has major importance for Thailand. Similar to the other countries, the food industry also has major importance in Thailand to fulfil the basic needs of people and to fulfil the various economic needs of people and contributing to the economic development. This industry is playing a vital role in Thailand by providing several benefits to the people in Thailand. Market value of this industry is increasing in Thailand because this industry increasing the investment. Figure 1 shows the market value of this industry which showing that the value is increasing. Furthermore, the forecast of market value is given for 2022 which is also showing that market value is increasing. There is a constant growth in this industry in relation to the market value. Constant growth is one of the major positive signs for this industry. The importance of food industry is also highlighted in various studies carried out in Thailand (Pipatprapa, Huang, & Huang, 2016; Ploenhad, Laoprawatchai, Thongrawd, & Jermisittiparsert, 2019). However, the food requirements are increasing day by day with the increase in population. The growing needs of food require high performance of food industry in Thailand. The low performance of food industry in Thailand cannot fulfill the basic needs of people. Therefore, food industry of Thailand requires better strategies to enhance the performance.

Figure 1: Market value of fresh food industry in Thailand in 2017, and forecasts for 2018 to 2022.



According to the current study, food product packaging is most important. Generally, to attract the customers, food packaging has central role. Better design of food product packaging increases the intention of the people towards the specific product which has the ability to influence the purchase decision of people. Generally, food product packaging has psychological effect on the people which force the people to purchase the given product. Therefore, food packaging has the ability to increase the performance. As the important role of packaging is already given in previous studies (Abidin, Effendi, Ibrahim, & Idris, 2014). Furthermore, the role of marketing is also major in performance. Marketing activities carried out by the food companies increases the customer intention and lead the behavior of customer to purchase the given product. Better marketing communication can increase the business performance of food industry. Marketing is one of the most important tool in business which increases the performance (Porcu, del Barrio-Garcia, Alcántara-Pilar, & Crespo-Almendros, 2019).

The current study is the important study in the food industry of Thailand. Because various scholars provide various studies on food industry (Chiadamrong & Sophonsaritsook, 2015; Erista et al., 2020; Gullo et al., 2017; Hu, Chang, Hsieh, & Chen, 2010; Xu et al., 2019), however, in very rare cases any author consider the mediating role of competitive advantage in firm performance of food industry. The combination between packaging, marketing communication, competitive advantage and firm performance was not examined in the previous studies. Hence, this is one of the studies which has vital importance for the literature as well as practice. Thus, the contribution of the current study in food industry of Thailand cannot be neglected.

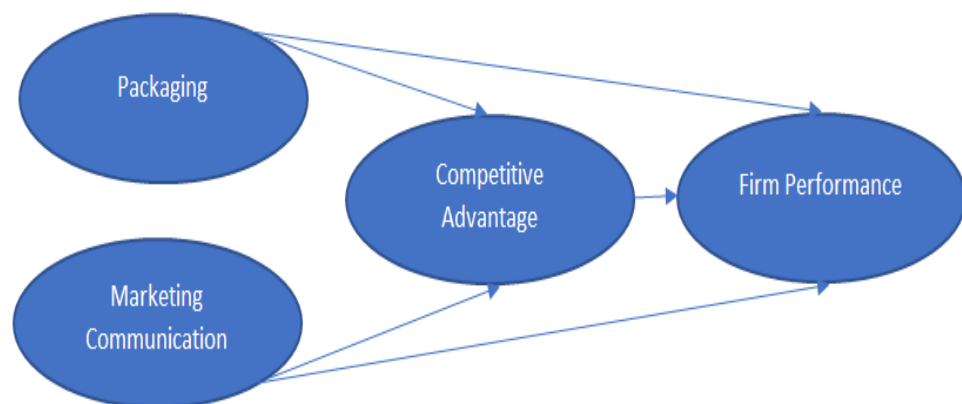
Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the role of packaging and marketing communication in performance of food industry. The relationship between packaging, marketing communication, competitive advantage and firm performance was examined. In this study, competitive advantage is also considered as one of the important tools for firm performance. It has the ability to increase the firm performance. Therefore, competitive advantage is considered as the mediating variables.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the business industry, the major objective of companies is to achieve higher performance. The major goal of every company is based on the shareholders wealth maximization and to increase the profitability. Both the goals are related to the shareholders wealth maximization and profitability. As shareholders wealth maximization and profitability is associated with the performance of the company. Better performance of the company promotes the shareholders wealth maximization and profitability. As the increase in performance increases the profitability of the companies. Therefore, it is most important for the companies to increase the business performance (Ghouri, Mani, Khan, Khan, & Srivastava, 2020; Mehta, Ali, Farooq, & Tariq, 2020). Thus, along with the other companies, the performance of food industry is also important. The overall performance of food industry is based on the performance of food industry firms and all the firms collectively effect on business performance. The vital importance of food industry is really important for the people. As this industry has vital role in the society to provide business activities and to meet the needs of people.

Companies are moving towards different strategies to enhance the business performance and to compete in the market. To maintain sustainability in business performance is not easy because in highly competitive market, the consistent performance is not easy to maintain which require important strategies implementation. According to the literature, various authors highlighted that; in competition, the role of various strategies is important to handle the situation and to enhance the performance of business. In this direction, the current study introduced packaging and marketing information which has vital role in business success. In high competition, product packaging has important role which may influence the customers and increases the business performance (Jena et al., 2019). Along with the packaging, the role of marketing is vital. Without proper marketing, the success is tough in high competition. As highlighted that marketing is an instrument to increase performance (Fiaz et al., 2019). Marketing has the ability to influence the competition in the business market with the help of competitive advantage. In the business market, the role for competitive advantage cannot be neglected (Bhatt, Emdad, Roberts, & Grover, 2010) to achieve higher business performance. Along with this, packaging also has major importance to promote business performance by gaining competitive advantage. The relationship between packaging, marketing communication, competitive advantage and firm performance is highlighted in Figure 2.

Figure 2.



Packaging is the science, art as well as technology of enfolding or protecting products for distribution, storage, sale, and use. In the recent decade, various technologies are available which has major role to do the packaging in various designs. Product packaging design denotes to the creation of the external design of a product which comprises choices in material as well as graphics, colors and fonts that are used on

covering, a box, a can, a bottle or any type of container. Companies use different product designs to sell the product. The product packaging design has vital importance for the companies to sell the product and increase the level of attraction among the customers. The product packaging is the outer look of product which has importance for the company. The packaging of the product attracts the customer to see the product and then it led to the purchase of product. Generally, most of the company's focus on the product packaging to influence the customers. As it has significant influence on mind of customers which has the potential to influence the purchasing decision and it has the ability to change the design of the customer to purchase the company product and leave the other company product. Therefore, previous studies also shows that it has major influence in the company (Abidin et al., 2014; Irwandi, Man, Yusof, Jinap, & Sugisawa, 1998; Jena et al., 2019; Phua et al., 2018).

Packaging has the ability to influence the performance of the company. It has important contribution to enhance the firm performance. Better packaging design is the point of intention for the customers which has influence on the firm performance. Usually, packaging has influence on the firm performance through product performance. As the better packaging of the product influence on the performance of the product. It has the ability to increase the product performance and increase in product performance has the potential to influence positively the firm performance. Previous studies also shows the relationship between product and firm performance (Gilley, Worrell, Davidson III, & El-Jelly, 2000; Javeed, Latief, & Lefen, 2020).

Furthermore, another important factor is marketing communication. Marketing communication is one of the vital aspects of any company which has major role in success. All the companies use marketing activities to influence the customers and to increase the sales. In this way, marketing communication is one of the major parts of companies to influence the customers and increase the sale. Marketing communication is an essential part of company activities and it is also complex part of a firm's marketing efforts which is most important to achieve for the companies. Marketing communication comprises advertising, direct marketing, branding, packaging, along with the online presence, printed materials, sales presentations, sponsorships, trade show appearances and more. Therefore, marketing activities are not only limited to the advertisement activities, but it has many activities which has the important influence on the business activities. As marketing has the ability to positively influence the firm performance which is highlighted in number of previous investigation which is proved that marketing is vital to get success (Duffett, Petroşanu, Negricea, & Edu, 2019; Falahat, Ramayah, Soto-Acosta, & Lee, 2020; Hoque, Hashim, & Azmi, 2018). There are number of marketing activities are available in the literature having major influence on the business activities and these activities are the major tools of business success by promoting the sales of product. Therefore, the importance of marketing communication cannot be neglected to promote firm performance (Porcu, del Barrio-García, Kitchen, & Tourky, 2019). Consequently, from the previous studies, it is clear that marketing communication is the major factor which is adopting by the companies to enhance the sales of the products by influencing the customers and it has major psychological effect on the customers which lead them to purchase the product for a specific company. Therefore, it has real importance for the company to increase the business performance with the help of marketing activities. Hence, it has positive role to influence the firm performance. Additionally, product packaging also has similar role in the business performance which effect on the product performance and ultimately influence positively on the firm performance. Thus, it is hypothesized that;

Hypothesis 1: Packaging has positive effect on firm performance.

Hypothesis 2: Marketing communication has positive effect on firm performance.

Competitive advantage is another important part of companies which has major role to influence the business activities and having great support to the companies to get success in several business activities and compete with the competitor by increasing the business performance. It has the vital role to influence the business activities to lead company towards higher business success. Therefore, competitive advantage has real importance for the companies to achieve higher business performance and to compete with the competitors in the market. Competitive advantage can be described through different factors, for instance, it denotes to the factors that give the permission to the company to produce goods as well as services better or more economically than its rivals. These factors permit the productive entity to generate more sales or superior margins compared to its market rivals. Competitive advantage can be consisted of various skills by the company. The unique skills by the company can make the difference. The capabilities of the company which do not have the competitor is also the major part of competitive advantage. Any other unique element which do not have by the competitors in the market can defined as the competitive advantage which has the ability to influence the business performance. Hence, several previous studies highlighted the major role of competitive advantage in business (Chan, Shaffer, & Snape, 2004; Mahdi, Abbas, Mazar, & George, 2015; Sirmon, Hitt, Arregle, & Campbell, 2010). Therefore, companies must influence various strategies to gain competitive advantage which can increase the performance.

According to the current study, competitive advantage can be promoted with the help of two major factors. First, the competitive advantage can be promoted with the help of product packaging. Product packaging has the ability to attain significant competitive advantage to support business performance. To show a good competitive advantage, the company must focus to develop a good product packaging design. As the better packaging design only can promote competitive advantage. To achieve this purpose, the company must have better skills, otherwise, the unique design cannot be achieved. In this direction, the capabilities of the employees have vital importance which can help to enhance the competitive design. As it is mentioned earlier that good capabilities of the employees are also the competitive advantage. Therefore, good employees' capabilities can provide new idea which has the potential to design product outer shape of packaging. Number of authors in the literature highlight that product design require capabilities of the employees. As the employees having better capabilities can provide innovative ideas to design the product packaging and remain successful to make product design attractive. It is really important for the business activities to generate innovative ideas which is based on the innovative ideas (Evans et al., 2017; Hafiz & Sary, 2020; Shujahat et al., 2019). It is also proved by the studies that innovation as major role in business activities. Therefore, new ideas generated by the employees to design product packaging has the ability to enhance the performance.

Additionally, along with the positive role of packaging in competitive advantage, marketing also has major importance to enhance the competitive advantage. Major marketing communication among the companies has positive role to highlight the competitive advantage which further has major influence on business performance. Especially, in the food industry, the marketing activities are more important. As the food related companies has major importance for the society, therefore, these companies have important role to increase the business performance with the help of competitive advantage which can be promoted with the help of marketing communication. Food supply companies already using the marketing activities, therefore, to gain a competitive advantage these companies should promote marketing strategies to enhance the marketing communication. The relationship between marketing and competitive advantage is already given in the literature which has major influence to promote business performance in several industries (Alao, Adefulu, Asikhia, & Makinde, 2020; Bauman, McFadden, & Jablonski, 2018). Hence, following hypotheses are proposed;

Hypothesis 3: Packaging has positive effect on competitive advantage.

Hypothesis 4: Marketing communication has positive effect on competitive advantage.

Hypothesis 5: Competitive advantage has positive effect on firm performance.

Hypothesis 6: Competitive advantage mediates the relationship between packaging and firm performance.

Hypothesis 7: Competitive advantage mediates the relationship between marketing communication and firm performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from Thailand food industry employees. Questionnaire was used for data collection by using cross-sectional research design. 400 questionnaires were used in this study for data collection. Cross-sectional research design was used in this study which is most suitable. After the distribution of questionnaires, 225 were returned and used in data analysis. These 225 questionnaires contain the valid responses, as invalid responses were excluded from the study. All the questionnaires were distributed by using simple random sampling. Measures of these variables are adopted from previous studies. Questionnaires was divided into various sections such as profile of respondents and research items related to the variables. The current study examined the data to remove the errors which is given in Table 1. It is proved that data is free from errors and accurate to proceed further for the next step of data analysis.

Table 1: Data Statistics

	No.	Missing	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Standard Deviation	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness
PACK1	1	0	3.399	4	1	5	1.385	-1.086	-0.437
PACK2	2	0	3.487	4	1	5	1.32	-0.903	-1.53
PACK3	3	0	3.425	4	1	5	1.345	-1.122	-0.36
PACK4	4	0	3.503	4	1	5	1.196	-0.66	-0.445
PACK5	5	0	3.523	4	2	5	0.876	-0.689	0.021
PACK6	6	0	3.415	3	2	5	0.854	-1.563	1.194
PACK7	7	0	3.389	3	1	5	1.058	-0.219	-0.433
PACK8	8	0	3.43	3	2	5	0.759	-0.42	-0.19
PACK9	9	0	3.503	4	2	5	0.749	-0.301	-0.456
MC1	10	0	3.503	4	2	5	0.87	-1.666	-0.079
MC2	11	0	3.57	4	2	5	0.856	-0.573	-1.195
MC3	12	0	3.565	4	2	5	0.8	-0.411	-0.152
MC4	13	0	3.725	4	2	5	0.883	-0.589	-0.296
MC5	14	0	3.829	4	2	5	0.85	-1.497	-0.328
CA1	15	0	3.705	4	2	5	0.846	-0.475	-1.273
CA2	16	0	3.746	4	2	5	0.883	-0.65	-0.251
CA3	17	0	3.715	4	2	5	0.885	-0.626	-0.264
CA4	18	0	3.58	4	2	5	0.919	-0.844	0.003
CA5	19	0	3.523	3	2	5	0.876	-0.699	0.115
FP1	20	0	3.435	4	1	5	1.076	-0.246	-0.46
FP2	21	0	3.565	4	2	5	0.88	-0.673	-0.13
FP3	22	0	3.658	4	2	5	0.937	-0.869	-0.143
FP4	23	0	3.705	4	2	5	0.9	-0.811	-0.112
FP5	24	0	3.782	4	2	5	0.907	-0.64	-0.352

FINDINGS

Factor loadings is given in Table 2. Packaging is measured by using nine items. Marketing communication is measured by using five items. Competitive advantage is measured by using five items and finally, firm performance is measured by using five items. It is found that, packaging, marketing communication, competitive advantage and firm performance achieved the minimum level of threshold for factor loadings. In this step, confirmatory factor analysis is carried out by using the Partial Least Square (PLS) (F. Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, & G. Kuppelwieser, 2014; J. Hair, Hollingsworth,

Randolph, & Chong, 2017; J. F. Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013; J. F. Hair, Sarstedt, Pieper, & Ringle, 2012).

Figure 3. Measurement Model.

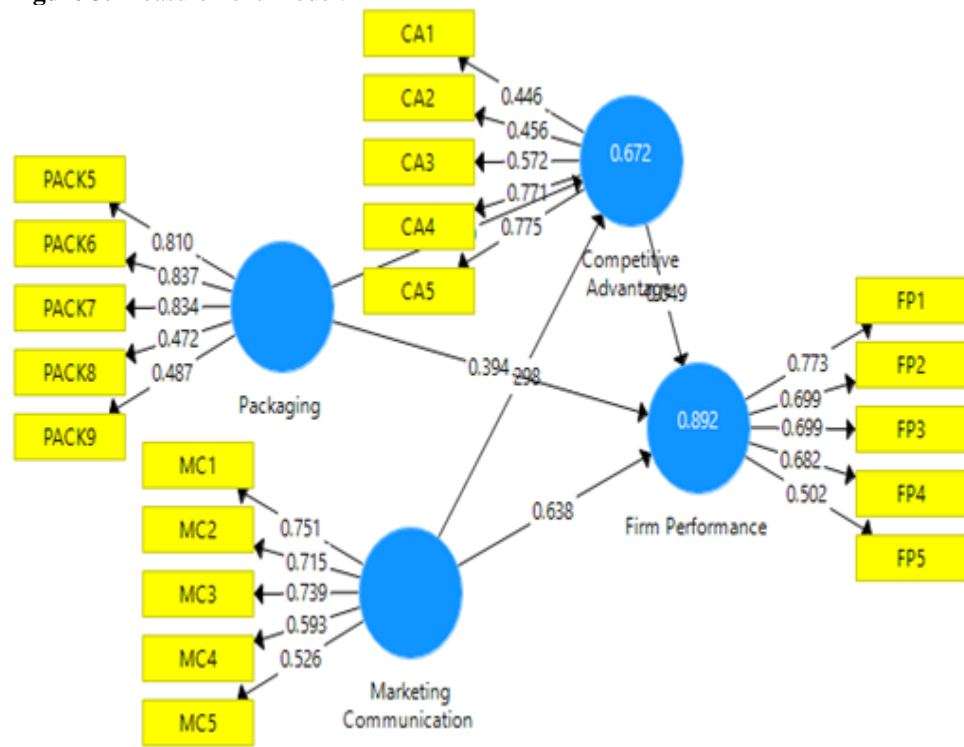


Table 2: Factor Loadings

	Competitive Advantage	Firm Performance	Marketing Communication	Packaging
CA1	0.446			
CA2	0.456			
CA3	0.572			
CA4	0.771			
CA5	0.775			
FP1		0.773		
FP2		0.699		
FP3		0.699		
FP4		0.682		
FP5		0.502		
MC1			0.751	
MC2			0.715	
MC3			0.739	
MC4			0.593	
MC5			0.526	
PACK5				0.81
PACK6				0.837
PACK7				0.834
PACK8				0.472
PACK9				0.487

Table 3 shows the composite reliability (CR) for packaging, marketing communication, competitive advantage and firm performance which is above 0.7. Average variance extracted (AVE) is also given in Table 3 which is above 0.5 for packaging, marketing communication, competitive advantage and firm performance. CR must be above 0.7 and AVE must be above 0.5 (Hameed, Basheer, Iqbal, Anwar, & Ahmad, 2018). Finally, discriminant validity is given in Table 4 by using the cross loadings (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015).

Table 3: Reliability and Convergent Validity.

	Alpha	rho_A	CR	(AVE)
Competitive Advantage	0.737	0.79	0.748	0.786
Firm Performance	0.797	0.711	0.806	0.758
Marketing Communication	0.792	0.71	0.801	0.745
Packaging	0.737	0.817	0.826	0.703

Table 4: Cross-Loadings

	Competitive Advantage	Firm Performance	Marketing Communication	Packaging
CA1	0.446	0.273	0.327	0.205
CA2	0.456	0.273	0.343	0.166
CA3	0.572	0.293	0.376	0.245
CA4	0.771	0.638	0.561	0.752
CA5	0.775	0.62	0.624	0.714
FP1	0.533	0.793	0.572	0.784
FP2	0.508	0.699	0.675	0.616
FP3	0.527	0.699	0.665	0.625
FP4	0.451	0.682	0.654	0.491
FP5	0.512	0.592	0.543	0.374
MC1	0.504	0.711	0.751	0.654
MC2	0.557	0.705	0.715	0.668
MC3	0.5	0.725	0.739	0.607
MC4	0.543	0.506	0.593	0.39
MC5	0.412	0.346	0.526	0.302
PACK5	0.772	0.677	0.617	0.81
PACK6	0.755	0.739	0.77	0.837
PACK7	0.555	0.787	0.624	0.834
PACK8	0.242	0.377	0.359	0.472
PACK9	0.287	0.362	0.385	0.487

Furthermore, next step was used to check the relationship between packaging, marketing communication, competitive advantage and firm performance. This relationship was examined by using PLS structural model (Gadzo, Kportorgbi, & Gatsi, 2019; Henseler & Fassott, 2010). The direct effect of packaging was examined on competitive advantage and firm performance. The direct effect of marketing communication was examined on competitive advantage and firm performance. Results of the study shows that all the relationships are significant, however, the relationship between competitive advantage and firm performance is not significant. The mediation effect is given in Table 6 in which one mediation effect is significant between marketing communication and firm performance.

Figure 4: Structural Model.

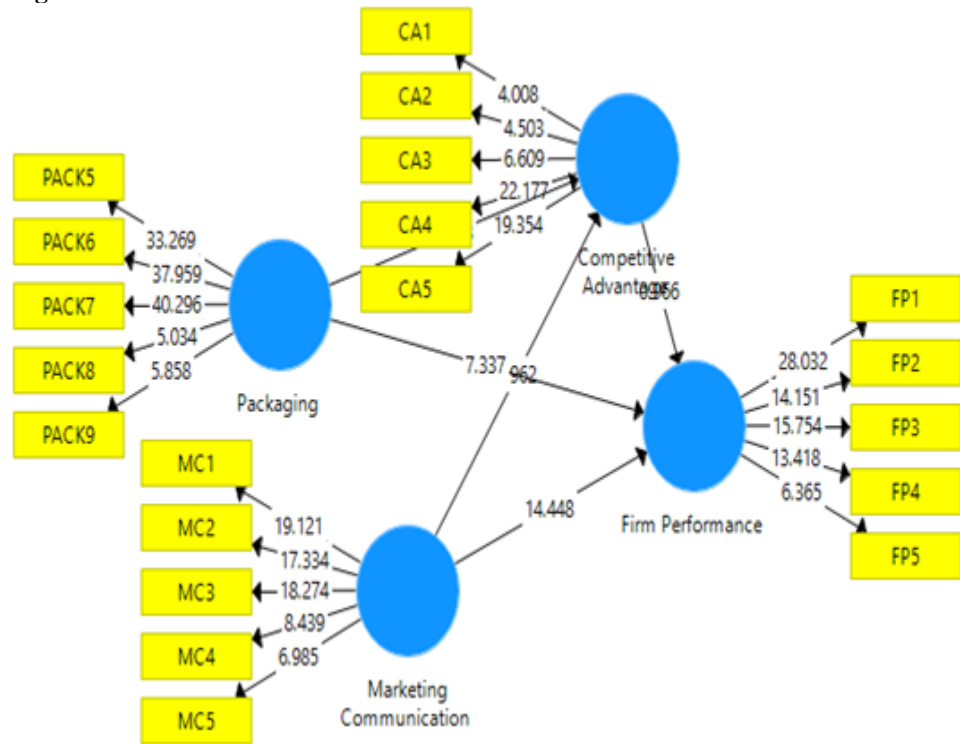


Table 5: Direct Effect Results.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Competitive Advantage -> Firm Performance	-0.049	-0.054	0.051	0.966	0.334
Marketing Communication -> Competitive Advantage	0.298	0.292	0.101	2.962	0.003
Marketing Communication -> Firm Performance	0.638	0.645	0.044	14.448	0
Packaging -> Competitive Advantage	0.56	0.57	0.099	5.668	0
Packaging -> Firm Performance	0.394	0.392	0.054	7.337	0

Table 6: Indirect Effect Results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Marketing Communication -> Competitive Advantage -> Firm Performance	-0.015	-0.015	0.003	4.999	0
Packaging -> Competitive Advantage -> Firm Performance	-0.028	-0.032	0.03	0.915	0.36

CONCLUSION

The relationship between packaging, marketing communication, competitive advantage and firm performance was examined. Data were collected from food industry employees by using a survey questionnaire. The objective of this study was to examine the role of packaging and marketing communication in performance of food industry. Findings of the study highlighted major results for the food industry of Thailand. Results of the study shows that; packaging has positive effect on firm performance. It shows that increase in better designing of packaging increases the firm performance. Marketing communication also has positive effect on firm performance which shows that marketing communication increases the firm performance. Moreover, packaging has positive effect on competitive advantage. In addition to this, marketing communication has positive effect on firm performance. Therefore, both the packaging and marketing communication has positive effect on competitive advantage.

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