



## Local Identity in Food Packaging Design Case Study : Samut Songkhram Province

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### Abstract

“Small and Micro Community Enterprise” (SMCE) has been the major factor to drive the economy of Thai communities. Nowadays, Thai SMCE lacks valid and appropriate directions, by focusing mainly on business procedures in order to struggle in the competitive free-capitalism export market as to the globalization stream. Thus, the directions of packaging design of Thai community products have now been influenced by international conditions. The identity and uniqueness, therefore, are inevitably swept away by the globalized society. The aims of this research are 1) to study the way of geometric art composition on packaging in order to create the image and reflect both characteristics and origins of community food products in Samut Songkhram province and 2) to seek for the way to apply the identity of the community onto the food products’ packaging, which is used for retail trade, transportation, and sale promotion, making it usable and cost-effective.

Researching process to create a local identity for food packaging design in Thailand started from valid and appropriate directions, by defining “SMCE” with a new paradigm aiming to create an integrated balanced system for the strength and the sustainability of communities. This study divides the economic advantage factors of communities into three categories, including 1) non-monetary capital, 2) knowledge, and 3) community marketing. The Sufficiency Economy philosophy is used as the framework in this study, and a guideline for applying the philosophy to the community products for highest productivity.

A study shows that the local food products can be coded by that 3 variables factors, separating the smaller group of the local food products into 6 criteria, which are 1) Types of raw materials 2) Opportunities to replace the raw materials 3) Processing 4) Familiarity of products 5) Reputation of brands and 6) Product’s life cycle, which divide the local food products to the total of 64 codes to be used as the basis of design guidelines to make it suitable for the available market within the market in and outside the community as well as the export markets. This research will not include necessary food consumed in everyday life.

The guidelines of local identity design principle for food packaging are analyzed through a table matrix from the variable factors of community economic advantages with 4 basic marketing functions of packaging 1) Communications and identification 2) Reflection of brand image 3) Accessibility to target market and 4) Sale promotion, which can make the total of 32 principles for local food packaging design, which can make use of the design analysis to create a layout of questionnaire for finding the real need of target group by 8 principles and 32 groups of local food product suitable for distribution in a particular season, and 2 groups of local product have a good opportunity to be sold in a market outside

community or export market, then the design principles that define the guidelines to be applied for all types of local food product in community.

**Keywords:** Local identity, Food packaging design, Community enterprise.

## Introduction

The policies of Thai Small and Micro Community Enterprise (SMCE) under the paradigm of the western free-trade in globalization have worsened the quality of life of people in society. A variety of social heritage falls into crisis as there has been an unconscious use deteriorating the valuable natural resources for years. There are also environmental problems. There are harmful chemicals use or contamination in food. There is also an impact on the way of life of people in community, once was simple, generous, and untied, that now tends to be more selfish, due to the implanted ideas of the SMCE business, which focuses on competition in order to gain as much profit as possible. This causes the social structure to be more individual, ruins the unity of a community, and also weakens the strength and sustainability of the community since it needs to rely on outside factors such as export incomes. If there is a global economic collapse or a lack of sufficient funds, community enterprise surely meets an inevitable end, leading to failures in social development.

Local identity in packaging design has been gradually melted down and wiped away by the globalization stream until it lacks the charm and identity as an industrial product by the need to be taken within the framework of ideas that form as standard of trade regulations, to reduce the risk and transport costs in the process of sorting, conveying, and storage. The considerations of consumers' purchase are under way for the hastiness filled with confusions; because of the market today are flooded with so many kinds of products and brands with a variety of style. Therefore, the improvement of quality and uniqueness of the product is a channel that needs more attention. Thus, this results in an advantage

for entrepreneurs with large capital, because the competition for business investment is necessary to be invested in the purchase of raw materials and modern equipment, the recruit of labors, specialists and consultants in marketing and product development, and also professional packaging designers and precipitation in the advertising budget to help create cost-effective return on marketing.

Sufficiency Economy philosophy of the King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who start a concept to build strong and sustainable economy, is appropriate to the context of Thai society under globalization and free trade, which is fast-changing and competitive. He has emphasized the development of guidelines on the main concept of self-reliance, in order to have enough economy for the majority of people, using the principle of moderation, regard for plausibility in the good immunization that is consistent with the localization paradigm [1] by Prof. Dr. Prawet Wasi, against globalization, by combining local wisdom used to guide and propel the society to strive for the happiness of society, rather than to measure the success of the development by the number of GDP (Gross Domestic Product.) A new social paradigm in postmodern era has turned its focus on the foundation of society, that is, the "community," to become strong and sustainable. In keeping with the primary balance in the way of integration of sufficiency, the community must turn to self-reliance with the support of government agencies. The community should make use of their economic advantages that are often overlooked, such as local wisdom in food processing, distinctive natural resources, inherited skills of labors, scholars, etc, to enable economic efficiency, natural resource management, and the quality of life for the community.

Grouping the community products into steps according to the new theory shows that the Sufficiency Economy philosophy is not opposed to market expansion or export markets outside the community in any way. Moreover, the Sufficiency Economy philosophy is not a conceptual framework to design packages that only focuses on a simplicity or low budget, instead to grant a community the maximum potential to manage resources in respect to the social condition. The lack of understanding of the Sufficiency Economy principles, which could be applied to community enterprises appropriately and in accordance with the requirements of target group, is another important issue that people do not realize. It is a philosophy that is highly abstract, difficult to make use with communities that are not defined as a model of concept in a clear application. Therefore, issues of community could not be truly solved, although implementation of the Sufficiency Economy philosophy has been done.

The aims of this research have the same direction as the 10<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan (2007–2011) which was established on the basis of the constant strengthening of the country's capital which includes social capital, economic capital, natural resource and environmental capital. It puts priority on "people-centered development" rather than the development measured by the economic indicators, and brings the philosophy of "Sufficiency Economy" as a guideline for moving forward toward "social happiness." Therefore, Thailand's human and social development strategy has a high priority on developing the quality of people. "People" are the ultimate goal, are the ones who will benefit from the development and at the same time perform as the drive to the desired development. Thus, people need improvement in all dimensions; balance of body and mind, knowledge and skills. People should be ready to face the changes that will occur, in order to live

with dignity and with security of economy in the family warmth and social peace. At the same time people should perform as the driving force in economic development for quality, stability, fairness, and also the management of natural resources and environment as the base of life and sustainable development, which finally leads to a happy and peaceful society.

In order to make a product different in the market, the analysis of the point of sale and brand positioning must start with defining the SMCE to fit the context of Thai society according to the Sufficiency Economy philosophy. To apply the principles in the management of community economic factors to optimize the economy of community, instead of to compete with money, is a cornerstone in building and maintaining the local identity. The research aims towards creating a paradigm shift in local food packaging design, which can be applied by all communities to create the uniqueness of their food products.

### **Aims**

From the significance of the above problems, the objectives of this research are to:

1. Study the way of geometric art composition on packaging in order to create the image and reflect both characteristics and origins of community food products in Samut Songkhram province and
2. Seek for the way to apply the identity of the community onto the food products' packaging, which is used for retail trade, transportation, and sale promotion, making it usable and cost-effective.
3. Make an instruction manual for creating an appropriate design of food products regarding the types of products and marketing factors.
4. Design the packaging samples for local food products in Samut Songkhram province, including 3 groups of products; processed

agricultural products, processed seafood products, and dessert.

### **Hypothesis**

Local food packaging under a design concept, reacting to the demand of society under the concept of Sufficiency Economy philosophy, can create a different packaging identity that satisfies the target group with statistical significance.

### **Framework of Research**

In this study the researcher sets the framework as followed:

#### **1. Framework for creating a corporate identity**

To make a difference in packaging design can be done in 2 ways, which are;

- 1) To make a difference with a packaging innovation.
- 2) To make a difference with the positioning of brands and products.

#### **2. Framework for definition of “Enterprise Community”**

Community enterprise under the concept of Sufficiency Economy philosophy has 7 characteristics, that are 1) Owned and operated by the community 2) Products from the process of community 3) Initiative, creative innovation by the community 4) Base local knowledge combined together with outside ones 5) Has the integrating production activities 6) Learning as the heart of the entire process, and 7) Self-reliance is the most important goal of the operations.

#### **3. Framework of the advantage factors of community economy**

1) The market considered the most important of community is the community itself, because the community has the certain number of consumers and demand.

- 2) Local wisdom knowledge to be used as

a foundation and a flexible framework to develop the community.

3) Capital in the community, which means the non-monetary capital divided into 4 types of capital; consuming properties capital, natural resource, social capital, and human resources.

#### **4. Framework for factors of community economic management**

The principles of management relating economic, social, and environmental factors for a sustainable development are;

“New theory”

According to His Majesty, the development of the 3 steps is the process that is, **Step 1**, make the production under the concept of “Sufficiency Economy” in which farmers can earn themselves economical living before developing to stage of having-enough economy for consumption with almost no expenses. **Step 2**, join forces in a group or cooperative in terms of production process, marketing, public welfare, education, and religion in order to build a stronger community that its members participate in the development, granted the cooperation from all parties such as public and private organizations concerned. **Step 3**, create a network and expand the variety of activities by the collaboration with the business, government and NGOs, in financial resources, marketing, production, information management and others leading to cost reductions, increasing the interests of the group and better quality of life and strengthening the group at national level.

“Sufficiency Economy philosophy”

It is a guideline to a development on self-reliance, to be enough for the majority of people, using the principle of moderation, plausibility, immunization, and is also aware of a linear development process using knowledge, integrity, and perseverance in action and in sustainable living.

5. Framework for relation of packaging design

Marketing purposes	Marketing mix	Role of marketing for package
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a sense</li> <li>- Create a good understanding</li> <li>- Create image</li> <li>- Changed behavior</li> <li>- Urge purchase decisions</li> </ul>	Product	Communications and identification
	Price	Reflects the image
	Place	Reach the target group
	Promotion	Sale promotion

Table 1: Shows the relation of marketing communications theory

6. Framework for applying in graphic design

According to the theory of marketing aesthetic by Bernd Schmitt and Alex Simonson, the impressions of the clients depend on how to impress them in a variety of unique composition. These impressions appear to be seen through the concept of aesthetic, which includes style and themes.

Process of Research

To effectively carry out, achieve, and complete this research, the research process operations can be divided into 2 steps as followed:

**Step 1**, analyze data to determine the definition of community enterprises. The Sufficiency Economic philosophy is used as a framework to manage factors of the advantage factors of community economy including 1) capital 2) knowledge and 3) marketing to be suitable for types of product and market.

**Step 2**, summarize the data analysis to apply the concept to a model in local food packaging design for more effectiveness in the market. Application with the conclusions of the study will be used as a framework for creating questionnaires to analyze data of the target groups.

Results

The results from this research can summarize the findings of the research objectives as followed:

*Summary of segment type of local food*

To support the adoption of designed guidelines to be properly-working, you can set the variable capital (natural resources) on knowledge and marketing into groups to the total of 64 product groups represented by the code number “1” or “2” in 6 places as followed:

- Number “1” in the first digit represents groups that use raw materials from the resource, can be found in anywhere else, such as bananas or lemon.
- Number “2” in the first digit represents groups that use raw material, which are endemic or well known, such as razor clams in Samut Songkhram province.
- Number “1” in the second digit represents groups that use raw material that can be replaced easily.
- Code numbers “2” in the second digit represents groups that use material at risk of extinction.
- Number “1” in the third digit represents groups of products that use the processing of local wisdom.
- Code number “2” in the third digit

represents groups of products that use industrial or semi-industrial processing.

- Code number “1” in the fourth digit represents groups that are familiar products.
- Number “2” in the fourth digit represents a new products that are unique.
- Code number “1” in the fifth digit represents groups that are unknown brands.
- Number “2” in the fifth digit represents groups that are well-known brands.
- Number “1” in the sixth digit represents groups of products with life cycle (without using chemicals) less than a week.
- Number “2” in the sixth digit represents groups of products with life cycle (without. chemical use) more than a week.

For example, a community food product with code “C2-2-2-2-1-2”, uses raw materials that are endemic or well-known, uses the material at risk of extinction, uses industrial processing, is a new and unique product, is an unknown brand and with product life cycle (without using chemicals) more than a week. The products with this set of code are, for example, “Chao Lay,” baked razor clams with black pepper, and “Sai Tharn,” mackerel with dried chilies.

#### *Summary of guidelines for packaging design*

To serve as guidelines applied in the packaging design for a local food products in areas such as:

- Offering information on packaging.
- Ways of making a difference in packaging design.
- Used as a guide to create and reflect the image of product in packaging design.
- Used as a guide to create query for accessing the real needs of target groups.
- Used as guidelines for point of purchase design.

This is to provide a vehicle to be used as a guide in food packaging design, can meet the functionality and marketing in 4 points:

### 1. Communication and identification

1.1 Can be used as a guide to offer information on the packaging which are 1) Presenting the responsibility to create a sense of confidence to consumers and (2 Presenting useful information for making decision and have the annotation by sale.

1.2 Can be used as a guide to create a difference in community product as followed:

- Packaging Design by combining natural materials in local area.
- Packaging Design by applying social and cultural heritage.
- Packaging Design by applying local wisdom knowledge.
- Packaging Design to support new product, developed from a local wisdom knowledge.
- Packaging Design in terms of reducing transport and storage pending sale factor to considering.
- Packaging Design consistent relationship with the distribution of tourist places.

### 2. Reflect the image

Can be used as guidelines to create and reflect the image for packaging design.

- To create a brand’s image with the community product with high precision.
- To create the image of natural resources and the environment concern.
- To create the image of society and cultural heritage concern.
- To create the image of conservation local wisdom related to packaging
- To create the image of the application of local knowledge related to food.
- To create the image of the product for health without using chemicals.
- To create the image of the friendly people in the rural community.
- To create the image of the premium grade product.

3. To reach the target group

Can be used as a guide to create a query for accessing the actual needs of target groups which are:

- To study a trust of food production groups in quality and safety.
- To study a level of importance factors of a natural resource and environment conservation image.
- To study a level of importance of society and culture heritage conservation factors.
- To study the level of acceptance in the local packaging style for sale as souvenirs.
- Studying by compare the importance factors of affecting the purchasing decision in community product.
- To study the need of target group to purchase the community product.
- To study a factor for making a decision of target group by shopping community food.
- To study basic data and tastes of target

group.

4. To promote

Can be used as guidelines for point of purchase design, including:

- The consistent and appropriate way of rural community for display design.
- Product distribution by appropriate season for display design.
- Product distribution associated with the local customs and traditions associated with food product for display design.
- Product distribution from the application of local knowledge related to packaging for display design.
- Reflect the value of local knowledge related to food for display design.
- Display design by searching the needs of target group appropriately.
- Product demonstration or other activities to enhance the attractiveness and display design in terms of pleasure rather than a competitive sale.

	<b>Community enterprises of “dependency”</b>	<b>Community enterprises of “sufficiency”</b>
Communication and identification	To build credibility and differentiation with an outstanding uniqueness and attractiveness.	To build confidence and a difference in the product with the creation of wisdom knowledge.
Reflect brand image	To create value for the product by offering the product at the high price level through the media	To create value for the product by offering the product quality and value of conservation.
To reach target group	Access tastes and needs of target groups in fragmented.	Access tastes and needs of target groups in particular.
Sale promotion	The type of persuasive sales target under the special invitation proposed.	The type of sale opportunities that enjoyed in terms of tourism activities.

Table 2: Shows the comparative paradigm for local packaging design.

**Results and Disussion**

**1. The way of design for some community product groups**

Some groups of community products are qualified in the application of design principles

derived from summary data analysis. These consist of;

- 1) Groups of using the raw material at risk of extinction

Based on the code of the community

product, groups with number “2” in the second digit with a total of 32 groups, as some resources are available in limited quantities and are not consistent throughout the year, it is not consistent with consumer’s demand. The more these resources are processed, the bigger the risk of extinction becomes; for example, sprinkling lime to hunt razor clams, using fishing net with small eyes to hunt mackerel in the spawning season, etc. Therefore, groups that use natural resources at risk of extinction are the product groups suitable for the guidance of distribution according to the season for sale promotion, by promoting the annual community festival that tourists will be able to buy certain products only in a specific season. There can be several types of products rotating throughout the year. This will help preserving these renewable resources and increasing the demand of tourists on the other hand.

2) Groups of using processing of local wisdom

Based on the code of the community product, groups with number “1” in the third digit with a total of 32 groups are the product groups that are suitable for the guidance of building image in the conservation of local wisdom related to food and types of products that reflect the value for product. Although some products, such as **coconut sugar**, do not look so high in value, if consumers are aware of the difficulty in processing by the local wisdom based on principles of nature, without using chemicals, it is possible that consumers will realize the differences and consider the value of these products higher than those industrially-processed products like **granulated sugar**.

3) Groups of familiar products

Based on the code of the community product, groups with number “1” in the fourth digit with a total of 32 groups are community product groups that should be developed to be new products applied from the local wisdom to create a point of sale that are different from other

brands. The differences will lead to opportunities for trading advantage, more easily than being a follower or an imitator. It is possible that the community can somewhat easily apply their local knowledge or understanding to develop new products. It can be seen that the current researches from various educational institutions in the community tend to more and more focus on how to develop food products.

**2. The local product groups are suitable for the market outside community according to Step 3 of “New theory”**

To respond the needs of the market outside community

These groups are in progress by considering basic features in the important manufacturing for 2 points: 1) Raw material that can be replaced easily 2) Product life cycle (without chemicals) more than a week, including community product groups code C\_1\_1\_1\_1\_2 with a total of 16 groups. Because of their raw materials can be replaced easily, the processing will have little impact on the natural resources in case the product is highly demanded by the market and needs to be produced in a big number. For distribution in markets outside community, product life cycle is considered a key factor. It is necessary that the products are able to be stored for a while before being sold. Groups that have high marketing opportunities, being able to be sold outside the community market. In addition to the basic 2 features mentioned above, features that create an advantage in the market are:

1. Well-known or signature local raw materials

Community product groups with code C2\_1\_1\_1\_2 feature special raw materials which are a key factor in creating special characteristics such as taste and nutritional value. These products also differentiate from other products on the market, such as the “Phech Sai Rung” rose apple from Phetchaburi province, and “Mae Lar”



snakehead fish from Sing Buri province, etc.

### 2. Unique new types of products

Community product groups with code C<sub>1-1-2-2</sub> even uses ordinary natural materials that can be found in anywhere else, but with creativity and wisdom in processing making them unique products. This will create a complete distinctiveness; for example, “Mae Klong” mackerel sandwiches.

### 3. Famous brands

Community product groups with code C<sub>1-1-2-2</sub> corresponds to key marketing theories about the brand cycle. After a brand becomes well-known; for instance, fermented pork “Par Yon” and shredded pork “Sor Khon Kaen,” it is more likely that the brands have a better opportunity in the market outside the community or export markets over the newcomer brands which are relatively unknown.

The community product groups that have the best opportunity in the markets outside the community are those with code C<sub>2-1-1-2-2-2</sub> and code C<sub>2-1-2-2-2-2</sub> because they have all the 5 potential characteristics, consisting of using signature or well-known raw materials, using raw materials that can be replaced easily, being new and unique, belonging to an already-famous brand, and have a product life cycle (without using chemicals) over a week. These kinds of product will differ only in traditional or in semi-industrial processing only, because the products on the market outside the community need to be produced in large quantity with consistent quality.

## Recommendation

1. The government or government agencies in the community should support investment in the production of standard packaging that can be applied by community.

2. The government or government agencies in the community should set a standard for product certification, bringing about confidence in considering the purchase of local food products.

3. Community participation should be established to develop their own community from all sectors such as tourism, community products, the financial institute of community to jointly plan and set regulations and the policies to achieve the strong and sustainable communities.

4. Packaging should be designed in accordance with rustic community life. The packaging should be only half-done, instead of ready-to-use, allowing each entrepreneur to use their local wisdom to create their own style of packaging.

5. The responsibility awareness is one of the important keys in operating a community enterprise, without competition aims to make profits, causing the product deficiency problem and the use of chemicals in production and processing, affecting the health of consumers. And there will be the problem of imitation of successful products leading to a product flood forcing the entrepreneurs to dump the price, as it has happened several times so far.

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