

Management Approach of Small and Medium Food Processing Business for Success in Franchise System

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Abstract

This research aims to study the management, marketing strategy, and success of the franchise system including to study processed food SMEs' success key factors in the transition to the franchise system. This research is qualitative research that gathers data from SME entrepreneurs in Thailand; the buyers, the suppliers, and the academic staff which counts 30 persons in total. The research is done by in-depth interview, group interview, and an analysis. The study found that 1) the processed food SME franchise management consists of 1.1 strategic planning and environment analysis 1.2 vision, mission, objective, and goal setting 1.3 organization, business, and job strategy 1.4 organizational structure, job description, human resources management 1.5 leadership building (leaders are able to motivate, communicate, and coordinate with every stakeholder). 2) The proper marketing strategy is to develop new products, do the right pricing, create distribution channels, and promote online marketing. 3) Build success by building a brand, developing operation standards, sharing knowledge, using information technology to follow up and make a contract. 4) Success factors and key management consists of SWOT analysis, operation standard, marketing strategy, marketing support, PR and advertisement plan, develop operation system, and prototype.

Keywords: SMEs, Food Processing Business, Franchise System

Introduction

Nowadays SME business has become an important and fast-growing force in the business world due to its economic potentials and the ability to expand very quickly. Also, it can minimize limitations and maximize the benefit in terms of financial supplies and human resources management; it can rapidly create business growth and foster new organization leaders who can potentially become a successful entrepreneur in a very short time comparing to them starting a business by themselves (Department of Industrial Promotion, 2017). However, there are many weaknesses found in SMEs; 1) most of them are family business, therefore, there is no transparency, business plan, accountancy system, and proper auditor. 2) They have limited access to financial supplies due to the inadequacy in collateral. 3) Human resources' ability is limited to a small amount of budget. 4) Most are unaware of the importance of technology and research and development especially in marketing, brand awareness, and competitive competency which are required in order to sustain business growth. However, it is found that there is an interesting business model that can fit very well with SMEs, the franchise. The franchise system helps expand the business and promote distributor channels. Since the franchiser is an expert in his/her business and has already

successfully developed his/her business unit, his/her brand logo or trademark has already been recognized by consumers. Therefore, the product already has its existing customers. The franchisor, who is originally the owner, will provide the know-how of the production, sales system, and marketing strategy of the business to the franchisee, who is the product distributor for all the business units to have the same standard (Sunantha Chairsakaew, 2010). This distributed business unit, granted authorization to use the trademark, will operate under the franchise system allowing it to benefit from the existing brand. Therefore, this is a budget-friendly and promising business model. In addition, the franchise system is receiving a great deal of support from the government. The Department of Industrial Promotion, The Ministry of Commerce has launched New Entrepreneurs Creation: NEC which is an incubator for new entrepreneurs providing a long-term training program for those who aim to form a growth phase business in 1-3 years. The program means to foster the new entrepreneurs and improve the existing ones by providing access to the know-how, increasing competitive competency, and implementing E-learning in order to create sustainability in the long run (Department of Industrial Promotion, 2018 and Susilo, G.2018). Therefore, it is a good way to do SMEs.

The statistic from Franchise Center indicates that there are 3,872 businesses in 2018; 556 Thai franchises and 3,316 international franchises. There are 96,306 Thai franchise units which cost an investment of 110,906,096 THB. The most popular franchise is the food franchise which makes of 128 business units or 23.02% of all 556 Thai franchises. There are 35 groups of food franchise. Among those, noodle is the most popular making of 22 business or 17.19 %. The second and the third most popular is the fried chicken and the steak which makes 15 businesses or 11.72% and 13 businesses or 10.16% respectively (An amount of Thai franchise, 2018). This piece of information shows the growth of the franchise business from the past 2-3 years. It can be inferred from the information that the food franchise is a fast-growing therefore promising business that has a quick-payback and does not need a big amount of investment compared to the other franchise group (Information as of September 30th, 2016). Moreover, there are examples of successful SMEs franchise such as the billionaire fried chicken (franchise fee 15,000 THB, payback in 1 month), Leng fish ball (franchise fee 2,990 THB, payback in less than a month), the galaxy pork noodle (franchise fee 5,000 THB, payback in 1-3 months), Sein steak (franchise fee 10,000 THB, payback in 3-6 month), the millionaire shrimp noodle (franchise fee 32,000 THB, payback in 1-2 month). These cases are examples of successful businesses. However, there is an unsuccessful business as well. According to the Department of Business Development, the causes of the failure are 1) the lack of understanding about franchise 2) lack of practice and know-how about franchise 3) lack of human resources development 4) lack of long-term vision and legal expertise. Many entrepreneurs in Thailand do not thoroughly understand the franchise system and do not have a proper marketing strategy. When combined with another problem such as a lack of brand awareness, copyright issues, and canceling the contract to avoid the franchise fee, it can cause the business to fail. Sometimes, the problem comes from the unfair royalty fee, inattentiveness of the franchise owner. Moreover, different entrepreneurs have different business purposes. And there are differences in markets and legal regulations. Though the government has tried to solve the issues for 10 years, there are still some unsolved problems due to the lack of support and human resources development. In order for a Thai entrepreneur to reach the international market, it needs to raise brand awareness and investments from partners in the same industry (Castrogiovanni and Bruton, 2000). From the aforementioned, there are various factors that can bring the business to failure or success. Choosing to invest in a franchise is a tough decision for every stakeholder. Therefore, this research aims to study the key success factors that bring the food franchise SMEs to success since this type of business is one of the most fast-growing businesses in the Thai market.

Research Objectives

This research aims to 1) study the management, strategy, success in the franchise system 2) study key success factors in processed food franchise SMEs 3) study the management system and practice of the processed food SMEs.

Literature Review and Research Framework

In order to cover the research topic “Management Approach of Small and Medium Food Processing Business for Success in Franchise System”, this research is based on 1) management framework which covers strategic planning, direction, organizational structure, job description, and evaluation (adapted from Dalf, (2006) Drucker (2005), Dessler Gary (2004) Robbins, Stephen P and DeCenzo. (2005)). The framework of this research is to study strategic planning, organization management, leading and managing a team. 2) Marketing strategy framework which covers business operation plan; objectives, goals, planning, resources management, and competitive competency (adapted from Kotler. (2017), Wheelen L. Thomas and Hunger J David. (2012) and Kotler & Keller. (2012)). The framework of marketing is to study product, price, distributor channels, and sales support. 3) The success of the franchise framework which is a concept or practice that allows the business to benefit from the competition and eventually reach the business goal that mainly focuses on customer satisfaction (adapted from Kotler, (2003), Fill. (2005) Campbell et al. (2009), Davies et al., (2011)). The framework is to study brand trademark, the know-how, the franchise operation system, information technology, and legal regulations and contract. According to the mentioned 3 frameworks, there comes the following picture.

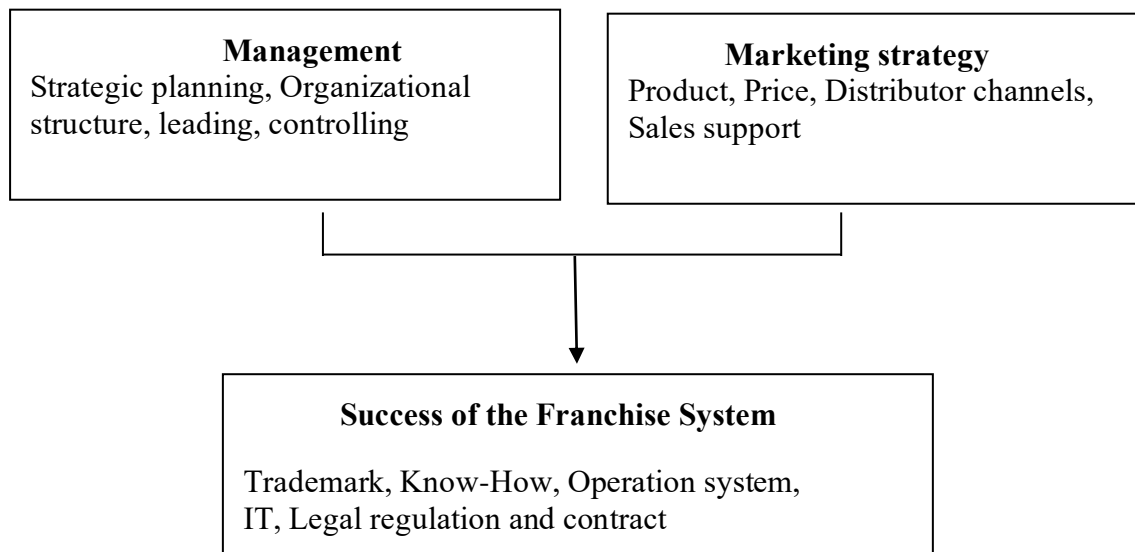


Figure 1: The research framework

Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative research that gathers information by in 1) Depth Interview by Semi-Structured Interview Protocol.

Key Informants: There are 30 associates of processed food SMEs selected by purposive selection then separated into 3 groups; first, 10 of Franchisors, second, 10 of Franchisees, and third, 10 of academic staff. And 2) Focus group discussion that consists of 5 Franchisors and 5 academic staff.

Data Analysis: From in Depth Interview and Focus Group Discussion, it is found that;

1) The result of management, marketing strategy, and franchise's success from in depth interview and brainstorm session among the franchisor, franchisee, and academic staff, there are the agreed and disagreed points as follow;

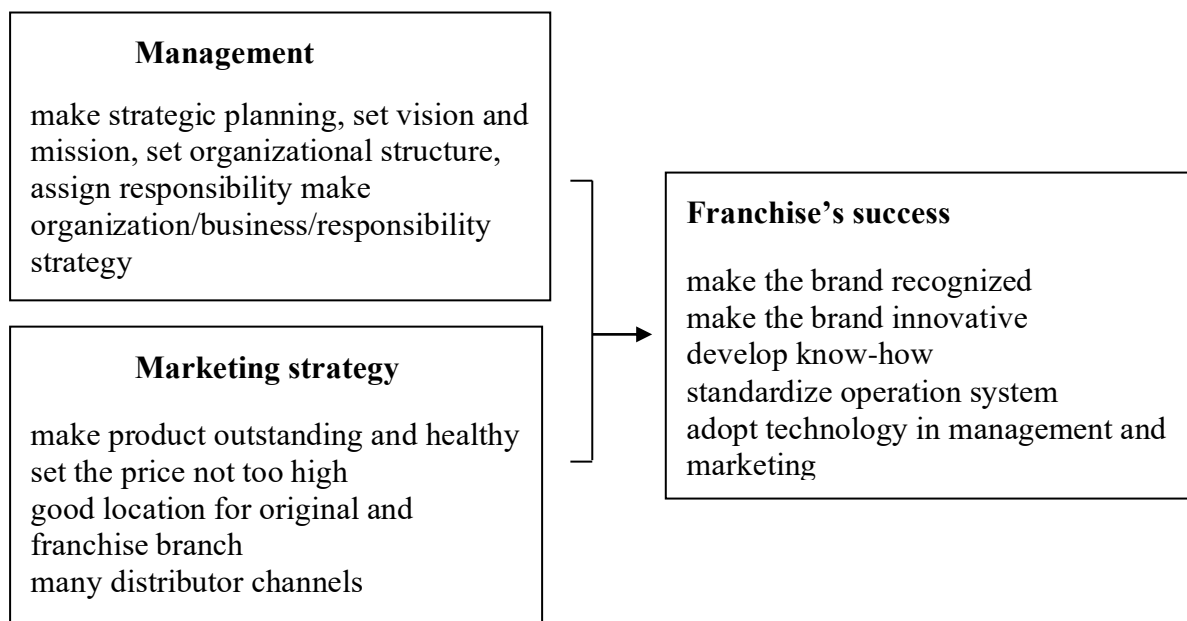
Table 1: Summary of management, marketing strategy, and franchise's success

Points	Franchisor	Franchisee	Academics
1) Management 1.1 Strategic Planning	Make strategic planning, operation plan, procedure, operation development,	Follow the system made by Franchisor. However, franchisor must develop a tangible system and allow franchisee to slightly adjust the product according to customer's needs.	Have the franchisor made strategic planning and the franchisee done the production and sales. And there must be food development in order to sustain growth.
1.2 Organizing	There must be an organizational structure and management structure by assigning main responsibility such as production, marketing for marketing strategy; accounting, finance, barcode, procurement for high-quality and low-price materials; human resources department for product and human development, including operation service that imitates the original business.		
1.3 Leading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - must possess a clear business vision - be creative and have good attitude - achieve DBD's standard - find financial support and investment in order to expand business overseas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trust in the franchisor - have enthusiasm and vision - honest and loyal - care for customers' needs in order to expand business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the franchise's high management must have a vision and an ability to drive the business to success - use technology and innovation in operation - use various PR channels and communication - review profit and drive business to international standard - cooperate with DBD - achieve franchise standard - use social media to build competitiveness
1.4 Controlling	There must be a standard to make sure that every process of food production is in high quality, same portion, and right-to-format. It must be checked in terms of ingredients, income, and expense in order to prevent leak and assure the worthiness. For the franchisee, the shop must be clean, the service must be fast and convenient for customers.		
2) Marketing Strategy 2.1 Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the product must be outstanding from competitor's and low-cost - the packaging must be safe, degradable, remarkably beautiful - the cost management must be systematic, can make low-cost production, fast and efficient shipping 		
2.2 Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - set the price according to the market price or a bit lower or higher - storage/warehouse management - when successful, raise fee and deduction from sales growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the franchise fee must not be too high and the payback must not exceed a 6-month time - the price must be reasonable and worth the quality - be outstanding; convenient and fast - perfect for rush hours - can be consumed in any meal, any day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the franchise fee must not be too high - when successful, raise the fee but still at a reasonable price - the franchisor should consider the first franchisee as a business partner and do not raise the fee from it.

Table 1: (Con.)

Points	Franchisor	Franchisee	Academics
2.3 Place	-	many distributors channels including physical shop, telesales, delivery, social media - physical shop for customers to visit - regular training course	
2.4 Promotion	-	Set various sales-support especially social media channels such as Facebook, LINE - Promote brand through ThaiFranchiseCenter.com, SME's smeleader.com, DBD's website, and another recognized platform - Hold an exhibition booth, road show both in domestic and overseas, hold seminars, academic forums, create networking with another party such as DBD, SMEs promotion center, SME bank, the franchise association, education institution, and private sectors.	
3) Brand	-	the franchisor must raise brand awareness - create communication channels to add value to the product - the franchisee must control employee to be polite to the customers	
3.2 know-how	-	the know-how must be taught thoroughly so every branch will have the same standard - the franchisee must consult the franchisor until they can operate the business by themselves	
3.3 Franchise Management System	-	the franchisor must develop, test, and improve all operation system - the prototype branch must have a strong procedure and standard - there must be an innovative creation - there must be a business support team to help the new franchisee - there must be a QA system for every branch	
3.4 Information Technology System	-	implement IT system in the franchise operation such as for purchasing ingredient, managing sales growth, and developing food recipe - use social network marketing to target the customers	
3.5 Law and Contract	-	there must be a contract to prevent potential risk and to be fair for both sides	

From table 1, it can be summarized as follows;

**Figure 2** The result of management, marketing strategy, and success analysis

Results

The Key Success Factor of Processed Food SMEs to the Franchise

From an in-depth interview and brainstorm session by the Franchisor, Franchisee, and the Academics, it is found that the key success factors that drive the business to success are as follows;

- 1) From SWOT analysis, it is found that the potentials of successful SMEs include strong know-how, expertise, skill, experience, and financial savings. However, the weakness can be improved. And there is still a lot of chances due to the popularity of dining out.
- 2) The successful business must have business direction, franchise activity, filter the company's background, make strategic planning, and use the strengths to set vision and mission, goals, and objectives. Set the organization/business/responsibility strategy including restructuring the organization structure, humane resources development, conduct guideline manual, and build 3-4 prototype branches in order to test and improve the plan. Then pitch for investment.
- 3) Marketing strategy, brand awareness, innovative product, do the right pricing, choose the best location, social network applications implementation, franchise presentation that covers cost, profit, sales promotion plan, business goal, and framework
- 4) The franchise system, operation management such as fast food technique, guideline manual, standardized manufacturer, cold storage, clean and safe containers, fast and efficient shipping

Direction of Processed food SMEs to the franchise success

From the study of management, marketing strategy, and franchise's success, it is found that the directions that drive the business to success are as follows;

- 1) SWOT analysis which consists of strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats.
- 2) The franchise operation system, organizational restructure, management structure, expertise consultant, standardize the business system, know-how sharing
- 3) Make marketing strategy, marketing plan, build the brand
- 4) Build a factory and warehouse, make guideline mannual, build 3-4 prototype branch
- 5) Shipping and logistics management

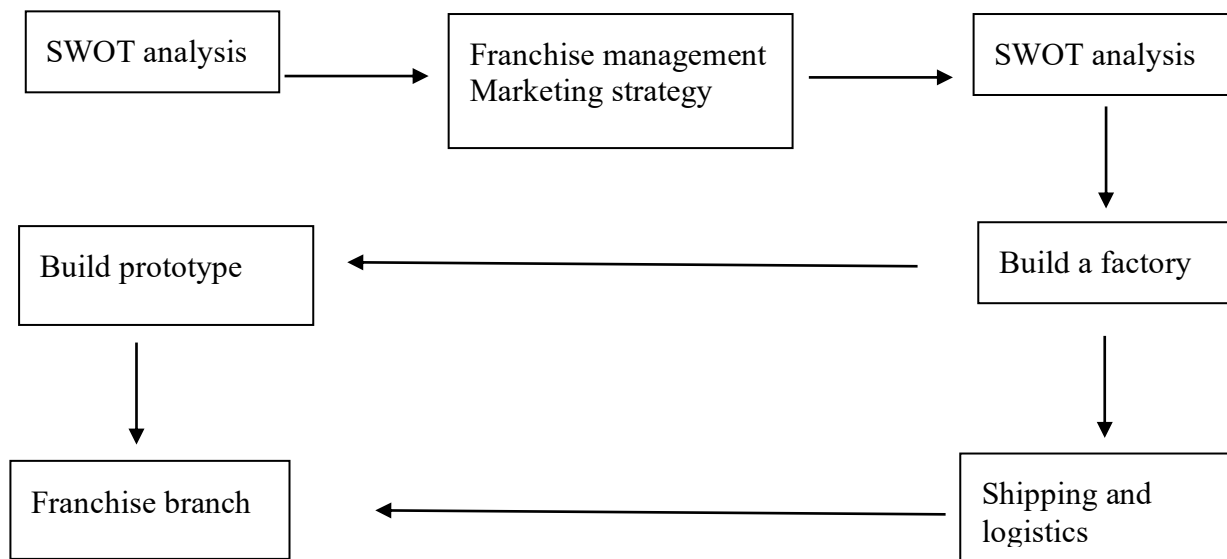


Figure 3 Direction of Processed food SMEs franchise

Discussion

From the qualitative research, the researcher has analyzed the information from in-depth interview and group discussion and summarized the outcome as follows;

Management

The strategic planning is the most crucial. Starting with SWOT analysis, strength of the entrepreneur, know-how, expertise, skill, customer that can develop to franchise system creating a chance to sell the food to the younger generation and the elders at home. The entrepreneur must have a business vision, mission to produce clean, tasty, and high-quality food, objective and goal. This includes business growth, organizational direction, growth direction, business strategy, cost strategy, value proposition strategy, responsibility, marketing plan, production plan, finance, human resources development (Porter, 1980; Likitsatapohn, 2014).

Organizational management, franchise management, organization structure, and other system development such as production system, management system, accounting and finance system, warehouse and logistics, human resources development, service standardization, building prototype branch and guideline manual, setting franchise fee and price (Gikonyo, Berndt and Wadawi, 2014; Kititwetchpokawath, 2017; Chaiprasert et al, 2017).

For leading, the franchise entrepreneur must have a good vision in building a franchise, writing business policy, driving policy and strategy toward the sustain goals (Kotter, 1988; Heah, 2011; Sirivah & Chaikew, 2012; Likitsatapohn, 2014)

For controlling, there must be quality assurance, quantity, time, and cost control in products including the ones that will be distributed to franchisee. The proper checking system need to be created and followed. (Dalf, 2006; Drucker, 2005; Chinadamanee, 2017).

Marketing Strategy

For product, efficient product development and effective procedure are important in making product outstanding in terms of recipe, color, size, quality, taste, scent, and packaging. For packaging, it is important to design the clean, good-looking packaging. To do this, coordinating with a university researcher is a good way to do it (Kotler, 2007; Etzel, Walker, and Stanton, 2007; Yum restaurant international, 2018). For the food price, the academics and franchisor agree that it can be at any price as long as it gives good experience to consumers. Some well-decorated restaurants can charge 15-20% higher than others. However, the franchise fee cannot be too low because it takes so much resource to build a franchise. But when the brand is well recognized, it can higher the price (Kotler & Keller, 2012 and Gerhardt, Dudley & Hazen, 2012).

For distributor channels, the entrepreneurs and academics agree that most of the franchise sell food in physical shop and by take home box. The second most popular way is to phone to order then come to pick up at the shop or delivery by the shop. In the future, the franchise should develop online channels for customers to order online. for example, website, LINE, and other applications including door-to-door delivery. Because in the future, the trend of consumers tend to rely more on convenient, fast, and reliable service (Qualman, 2012).

To promote sales and marketing in this era, the entrepreneur must develop brand strategy, brand image, brand identity and story. However, the franchise has to keep good quality of after sales service, customers relations, prototype branch, cooperation with DBD, banks and other organizations in the industry in order to hold roadshow trips, exhibition booth, and other PR events (Friedman, 2006; Soon, Chan, Hwa & Har, 1998).

Success of the Franchise System

For the brand trademark, there must associate with the story of the brand to raise awareness and understanding of the brand. Also, to communicate the true value of the brand whether it

is conveyed through word-by-word or by brand ambassador (Moreau & Parguel, 2011; Nyadzayo, et al. 2015; Kititwetchpokawath, 2017; Knapp, 2000).

For the know-how, the franchisor must possess the expertise and experience gained over long time of doing the business as well as the most effective way to deliver the know-how to the franchisee. The franchisor must control quality in every franchise branch in terms of production quality. Also, there should be 3-4 prototype shops or pilot projects (Nathan, 2004; Berg & Dean, 2008; Kulkarni, Ravindran, & Freeze, 2007).

The system is one of the 7S's in McKinsey that can create sustainable competitive advantage (Noppadol et al., 2012). The system is very important for franchise. The business model, procedure, operation plan, production, marketing, accounting and finance, storage and warehouse, logistics and shipping system are as important. The brand should build 3-4 prototype shop to test those systems and lift the standard by franchise training (Harif et al., 2011; Paynter and Arthanari, 2001; Scott et al., 2006).

For the IT system, the brand should implement technology in data mining such as purchasing history, employee information, sales analysis, ingredient purchase, customer behavior. In addition, IT system can be used as a communication channels between the brand and customers. The franchisor can also do marketing on social media to promote sales and gain popularity (Mohmed et al., 2013; Ardjouman, 2014, Mingaine, 2013).

For legal and contract, business units should make a contract to prevent legal conflicts and to show good intention and honesty of the contractors (Pizanti & Lerner, 2003; DBD, 2014; Issariyapitch, 2000).

Suggestion

Suggestion for this research

- 1) Management: The entrepreneur must have business vision, organization development, and operation development due to the fast-changing of food trend. There must be a tangible franchise evaluation in order to maintain good quality.
- 2) Marketing strategy: The franchise must keep up with the market trend and keep an eye on the demand, implement technology in the process, and build the outstanding prototype shop.
- 3) Success of the franchise: The franchise should use technology in management, legal and contract as a tool to control quality. Use social media in PR and real time online marketing. And use QR code in payment.

Suggestion for the future research

- 1) Do further study about driving the franchise to ASEAN standard and international standard.
- 2) Study online franchise in order to adapt the franchise to meet with customers' needs.

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