

**Czech University of Life Sciences Prague
Faculty of Economics and Management
Department of Management**



Bachelor Thesis

**Marketing of Vietnamese food products in the
Czech Republic**

Author: Do Minh Hang

Supervisor: Richard Selby, Ph. D

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Declaration

I declare that I have worked on my bachelor thesis called “Marketing Vietnamese food products in the Czech Republic” by myself and I used only the sources mentioned at the end of the thesis.

Prague, 15th March 2013 .

Do Minh Hang

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Richard Selby PhD for being my thesis supervisor and helped me with the thesis by giving useful and valuable advices. I would like to thank to my Czech friends who helped me translate the summary and questionnaire to Czech language and all my friends who gave me information from their business.

**Marketing Vietnamese food products
in the Czech Republic**

**Marketing vietnamských potravinových
produktů v České republice.**

Summary

This bachelor thesis deals with the topic of food promotion using marketing tools. The main objective of this thesis is to discover an optimum marketing strategy for food products which are produced in Vietnam for the Czech market.

The thesis includes introduction of Vietnamese culture that affects marketing methods, some typical Vietnamese food products which have already had shares not only in the EU but globally, the use of these products in worldwide compared with current position of them in the Czech market and finally - using marketing theories for suggesting some solutions for better way of trade in this market.

There is a survey included which was given to Czech people to find out their thought about our products. There is also a research of current food products imported to the Czech market which was collected from data of Czech Statistical Office and analysed by using statistical tools to forecast future demand of the market on Vietnamese products.

The conclusion includes evaluation of the data obtained by research and survey, which are used as the base of all recommendations for the improvement of marketing promotions for Vietnamese products.

Key words: marketing, Vietnamese food, Czech Republic, bachelor thesis, food products in Czech

Shrnutí

Předkládaná bakalářská práce se zabývá propagací potravin s využitím nástrojů marketingu. Hlavním účelem je nalezení optimální marketingové strategie pro potravinové produkty vyrobené ve Vietnamu pro český trh.

Práce zahrnuje úvod do vietnamské kultury, která ovlivňuje marketingové metody, některé vietnamské potraviny mající již podíl na evropském a světovém trhu, porovnání použití těchto potravin v celosvětovém měřítku s jejich současnou pozicí na českém trhu a využití marketingových teorií pro návrh řešení vedoucího ke zlepšení jejich situace na trhu.

Součástí je průzkum zaměřený na povědomí českých občanů o vietnamských produktech. Dále se BP zabývá současnou situací importovaného vietnamského zboží na českém trhu. Data byla čerpána ze statistik Českého statistického úřadu. Za pomoci dat byla analyzována poptávka českého trhu po vietnamských produktech.

V závěru je uvedeno vyhodnocení dat získaných z průzkumu a tato data jsou použita jako zdroj pro doporučení marketingové propagace vietnamských potravinových produktů.

Klíčová slova: marketing, vietnamské jídlo, Česká republika, bakalářská práce, potravinové produkty v České republice

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I. INTRODUCTION.

Vietnam is a small country in Southeast Asia with a very long culture of wet rice farming; un-well developed animal breeding and people mainly live on vegetable and aquatic thing such as shrimp, fish and snail. Vietnam can also be considered as a tropical paradise of dessert and beverage. Thanks to regional diversity, indigenous culture, a varied and tough terrain and climate, there are a plenty way of speciality dishes but can be stood out in two key features.

Firstly, rice plays an essential role in the nation's diet as it does throughout Southeast Asia. Regularly, rice appears as its original form or as noodle in breakfast, lunch, dinner; in homes, restaurants and at roadside stands. Noodles are eaten wet or dry, in soup or beside, in many different shapes and thicknesses of wheat and rice.

Secondly, no meal is called complete without fresh vegetables and herbs. Thanks to the tropical climate, fresh vegetables are available all the year round. As a result, dishes with fresh vegetable become familiar with every family, especially with poor people in the old days. With different cooking methods, different dishes were made, extremely enjoyed and gradually popularizes in the country. A key portion of every meal from the North, the Central to the South is a platter containing a number of herbs and vegetables which can be found principally in Southeast Asia market.

Though there were many rises and falls through the time and historical events, including cultural crosses between Vietnam and other countries, Vietnamese cuisine is always deep and strong in identity. It reminds people of the folk creation and adaptation to nature. Increasingly famous worldwide restaurants have sprawled over the globe, yet, no Vietnamese food abroad can equal in flavor or quality to the one made in Vietnam itself. In brief, Vietnamese cuisine depends heavily on rice grown in water paddies throughout the country with dishes varying from simple everyday meals to most complex dishes designed for the King. Reaching a balance between fresh herbs and meats as well as a selective use of spices, Vietnamese food can be considered one of the healthiest cuisines in the world.¹

¹ <http://www.vietnam-beauty.com/food-a-drink/166-vietnamese-cuisine.html>

There are over 86 000 Vietnamese people living in the Czech Republic². They began arriving in former Czechoslovakia during the communist regime. The majority came for two reasons, work or study, and their stay was part of two bilateral agreements made by the communist nations. Many were employed in machine-building and light industries, including textiles. Students studied mostly in technical fields, though some studied Czech language and literature. These people are the first force help Vietnamese culture being known and getting closer to Czech people day by day, thanks to their appearance and approaching co-workers from their works or colleagues from schools.

After the end of agreements between two countries, they stayed and have children. They opened groceries and restaurants of Vietnamese cuisine or combine with other Asian cuisines such as Japanese, Thailand, Korean, etc. Their children are called second generation or sometimes “banana kids”. They were born as a Vietnamese and raised as a Czech in local kindergarten and then schools. They have strong relationship with friends at school, have knowledge to integrate and introduce their culture to friends. These people and their parents’ restaurants are strongly help Vietnamese cuisine getting closer than ever to the changes in taste and passion of trying exotic cuisines of local people.

Compare to Chinese cuisine which is about 85% similar, Vietnamese cuisine – provide dishes with many variants in ingredients, varies of meat in vegetable, light but deep tasty and healthy – could lead diners to try cooking these dishes at home. Also, as a trend of healthy diet, people are more interested in having meals in Asian style- which is already well-known of its exotic tasty from natural and balanced ingredients, simply cooking methods to the art of presenting a dish, guarantee of nutrient and good for health. The demand will thus increase with a higher request of quality.

In the last 10 years, the import Vietnamese agricultural products to the Czech market have had significant changes in categories and quantity. Mostly imported to Czech Republic are coffee, tea, spices; cereals; fish and crustaceans, molluscs and other aquatic invertebrates. Currently, the most difficult problem is how to promote and expanse market, at first, for these products, and then for other highlights domestic products. Also, the foreign food market in Czech Republic is a red ocean with lots of competitive entrepreneurs, it is important to point out the strengths of Vietnamese

² http://www.czso.cz/csu/2012edicniplan.nsf/engkapitola/1414-12-eng_r_2012-0900

products and drum in it. From the point of view of a wholesaler, the thesis focus in using marketing and e-marketing methods to solve these problems, based on marketing theories, analysing research data and a questionnaire which was given to people live in Prague, Brno, Karlovy Vary and Pilsner.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE THESIS.

1. Objectives.

This bachelor thesis deals with three objectives:

- The first objective is to analyze the current situation of trading Vietnamese food products in the Czech market.
- The second objective is to analyze the Czech people's tendency of giving feast, their thought in buying Asian food products in general and Vietnamese food products in particular.
- The third objective is to figure out the effective solutions to rouse demand of Vietnamese food products in the Czech market.

2. Methodology.

In this thesis, there will be three methodologies used.

- SWOT analysis: by using this analysis, the current situation of the market as well as the situation of a company (in this thesis, it is called a product/s – represent for a company or a brand) will be analyzed to have a clearly view of market and help find out a better strategy.
- Quantitative and qualitative method: is used in order to find out the needs and wants of customers in the Czech Republic. This method will be completed by analysing data of the questionnaire.
- The 4Ps model: helps organize decisions for products and simplify the selection of marketing mixes. Target of this strategy is customers.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW.

1. Marketing.

Marketing plays a big part in economic growth and development. According to McCarthy [1], marketing is divided into two parts: micro and macro.

Micro-marketing is the performance of activities that seek to accomplish an organization's objectives by anticipating customer or client needs and directing a flow of need-satisfying goods and services from producer to customer or client.

This definition applies to profit and non-profit organizations in the aim to identify customers needs and to meet these needs so well that the product almost sells itself. But marketing is not just selling and advertising, it begins with potential customers needs, then determine what goods and services are to be developed, including every other decisions of providing a product (design, packaging, prices, sale, service, warranty, etc.).

Macro-marketing is a social process that directs an economy's flow of goods and services from producers to consumers in a way that effectively matches supply and demand and accomplishes the objectives of society.

Macro-marketing is not focus on the activities of individual organisations but on how the whole marketing system works. This process of marketing affects to economic system and making economic decisions. Sometimes, the definition of marketing is very similar to the definition of economics, so it is important to understand what market is and what the role of marketing in economic development is. By understanding these definitions, macro-marketing will be understood as a central market middleman where customers are helped to exchange their goods in a better way and provided services to develop their goods or satisfy their needs. More specific, a company needs a middlemen to help them understand the needs of market, the needs of customers and then create strategies to approach these needs, advertisements to sell more products to customers.

In this thesis, the theory of marketing would help Vietnamese companies get more knowledge about the Czech market, what is the interest of people in Czech nowadays for food products and they will able to apply marketing strategies to approach the market. Specific, the 4Ps model is used in this case to help them have a general look in the market. Besides that, the 4Cs will be compared to the 4Ps to have a more focused look on the customer than on general market.

2. The 4Ps model.

In a marketing strategy, there are two interrelated parts are specified:

- A target market: a fairly homogenous group of customers to whom a company wishes to appeal.
- A marketing mix: the controllable variables the company puts together to satisfy this target group. [1]

In the marketing process, customer is main target and can be seen in the centre of diagram below. This diagram represents the marketing mix as a business tool used in marketing by marketing professional.

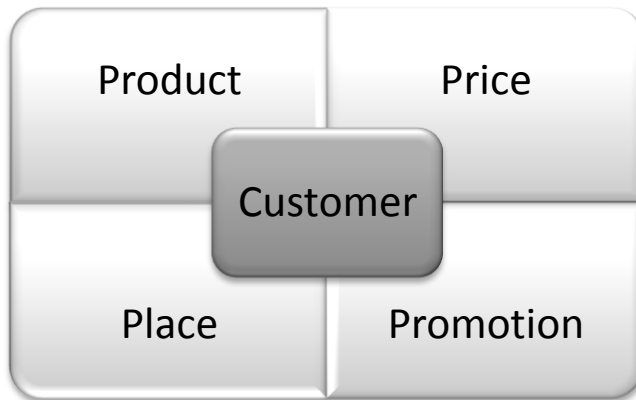


Figure 1 : the 4Ps model

In recent times, the concept of this marketing mix is replaced by the 4Cs, which even focus more on customer rights. The 4Ps is considered as the producer-oriented model and the 4Cs is consumer-oriented model. [2]

The 4Ps model will be used to analyse the current position of Vietnamese food products in local market, methods to improve products to meet the demand of market, apply new price if needed, promote, competitive and develop distribution channel type to approach the market in a better way. Also, the model will help forecast possible threatens in delivery and marketing process such as market exposure, transporting, storing or geographic and religious differences.

Products

The product area is concerned with developing the right “product” for the target market. Products include physical goods (tables, papers, books, computers.etc.), unphysical

goods (software, electric, etc.), and services. These products go through life cycles, so a particular firm's marketing mix usually must change during these cycles for many reasons.

[1]

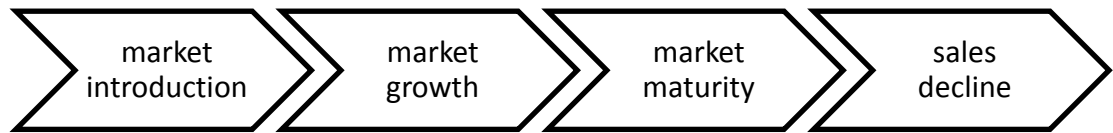


Figure 2: Product life cycle

In the food market, some of Vietnamese products have reached the maturity but seems like never be declined, eg. cereal or tobacco and its substitutes.

Place

Place is concerned with all the decisions involved in getting the “right” product to the target market's place. A product isn't much good to a customer if it isn't available when and where it's wanted. [1]

A product reaches customers through a channel of distribution. Sometimes this system is short, it runs directly from producer to customers. But often, the system is more complex, involving many types of middlemen and specialists, in order to have information about customer needs, especially when they first enter international market. Middlemen specialists can help make a channel more efficient, but a product-market commitment between firms must be shared in order to focus on the same target market at the end of the channel. This commitment should exist to reduce any possible problem come from the differences between firms' choices about what type of channel system to join or develop. [1]

There are two main channel systems: channel is lead by producers or by middlemen. If the producers dominate their channels, middlemen often wait to see what the producer intends to do and want them to do. Usually, producers select market target, develop products, set price, done some consumer and channel promotion, and develop the place setup, middlemen are then expected to finish the promotion job in their respective places. In some large or well-located middlemen take the lead and it means the bigger part in 4Ps diagram: they analyze the types of products their customers want and seek out producers who can provide their products at reasonable prices. [1]

Promotion

Promotion is communicating information between seller and potential buyer or others in the channel to influence attitudes and behaviour. The marketing manager's main promotion job is to tell target customers that the right Product is available at the right Place and at the right Price. A marketing manager can choose from several promotion methods: personal selling, mass selling and sales promotions – for their producer to low the cost and get the best profit. [1]

This tendency is an opportunity for retailers to communicate with their buyers directly and effective. Marketing manager can use social media, eg. blogs, websites, audio and video drive action, social networks to reach their target market, introduce and provide information of a products, influence them to buy and directly get back their comments or opinion of that product. This media can do the job of all three promotion methods mentioned above and guarantee low total cost. Of course, this method should be the second step to reach to customers. At first marketers still have to do the basic selling promotion methods that can give customers an idea of buying.

Price

The first three variables in the marketing for sure influence to producers and retailers decision of applying price for a product. Also, policies in a new market, price set by competitors and the needs of target market in each different place can affect the price level decision. It is not easy to define price in real-life situations because prices reflect many dimensions [1], and customers must be willing to pay these prices before a whole marketing mix succeeds. If they will not accept the price, all of the planning effort will be wasted.

Strategy planning for price should be guided by company's objectives. These objectives are focused on profit-oriented, sales-oriented and status quo oriented. Most firms set specific pricing policies to reach these objectives and hold prices steady for long periods of time or change them frequently if required, instead of letting daily market forces decide the prices. When a firm doesn't sell directly to customers as Vietnamese producers in this thesis case, it usually wants to set an administered price receive from both middlemen and price customers pay. This administered price is lead from three main price policies:

Price flexibility policies: offer same price to all customers under the same conditions and in the same quantities (one price policy) or offer the same product and quantities to different customers at different prices (flexible price policy). These policies are most common in the channels, direct sales and retail for expensive items and homogenous shopping products [1].

Price level policies over the product life cycle: for these policies, it is important to consider where the product life cycle is, and how fast it's moving. Marketing managers must decide if their price should be above, below or somewhere between relative to the market. For Vietnamese producers, competitors already exist a lot in the market and meeting competitors' price seems to be necessary: the profit margin for producers is thin or even disappear and turn into losses at a lower price than administered price, especially when the price is affected by cost of logistic, storing and price of money, but in long term, relation with customers will be tighter. This profit from customer convenience is more important. But there is still another way to raise demand and get optimum profit for producers: set an above market price level.

There are pricing policies of **allowance and geographic**. These policies will make the price be set in different rate and different ways, depend mainly on stocking and delivering.

3. The role of social media in marketing strategy.

Put products and services to the side and focus complete attention of the buyers for products bring wholesalers closer to achieving their goals. With the break out of digital era, creating a social network to interact with customers has never got easier. Today when people want to buy something, the web is almost always the first stop on their shopping trip [3]. Wholesales in the Czech market can create a website, a blog, using Facebook, video a film, buy advertisement in other well-known websites (ideally in related webs, eg. webs about fitness, cooking, health, etc.) to recommend for customers an idea of buying. Customers through these networks can read information of products they might be interested in and leave their opinions or comments as a feedback. These feedbacks will help wholesalers educate about customers needs and wants, then able to import suitable goods and provide ideal services to earn better profit.

To achieve the goal in this process, wholesalers must remember that the webs are written for customers, not for the companies. This means wholesalers must understands

target market needs and their problems in choosing a new item. Also, they need to know how customers call their product to be able to develop a research engine for the network. A team of IT experts will develop the webs content, start by creating individual pages with specialized content customized for a particular persona, creating appropriate links to these pages, creating an editorial plan for each buyer persona, start a blog, a podcast, or online video channels consider what other media can publish in the web to reach the buyer identified.

By using social network, the wholesalers can cut down the cost of promotion, place and storing – many social networks are for free, item no need to be in shelves for sale, products will be centred in some specific places. Instead, they only have to focus on spending in advertisements, customer service and quickly, directly get feedback from the buyers. Of course, “you are what you publish” [3], in this case, a wholesaler not only represent for producers but also for a industry of a country, so they should care about the ethics in providing any promotion or pricing a product in their pages. These ethics code are focus in the utility of customers and it might be³:

Trust: create practices and policies that promote an environment of trust between the consumer and marketer.

Integrity: follow the requirements of applicable laws, regulations, and rules concerning the prevention of unfair, deceptive or misleading advertising and marketing practices.

Respect: promote and abide by practices that focus on consumer welfare.

Truthfulness: provide any detail of a product without lying of its ingredients or quality.

Responsibility: customers have right to send back unexpected products or products under needed quality, leave their comments in pages without any troubles.

All the information for setting a right interface in a social media, how to build it in order to have the best interaction with customers, satisfy their needs and keep their return will be collected by research, interview and survey.

³ <http://www.womma.org/ethics/womma-code-of-ethics>

4. Qualitative and quantitative method.

There are two type of marketing research are used in this thesis: quantitative and qualitative. Data from quantitative research—such as market size, demographics, and user preferences—provides important information for business decisions. Qualitative research provides valuable data for use in the design of a product—including data about user needs, behaviour patterns, and use cases⁴.

Qualitative method

Quantitative studies provide data that can be expressed in numbers—thus, their name. Because the data is in a numeric form, we can apply statistical tests in making statements about the data. These include descriptive statistics like the mean, median, and standard deviation, but can also include inferential statistics like t-tests, ANOVAs, or multiple regression correlations (MRC). Statistical analysis lets us derive important facts from research data, including preference trends, differences between groups, and demographics.

Multivariate statistics like the MRC or stepwise correlation regression break the data down even further and determine what factors - such as variances in preferences - we can attribute to differences between specific groups such as age groups. Quantitative studies often employ automated means of collecting data such as surveys, but we can also use other static methods - for example, examining preferences through two-alternative, forced-choice studies or examining error rates and time on task using competitive benchmarks.

Quantitative studies' great strength is providing data that is descriptive - for example, allowing us to capture a snapshot of a user population - but we encounter difficulties when it comes to their interpretation⁵.

Quantitative method

Data from qualitative studies describes the qualities or characteristics of something. These descriptions cannot be reduces to numbers as findings from quantitative research, though it can be achieved this through an encoding process. Qualitative research studies can provide details about human behaviour, emotion, and personality characteristics that quantitative studies cannot match. Qualitative data includes information about user

⁴ <http://www.uxmatters.com/>

⁵ <http://www.uxmatters.com/>

behaviours, needs, desires, routines, use cases, and a variety of other information that is essential in designing a product that will actually fit into a user's life.

While quantitative research requires the standardization of data collection to allow statistical comparison, qualitative research requires flexibility, allow to respond to user data as it emerges during a session. Thus, qualitative research usually takes the form of either some form of naturalistic observation such as ethnography or structured interviews. In this case, a researcher must observe and document behaviours, opinions, patterns, needs, pain points, and other types of information *without* yet fully understanding what data will be meaningful.

Following data collection, rather than performing a statistical analysis, researchers look for trends in the data. When it comes to identifying trends, researchers look for statements that are identical across different research participants. The rule of thumb is that hearing a statement from just one participant is an anecdote; from two, a coincidence; and hearing it from three makes it a trend. The trends can then guide product development, business decisions, and marketing strategies⁶.

5. SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis is a useful tool for all sorts of situations in business and organisations. SWOT stands for **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**. The SWOT analysis headings provide a good framework for business planning, strategic planning, competitor evaluation, marketing, product development and research reports. SWOT analysis is often interpreted and used as a 2x2 matrix, especially in business and marketing planning. In this matrix, technically, Strengths and Weaknesses are internal factors, whereas Opportunities and Threats are external factors⁷.

Strengths - Strengths are the qualities that are used to accomplish the organization's mission. These are the basis on which continued success can be made and continued/sustained. Strengths can be either tangible or intangible. Strengths are the beneficial aspects of the organization or the capabilities of an organization, which includes human competencies, process capabilities, financial resources, products and services, customer goodwill and brand loyalty. Examples of organizational strengths are huge financial resources, broad product line, no debt, committed employees, etc.

⁶ <http://www.uxmatters.com/>

⁷ <http://www.businessballs.com/swotanalysisfreetemplate.htm>

Weaknesses - Weaknesses are the qualities that prevent managers from accomplishing their mission and achieving their potential. These weaknesses deteriorate influences on the organizational success and growth. Weaknesses are the factors which do not meet the standards. Weaknesses in an organization may be depreciating machinery, insufficient research and development facilities, narrow product range, poor decision-making, etc. Weaknesses are controllable. They must be minimized and eliminated. Examples of organizational weaknesses are huge debts, high employee turnover, complex decision making process, narrow product range, large wastage of raw materials, etc.

Opportunities - Opportunities are presented by the environment within operations of a company. These arise when an organization can take benefit of conditions in its environment to plan and execute strategies that enable it to become more profitable. Opportunities may arise from market, competition, industry/government and technology.

Threats - Threats arise when conditions in external environment jeopardize the reliability and profitability of the organization's business. They compound the vulnerability when they relate to the weaknesses. Threats are uncontrollable. Examples of threats are - unrest among employees; ever changing technology; increasing competition leading to excess capacity, price wars and reducing industry profits; etc. ⁸

Successful businesses build on their strengths, correct their weakness and protect against internal weaknesses and external threats. They also keep a watch on their overall business environment and recognize and exploit new opportunities faster than its competitors.

SWOT analysis may cause organizations to view circumstances as very simple because of which the organizations might overlook certain key strategic contact which may occur. Moreover, categorizing aspects as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats might be very subjective as there is great degree of uncertainty in market. SWOT Analysis does stress upon the significance of these four aspects, but it does not tell how an organization can identify these aspects for itself.

⁸ <http://www.managementstudyguide.com/swot-analysis.htm>

IV. PRACTICAL PART

In this part, the methodologies which are mentioned at the beginning of the thesis will be combined with own research and survey to figure out a suitable strategy for Vietnamese producers when enter the Czech market. By using theories of marketing and social media, some suggestions for trading food products will be provided.

1. SWOT analysis for Vietnamese wholesalers.

By using this method, the current situation of domestic producers as well as the situation of the local market, every advantages and disadvantages of the producers and the market will be analyzed to help marketing managers make the right decision for their strategy.

Strengths

- Since the November of 2006, Vietnam became a member of the WTO. To enable its entry to the WTO, Vietnamese farmers and producers must meet the requirements of WTO when trading products through borders. It helps the situation when export products to the Czech Republic become easier and faster.
- By learning experiences of other marketer while trading products to other countries in EU, wholesalers will have advantages to meet some requirements, eg. food safety technology and hygiene when import any product from Vietnam.
- The food-processing sector has benefited from consolidation, which has created more vertically integrated companies and more economies of scale.
- Consumer demands for convenience have served to increase the opportunities for food retailing, which are no longer confined to the traditional food outlets or to daylight hours. As well as minimising missed opportunities, it also enables the industry to capitalise on impulse purchasing.
- Some domestic brands or lines of product have already exported their products, brand, logo... and accepted in large market like EU or America. For example: coffee Trung Nguyen, rice products of Vinh Thuan, catfish or seafood of Hung Vuong co-operation, etc.

Weakness

- Vietnam has been doing well so far in keeping the low price for products, but that competitive edge is threatened by its heavy dependence on imported materials and increasing labour costs.
- The harvest depends mainly on weather, which changes every year and difficult to broadcast.
- Some products are still under requirements of EU for quality and hygiene.
- Lack of knowledge in changes of customers taste and needs.
- The local market share and revenue from local customers is low, due to the lack of provided information and wrong position of current wholesalers.

Opportunities

- Some expenditure on food is essential for everyone and is considered an established part of the household budget.
- Many food products are deemed necessities and are unlikely to be harshly affected by any economic downturn. It is discretionary spending that is usually badly hit in a recession, which is, therefore, more likely to harm sales of 'luxury' foods.
- Czech Republic is located in the central of Europe, without any coastline. This keeps a higher demand for seafood in the market.
- Demand for some certain agricultural products such as fish, rice, coffee, nuts, etc. in local market are being raised every year and seems like never get declined.
- Consumer demands for convenience have served to increase the opportunities for food retailing, which are no longer confined to the traditional food outlets or to daylight hours.
- Advances in technology and transportation helps innovations in handling and packaging methods can maintain products freshness and quality; producers can deliver perishable products faster with little loss of freshness at a lower price.

Threatens

- Facing too many competitions when enter the market. Especially since Czech Republic enter EU (2004), the agreement between Europe countries requests that each country member should import products from other country member more than from

countries out of Union, that's why Vietnam not only must competitive with Asian producers but also competitors from EU in process of export products.

- The quota for some products (fish, coffee) always give a trouble for Vietnamese farmers, also it affects the tax fee for wholesalers when import products to the Czech Republic. This is harmful to the target market when they have to purchase a higher price for a product than the international price.

- The buying power of the large supermarket chains, and their demand for lower-priced supplies, has put further pressures on food-industry margins.

2. Suggestions using 4Ps model.

Product

To find out what kind of food products local people are interested in or expected to buy, a survey was created and given to people who go shopping in groceries or supermarket. From result of this question, middlemen will be able to know what kind of products should be imported more, and how to improve these products to meet the needs of local people.

According to the research, the most imported products from Vietnam to Czech Republic now are cereal (rice and beans), coffee, tea, spices and aquatic invertebrates, eg. fish, crustaceans and mollusc. But these products must face to very strong competitions from China, Brazil, Thailand, USA, etc. Customers go shopping and always have lots of brands available where they shop. Vietnamese products should be able to highlight its features which make buyers put them to their cart. These features might be (and should be) quality, price, introduction and its image which has been created and proved through dishes in restaurants. The products must be also promoted in a different image compare to other existence products in the market, focus in the healthy and taste the products bring.

The outward of a product must be easy to see, eg. with bright colours or colours which can represent the features of product inside (orange, red, green, black...). Because the product is an exotic to local customers, the package should be able to see through. In the package, introduction written by Czech language must be printed clearly and easily to understand. Also, a brief using introduction of the product should be printed by local language and English. This introduction will lead customers to buy other products to be able to cook a finish dish at home.



Figure 3: a product of largest coffee organisation and its logo

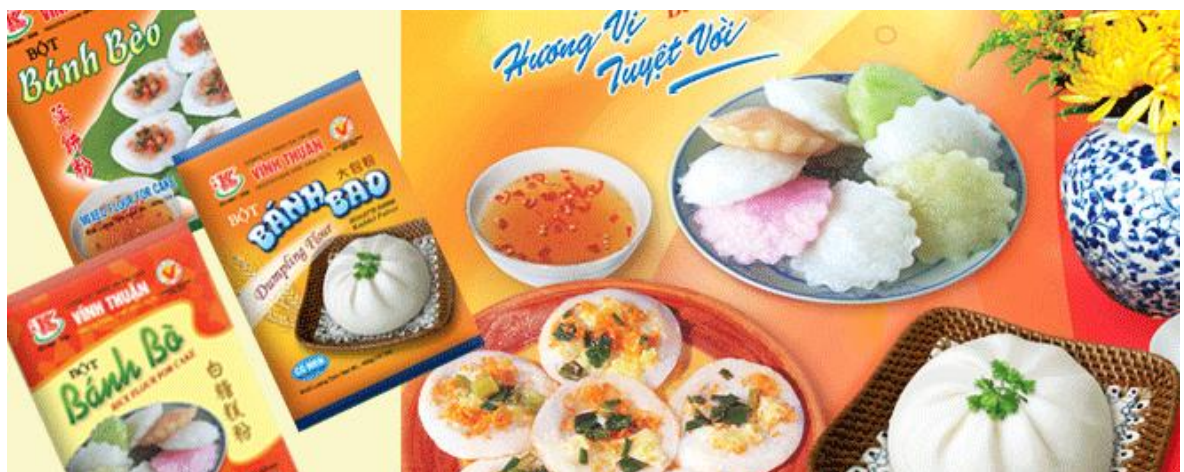


Figure 4: Rice starch products of Vinh Thuan Co.,Ltd.

While there are four main product classes (convenience, shopping, specialty, unsought), Vietnamese food products tend to stand in homogeneous shopping class with many other similar products and just few people know where the differences between them are. This problem will be discussed in Price part.

Place

In the case of this thesis, the retailer-dominated channel system will be suitable. A wholesaler or retailer in Czech has to collect products from many firms in Vietnamese to assort it in local market to give a target market what it wants. They understand the market and its buyers more than any domestic producer. In fact, to develop the current market

share in the Czech Republic, producers from Vietnam will have to depend on middlemen to reach to customers. Middlemen-or retailers will decide what, where and when to sell a product. This also mean that retailers, beside using marketing and PR to fight with other Asian brands, they have to competitive with other retailers in orders to have the lowest price in possibility.

Nowadays, there are many small groceries owned by Vietnamese and mostly, they stand by departments or blocks which are quite far away from local retailers, eg. Lidl, Tesco, Billa, etc. These groceries earn profit, but slow and not much. Although some people are interested in choosing new products and get to know about Vietnamese products from these shop. They can't help promote products to majority people but only people, who are in impulse or emergency situations. That's why a new retailer system should be open in places where more types of people might interested in trying new food, such as fitness centre (with people who care about having healthy products in their diet), hospital (for people who buy food for their special health situation- no gluten, low fat, natural component, etc.), places where centre Asian restaurants or centre of Vietnamese community. These places should be in a position with convenient transportation and enough big to store all the imported products. Type of transporting and storing influence to the total cost of a product, especially when all products are imported from Vietnam - some by airplanes, some by shipping, but then a local transportation is also required to deliver goods from containers to smaller wholesalers or retailers, that's why it is important to choose the most alternative transporting method for each product.

Promotion

Currently, the demand for Vietnamese products is still limited but its price compare to other competitors from Thailand or China is higher, and there are many such competitors in the market. A right promotion method should be chosen in order to reduce higher total cost but still able to reach as the largest number of target market as possible. In this case, mass selling method will be the optimum, because it offers advertising and publicity in its form. The mass selling method communicates with large number of potential customers at the same time, signify a less spent than personal selling or sales promotion activities, although it is not as flexible and effective as these methods. But this theory is just a basic one. Nowadays, with the strongly breaking out of internet and social network, customers tend to stay at home for shopping online.

Price

For Vietnamese producers when entering the Czech market, they will face some complements which make their total cost become higher:

- ✓ Allowances between different domestic firms
- ✓ Different prices from current exist competitors
- ✓ Different from the needs of target market, up on the educations, geographic and religion
- ✓ Cost of logistic and storing
- ✓ Exchange rate
- ✓ Tax

That's why the price level should be set higher than competitors' price. Customers will accept to pay a higher price in a comfortable status, if and only if the producers - in this case, the wholesalers - create and promote a right image for company or the same feature for all kind of products and offer better services which meet the needs of customers and make them feel like the products worth its price, then they are able to improve that needs to their wants. Producers must guarantee their products' quality to meet the set image, the wholesalers must provide a good and comfortable service; promote actions at the right time and in the right place focus on utility of target market (allowances, discounts, extra, publicity, delivering, etc.)

3. Using social media for promotion.

✓ An optimum social media (websites, blogs, video, etc.) must interact as well as possible with customers. Depends on the objectives of producers and wholesalers, marketing managers will figure out an interface which can help them satisfy each of their target market with the technical help of IT team.

✓ Marketers should have messages in as many formats as practical. Though the messages are the same, they will appeal to different groups of people, so marketers should think about augmenting text with photos and maybe some video contents. The page should be divided into several categories, eg. category for children, for students, for diet women or for housewives, etc.

✓ Take Alza.cz as an example of successful website which interacts very well with its customers, any online page for Vietnamese products should be found out quickly

through a research engine (Google, Bing, Ask.com, etc.). To make this, the site must be found by some simple words which a customer might put in the research tool to have information they need. Later, make sure the site stay at the top researched position by often updated with new contents, eg. video, news, etc.

✓ Make sure that site content must meet the picture which has created and advertised to customers before and the objectives of company. The products imported from Vietnam should be introduced as a natural, fresh and healthy line of products.

✓ The site had better to contain more non-text content – including photos, audio feeds, video clips, cartoons, charts and graphs – to inform and entertain site visitors. On a technical note, web developers should wary large size images and distracting multimedia contents like Flash Video to reduce any trouble a visitor could face when visit the site. It is better, because the current customers of local market still think of Vietnamese products as well as its cuisine as something very new, and they would not want to spend too much time in finding what it is about, unless they do really care of having it at home.

✓ As mentioned above, that a new customer will not want to spend too much time in finding information from tons of information they see on a site which are very similar and can confuse them. In this case, an online team will be formed to help customers find out the exact information they need and then introduce them some products which might satisfy their searching. This team must speak fluently Czech and English, have a basic knowledge of products and marketing strategy of the company.

4. Current quantity of import Vietnamese products in local market.

In this part, data tables were downloaded from Czech Statistical Office, in the form of imported quality and quantity through years to have a basic look on import situation for Vietnamese products in the Czech market.

Table 1: Value of Vietnamese imports to the Czech Republic

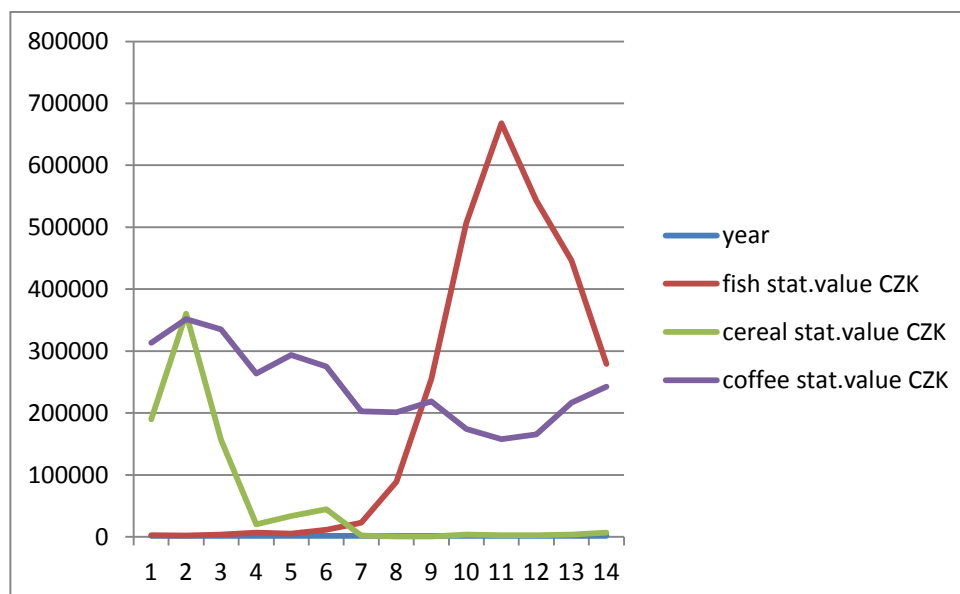
year	Fish stat.value CZK	Cereal stat.value CZK	Coffee stat.value CZK
1999	2,938	189,831	313,417
2000	2,176	360,559	351,786
2001	3,749	157,001	335,340
2002	6,689	20,598	263,614

2003	5,195	34,005	293,902
2004	11,690	44,508	275,388
2005	23,146	2,251	202,736
2006	89,199	977	201,313
2007	255,167	754	218,716
2008	506,854	3,626	174,549
2009	667,893	2,608	157,904
2010	542,783	2,570	165,717
2011	446,246	3,994	216,713
2012	279,442	6,947	242,644

Source: Czech Statistics Office February 2013

The table will be represented as a graph below:

Figure 4: Products imported to CR from Vietnam



The table indicates the value of selected Vietnamese direct imports to the Czech Republic in monetary values. The quantity in kg has not been recorded by the Statistics Office since 2005. After their lowest point in 2006, the values of coffee and cereal produce have both risen, though fish imports have dropped dramatically. The Vietnamese

association of seafood exporters explain that the reason for this is mainly the unreliable source of shrimp in particular, due to disease (“Early mortality syndrome”)⁹.

The most important problem is that while rice is the most exported product of Vietnam, takes the first place of the world, it has been decreased so strongly in Czech. The peak of imported quantity was 2000 with 39 904 064 kg, reach the value 380,559 crown. After this year, rice quantity dropped till only 754 thousands crown 2007, since then the quantity just increased a little bit. This problem could be caused firstly by the raise of competition from other rice-export countries (India, China, Thailand, etc.) and then by the policy barriers of local government, when Czech entered EU in 2004.

The import quantity of coffee –the current most export product in Vietnam – was also decreased since its peak in the same year. Not as fish and cereal, coffee still keep its position in the Czech market. The local demand for this product seems more stable than the others.

According to this table, if domestic producers/farmers want to enlarge the Czech market, they will have to face many competitions which have existed for a long time and in strong business position to take back the market share. Furthermore, they have to improve their products in order to have better quality than other competitors and meet the requirements of local policy. In additional, the health care service for customers must be offered somehow to increase the interest of customers in buying Vietnamese products. The decreases of rice and coffee in local market while it increases in global market is a threaten, but it could be also an opportunity if wholesalers and producers know how to improve products and apply right marketing strategy to meet the customers’ needs.

5. Survey of customers buying trend.

In this survey, a questionnaire consist of 8 questions was created to study of local people’ shopping habit. The questionnaire was given to customers who were visiting exotic food shelves in big retailers such as Tesco, Kaufland and small groceries of Vietnamese. The first asked question for every visitor is whether they have ever used a product made in Vietnam. There are over 400 answers received back as responds. The answers from these responds will be analysed to have a general look of current shopping habit of local people for exotic food product line, especially for Vietnamese products.

⁹ <http://www.eng.vasep.com.vn>

Question 1, 2: study of age, gender which could affect the shopping habit. The answers received as shown below:

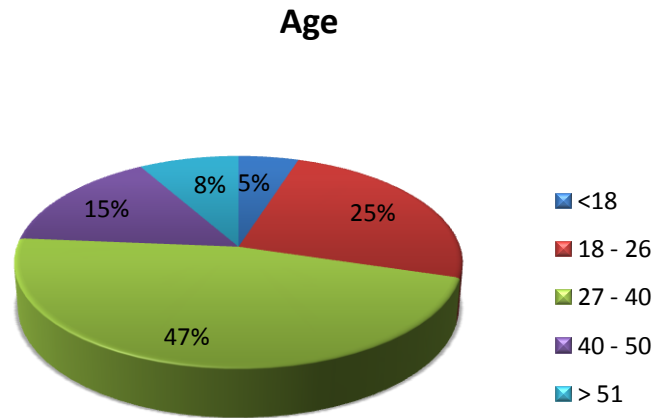


Figure 5: Customers' age.

Through this result, it can be seen that the exotic food shelves are mostly visited by customers in the ages of 27 – 40. It can be understood that people from these ages have a good condition of economic and a basic knowledge about some foreign products and its cuisine. This hypothesis will be proved at next questions.

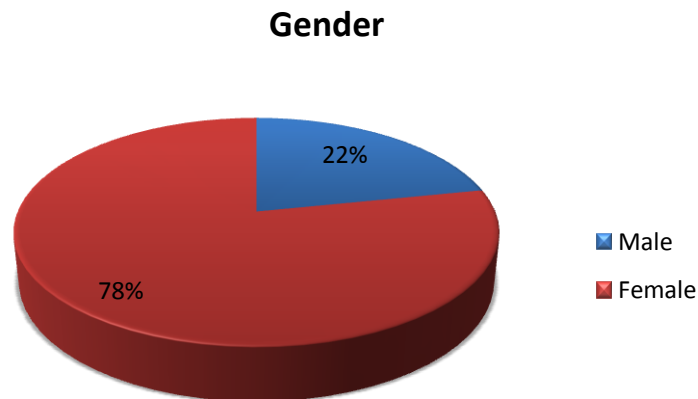


Figure 6: Customers' gender.

While collecting answers from visitors of a grocery, it's easy to see that mostly people who passed by exotic food section are women. As a result, 78% of people who answered the questionnaire are female. This result could help marketing managers know how to improve their products to be more suitable for women taste, base on the characters or interest of female; and how to increase the interest for Vietnamese products of male.

Question 3: In the aim to see how customers' job affects to their buying, this question seems to have similar answers like question of age. Below is result of this question.

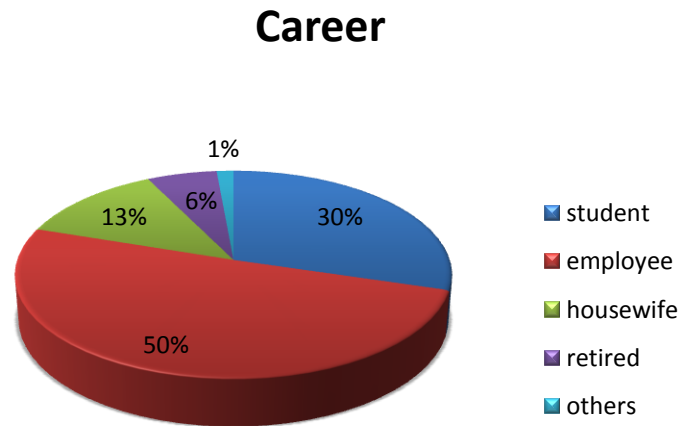


Figure 7: Customers' career.

The result shows that 50% of responders are member of a firm. It means their income is fixed and somehow through the work, they have conditions to reach new knowledge, culture and taste different cuisines. Less visiting to the shelves is students with rate of 30%. The rest 20% is divided to housewives, retired and other jobs. Through this result, marketing managers can see what type of target market are interested the most in buying their products and be able to focus more in customers healthcare service, as well as develop the service to satisfy this target market. Customers' career takes a part in influencing customers buying habit and paying price, the products – as a result – should be produced and packed in different ways to approach the needs. For example, products for employee segmentation should be packed in politely box with more details of nutrients and ingredients; price for these products can be higher but must look good and quality must be guaranteed (the nutrients must satisfy their healthy diet, easy to use at work, and so on). For students, what they care mostly is the price, quality is less cared, so the price should be lower, package can be simple with basic details, etc.

Question 4: the aim of this question is to know why visitors walk by an exotic food shelf and choose an item imported from Vietnam to buy.

Reason of buying

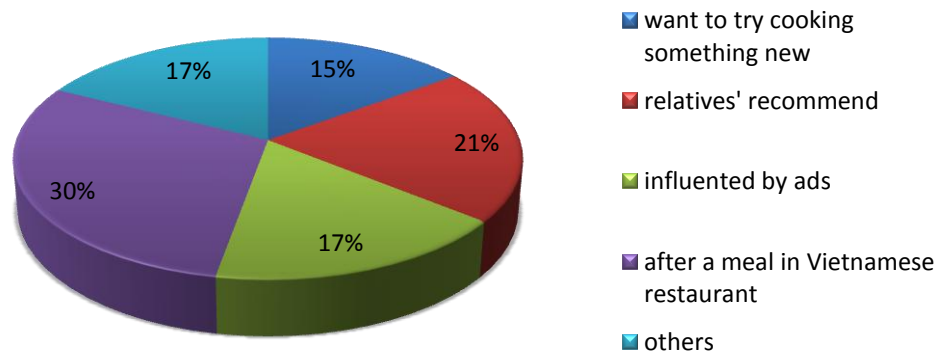


Figure 8: Customers' buying reasons.

The result received shows that mostly visitors (30%) walked by because they were impressed by the meal they have had in a Vietnamese restaurant, 21% said that their relatives from work, school or family recommended them to try buying Vietnamese food products instead of other countries' products to eat or cook, 17% said the advertisements about the special of Vietnamese cuisine that they read in local magazines, daily news or the websites/ social networks they often visit gave them an idea of buying the products. 15% just walked by because they hadn't had any idea what to buy for the day and want to try buying exotic products, the rest 17% walked by because they were looking for some other products and suddenly see it in exotic products area or want to see what retailer sell in this area.

The result of this question is important for marketing managers while developing their promotion process. Customers' answer would help them know what influences people in making their buying decision and from this, marketer can reinforce tools which are well working, develop new tool which might work and reduce the one which is not useful. For example, while a big part of customers buy products because they had meal in Vietnamese restaurants, marketers can provide products with some typical ingredients which are easy and quite simple for them to cook at home by themselves; buy more ads and improve networks content to reach customers who are affected by advertisements and relatives (which is also called word-of-mouth), and so on.

Question 5: was created to know how a product can impress customers and make them choose the product instead of other similar products in the shelf.

The question is “Which elements make you choose a product from shelves of a store?” And the answers received back are divided to:

Choosing elements

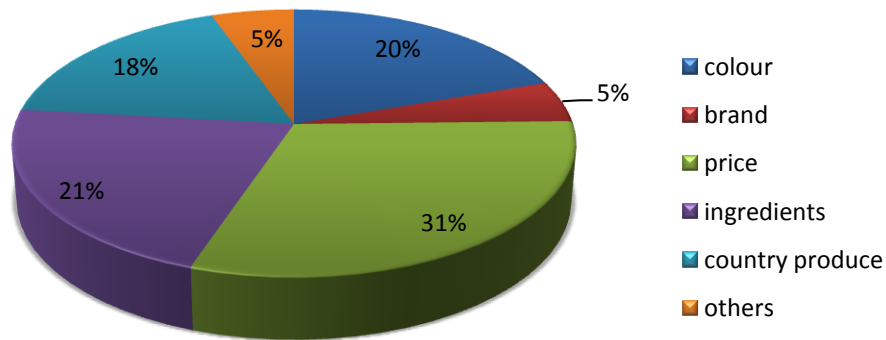


Figure 9: Elements lead to customers' decision.

The result shows that price is the most important element when customer considers their choice (31% of the responds). Follow it is products' ingredients, package colour, country where the product is produced, the brand and some other elements.

According to this result, marketers can see that price is the most influential factor to customer's decision. This result proves that the **Price** in 4Ps model is very important and right pricing strategy can affect to whole marketing process and lead target market to a fixed customer. The result also prove that some suggestions about packaging, choosing brand and improve products' quality mentioned using 4Ps method are based.

Question 6: this question is expected to study about the feast tendency of local people through buying actions. Responders were asked to choose more than one answer.

Most chosen food type

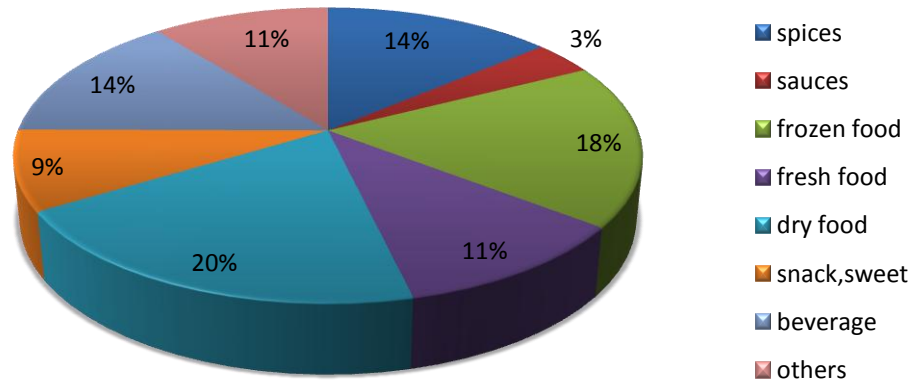


Figure 10: Feast tendency

As the result shows in the graph above, many responders (20%) chose to buy dry products (rice, noodle, beans, etc.), follow it 18% chose frozen food such as fish, shrimp or shellfishes. This can be mean that local customers still tend to choose products which are able to be stored longer and seems safer, easier to cook, or just because these products take the biggest section in groceries. 14% visitors want to buy spices which include cinnamon, cumin, curry, chilli, garlic, star anise, saffron, etc. 11% chose fresh food (tropical fruits, vegetables) though these fresh fruits are sold in local groceries mostly some kind of fruits such as pomegranate, starfruit, lychee, grapefruit, coconut, etc. and without any kind of vegetables. Vietnamese wholesalers are the only place where people can come and buy vegetables, some of visitors know that, but normally, these wholesalers or market are far from the centre and beside, just a few Czech people ever been there.

Besides showing the tendency of local customers in buying exotic products, through these responds marketing managers also able to see the important of **Place** in promote strategy: the biggest wholesaler where centred all kind of food products in the best quality is far away and mostly sell for Vietnamese people who don't need introduction to use those products. Although Czech customers are interested in Vietnamese products and its cuisine, that interest usually not strong enough to lead them spend such a long way and time to go to the market. So, a wholesaler which can be placed closer to centre of the city where local customers can visit easily and more often will be better for its selling process.

Question 7: the question was provided in order to know what customers' opinion about Vietnamese food products are. The answer was suggested to compare with other Asian countries' products.

Vietnamese products compare with other Asian products

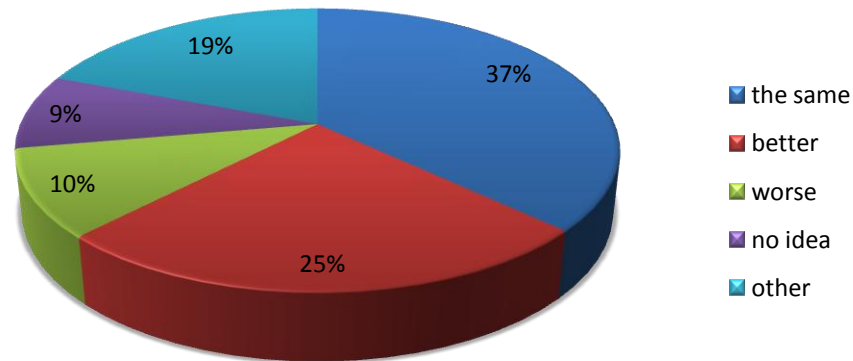


Figure 11: Comparing products

As the graph shown, mostly visitors (37%) think that Vietnamese products have the same quality as products of other Asian countries and 25% responders think that these products are better or much better. 19% responders refused to give an exact answer and 9% have never tried so they have no idea how the product will satisfy them.

This result shows that currently, Vietnamese food products have already had a positive thought in customers' mind, though "same quality" should be improved to "better quality" to meet the objectives of producers about competitions. The rest 38% of responders will become prospects that marketer must use promotion to change their opinion.

Question 8: this question is expected to help the social media team know which words or phrases customers would use to describe products, maybe to other people or to put in a research engine to search for what they are interested in.

Describing words

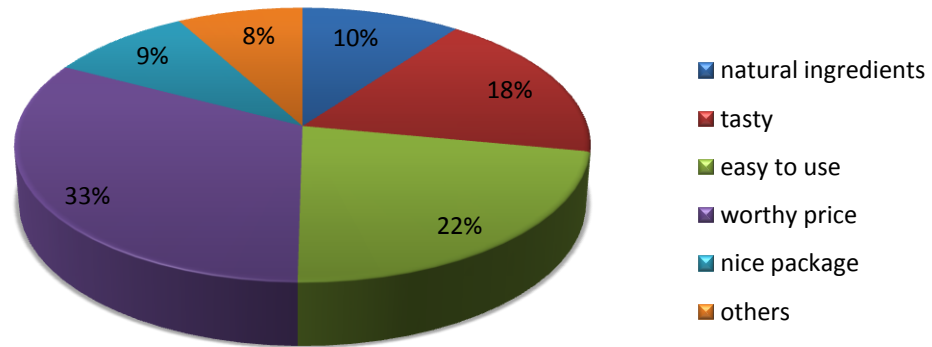


Figure 12: Describing words of Vietnamese products.

The graph shows that 33% customers who ever bought a Vietnamese product satisfied with it because it's worth the money they spent to buy the product. Not talk about the quality, as result of the 5th question showed, price is still the most considered factor in making decision process of customers. The important is that the product can satisfy customers because its quality commensurate to the price it's offered. It could be mean that a product when reaches the expected quality, any price it offers will be accepted. By this result, wholesalers can be able to know what kind of products they should import for sale and what price level they should apply for that product to make profit.

The useful of product is also considered when they have to talk about a product. 22% visitors said that they purchase an item in exotic shelves again because they can easily use it at home while that product comes from a new cuisine they have never used before. 9% visitors said that the package of products impressed them because of its colour, images and the introduction printed on it.

There is 18% visitors described Vietnamese food products as tasty. This is interesting, because 30% of visitors came to buy these products said that they were impressed by a meal they had in Vietnamese restaurants. It is not difficult to understand why just 18% of them think that Vietnamese products in store are tasty: the currently products sale in groceries for local people are different to the products sale for Vietnamese restaurants; also, the way Vietnamese chefs cook dinner in restaurants for local people are

different to the way Vietnamese people cook at home, not to mention the way local people use Vietnamese products from groceries to cook dinner at home for themselves – there are many ways to prepare a dish, ways to combine species when cooking or different orders of put ingredients into a pot. So mostly, people get trouble to cook a Vietnamese dish at home and compare it to the meal they had in restaurants. Products imported from Vietnam must have clear introductions which are written in Czech language or English and printed in the packages. Almost every product in the market now have an introduction under pressure of local policy but in wrong dictate or very sketchy, that's why local customers prefer buying products from other countries which have detailed information to buying Vietnamese products, lead to revenue obtained from Czech customers is very low.

V. CONCLUSION

The most imported products from Vietnam to Czech Republic now are cereal (rice and beans), coffee, tea, spices and aquatic invertebrates, eg. fish, crustaceans and mollusc. But these products must face to very strong competitions from China, Brazil, Thailand, USA, etc. Vietnamese products should be able to highlight its features to improve the share and allure new customers.

Vietnamese producers should apply the retailer – dominated channel system if they want to improve their market share. It means, they must let the middlemen in Czech decide what, where, when to sell a product and to whom, at which price.

Current Vietnamese groceries somehow have influenced local customers to buy Vietnamese products but mostly to people who are in impulse situations. That's why retailer system should be opened in right places in order to allure more customers in wider section.

Type of transporting and storing influence to the total cost of a product, that's why it is important to choose the most alternative transporting method for each product to lower the cost.

The price is the most considered problem when customer chooses a product, and its level should be set higher than competitors' price. Basically, price is different for each target market. Customers are willing to accept a higher price in a comfortable status, if and only if the producers can create and promote a right image for company or the same feature for all kind of products and offer better services than other providers.

Social media plays a very important role in marketing process. Apply social network will help wholesalers save money for paper advertisements and connect to customers faster and easier. Besides, the most suitable promotion strategy should be found out to help customers know what they are offered in the market, not only in local retailers.

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APPENDICES

Questionnaire

Dear responders,

I am a student of the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague and I am working on my Bachelor thesis under the topic: “Marketing Vietnamese food products in the Czech Republic”. I would be very grateful if you could spend approximately 5 minutes of your time to answer this questionnaire. It will help me analyze the current position of Vietnamese food products in Czech market, from that find out an effective marketing promotion method for these products. The results will be included in practical part of my thesis.

1. What is your group of age?

- Younger than 18
- 18 - 26
- 27 - 40
- 41 - 50
- Over 51

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3. What is your current job?

- High school
- Students in university
- Employee of a firm
- Housewives
- Others

4. What make you decide to buy an exotic product from a grocery?

- Want to try cooking something new.
- From recommends of relative (family, friends, etc.)
- From ads in social media.
- After having a meal in restaurant.

- Others: ...

5. Which elements make you choose a product from shelves of a store?

- Its colour
- The brand
- Its price
- Its quality/components
- Producing country
- Others.

6. What do you tend to buy from an exotic food product shelf of a store?

- Rice products (rice, noodle, rice papers, etc.)
- Spices (saffron, five aroma powder, chilli, pepper, garlic, etc)
- Sauces (hot sauce, sour sauce, soy sauce, fish cause, preparing sauces, etc.)
- Fresh food (vegetables, tropical fruits)
- Frozen food (fish, shrimp, shellfish, octopus, etc.)
- Dry food (beans, mushrooms, dry fish, dry fruits, etc)
- Snack, sweet
- Beverages (fruit juices, beer, milk, tea, coffee, etc.)
- Others

7. What is your opinion when compare Vietnamese products to other Asian products, especially Chinese or Thailand?

- Vietnamese products have the same quality.
- Vietnamese products are in better quality.
- Totally worse than products from other countries.
- No idea.
- Other opinion:

8. If you use a word or a phrase to describe Vietnamese food, which word do you use?

- Natural ingredients
- Tasty
- Easy to use
- Worth the price
- Nice package
- Others: ...

Dotazník

Drazí respondenti,

Jsem studentkou české zemědělské univerzity, která píše bakalářskou práci na téma Marketing vietnamských produktů na českém trhu. Budu Vám velmi vděčný, pokud strávíte svých 5 minut vyplněním tohoto dotazníku. Výsledky mi pomohou analyzovat současnou situaci vietnamských produktů na českém trhu. Data chci využít pro vybrání efektivních marketingových metod pro podporu prodeje těchto produktů. Výsledky budou zahrnuty v praktické části mé bakalářské práce.

1. Jaký je Váš věk?

- Mladší než 18
- 18 – 26
- 27 – 40
- 41 – 50
- Nad 51

2. Jste:

- Muž
- Žena

3. Jaká je Vaše pracovní pozice?

- Student střední školy
- Student university
- Zaměstnanec
- Žena v domácnosti
- Jiné

4. Z jakého důvodu kupujete exotické produkty?

- Chci zkusit vařit něco nového
- Doporučení mé rodiny a známých
- Reklamy v médiích
- Jídlo mi chutnalo v restauraci
- Jiné

5. Na základě jakých aspektů vybíráte produkty z regálů obchodů?

- Barva
- Značka

- Cent
- Kvalita/komponenty
- Země původu
- Jiné

6. Jaké exotické produkty nejčastěji kupujete?

- Rýžové produkty (rýže, nudle, rýžové papíry..)
- Koření (šafrán, prášek pěti chutí??. chilli, pepř, česnek..)
- Omáčky (pálivá, kyselá, sojová, rybí, základová)
- Čerstvé potraviny (zelenina, tropické ovoce)
- Zmražené potraviny (rudy, krevity, měkkýši, chobotnice..)
- Sušené potraviny (fazole, hobby, sušené rudy, sušené ovoce)
- Pochutiny
- Nápoje (ovocné džusy, pivot, mléko, čaj, káva..)
- Jiné

7. Jaká je tvá preference co se týče vietnamských potravin k jiným asijským potravinám, zvláště čínských a thajským?

- Vietnamské produkty jsou stejně kvalitní
- Vietnamské proudly jsou kvalitnější
- Vietnamské produkty jsou méně kvalitní
- Nevím
- Jiné: ...

8. Pokud byste měl použít slovo či frázi k popisu vietnamského jídla, co by to bylo?

- Přírodní ingredience
- Chut'
- Jednoduché k zpracování
- Cent odpovídající kvalitě
- Zajímavé balení
- Jiné

Some typical Vietnamese dishes:



Figure 13: Banh mi (Vietnamese baguette)



Figure 15: a hotpot



Figure 14: *pho* and *bun* - noodle soups



Figure 16: spring rolls