

# Integrated Marketing Communication and Service Quality Influencing on Brand Loyalty of Customer a Company that Produces and Distributes Chemical Fertilizers Under the ABC Brand

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## Abstract

The objectives of this research were 1) to study the importance of integrated marketing communication, service quality and brand loyalty, 2) to analyze the integrated marketing communication that influences brand loyalty, and 3) to analyze the service quality that influences brand loyalty. This is quantitative research. The data were collected from 298 operators selling chemical fertilizers of ABC brand. The sample group were selected using a 2-step sample selection method, the quota sample selection and random sampling. The statistics for data analysis were descriptive statistics consisting of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and inferential statistics which were multiple regression analysis. The research results revealed that 1) the service quality and brand loyalty were at a high level, 2) Integrated marketing communications in sales by salespeople influenced brand loyalty of customers of chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of ABC brand with statistically significance at the 0.01 level, and 3) service quality in credibility, caring, ensuring the customers, and in tangibility influenced the brand loyalty of customers of chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of ABC brand with statistically significance at the 0.01 level.

**Keywords:** Integrated Marketing Communication, Service Quality, Brand Loyalty

## Introduction

Nowadays, with the situation of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic, many business sectors have been affected and slowed down. However, as Thai agricultural sector has continually grown from consumption and exports, the price of agricultural products are likely to increase. It is expected that from the tendency of better agricultural prices, farmers will be motivated to increase the production rate causing positive effect on the chemical fertilizer industry. The chemical fertilizer industry is an important industry to Thailand because Thailand is an agricultural country. This makes the chemical fertilizer industry play a significant role in increasing the productivity of the agricultural sector. As Thailand is still unable to produce mother fertilizers or single-component fertilizers that are chemical

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compounds due to the high production cost, each entrepreneur is required to import fertilizers or single-purpose fertilizers from foreign countries in order to mix formulas to meet the needs of farmers and distributed through dealers. The quality of the formula used in the fertilizer production of each operator is not much different. Currently, 723 operators of chemical fertilizer manufacturers are registered in Thailand resulting in a variety of brands in the market and complete competition (Department of Business Development, 2019).

From the increasing market competition, the companies that operate the business of manufacturing and distributing chemical fertilizers of ABC brand encounters the problem with the company's sales decline. The dealers have reduced the order quantity of chemical fertilizers. The companies therefore need to adjust various strategies in accordance with the current situation to be distinctive in attracting attention and the purchase needs of dealer customers. These include the presentation of the company's brand to create awareness of customers and encourage customers to be interested in products and services allowing the companies to meet the needs of customers as much as possible. With the integrated marketing communication, it is an important strategy used as an accepted communication channel. It plays an important role in doing business or managing an organization that focuses on target groups in order for customers to gain brand awareness, familiarity with the brand as well as being a communication that creates a relationship between the organization and its customers (Sengmanee, 2019). Apart from the integrated marketing communication that makes customers aware and familiar with the brand, the companies need to apply Service Quality, which is a key factor in driving their business to build confidence in service quality in every crisis (Phimmasenh & Nouansavanh, 2015; Pungpho & Wanarat, 2017). It creates outstanding and differentiate products and services. If the organization delivers good service quality that can meet the expectations of customers, it will help creating the competitive advantage in the same business (Ritwatthanavanich, 2019; Dechtongkam, 2020).

From the background and significance, the researchers were interested in studying how integrated marketing communication and service quality influenced brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand. The information will be used to develop an integrated marketing communication strategy and service quality for creating a competitive advantage and increasing sales of chemical fertilizers as well as increasing the ability to maintain the existing customer base and attract new customers to make the decision to purchase chemical fertilizers of the Company.

### **Research Objectives**

- 1) To study the importance of integrated marketing communication, service quality and brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand.
- 2) To analyze the integrated marketing communication that influences brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand.
- 3) To analyze the service quality that influences brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand.

### **Research Methodology**

The study of integrated marketing communication and service quality influencing brand loyalty of customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturing company of the ABC brand is quantitative research.

### **Population and Samples**

The population used in this study consisted of 1,180 customers who were shop operators selling chemical fertilizers of the ABC brand. The sample group used in this study was 298 customers of shop operators selling chemical fertilizer of the ABC brand. This was calculated using Taro Yamane's formula. The reliability was determined at 95% with the tolerance of

5% taking into account the proportion of the population of each region and randomly selected the sample according to the proportion of each region.

### **Research Tools**

In this research, the researchers used the questionnaires as the tools to collect data consisting of 5 parts as follows:

Part 1 is the questionnaires about general information of respondents, including gender, age, length of service as a dealer, type of business and region of operation. It looks like a closed-ended questionnaire. The questions are multiple choices.

Part 2 is the questionnaires on the importance of integrated marketing communication of chemical fertilizers of the ABC brand on the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor. There is a questionnaire style as an estimation scale in 5 levels of answer for each question from the most, more, moderate, less, and the least.

Part 3 is the questionnaires on the importance of service quality of chemical fertilizers of the ABC brand on the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor. There is a questionnaire style as an estimation scale in 5 levels of answer for each question from the most, more, moderate, less, and the least.

Part 4 is the questionnaires on the level of brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor. There is a questionnaire style as an estimation scale in 5 levels of answer for each question from the most, more, moderate, less, and the least.

Part 5 is the questionnaires on the additional suggestions and comments with open-ended questions.

### **Quality Inspection of Research Tools**

1) The content validation is done by experts to check the correctness of the questions and the language used in each question. The content validation is determined by the Item-Objective Congruence Index or IOC by assessing whether the question is consistent with what is being studied or not. The content validity assessment criteria is based on scores (Silcharu, 2017). The results of the content validity analysis revealed that all questions had a calculated IOC value greater than or equal to 0.50. This means that the content validity questionnaire can be processed in the next step.

2) In testing the Reliability, the researchers conducted the test on the reliability of the questionnaires by using the tryout of 30 sets of questionnaires to collect the data to be tested by statistical methods. When considering the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, the integrated marketing communications variable had an alpha coefficient of between 0.85-0.92, service quality had an alpha coefficient of between 0.74-0.86, and brand loyalty had an alpha coefficient of between 0.89-0.92. These were greater than the 0.70 criterion for all variables (Vanichbuncha, 2017). Therefore, it could be concluded that the questionnaire was valid and had confidence that can be used to collect data for studying.

### **Data Collection**

The researchers distributed the questionnaires to the customers who were the shop operators selling chemical fertilizers of the ABC brand using 298 sets according to the quota of each region in an online format on Google Platform. The questionnaires were submitted in the form of Link and QR Code. For collecting questionnaires, when the sample group completed the questionnaire, the researcher checked for accuracy and completeness. Then, the data would be analyzed with statistical package program.

### **Data Analysis**

The researchers conducted data analysis using statistics as follows:

1) Descriptive Statistics: The statistics used to describe the characteristics of the data collected from the samples included in the study were frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

2) Inferential Statistics: The analysis was conducted on the integrated marketing communication and service quality influencing brand loyalty of customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was initially used, and multiple regression analysis was also used.

### Research Conceptual Framework

The researchers formulated the research conceptual framework based on studies, concepts, theories and researches related to integrated marketing communication, service quality and brand loyalty. This makes it possible to define the research conceptual framework as follows:

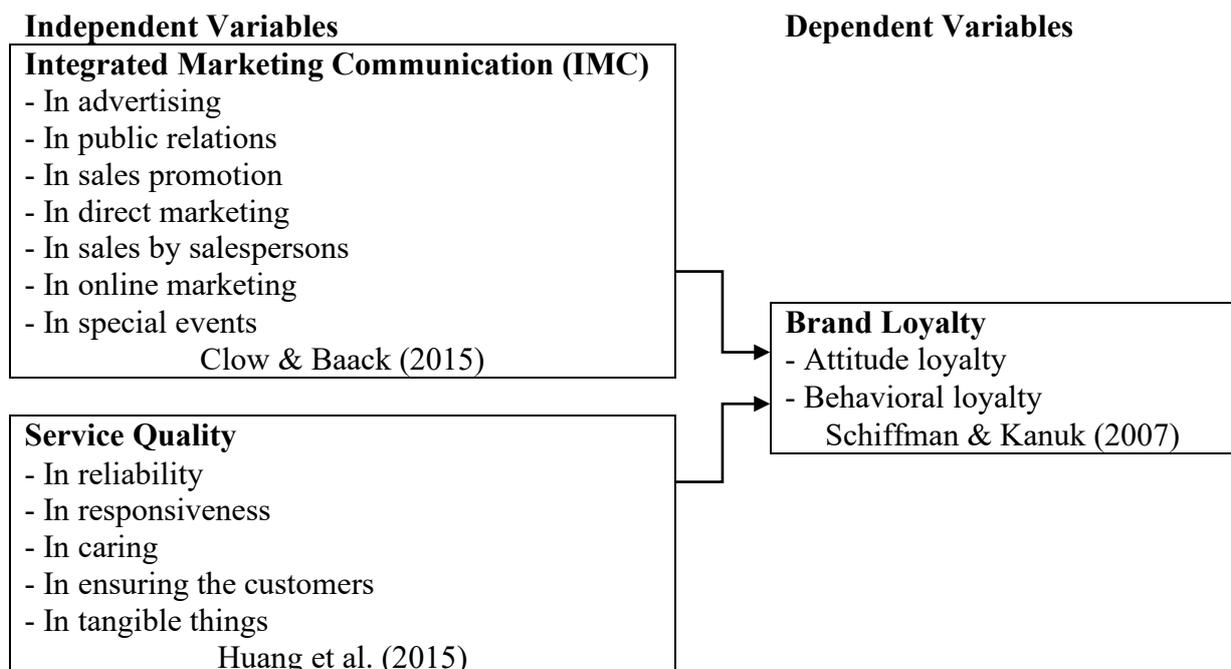


Figure 1 Research conceptual framework

## Research Results

### General Data of the Respondents

The general data found that the majority of respondents for 161 people were male accounting for 54.0%. 121 people aged between 40-49 years accounting for 40.6%. 110 people had been a distributor for more than 5 years accounting for 36.9%. 139 people engaged in the type of business of retail operators accounting for 46.6%. 146 people had the region where the establishments were located in Northeastern region accounting for 49.0%.

### Integrated Marketing Communications of the customers of a Chemical Fertilizer Manufacturer and Distributor of the ABC Brand

The importance of integrated marketing communication was entirely at a high level ( $\bar{x} = 4.07$ , S.D. = 0.52). When considering each aspect sorting the average from the highest to the lowest, it was found that sales by salespeople had the highest mean with the high level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.19$ , S.D. = 0.65). This was followed by direct marketing with the high level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.12$ , S.D. = 0.68). The sales promotion had the high level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.11$ , S.D. = 0.62). The public relations had the high level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.07$ , S.D. = 0.64). The special activities had the high level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.05$ , S.D. = 0.65). The online marketing ( $\bar{x} = 4.00$ , S.D. = 0.65) and advertising were of high importance ( $\bar{x} = 3.93$ , S.D. = 0.69), respectively.

**Service Quality of the Customers of a Chemical Fertilizer Manufacturer and Distributor of the ABC Brand**

The importance of overall service quality was at a high level ( $\bar{x} = 4.17$ , S.D. = 0.47). When considering each aspect in order of mean from the highest to the lowest, it was found that caring had the highest mean with the highest level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.21$ , S.D. = 0.56). This was followed by ensuring customers with the high level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.17$ , S.D. = 0.54). In response, the mean was at the highest level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.17$ , S.D. = 0.55). The tangible things had the high level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.17$ , S.D. = 0.56). In reliability, it was at the high level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.13$ , S.D. = 0.55), respectively.

**Brand Loyalty of the Customers of a Chemical Fertilizer Manufacturer and Distributor of the ABC Brand**

The importance of brand loyalty was entirely at a high level ( $\bar{x} = 4.20$ , S.D. = 0.51). When considering each aspect sorting the mean from the highest to the lowest, it was found that the attitude aspect had the highest mean ( $\bar{x} = 4.24$ , S.D. = 0.54). It was followed by behavioral aspect with the high level of importance ( $\bar{x} = 4.15$ , S.D. = 0.58), respectively.

**Research Hypothesis Testing**

**Test of Hypothesis 1:** The researchers examined the properties of the integrated marketing communication variables in order to avoid the Multicollinearity as follows:

1) Examine the relationship between the independent variables using statistical values which are Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The criteria for consideration was determined. Tolerance should be between 0.10-1.00 and VIF value must be less than 10 in order not to cause Multicollinearity or there is no spontaneous correlation between the independent variables (Vanichbuncha, 2012). From examining the relationship between independent variables, it was found that the Tolerance of independent variables was between 0.39-0.54 and the VIF of independent variables was 1.86-2.57. It was concluded that all independent variables had no level of reciprocal relationship.

**Table 1** Presents the integrated marketing communication influencing the brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand

Integrated Marketing Communication	Brand Loyalty			t	p
	Regression Coefficient (b)	Standard Error (β) S.E.			
Constant (a)	1.42	0.18			
1) In advertising	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.35	0.73
2) In public relations	0.11	0.13	0.06	1.92	0.06
3) In sales promotion	0.09	0.10	0.05	1.61	0.11
4) In direct marketing	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.82	0.42
5) In sales by salespersons	0.27	0.33	0.05	5.52	0.00**
6) In online marketing	0.05	0.07	0.05	1.08	0.28
7) In special events	0.09	0.12	0.05	1.88	0.06

R = 0.67, R<sup>2</sup> = 0.45, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.44, SEE = 0.38, F = 34.04

\* Level of significance p < 0.05, \*\* Level of significance p < 0.01

2) Verify the independence of the independent variables by finding the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The correlation coefficient should not exceed 0.8 (Steven, 1996) in order not to avoid Multicollinearity. There is no spontaneous correlation between the independent

variables. The examination found that the correlation coefficient between the independent variables was between 0.50-0.72 indicating that the independent variables were not correlated or independent. Therefore, the hypothesis can be tested using the Multiple Regression Analysis method. The analysis results are as shown in Table 1.

From Table 1, the analysis results of integrated marketing communication on brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand revealed that integrated marketing communication influenced brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand including sales by salespeople with statistical significance at 0.01 level. It can share brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand with the forecasting power of 44% (Adjust  $R^2 = 0.44$ ). It is able to create an integrated marketing communication forecasting equation that influences brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand. The regression equation can be written as follows:

$$Y = 1.42 + 0.27 (\text{In sales by salespersons})$$

**Test of Hypothesis 2:** The researchers examined the properties of the service quality variables in order to avoid the Multicollinearity as follows:

1) Examine the relationship between the independent variables using statistical values which are Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The criteria for consideration was determined. Tolerance should be between 0.10-1.00 and VIF value must be less than 10 in order not to cause Multicollinearity or there is no spontaneous correlation between the independent variables (Vanichbuncha, 2012). From examining the relationship between independent variables, it was found that the Tolerance of independent variables was between 0.37-0.49 and the VIF of independent variables was 2.05-2.74. It was concluded that all independent variables had no level of reciprocal relationship.

2) Verify the independence of the independent variables by finding the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. The correlation coefficient should not exceed 0.8 (Steven, 1996) in order not to avoid Multicollinearity. The examination found that the correlation coefficient between the independent variables was between 0.58-0.71 indicating that the independent variables were not correlated or independent. Therefore, the hypothesis can be tested using the Multiple Regression Analysis method. The analysis results are as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** Presents the service quality influencing the brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand

Service quality	Brand loyalty			t	p
	Regression Coefficient (b)	Standard error (β)	S.E.		
Constant (a)	0.62		0.17		
1) In reliability	0.12	0.13	0.05	2.39	0.02*
2) In responsiveness	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.45	0.66
3) In caring	0.26	0.28	0.05	4.74	0.00**
4) In ensuring the customers	0.21	0.22	0.06	3.77	0.00**
5) In tangible things	0.24	0.26	0.05	5.03	0.00**
R = 0.79, $R^2 = 0.62$ , Adjusted $R^2 = 0.62$ , SEE = 0.32, F = 97.12					

\* Level of significance  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* Level of significance  $p < 0.01$

From Table 2, the analysis results of service quality influencing brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand revealed that service quality influenced brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand namely reliability, caring, giving confidence

to customers and tangibility with statistical significance at the 0.05 level. It can share brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand. It has a predictive power of 62% ( $\text{Adjust } R^2 = 0.62$ ). It can create the forecasting equation for service quality that influences brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand. The regression equation can be written as follows:

$$Y = 0.62 + 0.12 (\text{reliability}) + 0.26 (\text{caring}) + 0.21 (\text{giving confidence to customers}) + 0.24 (\text{tangibility})$$

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

Based on research findings of integrated marketing communication and service quality influencing brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand, the results of the research can be discussed as follows:

The customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand have the opinion about the importance of integrated marketing communication at a high level. This is because integrated marketing communication is a direct communication tool between the organization and its target customers to motivate customers on the awareness of the products and services of the organization. It is a communication tool that helps building good relationships, motivating, and being able to meet the needs of customers causing customers to be accepted behavior in the organization's brand. This is consistent with the research of Ratiratchanon (2019) studying the integrated marketing communication strategies that affect the purchase decision of Milk Processed Products. It was found that the overall and individual opinion of integrated marketing communication were at the very high level. It is correspondent with the research of Ketklud (2018) studying the integrated marketing communication and the satisfaction affecting the loyalty to the S-Pure brand of consumers in the Bangkok area. It was found that the opinion of integrated marketing communication overall and in each aspect were at the high level.

The customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand have the opinion about the importance of service quality at a high level. This is because currently the quality of chemical fertilizer products has no difference between the different brands in the market. Therefore, the good service quality is an important strategy to differentiate the brand and to create competitive advantages for chemical fertilizer manufacturers and distributors in Thailand by delivering good service. It will help building customer awareness making customers satisfied with the products and services of the organization. When the organization can meet the needs of customers, the customers will have behaviors to accept the brand and have good attitude towards the brand which is psychological manifestation such as confidence and faith in the brand, etc. The behaviors of repetitive purchases and word of mouth continue. It is considered loyalty in the brand both in terms of attitude and behaviors. From the research results, it was found that the customer of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand have the opinion about the importance of brand loyalty at a high level. It is consistent with the research of Inthakong (2019) studying the service quality, product quality, pricing strategy, and store features that affect satisfaction and loyalty to the organic retailers of the consumers in Bangkok. It was found that the overall service quality of the organic products retailers in Bangkok was at a high level.

The results of the integrated marketing communication hypothesis testing on brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand revealed that integrated marketing communication influenced brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the brand ABC is the sales by using salespeople. This is because integrated marketing communication in sales by salesperson is a direct communication between the salesperson and the customers to present products of the

organization effectively. It can present information and respond to the needs of customers quickly and most relevant. The integrated marketing communication in sales by salesperson makes customers feel attentive in presenting products and solving problems to customers in a timely manner. It gives customers a positive attitude in the brand of the organization leading to the behaviors of acceptance in various products of the organization continuously with a positive attitude and continuous purchase behaviors. This agrees with the ideas of Etzel et al. (2007), Integrated Marketing Communication is a marketing communication tool to create motivation, reminders, and information about a product or service. The expectation is to build beliefs and customer sentiment towards purchasing behaviors as a communication tool to create positive attitude for customers which consists of sales by employees, advertisements, promotion, public relations and direct marketing. This is consistent with Woldegiorgis (2019) studying the Effects of Combined Promotion on Brand Loyalty: An In-Depth Study of the Brewery Industry in Ethiopia. It was found that Integrated Marketing Communication in advertising promotion and sales by employees affect brand loyalty with statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

The results of testing on the quality-of-service hypothesis influencing brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand revealed that service quality influenced brand loyalty of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand is reliability, caring, giving confidence to customers, and tangibility. This is because credibility is the factor making customers trust in the products and services of the organization when the organization can correct problems and provide fast, on-time service as defined. Caring is a factor making customers aware of the care of the organization. It is a service with care about the details of each individual customer. This helps creating good relationship between the customer and the organization. Giving confidence to customers is a factor that builds confidence for customers both in standard and secure services to meet the needs of customers. It can meet the needs and create satisfaction with customers completely and appropriately. The things that can be tangible is a factor arising from the perception of customers about the availability of services of the organization in convenience, speed, and value that customers receive. Therefore, the quality of service in credibility, caring, giving confidence to customers, and tangibility influence brand loyalty of the customer of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the brand ABC. This agrees with the research of Inthakong (2019) studying the service quality, product quality, pricing strategy and store features. It was found that the quality of service affecting the loyalty of the organic products retailers of Bangkok consumers include the attention, credibility, concreteness, confidence, and customer satisfaction with statistical significance at 0.01 level. Wongchaisuwan & U-On (2020) studies the relationship marketing and service quality affecting positive analysis and personal to brand loyalty in the cosmetic industry in Thailand. It was found that the quality of service in caring, customer response, credibility, confidence and concreteness influence the brand loyalty of the cosmetic industry in Thailand with statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

#### **Recommendations from the Research**

From the research results, the recommendations can be made as follows:

- 1) For the Integrated Marketing Communication in terms of advertising, the company should develop advertising communication in offering a variety of products, product features to create the strength of the organization to be above competitors due to advertising through various media. It makes customers perceive and build confidence in the quality of the organization's products.
- 2) For the service quality credibility, the company should improve the quality of service to build credibility. This is to develop the organization's operation in delivering products efficiently. Immediate troubleshooting can fulfill customer requests by setting service

standards and troubleshooting time limit to demonstrate sincerity in providing services in accordance with the conditions set forth between the organization and the customer. This allows customers to have confidence in the products and services of the organization.

3) For the service quality in caring, the company improves service quality in taking care of customers by paying attention to details of customers such as studying customer needs, visiting dealer stores to provide more quality customer service. The services are provided with intention and understand on the problems of customers. It will help impressing customers leading to the good relationship between the organization and its customers in the long run.

4) For the service quality in giving confidence to customers, the company should improve the quality of service to give confidence to customers by establishing a service standard for service personnel in the field of knowledge and service capability to make customers aware of receiving standardized services until making customers confident in the products and services of the organization. The organization can have good service standards which will help building the better corporate image.

5) For the service quality in tangibility, the company should improve the quality of services that customers can experience to facilitate customers such as the development of communication channels that are easily accessible. Developing production processes to meet the needs of customers with convenient and quick delivery processes can build trust among customers and build confidence that can be felt from the service of the organization.

#### **Recommendations for Next Researches**

1) From this research, it is the study of only the sample group of customers of the company who are merchants or dealers of the company only. Next time, there should be a sample group of farmers in the field to make the study results more detailed and clearer.

2) There should be a brand loyalty study of the customers of a chemical fertilizer manufacturer and distributor of the ABC brand using other independent variables apart from the variables used this time, such as holistic marketing, relationship marketing, customer focus, etc., to achieve research that covers a wide range of variables. This will result in development for use in planning marketing strategies to be able to properly meet the needs of customers and will enable the company to maintain its existing customer base and expand newer customer base in the future.

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