



Mazlan b. Muhammad - Managing Director
MM Vitaols Sdn Bhd



MARKETING MALAYSIAN EDIBLE OIL PRODUCT BRANDS FOR THE WORLD MARKET

➔ MM Vitaols Sdn Bhd recognises the importance of branding, and has invested heavily in promoting its in-house brands to establish itself in the market over time. It believes that by owning its own brands, it can control the direction of its business better and ensure it stays in the market for a long time.

MM Vitaols is a homegrown Malaysian company, which in its own way, helps to promote Malaysian palm oil products on the world stage. Incorporated in 1999 by its founder Mazlan b. Muhammad, the company began by exporting Malaysian agricultural products like palm oil, cocoa, rubber and timber. Today, MM Vitaols's main business is as manufacturer and exporter of edible oil products, such as cooking oil, shortening, margarine, pastry margarine and vegetable ghee with its first export to Africa in 2003. It operates from a factory in Shah Alam, and its staff of 80 currently has the capacity to produce 12,000mt of palm oil products each month. To date, the company has 24 in-house brands, which it exports to 63 countries worldwide, a considerable achievement for a rookie in the down-stream palm oil industry. It recorded over RM100 million in profits within the first three years of its operations and in 2007, the company recorded a turnover of RM86.9 million, a staggering 52% increase over the previous year.

SOUND MARKETING

Underpinning MM Vitaols's outstanding business success is an aggressive yet well thought out marketing plan. It positions itself as a promoter of healthy lifestyles, an undertaking that is reflected in its corporate tagline of "Makers of quality edible oil" and range of products that are **FREE FROM TRANS FATTY ACID**. The company's palm oil based products are non-hydrogenated, meaning that it does not increase the build up of bad cholesterol that can lead to ailments, such as high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. All these add up to quality, healthy products that meet the demands of modern health-conscious consumers.

MM Vitaols also recognises the importance of branding, and has invested heavily in promoting its in-house brands to establish itself in the market over time. It believes that

by owning its own brands, it can control the direction of its business better and ensure it stays in the market for a long time. Through branding, the company aims to develop a loyal customer base, which it is confident of translating it into financial profits in the future.

Customer service is another area that MM Vitaols feels is vital in helping it succeed. As such, the company's policy is to give prompt response to any customer enquiry. Encountering company representatives that are unsure about their own products leaves a poor impression on interested potential customers and in light of this, MM Vitaols ensures that its staff is well informed and knowledgeable about the company's products so that it can better serve customers by providing correct and relevant information.

As an export based company, MM Vitaols focuses on market segmentation, whereby it has dedicated traders assigned to specific regions. It targets penetration into one country every month, and aims for its products to be accepted by 80 countries by the end of 2008. The company employs "Blue Ocean Strategy", where it is constantly on the lookout for niche market areas, such as Central Asia where competition is less or minimal. This has led to great success in the company's operations in Uzbekistan. By customising modes of payment, delivery and types of product sold to suit specific markets, MM Vitaols has managed to capture 70% of Uzbekistan's shortening market.

The comprehensive marketing strategies employed by MM Vitaols have resulted in phenomenal business performance in the edible oil product industry. It has landed numerous awards in recognition of its outstanding achievements, amongst them Agence Pour La Valorisation Des Produits Agricoles Award (AVPA) 2008 by Special Commodities Organisation Paris, Superior Taste Award 2008 by International Taste and Quality Institute, Brussels, The Brand Laurette Award - Serimas (The World's Best Brand In The Asia Pacific For Consumer



Palm Oil Category), The Ministry of Trade and Industry – Industry Excellence Award 2007 on Export Excellence and the Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship Award (APEA) 2007.

ENHANCING PERFORMANCE

MM Vitaols believes that Malaysian SMEs and micro enterprises must emphasise on marketing strategies to enhance performance. It encourages spending in advertising when the needs are justified, and that the returns will outweigh the initial investment costs. It suggests companies to promote products in the electronic media and recommends creating an informative and responsive company website. Their reason? Websites act as a company representative that helps sell products and provides customer service 24 hours a day, something which is not easily achieved with human employees! In addition, a company can increase its exposure by placing links to its website on other prominent, industry-related websites. MM Vitaols, for instance, has placed links on www.palmoil.com – a leading website on palm oil news, information and prices, and www.soyatech.com as well as www.americanpalmoil.com. This extends the reach of MM Vitaols to genuine buyers from all over the world.

MM Vitaols also suggests introducing new products every now and then, and in changing the product packaging periodically in order to keep the product line-up fresh. It also stresses the importance of being aware of current trends in consumer behaviour and environmental issues, and using that information to develop products that can best be used to take advantage of the situation.

In terms of penetrating foreign markets, MM Vitaols believes that local SMES should follow its steps and get certified to ISO 9001:2000, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). MM Vitaols is striving towards achieving ISO 22000:2005 by this year itself. **SMES**