



## **An Interview with Mr. Pisit Jongsatitwatana**

**Firstly, I would like to ask about your business concept in establishing the Dortmund?**

*It was around 1990 when we started the business. At that time, the quality of the lady shoes in Thailand was quite poor and people did not use to pay for quality products made in Thailand. In contrary, people believe that the imported shoes have higher quality and are worth more to pay. As a local shoes producer, we established the company which aim to change their belief and to prove the ability of a local producer that can produce quality product. From the past, Thailand is a producer and an exporter; we export lots of shoes and other products and when Thais traveling abroad, they used to brought those products back home believing that they are better quality than the local one.*

*Also we want to tell Thai people that feet are a very important part of the body. They carry body weight for the whole time everyday. If we do not take care of our feet, many health problems might occur in the future. The wrong shoes could harm our health badly; for example, high heel shoes. They may look beauty on our feet; however, it is bad for our health.*



*These are the original idea of the company.*

**What is the concept in designing the shoes to have high quality?**

*We did lots of trial and errors, also, we studied the products from western countries; how they designed the shoes and what were their materials. Our*

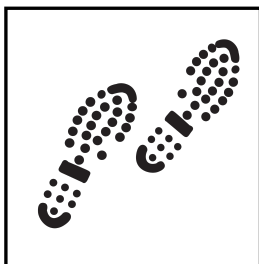
*company did shoes before, but these new design shoes were news in Thailand as they are not selling fashion but comfortable and the knowledge in producing them are very few.*

*The first collection of Dormüend the shoes and each model has only were surprise with our that a sales counter would (stock keeping unit) but Although, customers looked quite an old not very trendy and they research on shoes and the were very confident with our*



*started with only four models of three colours. The customers products because it is common have a least forty to fifty SKU we had only twelve SKU. could say that our shoes fashion; they are quite heavy, also quite expensive, our quality of our material made we products.*

### **So, what is the response from customers on your first collection?**



*The responses were very bad at the beginning because the models of the shoes we had were too few and the customers could not even pronounce the name of the brand correctly. Nevertheless, we tried hard to promote the brand and we made a great deal on our services. Our product consultants were well trained about product knowledge and how to transfer that knowledge to customers. Our mission was not only to sell shoes but also to educate customers with the new type of shoes in the market. We tried to stimulate customers trial so that they would know how they would feel wearing Dormüend; how good the healthy and comfort shoe can be good to their feet and how they would feel inside Dormüend.*

*Most of our customers can feel the comfortable from the first time they were trying the shoes. This is the first step of customers trail and when customers satisfied with our products they spread the news around, create worth of mouth which leading to viral marketing.*

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**Talking about the name “Dortmüend”, how could you come across using the name Dortmüend as your brand?**

*Even Dortmüend may sound like the name of a city in Germany nevertheless the spelling is different; we put an “E” and a “Ü” (u-umlaut) into the name to make it unique but still feel like German. This is because we cannot change the perceived quality of an imported product over a local one immediately. Germany, at the time and, even now, is the country where people trusted in quality. The products from Germany are unlike the products from America, Japan or other counties; they are not famous because they are trendy but famous in their beauty, durability and money worth. Of course, they are expensive but it has value to money. This is the idea of German people and German products.*

*The materials of our shoes are the best we could find and the process of making a shoe is complicated. The prices of our shoes are eight times higher than the normal shoes in the market. In order to make the customers pay eight times higher, we have to make them confident in Dortmüend. This is not an indicator that we gain profit eight times higher than the competitors, it is only told that our costs are very high and it is higher for the better quality. Compare when we brought shoes from abroad; they are twenty times more expensive than normal Thai’s shoes. We consider this is the mid-meeting point.*

**Could you tell me how is it complicated in making the quality shoes?**

*Because we position ourselves as healthy shoes, so the designs and the functions we choose on our shoes are unique. The technique we use to construct our shoes called “Hand Stitch” which is the technique that require human labour to do and even with very high labours, it is impossible to complete more than seven or eight pairs of shoes per day. Moreover, Dortmüend design the whole shoes to made from leather regarding those common shoes has only one leathers part. Dortmüend use*

*leather more than others three times especially the part we called “Midsole” which is the part that will carry the body weight and touch the sole of the foot, we build a special part that called “Toe-Bar” so that when customers wear Dormüend the toe of the customers would hold to the shape to their feet. Also we build the “Arch Cushion” at the mid of the shoe to carry the plantar arch, this is to control the shape of the feet when walking. It is difficult to made a good arch cushion. The materials have to be excellent, if the materials are not good enough; the customers would feel the pain when walking.*

**How could you select material for making the shoes, for example how could you select the leather, the thread or the needle?**

*As I mention, the concept of Dormüend is to provide customer with the best quality, therefore the price of raw material is not our restricted factor. Since we are not selling to mass market, instead we are selling to the niche, our priority is to select the best; we do not compromise quality with price. For instance, we select the soft leathers such as Nappa leather or full-grain leather for the upper part so that it would improve the quality even if it more expensive. Because the different parts of shoes are working differently, for the best result, we carefully select leathers for every part of shoes. As for the traditional “Hand Stitch” or “Hand Sawn” technique, the thread we selected need to be tough and strong. The threads we are using at the moment, we got them from England and they are about twenty times more expensive than the local one. Our craft men are highly skill; they did lots of training with our real material before we can have them doing our shoes.*

**What is the target market of the Dormüend shoes? Who is your customer?**

*From our first collection, we have our first four models that we called “The Fab Four” after the nickname of The Beetle. Of course as a producer, we want a large market, however the design of the healthy shoes*  
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*are very basic and our shoes were very new to the market at that time. Therefore, we tried to scope our target group down to the people had been travelling abroad, the people who knows how to distinguish quality product from the normal and could afford to buy quality. Importantly, we want our customers to have a good attitude that wearing healthy shoes is the care for your feet even thou they are not look so fashionable.*

*For that reason, our target group would be the lady with the age more than thirty and had been success in their life including the people who retired, housewife and specialist who need to stand or walk for the whole day. Again, because of our design of our shoes are not fashionable, the majority ages of our customers are not in the thirty+ group but in forty to fifty group.*

**But lately, I saw Dortmund had launched the new model to be more modern and more fashionable? What is your idea in designing the shoes?**

*From 1990 to 2002, we remain our traditional to produce only hand stitch models. The reason is that our customer bases are getting wider. We have lots of customers who pass their satisfaction of our shoes to others. The demands of our shoes are so high and we cannot catch up with the demand. Moreover, the unfashionable factors of the shoes made the shelf life of the shoes are quite long. Each model can be on shelf for more than 5-6 years and many customers have almost every model of our shoes. It is very difficult to combine the comfort with the fashion. Because of constrain on the structure of the shoes. However, as time goes by, we want the new customer group to feel the comfortable on their feet too. We compromise the*

*quality in the new and more modern models. The shoes may not as comfy as the old model but there are others factors to compensate such as lighter weight, more beauty and cheaper price. Therefore we beginning our new*

*model in the category called “Sport Sandal” which we aim to sell to the people who not only concern for the beauty but also the healthy life.*

**How was the response from your customer in this new shoes category?**

*The response were very good because of we target to another group of customer; the customers who are younger. Our target group starts from 17 to 18 years old to 30+ years old and the price of our new models are only 1/3 to the original one. We were entering into a more mass market, which is in line with the production technology of sport sandal that allows mass production. Our sport sandals are made from the material called “Filon”. There is only filon producer in Thailand, therefore, at the beginning, our sport sandal are manufactured oversea so that we could control the quality before moving the manufactured back to Thailand.*

**What do you think customer feel about the changing in style of Dortmund to target younger people? For example, how customer would feel about brand personality of Dortmund? Or will they get confuse about Dortmund’s products?**

*We do not worry about that point because the foundation of Dortmund still remain in every of our product categories, no matter how the shoes look. All of Dortmund’s shoes have to be good for the feet, soft, comfortable and could be wear in long hours. Of course there are customers who like our traditional model and do not interested in trying the new sport sandal but at the same times there are customers*

*who do try and fell in love with it. We want to open the new market to the younger people and after they used our sport sandal, we hope that they would try others of our shoes such as dressing shoes which is the shoes that are difficult to make them comfortable and they themselves are uncomfaortable by nature. After trying our shoes, most of customers are satisfied with them, therefore, we gain new group of customers. To*

*conclude, the personality of our new shoe categories are not conflict with the existing one.*

**Is that right that all Dortmund shoes are produced by outsourcers?  
And what is the reason for that?**

*Yes, we do not have our own factory. We have 2 reasons to do so. First, we have the company in the group who is very skilled called “Wattana Footwear”. Wattana are producing shoes for the mass market but at the same time Wattana could produce high quality products, only they do not have chance to do. Thus, I think it is a good idea to give a chance to them. Secondly, I think we should focus on what we expect. Instead of focusing on the production which we have no experience, we should focus on marketing and designing. It is important that we select the right outsourcers; we are willing to pay for the quality. For our products that manufactured oversea, our buying agent need to screen the products before deliver them to us and when the products arrive on our hand, we still have our quality control to ensure that our products have a good standard. If the products do not reach to our standard we will destroy the products.*

**I also heard that lately Dortmund have expanded the market into some special occupation that need to walk and stand all day such as nurse.**

*Actually, the professional series is our intension from the start. As we launched the company and our first four models (The Fab Four) are sandals. The design of sandal is not cover the feet; therefore in some occupation they do not use them as working shoes. After we expanded the market and after we are not only selling hand stitch shoes, we look for a new market, which is match our intension to produce long wearing, shoes. Therefore we adapted our products to match their using behavior for example, doctors, nurses and teachers, they are need to walk a lots but constrain from their occupation do not allow them to wear sandal, they*

*need to wear plum shoes or loafer shoes. Thus, we started to design shoes in those categories. Because most imported product is designed for western people, the outsole, the midsole, the laces we use have to be matched with Asian. Our first priority is function not fashion. No matter how beautiful the shoes are but if they are not comfortable for our customers' feet, we are not selling them.*

*The responses from this market are enormous as any professional such as chef have back and feet problem from standing for the whole daylong. Many orthopedic doctors also recommend Dortmünd to their patients who suffer from those symptoms. It is highly creditable when the shoes are recommending from doctors even though the shoes look very old fashion.*

### **How do you open the professional market?**

*We educated our customers. We did a lot of advertisement in specialist magazine. Actually, we started from the mommy market; we target to pregnant ladies. Mommy gain enormous body weight during pregnant; the physical shape of their feet are evolving. Since modern mom always searching for information to take care of themselves and their child, therefore, we put advertisements in mommy and child*

*magazine. For the hospital segment, we are so lucky; we only put advertisement on our selling shelf. One day a hospital manager come passing by our shelf and saw the advertisement. She first time brought our products and very satisfied with it. Thus she chose us as the shoes supplier for her hospital. Another case is a nurse from an operation room of a hospital. Her job need to a shoe that is light, strong and good for her feet, in case of she need to be in an operation for than 15 hours. Since then the quality of Dortmünd was spread around by word of mouth and, currently, there are many nurses and doctors from many hospital interesting in using Dortmünd.*

### **What is the company policy in expanding the market?**



*It is similar to normal brand building. First we offer new products to the old market, and, second we offer old products to the new market. For example offer our professional series to the new market, which is the hospital personnel. We are now focusing on healthy trend and open new market to health care industry. Hospital is the center of health care industry. Once we enter hospital, we can move forward with high creditability as healthy products. Another occupation that widely uses Dormüend is teachers because they need to stand and teach for the whole day. If the teachers see that hospital personnel who need to walk all day, stand all day exactly the same as them are using Dormüend, we are would gain creditability from them. Actually, our current customers are coming various occupations including chef. Jane Grey is a chef in a five star hospital. She had back problem but after using our shoes her pain is gone, thus, she wrote us a thank you letter and a testimonial to our product. So after hospital market, we are planning to target to teacher and chef.*

**God bless us to have a good business not for ourselves but to passing on the bless to the others**

**Which of Dormüend advertisement that you think it could best communicate about the brand?**



*There is an advertisement that shows our shoe in the heart shape (see) and the shoe is one of our models. We feel that this is what we want to give to our customers. We also made pin badge out of this advertisement and give them to all of our product consultants to put them on the left hand side of their*

*chest. We want to let our customers understand the sincere of our best*  
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*service that made from heart. We do not only sell shoes, we want customers to try on. If the shoe is suit the customers, we would say yes. If it is not we would say no. Actually I like all of Dormüend's advertisement, we never did them too commercial, we always made them artistry.*

**And how about your campaign, the mother's day campaign. What do you want to say in that campaign?**

**the company that are formed of love and it is the love in action.**

*We are the first shoe company to launch the mother day campaign. We want people to wear shoes that could promote health. You can give anything to your mom to support her health but shoes are also important. If you buy shoes to you mom, you are giving your mom her health. Dormüend's shoes are*

*quite expensive and we do not usually discount our shoes more than 15%. However, our mother day campaign is 30% discounted. This is because we want our customers to give health to their mom and, also themselves. Up till now, mother day comes and goes every year, and the campaign is still with us.*

**Since Dormüend has been founded, what is the thing that you most proud of?**

*We are proud to help people recover from health problem such as back pain, foot pain or any boned problem. There are many of our customers who suffer from these pains; they need to use steroid to reduce some pain, but after they used our shoes, their pains are healed. There are cases*

**they provide their employees welfare at the minimum cost or at a certain limit while asking them to work at the maximum. In my opinion this is a very wrong practice.**

*of our customers who need surgery to cure the pain, and again, after using*  
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*our shoes they pains are healed. There are a lot more stories of our customers. We have lots of testimonial and we have very good feed back from our customers.*

*Nevertheless, the thing that I most proud of Dormüend is the company itself and I am proud to be given the chance to found the company in my dream, the company that are formed of love and it is the love in action. The welfare in many Thai company are poor, they provide their employees welfare at the minimum cost or at a certain limit while asking them to work at the maximum. In my opinion this is a very wrong practice. God bless us to have a good business not for ourselves but to passing on the bless to the others*

**Do you have anything that you think we have missed or do you have anything to say or any further comments that you want to make for the brands?**

*I think we have many good opportunities in business and we are given them not because we are good and smart but it is the blessing from the god. God do not want us to have everything for ourselves. God wants us to pay it forward and this is what we all should do.*