

DIGITAL MARKETING PRACTICES OF B2C BUSINESS IN NAKHON PATHOM, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Abstract— Digital marketing is now prevalent and significant as communication channel of many B2C Businesses. Therefore, the objective of this survey research was to understand the influence of digital marketing types in relation to expected benefits of B2C Businesses. The hypotheses were based on the effect of digital marketing on brand awareness creation and corporate image development of B2C entrepreneurs. Participants in this study were 100 individuals, running B2C Businesses in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. Sampling technique used to select samples in this study was convenience sampling. The researcher was approached to gather the completed questionnaire from entrepreneurs. The data analysis used statistics, consisting of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and simple regression. The findings found that the higher use intensity of digital marketing leads to more corporate image development and brand awareness creation. As a result, these results provide support to previous literature regarding the digital marketing the B2C businesses use to create brand awareness and develop corporate image.

Keywords— Digital Marketing, Brand Awareness, Corporate Image

INTRODUCTION

In simpleminded terms, digital marketing is the promotion of products or brands via one or more forms of electronic media. Digital marketing differs from outdated marketing in that it involves the use of channels and methods that enable an organization to analyze marketing campaigns and understand what is working and what isn't – typically in real time. Digital marketing includes Website Page Marketing, Content Marketing, SEO Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Online PR Marketing, E-mail Marketing, Mobile & Apps Marketing, Online Video and Viral Marketing, etc. Digital Marketing has many benefits such as to generate higher conversion rates, save firm money, to enable real-time customer service, to generate higher revenues, to deliver higher profitability from company's campaigns, and to compete with large corporations (SAS Institute Inc., 2021).

Over the years, marketing has evolved from mass marketing to personalized marketing. There has been revolution in the field of personalized marketing with the advent of the internet. In 1970s, banking industry started using electronic funds transfer to exchange funds on secured networks. In late 1970s and early 1980s, companies started using electronic data interchange for e-commerce within the companies; they used it to transmit the data from one business to another. The 1990s actually witnessed the power of website for publishing and dissemination of the information. Digital landscape has expanded rapidly from first website launching in 1990 to over a billion websites in 2020. Even e-commerce has become commonplace. Millions of people have access to the internet via their smartphones and are providing boost to the digital marketing, globally. In its digital form, marketing becomes more holistic. It can be considered as most personalized form of marketing or individualized marketing. The technology has made this possible (Dunakhe & Panse, 2021). The world is now digitally connected. The customer has access to unlimited amount of information via internet. Consumers are getting influenced by the digital influencers (Childers et al., 2019). Smartphones and affordable data together form a digital power in the hands of a consumer. Most of the top companies of the world are digital companies. Even the success of regular businesses now depends on their digital presence. Maximum peer-to-peer communication is via social media. Every person owning a Smartphone or a tablet or a personal computer has multiple digital accounts such as email addresses, social media accounts and accounts with services. Even the traditional entertainment is getting replaced by digital over

the top media. All these accounts and voluntary sharing of information by the customer creates various touchpoints (Wagner et al., 2020), where customer can be communicated with. Consumers are humblebragging about their experiences (Chen et al., 2020). The objective of this research, therefore, was to understand the influence of digital marketing in relation to brand awareness creation and corporate image development of B2C Businesses in Nakhon Pathom to provide the entrepreneurs with the confirmation of digital marketing benefits. To accomplish this objective, research hypotheses are designed and tested using the survey data collected in Nakhon Pathom Thailand in 2021.

The scope of the research content has been limited within the boundary at the literature review and related research on digital marketing (website marketing and social media marketing), brand awareness creation, and corporate image development concerned for doing businesses in Nakhon Pathom. The business model that the author has chosen is the B2C business. This has allowed the author to exactly measure the different benefits of digital marketing usage. To meet the research purpose, the B2C businesses in various industries are focused as they are the research topic, such as coffee, fashion clothing, soccer clothing, cosmetics, shampoo, chocolate, sports shoes, language academy, music academy, garage, car accessory, magazine, and automobile parts. To further confine this research, the author could have only considered information retrieved from B2C businesses locating in Nakhon Pathom, apart from other areas.

LITERATURE & THEORY

2.1 B2C (Business to Customer)

In 1979 the conception of B2C, or business-to-consumer, was originated by Michael Aldrich, an English innovator, who developed online transactional process allowing customers communicate with businesses (Shelley, 2011). B2C is the form of e-commerce in which businesses trade goods or services to clients. In other words, it is one of classification of electronic commerce, together with B2B business, C2B business and C2C business in a traditional manner, it could relate to personal shopping for any product at home (Garbade, 2011). More newly, the B2C businesses including e-tailing and virtual storefronts, so well known, relates to the online vending of merchandises in which makers or shopkeepers vend their merchandises to clients via the Internet (Sandhusen, 2008).

2.2 The importance of Digital Marketing

Entrepreneurs trendily adopt digital marketing to their B2C Businesses. Digital marketing is a marketing developed by utilizing digital technology to communicate with clients (Wind & Mahajan, 2001). The major purpose is to advertise brands via diverse types of digital media. It is organized by a wide choice of goods, service, and brand marketing strategies, which chiefly utilize the Internet as an essential promotional media, in addition to smartphone and original Television and radio. However, it also extends to non-Internet channels that provide digital media, such as mobile phones (both SMS and MMS), callback and on-hold mobile ring tones, social media marketing, display advertising, e-books, optical disks and games, and any other form of digital medias (Childers et al., 2019).

Digital Marketing is so extensively that consumers have access to information any time and any place they desire it. Previously, when the messages people got about the products or services came from company and consisted of only what the company wanted them to perceive. Digital Marketing is an ever-growing source of news, entertainment, shopping and social interaction, and consumers are currently disclosed not only to what the company tells about its brand, but what the media, friends, relatives, peers, etc., are telling likewise (Ryan & Jone, 2009). People are quite possible to believe them than the company and they want brands they can trust, companies that know them, communications that are personalized and relevant, and offers responded to their requirements and favorites. Several industries, especially by the leading companies among each industry, use digital marketing as a channel or tools to promote products and services to clients and businesses with a very productive cost from benefit in creating individually tailored approach (Wagner et al., 2020), including increasing customer acquisition and so on, as shown in Figure 1 (ASCEND2, 2021).



Figure 1
Primary Objectives for Digital Marketing

2.3 Brand Awareness Creation

Many B2C businesses and SMEs use digital marketing to create their brand awareness (Aunyawong et al., 2020). Brand awareness is the extent to which a brand is recognized by potential customers, and is correctly associated with a particular product. Expressed usually as a percentage of the target market, brand awareness is the primary goal of advertising in the early months or years of a product's introduction (Percy & Rossiter, 1992). Brand awareness is related to the functions of brand identities in consumers' memory and can be reflected by how well the consumers can identify the brand under various conditions. Brand awareness includes brand recognition and brand recall performance. This does not necessarily require that the consumers identify the brand name (Keller, 1993).

A brand is the meaning behind the company's name, logo, symbols and slogans. Having a unique and memorable brand helps B2C businesses build brand awareness and create a long-term position in the marketplace. Brand awareness is a measure of how well B2C businesses' brand is known within its target markets. Creating brand awareness is usually the first step in building advertising objectives. Before B2C businesses can create a favorable impression or motivate customers to buy, they have to become aware of B2C businesses' brand and its meaning. The highest level of brand awareness is top of mind awareness. This is when customers think of B2C businesses first when they need to make a purchase within B2C businesses' product category. (Farris, Bendle, Pfeifer, & Reibstein, 2010). B2C businesses can build top of mind awareness through repeated exposure and consistent delivery of a good product or service over time. This is a huge advantage in the market when customers enter a buying situation and B2C businesses' brand immediately comes to mind first. The importance of brand awareness has become increasingly significant with the evolution of the Internet and digital technology. The public is more equipped with mobile and social media tools to communicate quickly about B2C businesses' brand -- good or bad. This means that establishing a strong reputation for good products or services, integrity in B2C businesses' business practices and community involvement are even more critical to long-term success (Kokemuller, 2007).

2.4 Corporate Image Improvement

B2C businesses employ digital marketing in order to improve their corporate image. The company image is referred to the set of perceptions that people have of organizations (Lemmink, Schuijf, & Streukens, 2003) "Corporate image" was once advertising terminology but is nowadays a common phrase referring to a company's name. The "image" is what the public is supposed to see when the corporation is mentioned. In other words, corporate image has been defined variously as the total impression that the entity makes on the minds of individuals (Dichter, 1985); and the image associated with the name of an organization (Gatewood, 1993).

Several factors have contributed to the increasing importance of corporate image in recent years. For example, the business climate in the Indonesia has become one of environmental complexity and change (Aunyawong et al., 2020). This has forced many B2C businesses to significantly alter their strategies to better compete and survive. The acceleration of product life cycles is another vital dimension of the turbulent business

environment (Olins, 1989). Globalization has been still another catalyst in the rise of corporate image programs, as companies have sought ways to spread their reputations to distant markets (Young, 1996). A related factor is that as a corporation expands its operations internationally, or even domestically, through acquisitions, there is a danger that its geographically dispersed business units will project dissimilar or contrary images to the detriment of corporate synergy (Schindler, 2000).

A final factor stimulating the current interest in corporate image is society's growing expectation that corporations be socially responsible. Many of today's consumers consider the environmental and social image of firms in making their purchasing decisions. Some B2C businesses have recognized this reality and reaped tremendous benefits by conducting themselves in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. Some of these B2C businesses act out of genuine altruism, while others act out of a simple recognition of the business benefits of such behavior (Ind, 1992).

2.5 Use intensity of Digital Marketing

In this research, B2C Businesses will be measure their uses of website and/or social media as marketing tactic. Use intensity of Digital Marketing is the extent of website and/or social media which is being use by B2C businesses. Website Marketing refers to a broad category of advertising that takes many different forms, but generally involves any marketing activity conducted online. Marketers have shifted their efforts online because it tends to be significantly less expensive.

The website also presents exciting new opportunities for companies to profile their customers. The interactive space of the Internet simplifies a company's ability to track, store, and analyze data about a customer's demographics, personal preferences, and online behavior. This data allows the advertiser to provide a more personalized and relevant ad experience for the customer.

Website marketing is a new form of “non-intrusive” advertising, in which the customer actively chooses to visit and interact with the company’s marketing communication efforts. Recent efforts involve the merging of information and images in innovative ways. Measures of the duration of time spent at a web site, depth of search through the site, navigation patterns through the site, and repeat visits to the site are crucial outcome measures for evaluating the effectiveness of such a site (Tsang & Tse, 2005).

Social media marketing is a form of effective digital marketing, as shown in Figure 2, that utilizes social networking as a marketing tool (ASCEND2, 2021). The objective of social media marketing is to create content that users will share with their social network to help a company increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach. Social media marketing helps a company get direct feedback from customers (and potential customers) while making the company seem more personable. The interactive parts of social media contribute customers the opportunity to ask questions or voice complaints and feel they are being heard. This aspect of social media marketing is called social customer relationship management (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

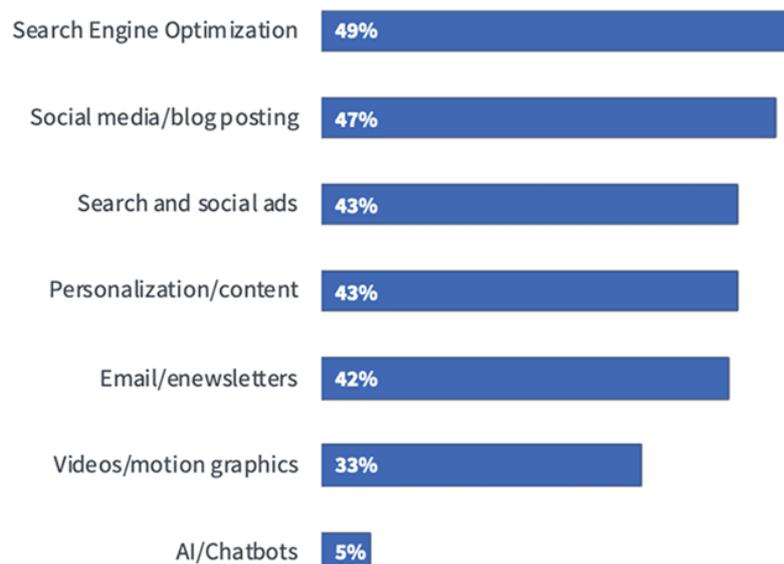


Figure 2
The most effective digital marketing tactics

Social media marketing became more public with the enlarged acceptance of websites such as Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and YouTube. In response, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has updated its rules to include Social media marketing (Fana & Tsai, 2010). If a company or its advertising agency offers

a blogger or other online commenter with free merchandises or other inducements to generate positive buzz for a manufactured goods, the online comments will be treated legally as endorsements. Both the blogger and the company will be held responsible for ensuring that the incentives are clearly and noticeably disclosed and that the blogger's posts contain no misleading or unsubstantiated statements and otherwise complies with the FTC's rules concerning unfair or deceptive advertising (Rothstein & Rouse, 2011).

2.6 Hypothesis Development

For this research, we have created the conceptual framework based on existing knowledge and theoretical perspectives from critical literature review. The conceptual framework has been developed to explain the relationship between the use intensity of Digital Marketing, Website Marketing and Social Media Marketing, and two different expectations. Independent variable was Use intensity of Digital Marketing and Dependent variables were Corporate Image Development and Brand Awareness Creation, as shown in Figure 3 Accordingly, data from both primary and secondary sources will be used to test the validity and to support the conceptual framework in answering the research problem.

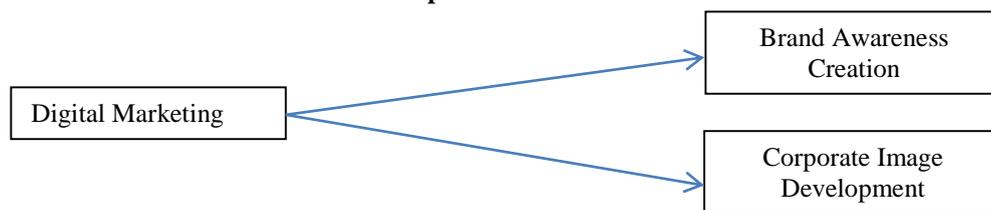
To create brand awareness, the companies have to design the advertisement emphasized the interesting and recognition of potential customers and keep out of sale volume. Previous study found that most of the B2C businesses, using social media, mostly expected to create brand awareness, for example Italian Businesses are using Instagram and Twitter to raise awareness about their Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives (Troise & Camilleri, 2021). Digital content marketing initiatives and online brand communities play a significant role in enhancing companies' brand awareness, customer retention, and profitability (Bowden and Mirzaei, 2021). Moreover, Foroudi et al. (2020) portray that digital marketing using social media can improve the companies' brand reputation. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H1: Use Intensity of Digital Marketing negatively relate to Brand Awareness Creation.

Respect to positive information provided one-sided to customers, many B2C businesses often use various social media networks for corporate communication purposes. The recent descriptive research shows that they are utilizing Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube, among others, to communicate commercial information and to promote their business (Troise & Camilleri, 2021). However, some B2C businesses, focusing on social Media, expect more advantages in terms of customer communication, so they can know customers' feedback and deal with the problems effectively. Moreover, companies can use Instagram as a communication channel embedded in green marketing digital mix to create corporate image (Šikić, 2021). In addition, digital Media can be used as strategic corporate communication channel to create the opportunities that emerged during an unprecedented coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak (Camilleri, 2021). The concept of Corporate Image is usually associated with large B2C businesses, but small B2C businesses also concern a corporate image. As B2C businesses using of Website-Marketing are more directly concern with corporate image issue, the following is hypothesized in order to compare the extent between both marketing tactics:

H2: Use intensity of Digital Marketing positively relate to Corporate Image Development.

Figure 3
Conceptual Framework



METHODS

3.1 Samples and data collection

Participants in this study were individuals, running B2C Businesses in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. Sampling technique used to select samples in this study was convenience sampling. The researchers were approached to gather the completed questionnaire from entrepreneurs or business owners, marketers and managers in 100 B2C Businesses, using digital marketing, in various industries (including coffee, fashion clothing, soccer clothing, cosmetics, shampoo, chocolate, sports shoes, language academy, music academy, garage, car accessory, magazine, and automobile parts) in May 2021. The respondents in each B2C business were contacted in person and were invited to reply the questionnaires. After those respondents accepted, totally 100 sets of questionnaires were diffused to them. All 100 completed questionnaires were gathered back by the researcher personally. The response rate expected is 100%.

3.2 Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis of the empirical data disclosed that of 100 completed surveys. It was carried out employing by simple regression. The regression aims to learn more about the relationship between independent variable, including both main independent variable and control variable, and a dependent variable.

RESULTS

According to Hypothesis 1, Use Intensity of Digital Marketing will be positively related on Brand Awareness Creation. The result, as shown in the Figure 4, depicted that the relationship between two variables is negative and statistically insignificant ($\beta=.663$; $p<0.001$). Therefore, the Hypothesis 1 can be supported.

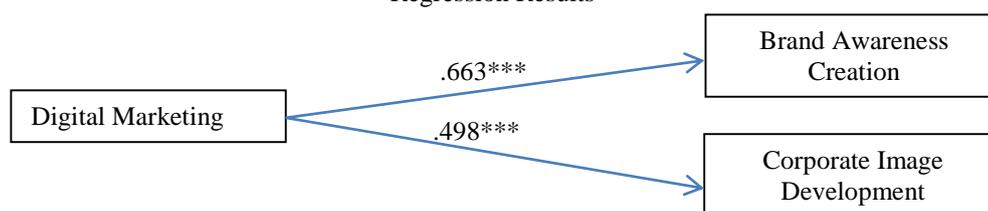
Additionally, the significant relationships between control variables brand awareness creation are found as the following. Business age positively associates with brand awareness creation ($\beta=0.009$; $p=0.408$) However, because the p-value is higher than 0.05, this result cannot be statistically supported.

According to dummy variables regression (dependent variable: brand awareness creation), the researcher selects one type of business which is beverage as a benchmark. This type of B2C business will be omitted from the regression and use for comparison with other types of B2C business that are included in the regression. Beta of the constant is used as a representative of the brand awareness creation of the type of B2C business that is omitted (beverage) is -0.952. There is only one result is statistically supported. Such result is found that negative beta of garage ($\beta=1.002$) means the brand awareness creation of B2C businesses which are garage is lower than the brand awareness creation of B2C businesses which are beverage. Because the p-value is lower than 0.01 ($p\text{-value}=0.007$), this result is statistically supported.

According to the Hypothesis 2, Use Intensity of Digital Marketing will be positively related on Corporate Image Development. The result, as shown in Figure 4 depicted that the relationship between two variables is positive and statistically significant at 0.01 level ($\beta=0.498$; $p<0.001$). Therefore, the Hypothesis 2 can be supported.

Additionally, the significant relationships between control variables corporate image development are found as the following. Business Age positively associates with corporate image development ($\beta=0.005$; $p=0.643$) However, because the p-value is higher than 0.05, this result cannot be statistically supported. According to dummy variables regression (dependent variable: corporate image development), the researcher selects one type of business which is beverage as a benchmark. This type of B2C business will be omitted from the regression and use for comparison with other types of B2C business that are included in the regression. Beta of the constant is used as a representative of the corporate image development of the type of B2C business that is omitted (beverage) is 0.299. There is only one result is statistically supported. Such result is that negative beta of garage ($\beta=1.079$) means the corporate image development of B2C businesses which are garage is lower than the corporate image development of B2C businesses which are beverage. Because the p-value is lower than 0.01 ($p\text{-value}=0.002$), this result is statistically supported.

Figure 4
Regression Results



Note: $R^2 = 0.900$, $AR^2 = 0.848$, $***p < .001$, $** = p < .01$, $* = p < .05$

As Brand Awareness Creation and Corporate Image Development were used as dependent variables, R square is 0.900. It means that the regression model can explain about 90% of Corporate Image Development. R squared modified for the number of explanatory terms in a model or Adjusted R squared is 0.848.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

This research aims to understand the influence of digital marketing types in relation to expected benefits of B2C Businesses in Nakhon Pathom. The main effect of use intensity of website marketing on brand awareness creation and corporate image development, evidence strongly suggests that the higher use intensity of website marketing leads to more corporate image development, but not to brand awareness creation.

Moreover, the main effect of use intensity of social media marketing on brand awareness creation and corporate image development, evidence strongly suggests that the higher use intensity of website marketing leads to more brand awareness creation and more corporate image development as well, but lower extent to corporate Image Development. As a result, these results provide support to previous literature regarding the digital marketing technique most of the B2C businesses use to create brand awareness (Bowden & Mirzaei, 2021; Foroudi et al., 2020; Troise & Camilleri, 2021). These results also sustain earlier literature that digital marketing can improve corporate image (Camilleri, 2021; Šikić, 2021, Troise & Camilleri, 2021).

The findings from this study offer additional contribution to research that emphasizes the role of digital marketing tactics used by the B2C businesses. Although previous studies found that using website and social media marketing could benefit B2C business success, the present study provides supplementary comprehension that the types of business is also probably conditional on brand awareness creation and corporate image development. This study found that the specific type of B2C Businesses, garage, is unnecessary to create their own websites in order to develop their corporate image. They have good corporate image, comparing to others, without website marketing. Thus, future research that aims to investigate the impact of different types of businesses using digital marketing tactics on expected benefits. Moreover, the researcher should consider some other business models such as Business-to-Business (B2B), Business-to-Customer (B2C), Business-to-Government (B2G), Customer-to-Business (C2B), Customer-to-Customer (C2C), Government-to-Customer (G2C), People-to-People (P2P), and so on.

Regardless of these findings, this study has some limitations. First, the results are based on cross-sectional data, so making causality hard to be implied. Future study should solve these problems by using longitudinal data collection. Second, due to the time limitation, the samples collected for this research arose from a few B2C businesses in Nakhon Pathom. The generalizability of the findings is confined by excessively small sample size. Consequently, future research should gather data in a larger sample size. Third, the owners or entrepreneurs, marketers, and managers of B2C-Self evaluated their own businesses concerning brand awareness and corporate image. Therefore the evaluation might be exaggerated and unreliable as those respondents might be untruth to the interviewer or might attempt to disguise their attitudes. The B2C business evaluation by customers is good alternative method. Forth, the questionnaire was adapted from doctoral dissertation, not from research published in top journal. It also consists of a few questions in each aspect. Subsequently, a poor-designed questionnaire might not meet the research purposes because respondents might not fully understand the questions and are probable to refuse to answer. This was caused by inadequate preparatory work. A good questionnaire prepared and worded to inspire respondents to provide precise, unbiased and comprehensive information is needed. Future research that addresses these limitations may provide better accurate information about the impact of digital marketing tactics on brand awareness creation and corporate image development.

This study provides the new B2C businesses with useful implications for planning the proper digital marketing strategies. This research also provides the existing B2C businesses with useful implications for improving business effectiveness, especially in terms of brand awareness and corporate Image.

In conclusion, the researcher suggests that several digital marketing tactics have their own prominent point. B2C businesses are advised to not only focus on one digital marketing tactics, but they also combine those tactics as B2Cs' strategy. This leads to excellent efficiency in brand and corporate image. Then, it also leads to business success.

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