

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION MODEL TO ENHANCE THE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF ENTREPRENEURS IN THE NAKHA FABRIC MARKET, UDON THANI PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

The research's purposes were 1) to study the context and the problems regarding marketing communication of weaving entrepreneurs in Na Kha, Udon Thani: the effective factors were respectively sale personnel (clear communication, politeness, and friendliness), promotion (giveaway), advertising (billboarding), public relation (fabric contests), and marketing channels via Facebook page and/or websites. By the way, the problems were the misunderstanding of customers, high competition in the market, and limited marketing resources. Furthermore, 2) the affected factors of the marketing communication development were the amount of the goods and the product placement; 3) the integrating marketing development included store layout, personnel selling, advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion; and 4) the effective results of experimental marketing communication were respectively personal selling, advertising, promotion, product placement, and direct marketing.

Keywords: Marketing Communication, Effective Business Operation, Marketing Communication Development

INTRODUCTION

Na Kha Fabric Market is the gathering of the weaving groups in Na Kha village, a long-established local weaving community of a large group splitting into subgroups of the household industry. Relatives and siblings send their products to be sold at the president's store, and there is a network in the villages of Na Kha village and the nearby areas. In 2536 B.E., economic expansion occurred due to the convergence of entrepreneurs, resulting in markets both inside and outside the community. This led to an increase in the number of entrepreneurs, and currently, there are a total of 120 stores selling handwoven fabrics, knit cloths, tied-dyed fabrics (ikat), tie-dyed ikat, indigo-dyed fabric, and ready-made traditional clothing for both men and women. Na Kha fabric market is considered the largest fabric market in Udon Thani province, generating more than 10 million baht daily. During the COVID-19 pandemic, business owners turned to online sales instead of in-store sales. If business owners utilize integrated marketing communication methods in their operations, it is expected to increase their sales.

Currently, communication technology has advanced significantly, and electronic communication tools play a crucial role in daily life worldwide. Communication is essential and crucial for business operations and marketing activities. Professor Philip Kotler, a marketing scholar, believes that we are now in the age of ASEAN marketing, and the marketing trend is moving towards the era of social media. Therefore, marketing communication plays a vital role in reaching consumers amidst business competition; online communication plays a crucial and significant role in facilitating marketing activities at every stage of the marketing process launching technological advancements. By the way, it has led to excessive amount of information because they have limited time to learn the information, resulting in confusion. Business operators, therefore, need to use marketing communication strategies and tools in all forms to effectively communicate with consumers in a competitive business environment to create added value in purchasing products and services Pongsataphorn (2006). As well, they have to use the tools for reputation of the organization to gain revenue, trustworthiness, and positive perception T.Srivong (2021). The concreteness of service made the employees ready and willing to serve. For reliability in service, the customers give importance to the employees who have knowledge of products and services. For the response to customer's demands, the customers give importance to the employees who are eager to serve. For reassurance in service, the customers give importance to the employees who serve politely. The customers expected and had opinions to receive a good quality of service.

In consequence, marketing communication is genuinely a vulnerable component in conducting business to create added value in purchasing products and services, as well as establishing a positive relationship with customers to ensure they have a favorable perception of the brand and organization. Marketing communication consists of 6 activities; as follows, advertising, which involves delivering information about products and services through mass media; sales promotion, which entails offering special benefits to customers to influence their purchasing decisions; public relations focuses on shaping the image of the company, brand, and services; personal selling involves one-on-one communication to persuade the target audience to buy or try the products; point-of-purchase communication is about arranging product displays and using various advertising materials to attract customers at the point of purchase; lastly, event marketing utilizes special events or activities as a medium to generate interest and facilitate brand recognition, building relationships between the brand and the target audience. These components contribute to effective marketing communication that aims to reach customers in a competitive business environment.

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the marketing communication conditions and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.
- 2.To examine the factors influencing the marketing communication practices of entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.
- 3.To develop marketing communication strategies aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.
- 4.To experiment with the marketing communication approaches employed by entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.

METHODOLOGY

The research process for developing an integrated marketing communication approach to enhance the operational efficiency of entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province, involves the following steps:

Step 1: Study the marketing communication conditions and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.

Step 2: Examine the factors influencing the marketing communication practices of entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.

Step 3: Develop an integrated marketing communication approach aimed at enhancing the operational efficiency of entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.

Step 4: Experiment with the integrated marketing communication approach to improve the operational efficiency of business entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market. This involves applying the developed marketing communication approach to at least one target group of entrepreneurs.

Population and Samples

The population of entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province, consists of 120 individuals. For this research, a sample group of 92 entrepreneurs from Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province, was selected using the Krejcie and Morgan method with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The selection process was conducted through simple random sampling.

Research Tool

The research tool utilized in this study is a questionnaire consisting of five sections:

Section 1: General information about the questionnaire respondents.

Section 2: Marketing communication conditions of entrepreneurs.

Section 3: Challenges in marketing communication faced by entrepreneurs.

Section 4: Factors influencing the operations of entrepreneurs.

Section 5: Operational efficiency in marketing communication of entrepreneurs

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted data analysis as follows:

Steps 1 and 2:

1) Data related to the general status of questionnaire respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistics. This involved frequency distribution and percentage calculation.

2) Data concerning the conditions and problems related to marketing communication faced by entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market were analyzed using percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

3) The obtained data were then analyzed to calculate the average efficiency and standard deviation. The interpretation criteria were as follows:

Mean 1.00-1.50: Indicates the lowest level.

Mean 1.51-2.49: Indicates a low level.

Mean 2.50-3.49: Indicates a moderate level.

Mean 3.50-4.49: Indicates a high level.

Mean 4.50-5.00: Indicates the highest level.

Step 3: Integrated Marketing Communication Model Development for Enhancing Efficiency of Entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.

3.1 Model Creation: The researcher used the data obtained from the survey to develop an integrated marketing communication model. The theoretical concepts of marketing communication supported the model's creation, with the subdivision of each marketing communication tool based on the survey data.

3.2 Subgroup Interviews (Focus Group Discussion): This involved discussions with marketing communication experts, entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province, and relevant organizations. The researcher analyzed qualitative data through content analysis, summarizing issues, interpreting data, and collecting insights. This information served as guidelines for developing an integrated marketing communication model aimed at enhancing operational efficiency for entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.

3.3 Proposal Integration: The suggestions gathered were incorporated into an integrated marketing communication model designed to enhance operational efficiency for entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province.

Step 4: This step involves experimenting with the integrated marketing communication model that has been developed with a group of 1 business. The operational process included the following steps:

1) The selected target group consists of 1 business entity. In this case, the researcher has chosen a Thai fabric store owner specializing in Thai fabric sets as the primary business entity. The choice is based on the observation that this store has been in operation for more than 10 years and is situated in a well-located area, making its products easily accessible to consumers and the general public. Additionally, the business owner is prepared to adopt the integrated marketing communication model for their business.

2) Collaboratively, both the researcher and the business owner will plan and create media materials. This will involve determining how to present product information through the integrated marketing communication model.

3) The experimental phase lasted for 2 weeks, during which the researcher and the research team gathered data in the field.

4) The effectiveness of the integrated marketing communication model was assessed through a questionnaire distributed to the target group, consisting of individuals who made purchases during marketing activities. Data was collected using accidental sampling, and the analysis involved calculating the mean and standard deviation to measure effectiveness.

RESULTS

Part 1: The study's findings on the market communication status and problems of entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market in Udon Thani Province revealed the following:

Demographic Profile: Most entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market are female and their age ranged from 46 to 55 years old. The monthly income was between 50,001 to 75,000 Baht. Educational attainment is typically below a bachelor's degree. Experience in the business was from 7 to 10 years.

Market Communication Importance: in general, entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market focused on market communication. When analyzed specific aspects namely sellers who communicated

effectively and possessed qualities like politeness, empathy, and authenticity. Sellers who had knowledge, skills, and experience related to product details and could answer customers' inquiries effectively. Sellers could provide excellent customer service, offered detailed advice, and established trust for sharing information (salesperson's role) including offering promotions such as buy-one-get-one-free deals and discounting products to attract customers (sales promotion); continuous information dissemination through various store channels and clear, detailed explanations of product features (clothing); advertising through various media channels, highlighting product unique selling points, often using vinyl banners (advertising); supporting participation in various competitions such as football, volleyball, and singing contests, involving customers to gather feedbacks and built confidence (public relations); providing regular product updates to customers via Facebook messages and presenting products through store channels, such as the page or website (direct marketing).

Market Communication Problems: in general, most entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market faced significant issues in market communication. When analyzing specific problems, the following were identified as the most pressing: difficulty understanding the diverse needs of different customer groups; facing intense competition in a competitive environment; limited resources for marketing activities.

Part 2: Factors Affecting the Marketing Communication Operations of Entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market. The study identified factors that significantly impact the marketing communication operations of entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market in Udon Thani Province. Overall, the factors that had the most significant impact on the operations of entrepreneurs in Na Kha Fabric Market are as follows:

The number of products available in the store affected the store's operations. The arrangement of products in the store influenced the store's operations; pricing of fabric products played a role in the store's operations; customer preferences impacted the store's operations; suppliers of raw materials (fabric) affected the store's operations; changes in fabric suppliers impact the store's operations; inventory management practices affected the store's operations; the utilization of technology affected the store's operations; efficiency in marketing communication operations among entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market is generally high.

Part 3: The most efficient marketing communication practices among entrepreneurs at the highest level are as follows: advertising using vinyl banners led to increased sales. Sellers who effectively communicated with politeness, empathy, and authenticity, resulting in increased sales; sellers who possessed knowledge, skills, and experience related to product details and could respond to customer inquiries effectively led to increased sales; sellers who provided excellent customer service, offered detailed advice, and establish trust when sharing information resulted in increased sales; sellers who introduced and made new product models appealing to customers led to increased sales; sellers who promptly responded to customer messages, resulted in increased sales; promotions such as buy-one-get-one-free deals led to increased sales; offering price discounts on products to customers resulted in increased sales. Continuous information dissemination through various store channels and clear, detailed explanations of product features resulted in increased sales; media advertisements presented through online channels that are interesting, prominent, and worth following, such as video and live streaming advertisements, had attracted more interest in product offerings; advertising products through Fan Pages (websites) allowed immediate communication and interaction with customers, resulted in increased sales;

advertisements in various formats that highlight the unique features of products (clothing) with clear explanations, led to increased sales.

S stands for Store Layout, which refers to the efficient arrangement and organization of the store spaces to create an interesting and convenient shopping experience for customers. Store Layout includes.

- 1) The layout of the store entrance.
- 2) The positioning of products.
- 3) The quantity of products displayed in the store.

This helps to create a positive and efficient shopping experience for customers, which can impact on sales and customer satisfaction.

P stands for Personal Selling, which is a form of marketing communication that emphasizes one-on-one communication between salespeople and customers. It involves assisting and persuading potential customers to make purchases and try out products. The success of Personal Selling relies on the salesperson's individual qualities, particularly in terms of appearance, communication skills, product knowledge, and effective sales planning. Well-trained sales staff can contribute significantly to successful sales and marketing communication.

A stand for Advertising, a vital tool in marketing communication aimed at stimulating and persuading customers to make purchases. Advertising includes:

- 1) Advertisements that communicate the product name and showcase visually appealing product images.
- 2) Point-of-purchase displays that convey compelling messages to influence purchase decisions.
- 3) Storefront signage that communicates product features, location, and store information.

D stands for Direct Marketing, a marketing strategy that focuses on direct communication and advertising to target audiences without intermediaries. It emphasizes building relationships and promoting sales directly to customers. Direct Marketing includes:

- 1) Sending email notifications.
- 2) Sharing various news updates on social media pages.
- 3) Implementing a membership system.

S stands for Sales Promotion, which comprises of marketing activities or strategies designed to create excitement and stimulate customers to make immediate purchases or take advantage of offers within a specified time frame. Sales Promotion includes:

- 1) Price discounts.
- 2) Buy-one-get-one promotions focus on generating excitement among customers to drive sales.

The integrated marketing communication format for entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province, is suitable for the context of the fabric market in that province. To apply this format effectively, it is essential to allocate resources appropriately, with the following weightings:

- 1) Store Layout = 10%
- 2) Personal Selling = 40%
- 3) Advertising = 25%
- 4) Direct Marketing = 5%

5) Sales Promotion = 20%

Part 4: The results of the experiment using an integrated marketing communication approach to enhance business efficiency for entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province, revealed the following key findings:

The majority of the entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province, were female, aged between 36-45 years, with a monthly income ranging from 25,001 to 50,000 Baht. They held bachelor's degrees and worked as government officials.

Effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC): In general, the integrated marketing communication approach was highly effective in enhancing business efficiency for entrepreneurs in the fabric market. These results emphasized the importance of a holistic approach to marketing communication, tailored to the specific needs and context of businesses Na Kha fabric market. By strategically implementing the various elements of IMC, entrepreneurs can enhance their business operations and ultimately achieve greater success in the fabric market.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Research Results of Developing an Integrated Marketing Communication Approach to Enhance Business Efficiency for Entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province yielded several noteworthy findings:

1. Most entrepreneurs in Na Kha fabric market, Udon Thani Province, prioritized effective market communication with their customers, emphasizing qualities such as politeness, friendliness, and authenticity. The market is relatively small and community-oriented, it holds a unique identity and attracts tourists from various provinces throughout the year. Therefore, sellers must engage in good, courteous, and genuine communication, which encourages customers to explore their products and make purchasing decisions. This aligns with the research conducted by Sopha (2020), which emphasized the significance of integrated marketing communication for influencing purchase decisions, particularly through courteous and knowledgeable sales staff during promotional events.

2. **Market Communication Challenges:** Most entrepreneurs faced market communication challenges. The inability of employees to understand the diverse needs of their customers, which included people from various cultural backgrounds and languages. Local salespeople often struggled to comprehend the varying customer requirements. According to Yaothanee (2016), which explored marketing communication in community businesses in Chiang Rai Province. The study revealed that the most critical aspects of marketing communication were personal selling (entrepreneurs selling their products directly), followed by the use of advertising (vinyl signs, advertisements, and storefront signs), public relations (business cards and pamphlets), and organizing product exhibitions at various events. Communication challenges were categorized into three aspects: entrepreneurs, information, and customers.

3. The researcher has therefore taken the data obtained and transformed it into a communication format, creating and developing a new format named S P A D S (Spads). This format consists of 1. Store Layout, 2. Personal Selling, 3. Advertising, 4. Direct Marketing, and 5. Sales Promotion.

The characteristics of this marketing communication format involve the integration of various marketing communication tools, often referred to as Integrated Marketing Communication. In this format, each tool has a different role but shares the common goal of creating awareness, influencing perceptions, motivating, and aligning with Schultz's concept, Schultz (1993). It emphasizes the importance of utilizing diverse communication tools to align them in the same direction as different types of distinct-functioned tools. This is particularly relevant in the highly competitive business landscape of the 21st century, where evolving technologies pose challenges to businesses. Therefore, businesses must adapt significantly to engage with customers, not only in terms of product development and pricing but also in effective communication with both current stakeholders and the general public Kotler (2003).

Future Work

- Researchers should focus on developing marketing communication models to enhance the efficiency of businesses in various other sectors, aiming to foster development and experimentation in the realm of integrated marketing communication.

- There should be a study on enhancing the professional image of sales personnel to build trustworthiness for products in the textile market.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University for invaluable help throughout this research.

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