



## Content of Online Marketing that Influence Customers' Decision: A Case on Buying Indigo-Dyed Clothing

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**Abstract** Nowadays, technology plays a significant role in business success. Technologies, including the Internet, web application, and social media can help to grow business by expanding distribution channels to reach customers, even in rural areas. In addition to technology, an online place to promote trade and the content of the products should be considered to help customers in buying decision processes. This research is conducted to understand how to create a proper content to promote online marketing. Consequently, good content can help to decrease the burden of web administrators who have to answer all frequently asked questions from customers. This paper begins with a literature review. Then, by using the focus group method, the customers' factors were identified on buying experiences of indigo-dyed clothing, which is a popular product in the Northeastern region of Thailand. Moreover, the interview of an administrator of an indigo-dyed clothing's web page as a purposive sample was summarized. By using content analysis, the results suggest some broad guidelines to present the content to promote products to gain the customers' response and interest. The conclusion and future work will be mentioned to contribute to the academics and the sellers to sustain online businesses.

**Keywords** impact, content marketing, buying decision, e-commerce, indigo-dyed clothing

### INTRODUCTION

E-commerce or online marketing could reduce economic inequality for people in a rural area to set up their businesses with limited marketing resources. However, e-commerce itself could not be a reason that a product could be sold. One factor that has an impact on the buying decision-making process is product content. It affects customer satisfaction (Saetang, 2017). In turn, it will influence the consumer buying decision, especially the process of information search (Stankevich, 2017). This paper aims to study on what content that customers' interests for helping them to make such a buying decision. The paper will begin by reviewing previous studies as follows.

#### Consumer Decision Making Process

From a critical literature review of Stankevich (2017), consumer decision making processes compose of 5 main processes, including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase. The information search process is a crucial process for gathering information about the description of products, promotion, recommendations, and reviews from other customers and the experience of using the products. All these pieces of information have an impact on the buying decision-making process.

#### Indigo Dyed Clothing

Indigo dyed clothing was chosen to be a case study as this local product is very famous in Northeast Thailand mainly, in Sakon Nakhon province. Indigo dyed clothing helps agriculturists generate more income apart from farming. In 2001, the Thai government encouraged local communities to apply their local knowledge and create a product that represents their local

communities through the campaign called “One Tambon (sub-district), One product.” This campaign is to boost local economies for each community (Chanjittra Chanorn, 2016). Indigo dyed clothing was selected as one product for the Sakon Nakhon province since it uses local wisdom inherited from generation to generation to produce cloth and can increase household income. Its fabric has its unique indigo color, odor, and properties, which make it unique and famous. It was dyed with an indigo tree and can help prevent Ultra Violet rays (Phuphat, 2012).

Indigo dyed clothing is one of the experience goods that customers should have experience with the products before buying. Otherwise, they will not recognize the quality and will not be interested in buying. However, there are many online stores and communities that sell indigo dyed products such as scarves, shirts, skirts, and bags. The example could be seen as the following Fig. 1.



**Fig. 1 An example of online stores (Ban Non Ruea, Sakon Nakhon) for indigo dyed products**

Even though village product promotion has many advantages and brings more income to communities, one major problem that arises for this campaign is that village producer groups have no experience with product development and marketing (Chanorn, 2016). Therefore, some communities failed to sell their products in spite of the support from governments.

Marketing is the key to success, which villagers, including indigo-dyed clothing sellers, have to deal with. One problem is they are naïve to business and do not know how to sell their products or how to communicate with customers. Content marketing could be an inexpensive way to sell products online. Creating the right content could reduce the workload upon answering their customers' frequently asked questions and can have more time to develop products.

This study focuses on this indigo-dyed clothing to assist naïve sellers who want to start their online businesses, but still not know what content or information that customers needed the most in particular, for experience goods such as indigo fabric. Some results of this study could give some guidelines for creating interesting online content for customers.

## Content Marketing

Content marketing could be defined as the pull strategy that provides consumers about the marketing information that is relevant, educational, helpful, engaging, needed, and sometimes entertaining without hard-sell advertising (Lieb, 2011). Nowadays, hard-sell advertising is not selling. The companies should give only a piece of content or information that serve their customers' need. In turn, it will make a customer return to the companies for that helpful information and have more intention to buy their products. Then, some questions were raised in mind; for example, what is the information that customers need or what kind of information we should provide for customers.

The work of Resnik and Stern (1997) has defined what is considered to be useful information for advertising in general. They identified 14 criteria for evaluating advertising content as 1. Price or value 2. Quality 3. Performance 4. Components or contents 5. Availability 6. Special offers 7. Taste 8. Packaging or Shape 9. Guarantees or warranties 10. Safety 11. Nutrition 12. Independent research, 13. Company-sponsored research, and 14. New ideas.

Additionally, the work of Gupta et al. (2004) shows that the factors that influence consumer switching from offline to an electronic channel are the ease of online price and information search

to evaluate the products. Moreover, delivery time and free express delivery are considered for online consumers. Furthermore, the study suggests that trust has an impact on purchase intention, especially for the experience goods (i.e., Ones that consumers would rather physically examine before making a buying decision).

Moreover, the global online consumer report (KPMG International cooperative, 2017) shows that reasons that consumers buy things online instead of in stores are the convenience and the ability to compare and gain a better price. Moreover, it suggests that the information that consumers are looking up for information about products are price comparison, product information or specification, reviews, product options (e.g., color, size, style, etc.) and store inventory/ availability. The report also shows that when consumers decide where to buy products depends on the best price, preferred website, best delivery options or price, stock availability, peer advice, and returns policy.

From the previous work above, it can be identified the essential and relevant content that should be included to promote experience products like indigo-dyed clothing to facilitate the buying decision making are: 1. Prices 2. Quality and product information 3. Availability 4. Special offers 5. Reviews 6. Packaging or Shape 7. Guarantees or warranties / Return policy, and 8. Delivery time and fee.

## **OBJECTIVE**

This research is conducted to study how to create content to respond to customer's needs and could help customers on buying decision processes by using indigo-dyed clothing as a case study. The good content, in turn, could help to reduce the workload of the online products' owner to answer all frequently asked questions. This study tried to identify the ways to create content that supports customers in their buying decision making. The methodology will be presented in the next section.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study referred to previous work, applied focus group, and interview as research methods. A focus group was used to identify the customers' factors on the experiences of indigo-dyed clothing's buying decision. Indigo dyed clothing is an experience good which people have been buying experience before. A focus group is a useful tool used in marketing to collect peoples' opinions, attitudes, and feelings on a given topic (Dilshad and Latif, 2013). A group of 10 persons who used to buy indigo-dyed clothing was asked questions about what information they used to make a buying decision on indigo dyed clothing and what channels (online/ offline shops) that they used to buy.

Moreover, the interview of an administrator, who is experiencing online selling of indigo-dyed clothing, on what information she used to be asked the most from customers was summarized in Table 1.

Sample groups in this research were selected using purposive sampling because of the limited numbers of customers and web administrators (sellers) and a group of people who experience and want to give information for the research. Thus, this research has a sample limitation and could be further expanded to collect more samples.

The results using content analysis suggest some ways to present the content to promote products in order to gain the customers' response and interest.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The content that was considered when buying indigo-dyed clothing from previous work was analyzed and presented as in Table 1. Which is (unordered data): 1. Prices 2. Quality and product information 3. Availability 4. Special offers 5. Reviews 6. Packaging or Shape 7. Guarantees or warranties/Return policy, and 8. Delivery time and fee.

**Table 1 The information that was considered when buying indigo-dyed clothing from the literature review**

Literature review	
1	Prices
2	Quality and product information
3	Availability
4	Special offers
5	Reviews
6	Packaging or Shape
7	Guarantees or warranties / Return policy
8	Delivery time and fee

Additionally, the results from the focus group summarized by content analysis are presented in Table 2. The group of purposive samples indicates that the styles (e.g., patterns, appearance), texture and smell of indigo plants, shop name or brand, and price are important information that focus group members considered when they make an indigo-dyed clothing buying decision, respectively. One of the samples said, “styles of the cloths” is the most crucial factor in buying them.

**Table 2 The information that was considered when buying indigo-dyed clothing**

Importance	Focus group	Interview an administrator of online indigo clothing seller
1	“Styles” (e.g. Patterns, appearance)	Products’ information (i.e. Dimensions)
2	“Texture and smell of indigo plants.”	Patterns and Styles
3	“Shop name/ Brand.”	Buying channels/methods
4	“Price”	Fabric care methods
5	“Friends’ recommendations.”	Price
6		Address and Map of shops

From interviewing an administrator of a web site that sell indigo-dyed clothing, the information that was asked most frequently about indigo-dyed products are products’ information such as dimensions and color, patterns and styles, buying channel or methods to buy, fabric care or how to take care the indigo-dyed clothing, price, address and map of the shop, respectively.

The results from the focus group and the interviews indicate that styles and patterns are the most important information (more than price) that customers will use to make their buying decisions since it will make customers happy and confident when wearing it. They will pay for cloth if it makes them good looking. Therefore, as an online shop, photos of the products and information needed to be prepared carefully. They have to be a clear picture with natural light and make people appreciated with.

Moreover, it can be seen that as an online shop where we cannot see each other face to face, some factors that increase trusts such as shop name or brand, address and map of shops, and friends’ recommendations are also important. All in all, from the above literature review on the section of content marketing (summarized in Table 1.), focus group and interview (summarized in Table 2.), information that should be provided for customers is all information as follows: 1. Prices, 2. Styles, patterns, texture, and product information, 3. Availability, 4. Special offers, 5. Reviews, 6. Packaging or Shape, 7. Guarantees or warranties / Return policy, 8. Delivery time and fee; 9. Shop name/ Brand, 10. Address and map of shops, 11. Buying channels/ methods, and 12. Fabric care methods.

All information (altogether from table 1 and 2) that should be provided for customers to help them make a buying decision for indigo-dyed clothing could be separated into 2 groups: 1. Information that is related to products including prices, styles, patterns, texture and product information, availability, special offers, packaging or shape, guarantees or warranties/return policy, delivery time and fee, buying channels/ methods, and fabric care methods, and 2. Information that increase trust including reviews, shop name/ brand, and address and map of shops. These kinds of

information could help customers accelerating a decision on buying processes and reducing workload to answer all frequency asked questions from customers.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The samples of the interview were selected using purposive sampling since there was little time to conduct this study. However, some lesson was learned and gained some guidelines for an administrator of any website to create content and provide some helpful content and information for their customers.

## **CONCLUSION**

Online marketing could help people in rural areas sell their products with limited resources and investment. However, nowadays, hard-sell advertising could not gain a high purchasing demand anymore; some marketing techniques have to be adopted. This study focuses on how to provide practical content that is useful and helpful for customers to make a quicker buying decision on indigo-dyed clothing. From previous work, focus group, and interviewing an administrator who sells indigo dyed fabric online, there are 2 kinds of information that should be provided for customers to facilitate indigo-dyed clothing's buying processes online, which are 1. Information that is related to products ,including prices, styles, patterns, texture and product information, availability, special offers, packaging or shape, guarantees or warranties / return policy, delivery time and fee, buying channels/ methods, and fabric care methods and 2. Information that increase trust, including reviews, shop name/ brand, and address and map of shops.

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