



EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR COMMUNICATION ON THE AIRLINE CUSTOMERS' PURCHASE INTENTIONS*

ผลกระทบของการใช้โซเชียลมีเดียในการสื่อสารต่อความตั้งใจซื้อ
ของลูกค้าสายการบิน



Nisara Paethrangsi, Ploywarin Sangsomboon, Wanlapa Jandaboue,
Parnkan Vijitsanguan, Parida Brahmaputra, Sombat Teekasap

นิสรา แพทย์รังษี, พลอยวรินทร์ แสงสมบัติ, วัลภา จันดาเบา,
ปารย์กัญจน์ วิจิตรสงวน, พาริดา พรหมบุตร, สมบัติ ที่มทรัพย์

Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi

มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลธัญบุรี

Corresponding Author E-mail: ploywarin_s@rmutt.ac.th

Abstract

Social media has become an essential communication tool for enterprises, including airline industries. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the effects of social media communication on airline customers' purchasing intentions by deploying a quantitative questionnaire survey from 305 airline customers with experience in using social media communication of airlines. Data were analyzed by using a structural equation model (SEM).

The results revealed that brand awareness was derived from Advertising Appeals (ADP), Marketing Messages (MMS), Word-of-Mouth (WOM), and Online Customer Reviews (OCR). Advertising Appeals (ADP) were the most significant impact on airline customers' purchasing intentions.

Keywords: Social Media Communication; Airline Customer; Purchase Intention; Brand Awareness

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บทคัดย่อ

โซเชียลมีเดียเป็นเครื่องมือสื่อสารที่สำคัญสำหรับองค์กรธุรกิจ รวมถึงในอุตสาหกรรมการบิน ดังนั้น การศึกษานี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบของการสื่อสารผ่านโซเชียลมีเดียต่อความตั้งใจซื้อของลูกค้าสายการบิน งานวิจัยนี้ ใช้การสำรวจแบบสอบถามเชิงปริมาณจากลูกค้าสายการบินที่มีประสบการณ์ในการสื่อสารกับสายการบินผ่านโซเชียลมีเดีย จำนวน 305 คน ผู้วิจัยวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้แบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้าง (SEM)

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า การรู้จักตราสินค้า (BA) ของลูกค้าสายการบินมีองค์ประกอบมาจากการโฆษณาประชาสัมพันธ์ที่ดึงดูดใจด้านอารมณ์ (ADP) เนื้อหาในสื่อโฆษณา (MMS) การบอกต่อปากต่อปาก (WOM) และบทวิจารณ์ออนไลน์จากลูกค้า (OCR) จากผลการวิเคราะห์ สรุปได้ว่าการโฆษณาประชาสัมพันธ์ที่ดึงดูดใจด้านอารมณ์ (ADP) มีผลกระทบเชิงบวกอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อความตั้งใจซื้อของลูกค้าสายการบิน

คำสำคัญ: การสื่อสารผ่านโซเชียลมีเดีย; ลูกค้าสายการบิน; ความตั้งใจซื้อ; การรู้จักตราสินค้า

Introduction

Social media communication has played a relevant role in creating brand equity and influencing consumer decisions (Majeed et al., 2021), affecting people's daily lives. Nowadays, customers tend to communicate with airlines in all aspects through social networks. Therefore, airlines must manage changes for these new standard settings to improve their business (Seo & Park, 2018). Several people use social media, about 900 million on Facebook, 300 million on Twitter, and 100 million on Instagram (Bangkokbiz, 2022).

Social networking provides connections, builds relationships between companies and potential customers, and maintains their customers effectively (Alalwan, 2018). Advertising through social media has become more severe in aviation industries. The critical players among many airlines have faced challenges due to many new competitive factors in competing with competitors social media communication is a changing agent for airline customers' lifestyles in acquiring interesting information, social issues discussion, and social change pursuing (Seo & Park, 2018). This study aims to investigate how social media communication influences airline customer response. Therefore, it comes to the following research objective.



Research Objectives

To investigate the effects of social media communication on airline customers' purchase intentions.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative design to establish the influence of social media communication on customers' purchase intentions via structural equation model analysis. Dependent variables are marketing messages (MMS), advertising appeals (ADA), online customer reviews (OCR), and word-of-mouth (WOM). The questionnaire was developed from literature reviews to fit convenience sampling online google form and was divided into two parts: respondent's demographic data and information about research variables. The intended population included airline customers who have experience using social media to connect with airlines and use to view, follow, like, and share information about brands. A random sampling using the Morgan table sample size of 305 was used (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). 400 questionnaires were distributed, among which 319 were returned and 305 were used for analysis.

Results

Table 1 illustrates that Chi-square is 164.33 df is 159 and /df is 1.033, GFI is 0.95, AGFI is 0.93, CFI is 1.00, SRMR is 0.037, and RMSRA is 0.011, as the measured index must be lower than 0.05. Thus, all structural are passed the criteria. It showed that the model is a good fit with the variables that affect airline customers' purchase intentions.

Table 1 Measurement and structural model

GOF	Accepted value	Measured index	Accepted/unaccepted
χ^2 -test	$p \geq 0.05$	0.369	Accepted
χ^2 /df	< 2.00	1.033	Accepted
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.95	Accepted
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.93	Accepted
CFI	≥ 0.90	1.00	Accepted
SRMR	< 0.05	0.037	Accepted
RMSEA	< 0.05	0.011	Accepted

Table 2 Mean, S.D., and opinion level of Customers' Purchase intention.

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Opinion level	Rank
Willing to pay (WP)	4.26	0.565	Strongly agree	1
Purchase intention (PI)	4.20	0.613	Agree	2
Value perception (VP)	4.15	0.622	Agree	3
Brand trustworthiness (BT)	4.12	0.651	Agree	4
Interesting contents (IC)	4.10	0.541	Agree	5

Table 2 illustrates that the Purchase intention is significant, with a mean of 4.20 and a standard deviation of 0.613. The key indicators are 1. Willing to pay, with a mean of 4.26, 2. Value perception, with a mean of 4.15, 3. Brand trustworthiness, with a mean of 4.12, and 4. Interesting contents with a mean of 4.10. SEM was applied to estimate direct and indirect effects with the involved mediator as shown in table 4 which investigates the mediating effects of brand awareness on output variables.

Table 3: Direct and indirect variable from BETA and GAMMA, and empirical variable from Lambda Y, Lambda X, and Error.

Dependent variation Independent variation	OCR			ADA			WOM			PI		
	TE	IE	DE	TE	IE	DE	TE	IE	DE	TE	IE	DE
Mkt. message	0.73 ** (0.10)	-	0.73 ** (0.10)	0.90 ** (0.09)	0.19* (0.09)	0.71 ** (0.13)	0.93 ** (0.09)	0.49* (0.24)	0.44* (0.27)	0.82 ** (0.09)	1.35 ** (0.52)	-0.53 (0.51)
Online customer reviews	-	-	-	0.26* (0.13)	-	0.26* (0.13)	0.21 (0.13)	0.12 (0.11)	0.09 (0.13)	0.29* (0.14)	0.36* (0.19)	-0.08 (0.17)
Advertising appeals	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.47* (0.30)	-	0.47* (0.30)	1.15* (0.42)	0.34 (0.26)	0.81* (0.48)
Word-of-mouth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.72* (0.14)	-	0.72* (0.14)
Statistic	Chi-Square= 164.33, df= 159, GFI = 0.95, AGFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.011											

Note: number in parentheses is standard variable, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, TE= influence summation, IE= indirect influence, DE= direct influence

Table 3 presents the most influential factors towards customers' purchase intention, in turn, are: 1. Advertising appeals (1.15), 2. Marketing message (0.82), 3. Word-of-mouth (0.72), and 4. Online customer reviews (0.29), We found that: Advertising appeals (ADA) directly and indirectly influence towards purchase intentions (PI) at 0.81, 0.34 in turn and overall influence at 1.15. Marketing message (MMS) has influenced purchase intentions (PI) directly and indirectly at -0.53, 1.35, and overall influence is 0.82. Word-of-mouth (WOM) directly influences purchase



intentions (PI) at 0.72, and overall influence = 0.72. Finally, Online customer reviews (OCR) have indirect and direct influences on purchase intentions at -0.08 and 0.36. Hence the overall influences are 0.29, which is the most negligible impact on PI.

Discussion

Results showed that brand awareness of airline customers through social media communication comprises Marketing messages, Advertising appeals, Online customer reviews, and Word-of-mouth. All five hypotheses are supported. The most influential factors towards customers' purchase intention, in turn, are: 1. Advertising appeals (1.15), 2. Marketing messages (0.82), 3. Word-of-mouth (0.72), and 4. Online customer reviews (0.29). We found that: Advertising appeals (ADA) directly and indirectly influence towards purchase intentions (PI) at 0.81, 0.34 in turn and overall influence at 1.15. The relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention is statistically positive and significant (p -value 0.369; p 0.05) to confirm H5.

Advertising appeals (ADA) showed the most significant impact on PI and confirmed H1. Online advertisements effectively promote brand loyalty and product purchase intention (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). Airlines that display professional information, knowledge, and the high functionality of the product and service in social media, are gaining customer perception of truth and reliability

The H3 was supported; respondents rated Marketing messages (MMS) in social media as significant in second place of four sequences. MMS influences customers in all three mental stages: the cognitive phase, the affective stage, and the cognitive stage, which is related to scholars' works; that social Marketing message in social media influences the economic outcome of the company (Zhu & Zhang, 2010).

Word-of-mouth (WOM) was perceived as significant, weighing 0.72, and H4 was supported. WOM is a source of social media communication that gives consumers information for buying decisions. It provides information on products and services which lead to customers' purchase intention in the future (Mooradian et al., 2012). E- WOM, online communities, and Respondents considered WOM to be more reliable, credible, and trustworthy, consistent with the research of

Aslam et al. (2019), which confirmed that WOM has a significant impact on purchase intention.

Finally, the H3 was supported. Online customer reviews (OCR) were perceived as having the most neglectful effect on airline customers' purchase intentions. This result was consistent with many marketing scholars' work. Although OCR has both direct and indirect on brands, the reliability is not consistent. The OCR has positive and negative impacts on customers' choices moderately (Kostyra et al., 2016). Customer reviews are nonsignificant helpfulness and determinants of purchase intention (Filieri et al., 2016). However, some results differ from previous works. Scholars found that OCR is a major driving force in marketing. The OCR is perceived as more credible and trustworthy. (Cui et al., 2012)

Body of knowledge

Social media communication allows customers quickly obtain information on the airline's products and services. Customers' brand awareness is driven by the quantity and quality of advertising appeals, marketing messages, word-of-mouth, and online reviews as shown in Figure 1

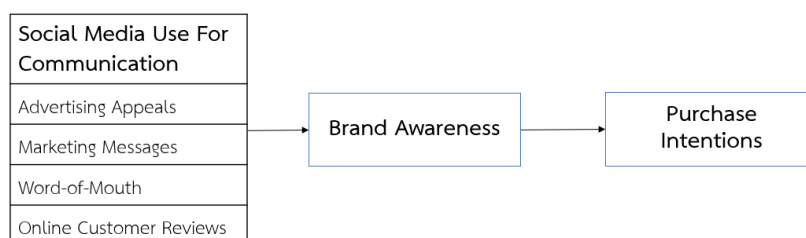


Figure 1 Body of knowledge

This study's significant result emphasizes that the most effective communication channel leading to purchase intention is Advertising Appeals, followed by Marketing Messages because they improve customer understanding of products and brands. Word-of-Mouth and Online Customer Reviews do not give information about the airline services. However, they showed positive effects on purchase intentions because many customers have experience using the service and talked about it.



Recommendations

Social media advertising is a tool for airlines to connect with customers besides traditional marketing. The findings from this study have important implications for managers in social and content media strategy. Airline managers can enable brand awareness through social media communication and forecast the future purchasing behavior of their customers.

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