

MARKETING COMMUNICATION OF OTOP ENTREPRENEURS IN THE THREE SOUTHERNMOST PROVINCES

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study are 1) to study factors stimulating business development, 2) to examine marketing communication, 3) to analyze the relationship between relevant factors in business development and marketing communication, and 4) to explore platforms for marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southernmost provinces.

This study is evolved around quantitative and qualitative research. As for quantitative exploration, it takes a total sample of 205 OTOP entrepreneurs. It also applies various research tools, consisting of questionnaires and data analyses by statistics, frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and multiple regression analysis. Whereas qualitative research considers 21 key contributors. In the selection of the sample, the purposive sampling method is used together with an application of group interview and descriptive data analysis.

As for the results, it reveals the following conclusions: 1) An OTOP promotion wisdom is presented as a contributing factor for the business development of the OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces, 2) A marketing communication, product demonstration, personal selling, and product exhibition are given the most attention, respectively, by OTOP entrepreneurs in the area, 3) An OTOP network promotion, OTOP promotion wisdom, and logistics are the factors connecting to marketing communication of the OTOP entrepreneurs at a significance level of 0.05, and 4) Marketing communication methods of the OTOP entrepreneurs in the areas rely on the advertisement, personal selling, and event marketing by integrating the identity of the three southern border provinces through business matching with foreign countries or different regions.

Keywords: Marketing Communication, OTOP Entrepreneurs, Three Southernmost Provinces, Factors Affecting Business Development, Relative Factors Impacting Marketing Communications, Marketing Communication Channel

INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, the project of One Tambon One Product (OTOP) has been one of the successful initiatives to promote local entrepreneurship. The Thai government has mandated the Community Development Department under the Ministry of Interior to implement and monitor the OTOP project with the purpose of empowering entrepreneurs in the country. The project is considered one of the core policies to trigger the local economy, as well as to combat poverty in the country. Its mechanism is activated by encouraging people in the community to emphasize and utilize their local wisdom as their strengths in developing their potential for a resilient community at the basic level. This particular project has been found consistent with the concept of Sufficiency Economy and an ideal strategy to link the community economy to the world economy. The Community Development Department, therefore, plays a vital role in different functions under the core vision; executing a registration service for producers, OTOP operators, product standard development,

packaging development, and marketing promotion by allowing manufacturers and OTOP entrepreneurs to develop their ability to work and generate income for themselves, community and country (Community Development Department, 2006). This vision has triggered the Thai government to make special attention, as it is believed that the failure of entrepreneurship could interrupt government measures set for entrepreneurship development in the economy (Amjad, AbdulRani & Sa'atar, 2020).

The key feature of the promotion and development process for producers and OTOP operators under the supervision of the Community Development Department is to place a great emphasis on the development of all levels of the process; upstream, midstream, and downstream. The upstream begins with encouragement for communities to establish a working group compiling traditionally social wisdom and turn them into products with the use of raw materials or resources available in the community. This level further touches on the inheritance of local wisdom to future generations, as well as the conservation of resources for sustainable use. The development also deals with the registration and potential classification of producers, and OTOP operators as available information for the promotion process and its promotional development. As for the midstream position, it starts with the execution of the capacity development among manufacturers and OTOP entrepreneurs to prepare them for business competition together with the development of standard quality products, social responsibility, and network force. In addition, the downstream position focuses on marketing promotion at all markets; be it community, local, regional, national, Thai-neighboring nations markets, and international markets (Community Development Department, 2015).

Within the realm of supporting and promoting the operation of OTOP operators in Thailand, it should consider a competitive advantage. Undoubtedly, this concept of competitive advantage has always been a key consideration in entrepreneurship. In this regard, "a marketing communication" becomes an important factor as it holds communication tools functional to inform the target customers about the products for recognition, preference, as well as to boost in competitive advantage motivating the target audience in several forms (Falihat, Ramayah, Soto-Acosta & Lee, 2020; Wongmonta, 1999; Jayutirat, 2007). This claim is consistent with (Charinsarn, 2006) considering a marketing communication platform as a tool to approach consumers, comprising of Advertisement, Sales Promotion, Content Marketing, Public Relations, Owned Media, Direct Marketing, and Social Media Marketing Communication. At the same time, a number of differences exists in the three southern border provinces of Thailand in terms of language uses, lifestyles, traditions, cultures, and social wellbeing of the people in the area. Therefore, different aspects of marketing communication are assessed covering advertisement, personal selling, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing, products demonstration, and products exhibition.

This interest further results in the study of factors influencing the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces, their marketing communication, the relationship between factors in OTOP business development, and OTOP marketing communication. Besides, a marketing communication guideline is also designed for groups of entrepreneurs or responsible agencies in empowering entrepreneurs to exercise and practice for future application in the development and formulation of the business development guideline.

Objectives

- 1) To study the factors impacting the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces.
- 2) To explore the marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces.
- 3) To analyze the relationship between factors in the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs and marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces.

- 4) To examine the marketing communication platform of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study explores and reviews various concepts and theories including factors analysis in business development, marketing communication, and the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) project. The Community Development Institute (2017) has studied the OTOP development model towards a new dimension by exploring issues and problems in the OTOP operations across the country at all levels; be it upstream, midstream, and downstream. As for the result, the Institute reveals that wisdom, product development, entrepreneurship development, OTOP network promotion, logistics, marketing channels promotion, and product publicity are the factors impacting the OTOP business development. However, the marketing communication shall be applied to help compete in business by relying on all types of marketing activities to help stimulate and convince consumers and middlemen for product acquisition. In addition, the platform of marketing promotion consists of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and publicity (Iamratanakul, 2014).

Conceptual Framework

In compliance with the above explanation, the concepts and theories can be constructed and drawn into the following research framework as shown in Figure 1.



FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON MARKETING COMMUNICATION OF OTOP
ENTREPRENEURS IN THE THREE SOUTHERN BORDER PROVINCES

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Type

In conducting the study, a mixed-methods research approach is deployed consisting of two key steps as follows:

Step 1: It is to conduct quantitative research by assessing the factors affecting the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces, exploring their marketing communication, and analyzing the relationship between the factors and the marketing communication.

Step 2: It is to conduct qualitative research by applying the research results driven by Step 1 to suggest possible platforms in marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces. This type of research is held by conducting group interviews among key informants representing agencies in the three southern border provinces in order to partially promote and supporting the operation of OTOP entrepreneurship.

Population, Sample, and Key Informants

In Phase 1, the population referred in the study includes 418 OTOP entrepreneurs in Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat provinces (Community Development Department Ministry of Interior, 2019). Upon measuring a sample size of the study based on (Yamane's formula, 1967) at a confidence level of 95 per cent, a total of 205 sample size is obtained with the application of Multistage Random Sampling. This method can be explained below:

Step 1: The samples are categorized according to districts in relation to OTOP entrepreneurs.

Step 2: The proportion is determined in accordance with the population.

Step 3: The sample is selected based on the method of Simple Random Sampling by randomly drawing the names of OTOP entrepreneurs from each district.

In Phase 2, the key informants are chosen based on a purposive sampling method retrieving 21 representatives from agencies involved in the promotion and support of the operation of the OTOP group in the three southern border provinces. The agencies comprise of Provincial Developers as an administrator of the OTOP in each province, directors of the Community Promotion and Development Group as a supervisor and monitor in the implementation of the OTOP project, Community Development scholars as a coordinator between the Community Development Department and OTOP Network Group, developers as a project executer of OTOP, representatives of Provincial Commerce Office as a supervisor of intellectual property and marketing, representatives of Provincial Public Health Office as an auditor of food and drug standards, representatives of Provincial Agriculture and Cooperatives Office as an administrator of community enterprises, representatives of Provincial Industry as an auditor of community product standards, representatives of Provincial Islamic Committee as a Halal inspector, and OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces.

Research Tools

In Phase 1, a questionnaire on factors affecting the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces is applied with a range of 30 questions in the form of a 5-rating scale. In addition, a questionnaire on marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces is employed with a range of 47 questions on a similar 5-rating scale. Besides, content quality has been examined and validated by experts with an Index of Item Objective Congruence of each question between 0.60 and 1.00, which exceeds the specified criteria of 0.50 above. The questionnaires have also been revised and improved based on the guidance of the experts. To this study, the revised version of questionnaires has been tried out on the sample of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces totaling 30 people. Furthermore, each question is measured by using Pearson's correlation. As a result, the 30-question questionnaire on factors affecting the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces is detected with the coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha of 0.928. Upon considering each aspect, it is evident that OTOP promotion wisdom, product development, entrepreneurial development, OTOP network promotion, marketing channels promotion, logistics,

and publicity possess Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.834, 0.860, 0.880, 0.847, 0.820, 0.805, and 0.711, respectively. In terms of the questionnaire on marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces consisting of 47 questions, its Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is presented at 0.963. By considering each aspect, the study depicts that advertisement, personal selling, public relation, sales promotion, direct marketing, product demonstration, and product exhibition are detected with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.890, 0.832, 0.843, 0.785, 0.863, 0.856, and 0.823, respectively.

As for Phase 2, a tool for group interview is designed with step-by-step instructions and planning while considering flexibility in compliance with key issues covered in an appropriate, accurate and complete manner. The planning begins with the procedures as follows: 1) Introduce oneself, break the ices, and identify objectives; 2) Acquire basic information of the participants in the group interview; 3) Igniting the discussion on interesting issues along with the suitable, complete, and accurate justification of the questionnaires by experts.

Data Collection

This study has been granted approval by the Research and International Affair Division of Sirindhorn College of Public Health, Yala Province, for the purpose of dealing with human subjects from the Ethics Committee No. SCPHYREC-015/2564 dated 31/3/21 to ensure the human rights of the research informants are well protected prior to data collection.

In Phase 1, an assistance request is made and submitted to the Provincial Community Development Office of Pattani, Narathiwat, and Yala for cooperation in data collection, where marketing communication staff of the Provincial Community Development Office in every province and developers of their sub-districts act as data retrievers collecting data on the appointment dates directed, monitored, and verified by the authors in terms of data integrity. All the questionnaires distributed totaling 205 sets are fully retrieved, representing 100 percent of the total number of distributed questionnaires.

In Phase 2, a data is additionally collected by the authors. The collection is done through a group interview with the key informants upon their consent in data collection and acknowledgment of research details pertaining to its preliminary research objectives together. The procedure is simultaneously presented with the official approval letter from the Research and International Affair Division by Sirindhorn College of Public Health, Yala Province. The key informants are provided with questions for a group interview, as well as the scheduled date, time, and place for the interview. They are also asked permission for audio recording and writing during their group interview. The entire process of interview takes about three hours for each province.

Data Analysis

In Phase 1, a quantitative data analysis is conducted to study factors affecting the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces. Within the Phase, the process is divided into four sections. Firstly, the general data of respondents is analyzed by using descriptive statistics to estimate the mean, standard deviation, and percentage. Secondly, both analyses of factors affecting business development of OTOP entrepreneurs and analysis of their marketing communication are conducted by deploying descriptive statistics to calculate mean and standard deviation. Thirdly, the relationship between both types of factors is investigated by applying a Multiple Regression Analysis and Assumption Verification. Upon executing the regression analysis, VIF value is ranged from 1.5 – 4.5 and the Tolerance value is ranged from 0.2 – 0.6. These two values satisfy all the assumptions. Lastly, the retrieved data is systematically

compiled and integrated to generate concepts and measurably quantitative variables. Consequently, all the information obtained from this compilation is taken for analysis and integration in order to draw conclusions with recommendations.

In Phase 2, the data obtained from the group interview mainly focusing on the perspective of key informants is systematically descriptively analyzed according to the subject matters; content, variables, and specified themes. In parallel, the required information is sorted and retrieved for analysis and integration in order to bring forth conclusions and recommendations.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Objective 1: Factors Affecting the Business Development of OTOP Entrepreneurs in the Three Southern Border Provinces

In analyzing the quantitative data of the sample size of 205 people, it is found that most of the respondents are female totaling 147 people accounted for 71.7 percent. They are categorized based on age, bachelor's degree holding, presidential position servicing, OTOP entrepreneurs, products, Quadrant C-type production, business experiences, OTOP-based income, standard compliance; 31-40 years old respondents are accounted for 57 people or 27.8%, bachelor's degree holders are accounted for 86 people or 42.0, 86 percent, serving as presidents is accounted for 106 people or 51.7 percent, and OTOP entrepreneurs are accounted for 121 people or 59.9 percent, food-based sellers are accounted for 90 people or 44.8 percent, possessing 4-star OTOP production is accounted for 72 people or 35.2 percent, Quadrant C-type products dealers are accounted for 67 people or 39.4 percent, 4-6 years of experiences in OTOP business is accounted for 69 people or 33.7 percent, monthly income from OTOP sales between 10,001 - 30,000 baht per month is accounted for 80 people or 39.0 percent, possessing Community Product Standards is accounted for 117 people or 41.8 percent, respectively. With the given explanation, it can be summarized in Table 1 below.

Factors Affecting Business Development	\bar{x}	S.D.	Explanation Significance
OTOP Promotion Wisdom	4.1	0.72	High
Products Development	4.09	0.66	High
Entrepreneurial Development	3.88	0.76	High
OTOP Network Promotion	3.97	0.84	High
Marketing Channels Promotion	3.95	0.68	High
Logistics	3.96	0.78	High
Publicity	3.98	0.83	High
Total	3.99	0.61	High

Based on the findings of this study, it shows that the factors affecting the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces are overall at a high

significance towards the business development with an average of 3.99. With regards to factors' significance towards the business development, all factors are found with high impact. Upon considering each aspect ranging from the highest to lowest average, it indicates that OTOP promotion wisdom is ranked at the top of the list with an average of 4.10. Whereas the product development and publicity are ranked the second and third position with an average of 4.09 and 3.98, respectively.

Objective 2: Marketing Communication of OTOP Entrepreneurs in the Three Southern Border Provinces

The result of the quantitative data analysis based on the sample size of 205 people depicts that the marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces is summarized and shown in Table 2 below.

Marketing Communication of OTOP Entrepreneurs	\bar{x}	S.D.	Explanation Significance
Advertisement	3.09	0.95	Moderate
Personal Selling	3.88	0.98	High
Public Relation	3.13	1.09	Moderate
Sales Promotion	3	1.26	Moderate
Direct Marketing	2.98	1.06	Moderate

Marketing Communication of OTOP entrepreneurs	\bar{x}	S.D.	Explanation Significance
Products Demonstration	3.91	0.89	High
Products Exhibition	3.69	0.95	High
Total	3.38	0.8	Moderate

According to Table 2, the result explains the marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces is rated at a moderate level with an average of 3.38. By accounting for each aspect with the rank of the mean values, products demonstration is reflected with high significance with an average of 3.91. Whereas personal selling and products exhibition are found highly significant with a mean of 3.88 and 3.69, respectively.

Objective 3: The Relationship Analysis between the Factors Affecting the Business Development of OTOP Entrepreneurs and Marketing Communication of OTOP Entrepreneurs in the Three Southern Border Provinces

The quantitative data analysis with the application of the sample size of 205 people demonstrates the analysis of the relationship between factors affecting the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs and marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces. Upon analysis, the findings can be found and observed in Table 4 below.

Variables	B	S.E.	Beta
OTOP Promotion Wisdom	-0.229	0.086	-0.206
OTOP Network Promotion	0.283	0.102	0.296
Logistics	0.203	0.104	0.199
$R^2=0.257$, $SEE=0.702$, $F=9.735^*$ *: The statistical significance level of 0.05			

Based on the above outcomes of the multiple regression analysis, it reveals that only three independent variables out of seven variables mutually explain the variation of marketing communication among OTOP entrepreneurs accounting for 25.70 percent. Furthermore, the relationship is explained and correlated by the three factors, namely OTOP promotion wisdom, OTOP network promotion, and logistics at a statistical significance level of 0.05. When considering the independent variables with a prediction ability in the changes of marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs, OTOP network promotion is proven to be the best factor, followed by OTOP promotion wisdom and logistics, respectively. However, OTOP promotion wisdom is found to be negatively correlated to the dependent variable. Simply put, the OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces emphasize the development of wisdom-based products, resulting in weak marketing communication.

Objective 4: Marketing Communication Platforms of OTOP Entrepreneurs in the Three Southern Border Provinces

With the qualitative data analysis from the group interview, it retrieves from the key informants, consisting of directors of Community Promotion and Development Division, Community Development scholars, OTOP-responsible developers, representatives from Provincial Commercial Office, representatives from Provincial Public Health Office, representatives from Provincial Agriculture and Cooperatives Office, representatives from Provincial Industries, OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces, representatives from Provincial Islamic Committee of the three provinces, totaling 21 people, with the facilitation of a purposive sampling approach. The analysis shows that the marketing communication platforms of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces can be optimized through the following six key approaches as follows:

Advertisement

Advertising in the three southern border provinces is found valid because the credible channels positively affect sales. The entrepreneurs in the area are seen to lack the budget for advertisement through mainstream media, such as television and radio broadcasting. Therefore, the use of social media, including Social Media Page and Line, should be given a high emphasis in

creating content for the entrepreneurs, especially 1-2 star-rated entrepreneurs. It can be noted that only fewer numbers of them acknowledge the importance of using social media. When considering the organization of training, the participants should be grouped and divided into three main groups: 1) a group with strength and ability to export products abroad, 2) a group of new-generation businesspeople, and 3) a group of newly-established or support required individuals from various agencies.

Personal Selling

In the case of food distribution in the three southern border provinces or Muslim countries, salespeople should be Muslims as they are influential over buyers, services, products information provision, and products story through the use of local Malay language in communication.

Public Relations

Public relations should be done in parallel with event marketing. This effort is considered an additional activity organized to enhance the identity of the three southern border provinces through business matching with foreign countries or different regions.

Sales Promotion

The sales promotion should be related to tourism, traditions, and culture, which are considered as the identity of the three southernmost provinces. For instance, the promotion is made in relation to the gold panning activity in Sukhirin district of Narathiwat Province.

Products Demonstration

The sustainable products demonstration effort in the three southern border provinces is to exhibit products demonstration in learning spaces, learning centers, public markets (Pracharat), public projects (Pracharat), agricultural-based and eco-based learning centers, organic farming, natural agriculture farming. The effort is also found optimal when integrating into tourism, a sea of mist, durian fruit festival, orange gardens, coffee dripping, and medicinal plants exploration by deploying community communicators as information providers.

Products Exhibition

The exhibition of products should be organized by the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Center (SBPAC), and it acts as the core management body in the preparation of projects related to the exhibition. The exhibition should be in the form of an annual activity organization out of the scopes of the local government agencies. For example, the SBPAC may choose to organize a rice festival this year and a golden leaves festival in the following year.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, products exhibition should be held online to Allow all the potential customers to explore products and acquire products information.

Results Discussion

Objective 1: Factors Impacting the Business Development of OTOP Entrepreneurs in the Three Southern Border Provinces

In line with this study, it is evident that OTOP promotion wisdom is the core factor affecting the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southernmost provinces, which is also supported by Puangngam (2010) claiming that local wisdom refers to the knowledge of a person or group of people in a particular locality passed on through inheritance from ancestors, or experience, or filtered, accumulated, and analyzed experience applied for benefit and result. This practice is paved by learning through lifestyle, which is the foundation of abstract and concrete knowledge. This claim is consistent with a study by Chattaraman, Rudd & Lennon (2009) indicating that products and communication are culturally correlated, and such relationship is the key contributor to the success of ethnic marketing. In fact, the project of One Tambon One Product (OTOP) does not only reflect a stand-alone product but also portrays a holistic thinking process. It further covers services, maintenance, and conservation of natural resources and the environment, preservation of Thai Wisdom, tourism, arts and culture, traditions, application of local wisdom, learning exchange, and community cultural values. These features, therefore, result in high-quality products with uniqueness and strong selling points based on well-known Thai wisdom across the country and around the world. Hence, the integration of local wisdom in the three southern border provinces conveying the identity of the area while telling consumers about the story of being 3-province southerners can affect the business development of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces.

Objective 2: Marketing Communication of OTOP Entrepreneurs in the Three Southern Border Provinces

According to this study, it reveals that the marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces consists of products demonstration, personal selling, and products exhibition, respectively. This finding is in line with Zephaniah, Ogbab & Izogo (2020) illustrating that sales promotion and personal selling are the core determiners of customer loyalty. In addition, Iamratanakul (2014); Peuchthonglang, et al., (2021) confirmed that products demonstration and products exhibition are integral parts of sales promotion. However, the demonstration is for consumer promotion while the exhibition is for trade promotion. Besides, this study also indicates that personal selling is a marketing communication method the OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southernmost provinces should choose to utilize in order to sustain their business. According to Nawarat (2020), personal selling deals with an interaction between service providers and customers, which may contribute to better enhance their relationship. In terms of the sale process, it can be observed from five key steps: 1) target prospect identification, 2) sales call planning, 3) preparation of presentation, 4) handling objections, and 5) closing sale. Thus, personal selling is believed to have greater advantages compared to other methods of marketing promotion because of its personal contact functions; enabling the selling, servicing, and monitoring. In addition, it is served to strengthen the relationship with customers and help create opportunities to offer other services (cross-selling). These functions are realized due to the close contact made between employees and customers, and salespeople can build trust with customers. The above finding is in line with the study of Hossain, Hasan, Kabir, Mahbub & Zayed (2019) in which a customer is portrayed as an inseparable element to a business entity. In fact, the manifold business strategies have been adopted while realizing the distinctive attributes and values in order to ensure the customer satisfaction, resulting in the ultimate desire customer loyalty. Most significantly, enthusiasm and assurance of customers' awareness in receiving complete information are to be materialized, such as feedback assessment and customer relation (Khalil, Rasel, Kobra, Noor & Zayed, 2020; Peuchthonglang et al., 2020).

Objective 3: The Relationship Analysis between Factors Affecting the Business Development of OTOP Entrepreneurs and Marketing Communication of OTOP Entrepreneurs in the Three Southern Border Provinces

Based on this study, it illustrates that the factors related to marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs are inclusive of OTOP promotion wisdom, OTOP network promotion, and logistics at a statistical significance level of 0.05. When considering independent variables with a prediction ability over the changes in marketing communication of OTOP entrepreneurs, it confirms that promotion of local wisdom has a negative correlation with marketing communication. This finding implies that OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces place greater attention on the development of wisdom-based products, which results in weak marketing communication. The above finding can be interpreted as the development of wisdom-based OTOP products helping the entrepreneurs reduce marketing communication, or the entrepreneurs do not have to invest in marketing communication because the identity of local wisdom in the three southern border provinces helps generate income for their business. This result is also consistent with (Komphanchai, 2015) claiming that the measures of consumer perception of goods and services of social enterprises lie within the following: 1) incorporation of identity, culture, social lifestyle, and local wisdom into benefit creation in application/services, 2) integration of local wisdom with modern sciences for benefit creation in application/services, and 3) products or services help restore and preserve culture, and local Thai wisdom. Such measures can affect the development of the marketing strategy of effective social enterprises. Therefore, OTOP products in the three southern border provinces should rely on social communication integrating into OTOP businesses through the presentation of the identity; be it local wisdom and culture. This statement is seen to comply with the study of Sothanasathien (2020) explaining social marketing theory depends on the assumption of which positive information and optimism lead to good social change in consideration of listening to the receivers and allowing them to learn bit by bit in order to create a new social concept in life because the three southern border provinces are the affected areas due to the insurgency. Therefore, if communication between the senders from OTOP entrepreneurs to people both within the area and outside the area is well-perceived in terms of the context of the three southern border provinces in parallel with the demonstration, or the transition of wisdom is linked to creating an understanding of traditions, cultures, and way of life of the people of the three southern border provinces, positive images can be realized among the people in different regions and countries.

Objective 4: Marketing Communication Platform of OTOP Entrepreneurs in the Three Southern Border Provinces

Based on this study, it reveals that the key informants focus on advertisement due to the high credibility of the advertising channels with great impact on sales. However, the entrepreneurs in the area are still found lacking the budget for advertisement through key media, such as television and radio broadcast. Therefore, the use of social media, such as Social Media Page and Line, should be promoted with an emphasis on content creation. This statement is in line with (Englund, Hedrick, Duffey & Kraak, 2020) showing that social media support affects the access of consumer groups, which considers as part of the marketing communication strategy. While Saengthong (2005) further agreed that the dissemination of information is integrated with media advertisement to allow the access of information and influence the changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of the target group.

When it comes to personal selling, the selling should be done by Muslims in dealing with OTOP products in the three southern border provinces or Muslim countries, because this position influences buyers, services, product information provision, and product stories. This finding is consistent with (Iamratanakul, 2014) claiming that the focus of the communication process begins with the sender, who must possess a concrete purpose and awareness in using codes or symbols that match the idea or content to be delivered in order to allow the receiver to interpret the message into the expected meaning. In addition, we need to know who the receivers are, where they are, what they want, and how they receive the message to allow us to choose the right media. Also, the salesperson acting as a sender is associated with the message component. This is in line with (Kaewthep, 2003; Prakoppol, 2001), claiming that a message is an idea, belief, or truth about anything the sender wants to convey to the receiver. Successful communication depends on the properties of the transmitted message whether how well the message can provide meanings. The sender is the message taker, who translates the message into code, which means whatever language is best understood by both the sender and the receiver. The code acts as the best substitute for the sender's message. The sender, therefore, becomes only significant when choosing words, language, sequencing, and formatting messages, which are clear and appropriate to the intended receiver. Thus, it results in the assurance of effective communication. Hence, the OTOP entrepreneurs in the three southern border provinces should pay attention to the senders or sale employees, especially those deals with food products, when their communication aims to tell stories or transfer knowledge and wisdom in relation to OTOP products.

In addition, the product's publicity of OTOP entrepreneurs should be done in parallel with event marketing by enhancing the identity of the three southern border provinces through business matching with foreign countries or different regions. This statement is claimed in consistence with the research done by Srihirun, Pitirote & Hannon (2018), designing fun cultural events in a beautiful Thai etiquette context. Their research further suggested that successful event marketing in Thailand should integrate the concept of Thainess and Thai hospitality as a basic principle in designing events. This integration is considered a promotion, awareness creation, and reflection on identity, uniqueness, and Thainess. However, Cesinger, Vallaster & Müller (2021) showed that setting standards for responsible business, thorough consideration of new partners, and the evaluation of every step of the operation taking the economic, social, and ecological value into account, require the right time and place because they help increase chances of success upon fulfilling the priorities, resulting in sustainable entrepreneurship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Recommendations

The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC) should formulate a strategy on trade links between Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia in order to build confidence among OTOP entrepreneurs, and marketing promotion in the form of products demonstration together with products exhibition. Furthermore, the SBPAC should emphasize personal selling depicted the local wisdom and identity of the southern border provinces of Thailand.

Practical recommendations

- 1) The Community Development Department under the Ministry of Interior should promote local wisdom through products demonstration and exhibition connecting both regional markets and abroad.

- 2) The Ministry of Commerce should organize training for sales staff along with marketing promotion to equip OTOP entrepreneurs with skills, techniques, methods in products presentation while adapting to the rapidly changing global condition.
- 3) The Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre (SBPAC), Provincial Community Development Office, and Provincial Commercial Office should promote public relations together with event marketing by enhancing the identity of the three southern border provinces through business matching with foreign countries or different regions.

Suggestions for Future Research

- 1) An account of factors impacting the marketing communication over the Thai wisdom should be taken into consideration.
- 2) A study on e-commerce affiliate communication of OTOP products in the three southern border provinces should be explored.

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