Internet Marketing: Contemporary Opportunity for Thai Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

This article aims at strengthening the understanding about internet marketing. The first part explains the meaning and the history of internet marketing including comparison between traditional marketing and internet marketing. This section also mentions to the advantages of internet marketing. The second part explains the seven success factors for doing internet marketing which are 1) having personal computer and accessing the internet 2) website easily to use and sufficient data 3) quality products and services 4) low cost and low price products 5) trust of money transaction 6) consumers having credit card thoroughly 7) efficient products delivery. The third part presents the format of consumer decision in buying products via the internet which can be useful for entrepreneurs to do internet marketing as well. The last part of this article presents the case study of Thai AirAsia which is one of the successful companies in doing internet marketing which can be the road map for new entrepreneurs to do internet marketing.

Today, internet marketing has been widely interested by specialists and businessmen as we can see from the popularity and many concerned researches (Canavan, Henchion & O'Reilly, 2007; Schibrowsky, Peltier & Nill, 2007; Yu, 2006; Eid, 2005; Lagrosen, 2005; Taylor & England, 2005; Direct Marketing Association, 2004; Zhang, 2004; Ngai, 2003; Eid, Trueman & Ahmed, 2002; Damanpour, 2001; Hofacker, 2001; Porter, 2001; Chaffey, Mayer, Johnston & Ellis-Chadwick, 2000; Duggan & Deveney, 2000; Kotab & Helsen, 2000; Hoffman, Novak & Peralta, 1999; Honeycutt, Flaherty & Benassi, 1998; Cronin, 1996a; Cronin, 1996b; Hoffman & Novak, 1996a; Hoffman & Novak, 1996b). Internet marketing becomes an important part of organization to increase the number of customer, the awareness of consumer in product, company and sale (Aldridge, Forcht & Pierson, 1997). The new challenge issues that change the market pattern are (Kotler, Ang, Leong & Tan, 2004);

- The changing of technology makes the straight communication to customer, the small difference on price in each area and the increasing of commerce by internet.

- Globalization makes the transportation to be convenient, fast, and throughout.
- High competition among the business in term of branding effect the increasing of advertising expenses and reducing the profit.
- Doing business by bypassing agent due to the success of dot com business such as Amazon, Yahoo, and eBay affect the traditional business must be change in order to keep communication with the customers all the time.

There is no wonder why specialists and marketers increase their attention to the internet marketing

Meaning and History of Internet Marketing

In 1960, Internet was invented and used to protect the mainframe computer of the United States in Cold War. In 1970, Scientists and specialists used the internet to share their information and researches. In 1990, due to the personal computer was invented, the information is most important for people as called Information Age (Hof & Verity, 1994). While the increasing of computer users with the decreasing of computer price, the increasing number of people using the internet to be distribution channel (Canavan, Henchion & O'Reilly, 2007). These turns cause the entrepreneurs use the internet as a market equipment.

The meaning of internet marketing is the process of using the internet technology to help company to attract the new customers and keep contact with current customers. The main target is to make the convenience for exchanging the ideas, products, and services between buyers and sellers (Imber & Betsy-Ann, 2000). The advance of computer technology gives an opportunity for entrepreneurs to do the cyber space or internet business.

In the past decade, internet advertising was not well-known but now the marketing executives realize that internet is the most interesting distribution channel because it is the most effective marketing communication of this century (Herbig & Hale, 1997). The survey about the number of websites showed that it was only one website in 1990. In 1995, it had about 23,500 websites and increasing more than 101 million websites in 2006 (Zakon, 2006). In the United States, the internet marketing income increased more than 50 billion dollars from 1995 to 2004 (61% is the income from business to business commerce). The expected growth of income for doing internet marketing is more than 20% per year (Direct Marketing Association, 2004). The

number of educated young people continues increasing because it is the effective channel to reach the vast amount of information (Lagrosen, 2005).

The special characteristic of the internet is that it can be both market and channel at the same time. These lead to increase the efficiency of traditional marketing in order to increase the value added for consumer also the company profit (Ngai, 2003). By rapidly growth in the past decade, it makes internet to be the important tool for international marketing (Samiee, 1998). Butler & Peppard (1998) mentioned that internet marketing will replace the traditional marketing in three patterns which are communication, transaction, and distribution which conform with the idea of Hart, Doherty & Ellis-Chadwick (2000).

When comparing between traditional marketing and internet marketing, the different aspects as time, factor affecting marketing function, communication, value added, competition, nature of market and economic were found. The differences between traditional marketing and internet marketing show in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Comparison of Traditional Marketing and Internet Marketing

Aspects	Traditional Marketing	Internet Marketing

Time	Short term return	Long term return
Factor affecting marketing function	Marketing mix	Relationship marketing (supported by activities of marketing mix)
Communication	From one seller to many buyers and one way communication	From many sellers to many buyers and two way communication
Value added	Information is a supporting factor to make value	Information is value
Competition	Effectiveness of operation	Strategic marketing positioning
Nature of market	Inefficient market	Efficient market
Economic	Supply side	Demand side

Source: Adapted from Eid & Trueman, 2002: 63.

The Advantage of Internet Marketing

Today, no wonder why the internet is so important to buyers, sellers, and agents (Schibrowsky, Peltier & Nill, 2007) especially on reducing or bypassing agents from marketing channel (Gallaugher, 2002). The researcher mentioned that internet is the new channel for market communication (Heinen, 1996) while some specialist predicted that it might be the end of traditional marketing (Holbrook & Hulbert, 2002).

Quelch & Klein (1996) said that using the internet as the tool for presenting and giving the information of the product is the important force that makes internet more popular. There are many objectives of doing internet marketing as follows:

- Increasing sale
- Promoting image
- Increasing the opportunity for introducing products

- Increasing the distribution channel

- Maintaining the current market share and increasing the new internet market share

- Accommodating transaction

- Creating business alliance

- Keeping and increasing profit

- Creating the new market positioning on the internet

- Reducing cost while increasing efficiency

- Increasing competitive advantage

The internet marketing gives an opportunity to all size company no matter small or large to do their businesses both domestic and international markets within their existing cost (Eid, 2005). At the same time, internet can threat the company to face both domestic and international competitors (Wymbs, 2000). Doing internet marketing in each country is different. For example, the comparisons study of internet marketing in United Kingdom, Australia, and Newzeland by Adam, Mulye, Deans & Palihawadana (2002) found that these countries communicated to their customers by using the internet but only a small amount of customer did the internet transaction.

Specialist mentioned that the achievement of business in the future can be measured by the internet marketing (Eid, Trueman & Ahmed, 2002; Gurau, Ranchhod & Hackney, 2001). People can reach the internet faster than other media. To reach 5 billion people, radio used 38 years, television used 13 years while internet used only 5 years (Ellsworth & Ellsworth, 1997). Home Shopping Network, the biggest television shopping company in United State, buys the internet shopping network because of the following advantages (Eid & Trueman, 2002);

- Internet marketing makes the business increase their customers by less cost.

- Distance and location do not affect the buying products or services. Customer can buy products or services from everywhere having internet.

- No limitation of time in transaction because customer can buy products and services all the time.

- Bypassing marketing agencies make the price of products and services come down.

- The more information business presents through the internet, the more competitive advantage the business gains.

- Communication with customers via email will make community on internet and will greatly benefit for exchanging information in the future.

- Understanding customers' requirement and fulfill their needs directly through internet.
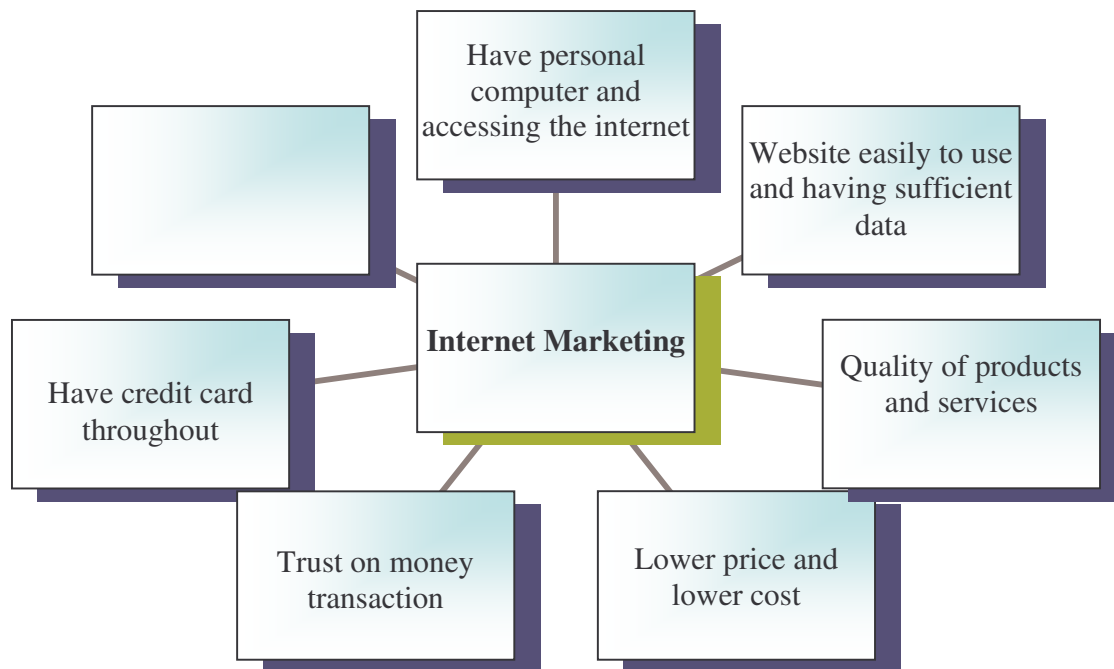- Increasing the number of customers with less cost.

Moreover, internet is an efficient tool for performing marketing research all over the world (Anderson & Kingsley, 1998).

Although internet makes marketers' dream come true but it can be a nightmare for the organizations that do not prepare for the challenging from the internet. Before starting adopting international online marketing, executive should fully aware of international branding, pricing, competitors increasing, the payment method and the differences in culture and law (Palumbo & Herbig, 1998). Moreover, for doing internet marketing, language is the most important for communication that marketers have to realize (Melewar & Smith, 2003).

The success factors for doing internet marketing

In doing internet marketing, there are seven factors for the success which displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1 The Success Factors for Doing Internet Marketing

Have personal computer and accessing the internet

Website easily to use and having sufficient data

Internet Marketing

Quality of products and services

Have credit card throughout

Lower price and lower cost

Trust on money transaction

1. Consumers have personal computer and access the internet
2. Website easily to use and having sufficient data for buying decision of consumer
3. Consumers trust in the mentioned quality of products and services
4. The product price should be lower than traditional channel due to lower cost
5. Consumers trust on money transaction via internet
6. Consumers have credit card throughout
7. The product deliver must be efficient.

In developed countries have all factors mentioned above so internet marketing in those countries progresses extremely (Haley, 2002). For example, the United States has the internet using rate 69.7% (Internet World Stats, 2007) and people have experience in buying products from catalogue for a long time makes them intimate in buying without facing between buyers and sellers. Moreover, payment system by credit card has developed well and majority of people in the United States own the credit card. Furthermore, delivery system and business competition make product delivery to be efficient (Yu, 2006).

However, the important thing that business owners should realize is to make website of their business easy to use (Siddiqui, O'Malley, McColl & Birtwistle, 2003; Kolesar & Galbraith, 2000; Berthon & Davies, 1999). It is the duty of business owner to design website appropriately,

facilitate for website watcher to use easily and consumers must usually reach the website. Business must give the essential information that meets the consumers' need to make the consumers decide to buy product or service while they are watching website. Because of the more difficult of using website, the less opportunity the consumers will buy products or services (Taylor & England, 2005). Conform with Huarng & Christopher (2003) that said that the important thing in website design is the consumers can search the information they need to make the decision to buy products or services completely.

Moreover, business owners should adjust their website always up-to-date. If they can listen to the idea from website watcher, it will benefit for business extremely to make internet marketing of their business can response customers' need. It conforms with Taylor & England (2005) reaffirmed that marketing is a dynamic activity because consumer behavior and relevance environment change all the time. So, developing website constantly to response consumer behavior and environment that change is necessary. If business has transaction system via website, it is necessary very much to guarantee the security of transaction, too.

However, the research found that more than 80% of website watcher came from search engine, so marketers that made a lot of website watcher and to be successful were marketing with search engine (Maximumdev, 2007). Because the important thing in doing marketing on website is consideration that not to do for someone watching website but the method to change them to the customer of business that will affect the performance of business eventually. You must not forget that the late you apply internet marketing strategy not only affect on the revenue of business but also give a marketing opportunity to your competitors (Yu, 2006).

Consumer Behavior and Internet Marketing

The present consumers have diversified need and search for the products or services that can respond their need (Brown, 1993). Therefore, to achieve the internet marketing, the business must understand the internet customer behavior. Park (2002) presented the model of consumer decision in buying product via the internet. There are five factors that effect the buying via internet which are type of product, choosing behavior, interesting product, internet buying experience, and the trust of website as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Model of Consumer Decision in Buying Product via the Internet

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┌─────────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Type of products        │          │ Choosing behavior       │
│ - Searched product      │          │ - Enjoyment             │
│ - Familiar product      │          │ - Accustomed            │
│ - Reliable product      │          │ - Comfortably           │
│ - Service               │          │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘          └─────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────┐      ╭──────────────╮      ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Interesting product │ ───> │   Buying     │ <─── │  Reliable website   │
└─────────────────────┘      │ Decision via │      └─────────────────────┘
                             │ the Internet │
                             ╰──────────────╯
                        ┌──────────────────────────┐
                        │ Experience in buying     │
                        │ product via the internet │
                        └──────────────────────────┘
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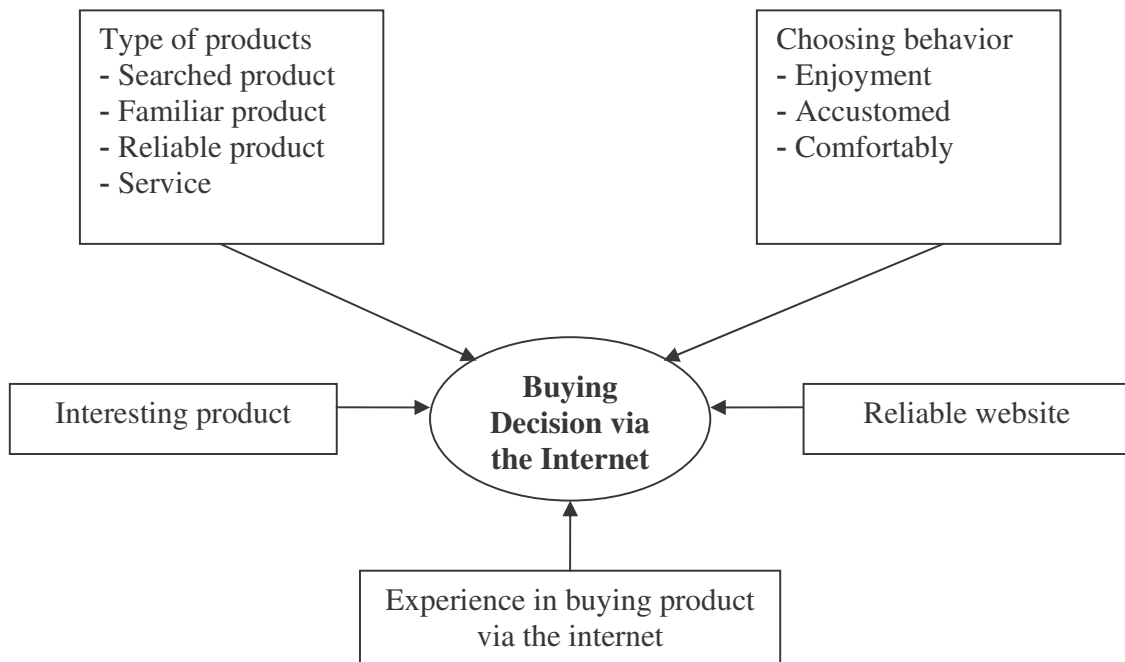
Source: Adapted from Park, 2002.

The study of Park (2002) also found that the increasing of the product was interested along with the experience of the customer in buying product via internet and the increasing of the opportunity in buying decisions.

The products that admire to sell on internet are Airline tickets, concert tickets, books, DVDs, and songs respectively (Canavan, Henchion & O'Reilly, 2007) which conform to the study of Wongwanshatree (2001) that studied consumer behavior via internet of Thai people and found that the products that Thai consumer also buying via the internet are book, song, and VDO. While Japan has wireless internet call I-mode in which the consumer can send E-mail, book the seat at restaurant, book the concert ticket, visit the entertainment website, follow news, and contact their friend. I-mode seem to be the fifth necessity of lives for Japanese people (Kotler, Ang, Leong & Tan, 2004).

However, it is not necessary for all countries to achieve by doing the internet marketing. For example, in China people do not like to have the money transaction via internet (Worthington, 2003). Because of culture, Chinese people will have the money transaction by face-to-face that make internet marketing in China not develop as expected (Haley, 2002).

In Thailand, The national electronics and computer technology center (NECTEC) (2006) pointed that even if the 13.9% increasing of internet user from 2003 to 2004, only 30.7% buying the product via internet. The consumers that buy the products via internet rely on trust of supplier website, the convenience of buying, the clear information of use, and safety of private information (Wongwanshatree, 2001).

Administrator must realize that it is difficult to penetrate market and customer behavior because it rapidly changes in internet world due to many factors concerning such as the increasing of internet users, website of other companies, the expense for advertising via internet, and the amount of companies having the website. To achieve on internet marketing, administrator must conduct the specific strategy to match the internet marketing.

The Case Study of Internet Marketing in Thailand

Thai AirAsia Airline is one of the successful companies in doing the internet marketing. The company is the first low cost airline in Thailand that sold the online ticket since 2002. This will lead to reduce cost of selling by employee or agency and be the core competency strategy for Thai AirAsia Airline. The success factors of Thai AirAsia are:

First factor is having the efficient website. Customer can view the website via 3 languages which are Thai, Chinese, and English. This makes Thai AirAsia website across the language limitation and can increase their customers. Moreover, it is easily to buy the ticket by preceding the step (as shown in Figure 3). By having the adequate information via the website, it can make the company successful in doing the internet marketing. Even if Thai AirAsia has the efficient website, they still continue improving their website all the time. For example, in the past, customers could not buy the tickets via the website 24 hours before the departure time but now they can buy the ticket 4 hours before the departure time.

Figure 3 Website of Thai AirAsia Airline

Second factor is the low price of ticket. As Thai AirAsia is the low cost airline, the customer will not much expect with their service but only the price. By doing the internet marketing can reduce their cost in hiring the employee, rental office, also the public utility expense.

Third factor is the confidence in transaction system. The customer can pay for the ticket via credit card even if the name on credit card is not the same as the passenger. The security will be conducted via Secure Code system for Master card and Verified by Visa System for Visa Card as shown in Figure 4. By the way, customer can choose the payment via E-gift voucher, too.

Figure 4 Payment Method and Security System of Thai AirAsia Website

Last factor is the efficiency of distribution channel. Since 2005, Thai AirAsia Airline has used the electronic ticket or e-ticket instead of paper ticket as shown in Figure 5. After finishing the buying, the customer will receive the code having to be presented along with their ID cards or passports when checking in at the airport.

Figure 5 Electronic Ticket or E-ticket of Thai AirAsia

It is not all airline companies will get success in doing internet marketing. For example, Thai Airways, which is not the low cost airline, pursue the internet marketing to be one of the

distribute channel and reinforce their image. They did not expect the internet marketing to be the main channel to increase their customers which can be seen from many factors as follows:

1. Website: The customers can view Thai Airways website in only Thai or English language. The booking can be made via the website before departure time at least 24 hours.

2. Diversify product: Thai Airways tickets have diversify with price and condition. Selling by employee or agency will be made the customer more understand than selling via website.

3. Payment transaction: The only way for payment when buying the ticket via website is by credit card. But the name on credit card must be the same as passengers' name. Moreover, passengers must show their credit cards when check in at the airport. Even if it will be more save for transaction, it make uncomfortable for them.

4. Changing flight: Customers can not change their flight via website. The only way for changing their flight is by agency or airline officers.

As mentioned, we can see that internet marketing can make the advantages in competition. However, business can not rely on only internet marketing when network is not sufficient or down, it will lead strongly damage to the company. Therefore, the company that will use the internet marketing to be the channel distribution must pay the attention on the information and consider the potential of the company intimately.

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