

Facebook as a Marketing Strategy for Online Sellers

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ABSTRACT

The rise of online selling proliferated during the second quarter of 2021. In a fast-changing industry, the utilization of social media, specifically Facebook, has become the mainstream of marketing and selling. This study aimed to conduct an in-depth analysis of the promotional strategies adopted by online sellers who do not have physical stores. Furthermore, this research study sought to determine the challenges faced by online sellers as they market tangible products (i.e., accessories, clothing, cosmetics, food, and supplement). A one-on-one interview was employed to gather data from the participants' lived experiences. The findings indicated that knowing the target market, use of graphics, Facebook boosting, and brand ambassadors were the most common strategies online sellers employ in marketing their products. For most of them, it contributed to increasing the sales of their products and has positively affected their livelihood. However, online sellers deal with challenges like difficult customers, technical issues, miscommunication, and limitations of stocks. The findings from this study provided an avenue for online sellers to enhance their marketing strategies which can increase their sales with fewer challenges encountered.

Keywords: Facebook, Social Media, Marketing Strategy, Online Selling

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Introduction

The advancement of technology has taken over how society looks at norms. People have to adapt from traditional methods to modern ones for a greater chance of achieving success. As a product of technological advancement, social media usage has become a requisite in everyone's lives. Lutkevich and Witmore (2021) describe social media as "websites and applications that are focused on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing, and collaboration". Social media has also been used for product promotion, building brand images, and enhancing consumer relationships. With social media, marketing can provide personal channels, consumer-driven networking, and social interaction.

These social media platforms have attracted 89 million online users in the Philippines, which comprises

80% of its total population (Statista Research Department, 2021). Furthermore, based on a poll conducted by Pulse Asia in October 2021, Facebook is the most popular social media platform among Filipino internet users. As a result, the general attitude and view of Filipinos toward digital media are positive. Filipino consumers are influenced by advertisements found online, based on the high level of agreement on their preference for purchase intention.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, people were locked down, minimizing face-to-face interactions. Filipino business owners were forced to close their businesses or move to a different type of platform, like social media (Jacinto et al., 2021). Facebook, being the top social media platform in the Philippines, can engage customers directly in a marketing activity. Because of the advanced features embedded in the application, it is no longer seen as a simple platform. When fully utilized,

using Facebook as a marketing tool can be easier and more convenient than having a physical store. It is also cheaper, effective, and can be used at any time. This strategy enables online sellers to promote their products to a much larger audience as online selling crosses geographical boundaries.

This study was anchored on the combination of two different theories. First is Marshall McLuhan's "Media Ecology theory" which focuses on the relationship between society and technology. This technology plays a major part in society and will remain central virtually in everyone's life. This theory also stated that the media determine the thoughts and actions of people and society in a "soft way". In a social media platform like Facebook, online sellers can use this to their advantage to influence the decision of their target market. The different promotional strategies they exhibit can persuade social media users to buy their products. Thus, the technology that transfers the message, such as social media, affects the way buyers think and act without them noticing it.

The second theory is Kenneth Burke's "Dramatism Theory" According to Burke, it is a way to analyze human relationships through interpretive studies. One of its key concepts is the "Dramatistic Pentad" which has five (5) elements; act (social media marketing), scene (Facebook), agent (online sellers), agency (promotional strategies), and purpose (to persuade). These elements can be used by online sellers to persuade an audience. If these are properly applied in their social media marketing, it can contribute to the increase of the sales of products, which will positively affect their socio-economic growth.

In a course analysis of a study conducted by Dr. Moloy Ghoshal, "Social Media as an Effective Tool to Promote Business (2019)", a gap was present between buyer's expectations and business owner's promises over social media advertising. Buyers disagree that social media is a good platform for solving their grievances. Also, the lack of personal touch is one of the major shortcomings of social media marketing, given that customers prefer to buy products they can touch and feel. This resulted in low product sales. Now that the world has shifted into the new normal, this study aims to thoroughly investigate the effectiveness of Facebook as a marketing strategy, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since a lockdown was implemented in the Philippines, online selling and online shopping might impose a different attitude and values on Filipino online sellers and consumers given that it has been a widely used method to purchase goods.

This study aims to assess the effectiveness of Facebook as a marketing strategy for different products.

Specifically, this study aims to address the following problems: (1) How do online sellers utilize Facebook as a marketing strategy for their products? (1.1) What are the promotional strategies online sellers use? (1.2) To what extent are the promotional strategies help market the products? (1.3) What payment scheme is adopted by online sellers, (2) what are the socio-economic impacts of using Facebook as a marketing strategy for online sellers? (3) What challenges are encountered by the sellers in using Facebook as a marketing strategy for online selling? and (4) What recommendations may be offered to address the identified problems?

Since there is limited literature or case study that analyzes the lived experiences of online sellers explicitly when using Facebook to market a certain product, this study would be crucial for current online sellers as well as for those who are planning to venture the social media marketing. Knowing effective Facebook marketing strategies can generate significant value for the business. In addition, it can create development within the plans and actions needed to be taken for the success of product marketing.

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative research method that describes the characteristics of variables under the study and attempts to collect data from the selected participants. Moreover, the researchers used a descriptive phenomenological method which focuses on how phenomena are experienced as subjects' consciousness arise. It uncovers relationships, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors into an essential framework that describes "things as they are" (Vagle, 2018). This method was applied to gather the lived experiences of online sellers about the effectiveness of Facebook as a marketing strategy and its impact on them.

The researchers used a purposive sampling technique in selecting participants. According to Kassiani (2022), purposive sampling is a technique that involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that has the characteristic needed in the phenomenon of interest.

There was a total of five (5) participants. Each one of them must meet all of the criteria listed by the researchers: (1) must be an independent online seller within Makati City, (2) must be selling any of the following products: accessories, clothing, cosmetics, food, and supplements, lastly (3) must have an active Facebook page for their products.

In selecting the participants, there was no specific number of years required regarding how long online sellers have been using Facebook marketing strategies. Moreover, the products were specified as

accessories, clothing, cosmetics, food, and supplements as these are the most common types of products sold online. This study does not only focus on one category to further evaluate the effectiveness of a certain promotional strategy as it may be effective for a certain type of product but might be ineffective for others.

A semi-structured interview was used as the primary tool to gather data from the participants. It is a data collection method that relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework (George, 2022).

A consent letter was sent to the selected participants. After all of them were fully identified, a link to a video-conferencing tool (Zoom) was sent. They were asked to enter one after another. The researchers clarified the protocols and the flow of the session. To attain accurate responses, it was explained to the participants that the session has to be recorded. Six (6) questions were posted through a PowerPoint presentation to obtain oral responses from them. The interview questions were based on how they use Facebook as a marketing strategy, and it was also used to dig deeper into their personal experiences as online sellers. After the interview, the data gathered were analyzed and interpreted.

The researchers used the thematic analysis method, wherein data collection from chosen relevant participants will be identified and analyzed. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading through a data set and identifying patterns in meaning across the data to derive themes (Delve & Limpaecher, 2020). The data that will be gathered should identify common themes or patterns of meaning. The result should also highlight the most important meanings present within the data set.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion include information from the interviews. Furthermore, it contains additional literature and/or studies to strengthen the claims. The findings are presented under the following major headings: Marketing Strategies Utilized by Online Sellers Using Facebook, Socioeconomic Impacts of Using Facebook as a Marketing Strategy, and Challenges Encountered by Online Sellers.

Marketing Strategies Utilized by Online Sellers Using Facebook Promotional Strategies

Know the Target Market. For one of the participants (clothing), it is important to know first the market and location before anything else. This can be done by having a background check of the target market and knowing their needs. A participant said, "My target

markets are millennials and Gen Z. I try to understand and do research about them because once I know who my target market is, I can play around with the strategies in promoting here on Facebook." Aside from knowing the target market, the participant also emphasized knowing their location.

My goal is to reach a wider range of audience as wide as possible. To do that, you must be realistic when reaching out to your target market. You should know where they came from because the way you communicate with them will vary.

It is crucial because the participant uses a certain language or way of messaging when talking to customers. The way to approach clients from Metro Manila differs from those in the provinces. This is also applicable to the different generations that use Facebook. Since Facebook users are mostly comprised of Gen Zs, online sellers have to adapt to the way this generation communicates. Nowadays, different slang words such as "ghosting", "flex", "lowkey", etc. are widely used on the internet. If Gen Z is the target market of online sellers, they should familiarize themselves with these terms and use this to their advantage to market their products. For instance, they could use either one of these terms in the caption of their Facebook post. Gen Z will automatically engage with it as they have understood what was meant in the post.

The foundation of a business is the understanding and awareness of the target market. A product positioning, pricing, and marketing strategy could quickly fall apart without it. The marketing strategy will lack direction if an online seller does not know his target. Determining a target market consumes a lot of time, but it is essential as it allows online sellers to focus on marketing efforts in the most cost-effective way that would bring impact to the buyers. To define a target market, online sellers have to gather statistics and other marketing research data that will help them better understand their potential customers (Egan, 2021). With these data, the market can now be segmented into groups of buyers with similar preferences and buying habits. Segmentation can be classified into genders, civil status, socio-economic status, and others. Eventually, online sellers can discover how they can meet the buyers' needs.

Facebook also supports targeted marketing by helping online sellers reach the people who are most likely to be interested in their products. With Facebook's advanced targeting options, the target audience can easily be defined. Core audiences are those targeted based on demographics, behaviors, and location.

Custom audiences allow online sellers to reconnect with people who have already interacted with their business. Lastly, lookalike audiences allow targeting people similar to people who have purchased the product but may not know about the business yet.

Use of Graphics. All participants post photos and videos to promote their products on Facebook. They post creative content to entice potential buyers. One participant who sells clothes posts 70% photos and 30% videos on the seller's Facebook page. The participant explained,

Originally, I wanted to post more videos because of their engaging content. However, making such is very time-consuming. So, I just post pictures on the Facebook page on normal days, while videos are posted when there are special events such as the launching of new items.

Most of the participants post at least twice during weekdays and once over the weekend. This strategy has proven to establish a presence on the feed of the Facebook page's followers. Consistency and quality are the keys to success in social media marketing to determine when is the best time to post, online sellers must monitor their Facebook Insights. It is a section on a Facebook business page that allows online sellers to keep track of analytics. Information about the page's views, likes, followers, post engagements, etc. can be seen in this section. Online sellers can make use of this data by analyzing it extensively and aligning their marketing strategy to it.

In terms of graphic designing, four participants (accessories, clothing, cosmetics, and food) edit their photos and videos to be posted on the Facebook page. Online graphic design tools such as Canva and Adobe Photoshop are popular and helpful for online sellers. They do not hire professional graphic artists anymore as it will be costly. Selecting the best image for Facebook graphics is important. Online sellers avoid graphics that have too much text as it will only overwhelm Facebook users and might just skip the post.

On the other hand, the online seller of supplements posts photos and videos that directly came from the company. Since the product to be sold is a supplement, the participant has to be careful of what she posts because she cannot overclaim something about your product on Facebook. One participant claimed:

It is really helpful to post feedback and testimonies. However, you have to be careful

because Facebook has a lot of restrictions and your account might get restricted as well. So, to avoid this, I only post contents that are provided by the company.

The participant posts videos of doctors' statements about the supplement so that more people will believe that the products and seller are legitimate. This is a great way to build trust between the seller and buyers. Posting graphics that include proof of online sellers' successful transactions with their previous buyers helps prove the legitimacy of their business, thus helping them to increase sales and attract other online users.

Graphics is a huge factor in attracting and gaining potential buyers. It greatly influences the decision of customers before buying online. According to Bergman and Noren (2017), infographics are substantial for social media because they combine engaging visuals with helpful information. It is one of the helpful tools in promoting and selling their products to their customers online. Alongside it is the information that customers need to know and understand better the kind of product they will buy or order online. In addition to that, graphics enable online sellers to create social media posts that are both informative and engaging. At the same time, it helps online sellers to visualize the products they want to sell and the customers to know what the product is all about and avoid scams.

Facebook Boosting. Only two of the participants (accessories and food) use paid advertising to promote their products on Facebook. Boosting allows the content of online sellers' Facebook pages to reach a wider range of their target audience, especially those who haven't "liked" or "followed" their pages yet. This creates more interaction with potential buyers as they will be engaged with each other frequently. They will appear in comment sections or in messenger to inquire about the product. Boosting also helps online sellers get more messages, video views, and even calls. Through Facebook Boost Post, the expansion of the audience is possible in just a few minutes.

According to the seller of food, one thousand pesos (Php 1,000.00) is already good for a week of boosting, but as for the seller of accessories, she usually spends a minimum of two thousand pesos (Php 2,000.00) a day. They usually use Facebook boosting at least once or thrice a week. The more you spend on boosting, the more people your post will reach. Facebook has a recommendation on how much advertising budget to spend, but online sellers could customize it depending on their needs. It is advisable for

sellers that are new to Facebook boosting to spend no more than one thousand pesos (Php 1,000.00) a day and observe its effect on their businesses. They could adjust their budget and duration later on.

The efficiency of boosting depends on the seller. One participant (food) mentioned that it is more convenient for them if they do it during holidays when promos are also in demand. The participant explained, "Facebook boosting is effective when there are holidays and promos. For example, I will have free deliveries within Makati City then I will boost that post. I do gain a lot of customers when I use that strategy."

Whether it is holidays or the business' anniversary, online sellers could use these special events to their advantage by having a promo and discount on their products during those specific days. They could announce it using their Facebook pages by posting photos and/or videos. To further gain potential buyers, online sellers could use Facebook boosting on the same day so that the post will reach a wider range of audience. In Facebook boosting, sellers have also access to analytics in which they can monitor how well the past post performed. (Newberry, 2022). The result of the boosted post can be seen in the Ad Center section of the Facebook Page where data like post engagements can be seen. This will help in understanding what best works for Facebook marketing goals, so sellers can easily adjust their marketing strategy.

Brand Ambassadors. Participants who sell clothing and cosmetics promote their products with the help of their brand ambassadors. Participants use photos and videos of their ambassadors wherein their brands are being represented.

"I post videos of my five (5) brand ambassadors where they are promoting all of my products. They swatch all types of cosmetics and skincare on their eyes, lips, and cheeks," one of the participants (cosmetics) said.

Brand ambassadors are usually individuals who are paid to endorse or promote particular products or services (Choursia, 2018). Most of the time, brand ambassadors are those personalities that have well-known faces to the public such as vloggers and influencers. They can also be average consumers that sometimes work for free. Small businesses start first by having brand ambassadors who are close to them such as relatives and friends because it is less expensive. A participant (cosmetics) mentioned that her brand ambassadors only receive free products from her shop in return for endorsing her brand.

For me, having Brand Ambassadors is an investment. They help me promote my products

and increase my brand image. In return, I gave them free products I sell, and they are also being exposed on my social media accounts.

Selecting brand ambassadors takes time and effort because sellers have to pick someone that is best suited for their brands. For the seller of cosmetics, most of her brand ambassadors are women because her products are make-up and skincare. These brand ambassadors are people who are active on different social media platforms and not just on Facebook. For the seller of clothing, his brand ambassadors are both men and women who are part of Gen Z. All of these brand ambassadors must understand the value and goals of the brand they are endorsing. Ideally, they should have large social media followers and can engage effectively. They should also be able to create high-quality content and should be well-versed in social media marketing.

Brand Ambassadors serve as faces or representatives of the brand that the audience can rely on when purchasing a product. They play an important role because they are building and creating an image in the minds of consumers. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) averred that influencers-endorsers have a greater impact on young consumers' brand views and purchasing decisions. Ambassadors share user-oriented product reviews, recommendations, and personal experiences on their social media channels, such as beauty influencers demonstrating make-up articles in their vlogs, which increases their credibility and trustworthiness among customers/viewers.

The way online sellers utilize Facebook as a marketing strategy for their products reflects the five (5) key elements of Burke's Dramatistic Pentad. The promotional strategies used by the online sellers were coherent to market the products. It enabled them to persuade the customers by knowing the target market and the goal to reach a wider range for the best way of communication. The promotional strategies also intervened through the use of graphics, Facebook boost, and brand ambassadors, which highly contributed to increased product sales.

The Extent to Which Promotional Strategies Help Market the Products

Attract Customers. Participants who sell accessories, clothing, cosmetics, food, and supplements stated that the promotional strategies they utilized on Facebook helped them attract customers to buy their products. With the use of Facebook as a marketing tool, it has become more convenient for online sellers to market their products and publicize them to their target audiences.

A participant (clothing) said that because of the promotional strategies he utilized, his efforts were not put in vain because he knew that he is tapping the right customers for his products. By using a specific target market technique, the participant has more detailed information about his customers. From there, he can design a new marketing strategy or improve the existing one. Since Gen Z is the target market of the online seller, he started creating content that is relevant and enticing for this generation. The design of his products which were posted on his Facebook page helped in attracting new customers because these are trendy. It became evident that this strategy is useful because the users who engage in his business are mostly Gen Z.

Furthermore, the participant explained that these promotional strategies also helped convince customers to visit other pages and platforms for their business, like Shopee shop accounts.

Since I do not have a website yet, I just monitor how many customers visit my Shopee shop who originally came from Facebook. Then, later on, I can also monitor how many of them will check out my products.

Because users became attracted to the posts they saw on the seller's Facebook page, it led them to check the shop of the seller from another platform, look for more products, and eventually purchase from it.

According to one of the participants (food), using different promotional strategies provided him the capability to expand the target audience throughout the platform. He has observed that he has more customers when there is a promo on his products and there are more engagements on his boosted posts rather than on normal ones.

When a business has an effective marketing strategy, it can attract more customers (Ray, 2019). Because of this, online sellers can communicate well with them and understand their demands and desires. Promotional strategies further appeal to the target market and convince them to purchase the product especially if it is on sale. Facebook pages that post eye-catching visual content also help attract customers.

Increase Sales. As stated by the participants who sell clothing and food using Facebook marketing strategies has helped increase the sales of their products. One of the participants (clothing) stated,

I noticed an increase in sales after launching for three months. I've seen many people engaging with my brand, and my target market seems interested. Once you see a spike in your sales, you will automatically follow it with your new collections. It's a cycle.

After three months, the participant noticed that his sales are still continuously increasing. He was able to maintain it because did not stop trying various marketing strategies until he found out what best works for him. He also introduces new products which provide a broader range of selection for customers. From clothes, he also started selling tote bags, hats, face masks, and more. The participant also mentioned that whenever he posts on his Facebook page, he includes the Shopee account link of his shop in the caption. By using this strategy, he easily converts his Facebook audience to directly check his online store and eventually buy from it, thus increasing sales because his products are being exposed on different platforms.

Another participant (cosmetics) stated, "It isn't giving that much help, especially if you are new on Facebook and a new online seller. Marketing outside Facebook can still be more helpful to gain customers, usually through referrals from friends and family."

Referrals are proven to generate high-quality sales leads for a business (Shannon, 2021). Asking people, especially existing customers, to introduce and say good words about your products can increase sales. A well-built referral marketing strategy can increase brand awareness while boosting sales at the same time. This can be done by having refer-a-friend programs or trying various customer referral campaigns.

Marketing and sales are inextricably linked. The amount of time and effort sellers put into their marketing plan determines the success of their business. It is essential to have a marketing strategy that reaches and engages with the target market.

The extent to which promotional strategies helped market the products relates to the Media Ecology Theory of McLuhan as it shows how online sellers promote their products more than the information itself, attracting customers and increasing sales. Through the use of Facebook, online sellers can influence the decision of their target market to their advantage. Thus, the social media platform unintentionally affects how buyers think and act.

Payment Scheme Adopted by Online Sellers

Cash on Delivery (COD). Participants who sell clothing, food, and supplement consider this kind of payment method because they believe that most of their customers use this type of payment to ensure that their items are delivered to them. It is mainly considered to be a standard mode of payment when it comes to online business. Up until now, COD is still mostly prepared by customers as they have more assurance of having the item right before they pay for the purchased goods. A

participant who sells clothing said, "I adopted cash on delivery because most of the buyers who have the same age as mine (young adult) prefer this one." The participant further explained, "I embrace accepting cash on delivery because most of my customers are my close friends. So, there are times that I deliver personally the items to them and they will just hand me the cash."

Cash on delivery is a payment method in which customers do not pay immediately for the product they have bought online until they have received it. This can be done when the customer communicates with the online seller through the Facebook page and confirms the product he wants to purchase. Once confirmed, the seller will now process the shipment of the product and give updates to the customer. Contrary to the name of the payment method, cash is not the only way a customer can pay when the product has been delivered. Oftentimes, delivery riders also accept mobile payments.

According to Halaweh (2018), using cash on delivery can help the sellers track down the references and the customers' particular needs and types in buying online. It also prevents sellers and customers from getting scammed and knows the updates about the product ordered online. Since customers will only pay once they have received the product, it is less time-consuming instead of going to banks or going online to pay for the product. However, cash on delivery can still be risky for online sellers because they cannot guarantee that they will get paid for the products they have sent. To avoid this, the seller must confirm first the identity of his customer. Since the transaction is done through a Facebook page, the seller could ask his customer to send a valid ID for verification purposes. The seller could also check the Facebook profile of the customer and other social media accounts linked to it to confirm the legitimacy of the customer.

Electronic Wallet (E-wallet). Participants who sell clothing, cosmetics, food, and supplements also consider using e-wallets (i.e., GCash and PayMaya) as payment methods for fast transactions. It is convenient for customers who do not have on-hand cash. It has also become one of the mainstream when it comes to the mode of payment for online shopping.

I am talking to Gen Z and millennials so I have to adapt to their mode of payment, especially during the pandemic. Imagine, during the new normal, everyone is still adjusting, so, I chose to have a mode of payment that everyone is comfortable with. One of them is GCash which has been widely used.

An electronic wallet is a financial transaction application that runs on mobile devices. It securely stores payment information and passwords. These applications allow customers to pay when they are shopping online so that they do not have to carry cash anymore (Kagan, 2018). Customers have options of whether to link it with their credit/debit card or not.

Digital wallets provide a safe, secure avenue to make purchases or payments electronically. Its usage is also convenient for customers as they can easily pay online. Carrying a physical wallet full of cash and credit cards to make purchases can be eliminated. Digital wallets are growing in popularity all over the world. Because e-wallets are easy to use, there is increasing popularity of using them all over the world.

Despite the convenience brought by this mode of payment, security might still become an issue if an online user does not fully understand how e-wallets work. If the phone isn't password-protected, the user risks giving someone else access to their finances if they lose their phone. The recent increase in cyberattacks around the world has only fueled the perception that e-wallet is not a safe way for storing users' money.

Another risk that is associated with using e-wallets is a personal liability in the event of fraud. Fraudsters take advantage of e-wallets as they can serve as a gateway to other malicious activities such as money laundering and identity theft. There is also the existence of fake e-wallets that contains malware. It is designed to carry out a wide range of malicious activities, such as stealing login information or conducting spam attacks.

To have a secure digital transaction, both online sellers and customers should monitor online transaction notifications, avoid sharing passwords and other personal information and verify the payment recipient and other details first.

Bank Transfer. Some participants who sell accessories, food, cosmetics, and supplements use bank transfer as a payment method for big transactions, especially when the customer orders a pack of items to be delivered. Though a small amount of money can still be processed through bank transfer, customers just sometimes opt to use cash on delivery for small transactions. A participant who sells cosmetics said,

I generally use online banking because sometimes, there are purchases that exceed Php 50,000. Clients request bank details and other bank records of the seller to ensure its legitimacy.

One of the participants who sell accessories only uses bank transfer as a mode of payment because the prices of items are high. Since not everyone has a bank account, some potential customers back out.

This somehow became a hindrance in connecting with customers because some do not have a bank account. They are requesting a COD, which I do not allow because a large sum of money is involved in selling accessories.

Unlike with cash on delivery where there is a risk of customers not paying for what they have ordered, online sellers do not have to worry about security when using a bank transfer because the money should first be transferred to their bank accounts before they process the shipment of the product.

A bank transfer is a payment method that allows online sellers and buyers to directly transfer money to a bank account (Findling, 2022). Banking money can have ease and customer satisfaction when it comes to security and service because the information given by the customers to the online sellers is not exposed to the public. Money is also secured mainly if the customers pay large amounts for the product. In addition, there is also a receipt showing the amount of money you paid for the transaction, which is the same thing as when withdrawing money from the bank.

Socio-economic Impacts of Using Facebook as a Marketing Strategy

Improved Livelihood. A participant who sells supplements said that sales and income increased because of online selling. Consequently, the participant sells more items that are now being sold online. Aside from that, the participant can now buy basic household necessities because of the added income from online selling. A participant who sells cosmetics has a similar experience. This online seller can now provide payment for electricity and water bills and buy groceries for the family. A participant who sells accessories also said the same thing.

Online selling covers my monthly bills. I have also gained some friends. That's why my network expanded.

Income is one of the key aspects in having an increase in the sustainable livelihood of an individual for it is directly related to and reflected in the level of community livelihood. According to Beheshti and Salehi-Sangari (2020), online business has become the new

system that provides consumers and customers the information about products through internet-based services. Because of this, sellers can save income and money to produce banners and flyers to attract customers due to the use of the Internet and social media to sell and promote their products online. In addition to that, there is also an increase in the establishment of connections in terms of outsourcing and maintaining old and new relationships between consumers and sellers.

Financial Security. Participants who sell clothing and food feel financially secure as they continue with online selling. One participant who sells clothes mentioned that because of online business, worrying about money is no longer an issue because of the savings that can be used in the future. Another participant who sells food feels that the family is financially secure. As a result, this seller can spend on luxurious things and sufficient money for the family's travels.

We rarely have family bonding before because we find it expensive. But when I started online selling, slowly, we could afford to dine out and have some small get-togethers. I can also afford to buy other things that I want because of it.

Financial security means different things to different people. Simply, it refers to having enough financial assets to cover expenses, emergencies, and retirement without worrying about running out (Appleby, 2021). One good way to measure financial security is through the "4% rule". Being able to withdraw 4% from investment accounts every year safely and never run out of money, it's probably safe to say that someone is financially secure. Online sellers can be financially secure after a couple of months of opening an online business while it might take years for some.

To be financially secure, online sellers must first determine the right business for them. For the participant (food), running a food business is something that his family has been doing and it picked his interest. Another way to select what business to pursue is by considering factors such as skills and passion. Online sellers should also determine the budget they are willing to spend for the first time. In the Philippines, the starting capital could be around four thousand pesos (Php 4,000.00) more or less, depending on the type of business. To manage online business finances, online sellers could try adding extra capital as it contributes to the growth of the business. Online sellers must also establish internal financial protocols, even if it's as simple

as dedicating set time to review and update financial information.

Starts to Gain Profit. All of the participants earned profit sometime after they did online selling. One participant who sells accessories even said that there is now a plan to expand business outside Makati City to gain more customers. While another participant who sells supplements is planning to sell other items to grow the business, as well. This seller added,

I have also gained profits because of it. Instead of spending those profits on luxury, I added it to the capital so I can sell more products. Aside from supplements, I was able to sell other items such as alcohol and other necessities during the pandemic.

Small business owners need to change their practices to focus more on profit (York, 2019). Once online sellers start to gain profit, they have to closely track their profitability. Profits can be used as part of savings to guarantee that there will be an adequate fund for the business once there is an emergency expense or an unexpected revenue slowdown. Profits can also be used for business growth and expansion, as was done by the participants.

The socio-economic impact online sellers experience with marketing strategies can be visualized and related to the five elements of Burke's Dramatistic Pentad. Online sellers as agents maximized the use of Facebook (scene) and promotional strategies (agency) to persuade potential buyers of their products. It has contributed to their socioeconomic growth. Likewise, Marshall McLuhan's Media Ecology Theory is related to how Facebook served as the technology that transfers messages to its audience. The online sellers used this to their advantage to influence their target market's decision resulting in more profit and improving their livelihood as well. Thus, Facebook marketing affected how buyers think and act without them noticing it.

Challenges Encountered by the Sellers in Using Facebook as a Marketing Strategy for Online Selling

Technical Issues. According to two participants who sell cosmetics and food, they are struggling with technical issues in using Facebook to promote their business and products. They have experienced troubleshooting when taking customers' orders and having late responses or notifications when using the said application. The participant (food) said, "There was this time when I was about to deliver the customer's

order. However, there was a connectivity issue with Facebook, so I struggled to connect with my customer."

As a result, the customer thought he was being ignored or not noticed by the online seller. It is inevitable for some Facebook users to encounter problems while accessing the app and its features and services. Some could not load their Facebook feeds, and others could not send messages on Facebook Messenger. The network's speed can also affect business in many aspects. A slow internet connection can cause slow productivity and make it difficult to assist a customer with a specific problem quickly. Problems with internet connectivity might lead to an unsatisfying transaction and the potential loss of a customer (Jones, 2018).

Since online sellers do not have control over slow internet connectivity and other technical issues, it is best to inform their customers about the issue they are encountering by trying different methods. For instance, the seller could use other devices in communicating with the customers. They could also switch to mobile data just in case there is a problem with Wi-Fi connections. Informing them about the problem can lessen the misunderstanding between the seller and the customer. When it comes to an unresponsive webpage or application, online sellers can basic troubleshooting techniques such as refreshing it, logging out and back in, clearing cache and cookies, and restarting devices. These are just some of the ways online sellers could do to take action on some technical issues that they may encounter using Facebook.

Miscommunication. Having a misunderstanding is also a problem when it comes to promoting and selling business online. According to the two participants, clothing and food business owners, misunderstandings sometimes happen when taking customers' orders, leading them to deliver the wrong products to their addresses. "It is hard to keep in touch with the customers because we are not meeting face to face. All of the transaction is done online, which is why it is challenging," said the participant (clothing). Additionally, the online sellers have stated they are having difficulties promoting and selling their products online using Facebook.

Miscommunication in social media can happen because of various reasons. Online sellers steer clear of miscommunication with their customers to avoid any unpleasant feedback or reviews of their business. To overcome miscommunication virtually, online sellers must know first their customers (Dudlets, 2022). It is important to know whom they are talking to before sending them messages. Factors like age and background affect how they react to messages. The message to be sent must be proofread first before sending it. Taking time to re-read messages prevent

typographical errors that would affect how the customer will receive the message. Sending wrong and inappropriate messages to a customer can cause misunderstanding. Moreover, since the business is done online, it is hard to express feelings. Emoji is a great way to express emotions as long as the sellers do not go overboard because it might affect professionalism.

Limitations of Stocks. Selling products online is not easy, especially when running out of stock. Two out of five participants (food and supplements) have stated that they encountered getting out of stock to having no products when the customers are inquiring or ordering from their online shop.

"There are times that the company where I get products is also running out of stock. So, it's a problem. My customers would just pre-order every time that happens," the participant (supplement) said.

According to Reyes (2019), online sellers in the Philippines have potential growth. However, lacking resources and a workforce can hinder this achievement. The drive for online sellers and small business owners to multitask also contributes to this. To avoid the occurrence of limited stocks, online sellers have to know how to manage their inventory. By prioritizing it, they will know which items need to be ordered/bought more frequently. The inventory should also be audited. Make it a point to physically count the inventory regularly. For online sellers who have suppliers, the supplier's performance should be analyzed. Unreliable suppliers can cause problems in the inventory. If the current supplier is habitually delaying the deliveries or frequently shorts an order, it is better to take action and look for new suppliers.

Difficult Customers and/ or Scammers. Participants who sell accessories experienced dealing with a scammer wherein a fake receipt was sent to show that the payment was already deposited to the bank account. Upon confirmation, it was revealed that no money had been transferred to the seller's bank account yet. The same participant also experienced dealing with difficult customers.

It will take much patience to deal with customers like that. You shouldn't get mad at them because they might not consider buying your product in the end. As much as possible, I always try to stay calm.

The participant who sells food had the same experience, "Some customers kept asking for free delivery and discounts even though we were not providing it during that time. It was hard to explain things to them because they might misunderstand."

Based on the Federal Trade Commission data in 2022, scam is the most profitable fraud on social media. Online shopping fraud, along with other forms of scams, accounted for over 70% of reported losses to social media scams in 2021. Online sellers as well as customers are prone to scammers. When it comes to online transactions, users must not immediately give their personal or financial information in response to a request that they are not expecting. Research or a quick background check must be done first to determine whether the customer is legitimate.

The challenges encountered by the sellers in using Facebook as a marketing strategy for online selling are related to Marshall McLuhan's "Media Ecology Theory" which states the relationship between society and technology. This technology (Facebook) serves a major part of every online seller to market their products. That is the reason why there are some challenges that online sellers face in using Facebook. Some technical issues are uncontrollable and can affect the operation of a business.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study, the following conclusions can be drawn: using Facebook as a marketing strategy is efficient and effective. The most common is the use of graphics wherein all participants utilized. Participants prefer to edit their graphic design using online editing tools because this is less expensive than hiring a professional graphic artist. This study found that customers tend to buy products that have visually appealing posters on the Facebook page. Facebook boosting and brand ambassadors also helped market their products because these strategies can easily reach their target audience. By spending a certain amount on Facebook boosting, online sellers can easily communicate with potential buyers especially those who haven't liked/followed their Facebook pages yet. On the other hand, brand ambassadors are helpful because they have a wide range of followers. By using appropriate techniques, they can influence the purchasing decisions of potential buyers.

Because of these promotional strategies, it is easier for online sellers to attract customers. Since the strategies are designed to fit the needs of the targeted audience, they create more engagements on the Facebook pages. Online sellers receive inquiries about the products they sell through messages and comments.

These have also contributed to an increase in sales. Effective marketing strategies are those that are targeted toward a specific audience and are focused on key benefits based on the audience's point of view and interests (Chron, 2021).

Online sellers' payment schemes also contribute to marketing their products. An online seller who uses different payment methods tends to have more buyers because of their flexibility. Some customers tend not to buy once they find out that their preferred payment method is unavailable. In selecting the best mode of payment for the business, online sellers must consider factors like accessibility, security, and ease of use.

Online selling led to positive socio-economic impacts on the lives of the sellers. All of them started to increase profits which helped them to expand their business. Livelihood improvement is also visible because the sellers can now afford what they fail to afford before engaging with online selling. The feeling of being financially secure is vital in this aspect, as well. However, since sellers market their products on Facebook, it is inevitable to deal with challenges. Technical issues, miscommunication, limitation of stocks, and difficult customers and/or scammers were the problems mentioned by the participants. As online sellers, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by each of these. While it may seem impossible at times, the right planning can help them overcome almost anything. When these arise, online sellers should be knowledgeable, flexible, and resourceful to solve these. Preparing ahead of time and having backup plans are necessary as it prevents further problems.

Based on the findings and conclusions presented above, the following recommendations are offered:

For Online Sellers. Facebook has been an integral part of the marketing strategy of every online seller. It helps them promote their products, but at the same time, causes them problems throughout the business operation. Based on the study, researchers have found out that knowing the target market, uses of graphics, Facebook boosting, and brand ambassadors have helped online sellers promote their products. The researchers would like to recommend these strategies to help other online sellers who market their products on Facebook.

In identifying the target market, they can use Facebook's Audience Insights tool which will help them delve deeper into their potential customers to find information such as gender, education, relationship status, location, language, Facebook usage, and even past purchases. Visual posts that will be posted on the Facebook page should be professionally designed.

Online sellers are also advised to post high-quality video content because it receives higher engagement than images. They can also spend money on Facebook advertisements because according to eMarketers, Facebook is the most effective social media advertising platform for return on ad spending.

In terms of the common challenges happening on Facebook, online sellers should practice how to communicate and handle their buyers properly. Miscommunication is hard to avoid, especially in the online environment, but learning the basics of good communication skills will greatly help. Sellers should empathize with their customers by actively listening to them and providing polite responses. No matter how irritating the situation is, sellers should always use positive language and make the conversation clear and concise. Dealing with difficult customers is also unavoidable. Therefore, they should always be careful and alert.

For Online Buyers. With the current situation, many people depend on online transactions, whether it is for buying food, clothes, or other necessities. In this study, the researchers recommend that buyers increase their awareness and be careful about online transactions because scammers are everywhere. Always practice safe online shopping. This can be done by carefully disclosing information, intently observing, and having a background check on the online seller to know if they are legitimate or not.

Digital Marketing Specialists. Even though Digital Marketing Specialists are known for being experts in the field, this would still help them widen their idea by staying relevant in a digital-centric world. They can use this study to look for other solutions based on the different point-of-view given by the participants. They could develop enhanced marketing strategies that would cost less but could greatly help online sellers. To assure the success of a business, they can strategize with other marketing professionals to create an effective marketing campaign.

Facebook Meta. Facebook has been improving since the day it was launched up until now. Because of this, the company is giving different opportunities for its users to stay connected and learn how they can earn money using the platform. In connection with this, the Facebook team can use this study to know the different problems online sellers encounter while doing business on their platform. This will give them an idea on what are the things that they still have to fix and improve on to help their users.

Social Media Specialist. The main job of a Social Media Specialist is to manage social media by conducting thorough research and publishing content using their skills to build a brand image, boost their client's sales, and grow their client's audience. These ideas and perspectives will help them attract more clients and use this study to know the different problems these online sellers encounter. This could help them support their client to get the right customers and build a cohesive plan that suits their client's goals.

For Future Researchers. This research was confined to online sellers of accessories, clothing, cosmetics, food, and supplements within Makati City. The participants were selected based on the typical products marketed online observed by the researchers. For future studies, choosing online sellers who sell different products is a good idea. Future researchers may also use a quantitative research design to address this topic.

Additionally, the researchers recommend selecting another social media platform, such as Twitter, Instagram, and Tiktok, where products can be marketed. This might impose different results from this study because the mentioned platforms have other features from Facebook. Future researchers could also focus on a particular issue in this study. They could delve deeper into any of the following topics: Facebook marketing strategies, socio-economic impacts of Facebook marketing, or challenges experienced by online sellers.

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