

# Online Marketing To Successful Strategy In Food Production Business Of Small And Medium Enterprises (Smes) In Northeastern Thailand

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## Abstract

This research paper aimed to study direct influence between online marketing strategies and business success. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 281 samples of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Northeastern Region of Thailand. Structural Equation Modeling techniques was employed for data analysis.

The results were: 1) Online marketing strategy, customer communication channels have direct positive effects on the business success in terms of financial, customer, internal process, learning and development aspects; 2) product variety has a positive direct influence on business success in terms of financial, customer, internal, and learning and development aspects; 3) competitor's recognition capability has a positive direct relationship with the business success in terms of financial and learning and development aspects, excluding customer and internal processes aspects; 4) immediate response to market has a positive and direct influence on business success in terms of customer, internal process and learning and development aspects; 5) privacy has a positive direct effect on the business success in financial, customers, internal process, and learning and development aspects; 6) personal service also has a positive direct relationship with the business success in terms of financial, customers, internal processes and learning and development aspects.

**Keywords:** Online marketing; Success; food product; Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

## Introduction

Presently, business in Thailand has become more and more competitive, especially, innovation competition (Rujirawanich et al., 2011). Driving innovation can rapidly occur due to change that should create more innovation, such as adoption innovation to the business sector (Hovgaard and Hansen, 2004). Business sectors applied internet innovation in e-commerce marketing to grow faster, and it requires data as well as needs to be ready for product ordering at any time (Ching and Ellis, 2004). In the last decade, many research

discussed on using more information technology, especially, promoting the use of the internet, and the traditional online sales were found with few online marketing activities (Gallagher and Gilmore, 2004). Many concepts suggested the role of the internet related to marketing activities and business performance but they lacked of intensive research focusing on specific issues such as limitations of online marketing, successful online marketing strategy, or survival of e-marketing for SMEs (Ching and Ellis, 2004).

There are problems and obstacles regarding online marketing strategies of SMEs, such as access to high-speed technology, high-speed internet, or internet use. Increasing of these problems affected on failure of electronic marketing (Noyce, 2002) and financial constraint of SMEs, such as choosing e-marketing and expensive website design for competitive advantage (Winkholfer and Houghton, 2004). Lacking skills and knowledge of web marketing were major problems for SMEs (Chapman et al., 2000). In addition, managers and employees in SMEs had limited knowledge of computer technology (Jeffcoate et al., 2002). As mentioned above, SMEs experienced troubles applying online marketing strategies that can incur great benefits. The internet was a useful instrument for small companies to gain international and communication benefits and information cross-border exchange (Loane and Bell, 2006). Small companies can create a competitive advantage form using the internet and communication to support the international distribution of goods and services (Loane, 2006). Online marketing is an important competitive strategy because it created a lower cost, and it is easy to get the target and will lead to a successful organization (Chuwiruch et al., 2015). Electronic commerce application of SMEs was used by the perspective of managers and business owners of Thailand. It is a new concept in which Thailand has collected such a limited data from SMEs using social media (Sutanonpaiboon and Pearson, 2006).

Therefore, this research is an interesting online marketing study to be successful in the food production business of SMEs in Northeastern Thailand. Furthermore, it considered the benefits of SMEs obtained from using social online. All of the above was an online marketing strategy of which the data and results from this study can be applied to be guidelines for effective food products of SMEs. This research aimed to:

1. study online marketing strategies.
2. study online marketing strategies that directly affected the success of business operations.

## **Theoretical background**

### **Online marketing strategy**

Online marketing strategy is important for any organizations to learn and prepare themselves. There are various channels of marketing strategy for communication information with customers. Each of channel is different in characteristics and targets (Pongsiriyakul et al., 2020). Web design techniques were key factors for successful website as well as popular channels on social media and newsletters or E-newsletter, VDO, Blog Post, and Image/ Infographic (Laursen and Salter, 2006). In addition, the development of the future market can be done when the operation via digital channels and digital media can identify those users and create type two-way communication (Wertime and Fenwick, 2011). Online marketing refers to marketing conducted through online media to make our products widely known (Sharma et al., 2011). The variety of products in large industries and diversity of offering products were major competitive factors (Escobar-Saldívar et al., 2008). Growing of brands and social media is the basis of brand strategy and efficient application being considered as an instrument for successful marketing (Medjani et al., 2019). Diversity management is essential for operating successful business, which is consisted of: 1) process capability, 2) point of difference, and 3) day-to-day decisions (Ramdas, 2009). Development capability of product design required increasing product diversity, and product diversification does increase the efficiency of work (Patel and Jayaram, 2013). Manufactures try to expand the product variety for customers' choices (Um et al., 2017). Internet retailers' online marketing affects

consumers' trust and attitude toward the retailer's website (Limbu et al., 2012).

The ability to learn from competitors including learning, adapting, and interacting was important to competitive business (Deissenroth et al., 2017). Learning technology has effects on competitors, especially, learning from competitors' failure is useful for developing the best products (Krieger, 2021). The perspective of competitors showed that leaders learn less from others than their followers (Eeckhout and Boyan, 2002). In addition, learning for non-innovative companies was the overflowing knowledge of competitors (Lhuillery, 2011). The proactive imitation strategy of competitors' learnings has insufficient commercial data to create a competitive advantage (Vandekerckhove and De Bondt, 2008) as well as extending relationship will encourage the businesses to create a competitive advantage (Mettathamrong et al., 2020). Responding to the market, product development process and responses to market demand were essential for SMEs (Xenophon et al., 2010). Knowledge application responds to technological changes regarding knowledge and technology created in new products and processes (Song et al., 2005). The influence of marketing strategies, such as market response and product innovation, affects company performance and networking strength (Lee, 2010). Today, competitive environment, dynamic of savage competition, unstable environment, and ability to quickly and efficiently respond to change are essential to an organization (Harraf et al., 2015). Privacy of users whose data to be collected online is needed to be concerned such as increasing public information sharing (Fiesler and Hallinan, 2018). Social networks such as Friendster, MySpace, or Facebook are privacy concerns and individuals still join networks and share large personal information (Acquisti and Gross, 2006).

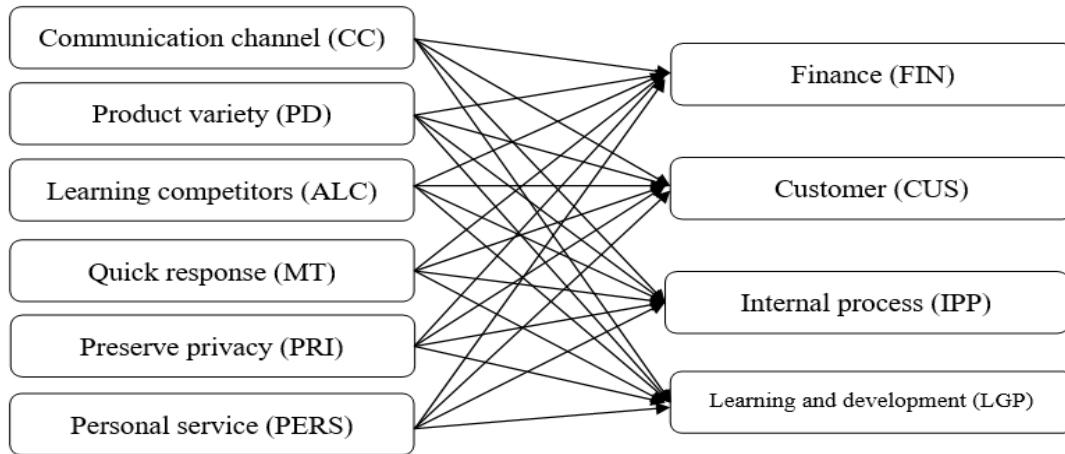
Business success

Business success was essential to the business sector. Doing business needs verifiable finance indicators (Neely and Al Najjar, 2006). A successful business should focus on accounting and general business and management. Systematic reviews can support organizations successfully (Hansen and Schaltegger, 2016). Organizational performance training through the value chain can encourage understanding employees which is measurement of success (Glaveli and Karassavidou, 2011). Customer relationship management and relationship management affect organizational success (Wu and Lu., 2012). Employee management is essential for the industry to invest in. The interplay of employee trust and customer satisfaction of customers in the service industry can help organizations achieve the goals (Ribeiro et al., 2019). The instrument development of performance measurement used by Balanced Scorecard (BSC) and the analytical process for assessable comparison essential to the business are used to evaluate all systems (Kim and Kim, 2010). BSC assessments by human resource managers focuses on learning and growing, especially the growing of employees (McPhail et al., 2008) is implemented for managers' decisions about personal development, learning and self-assessment (Cianci et al., 2013).

## Research model and hypotheses

### Research model

This research focused on examining online marketing strategy to be successful in the food production business for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Northeastern Thailand. The review literature, theories, and concepts of the hypothesis of the model consisted 6 assumptions as shown in Figure 1



**Figure 1** Research model

## Research hypotheses

### Focus on communication channels

Communication channel for website design is popular communication channel through social media with customers (Laursen and Salter, 2006). Communicating with customers and financial application is convenient for customers (Ariffin and Ismail, 2019). Internal communication of managers must be clear, accurate, and reliable so that it can help employees recognize and deliver messages to customers (White et al., 2010; Marques, 2010). Communication channel will encourage knowledge creation to transfer knowledge about products to employees and customers (Scott and Sarker, 2006).

H1-H4 focus on communication channels that directly influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development.

### Product variety

Product variety can help a good cash flow of the company and the suitability of financial policy to stabilize pricing a product (Bilbiie et al., 2007). If there are a variety of product designs via online websites, customers will be satisfied with online shopping (Alam and Yasin, 2010). Product variety requires a good internal process, especially the process to conduct suppliers (Koufteros et al., 2005).

H5-H8 Product variety has a direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development.

### Learning competitors

Learning about competitors is essential to organizational learning because learning to use technology is a cost of investment that is competitive strategy (García-Morales et al., 2008). Learning and knowing competitors are positively correlated with market share (Eibe Sørensen, 2009). Market learning or learning of marketing competitors and internal learning are influent innovation and product management (Weerawardena et al., 2006).

H9-H12 Learning competitors has direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development.

### Quick response

The quick response needs a wide strategy in supply chains that encourages higher profitability (Chan et al., 2016). Quick response to customer needs leads to customer satisfaction (Min et al., 2014), and affects learning to maintain inventory and cost control (Cachon and Swinney, 2008).

H13-H16 Quick response has a direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development.

### Preserve privacy

Preserve privacy on social media when shopping online, especially, banquet transfer is a risk of which needed to be carefully concerned (Xu et al., 2008). Online marketing is rapid spread of technology, but it causes problems on consumer privacy (Ashworth and Free, 2006). Marketers' learning to share and reach into personal data via online is essential for protecting customer information (Homaz et al., 2020).

H17-H20 Preserving privacy has a direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development.

#### Personal service

Service industry or personal service is important in production and service sectors, and it also affects on customers' satisfaction (Morikawa, 2011). In addition, the importance of employees or service minds are contributed to customer satisfaction (Alhelalat et al., 2017). Professional personal should be trained and developed with service provision (George, 2008).

H21-H24 Personal service has direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development.

## Methodology

### Data collection

This research is the quantitative research of which the population were from food productive production of SMEs, divided into upper, lower, and middle regions, totaling 1,100 companies located in Kalasin, Khon Kaen, Chaiyaphum, Nakhon Phanom, Nakhon Ratchasima, Bueng Kan, Buriram, Maha Sarakham, Mukdahan, Yasothorn, Roi Et, Loei, Sisaket, Sakon Nakhon, Surin, Nong Khai, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Amnat Charoen, Udon Thani, and Ubon Ratchathani provinces in Thailand.

The sample group and sample size in this research comprised food productive manufacturers of SMEs. The instrument of research was a questionnaire, and the data was collected by mailing the questioners to 530

respondents. The number was limited number by response rates. This research data was obtained from 281 respondents, and a survey response rate was 53.01% due to the concept of Hoonakker and Carayon (2009) regarding research synthesis toward the survey response rate of academic studies that the average survey of response rate should be 50.56% and 44.60, respectively. Therefore, the survey rate of this research, 53.01% was acceptable. For this research, the condition of sample size was considered based on Hoonakker and Carayon who suggested that the criteria to determine the sample size should be 10-20 times of the observed variables. Therefore, the number of samples was included in this study that met the requirements.

### Measurement

The qualitative research instruments were evaluated by 5 experts and advisors to verify the content validity. The criteria used for considering the content validity, index of item-objective congruence (IOC) must be greater than 0.50 (Turner and Carlson, 2003). It was found that the IOC of all items were greater than 0.50. The reliability of questionnaire by Cronbach's alpha coefficient equal or greater than 0.70 that are accepted (Hair et al., 2010). The result showed that the questionnaire was scored between 0.867-0.971 that mean the reliability was accepted.

Basic statistics used to analyze the data in order to specify the character of the sample and distributive variables were percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was implemented to examine the relationship of variables, and the data was analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling: SEM by considering CMIN- $p > 0.05$  (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004), CMIN/df < 3 (Ullman, 2001), GFI, AGFI, CFI > 0.90 (Byrne, 1994), and RMSEA < 0.08 (MacCallum et al, 1996).

### Empirical analysis

Descriptive statistics were implemented to analyze the population groups. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was needed for determining reliability and validity before testing the hypothesis. Especially, the factor analysis was performed to determine the validity by Discriminant Validity through the Square

Root of AVE. The discriminant validity analysis was conducted by cross-loadings based on the relationship between out loadings and correlation coefficient between observable variables by Pearson correlation coefficient to verify the preliminary agreement of model analysis and analyse the SEM on the assumptions.

**Table 1** Demographic analysis

Category		Freq.	%	Category		Freq.	%
Gender	Male	83	29.54%	Age	31-40	112	39.85%
	Female	198	70.46%		41-50	169	60.15%
	Total	281	100%		Total	281	100%
Income	<= 30,000 baht	174	61.92%	Period of business	6-10 year	117	41.64%
	30,001-50,000 baht	107	38.08%		11-15 year	164	58.36%
	Total	281	100%		Total	281	100%
Number of employees	31-60 people	108	38.43%	Investment	500,000-1,000,000 baht	168	59.78%
	61-90 people	173	61.57%		1,000,001-5,000,000 baht	113	41.22%
	Total	281	100%		Total	281	100%
Operational characteristics	Limited partnerships	171	60.85%	The reason for online sale	Cost-saving	77	27.40%
	Company limited	110	39.15%		Access to customers all the world	121	43.06%
	Total	281	100%		Can be done anywhere, anytime	83	29.54%
Social Media channel					Total	281	100%
	Line	108	38.44%	E-Marketplace channel	Lazada	182	64.77%
	Facebook	84	29.89%		Shopee	99	35.23%
	Instagram	89	31.67%		Total	281	100%
	Total	281	100%				

Demographic analysis



PD1		0.75 2								
PD2		0.87 6								
PD3		0.92 5								
ALC1			0.78 0							
ALC2			0.85 2							
ALC3			0.84 7							
MT1				0.87 7						
MT2				0.84 3						
MT3				0.89 3						
PRI1					0.90 3					
PRI2					0.90 5					
PRI3					0.86 5					
PERS 1						0.835				
PERS 2						0.782				
PERS 3						0.790				

Item	CC	PD	ALC	MT	PRI	PERS	FIN	CUS	INPR O	LEADE
FIN1							0.87 7			
FIN2							0.82 2			
FIN3							0.83 5			
FIN4							0.80 3			
CUS1								0.79 0		



CUS2								0.843		
CUS3								0.821		
CUS4								0.845		
INPRO1									0.842	
INPRO2									0.769	
INPRO3									0.815	
INPRO4									0.872	
INPRO5									0.781	
LEADE1										0.812
LEADE2										0.786
LEADE3										0.834

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was implemented to examine the covariance or correlation matrices between observable

variables verifying the preliminary agreement of SEM because the variables must be related, as shown table 4.

**Table 4** Correlation coefficients, Mean and S.D.

Item	CC	PD	ALC	MT	PRI	PER S	FIN	CUS	INPR O	LEADE
CC	1									
PD	.48**	1								
ALC	.59**	.44**	1							
MT	.42**	.47**	.46	1						
PRI	.33**	.39**	.39*	.45*	1					
			*	*						
PERS	.36*	.33**	.41*	.53*	.43*	1				
				*						
FIN	.42**	.54**	.45*	.30*	.42*	.61	1			
			*	*	*					
CUS	.40**	.39**	.38*	.31	.28*	.39*	.51**	1		
			*		*	*				
INPRO	.36**	.36**	.32*	.25*	.37*	.36*	.48**	.47	1	
			*	*	*	*				
LEADE	.43	.39	.37	.40	.32	.44*	.35	.46	.42**	1
Mean	3.89	4.11	3.87	4.02	3.99	4.14	4.03	3.76	3.82	4.01
S.D.	0.88	0.82	0.80	0.78	0.69	0.81	0.74	0.72	0.73	0.76

Notation: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

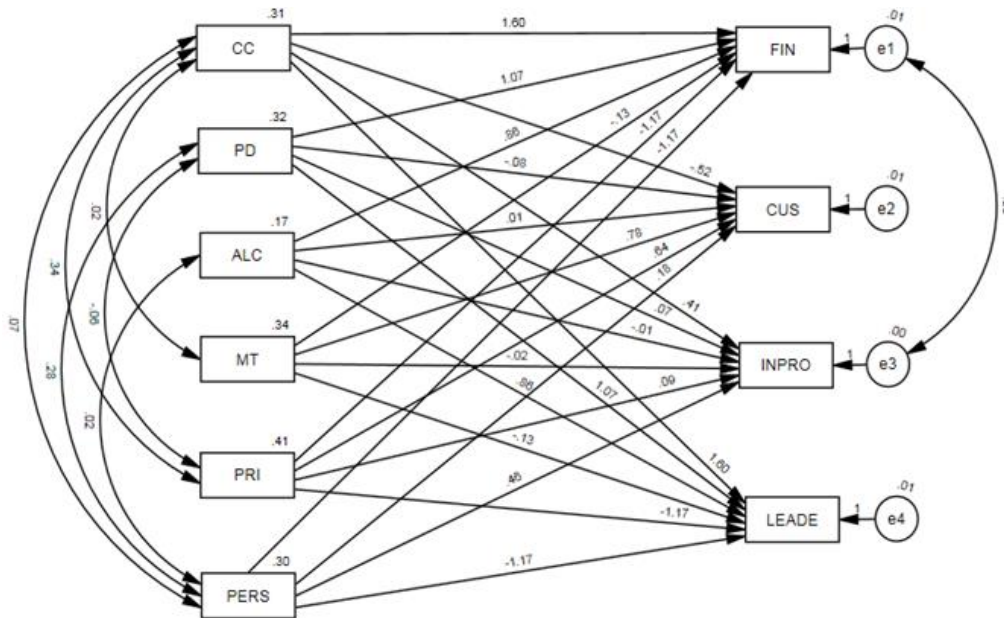
Table 4 illustrated the correlation coefficients values of the latent variable. It was found all the

latent variables related in the same direction with positive values had a relationship at

statistically significant of 0.01. The mean score of latent variables ranged from 3.76 – 4.14 which were interpreted that latent variables were at very high and maximum levels.

#### Model fit

The results of the hypothesis-based SEM model with the empirical data analysis regarding the relationship between observable variables by test hypothesis were shown in Figure 2



**Figure 2** illustrated successful online marketing strategy that enhanced the successful business in food production business of SMEs

$\chi^2/df = 2.418$  (pass),  $p = 0.311$  (pass), CFI = 0.923 (pass), GFI = 0.911, AGFI = 0.932, and RMSEA = 0.051

From figure 2, the index harmonization standard value from modifying model was considered based on the recommendation to adjust the parameters in the model with the M.I. until all index numbers passed, and the criteria

for considering was  $\chi^2/df = 2.418$  (pass),  $p = 0.311$  (pass), CFI = 0.923 (pass), GFI = 0.911, AGFI = 0.932, and RMSEA = 0.051, so that the hypothesis model was consistent with the empirical data.

The results of the component weight of the observable variable were considered common element that can describe the relationship between variables as shown in table 5.

**Table 5** the results of the component weight of observable variables

Latent variable	(b)	(S.E.)	(B)	(R <sup>2</sup> )
<b>Online marketing strategy</b>				
Communication (CC)	1.33***	0.12	0.77	0.59
Product variety (PD)	0.96***	0.07	0.65	0.41
Learning from competitors (ALC)	1.02***	0.07	0.78	0.56
Quick response (MT)	0.88***	0.07	0.76	0.45
Preserve privacy (PRI)	0.90	0.08	0.71	0.51

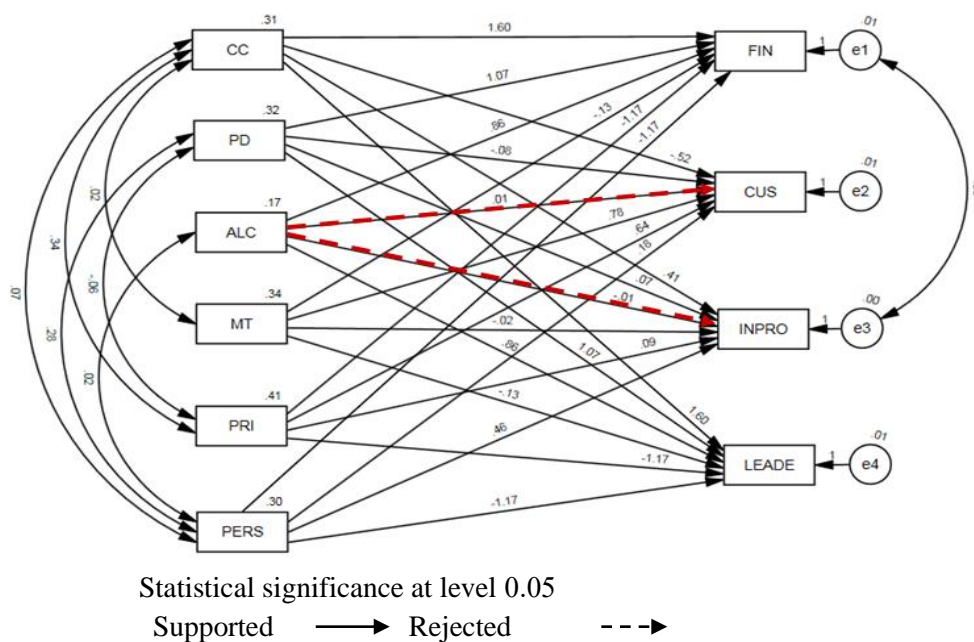
Personal service (PERS)	0.91	0.08	0.65	0.55
<b>Successful business</b>				
Finance (FIN)	1.10***	0.07	0.82	0.68
Customers (CUS)	0.80	0.08	0.73	0.51
Internal processes (INPRO)	0.93	0.08	0.65	0.55
Learning and development (LEADE)	0.59***	0.07	0.69	0.44

Notation: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.10$

The results of the component weight of the observable variables shown in table 5 showed that all values were positive weight of the observable variables between 0.59-1.33 and were significantly different at 0.10. The most component weight of the observed variables was communication channels with a weight of 1.33.

On the other hand, the lowest rated aspects were learning and development, scored 0.59. The reliability coefficient of the observed variables ( $R^2$ ) indicated the covariance of latent variables of online marketing strategy ranging from 0.41-0.59 and a latent variable of successful business ranging from 0.44-0.68.

The direct effect



**Figure 3** showed the results of an indirect effect

**Table 6** The results of the research hypothesis

	Hypothesis	Result
Item 1	Communication channels has a direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development.	Consistency assumptions, H1-H4
Item 2	Product variety has a direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development.	Consistency assumptions, H5-H8
Item 3	Learning competitors has a direct influence on finances,	Consistency assumptions, H9

	customers, internal processes, and learning and development.	and H12, Inconsistency assumptions H10 and H11
Item 4	Quick response has a direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development	Consistency assumptions, H13-H16
Item 5	Preserve privacy has a direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development	Consistency assumptions, H17-H20
Item 6	Personal service has a direct influence on finances, customers, internal processes, and learning and development.	Consistency assumptions, H21-H24

## Conclusion, limitations, and future research directions

### Conclusion

This research was the study of online marketing strategies and success of the food production business of SME of which the results can be discussed based on the assumptions.

Online marketing strategies included communication channels, product variety, learning from competitors, quick response, preserve privacy, and personal service which influence to a successful business of finance, customers, internal processes, and learning and development. The assumptions were as follows.

A communication channel to customers has a direct influence on successful business to finance, internal processes and learning and development that is the ability of the organization to use online communication tools to communicate and connect with their customers which is consistent to Tippayapornkul (2016) who discussed the difference customers' income that affected customers' decision to buy cosmetics online differently that customers' difference was needed to be considered regarding communication. Similarly, Maneelerlert (2010) stated that the difference of customers' income resulted on different online shopping behaviours since customers needed to spend money for online shopping and buying things online needed online banking for payment.

A variety of products, services, product information collection via online communication

channels had direct influence on finance, internal processes, and learning and development. It was similar Song Xie and Di Benedetto (2001) who mentioned good information needed to be easy to understand, reliable, and updated. In addition, the factor of customers was the key factor to be considered. Berger-Walliser et al., (2011) discussed that the business success was the most profitable; therefore, producing products or services to meet customer needs, the process must be efficient. This idea is consistent with this research because it focused on customer, and efficient internal process.

The ability to learn from competitors, competitive analysis, and assessing the competitive situation has direct influence on a successful business. Pongsiriyakul et al., (2020) mentioned that to assess the situations of competitors' cost and performance, the background of the competitors was needed to study. This is consistent with this research that to know competitors, it is a must to consider the growth of competitors.

A timely response to the market, the organization's ability to response to the market using social media had a direct influence on business success which is consistent with Jagongo and Kinnyua (2013) that marketing in modern communication was important and essential for business operations. A timely response to the market will encourage a business

opportunity to grow their business and make it easy to reach the customers. This is consistent with research because timely response will lead to customers' satisfaction.

Privacy protection influences business success. Entrepreneurs should set policies to enhance credibility, especially, the private information with Walter et al., (2001) that good relationship between buyers and sellers enhanced customers' special feeling, and privacy protection had influence on business success to keep the customers remained in the future. This is similar to this research because customers' privacy protection will lead to customers' loyalty and satisfaction. Eisingerich et al., (2014) mentioned that strong relationship between the customers and the company's policy of customers' privacy protection affected customers' satisfaction and verbal communication between customers in form of word of mouth.

Personal service has influence to business success. Strong personal relationships and familiarity with customers resulted on customers' decision to return to shop again. Ranganathan and Ganapathy (2002) discussed that online communication created the interaction between customers and online stores that was essential and helped provide online stores credibility. In addition, it was an individual service that enhanced customers' satisfaction. This is similar to this research that customers' satisfaction created from personal service.

### limitations

This research limitation was about sample group. The further research may exclude other regions or other provinces. In addition, qualitative research methodology such as in-depth interview and focus group should be conducted to obtain insights. In addition, other factors related to decision-making of customer via online applications should be studied.

### Suggestions for further research

It is suggested for the further research to study the company or businesses operators of beverage, rubber and plastic, furniture and manufacture of machinery, and tools to find out the customers' behaviours in order to prepare a plan for successful business. There should be a qualitative research to the create forms or models of online shopping to develop the online shopping business.

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