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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES AND BRAND SUCCESS: THE CASE OF LEADING THAI UNDER-300CC MOTORBIKE BRANDS

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Abstract

This research employs a comparative analysis to uncover the success factors driving the digital marketing strategies of Thailand's three leading under-300cc motorbike brands: Honda, Yamaha, and Vespa. Utilizing a structural equation model (SEM) and a sample of 930 customers who use online information for purchasing decisions, the study investigates the influence of the 4Es digital marketing framework (Experience, Exchange, Everyplace, Evangelism) and two brand strategy factors (Brand Distinctiveness and Brand Attractiveness) on purchase intention, mediated by brand attitude. Results reveal similarities and differences in the effectiveness of these strategies across the three brands. Honda's success is primarily attributed to exchange and evangelism, while Yamaha emphasizes experience and brand distinctiveness. Vespa's strength lies in a balanced approach across the 4Es, augmented by Brand Attractiveness. These findings provide valuable insights into crafting effective digital marketing strategies within the competitive Thai motorbike market, highlighting the nuanced interplay between digital marketing tactics and overall brand strategy.

Keywords: Digital Marketing Strategies, 4Es Framework, Brand Attitude, Purchase Intention, Thai Motorbike Market

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Introduction

This research compares the success factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions in the digital era for Honda, Yamaha, and Vespa motorcycles in Thailand. The study examines the effects of four exogenous variables representing the digital marketing mix (Experience, Exchange, Everyplace, and Evangelism) and two brand strategy factors (Brand Distinctiveness and Brand Attractiveness) on purchase intention. Brand Attitude serves as a mediating variable. The sample comprises customers who utilize online information to inform their purchasing decisions.

The rapidly evolving marketing landscape, particularly the increasing prevalence of digitalization and the advent of artificial intelligence in Marketing 6.0 necessitates that brands adapt their strategies to align with the behaviors of digitally savvy consumers. The Thai motorcycle market is unique, differing significantly from other countries due to its importance as a mode of micro-transportation and a source of employment. This is particularly relevant in less developed provinces where public transportation is insufficient. Total sales in 2023 reached 1.88 million units (Pamonpon, 2024), with Honda, Yamaha, and Vespa holding the top three market shares. These established brands, characterized by their long history and strong market presence in Thailand, have each adopted distinct digital marketing and branding strategies. This research aims to comparatively analyze the key success factors and market dynamics influencing purchasing intention, both directly and indirectly through brand attitude, for these three dominant motorcycle brands.

Literature Review

Brand strategy is a core element of business strategy. This research focuses on two key brand variables: Brand Distinctiveness and Brand Attractiveness. These variables were hypothesized to influence purchase intention through brand attitude.

Brand Distinctiveness (BD) refers to a brand's unique physical and emotional characteristics that differentiate it from competitors, as perceived by consumers. This construct can be measured through three aspects of consumer perception: (1) Perceived Uniqueness (the degree to which a brand possesses unique attributes not offered by competitors; Kim et al., 2016), (2) Brand Superiority (the extent to which the brand is perceived as superior to its competitors), and (3) Overall Distinctiveness (the overall perceived distinctiveness of the brand; Ahn et al., 2016).

Brand Attractiveness (BA) represents the communicated value of a brand that influences consumer attitudes and drives purchase intent. Measurement involves assessing: (1) Brand Equity (the overall value associated with the brand encompassing product and service offerings), (2) Brand Appeal (the degree to which the brand attracts consumers through product/service use and emotional connection), and (3) Effectiveness of Communication (the effectiveness of the brand's communication strategies; Noni et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2017).

Brand Attitude (BAT) reflects consumers' overall perceptions and feelings toward the brand, encompassing aspects such as whether it is perceived as modern or outdated, fashionable or traditional, etc. (Loureiro, 2017). This can be assessed through (1) Brand Culture (the brand's overall image and values), (2) Brand Design (the design elements across all brand touchpoints), and (3) Brand Activities (the activities undertaken by the brand, both product-related and corporate; Park et al., 2015; Noni et al., 2014).

The digital marketing mix, an evolution of the traditional 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion), is conceptualized here as the 4Es:

1) Experience (EXP): The overall sensory and emotional experience associated with interacting with the brand across all touchpoints. Measurement focuses on Content Quality, Service Quality (related to online channels), and System Quality (perceived usability and performance of online systems; Ha & Perks, 2005; Shin, 2015).

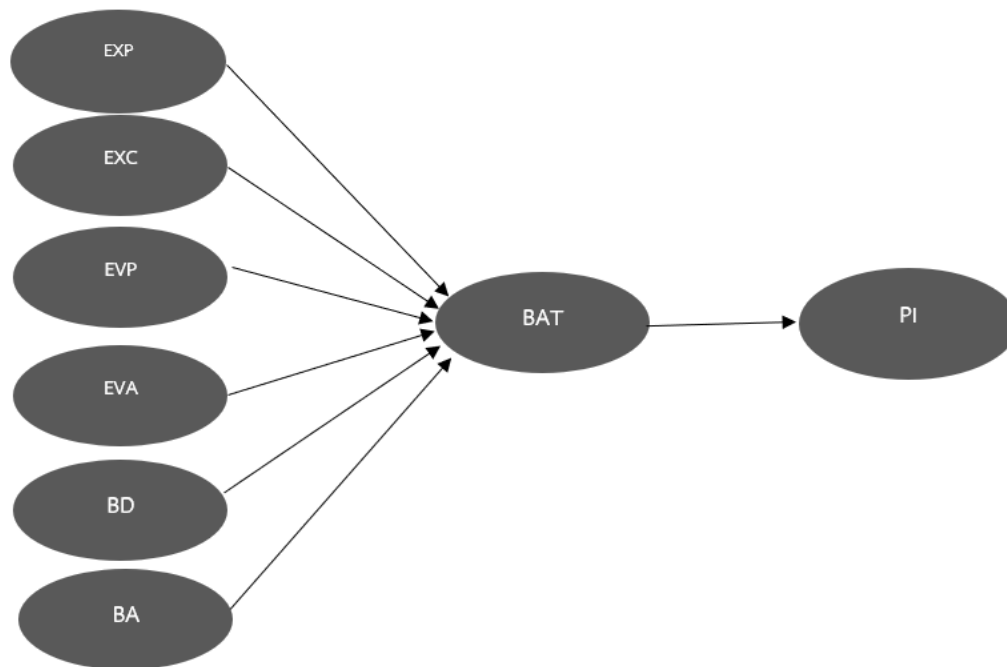
2) Exchange (EXC): The perceived value exchange between the customer and the brand, encompassing the perceived fairness of the price relative to the value received. The assessment considers Time Cost, perceived fairness of the price (Conscience), and the degree of co-creation experienced during the exchange process (Konhäusner et al., 2021; Meilhan, 2019).

3) Everyplace (EVP): The brand's accessibility across various channels and touchpoints. Measurement considers ease of access to products, complexity of engagement, and ease of commercial transactions (Epuran et al., 2015).

4) Evangelism (EVA): The extent to which customers act as brand advocates, actively promoting the brand across various channels. Measurement involves assessing Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), traditional Word-of-Mouth (WOM), and overall brand evangelism (Epuran et al., 2015).

Purchase Intention (PI) represents the consumer's likelihood of purchasing the product. This is measured by assessing consumer interest in the product and their perceived likelihood of purchase (Noni et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2017).

Conceptual Framework



Research Methodology

A sample of 930 respondents (310 per brand) was randomly selected from the top three brands' social media users (Facebook official pages, Instagram, and X/Twitter). Data collection concluded on January 15, 2024. Combining purposive and quota sampling techniques, a mixed sampling method ensured representation across various user types based on motorcycle ownership and online information usage.

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize respondent characteristics. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement scales. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was then used to analyze the relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part 1 (eight questions) screened participants based on their use of online information for decision-making and collected general demographic information; Part 2 (thirty-one five-point Likert-scale questions) assessed the study variables. Content validity was established via expert review (Index of Item-Objective Congruence: IOC), and reliability analysis was performed. The sample size 310 per brand (based on a rule

of thumb of 10 respondents per item in the 31-item Part 2) exceeded the minimum sample size requirement of 100 per brand.

This research adhered to ethical guidelines for human research, ensuring informed consent, maintaining respondent confidentiality, and safeguarding the rights of vulnerable participants.

Table 1 Summary of Sample Data

Brand	Social Media	User No.	%	Sample Size
HONDA	Meta Facebook	1,279,254	99.38	308
	Instragram	7,514	0.58	1
	X	409	0.04	1
	Total	1,287,177	100	310
YAMAHA	Meta Facebook	2,600,000	96.00	297
	Instragram	107,000	3.95	12
	X	65	0.05	1
	Total	2,707,065	100	310
VESPA	Meta Facebook	3,100,000	97.07	300
	Instragram	93,200	2.90	9
	X	299	0.03	1
	Total	3,193,499	100	310

Research Results

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Analysis reveals similarities and differences across the three brands' customer bases. Common characteristics include a predominantly male customer profile (aged 25-40, Generation Y), employment primarily in the private sector, and a preference for seeking information and engaging with dealers via Facebook. Key differences were observed in income and educational levels.

Table 2 Respondents' top 3 choices general information summary

Data	%		
	HONDA	YAMAHA	VESPA
Gender	Male	Male	Male
	54.2	76.8	64.2
Age	25-40	25-40	25-40
	62.9	70.0	43.7
Income	15,001-25,000 Baht	25,001-35,000 Baht	15,001-25,000 Baht
	27.6	39.0	43.4
Education	Diploma	Diploma	Bachelor
	33.2	50.0	40.2
Career	Private sector	Private sector	Private sector
	Employee	Employee	Employee
	24.6	31.3	57.3
Sources of information that influence decision-making	Dealer's Facebook	Dealer's Facebook	Dealer's Facebook
	31.2	40.0	30.1
Inquire via the online system.	Yes	Yes	Yes
	100	100	100

Table 3 displays the results of the model fit assessment. All items exhibited content validity (IOC > 0.5), and the data, analyzed via component analysis (n=310), confirmed that the model satisfied all SEM requirements.

Table 3 Model fit analysis

Statistic	Condition	HONDA	YAMAHA	VESPA	Reference
Cronbach's alpha	> 0.7	0.969	0.982	0.978	Hair et al. (2010)
Factor loading	> 0.6	> 0.6 all	> 0.6 all	> 0.6 all	Hair et al. (2010)
Chi-square/Degrees Freedom	< 5.0	1.839	2.438	4.716	Loo & Thorpe (2000)
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	> 0.9	0.987	0.908	0.918	Hu & Bentler (1999)
Normalized Fit Index (NFI)	≥ 0.9	0.927	0.939	0.922	Hair et al. (2010)
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	≥ 0.9	0.914	0.923	0.902	Hair et al. (2010)
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	≥ 0.9	0.965	0.963	0.901	Hair et al. (2010)
Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)	≥ 0.9	0.959	0.953	0.981	Hair et al. (2010)
Comparative fit Index (CFI)	≥ 0.9	0.965	0.963	0.900	Hair et al. (2010)
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.08	0.052	0.060	0.790	Hair et al. (2010)

Table 4 presents the structural equation modeling results for Honda. Exchange, Evangelism, and Brand Attractiveness positively influenced Brand Attitude, while Everyplace exhibited a negative effect. Brand Attitude significantly predicts Purchase Intention.

Table 4 Path Analysis result of HONDA

Variables	Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Sig.
EXP → BAT	0.273	0.163	1.677	0.094
EXC → BAT	0.793	0.298	2.659	0.008***
EVP → BAT	-1.204	0.268	-4.498	0.000***
EVA → BAT	0.485	0.150	3.239	0.001***
BD → BAT	-0.025	0.333	-0.074	0.941
BA → BAT	0.760	0.264	2.884	0.004***
BAT → PI	0.916	0.066	13.913	0.000***

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, R² = 0.76

Table 5 shows that for Honda, Experience, Exchange, Everyplace, and Brand Attractiveness significantly predicted Purchase Intention through the mediating effect of Brand Attitude (p < .05).

Table 5 Indirect effect of Path analysis of HONDA

Variables	Estimate
EXC → BAT → PI	0.726
EVP → BAT → PI	-1.103
EVA → BAT → PI	0.444
BA → BAT → PI	0.696

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05

Table 6 shows that for Yamaha, Experience, Brand Distinctiveness, and Brand Attractiveness significantly and positively predicted Brand Attitude. Brand Attitude significantly predicted Purchase Intention (p < .05).

Table 6 Path Analysis result of YAMAHA

Variables	Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Sig.
EXP → BAT	0.541	0.273	2.030	0.042**
EXC → BAT	-0.532	0.472	-1.070	0.284
EVP → BAT	-0.187	0.115	-1.466	0.143
EVA → BAT	0.087	0.198	0.415	0.678
BD → BAT	0.466	0.157	2.803	0.005**
BA → BAT	0.658	0.093	7.120	0.000***
BAT → PI	0.972	0.050	20.134	0.000***

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, R² = 0.94

Table 7 replicates the finding from Table 6; for Yamaha, Experience, Brand Distinctiveness, and Brand Attractiveness significantly predicted Purchase Intention via the mediating effect of Brand Attitude (p < .05).

Table 7 Indirect effect of Path analysis of YAMAHA

Variables	Estimate
EXP → BAT → PI	0.526
BD → BAT → PI	0.453
BA → BAT → PI	0.639

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05

Table 8 shows that for Vespa, Experience, Exchange, Everywhere, Evangelism, Brand Distinctiveness, and Brand Attractiveness all significantly and positively predicted Brand Attitude, Which, in turn, significantly predicts Purchase Intention.

Table 8 Path Analysis Result of Vespa

Variables	Estimate	Standard Error	Critical Ratio	Sig.
EXP → BAT	0.059	0.021	2.871	0.004**
EXC → BAT	0.182	0.022	8.096	0.000***
EVP → BAT	0.057	0.023	2.480	0.013**
EVA → BAT	0.044	0.022	1.990	0.047**
BD → BAT	0.217	0.024	5.401	0.000***
BA → BAT	0.734	0.043	17.422	0.000***
BAT → PI	0.958	0.063	15.214	0.000***

***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, R² = 0.74

Table 9 shows that for Vespa, Experience, Exchange, Everyplace, Evangelism, Brand Distinctiveness, and Brand Attractiveness significantly influenced Purchase Intention through the mediating effect of Brand Attitude ($p < .05$).

Table 9 Path Analysis result of VESPA

Variables	Estimate
EXP → BAT → PI	0.057
EXC → BAT → PI	0.174
EVP → BAT → PI	0.055
EVA → BAT → PI	0.042
BD → BAT → PI	0.208
BA → BAT → PI	0.703

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

Conclusion and Discussion

Analysis of the 4Es (Experience, Exchange, Everyplace, and Evangelism) revealed distinct patterns in their influence on purchase intention across the three brands, reflecting unique marketing strategies and market positioning.

Honda: Exchange, Everyplace, and Evangelism positively influenced purchase intention through brand attitude. While Honda demonstrates a strong overall digital marketing approach, a closer examination reveals a negative influence of the Exchange variable. This may reflect pricing, payment, and delivery process challenges, potentially stemming from widespread price competition within existing distribution channels. The strong negative relationship between Exchange and purchase intention, despite the overall positive influence of the other 4Es, suggests a need for improvement in these aspects of the customer journey. The lack of significant influence from the Experience variable highlights a further area requiring attention.

Yamaha: Only Experience significantly influenced purchase intention. Yamaha's marketing strategy emphasizes product innovation, strongly focusing on the Experience aspect of the 4Es framework. The lack of influence from other 4Es variables suggests a potential weakness in these areas that requires improvement.

Vespa: Experience, Exchange, Everyplace, and Evangelism all positively influenced purchase intention. Despite its smaller market share compared to Honda and Yamaha, Vespa's success is attributed to its effective utilization of digital marketing across all 4Es, successfully cultivating a unique brand personality.

These findings align with previous research (Mahmoud et al., 2017), highlighting the importance of integrating the 4Es with broader brand strategies. The analysis of Brand Distinctiveness and Brand Attractiveness further revealed that while Yamaha and Vespa demonstrated significant positive effects, Honda showed no significant influence from Brand Distinctiveness. This suggests that while all three brands benefit from substantial brand equity in the minds of consumers (consistent with Currás-Pérez et al., 2009 and reflecting the established nature of these brands in the Thai market), their marketing strategies and effectiveness vary considerably. The mediating role of Brand Attitude in influencing purchase intention is consistently observed across all three brands.

In conclusion, this research comprehensively analyzes digital marketing strategies within Thailand's competitive motorcycle market. Despite operating within the same market, the three brands demonstrate distinct digital marketing approaches. The findings highlight strengths and areas for improvement in each brand's strategy, offering valuable insights for businesses seeking to optimize their digital marketing efforts within this context.

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