



# Developing Guidelines for Offline and Online Marketing Channels for Chinese Dishes Catering in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received: 12 January 2023

Revised: 21 April 2023

Accepted: 25 June 2023

### Keywords:

Offline-channel marketing

Online-channel marketing

Chinese dishes catering

Cross-channel marketing

Omni-channel marketing

## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the developing guidelines for multiple integrated marketing channels. The guidelines aid the business to use both offline and online methods with the theory of development for various marketing channels. In this study, we use qualitative research classifying into three groups of key informants: 1) nineteen Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs in Nakhon Pathom province, 2) three marketing and business administration experts, and 3) two food business experts. As for the results, it was found that there are four development guidelines: 1) Single-Channel Marketing through offline by using telephone communication with applying the word-of-mouth strategy; 2) Multi-Channel Marketing through online by developing the central site of Facebook Official named “Nakhon Pathom Chinese dishes catering, Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs”; 3) Increase Cross-Channel Marketing; and 4) Omni-Channel Marketing to sell Chinese dishes catering through food delivery platform (Grab). Additionally, in order to raise the Chinese dishes catering for food quality and comprehensive services, it is important to broaden the marketing channels for Chinese dishes catering business clients in order to be well-known in the form of advertising and public relations through online and offline media.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Word-of-mouth marketing is a strategy that enables the development of high levels of credibility, trust, and brand loyalty [1]. The competition in the Chinese dishes catering business is quite intense because there is a total of entrepreneurs for approximately two thousand people [2]. Therefore, it results in many forms of competition, such as a price-cutting strategy, hiring a party without a deposit, including an installment payment, reducing the quality of raw materials, and others. The market shares of the Chinese dishes catering business in Thailand is divided into eighty-five percent of the domestic market and twenty-five percent of the international market [3]. Nakhon Pathom is a province famous for conducting Chinese dishes catering in Thailand because there are many Thai people of Chinese descent living in which their wisdom of Chinese cooking has been developed into a Chinese dishes catering service business in the form of a full-service mobile restaurant. For this reason, it has generated incomes for the province worth more than 2,000 million baht per year and tends to increase both

domestic and international market growth. Unfortunately, in the years 2020–2021, the Chinese dishes catering industry faced challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic that entrepreneurs could not manage their businesses, affecting their incomes and encountering problems with high raw material costs, increased shipping costs, and problems in food quality with the limitations of funds and marketing channels [4]. Similarly, the interview data revealed that most Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs are family businesses, which explains why they lack business planning and have narrow marketing channels, only the offline channel. There is also a lack of variety in marketing channels. The ability to use online marketing channels is quite limited.

In the current situation, the rapid growth of internet technology has made structural changes in society and the economy, so online marketing channels have become an integral part of everyday life [5], [6], [7], including changing customer behavior in the real world and the digital world. Then, it has considered offline and online marketing channels; if there is a link to integrate by improving the business processes to reach new customers with the activity

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management on traditional online and offline marketing channels. Additionally, it has created physical value and online value as a way to make a sustainable competitive advantage [8]. Thus, combining the potential of online and offline marketing channels and utilizing existing marketing channels and infrastructure saves costs. Retaining existing customers as well as expanding the customer base to new broader and more cost-effective segments of the internet enables speed and simple information exchange, attractive product presentation, and efficient and effective distribution [9], [10].

In this paper, we empirically study the development of offline and online marketing channels in order to reduce the limitation of offline marketing channels, only the sales channel through the storefront that makes it unable to compete in the long run. Moreover, when technology plays an important role in life, selecting a single channel is not enough to meet the needs of today's clients. In this case, there is a variety of businesses on the developing channels, called multi-channel, to reach customers and increase opportunities for the products and services. In the same way, the multi-channel service is the presentation of products and services using various channels, and omni-channel is now created to solve this problem. Then, omni-channel is a combination of technology and marketing strategy to bring together all available channels of customer access for both offline and online. Therefore, in order to deliver a better customer experience naturally and seamlessly [11], omni-channel is the finest strategy for today's business as it allows entrepreneurs to change the business model process with the new normal integration for online and offline marketing. As a result, it can make achievement with positive results enabling the businesses to apply the results of research and ideas from the synthesis. Finally, it creates a competitive advantage for the business by attracting customers with creating actual competitive sustainability.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing is the process of satisfying the needs of customers. In the development of Chinese dishes catering business marketing, the concept of marketing is used in the process of product operation planning, price, marketing channel, and marketing promotion to aim at meeting customer needs and achieving business objectives through marketing. There are two types of marketing: online marketing and offline marketing. Implementation of online marketing concepts used in activities to promote products and prices of Chinese dishes catering is in line with the needs of today's consumers who prefer to research or search for information through online marketing channels. It also includes the use of promotional marketing communications to reach the Chinese dishes catering's target customers broadly and efficiently. As for offline marketing, it is a traditional form of Chinese dishes catering business. In this development, the original strengths of the Chinese dishes

catering business will be used. It employs word-of-mouth communication to bring back the service of existing customers and expand opportunities by diversifying the product and creating added value by delivering healthy and safe Chinese dishes catering food to consumers.

### 2.1 Offline-Channel Marketing

Generally, the buying process is directed to entrepreneurs or stores where customers can touch the products and services to feel about the advantages of buying products from the store channel and can compare to the money spent on the purchase [12]. The offline sales model or the in-store sales model provides full service, so it plays a role in creating a personalized purchase experience for customers [13]. In addition, the selection procedure of the Chinese dishes catering business emphasizes the interaction between customers and entrepreneurs regarding the catering style, such as choosing a set meal, service patterns, number of tables, and requirements to try the food. Meetings elicit emotional responses as well as satisfy the highest demands of customers. Thus, the opportunity to close sales is more easily [14]. In the same way, in-store purchases or onsite services create a positive experience since they are friendly and enjoyable and allow customers to meet and talk to one another [13]. Direct or in-person channels are one component of purchasing products from integrated distribution channels [15].

### 2.2 Online-Channel Marketing

Ordering products and services through online channels such as websites and social networks has changed customer behavior. Besides, the behavior of the new generation of customers tends to use the website for information and purchases. The website can save time on purchasing and searching for information by making it simple for customers to access information about products and services [16], including reducing the inconvenience of visiting the store, reducing the time of queuing in line for payment, helping to compare product prices easily, and serving as a cost-effective sales channel to offer various models of products [17]. It is able to collect the customer history with the shopping pattern. Shopping patterns via social networks are likely to increase as customers perceive the benefits and enjoyment of shopping and can compare the money spent on purchases, wasted time, or effort in purchasing products [12]. Social networking channels can provide information with two-way communication for customers through after-sales service by responding to conflicts and resolving issues while the customers quickly build brand awareness and build strong customer relationships [18; 19]. In this case, customers can get advice from friends on Facebook and Twitter by reading product reviews from experts or real users before making a decision, including helping to find information, comparing prices, sharing information about products, and trading goods and services. As a result, most

of our young customers spend four to five hours a day on social networks and prefer to use this channel for communication by sharing messages [20]. Social networking channels are one of the integrated marketing channels in the Chinese dishes catering business.

### 2.3 Omni-Channel Marketing

Buying products from various channels that entrepreneurs have linked all channels together, both offline and online channels. Omni-channel is intended for communication purposes, providing information to target groups, product distribution, and facilitating consumers to have alternatives to make purchasing decisions anywhere and anytime [21], [12]. Thus, today customers need a variety of marketing channels to choose products, especially for the benefits of online channels to access unlimited information about products. In addition, customers can compare online prices and read reviews and recommendations from friends or experts. However, at the same time, customers also want to reap the benefit from the storefront channel, such as the requirement to make experience or try a real product with special care by salespeople. Then, they need the product information from a salesperson by making the experience of walking and shopping in the store. In this situation, it will give value to the customer from buying the products compared to the integrated distribution channel [14]. The purchasing value from integrated distribution channels is a combination of offline and online commerce channels [14], [12]. The composition of the value from purchasing products with the integrated distribution channel in the Chinese dishes catering business consists of direct contact with Chinese dishes catering operators, in-store channels, websites, mobile applications, and social networks [22].

### 2.4 Measuring Channel Performance

The measures of the effectiveness of offline and online marketing channels consist of 1) Engagement rate by reach, 2) Conversion rate by channel, and 3) Cost per sale/acquisition and Return on Investment [11]. Thus, these tools can be used to measure the effectiveness of marketing channels affecting the Chinese dishes catering business.

## 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is qualitative research with a research design based on the creative paradigm or constructivism with the strategy of building a grounded theory from three groups of key informants; namely, 1) nineteen Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs in Nakhon Pathom province, 2) three marketing and business administration experts, an online marketing and business strategy consultant, and 3) two food business experts to verify the completeness of the triangular according to the concept [23]. The data collection methods were performed by in-depth semi-structured interviews, and the research process was conducted using a research and development model (Research and Development) with three

steps as follows: 1) a study of the problems of offline and online marketing channels in the Chinese dishes catering business; 2) the design of offline marketing channels; and 3) to develop, trial, and measure the effectiveness of offline and online marketing channels for the Chinese dishes catering business. The data collection includes a literature review and related research papers with observations and in-depth interviews. Online interview was conducted via LINE Meeting and Zoom Meeting programs. The interview took about one hour to interview Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs and experts who were the key informants. Additionally, the researcher is aware of research ethics, which consist of consent to information and actual information to maintain confidentiality and provide accurate information while reducing the data risk.

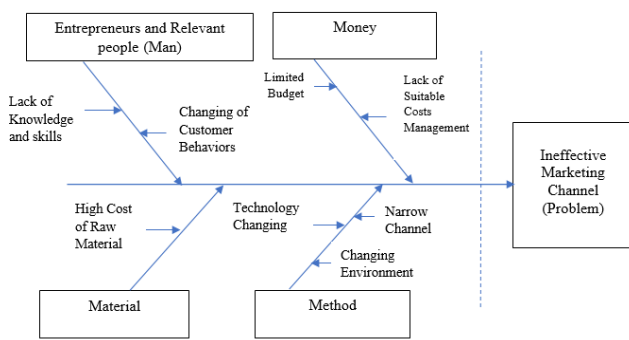
The criteria of key informants for Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs consist of 1) Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs in Nakhon Pathom province who have passed the assessment standards of the Public Health in Nakhon Pathom province, 2) age between 25–60 years old, 3) having experience in Chinese dishes catering business at least two years, and 4) able to participate in all activities throughout the research project. In addition, the criteria for selecting personnel from the government and private sectors with academic support roles consist of 1) a person with knowledge and expertise in certifying marketing safety standards for Chinese dishes catering business in Nakhon Pathom province on the website for ordering food and beverage services, Chinese dishes catering party preparation (organize) at least one year and 2) able to participate in all activities throughout the research project.

In qualitative research, samples are frequently small to support the in-depth case-oriented analysis that is required for this type of investigation. Qualitative samples were additionally purposefully chosen; that is, they were chosen for their ability to offer in-depth details pertinent to the phenomenon under study.

## 4. RESULTS

According to the analysis result with the condition of problems from the marketing channels of the Chinese dishes catering business, the 4 M principle and the fishbone map were used to study the problem condition shown in Figure 1.

In this case, it has employed the 4M principle with the fishbone diagram for the marketing channel analysis of the Chinese dishes catering business, as shown in Figure 1. Moreover, the problem encountered was the inefficiency of the marketing channel with four issues: 1) Entrepreneurs who lack knowledge and skills, including changing customer behavior or Man; 2) Capital limitation due to a lack of proper capital management and money; 3) High raw material costs; and 4) Narrow marketing channels with a lack of diversity and changes in technology and environment with the method.



**Fig. 1.** Analysis of the marketing channel with the Chinese dishes catering business by using 4M and the fishbone map.

According to the analysis of the inefficiency problem for marketing channels, this research led to optimizing the marketing channels for the Chinese dishes catering business by developing offline and online marketing channels with the Chinese dishes catering business in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. They are divided into four types of marketing channels as follows: 1) Single-Channel Marketing, 2) Multi-Channel Marketing, 3) Cross-Channel Marketing, and 4) Seamless Integrated Marketing Channel or Omni-Channel Marketing [24], as shown in Figure 2.



**Fig. 2** The format of the marketing channels for the Chinese catering business. Source: [24]

**4.1 Single-channel marketing for Chinese dishes catering business**

It shows that the Chinese dishes catering business has been using only one marketing channel since its inception until now. According to the existing marketing channels of the past Chinese dishes catering business, there was only one offline channel where operators would deal with customers directly through face-to-face communication. Besides, it shows that ninety percent of Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs do not have a storefront, and only ten percent have an entire storefront, while each hire will focus on a large number of tables to provide full service.

*Development of an offline marketing channel*

Entrepreneurs have also adopted a face-to-face communication model through the application of mobile phones with the target of existing customers who are loyal to the brand by using word-of-mouth strategy to acquire new customers. In addition, they can adjust the service model by reducing the number of tables at each time, emphasizing the level of quality and safety tableware, including providing standardized services to build customer confidence through the process of increasing safety measures. Then, all

employees serving are vaccinated, while all waiters wear masks and plastic gloves. All attendees of the Chinese banquet wear masks and take their temperature before entering the venue. It is related to the seating arrangement in social distance measure as one table contains 4–6 chairs, and the tableware and utensils are covered with plastic wrap. Additionally, a serving spoon is provided for everyone at the table, and no alcoholic beverages are served. In some cases, box sets are given out to guests to take home instead of dining.

**4.2 Multi-channel marketing for Chinese dishes catering business**

According to the traditional marketing channel of the past Chinese dishes catering businesses, they used various marketing channels with direct contact between the buyers and the sellers as offline channels and online channels.

*Development of multiple marketing channels*

It involves the development of offline marketing channels, as mentioned above, and the development of online marketing channels, which consist of a central website to gather Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs. Besides, it has participated in this study as the website named “Nakhon Pathom Chinese dishes catering” and developed LINE Official for each entrepreneur, including developing Facebook Official named “Nakhon Pathom Chinese dishes catering, Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs”. Thus, the business models have been adjusted so that they can reach more customers and create more sales opportunities. However, this channel has limitations because the customers can access each channel individually, but each channel is not connected. This makes it impossible for customers to use cross-channel services because the data of each channel is inconsistent due to the lack of synchronization between channels and changes in technology and the environment.

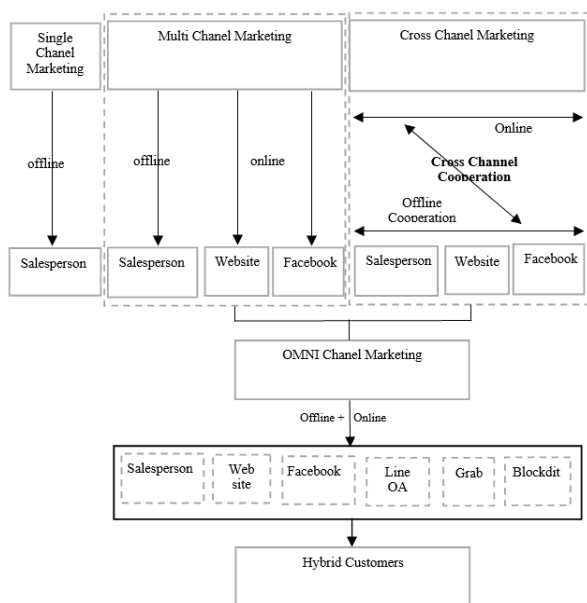
**4.3 Cross-channel marketing for Chinese dishes catering business**

Cross-channel marketing is a channel for customers to communicate with entrepreneurs to buy products through a mix of multiple channels, increasing the convenience for customers. However, from the entrepreneurs’ perspective, there is still a lack of a management system for connection in each channel, causing the work to be a system that has not yet achieved the highest efficiency that leads to progress.

**4.4 Omni-channel marketing for Chinese dishes catering business**

Development of additional online marketing channels consisting of a food delivery platform (Grab) and Chinese

dishes catering entrepreneurs have arranged the tableware as small Chinese dishes catering sets that customers can choose via online ordering with Google Forms. The entrepreneur is the courier of developing a seamless integrated marketing channel by creating a link to the efficient operation of all channels, including improving the weaknesses of each channel and enabling customer experience. It involves the purchase of goods and services with easy accessibility and a fast system to link all channels with information. The customers can close the deal completely by integrating to raise awareness and publicize the Chinese dishes catering business through writing marketing content on the Blockdit platform; the details are shown in Figure 3.



**Fig. 3. Marketing channel model for Chinese dishes catering business.**

The results show that there are ten Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs used multi-channel marketing, representing 53% of the total. Seven entrepreneurs used cross-channel marketing for 36%, while two used omni-channel marketing for 11%. Concerning the efficiency of using marketing channels of Chinese dishes catering operators, the mean of single-channel marketing accounted for 4.09 (mean = 4.09, S.D. = 0.819). The mean of multi-channel marketing accounted for 3.89 (mean = 3.89, S.D. = 0.829). The mean of cross-channel marketing accounted for 3.82 (mean = 3.82, S.D. = 0.8219), and the mean of omni-channel marketing accounted for 3.69 (mean = 3.69, S.D. = 0.839). Therefore, the development of offline and online marketing channels for the Chinese dishes catering business in Nakhon Pathom is in line with the changing environment, resulting in the unceasing development of new technologies. Additionally, the diversified channel proliferation and the good customer relationships with purchases over the internet are important sales channels for selling consumer goods

[25]. Thus, it is related to the supply chain [26] and the convergence of offline and online channels to make a difference in services through the different channels and the different goals regarding the age group that the Chinese dishes catering business has searched for data. The supply chain may deteriorate if a company is successful but lacks specific risk prevention measures [27]. Comparison of reviews and contacts with entrepreneurs is gaining popularity, creating added value in terms of service and customer relations in parallel with the use of traditional channels by confirming trial purchases; that is, tasting the food or ending up negotiating with the vendors in the final stages. Aside from fulfilling customers' requirements, maintaining customer relationships and building brand loyalty is as essential as acquiring more customers [28]. However, in this research, there was a limitation in the study on efficacy measurements due to the incidence of COVID-19 disease. This resulted in the suspension of the Chinese dishes catering business due to government measures, causing high uncertainty in profit and cost estimations.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The current business practices involve the proliferation of digital technology and changing customer behavior for the line between offline commerce and online commerce. In order to be successful in the long term, organizations need to integrate both channels. Besides, this article presents the guidelines for developing diverse and interoperable marketing channels to help businesses integrate offline and online by applying the theory and process of developing multiple marketing channels. Based on the cross-channel and omni-channel integration that are the drivers of sustainable competitive advantage, it is able to summarize the development guidelines in four forms.

1) Single-Channel Marketing that is the offline channel to use with the communication via telephone as the word-of-mouth recommendation strategy. At networking events, offline marketing will be beneficial. In-person brand communication is greatly facilitated by networking. Additionally, it allows business owners to speak with people face-to-face, enabling them to respond to inquiries immediately and present a more human side to their enterprise. Some claim that this form of offline brand marketing is the most successful.

2) Multi-Channel Marketing with online channels to develop a website in the center of Facebook Official named "Nakhon Pathom Chinese dishes catering, Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs". The idea behind multi-channel marketing is that customers now have more options than ever on how they want to learn about products. In order to advance their customer relationship management initiatives, marketing departments have increased their presence on these channels due to the proliferation of available channels,

including the growth of email, social media, and mobile phones.

3) Increase Cross-Channel Marketing. The goal of cross-channel marketing is to keep the conversation going with current customers through all stages of the customer lifecycle, from acquisition to loyalty and retention, across all of the channels they use.

4) Omni-Channel Marketing that is the sale of Chinese dishes catering through a food delivery platform (Grab), and Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs arrange food sets as Chinese dishes catering sets. Marketers give customers access to goods and services through a variety of channels, platforms, and devices when they employ an omni-channel marketing strategy. For instance, Chinese dishes catering entrepreneurs could provide customer support via email, phone, Facebook Messenger, and live chat on the website rather than solely on desktop.

As a result, it is involved with the small size that the customers can choose via online ordering with Google Forms delivered from the entrepreneurs. Thus, this article assists entrepreneurs in evaluating the benefits of integrating offline and online marketing channels to suit their business, including creating opportunities to expand the market to customers to take full advantage. However, according to the potential of these marketing channels, entrepreneurs should systematically and cautiously apply a good strategy to support and drive further dynamics.

Chinese dishes catering businesses can use the research results as a guideline for development. The Office of Provincial Commercial Affairs and the Chinese dishes catering Association can also adopt them as a guide for knowledge provision by organizing training for Chinese dishes catering operators and other food business operators to develop personnel and workers serving the Chinese dishes catering business to meet the needs of service recipients as much as possible. The application of integrated marketing tools for the Chinese dishes catering business must start from clearly defined target groups because it will allow businesses to use integrated marketing tools appropriately and can measure their success. The result of successful market integration is the value of customer loyalty. In addition, it is necessary to expand marketing channels for Chinese dishes catering business customers to be widely known in the form of advertising and public relations through online and offline media, as well as disseminate the knowledge to other groups of Chinese dishes catering operators to raise the standard of food quality and holistic services.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper grateful for the research funding of National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) to support this research.

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