

THE IMPACT OF MASCOT, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND SALES CHANNEL, FACTORS TOWARDS THE BUYING DECISION OF BUTTERBEAR BAKERY SHOP

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the factors that influence the buying decisions of customers at Butterbear Bakery Shop. The three independent variables of this study to understand the dependent variable of customers' buying decision are the mascot, social media and sales channel. Sub-variables to test for mascot included appearance, personality and engagement. The sub-variables for social media consisted of the engagement, user-generated content and viral attractions. The sub-variables for the sales channel included accessibility, convenience and customer experience. A quantitative research method was employed, using a structured questionnaire distributed to 425 respondents in China, and snowball sampling method was used to collect the survey from social media contacts using Wenjuanxing for this study. The questionnaire comprises multiple choices for demographic data and a five-point Likert scale for independent and dependent variables. The statistical software used for analyzing data includes descriptive and inferential analysis. The results of the study showed that all the hypotheses proposed were supported. The results revealed that there is a significant effect between the independent variables (mascot, social media and sales channel) and the dependent variable (buying decision).

Keywords: Mascot, Social Media, Sale Channel

Introduction

Butterbear Bakery Shop is a popular bakery brand in Thailand, known for its delightful range of baked goods and beverages, including pastries, cakes, and specialty drinks. The shop gained significant recognition due to its adorable mascot, Butterbear, which has become a central part of its branding. The mascot's charming appearance and engaging personality have made it a social media sensation, particularly in China, where it went viral after appearing in entertaining content such as dancing videos. The mascot’s weekly in-store appearances attract long queues of both locals and tourists, creating a sense of exclusivity and excitement around the brand. Butterbear Bakery's strategic use of social media and co-branding partnerships, such as collaborations with Chinese coffee and drink brands, has further expanded its reach and visibility, establishing it as a beloved brand among consumers who value both quality products and an engaging customer experience.

Research Objectives

1. Analyze the impact of mascot factors (appearance, personality, engagement)
2. Examine the influence of social media factors (engagement, user-generated content, visual attraction)

3. Evaluate how sales channels (accessibility, convenience, customer experience) affect buying decisions.

Scope of the Research

1. Population Scope:

The study targets 425 respondents, primarily composed of consumers familiar with Butterbear Bakery Shop. These respondents were selected through a snowball sampling technique, focusing on individuals residing in or connected to key markets influenced by the bakery's brand presence and marketing strategies.

2. Variable Scope

The research examines three independent variables: Mascot Factors: Appearance, personality, and engagement. Social Media Factors: Engagement, user-generated content, and visual attraction. Sales Channel Factors: Accessibility, convenience, and customer experience. The dependent variable is the buying decision of consumers.

3. Time Scope

The data collection and analysis were conducted over a defined period in 2024, focusing on consumer behavior during that time frame.

Literature Review

Mascots are a significant branding tool, often serving as a visual symbol that conveys a brand's personality and values, fostering emotional connections with consumers. Keller and Lehmann (2006) described mascots as integral elements of brand identity, designed to create memorable and positive associations with a brand. When used effectively, mascots can enhance brand recognition and differentiate a business from competitors, making them a critical part of branding strategy. Mascots play a critical role in driving consumer engagement by humanizing brands and adding an element of personality, which helps capture consumer interest. Research suggests that mascots are particularly effective in digital and social media marketing, where they can interact with consumers in dynamic ways, such as through social media posts, animations, or live events (Aaker, 1997).

Social media is a key component in digital marketing, providing businesses with a means to reach and engage with their audience directly, fostering interaction, brand loyalty, and consumer trust (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). Social media has emerged as a powerful tool in digital marketing, allowing businesses to engage directly with consumers in real-time. Social media significantly influences consumer behavior by allowing users to engage with brands, seek recommendations, and read reviews. Research by Cheung et al. (2011) found that social media reviews and user-generated content (UGC) greatly impact consumers' purchasing decisions, as individuals trust peer recommendations over traditional advertisements. Kim and Ko (2012) further emphasized that social media enhances brand loyalty through emotional engagement, wherein consumers feel more connected to a brand through ongoing interactions online.

A sales channel refers to the method or platform through which a product or service is delivered to consumers. Sales channels can be classified into two primary types: direct (such as a company's own physical store or website) and indirect (such as third-party retailers or e-commerce platforms). These channels are critical for businesses to connect with their target audience, increase accessibility, and optimize the customer experience (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Effective management of sales channels plays a key role in maximizing reach, revenue, and customer satisfaction. Sales channels significantly influence consumer buying decisions. Studies by Puccinelli et al. (2009) suggested that the convenience and accessibility provided

by multiple sales channels affect consumer perceptions of the brand and play a critical role in purchasing decisions.

Research Methodology

1. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research approach to investigate the impact of mascot, social media, and sales channel factors on consumers' buying decisions for Butterbear Bakery Shop products. The research aims to analyze the relationship between independent variables (mascot, social media, sales channel) and the dependent variable (buying decision).

2. Research Steps

The online questionnaire will be measured as the following:

The attitude of independent variables: interval scale (the least (1) to the most (5))

The attitude of dependent variable: interval scale (the least (1) to the most (5))

The statistics used will be 2 types: 1. Descriptive statistics, which is composed of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. 2. Inferential statistics, which is composed of the Multiple Regression Analysis Test.

3. Data Collection

The quantitative questionnaire was developed using Wenjuanxing and was conducted in Chinese. According to Yamane's table for sample size, if the population in the country is greater than 100,000, 400 sample sizes are needed to be collected with a precision level of $\pm 5\%$. So this research will collect 425 samples to illustrate the whole population in China.

It was distributed online to 425 respondents who had purchased Butterbear bakery shop products in China.

4. Data Analysis

Use descriptive analysis to summarize demographic data. Use inferential statistics to assess relationships between independent and dependent variables. Use hypothesis testing to determine the significance of the variables affecting buying decisions

H₁: Mascot (appearance, personality, engagement) have a significant impact on customer's buying decision of Butterbear bakery shop.

H₂: Social media (engagement, user-generated content and visual attraction) have a significant impact on customer's buying decision of Butterbear bakery shop.

H₃: Sales channel (Accessibility, convenience and customer experience) have a significant impact on customer's buying decision of Butterbear bakery shop.

Research Results

According to the questionnaire, most respondents aged under 25 years old (48.2%). Most of the respondents are female (54.1%), followed by males (42.8%). The most significant number of nationalities is Chinese (82.1%), followed by Thailand (8.5%). The majority of the respondents hold bachelor's degrees (38.6%) and work as employees (41.9%). Most respondents earn from 25,001 to 30,000 baht (30.1%). More respondents buy the Butterbear product only one time (35.8%) and spend from 100 to 150 baht per time (25.4%). Most participants purchase peripheral products (60.9%), followed by bakery product (54.1%). Finally, a significant factor that influences participants to make the buying decision is the social media promotion (46.6%), Butterbear mascot (58.4%), and Convenience of Sales Channels (53.2%).

Table 1: The Total Reliability Test Results

Cronbach’s Alpha	N (number) of Items
0.967	39

Table 2: The Reliability Test Results for Mascot

Cronbach’s Alpha	N (number) of Items
.881	9

Table 3: The Reliability Test Results for Social Media

Cronbach’s Alpha	N (number) of Items
.869	9

Table 4: The Reliability Test Results for Sales channel

Cronbach’s Alpha	N (number) of Items
.865	9

Table 5: The Reliability Test Results Buying Decision

Cronbach’s Alpha	N (number) of Items
.903	12

Table 6: Mean and Standard Deviation of Mascot Factors

Sub-variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1.1 Appearance	3.98	.870	Agree
1.2 Personality	3.92	.883	Agree
1.3 Engagement	3.97	.900	Agree
Total	3.96	.797	Agree

From table 5 the result shows most respondents agreed with the appearance (\bar{x} = 3.98, S.D. = .870) followed by the personality (\bar{x} = 3.92, S.D. =.883), and the engagement (\bar{x} = 3.79, S. D. = .900). To summarize, the mean of all three mascot factors is 3.96 (agree), and the standard deviation is .797.

Table 7: Mean and Standard Deviation of Social Media Factors

Sub-variables	Mean	Std.Deviation	Interpretation
2.1 Engagement	3.94	0.901	Agree
2.2 User-Generated content	3.94	0.835	Agree
2.3 Visual Attraction	3.95	0.887	Agree
Total	3.94	0.776	Agree

Table 7 shows that most of the respondents agreed on engagement (\bar{x} = 3.94, S.D. = .901). Moreover, most participants agreed on user-generated content (\bar{x} = 3.94, S.D. = .835) and visual attraction (\bar{x} = 3.95, S.D. = .887). Overall, the mean of the social media factors is 3.94 (agree), and the standard deviation is .776.

Table 8: Mean and Standard Deviation of Sales Channel

Sub-variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
3.1 Accessibility	3.92	.894	Agree
3.2 Convenience	3.93	.867	Agree
3.3 Customer Experience	3.95	.862	Agree
Total	3.93	.775	Agree

Table 8 illustrates that most respondents agreed on accessibility (\bar{x} = 3.92, S.D. = .894) and convenience (\bar{x} = 3.93, S.D. = .867). Many participants agreed on customer experience (\bar{x} = 3.95, S.D. = .862). In total, the mean of the sales channel factors is 3.93 (agree), and the standard deviation is .775.

Table 9: Mean and Standard Deviation of Buying Decision

Dependent variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Buying Decision	3.93	.760	Agree

The table 9 shows the data on the dependent variable, buying decision. It highlights that respondent in this research agreed with their decision to buy the Butterbear bakery shop (\bar{x} = 3.93, S.D. = .760).

Table 10: Analysis of Impact of Mascot towards Buying Decision

Mascot sub variables	b	Beta	t	Sig.	Interpretation
1.1 Appearance	.315	.360	9.626	0.01*	Accepted
1.2 Personality	.290	.336	9.227	0.01*	Accepted
1.3 Engagement	.237	.280	7.824	0.01*	Accepted

Adjusted R-square = .774, F = 486.142 *P ≤ 0.05

Independent variable = Mascot

Dependent variable = Buying Decision

Table 10 showed the statistical analysis of the relationship between the mascot and buying decision. This research finding supports the hypothesis proposed that mascot (appearance, personality and engagement) have a significant impact on customers’ buying decision toward Butterbear bakery shop. The table shows that three sub-variables are supported: Appearance (Sig = .001) and Personality (Sig = .001), and engagement (Sig = .001). Moreover, the Adjusted R Square for mascot factors is .774, indicating that mascot factors can classify the change in customer’s buying decision level in the Butterbear bakery shop with 77.4%. Lastly, among the three sub-variables, the Beta value for “Appearance” is 36%, which shows the highest effect on customers’ buying decision, followed by “Personality” at 33.6% and “Engagement” at 28%. Therefore, H1 is accepted.

Table 11: Analysis of Impact of Social Media towards Buying Decision

Social Media Sub-variables	b	Beta	t	Sig	Interpretation
2.1 Engagement	0.31	0.357	9.611	0.01*	Accepted
2.2 User-Generated Content	0.287	0.315	9.180	0.01*	Accepted
2.3 Visual Attraction	0.265	0.310	8.454	0.01*	Accepted

Adjusted R-square = .757, F = 440.845, *P≤0.05

Independent variable = Social Media

Dependent variable = Buying Decision

Table 11 displays the statistical analysis of the relationship between the social media factors and buying decision. This research finding supports the hypothesis proposed that social media (engagement, user-generated content, and visual attraction) significantly impact customers’ buying decision to the Butterbear bakery shop. The table shows that all three sub-variables are supported: Affordability (Sig = .005), Promotional offers (Sig = <.001), and Value (Sig = <.001). Moreover, the Adjusted R Square for price factors is .757, indicating that social media factors can explain the change in customer’s buying decision level in the Butterbear bakery shop with 75.7%. Lastly, among the three sub-variables, the Beta value for “Engagement” is 35.7%, which shows the highest effect on customers’ buying decision, followed by “User generated content” at 31.5% and “visual attraction” at 26.5%. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

Table 12: Analysis of Impact of Sales Channel

Sales Channel Sub-variables	b	Beta	t	Sig	Interpretation
3.1 Accessibility	0.329	0.387	11.801	0.01*	Accepted
3.2 Convenience	0.269	0.307	9.249	0.01*	Accepted
3.3 Customer Experience	0.272	0.309	9.078	0.01*	Accepted

Adjusted R-square = .787, F = 524.583, *P≤0.05

Independent variable = Sales Channel

Dependent variable = Buying Decision

Table 12 displays the statistical analysis of the relationship between sales channel and Buying decision. This research finding supports the hypothesis proposed that sales channel

accessibility, convenience and customer experience) have a significant impact on customers' buying decision to the Butterbear bakery shop. The table illustrated that all sub-variables are supported; Accessibility (Sig = .010), Convenience (Sig = .001), and Customer experience (Sig = .001). Moreover, the Adjusted R Square for aesthetic values factors is .787, indicating that sales channel factors can explain the change in customer's buying decision level in the Butterbear bakery shop with 78.7%. Lastly, among the three sub-variables, the Beta value for “Accessibility” is 38.7%, which shows the highest effect on customers' buying decision, followed by “Customer experience” at 30.9% and “Convenience” at 30.7%. Therefore, H3 is accepted.

Discussion

This research aimed to examine how mascots, social media, and sales channels influence consumer buying decisions. The findings highlight that these three factors play a significant role in shaping customer perceptions, building brand loyalty, and ultimately driving purchase behavior.

For the mascot factors, a brand mascot's appearance, personality, and engagement are powerful factors that significantly influence consumer buying decisions. These elements work together to create emotional connections, enhance brand recognition, and drive customer loyalty. Firstly, a mascot's visual appearance plays a critical role in attracting consumer attention and improving brand recall. Visually appealing and distinctive mascots capture interest and make a brand more memorable, increasing the likelihood of purchase (Keller & Lehmann, 2006). A well-designed mascot can differentiate a brand in competitive markets, making it easier for consumers to recognize and trust the brand (Delbaere, McQuarrie, & Phillips, 2011). Secondly, a mascot's personality deeply influences consumer perceptions and emotional engagement. When a mascot's personality aligns with the brand's identity and resonates with consumers' values—whether it's fun, caring, or adventurous—it fosters emotional bonds that strengthen brand loyalty (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007). Lastly, active engagement between mascots and consumers, especially on social media and in interactive marketing campaigns, greatly impacts buying decisions. Mascots that engage with customers through storytelling, live events, or social media trends create memorable experiences that build emotional connections and encourage product purchases (Schmitt, 1999). This engagement not only enhances brand visibility but also increases customer involvement and loyalty. In summary, a mascot's appearance, personality, and level of engagement are essential in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. Brands that effectively design and promote mascots can influence consumer perceptions, foster deeper emotional connections, and ultimately drive stronger purchasing decisions.

For the social media factors, social media was found to be a powerful platform for shaping consumer behavior through social proof, influencer marketing, and visually appealing content. Active brand engagement and user-generated content on social media increase brand visibility and credibility, encouraging consumers to trust and purchase products. Social media plays a crucial role in shaping consumer buying decisions through engagement, user-generated content (UGC), and visual attraction. These factors collectively enhance brand visibility, build trust, and motivate consumers to purchase products. Firstly, social media engagement—including likes, comments, shares, and interactive content—directly influences consumer behavior. Active brand engagement fosters a sense of community and trust, encouraging consumers to interact with and purchase from the brand (Alalwan et al., 2017). Secondly, user-generated content (UGC) significantly affects buying behavior by providing authentic and relatable product experiences. Consumers are more likely to trust content created by other

users, such as reviews, testimonials, and product photos, over traditional advertisements (Cheung et al., 2009). Lastly, visual attraction through high-quality, creative, and visually appealing content is vital for capturing attention and driving purchases. Visually engaging content—such as vibrant images, videos, and graphics—can evoke emotions and make products more desirable (Berger & Milkman, 2012). In conclusion, the combined impact of engagement, user-generated content, and visual attraction on social media significantly shapes consumer buying decisions. Brands that strategically leverage these factors can enhance customer trust, increase brand loyalty, and drive higher sales.

For the sales channel factor, the effectiveness of a brand's sales channels significantly influences consumer buying decisions, with key factors including accessibility, convenience, and the overall customer experience. These elements shape how customers perceive the brand, interact with it, and ultimately decide to make a purchase. Firstly, accessibility in sales channels is crucial for ensuring that products are easily available to customers through both online and offline platforms. Brands that provide multiple and easily reachable sales channels—such as physical stores, e-commerce websites, and mobile apps—make it more convenient for customers to access their products, which increases the likelihood of purchase (Verhoef et al., 2015). Secondly, convenience in the purchasing process significantly impacts buying behavior. Sales channels that prioritize time-saving solutions and frictionless shopping experiences are more likely to convert interest into sales (Grewal et al., 2018). Lastly, the quality of the customer experience within sales channels directly affects purchasing decisions. Positive experiences, characterized by excellent customer service, personalized recommendations, and a smooth purchasing process, enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty (Homburg et al., 2015). In conclusion, the integration of accessible, convenient, and customer-centric sales channels is vital for influencing consumer buying decisions. Brands that optimize these factors can enhance customer satisfaction, build loyalty, and drive long-term sales growth.

Overall, the research demonstrates that the combined impact of mascots, social media strategies, and well-structured sales channels significantly enhances a brand's ability to attract, engage, and retain customers. Understanding how these factors influence consumer behavior enables businesses to develop more effective marketing strategies, strengthen brand loyalty, and drive long-term growth.

Recommendations

Future studies should examine how specific mascot attributes such as design, color schemes, and personality traits—influence consumer perceptions and brand loyalty across different cultural contexts. Exploring how mascots impact various demographic groups could provide insights into designing mascots that resonate with diverse audiences. Given the rapid evolution of social media, future research should investigate the impact of emerging platforms (e.g., TikTok, Threads) and content formats (e.g., short videos, interactive stories) on consumer behavior. Additionally, understanding how algorithm changes and paid promotions influence organic engagement and buying decisions can offer valuable insights for brands.

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