



Unveiling the 4Es Marketing Strategy: Factors Influencing Online Shopping Behavior Among Consumers in Krabi, Thailand

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Abstract

The rapid growth of electronic commerce (e-commerce), as well as social commerce (s-commerce), has revolutionized the way consumers shop, presenting new opportunities and challenges for marketers. Understanding the factors that influence online shopping behavior is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies. This qualitative study explores the influence of the 4Es marketing strategy on online shopping behavior among consumers in Krabi, Thailand. The 4Es strategy focuses on experience, everyplace, exchange and evangelism. This research adopted interviews with 12 key informants. Content analysis and NVivo were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study highlight the crucial role of the 4Es strategy in influencing consumers' online shopping behavior. It emphasizes the significance of personalized experiences, convenience, transparency, and customer advocacy in capturing and retaining customers in the competitive online marketplace. These insights offer valuable guidance for marketers aiming to enhance their strategies and elevate the online shopping experience for their target audience. By integrating the 4Es elements into their marketing efforts, businesses can forge strong relationships with consumers, boost customer satisfaction and loyalty, and ultimately drive online sales. Implementing these strategies can provide a competitive edge and position businesses for success in the dynamic landscape of both e-commerce and s-commerce.

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Introduction

The advent of the digital era has revolutionized the way consumers engage with businesses, transforming the traditional shopping experience into a dynamic and interconnected online marketplace. In response to this shift, marketing strategies have had to adapt to accommodate the changing consumer landscape (Kartajaya et al., 2016; Verhoef et al., 2021). The genesis of the 4 Ps (Product, Place, Price, and Promotion) concept occurred during an era characterized by marketer dominance, and products possessed enduring lifespans before being superseded by the next superior offering. However, this framework fails to withstand the demands of the present-day dynamic digital landscape. The advent of the Internet has profoundly transformed the manner in which individuals search for, evaluate, and purchase goods and services. Consequently, to attain genuine success in the online marketplace, marketers must embrace and adapt to these evolving consumer behaviors. Achieving prosperity in today's digital market necessitates a fundamental shift in how marketers approach their consumers and tailor their online endeavors accordingly (Atkinson, 2020).

According to Maniplal (2020), the contemporary marketplace represents an unprecedented departure from historical norms, exemplified by the advent of e-commerce, as well as s-commerce, enabling individuals to acquire virtually any product from any location worldwide using digital currency. Moreover, the proliferation of virtual assistants has revolutionized the buying experience by tailoring personalized recommendations to each individual, resulting in unique purchasing journeys. In this era, well-established marketing frameworks such as the 4Ps of marketing are undergoing a notable transformation, giving way to the emergence of the 4Es of marketing.

The 4Es of marketing encompass the principles of "Experience," "Everyplace," "Exchange," and "Evangelism." While not as universally embraced, some marketing experts and scholars have introduced these concepts to adapt to the evolving marketing landscape. To delve into each of these 4Es, "Experience" emphasizes creating memorable customer interactions and emotional connections; "Everyplace" stresses the need for omnichannel marketing to reach customers across diverse touchpoints; "Exchange" underscores the value creation aspect in transactions; and "Evangelism" centers on cultivating brand advocates. It's important to note that the choice between these frameworks depends on a business's unique context and objectives, as different industries may find one more suitable than the other for their marketing strategies.

Transitioning from the traditional 4Ps marketing framework to the modern 4Es framework has become imperative in the contemporary business landscape. Consumers today place greater emphasis on the overall experience they have with a brand, rather than solely focusing on the product features. Leveraging the abundance of data available through website analytics, businesses can gain valuable insights into their customers' journey, starting from initial contact to the point of purchase (Atkinson, 2020). To effectively understand the customer experience through analytics, it is crucial to consider how users perceive the brand across various devices. Ensuring a seamless and enjoyable experience across all platforms, including mobile devices and desktops, is essential. Consistency is key, as customers should have a similar brand experience regardless of where they encounter the business (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Mocanu, 2020).

In the digital age, the concept of "Place" has transformed into "Everyplace." Consumers now invest significant time in researching products online before making a purchase. Establishing a strong online presence across multiple platforms ensures that the business remains top-of-mind. Recognizing that consumer needs vary depending on their position in the sales funnel and their preferred method of accessing content, businesses must strive to be easily discoverable online. Optimizing online visibility increases the likelihood of customer conversions and helps to stay competitive in the market. Shifting the focus from "Price" to "Exchange" acknowledges that not all offerings on a website are tangible products. Sometimes, the goal is to encourage visitors to engage with the business at a different level, such as downloading guides or reports or subscribing to newsletters. To build trust and facilitate this exchange of valuable information, businesses must establish credibility and foster a sense of security. Earning the trust of customers empowers them to share their personal data, such as credit card details or email addresses. In the era of social media, businesses have the opportunity to transform customers into brand evangelists. Rather than solely relying on traditional promotional efforts, the emphasis now lies on cultivating evangelism. By initiating meaningful conversations with followers and fans, businesses can provide incentives for customers to share their positive experiences and advocate for the brand. Creating multiple reasons for customers to spread the word about the business cultivates a network of passionate brand evangelists, amplifying the brand's reach and impact (Atkinson, 2020; Nemati & Weber, 2022; Tseng, 2023).

Understanding how the 4Es impact online shopping behavior is crucial in today's digital age.

Online shopping has become a significant part of consumers' lives, and businesses need effective strategies to engage and convert online shoppers. In addition, the 4Es marketing strategy holds great significance, making it a crucial area of study. Numerous studies have been conducted on the 4Ps marketing mix. For instance, Asdi and Putra (2020) investigated the impact of the 4Ps marketing mix on consumer purchasing decisions regarding Samsung smartphone products. Maulana and Najib (2021) explored the influence of the marketing mix on consumer trust and satisfaction in online purchases of organic food during the COVID-19 outbreak. However, there is limited research on the influence of the 4Es marketing strategy on online shopping behavior among consumers. Therefore, the objective of this study is to elucidate the influence of the 4Es marketing strategy (experience, everyplace, exchange, and evangelism) on consumers' online shopping behavior. The research specifically focuses on Krabi, Thailand, a region renowned for its flourishing tourism industry and increasing prevalence of online consumer activity. Through an examination of the factors shaping online shopping behavior among consumers in Krabi, Thailand, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on digital marketing and provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the 4Es marketing strategy within this specific context. The findings of this study can offer practical insights for businesses operating in Krabi or similar markets. It can guide them in tailoring their marketing strategies to resonate with local consumers and enhance their online shopping experiences. From an academic standpoint, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence of how the 4Es influence online shopping behavior. It adds to the understanding of consumer psychology and marketing

strategies in a digital context. The results may also have implications for policy-makers and regulatory bodies interested in e-commerce and consumer protection. Understanding what motivates or influences online shopping behavior can inform policies aimed at promoting fair trade and protecting consumers.

Objective

This study aims to explain the influence of the 4Es marketing strategy (experience, everyplace, exchange and evangelism) on online shopping behavior among consumers in Krabi, Thailand. Explaining the influence of the 4Es marketing strategy on online shopping behavior in Krabi, Thailand, is essential for both practical and academic reasons. It sheds light on consumer behavior in a specific context, helping businesses refine their strategies and contributing to the broader understanding of marketing in the digital era.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach as the research strategy, comprising four distinct steps: research design, data collection, data analysis, and report writing (Moin & Kraiwanit, 2023). By utilizing this methodology, the focus was on examining the decision-making processes and specific behaviors exhibited by individuals or groups, with the intention of elucidating the observed phenomena. This approach facilitated the collection of supplementary data, leading to a comprehensive understanding, and emphasized the importance of fostering open communication during interviews (Siripipatthanakul et al., 2022). To evaluate the impact of the 4Es marketing strategy on online shopping behavior among consumers in Krabi, Thailand, a series of in-depth interviews were conducted. The choice of Krabi as the

study location added a specific regional context to the research. Krabi, known for its tourism industry, might have unique consumer behaviors and preferences. Understanding how the 4Es apply in this area can be particularly useful for businesses operating there.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, in line with recommendations for achieving data saturation in qualitative research. Thus, a minimum sample size of six participants was sought (Jangjarat et al., 2023), resulting in a total of 12 individuals being interviewed. The selection process involved specific criteria: participants had to be at least 18 years old, residing in Krabi, Thailand, and engaging in online shopping at least twice a month. The interviews took place in March 2023, allowing for up-to-date and relevant data collection. Through this rigorous qualitative research approach, valuable insights were gained, shedding light on the impact of the 4Es marketing strategy on online shopping behavior among consumers in Krabi, Thailand.

The data analysis process employed in this study utilized qualitative content analysis, a systematic and objective method for describing specific phenomena by drawing valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data (Buranasujja & Kraiwanit, 2023). Qualitative content analysis involves the systematic condensation of data into categories or themes, relying on the researcher's ability to make valid inferences and employing inductive reasoning. Through meticulous examination and continual comparison of data, themes and categories are derived directly from the data itself (Mezmir, 2022; Vespestad & Clancy, 2021). To achieve depth and breadth in the analysis, the researchers utilized NVivo, a powerful tool that plays a vital role in qualitative data analysis. NVivo software offers a wide range of tools to effectively manage, organize, and analyze qualitative data, contributing to

a comprehensive and robust analysis process (Mortelmans, 2019; Olapane, 2021). Hence, content analysis and NVivo were employed as the primary techniques for analyzing the collected data.

Result

A comprehensive set of interviews was conducted, involving 12 key informants. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the participants, encompassing their gender, age, online

shopping frequency, and the specific date and time of their interviews. The sample group comprised 12 individuals who engage in online shopping, evenly divided between males and females, with ages ranging from 22 to 39 years. Out of the participants, three individuals engaged in online shopping twice a month, whereas the remaining participants made online purchases more frequently than twice a month. It is noteworthy that all participants were geographically located in Krabi, Thailand, for the duration of the study.

Table 1. Demographic information on the respondents and interview dates and times

No	Gender	Age	Frequency of Online Shopping	Date and Time of Interview
R1	Male	28	Twice a month	March 22, 2023 at 09:30 am
R2	Male	29	More than twice a month	March 22, 2023 at 10:30 am
R3	Male	31	More than twice a month	March 23, 2023 at 09:00 am
R4	Male	27	Twice a month	March 23, 2023 at 10:00 am
R5	Male	24	Twice a month	March 24, 2023 at 09:00 am
R6	Male	23	More than twice a month	March 24, 2023 at 10:00 am
R7	Female	28	More than twice a month	March 25, 2023 at 10:00 am
R8	Female	38	More than twice a month	March 25, 2023 at 11:00 am
R9	Female	39	More than twice a month	March 26, 2023 at 10:00 am
R10	Female	26	More than twice a month	March 26, 2023 at 11:00 am
R11	Female	22	More than twice a month	March 27, 2023 at 10:00 am
R12	Female	33	More than twice a month	March 27, 2023 at 11:00 am

By meticulously analyzing and interpreting the responses provided by the participants, the study uncovered noteworthy and recurring themes that shed light on the influence of the 4Es marketing strategy, encompassing experience, everyplace, exchange, and evangelism, on consumers' online shopping behavior. Through a comprehensive examination of the participants' perspectives, the research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which these key elements of the marketing strategy shape and impact the decision-making processes and preferences of

online shoppers. The study delved into the participants' experiences, examining the extent to which the marketing strategy created a favorable shopping environment across various digital platforms, fostered a sense of engagement and interaction, facilitated the exchange of goods and services, and encouraged advocacy and loyalty among consumers. The interview data was analyzed using content analysis and the NVivo software to examine the collected information comprehensively. A word frequency query was conducted, and the most frequently used words

during the interviews were visually represented in a word

cloud to enhance the understanding of the findings (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Word Cloud

Source: The author

The study's analysis of the participants' responses yielded compelling results regarding the influence of the 4Es marketing strategy on consumers' online shopping behavior.

Experience

Participants expressed a strong inclination towards online retailers that provided a personalized and immersive shopping experience. They emphasized the importance of intuitive website interfaces, attractive visuals, product recommendations based on their preferences, and engaging interactive features. Positive experiences were found to enhance customer satisfaction and increase the likelihood of repeat purchases.

"I must say, I really appreciate online retailers that offer a personalized and immersive shopping experience. It makes me feel like they understand my preferences and cater to my needs" (R1).

“The availability of secure payment options is important. Knowing that my personal and financial

information is protected gives me peace of mind when making online transactions. It's a crucial factor in determining which online retailers I choose to shop from" (R2).

“Intuitive website interfaces play a major role in enhancing that experience. When I visit a website that's easy to navigate and visually appealing, it immediately grabs my attention and makes me want to explore further. The product recommendations based on our preferences are a game-changer. It saves me so much time searching for items I might like. It's like the website knows exactly what I'm looking for”
(R3).

"I like the interactive features. When I can engage with the products, zoom in for a closer look, or even virtually try them on, it creates a more interactive and enjoyable shopping experience. Positive experiences like these really leave a lasting impression. They make me more satisfied as a

customer and increase my likelihood of returning to the same retailer for future purchases” (R4).

Everyplace

The convenience and accessibility offered by the online shopping environment were highly valued by participants. They emphasized the ability to shop anytime and anywhere, using multiple devices such as smartphones, tablets, and computers. The availability of secure payment options and fast delivery services played a crucial role in shaping their online shopping decisions.

“One of the things I love about online shopping is the convenience it offers. Being able to shop anytime and anywhere is a game-changer for me. I don't have to worry about store hours or rushing to make a purchase before they close. It's so convenient to have access to a wide range of products at my fingertips. Whether I'm using my smartphone, tablet, or computer, I can browse and make purchases whenever it's convenient for me” (R1).

“Trust is essential when it comes to online shopping. If a website doesn't provide secure payment options, I'm immediately skeptical and hesitant to proceed with a purchase” (R5).

“Fast delivery services also make a significant difference in my decision-making process. When I can expect timely and reliable delivery, it adds to the overall convenience factor. I don't have to wait for weeks to receive my order. It's great to receive my purchases promptly, especially when I need them for a specific event or occasion” (R6).

“If a retailer offers a seamless and convenient experience with secure payment options and fast delivery, they become my go-to choose. Convenience truly is a driving factor in the success of online shopping. It saves us time, provides flexibility, and enables us to make purchases without any

geographical constraints. It's no wonder that these aspects play such a crucial role in my online shopping decisions” (R9).

“The convenience and accessibility offered by online shopping have revolutionized the way we shop. It has become an integral part of our lives, and retailers who prioritize these aspects are likely to attract and retain customers in this competitive digital landscape” (R12).

Exchange

The study revealed that participants appreciated the ease of product comparison, availability of customer reviews, and transparent pricing on online platforms. They emphasized the importance of obtaining detailed product information, comparing prices across different online retailers, and being able to make informed purchase decisions. A seamless and reliable exchange process, including hassle-free returns and efficient customer service, was also considered essential.

“One of the things I really appreciate about online shopping is the ability to compare products easily. Having all the information at my fingertips allows me to make informed purchase decisions. Online platforms make it so convenient to compare products from different brands and retailers. I can read reviews, check specifications, and even compare prices without having to physically visit multiple stores” (R5).

“Detailed product information is crucial for me when making online purchases. I want to know the features, dimensions, and other specifications before making a decision. Online platforms often provide comprehensive product descriptions that help me understand what I'm buying” (R7).

“Customer reviews play a significant role in shaping my choices. Reading feedback and

experiences from other customers gives me a better understanding of the product's quality and performance. The customer reviews provide valuable insights that go beyond the marketing claims. It's reassuring to hear from people who have already used the product and can share their honest opinions" (R10).

"Transparency in pricing is another important aspect for me. I appreciate it when online retailers display clear and transparent pricing information. It helps me compare prices across different platforms and ensures that I'm getting the best value for my money. I don't want any surprises at the checkout. Transparent pricing allows me to plan my budget and make sure I'm getting a fair deal" (R11).

"A seamless and reliable return policy is essential. If I receive a defective or unsatisfactory product, I want the reassurance that I can easily return it without any hassle. A hassle-free return process and efficient customer service make a significant difference in my online shopping experience. It gives me confidence that the retailer stands behind their products and values customer satisfaction" (R12).

Evangelism

Participants expressed a desire to share their positive online shopping experiences with others. They were more likely to recommend online retailers that provided exceptional service, high-quality products, and a reliable shopping experience. Word-of-mouth (WOM) referrals, online reviews, and social media sharing were identified as significant factors influencing the decision-making process of potential customers.

"When I have a great online shopping experience, I can't help but share it with others. It's like I want everyone to know about the exceptional service and quality products I received. For me, word-of-mouth referrals carry so much weight. If a friend or

family member recommends an online retailer based on their positive experience, I'm much more likely to trust their recommendation and give it a try" (R7).

"Online reviews play a significant role too. I always check out the reviews before making a purchase as they provide insights from other customers who have already tried the products or services. It's like getting a firsthand opinion before making a purchase" (R8).

"Social media sharing also has a strong influence. I often see friends posting about their positive online shopping experiences or sharing their new purchases. It piques my interest and makes me consider those retailers for my own shopping needs. Social media platforms have become a place where people showcase their online shopping finds and share their recommendations. It's a powerful way to spread the word and influence others' decision-making process" (R10).

"When online retailers go above and beyond to meet customer expectations, they create a ripple effect of positive recommendations and reviews. Positive experiences shared through word-of-mouth, online reviews, and social media have a significant impact on the decision-making process of potential customers. It's a powerful tool for online retailers to gain trust and build a strong reputation" (R11).

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the study suggest that the 4Es marketing strategy plays a crucial role in influencing consumers' online shopping behavior. In alignment with Danziger (2017) and Khajornkham (2020), the conception of the 4Es underscores the reality that today's customers wield unprecedented power, necessitating a profound shift in marketing approaches. Each individual's buying journey is as distinct as their

unique characteristics and preferences. Therefore, marketers must adapt to this evolving landscape by placing customers at the forefront.

By emphasizing "Experience," marketers strive to create meaningful and engaging interactions with their target audience. Consistent with the findings of Sittthipon et al. (2022), it was observed that customers who experience satisfaction with products or services are more inclined to engage in repurchase behaviors.

The concept of "Everyplace" recognizes the ubiquity of digital channels and the importance of connecting with consumers through various touchpoints. This aligns with the research conducted by Duarte et al. (2018), which found that online convenience significantly influences consumers' intentions to participate in online shopping.

"Exchange" encapsulates the dynamic nature of value creation in modern marketing, recognizing that transactions extend beyond monetary exchanges to encompass a broader array of tangible and intangible benefits. This perspective is in harmony with the research conducted by Duarte et al. (2018), where they identified that the transaction dimension played a significant role in influencing the convenience of online shopping.

Finally, "Evangelism" denotes the cultivation of loyal brand advocates and enthusiasts who actively promote and endorse products or services within their social circles. In accordance with the findings of Asanprakit and Limna (2023), it has been established that social support can manifest in diverse forms, encompassing recommendations, reviews, and feedback related to products and services. Consequently, consumers exhibit a higher propensity to engage with social commerce platforms when they receive support from their social networks.

In essence, the rise of the 4Es of marketing symbolizes a paradigm shift, aligning marketing strategies with the central role of the customer in the contemporary marketplace, where individuality reigns supreme, and consumer experiences and journeys are diversified and personalized.

The insights from this study offer valuable guidance for marketers looking to enhance their strategies and improve the online shopping experience for their target audience. By integrating the elements of the 4Es marketing strategy into their efforts, businesses can forge strong relationships with consumers, boost customer satisfaction and loyalty, and ultimately drive online sales.

Implementing these strategies can provide a competitive edge for businesses in the ever-evolving landscape of e-commerce and social commerce. With the rapid growth of online shopping, understanding the factors that influence consumer behavior is essential for marketers to stay relevant and successful. The 4Es marketing strategy offers a framework for addressing these factors and creating a compelling online shopping experience for customers.

To conclude, in the current era characterized by rapid technological advancements and the emergence of a new industrial revolution, the dynamics of customer needs, desires, and expectations are continuously evolving. In response, companies must strive to develop a marketing mix that revolves around a customer-centric, comprehensive journey, aimed at delivering value to customers at every stage of their interaction. Aligning with these evolving expectations is not only essential but also a fundamental responsibility for marketers. By embracing this customer-centric approach, marketers can effectively meet the evolving needs of their customers and fulfill their role in delivering superior value and satisfaction.

This study makes practical contributions by offering guidance for marketers to improve their strategies and elevate the online shopping experience. Additionally, it contributes academically by addressing research gaps, employing qualitative research methodologies, and providing empirical evidence for the effectiveness of the 4Es marketing strategy in the context of online shopping behavior.

While this qualitative study on the influence of the 4Es marketing strategy on online shopping behavior among consumers in Krabi, Thailand provides valuable insights, there are certain limitations that should be acknowledged. The small sample size and specific geographical context restrict the generalizability of the findings. To overcome these limitations, future studies should aim for larger and more diverse samples,

encompassing different cultural contexts and geographical locations. Furthermore, it is advisable to consider conducting a quantitative study in a future research endeavor to elucidate the relationship phenomenon among a broader and more representative group of individuals. Additionally, employing a mixed-methods approach and conducting longitudinal research would offer a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between the 4Es marketing strategy and online shopping behavior. By addressing these limitations and pursuing further research, marketers and academics can continue to enhance their knowledge and develop effective strategies to navigate the evolving landscape of e-commerce and s-commerce.

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