

Developing Brand Identity of Thai MOOC Project in Promoting Life-Long Learning

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Abstract:- Thai Massive Open Online Course Project or Thai MOOC is part of Thai government initiatives that aims to open educational opportunities for Thai People nationwide to enable them to study at no costs. Due to its early stage, there is a need for assessing brand communication of Thai MOOC through the use of action research. The implementation of action research involves participation and reflection of researcher as a partner. The brand communication plan is achieved by lessons learned as part of knowledge creation while practicing. The emphasis is on developing efficient and effective communication plan for promoting identity of Thai MOOC's project in supporting life-long learning for Thai people.

Keywords:- Brand, Brand Identity, Thai MOOC, Life-Long Learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

Thailand is moving forward to develop the country to Thailand 4.0 in order to keep pace with the current from the global community which has changed rapidly in all aspects, including politics, economy, society, lifestyle and the advancement of technology. The education sector in Thailand aims to develop Thai manpower under the 2017-2031 National Education Plan by launching national platform to support Thai Massive Open Online Course or Thai MOOC. Thai MOOC is a project initiated to promote life-long learning through online teaching programs of the National Public System, in order to support government policies in driving digital economy and society.

Thai MOOC project is an online education in an open system, where learners are able to study via the internet without registration fees, with unlimited number of participants, no entrance examination, no qualification restrictions such as age restrictions. Due to its early stage, there is a need for conducting analysis of brand identity of Thai MOOC project through action research. The emphasis is on identity formation process and to bring lessons learned to reflect, create, develop, modify to allow the brand element design of the Thai MOOC project to enhance the identity of the project and make communication effective.

II. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Thai MOOC is a project that is conducted under the cooperation between the 3 main agencies, namely 1) Thailand Cyber University: TCU, Office of the Higher Education Commission 2) National Science and Technology Development Agency, which is under the Ministry of Science and Technology and 3) Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. In addition, Thai MOOC also cooperates with educational networks nationwide, in inviting faculty members or experts from educational institutions to produce courses for Thai learners. The Thai MOOC project is a new educational project that is not widely known in Thailand. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the brand identity of the Thai MOOC project using action research. The aim is to contribute to the participation in the identity formation process and to bring lessons learned to reflect, create, develop, modify to allow the brand element design of the Thai MOOC project to enhance the identity of the project and make communication effective.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ Brand Identity

Brand identity is based on a thorough understanding of the firm's customers, competitors, and business environment. The brand identity needs to reflect the business strategy and the firm's willingness to invest in the programs needed for the brand to live up to its promise to customers (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1997). Brand identity is formed as a result of the presentation of the visual elements of the brand such as logo, color, use of presenter, use of mascot, brand positioning combined with the brand personality. It is essential that the presentation of the identity of the brand to be clear, compelling and consistent reflecting brand purpose or meaning of the brand. The creation of a well-known brand must begin by defining the true identity of the brand that reflects the brand meaning or what the brand stands for (Keller, 2003; MacInnis, Moorman & Jaworski, 1991).

➤ Brand Personality

Brand Personality refers to the characteristics of the personality of the brand that is expressed as a person. Aaker (1997) develops brand personality dimension in order to measure personality of the brand in 5 categories as follows: 1) Sincerity 2) Excitement 3) Competence 4) Sophistication and 5) Ruggedness. The concept, which stems from the Big Five Personality of people, can be used to measure the personality of the brand, as a product,

service including firm, institution or destination. Brand personality is an integral part of brand identity.

IV. RESEARCH PROCESS

Action research is an interactive and participatory research method based on an interrelated sequence of activities (Berg, 2001). The implementation of action research in this case involves the roles and participations of the researchers as partners of the project. The aim is to reflect on lessons learned as part of knowledge creation while practicing as brand consultant.

The action research process starts from analyzing the situation which is in accordance with Swann's operational research process (2002) which consists of 6 processes, namely 1) Problem 2) Analysis 3) Synthesis 4) Execution 5) Production and 6) Evaluation. In this study, the action research process can further be classified as 3 phases: research phase, creative phase and communication phase.

Phase 1: Research phase involves the problem finding process and analysis;

Phase 2: Creative phase is a period that involves the synthesis process;

Phase 3: Communication phase is the result of the research phase and creativity phase, leading to operation, production and evaluation.

V. RESEARCH RESULTS

❖ Phase 1: Research phase

At this stage, 3 key issues are identified as follows:

- Issue 1: The Thai MOOC project is a new educational project that is not yet familiar to Thai people.
- Issue 2: Thai MOOC project has a wide target group which is Thai people, with diversity in demographic; psychographic, geographic and behavioral characteristics.
- Issue 3: Thai MOOC is a mega project that requires collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions and technology.

❖ Phase 2: Creative phase

The Thai MOOC core brand is derived from synthesizing various points in Phase 1. Thus, the core brand of the Thai MOOC is defined as "Support and Help" to reflect the central role of government in providing opportunities for learning to Thai people, reducing educational disparity with the goal of supporting lifelong learning of Thai people. Therefore, Thai MOOC serves as an intermediary to support education institutions, both public and private sectors, as well as business sectors in the future, to produce and deliver quality courses to Thai learners.

Guided by the Big Idea, "Thai MOOC, lifelong learning support for Thai people", the brand elements of Thai MOOC are developed as follows:

➤ Logo:

"Thai MOOC" is the logo of the Thai MOOC project that uses simple blue fonts, spelled in English letters, because of the need for internationalization. The word "Thai" indicates a national program for the Thai people and "MOOC" is the abbreviation for Massive Open Online Course. As highlighted by Drori, Tienari, & Wæraas (2015), a verbal notation that matches the institution's acronym, help to add a modern naming component and allow the logo to stand out. Figure 1 shows the official logo of Thai MOOC.



Fig 1:- Thai MOOC Logo

➤ Slogan

"Lifelong learning support for Thai people" and to make it easy to remember, therefore having a short focus on the word "helper", with meaning of *support*, but it is a simple word that is familiar and make learners feel friendly; while conveying the message of *someone is helping you to learn*.

➤ Mood and Tone

The mood and tone of Thai MOOC is "lively and enjoyment" to enhance lifelong learning as stimulating and enjoyable.

➤ Mascot

In order to promote lifelong learning, a mascot called "helper" that causes imagination and creates a unique identity is needed (Ward & Gaidis, 1990). Although the word "helper" is a familiar word for anyone, no one can indicate the appearance, shape or character of the "helper". This enables Thai MOOC to create a new look of mascot to help create a key visual image by focusing on promoting lifelong learning in a fun and friendly environment. Figure 2 shows an example of Thai MOOC "helper" mascot as used in the website of Thailand Cyber University (TCU).



Fig 2:- Thai MOOC Mascot

The design of the "helper" mascot is portrayed in consistent with the core brand, the color of the logo, the mood and tone, and the nature of the project. As such, the "helper" mascot shows enthusiasm with a big, warm,

smiling face to convey the message that, *Thai MOOC is always there to support and help you through your journey of lifelong learning*. In addition, to build awareness of learners about the MOOC platform, the eyebrow of the mascot symbolizes Wi-Fi signal to be in line with the online learning elements.

❖ Phase 3: Communication phase

The communication stage integrates the results of the earlier stages. In articulating the brand identity of Thai MOOC, a careful projection of how the brand should be perceived by its target audience, in order to set forth the communication objectives. Through action research process, brand personality and other brand communication efforts associated with branding Thai MOOC, are outlined to reflect brand communications to appeal to its target audience as follows:

A. Brand Personality

Thai MOOC's personality is "sincerity", which is the personality of the brand that corresponds to the core of the brand, "support and help", placing the personality of Thai MOOC to show the personality of sincerity, one of five brand personality dimensions based on the concept of Aaker, 1997. The sincerity brand personality helps to make learners feel the project is easily accessible, sincere and committed to the lifelong learning of Thai people.

B. Brand Value

The value of Thai MOOC is "to be a hard time friend when you have problems with learning. The "helper" is always there to help, never away." Thai MOOC is valuable to anyone. It provides opportunities for learning for diverse groups of learners. Subjects taught in Thai MOOC can be beneficial as a supplementary lesson for students enrolled in the system of an educational institution, or any learner who are out of school, seeking self-development learning or pursuing self-interest.

C. Brand Meaning

The benefits of Thai MOOC are "provide knowledge to clarify any subjects that people want to know. Learning is a never-ending journey." Therefore, in any communication activities of Thai MOOC, it is necessary to present a wide range of knowledge by presenting it in an easy to understand format. At present, Thai MOOC offers more than 140 courses that cover a wide range of science. It is an open system, where learners can access online through the computer or mobile phone for 24 hours, at no cost, unlimitedly.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thai MOOC project is a pilot project of the government that aims to open educational opportunities for Thai people to reduce educational disparity. The aim of the project is to promote lifelong learning of Thai people by designing an informal learning approach through online system.

Thai MOOC project is designed to serve all Thai learners, therefore, target groups are diverse. In successfully launch the project, it is necessary to analyze and design the brand communication plan for Thai MOOC to cover the broad audience. Therefore, action research is carried out to help analyze and design the communication plan of Thai MOOC project appropriately. The emphasis is on developing efficient and effective communication plan for promoting identity of Thai MOOC's project in supporting life-long learning for Thai people.

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