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Value Co-creation for Strategic Development in Public Service: A Study of the OTOP Programme in Thailand

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OTOP (One Tumbon, One Product) is a grassroots enterprise development programme initiated by the Thai government that aims to promote the local economy by encouraging locals to create and sell products that use local resources. However, the programme's top-down execution has resulted in a lack of local involvement at the strategic level. Consequently, government-led activities and a one-size-fits-all approach can sometimes be irrelevant to the actual needs of locals, leading to an oversupply of certain types of support. To address this, this research proposes involving all stakeholders' viewpoints, including local authorities, entrepreneurs, and OTOP customers, in a bottom-up approach to co-create new value that can lead to new strategic development for the OTOP programme and mitigate the negative impact of the programme. As this research is part of doctoral research, it first explores current practices from the customer's point of view, with future work to be done with other stakeholders. This paper collected data from online questionnaires in nine areas: (1) attitudes towards OTOP products, (2) perceptions of the OTOP programme, (3) perspectives on the OTOP standard mark, (4) opinions on the working procedures of local authorities in providing support for local communities, (5) product accessibility, (6) buying decisions, (7) expectations for OTOP products, (8) effectiveness of brand touchpoints, and (9) value perception for the local brand. The findings are divided into two relationship groups: (i) between local authorities and OTOP customers, and (ii) between OTOP customers and enterprises. The research concludes potential strategies and emerging themes for both relationships, such as new training and communication methods, programme value-adding, new distribution channels, and customer engagement strategies.

Keywords: value co-creation; public service; strategic development

1 Introduction

Traditionally, service providers have generated and delivered public services with little or no input from service recipients or users. However, there has recently been an increased focus on the user and community participation rather than implementing a top-down or one-way communication process from service providers. As a result, users and community members have increasingly played an essential role in decision-making and shaping outcomes (Bovaird, 2007). This paper is interested in how to introduce the bottom-up approach to public service in Thailand called the 'OTOP' programme—a government-initiated programme in the field of grassroots enterprise development. The acronym 'OTOP' stands for 'One Tumbon, One Product' (Tumbon means township in Thai). The OTOP programme in Thailand was inspired by the Japanese OVOP programme in 1979. It aims to boost the rural economy by developing local products with local resources and participation. The OTOP products include agricultural products, food and beverage, textiles, clothing, accessories, home decoration, souvenirs, and non-food herbal products. The OTOP programme has built the grassroots economy in Thailand for over 20 years. It has brought positive values to local communities, such as improved household incomes (Kurokawa et al., 2010), higher employment opportunities (TICA, 2010), and the growth of local community leadership and pride (Wattanasiri, 2005). However, the top-down mechanism of the programme may have negative impacts. Government-led marketing activities can be irrelevant to real needs and seen as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach (Tanwattana, 2012). In this regard, the support does not empower locals in the long term (Thu, 2013), resulting in a lack of ownership and commitment to the activities provided by the government. When entrepreneurs fail to recognise the importance of their participation in development, their motivation is reduced (Thu, 2013).

This research aims to mitigate the negative impact of the OTOP programme by investigating the viewpoints of its stakeholders, including local authorities, entrepreneurs, and customers (see Figure 1). The goal is to enable them to co-create value for the programme by enhancing its positive strengths and reducing its negative effects. Furthermore, by involving stakeholders in the value co-creation process, new strategic developments can be formed in a bottom-up manner.

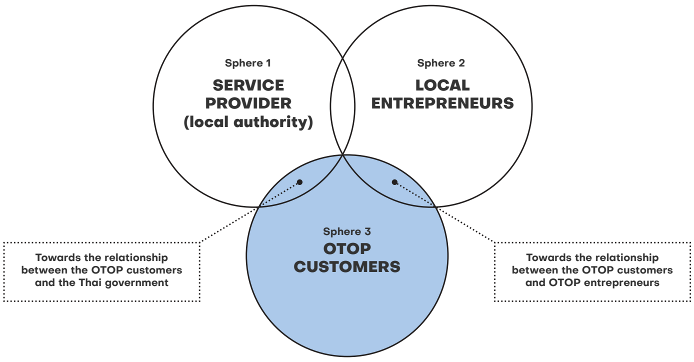

Figure 1. Key stakeholders of the OTOP programme and the area of investigation in this research paper

This research paper presents the findings of an investigation into the perspectives of OTOP customers (highlighted in Sphere 3 in Figure 1). These findings will be incorporated with the results from other spheres to shape the strategic development of the OTOP programme. This investigation is part of doctoral research that aims to explore the perspectives and relationships of all key stakeholders seeking to contribute to the field of social innovation for public service.

2 Co-creation of value for strategic development in public service

To enhance OTOP's bottom-up approach, the researcher uses value co-creation as a means of collaboration. Co-creation refers to any act of collective creativity (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). It can be treated as a mindset, method, tool, or technique (Sanders & Stappers, 2018). This approach is gaining popularity for creating value in our complex, ever-changing world. Co-creation of value can be seen as a process by which mutual value is expanded using the experiences of individuals (Ramaswamy, 2011). This process can be applied in various fields, such as product design, service delivery, and community development. The co-creation process can provide mutual benefits, especially for a public service like the OTOP programme, which involves complex relationships between stakeholders. Various perspectives can serve as building blocks for new development strategies. Joint planning, design, and decision-making between authorities and the community can create a sense of partnership (Wates, 2014), which is crucial for community development. This approach could bring significant benefits and meaningful actions to the service and the community.

3 Methodology

To gain perspectives from OTOP customers, this paper used online questionnaire surveys to obtain the data. The types of questions contain dichotomous, 5-point Likert scale, ranking and multiple-answer questions.

The survey aimed to collect at least 100 valid responses from participants of different age groups (18 to over 60 years old) who had experience purchasing OTOP products. As a results, the final sample size was 113 and was selected using cluster random and snowball sampling strategies. The researcher distributed an online questionnaire to representatives from various regions and asked them to recruit participants from their respective regions. This approach aimed to represent the nationwide population of OTOP customers[1]. The findings were analysed using a quantitative analysis with a qualitative interpretation approach. Descriptive statistics, such as the frequency and percentage of responses and measures of central tendency, were used to interpret the data. The conclusion of the findings used tabulation to categorise and identify themes for potential strategic approaches to the OTOP programme.

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- Need more context for the reader. For example, what descriptive statistics are you talking about?

- Add description about the scale of the program to know how representative 113 respondents are

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Add text as highlighted + footnote

4 Findings

This section describes the findings and analysis of the data collected from questionnaire surveys, which were separated by the area of investigation categorised as follows.

Between the OTOP customers and the service provider (local authorities)

1. Customers' attitudes towards the OTOP products
2. Customers' perceptions towards the OTOP programme
3. Customers' perspectives on the OTOP standard mark

[1] As reported by the Community Development Department (2019), the adoption of the OTOP programme nationwide has resulted in the registration of 19,560 enterprises in the OTOP product provincial selection in 2019.

4. Opinions on the working procedures of local authorities in providing support for local communities

Between the OTOP customers and OTOP entrepreneurs

5. OTOP product's accessibility
6. Buying decisions towards local products
7. Customer expectation for OTOP products
8. Effectiveness of brand touchpoints
9. Value perception for the local brand

4.1 Customers' attitudes towards the OTOP products

The questions were divided into four areas namely: (1) quality and reliability, (2) distribution of the local resources, (3) originality, (4) innovation and novelty. All questions utilised a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Regarding **quality and reliability** (see Table 1), the majority of respondents (N=60, 53.1%) agree that *'OTOP products deliver good quality'*. A portion of respondents strongly agrees (N=20, 17.7%), while others remain neutral in their agreement (N=33, 29.2%). As for the statement *'OTOP products are reliable'*, 49.6% of those surveyed (N=56) agreed with the statement, while 35.4% (N=40) were undecided. With regards to the statement *'OTOP products are appropriate and ready for export'*, 46% of respondents (N=52) reported that they agreed with the statement, followed by 31% having neutral feelings on it (N=35). To conclude, the study combined the results from three statements to assess the quality and reliability of OTOP products (see Table 2). The medians for all statements were 4.00 (IQR = 1.00), indicating that the majority of participants believed that OTOP products are of good quality (N = 60, 53.1%), reliable (N = 56, 49.6%), and ready for export (N = 52, 46.0%).

Table 1. Quality and reliability results

OTOP products deliver good quality					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	33	29.2	29.2	29.2
	Agree	60	53.1	53.1	82.3
	Strongly agree	20	17.7	17.7	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	
OTOP products are reliable					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Neutral	40	35.4	35.4	38.1
	Agree	56	49.6	49.6	87.6
	Strongly agree	14	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	
OTOP products are appropriate and ready for export					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Neutral	35	31.0	31.0	32.7
	Agree	52	46.0	46.0	78.8
	Strongly agree	24	21.2	21.2	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Quality and reliability, with the median for each statement

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Median	IQR
OTOP products deliver good quality	113	3	5	4.00	1.00
OTOP products are reliable	113	2	5	4.00	1.00
OTOP products are appropriate and ready for export	113	2	5	4.00	1.00
Valid N (listwise)	113				

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

Regarding the **distribution of local resources and wisdom**, participants were asked two questions to assess their beliefs. The statement '*OTOP products are locally initiated from folk wisdom*' received an overall positive response, with 53 people agreeing (46.9%) and 48 people strongly agreeing (42.5%). The statement '*OTOP products make good use of local resources*' received 51 strong agreements (45.1%) and 50 agreements (44.2%). See Table 3 for the overall results. Combining two questions to gauge customers' attitudes regarding the distribution and local production of OTOP products, as seen in Table 4, resulting in a positive outcome. The median score for both statements was 4.00 (IQR = 1.00), indicating that customers generally understood that these products were sourced and produced locally using indigenous knowledge.

Table 3. Distribution of local resources and wisdom results

OTOP products are locally initiated from folk wisdom					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	12	10.6	10.6	10.6
	Agree	53	46.9	46.9	57.5
	Strongly agree	48	42.5	42.5	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	
OTOP products make good use of local resources					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Neutral	12	10.6	10.6	10.6
	Agree	50	44.2	44.2	54.9
	Strongly agree	51	45.1	45.1	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Distribution of local resources and wisdom, with the median for each statement

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Median	IQR
OTOP products are locally initiated from folk wisdom	113	3	5	4.00	1.00
OTOP products make good use of local resources	113	3	5	4.00	1.00
Valid N (listwise)	113				

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

The third area of investigation regarding customers' attitudes is **originality**. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement, *'OTOP products are repetitive from one product to another across communities'.* Most participants (N=49), 43.4%, agreed with the statement. 31% (N=35) of the respondents were neutral, and 23% (N=26) strongly agreed (see Table 5 for results). The median was 4 (IQR=1.00), indicating that most respondents agreed with the statement (see Table 6).

Table 5. Results on originality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Neutral	35	31.0	31.0	33.6
	Agree	49	43.4	43.4	77.0
	Strongly agree	26	23.0	23.0	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Originality results with the median

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Median	IQR
OTOP products are repetitive from one product to another across communities	113	3	5	4.00	1.00
Valid N (listwise)	113				

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

The final inquiry regarding customer attitudes towards OTOP products pertains to their **innovation and novelty**. Two statements were used to gauge whether customers perceive OTOP products as innovative or trendy. As a result (see Table 7), both questions yielded neutral responses from the majority of respondents. Specifically, 47.8% (N=54) responded neutrally to the statement *'OTOP products are innovative'*, while 50.4% (N=57) responded neutrally to the statement *'OTOP products are new and trendy'*. The medians for both statements were 3.00 (IQR=1.00), indicating that participants were indecisive when asked about this aspect (as presented in Table 8). Thus, there is an opportunity for OTOP enterprises to improve in this area.

Table 7. Innovation and novelty results

OTOP products are innovative					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	3.5	3.5	3.5
	Disagree	13	11.5	11.5	15.0
	Neutral	54	47.8	47.8	62.8
	Agree	36	31.9	31.9	94.7
	Strongly agree	6	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	
OTOP products are new and trendy					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	4.4	4.4	4.4
	Disagree	18	15.9	15.9	20.4
	Neutral	57	50.4	50.4	70.8
	Agree	27	23.9	23.9	94.7
	Strongly agree	6	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Table 8. Innovation and novelty, with the median for each statement

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Median	IQR
OTOP products are innovative	113	1	5	3.00	1.00
OTOP products are new and trendy	113	1	5	3.00	1.00
Valid N (listwise)	113				

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

4.2 Customers' perceptions towards the OTOP programme

This section aims to understand how OTOP customers perceive the OTOP programme. Respondents were asked to select multiple answers to the question, *"How do you understand and perceive the word 'OTOP'?"* Table 9 shows that the top three options chosen by respondents were: (1) *it is support for locally initiated products* (30.6%, N=103), (2) *it is local community capacity development* (26.7%, N=90), and (3) *it is grassroots entrepreneurial development* (20.2%, N=68). However, the negative aspects, which cannot be ignored, are also shown as a small number of respondents chose *'it is the government programme related to political patronage'* (5.6%, N=19) and *'it is a populist political approach'* (3.0%, N=10).

Table 9. Results for the question "How do you understand and perceive the word 'OTOP'?"

		Responses		Percent of
		N	Percent	Cases
Perception towards OTOP programme	It is a support for locally initiated products	103	30.6%	91.2%
	It is grassroots economic development	47	13.9%	41.6%
	It is local community capacity development	90	26.7%	79.6%
	It is grassroots entrepreneurial development	68	20.2%	60.2%
	It is a government programme related to political patronage	19	5.6%	16.8%
	It is a populist political approach	10	3.0%	8.8%
Total		337	100.0%	298.2%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

4.3 Customers' perspectives on the OTOP standard mark

The OTOP scheme allows entrepreneurs to use the OTOP logo on their products and promotional items. This investigation aims to understand customers' perceptions of the logo. 79.6% (N=90) of respondents noticed the logo on product packaging and promotional items, as shown in Figure 2. 70.8% (N=80) confirmed that the logo affects their purchasing decision, whereas 34.5% (N=39) claimed it does not.

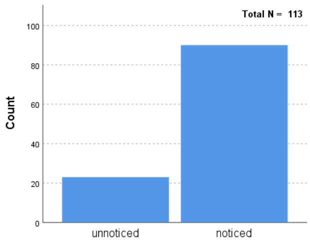

Figure 2. Noticeability of the OTOP logo on the product and other promotional item

Table 10. Results for the question "If there are two similar products on the shelf, one of which has the OTOP logo and one of which does not, would you choose the OTOP product over the non-OTOP product?"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, because I believe in OTOP standard	27	23.9	23.9	23.9
	It does not matter; I would pick any of them as long as it can serve me well	85	75.2	75.2	99.1
	No, because I do not believe in OTOP standard	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

Furthermore, the survey also aimed to investigate the scenario where two similar products are available for purchase. Would consumers prefer the OTOP product over the non-OTOP product? As shown in Table 10, the majority of respondents, 75.2% (N=85), answered that it does not matter which product they choose as long as it can serve them well. This suggests that the value of the OTOP mark is not significant enough for customers to choose the OTOP product over the non-OTOP product.

4.4 Opinions on the working procedures of local authorities in providing support for local communities

The survey asked participants if they wanted to see how the government provides support to local businesses. The results showed that 80.5% (N=91) of participants wanted to see it. To further understand their preferences, Likert-scale questions were used to determine what evidence of support customers wished to see. Figure 3 provides the results. Overall, the responses mostly agreed with all statements. Based on the means (see Table 11), customers highly agreed with *'I want to know how the budgets are allocated'* (μ=4.54), followed by *'the outcome of the support'* (μ=4.46), and *'how they truly work together'* (μ=4.39), respectively.

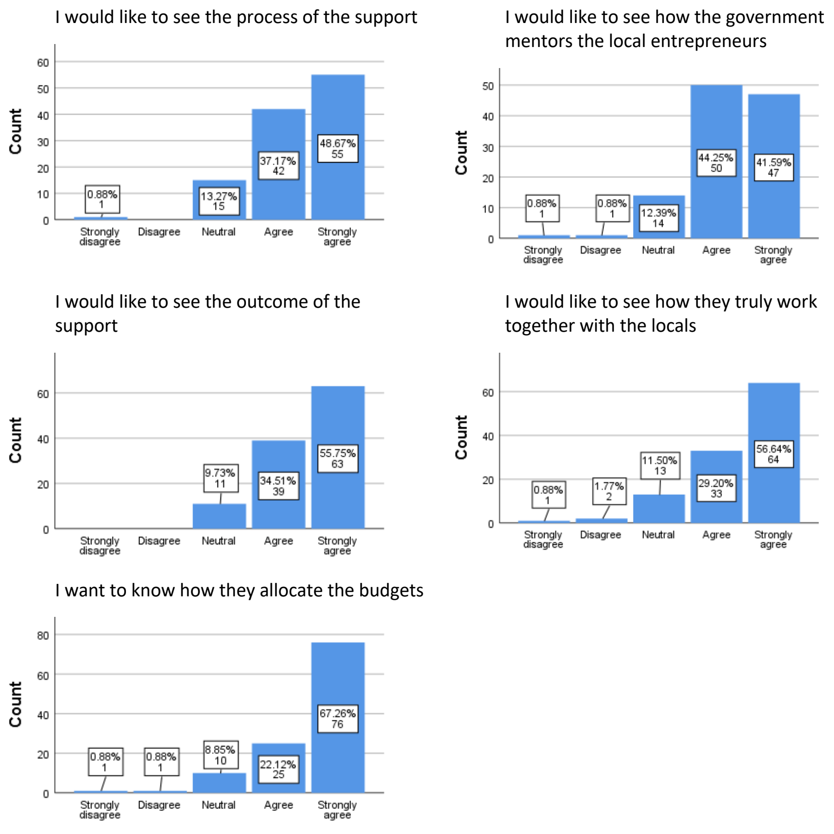

Figure 3. Bar charts present the results of the question, "How would you like to see the evidence of provided support?"

Table 11. Results for the question "How would you like to see the evidence of the provided support?"

		I would like to see the process of the support	I would like to see how the government mentors the local entrepreneurs	I would like to see the outcome of the support	I would like to see how they truly work together with the locals	I want to know how they allocate budgets
N	Valid	113	113	113	113	113
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.33	4.25	4.46	4.39	4.54
Median		4.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

In addition to the previous question, asking which channel the customers prefer to see the evidence is helpful in practice. According to the survey, 91.2% of the respondents prefer to see the evidence from the brand's social media/website, followed by the product's leaflet/packaging (49.6%) and the local government website (35.4%). Respondents suggested several other mediums, including government organisation announcements and the annual report, reviews from both government and local entrepreneur perspectives, the use of new standard marks to guarantee well-coordinated efforts between enterprises and local authorities, interviews with locals, and the use of media such as governmental news channels on television or government publications.

Table 12. Results for the question "How would you like to see the evidence of the provided support?"

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Which medium would you like to see the evidence[a]	It should communicate on the brand's social media or website	103	49.8%	91.2%
	Through the product's leaflet or packaging	56	27.1%	49.6%
	On the local government website	40	19.3%	35.4%
	Others	8	3.9%	7.1%
Total		207	100.0%	183.2%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

4.5 OTOP product's accessibility

This research investigates the accessibility of OTOP products, focusing on both current and future distribution channels. Table 13 indicates that the vast majority of respondents feel 'neutral' (54.0%, N=61) when asked whether OTOP products are easy to find. This suggests that customers are hesitant to choose, and reflects the difficulty of finding OTOP products through current distribution channels. The study also inquired about the places where customers usually buy the product and compared them to the preferable places for future purchases, as seen in Table 13.

Table 13. Results for 'Place that usually they buy OTOP products' compare with 'the preferable places to buy'

	Current places (Current situation)			Preferable places (Future possibility)		
	Responses		Percent of Cases	Responses		Percent of Cases
	N	Percent		N	Percent	
OTOP fair / event	94	31.9%	83.2%	50	15.5%	44.6%
From the shelf in shopping mall or kiosk in the market	58	19.7%	51.3%	65	20.2%	58.0%
From its original place	25	8.5%	22.1%	28	8.7%	25.0%
From the OTOP distribution hub in the big city	42	14.2%	37.2%	29	9.0%	25.9%
From roadside services when travelling	46	15.6%	40.7%	32	9.9%	28.6%

Online through an official OTOP website (www.thaitambon.com)	4	1.4%	3.5%	21	6.5%	18.8%
Online through third-party website (e.g., Shopee, Lazada)	15	5.1%	13.3%	55	17.1%	49.1%
Online through brand-owned website or social media	11	3.7%	9.7%	40	12.4%	35.7%
Other	0	0.0%	0.0%	2	0.6%	1.8%
Total	295	100.0%	261.1%	322	100.0%	287.5%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Currently, the majority of people (83.2%) usually buy OTOP products at fairs or events, followed by on the shelf in shopping malls or kiosks (51.3%), roadside services (40.7%), and distribution hubs in big cities (37.2%). When asked to choose their preferred places, on the shelf in a shopping mall (58.0%) and fairs or events (44.6%) remained in high positions, with over 30% of respondents preferring to buy from these places. Interestingly, customers are also interested in buying through online channels, both through third-party websites (49.1%) and brand-owned websites or social media (35.7%). Respondents also suggested local restaurants and convenience stores as other potential places to buy. In conclusion, these new preferred places provide a unique opportunity for the OTOP distribution channel.

4.6 Buying decisions towards local products

To investigate buying decisions for locally-made products, participants ranked the most important aspects of their decisions in Table 14. The mean ranks were then calculated to determine the most crucial element. The results show that customers prioritise product quality and functionality, followed by approachable prices and supporting the local economy, respectively. The mean ranks were not equal according to a statistical test using Friedman's ANOVA (χ^2 (7) = 269.684, p = .000; effect size = 0.341).

Table 14. Results for the question "what is the most important aspect of buying local products"

	Mean Rank	Rank
Product quality and its function	1.94	1
Product price is approachable	2.92	2
To help support the local economy	4.31	3
Product is easy to find and access	4.77	4
The product is well-known and has a good review	4.88	5
Because you are fascinated by local wisdom and local culture	5.42	6
To try something new	5.45	7
Because you want to be a part of legacy conservation	6.30	8

Test Statistics[a]

N	113
Chi-Square	269.684
df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Friedman Test

Test Statistics[b]

N	113
Kendall's W[a]	.341
Chi-Square	269.684
df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.000

b. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

As the OTOP programme promotes the use of unique resources from different districts, this study aimed to examine customers' awareness of the product's origin by asking, "When you buy local products, do you pay attention to their origin?" The results were positive, with 65.5% of respondents (N=74) indicating that they pay attention to local production and its source, while 34.5% (N=39) said that the product's origin does not affect their buying decision.

Table 15. Results for the question "Do you pay attention to their origin?"

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes, because I am interested in local production and where it produced	74	65.5	65.5	65.5
	No, it does not matter	39	34.5	34.5	100.0
	Total	113	100.0	100.0	

4.7 Customer expectation for OTOP products

This section aims to study customer expectations towards OTOP products. The survey used a ranking question to determine the most and least concerning elements. As shown in Table 16, the most concerning factors are (1) quality, (2) consistency, (3) price, (4) use of local resources, (5) newness/innovation, (6) accessibility, (7) authenticity, (8) community participation, (9) ethics, and (10) promotion, respectively. The statistical test using Friedman's ANOVA rejects the null hypothesis of equal mean ranks, with $\chi 2$ (9) = 280.451, p = .000, and Kendall's effect size of 0.276.

Table 16. Results on customer expectation for the OTOP products

	Mean Rank	Rank
Quality	1.72	1
Consistency	4.65	2
Price	4.99	3
Use of local resources	5.04	4
Newness/Innovation	5.59	5
Accessibility	5.81	6
Authenticity	6.33	7
Community participation	6.81	8
Ethics	6.82	9
Promotion	7.23	10

Test Statistics[a]

N	113
Chi-Square	280.451
df	9
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. Friedman Test

Test Statistics[b]

N	113
Kendall's W[a]	.276
Chi-Square	280.451
df	9
Asymp. Sig.	.000

b. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

4.8 Effectiveness of brand touchpoints

This study aims to understand customers' perceptions of brand touchpoints that effectively communicate brand value and story. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the level of agreement at each touchpoint. The means were calculated to determine which touchpoints customers found most effective in delivering brand value, story, and philosophy (see Table 17 for the list). Social media had the highest mean (4.58), followed by product packaging (4.19), website (4.10), and word of mouth (4.10), respectively. The touchpoint with the lowest mean was email (2.89).

Table 17. Results for brand touchpoints

		Social media	Website	Word of mouth	Prints	Packaging	Email	Store	Sale representative
N	Valid	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	4.58	4.10	4.10	3.54	4.19	2.89	3.97	3.99
	Median	5.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

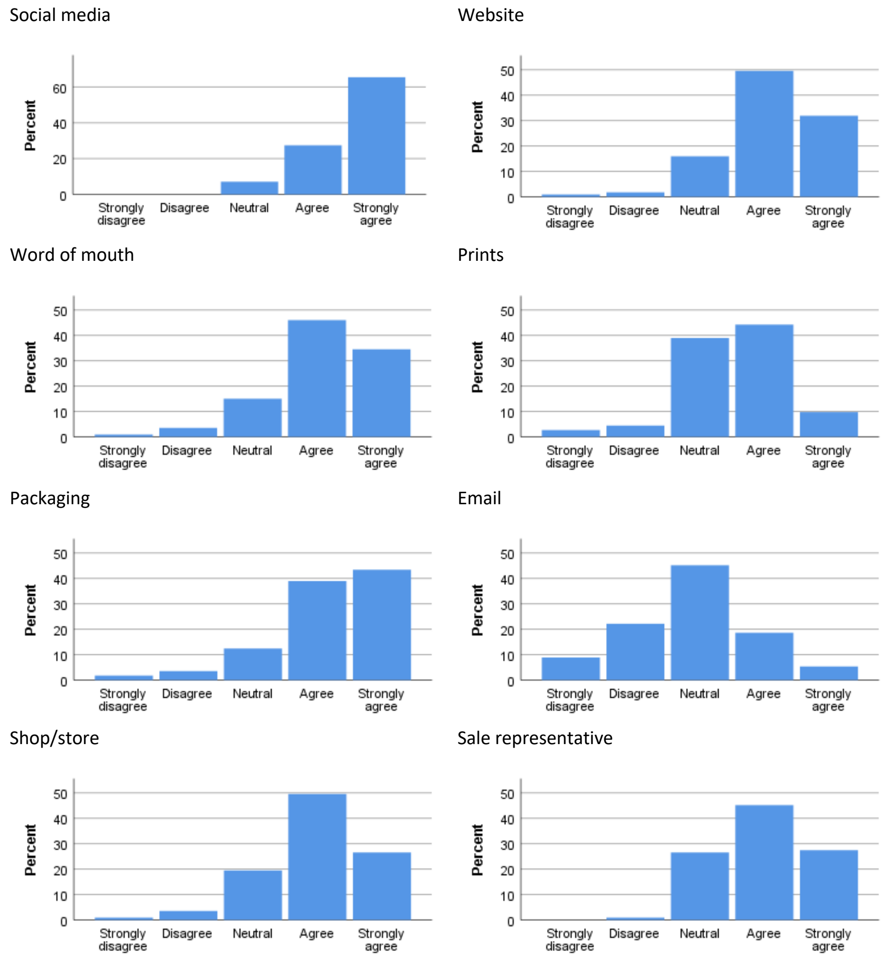

Figure 4. Bar charts present the results of effective brand touchpoints

As social media receives the most positive response compared to other touchpoints, this question specifically focuses on social media to understand how customers perceive it as a channel for communicating brand value and story. The study examined social media posts and identified design elements that can engage customers, such as content, pictures of the production process, or people's involvement. The survey tested those elements with the statements (as seen in Figure 5) and received positive feedback. ‘Strongly agree’ was the most commonly selected option across all elements. From the result, it can be concluded that social media can effectively convey a brand's value and story through pictures and content. Images of the product-making process can demonstrate a brand's value and help ensure product quality. People's involvement in the content can also convey a strong sense of community.

Figure 5. Bar charts present the results of the use of design elements in social media

4.9 Value perception for the local brand

This section presents a comparative deductive study that aims to analyse communication strategies and their impact on the audience by comparing two different brands, A and B. To conduct the study, two social media posts were selected from the respective accounts of the brands and are labelled as brands A (Figure 6) and B (Figure 7). The posts include showcasing products, the making process, local involvement, and selling booths. Although they all feature similar types of pictures, they have different communication styles and place emphasis on different aspects of their brand. For example, on social media, brand A places a strong emphasis on the maker's inspiration for each work. This indicates that the brand seeks to capture the essence of its vital resources: its hometown and people. The brand's story is conveyed through pictures that casually showcase its surroundings with warmly lit images. The booth is decorated using wooden displays. In comparison, brand B emphasises the variety of products in its collection by showing them being worn by models. Pictures of awards and certificates represent the quality of their products. The booth decoration also utilises the print signage pattern provided by the event organiser.

The survey used dichotomous and multiple-choice questions. Respondents were asked to choose between brand A and brand B. Brand A received 54.9% of the votes (N=62), while brand B received 45.1% (N=51). The difference in votes between the two brands was not statistically significant. However, when the results were analysed by age group (see Figure 8), it was found that younger people (under 45 years old) were more interested in brand A, while those aged 46 and above preferred brand B.

Figure 6. Brand A social media content, gathered from the brand's social media posts (Bhukarm, n.d.)

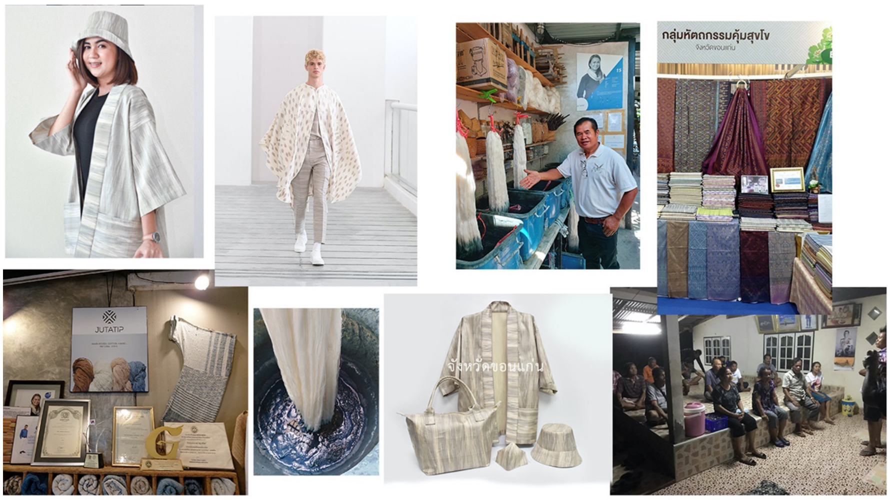

Figure 7. Brand B social media content, gathered from the brand's social media posts (Khumsukkho, n.d.)

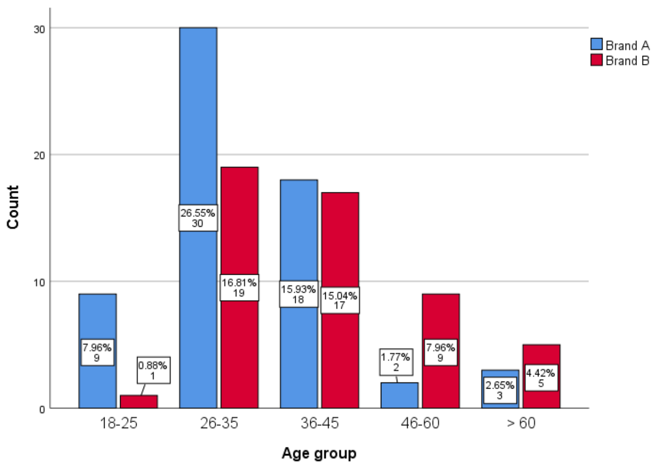

Figure 8. Result of preferred brand divined by age groups

The survey investigated the reasons for choosing one brand over another. Respondents who chose brands A and B were asked to select multiple reasons for their choice. Results are shown in Table 18.

The top five reasons for choosing brand A were:

10. It represents their hometown better
11. The story of their product is easy to connect with
12. They show community participation
13. The products suit them better
14. The craftsmanship is more delicate

Meanwhile, the top five reasons for choosing brand B were:

1. The products suit them better
2. Products look better when a model wears them
3. The products look better in terms of quality
4. Products have more variety
5. The prizes and awards the brand has received help ensure product quality

Table 18. Reasons for choosing the preferred brand results

Preferred brand			Responses N	Responses Percent	Percent of Cases
Brand A	Reason for selecting this brand[a]	The products look better in quality	8	4.1%	12.9%
		The products suit me better	30	15.2%	48.4%
		Products look better when a model wears them	5	2.5%	8.1%
		Products have more variety	4	2.0%	6.5%
		The story of their product is easy to connect with	33	16.8%	53.2%
		It represents their hometown better	34	17.3%	54.8%
		The prizes and awards the brand has received help ensure product quality	1	0.5%	1.6%

		Their booth or kiosk is better decorated	5	2.5%	8.1%
		The craftsmanship is more delicate	24	12.2%	38.7%
		It gives you a sense that you can be a part of supporting the local community	21	10.7%	33.9%
		They show the community participation	32	16.2%	51.6%
	Total		197	100.0%	317.7%
Brand B	Reason for selecting this brand[a]	The products look better in quality	19	13.1%	37.3%
		The products suit me better	35	24.1%	68.6%
		Products look better when a model wears them	25	17.2%	49.0%
		Products have more variety	15	10.3%	29.4%
		The story of their product is easy to connect with	3	2.1%	5.9%
		It represents their hometown better	6	4.1%	11.8%
		The prizes and awards the brand has received help ensure product quality	13	9.0%	25.5%
		Their booth or kiosk is better decorated	11	7.6%	21.6%
		The craftsmanship is more delicate	6	4.1%	11.8%
		It gives you a sense that you can be a part of supporting the local community	6	4.1%	11.8%
		They show the community participation	6	4.1%	11.8%
	Total		145	100.0%	284.3%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

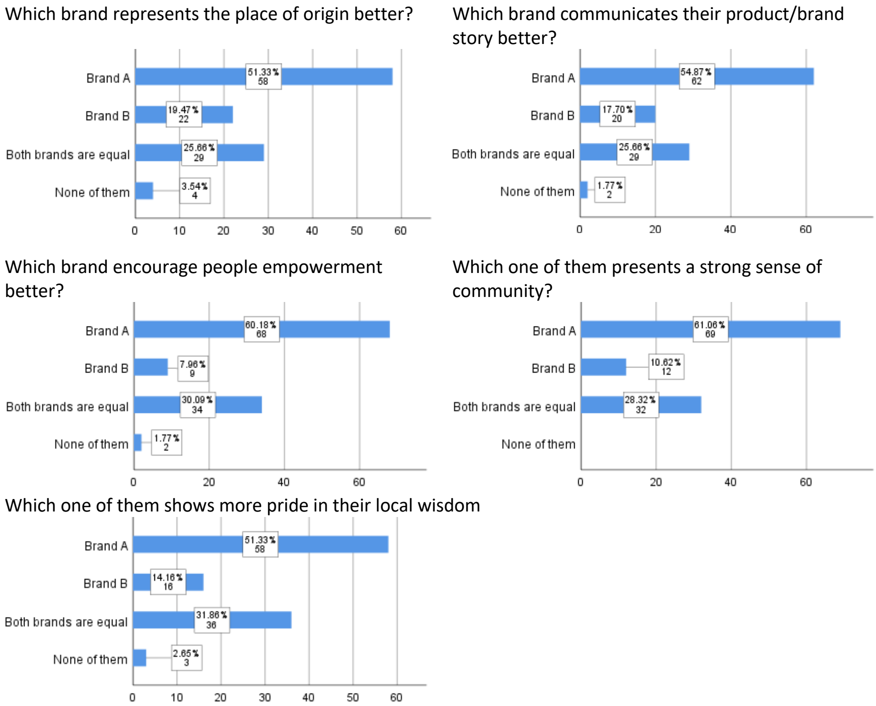

Figure 9. Bar charts present a comparison of brand communication between two brands

5 Discussion

This section presents the key findings and conclusion from the previous section. The first conclusion is drawn between the OTOP customers and local authorities, while the second is between the OTOP customers and the OTOP enterprise. The discussion of new strategies is presented in Tables 19 and 20.

Table 19. Key findings and conclusion (between the OTOP customers and local authorities)

Key findings and discussion for new opportunities	Themes	Strategic development
Customer's attitude towards OTOP products Customers positively perceive the product's quality, reliability, and local distribution. However, there is room for improvement in terms of product originality and innovation. This is a new opportunity for the OTOP. Service providers can train local businesses to innovate and add value to OTOP products.	Training	New training programme for product originality and innovation
Customers' perceptions towards the OTOP programme The value of the OTOP programme from the customer's point of view can be reflected in this query. However, despite the fairly good understanding, the negative aspect cannot be ignored. Both negative aspects are related to political issues. To avoid these issues, the service provider can clarify that they genuinely support local businesses and advocate for this to the general public.	Communication strategy	Advocating genuine support and service
Customers' perspectives on the OTOP standard mark The OTOP standard mark can affect buying decisions when customers want to support local products. However, if two similar products are available for purchase, customers will often choose based on quality and convenience rather than the presence of the OTOP mark. Therefore, while customers may positively respond to the OTOP standard mark, it may not be valuable enough to prompt them to choose an OTOP product over a non-OTOP product. Therefore, the OTOP service provider should identify the unique value of OTOP products that distinguishes them from local competitors. Moreover, they should promote the addition of new value to the OTOP programme and its standard mark to reflect this added value.	New programme's value Communication strategy	Unique value-adding to the OTOP programme Value communication through the use of a new standard mark
Opinions on the working procedures of local authorities in providing support for local communities Although customers are not directly involved in the support provided by the OTOP programme, they still want to be updated on its progress. Specifically, they are interested in knowing about the budget allocation, the outcome of the support, and how the government works with local communities.	Communication strategy	Increasing information transparency of the provided support to build trust with the general public

In conclusion, the investigation between local authorities and OTOP customers revealed three themes that could be the solution for strategic development. First, a new kind of training could be provided to increase innovation in local products. Second, the value of the programme could be communicated more effectively. Third, genuine support should be provided with transparency to both local enterprises and the general public.

Table 20. Key findings and conclusion (between the OTOP customers and OTOP enterprises)

Key findings and discussion for new opportunities	Themes	Strategic development
OTOP product's accessibility To make OTOP products more accessible to customers, new distribution channels should be explored. Online platforms are a popular option, as well as setting up shelves or kiosks in shopping malls, partnering with third-party websites, participating in OTOP fairs, and selling directly through the brand's website or social media. Local restaurants and convenience stores were also suggested as potential distribution channels by respondents.	Product accessibility	New 'place' for distribution
Buying decisions towards local products Buying decisions are influenced by both product and social aspects. Regarding the product-related aspect, customers are satisfied when the OTOP product's quality meets their expectations. However, they also value the social aspect and want to support the local community. Furthermore, customers also pay attention to the product's place of origin when purchasing. Therefore, highlighting the place of origin, how well the product utilises local resources, and its positive economic and social impact can create new opportunities for customer engagement.	Customer engagement	Enhancing the social value and the story of the product's origin
Customer expectation for OTOP products The most important product expectations are quality, consistency, price, use of local resources, and innovation. To increase customer engagement, it is important to consider these factors. One of the most critical factors is *'newness and innovation'*. Local authorities and entrepreneurs must prioritise this aspect, as it is a significant concern, and there seems to be a lack of innovation in OTOP products.	Customer engagement	Innovative local product scheme
Effectiveness of brand touchpoints According to customer opinion, social media, product packaging, and website are the most influential touchpoints for communicating brand value. Customers believe that social media plays an essential role in brand value communication. Including images of the product-making process can demonstrate a brand's value and help ensure product quality. Additionally, involving people in the content can convey a strong sense of community.	Customer engagement	Effectiveness of touchpoints for value communication
Value perception for the local brand The younger generation is more interested in the social and emotional values associated with a brand's story rather than the physical value of the product itself. For the new age of OTOP business, there is an opportunity to focus on this aspect as the centre of development. Another level of customer engagement can be achieved by incorporating empowering storytelling, fostering a strong sense of community, and promoting pride in local wisdom.	Customer engagement	Enhancing social value through brand storytelling

In the investigation between OTOP customers and enterprises, two themes emerged: product accessibility and customer engagement. To improve product accessibility, distribution can be expanded to include online selling. To enhance customer engagement, the social value and origin story of the product can be emphasised, effective touchpoints can be utilised, and brand storytelling can be incorporated. Additionally, traditional OTOP product styles can be explored and innovated to serve modern lifestyles better.

6 Conclusion and future work

Through the investigation, new potential strategies have been extracted. These strategies could potentially provide new value to the OTOP programme derived from OTOP customers' perspective and could lead to a stronger relationship between stakeholders. The future work will investigate further to find the potential value from the perspective of the other groups of stakeholders: between local authorities and OTOP entrepreneurs. With these groups of stakeholders, in-depth interviews and co-design workshops will be conducted to find the solution to mitigate the negativity from current practice. The results will be incorporated together to conclude mutual value for the OTOP programme so that all stakeholders can benefit from it fruitfully.

In conclusion, the investigation has revealed new potential strategies that could add value to the OTOP programme from the perspective of OTOP customers. Implementation of these strategies could lead to stronger relationships between stakeholders. Future work will aim to uncover potential value from the perspective of other stakeholder groups, namely: local authorities and OTOP entrepreneurs. To achieve this, in-depth interviews and co-design workshops will be conducted. These efforts will focus on finding solutions to mitigate the negative impacts of current practices. The results of these investigations will be combined to identify mutual value for the OTOP programme, benefiting all stakeholders in a fruitful manner.

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