Building Community, Driving Sales:
The Influence of Solidarity in Online University Marketplace
การสร้างชุมชนและกระตุ้นการขาย:
อิทธิพลของความเป็นพวกพ้องในตลาดออนไลน์มหาวิทยาลัย

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Abstract

This research explores how solidarity promotes sales in a Thai online university marketplace and its influence on purchasing decisions. Initiated by alumni in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, this marketplace functions as a problem-solving community, enhancing member engagement. By employing Alharbi's theory of solidarity discourse, the research revealed features of the discourse that reinforce community bonds and advance commercial success, as well as specific marketing strategies related to solidarity. Through a solidarity discourse analysis of 120 online selling captions and a survey of 400 community members on the influence of solidarity and seller status on purchasing decisions, this study delineated the mechanisms through which sellers foster group solidarity. The analysis identified five distinct acts of solidarity discourse (namely commissive, assertive, identifying, regrouping, and persuasive acts), assessed their perceived impacts on purchasing behaviors, and evaluated the influence of seller status. The results indicate varied levels of the influence of solidarity on consumer purchasing decisions, offering insights into the effectiveness of different solidarity strategies in promoting group cohesion and facilitating business objectives. This investigation contributes to the understanding of online community dynamics and their implications for marketing and consumer purchasing decisions on digital platforms.

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บทคัดย่อ

     การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการสร้างและใช้ความเป็นพวกพ้องเพื่อสนับสนุนการขาย รวมทั้ง
อิทธิพลของความเป็นพวกพ้องต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อในหมู่สมาชิกตลาดออนไลน์ของมหาวิทยาลัยแห่งหนึ่งในประเทศ
ไทย ตลาดออนไลน์แห่งนี้ริเริ่มโดยศิษย์เก่าเพื่อตอบสนองต่อการแพร่ระบาดของโควิด-19 โดยทำหน้าที่เป็นชุมชนที่
แก้ไขปัญหาและกระตุ้นการมีส่วนร่วมของสมาชิกในองค์กร การวิจัยนี้ศึกษาลักษณะวาทกรรมความเป็นพวกพ้องใน
การสร้างเสริมความเป็นปึกแผ่นของชุมชนผ่านทฤษฎีวาทกรรมความเป็นพวกพ้องของอัลฮัม ฮัลฮาบี รวมทั้ง
กลยุทธ์ทางการตลาดเฉพาะที่สัมพันธ์กับความเป็นพวกพ้อง ผู้วิจัยเก็บข้อมูลจากคำบรรยายการขายออนไลน์
จำนวน 120 ข้อความเพื่อวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมความเป็นพวกพ้องและผลสำรวจออนไลน์จากสมาชิกชุมชนจำนวน
400 รายเพื่อวิเคราะห์อิทธิพลของความเป็นพวกพ้องและสถานะของผู้ขายต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อของผู้บริโภค
ผลการศึกษาพบวาทกรรมความเป็นพวกพ้องทั้ง 5 วัจนกรรม ได้แก่ วัจนกรรมผูกมัด วัจนกรรมยืนยัน
วัจนกรรมระบุ วัจนกรรมจัดกลุ่มใหม่ และวัจนกรรมโน้มน้าว รวมทั้งประเมินผลกระทบที่ปรากฏต่อการ
ตัดสินใจซื้อของผู้บริโภค และประเมินอิทธิพลของสถานะผู้ขาย นอกจากนี้การวิจัยยังพบว่าอิทธิพลของความ
เป็นพวกพ้องต่อการตัดสินใจซื้อของผู้บริโภคมีหลายระดับ อันนำไปสู่ข้อมูลเชิงลึกในแง่ประสิทธิผลของกลยุทธ์
ความเป็นพวกพ้องที่แตกต่างกันในการส่งเสริมความสามัคคีของกลุ่มและสนับสนุนเป้าหมายทางธุรกิจ การวิจัย
นี้ช่วยเพิ่มความเข้าใจต่อพลวัตของชุมชนออนไลน์และผลกระทบต่อการตลาดและการตัดสินใจซื้อของผู้บริโภค
ในช่องทางดิจิทัล

คำสำคัญ: ความเป็นพวกพ้อง วาทกรรมความเป็นพวกพ้อง ตลาดออนไลน์มหาวิทยาลัย
            การตัดสินใจซื้อของผู้บริโภค คำบรรยายการขาย

Introduction

     The Covid-19 pandemic precipitated unprecedented global lockdown measures, propelling the world economy into its most severe recession since World War II (World Bank, 2020). In the wake of these economic challenges, Thailand has witnessed the emergence of a novel business model: the online university marketplace. Spearheaded by a cohort of Thai university alumni, this initiative represents a pioneering form of community-driven commerce designed exclusively for university-affiliated sellers (Taibanguai, 2022). Distinct from conventional marketplaces, this digital platform functions as a problem-oriented community, rapidly assembled through a Facebook group in direct response to the pandemic, thereby acting as a focal point for collective action (Georgiou, 2016). Taibanguai and Suraratdecha (2022) found that selling in this online marketplace could be achieved visually through images and videos, and textually through captions. These captions often exhibit repeated patterns and employ a diverse range of author tones, from humorous and appreciative to nostalgic and depressing. Appreciation was thus expressed for the organizational members' support, along with nostalgia for the good old university days. The online selling captions written by the university-affiliated sellers are not only a space where details about products and services are provided but also a space for storytelling and connections in the midst of the deadly crisis. As a result, beyond facilitating transactions, the platform engenders a sense of belonging and active engagement among its participants (Taibanguai, 2022).

Within the confines of this online university marketplace, several community members, predominantly amateur sellers lacking formal commerce training, turn to the solidarity within the group to bolster sales and captivate potential buyers. These sellers leverage their institutional affiliation to boost sales, employing a linguistic strategy known as solidarity discourse in their online selling captions. Solidarity discourse is defined as a cohesive social practice, articulated through text, speech, and other communicative forms, and aimed at reinforcing social bonds (Alharbi, 2018). Solidarity and business are partly related, and the connection became evident during the great pandemic. For example, as supported by Kulow et al. (2021), essential workers who experienced stress during the Covid-19 pandemic seek social support and solidarity by purchasing products from personized sellers who offer insight into consumers' individuality while selling.

Accordingly, the primary objective of this research is twofold: first, to investigate sellers' approaches to solidarity cultivation among community members through online selling captions; and second, to examine the role of solidarity in influencing consumer purchasing decisions within this unique marketplace setting. The insights gleaned from this research underscore the critical role of solidarity in commercial settings and illuminate the tactics sellers employ to nurture a shared sense of purpose between sellers and buyers.

Objectives

The current research aims to investigate the mechanisms through which sellers in an online university marketplace foster solidarity among buyers through selling captions, as well as to examine the influence of solidarity on purchasing behaviors.

Literature Review

1. Solidarity

Solidarity, a multifaceted concept, is categorized into three distinct levels: institutional, group, and interpersonal. Institutional solidarity is grounded in the frameworks within societies, relying on formalized sectors that foster collective support (Prainsack & Buyx, 2017). Group solidarity captures the collective consciousness of members united by shared goals, duties, and interests, and promotes a sense of community unity (Sam, 2013). Interpersonal solidarity is characterized by the personal bonds between individuals, cultivated through shared experiences, emotions, and close relationships (Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 2004). The core function of solidarity is to unite individuals around fundamental values, fostering a cohesive collective that promotes social cohesion and enables concerted action (Hechter, 2001). According to Hechter's (1987) research, within any community, the enjoyment of mutual company and engagement in various interactions are sustained by the benefits derived from solidarity.

In the digital era, the scope for fostering solidarity has significantly expanded, with online platforms, especially social media networks like Facebook groups and Twitter, playing a crucial role in facilitating and strengthening connections among users. These platforms offer new avenues for the articulation and expansion of solidarity across diverse geographical and societal landscapes. The instance of the Covid-19 crisis clearly indicates the significance of social networks as they establish new conventions of solidarity. However, the new norm of

solidarity involves staying at home and avoiding physical contact, which paradoxically contrasts with the traditional concept of human coexistence (Fisse & Haas, 2020).

The practical implications of solidarity are vast, manifesting in actions that contribute positively to community welfare (Unger, 2014). Group solidarity encompasses shared social, economic, and cultural values, aims at reducing disparities, and enhances a collective identity to confront common challenges (Sanguankaew et al., 2020). Additionally, the need for belonging and social engagement is a powerful motivator of human behavior (Baumeister, 2012). This form of solidarity not only strengthens community ties but also brings tangible benefits to businesses. For example, cultural products, created with commercial intent, utilize group solidarity to enhance profitability and encourage mutual recognition among community members, thereby enriching the diversity of cultural expressions through strategic associations with specific groups (Mulyana, Briandana, & Puspa, 2019). The role of group solidarity has been especially emphasized during crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, where it has been instrumental in mobilizing collective efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus (Yan et al., 2020). In conclusion, group solidarity represents a crucial element in the architecture of community resilience, serving as a versatile tool for societal and economic empowerment.

2. Solidarity Discourse

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the notion of solidarity significantly captured the interest of communitarian scholars, subsequently becoming a foundational concept across various academic disciplines (Prainsack & Buyx, 2011). Solidarity discourse emerged as a critical framework within this context, conceptualized by Alharbi (2018) as "a form of consolidating social practice, manifested through text, speech, and communication." This form of discourse employs both linguistic and non-linguistic elements to propagate a sense of unity, functioning as a performative mechanism that actively fosters solidarity within and among communities.

Austin (1962) introduced a performative theory categorizing solidarity discourse into three operational levels: locution, illocution, and perlocution. The locutionary stage encompasses various acts such as commissive (pledges towards future actions), assertive (articulation of attitudes, positions, and ideologies), identifying (acknowledgment of others' interests), and regrouping (unification of disparate entities) acts (Alharbi, 2018). The illocutionary phase encompasses these acts with an emphasis on their performative intent, while the perlocutionary stage focuses on persuasive acts aimed at achieving a definitive objective. It is noteworthy that a singular communicative exchange can simultaneously embody multiple acts, offering a layered and multifaceted approach to understanding solidarity through discourse.

Viewed through the lens of discourse analysis, solidarity becomes a rich field of study, allowing for in-depth descriptions and nuanced analyses. Discourse inherently integrates various levels and attributes, presenting a polycentric nature that facilitates a comprehensive exploration of the concept of solidarity (Alharbi, 2018).

In this paper, online selling captions are examined as potential vehicles for conveying solidarity discourse. Alharbi and Rucker (2023) highlight the role of storytelling in disseminating messages of solidarity. Storytelling enables a speaker to create connections with an audience, regroup individuals or parties, make assertions, and portray realities in a manner that fosters group cohesion without directly contesting alternative viewpoints. Thus, storytelling emerges as a strategic tool for communicators, providing a subtle means to support assertive messages and bolster communal ties.

Research Methodology

This study explores the solidarity discourse features in fostering community bonds and driving commercial success, as well as the impact of solidarity on purchasing decisions within the online marketplace associated with Thammasat University.

The Thammasat University and Marketplace (Mahawitthayalai Thammasat Lae Kan Fakran) Facebook group was the first online university marketplace in Thailand, trading various kinds of products and services, such as food, properties, hotels, and educational services (Taibanguai, 2022). Compared to other marketplaces, it had the highest number of 113 "Visual Storytellers" on the data collection day, indicating a strong likelihood of obtaining (the most) qualified data. By combining qualitative and quantitative analyses, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how solidarity discourse manifests and impacts consumer purchasing decisions.

Firstly, the textual analysis employed Alharbi's (2018) theory of solidarity discourse together with a discursive speech act. A total of 120 online selling captions, written by 65 members who were awarded the badge of Visual Storyteller within the marketplace, were examined. This badge is recognized for contributions to valued content that enhances community engagement (Facebook Community, 2018). The timeframe for the analyzed captions extends from the group's inception on April 7, 2020, to six months later, on October 7, 2020, with data collection conducted within a single day to maintain temporal consistency. The caption analysis targeted speech acts and linguistic features, notably word choices, that indicate solidarity discourse among community members to reveal the implied selling strategies. This study excluded non-linguistic analysis because the data contained different non-linguistic media, such as images, videos, and infographics, which could lead to inconsistent analysis among posts.

Secondly, the analysis of solidarity influence was conducted through an online survey. Utilizing Yamane's (1967) sampling technique, the research engaged 400 respondents affiliated with both Thammasat University and the Facebook group's online marketplace. The survey sought to clarify the effects of solidarity between sellers and buyers on their purchasing decisions, inviting respondents to provide supplementary qualitative insights to support their quantitative responses. The survey questions included four aspects: community member verification, personal information, perceived influence of solidarity on purchasing behaviors, and perceived influence of seller's status on purchasing behaviors. The data analysis was performed with the SPSS software, focusing on frequency and percentage distributions to quantify the impact of solidarity on purchasing behaviors.

By integrating these qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the study aims to shed light on the intricate dynamics of solidarity discourse within digital marketplaces and its implications for consumer engagement and commercial success.

Findings

To attain the first research objective of investigating how sellers in the online university marketplace cultivate solidarity among buyers through selling captions, qualitative data analysis was conducted as follows:

1. Solidarity Discourse

Drawing from Alharbi's (2018) performative theory of solidarity, the analysis identified five distinct acts of solidarity discourse within the 120 online selling captions on the Thammasat University and Marketplace platform.

1.1 Commissive act

The commissive act within these selling captions manifests through offers of special discounts, promotions, and services tailored exclusively for Thammasat University members, occurring a total of 20 times in the dataset. This act signifies a pledge or guarantee of future actions, contingent upon members verifying their affiliation. Examples of the commissive act include:

(1) lae thi samkhan ropkuan song imel rue khokwam ma bok noi na kha wa luk maedom mueankan diao ui lot rakha hai chukchuk naenon

[And, most importantly, please send an email or message confirming that you are also a child of Mae Dome. I will certainly lower the price for you.]

(2) tha lang mot wikrit khowit-19 phueanphuean phiphi nai krup ni ma thi ran thak ha phom dai loei khrap mi suanlot hai phinong thammasat khrapphom

[Once the Covid-19 crisis is over, my friends, brothers, and sisters in this group can text me when visiting my shop. I have some discounts available exclusively for our Thammasat University family.]

(3) chaeng ma wa ma chak phet ni thang Facebook khong taela rongraem wai klap ma poet borikan dai laeo cha sang suanlot phoem hai ik samrap phinong TU khrap 😳

[Please let each hotel know through its Facebook page that you are from this TU page. If the hotel has reopened its services, I will create additional discount promotion codes exclusively for the TU family. 😳]

(4) tha bok wa pen dek motho diao hai mae pok phonlamai tam ruedu kan chaek lang ahan duai cha

[If you mention that you are a TU student, I will have my mom serve seasonal fruits after the meal.]

The analyzed examples illustrate the sellers' dedication to furnishing Thammasat University members with exclusive benefits. These privileges are not only promised but also substantiated through documentary evidence, contingent upon the verification of the individual's affiliation with the university. The narrative explicitly references Thammasat University, employing its official abbreviation "motho" (TU) and the colloquial "maedom" (Mae Dome) to personalize the connection, alongside the detailed offers.

The use of "naenon" (certainly) in Example 1 strengthens an illocutionary force of the utterance as a commissive act, by conveying a robust assurance of the seller's commitment to the offered discount. Similarly, the future-oriented markers "diao" and "cha" (will), observed in Examples 1, 3, and 4, explicitly articulate the seller's intention towards future actions, thereby reinforcing the commissive nature of these interactions.

By offering exclusive discounts, the sellers strategically aim to elicit a specific perlocutionary response. The goal is to encourage buyers to feel a sense of belonging and better treatment within the marketplace, which influences their purchasing decisions. This commissive act establishes a reciprocal relationship where sellers benefit from heightened sales, and buyers gain access to exclusive privileges and benefits, illustrating a mutual advantage facilitated by solidarity discourse within the marketplace.

1.2 Assertive act

In the context of online selling captions, the assertive act serves as a vehicle for sellers to articulate their perspectives, beliefs, and intentions, suggesting an illocutionary force. This discourse strategy enables sellers to align and unite with the community's members by expressing shared values and goals, occurring a total of five times in the dataset. Some examples of the assertive act are provided below:

(5) phon bun phon than thi than dai chuailuea phiphi nongnong cha song phon hai than mi khwamsuk to pai nai phai phak na

[The merit of helping your brothers and sisters will result in future happiness.]

Example 5 positions the seller as a member who values community support and future well-being, by advocating for the virtue of supporting one another and by offering goods and services at subsidized rates. This textual strategy effectively resonates with potential buyers who share mutual values.

(6) rao chuea wa chao thammasat mai khoei thing phinong yu laeo

[I believe that Thammasat people never abandon their brothers and sisters.]

(7) lae ko yak cha sanapsanun kitchakan khong chao thammasat kap khao bang

[And I want to support the business of Thammasat people.]

Example 6 asserts the seller's strong commitment to assisting fellow community members, affectionately termed "phinong" (siblings), cultivating a sense of familial bond. Likewise, the inclusion of "chao thammasat" (Thammasat people) in Example 7 reinforces a shared identity and belonging within the community.

(8) tangtae khai ma bok loei maikhoei tham pro tham rakha ni phuea chao motho thaonan!!!

[Since I started selling it, I would say I have never offered a promotion and price like this. This is for TU people only!!!]

Example 8 announces exclusive benefits tailored for the Thammasat community, thereby focusing on a distinct group and fostering a sense of unity among the community. It also strengthens the assertive statement's impact with the use of emphatic phrases such as "maikhoei" (never) and "thaonan" (only). The seller asserts the exclusivity of the offer and its focus on the Thammasat community, which suggests an illocutionary force. Furthermore, these emphatic terms create a sense of urgency and highlight the offer's value to Thammasat people, suggesting a perlocutionary effect.

These examples typically highlight how the sellers communicate their stance on community engagement, product quality, or customer service principles, thereby fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose with the community members. Through such assertive statements, sellers not only position their offerings within the marketplace but also contribute to the collective identity of the institution, reinforcing the bond between sellers and the wider community. Such instances effectively bring together sellers and prospective buyers around common values and objectives, nurturing a sense of affiliation with the Thammasat University community.

Overall, the assertive act fosters solidarity by presenting the sellers as someone who shares the community's values and interests (illocutionary force). Strategic language choices solidify this connection, which influences consumer purchasing decisions within the marketplace (perlocutionary effect).

1.3 Identifying act

In line with the marketplace's core mission of aiding Thammasat University's members, the online selling captions prominently feature the identifying act, occurring a total of 52 times in the dataset. Sellers actively nurture connections by identifying buyers as part of the Thammasat community (illocutionary force), emphasizing friendship and the establishment of a unified collective identity. This emphasis on unity transcends demographic distinctions, manifesting in three distinct forms of relationships used to characterize their shared association: siblinghood, clan, and alumni. Notably, a single message often combines multiple relationships. The provided examples effectively illustrate the identifying act in action:

(9) lae thi samkhan ropkuan song imel rue khokwam ma bok noi na kha wa luk maedom mueankan diao ui lot rakha hai chukchuk naenon

[And, most importantly, please send an email or message confirming that you are also a child of Mae Dome. I will certainly lower the price for you.]

(10) tae lueat lueangdaeng lae chao talat yang rao "khong man tong mi ngai"

[But for those with red-yellow blood and members of the marketplace like us, "it is a must-have item".]

(11) phiset samrap phueanphuean thammasat

[Exclusively for Thammasat friends]

Examples 9, 10, and 11 evoke a strong sense of siblinghood, clan, shared heritage, and closeness among the target readers through the terms "luk maedom" (child of Mae Dome), "lueat lueangdaeng" (red-yellow blood), and "phueanphuean thammasat" (Thammasat friends).

(12) kho hai phanakngan kanbinthai thi pen sitkao thammasat thuk than triam kankhaikhong dai na batni

[I would like all Thai Airways employees who are Thammasat alumni to prepare for sale now.]

Meanwhile, Example 12 highlights shared experiences or affiliations, placing emphasis on shared backgrounds among members, irrespective of their current or former status at Thammasat University. Through these examples, the sellers establish meaningful connections and underscore experiences that unify Thammasat University members, which reinforces the sense of community and shared identity.

These instances exemplify the concerted efforts made by sellers to nurture a sense of camaraderie, belonging, and shared identity among community members, irrespective of their individual backgrounds. They adeptly identify individuals based on shared characteristics. They employ terms of address that evoke a profound sense of group solidarity and a united entity. Overall, the identifying act plays a pivotal role in reinforcing the marketplace's community spirit and collective purpose, by categorizing buyers as part of the Thammasat family (illocutionary force).

1.4 Regrouping act

The regrouping act is observed only once, in the example provided below. This act serves as a demonstration that the seller has positioned herself and her community as a single, united entity, distinguishing them from other communities. The following example illustrates the regrouping act:

(13) rao pai kho huana ma hai samrap dek thammasat doichapho duai kha tonni dek chula ko yang maidai pro ni na

[I requested a promotion from the boss, especially for Thammasat students. (Chulalongkorn students have not received this promotion yet.)]

Example 13 demonstrates that the seller establishes a connection with the readers, who are part of the Thammasat University community. Additionally, the seller positions her group as privileged and exclusive (illocutionary force) by mentioning a third party, the Chulalongkorn University community. By including this reference to the "other" group, the seller engages in a regrouping act that emphasizes the differentiation between the Thammasat University community (the "self") and the Chulalongkorn University community (the "other"). This approach constructs a sense of superiority and exclusivity, potentially elevating the perceived value of the product or service. The intended effect is to foster loyalty and a sense

of belonging among Thammasat people, encouraging support for the seller as a community representative. Consequently, Example 13 demonstrates regrouping as a strategic tool for building solidarity by creating a clear distinction between the in-group and the out-group, thereby exemplifying a regrouping rather than an identifying act.

1.5 Persuasive act

The persuasive act in the online selling captions can be identified in two aspects, occurring a total of 16 times in the dataset. The first aspect aims to convince readers to support sellers within the community, aligning with the primary goal of the online marketplace founded amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. This aspect encourages readers to assist and engage with the sellers. The second aspect is intended to motivate sellers to maximize their selling potential. These messages inspire sellers to take proactive steps in their marketing strategies. The following examples illustrate the persuasive act in both aspects:

(14) lae kho choen lukkha thuk khon thi mi chai metta mi kamlangsap pho cha utnun kueakun kan dai chuailuea phiphi nongnong phokha maekha ruam samnak diao kan

[And I welcome everyone who has a kind heart and has enough money to support each other to help brothers, sisters, and sellers from the same university.]

(15) rao pai kho huana ma hai samrap dek thammasat doichapho duai kha tonni dek chula ko yang maidai pro ni na

[I requested a promotion from the boss, especially for Thammasat students. (Chulalongkorn students have not received this promotion yet.)]

Despite their common goal of encouraging purchases, Examples 14 and 15 employ different persuasive approaches. Example 14 employs an emotionally compelling persuasion technique to make a request for support (illocutionary force). By employing kinship terms "phiphi nongnong" (brothers and sisters) and evoking altruism, the caption fosters empathy and a sense of obligation among readers, thereby encouraging support for community members (perlocutionary effect). Meanwhile, Example 15 persuades by emphasizing the privilege enjoyed by the Thammasat community in comparison to a third party, the Chulalongkorn community, which does not receive the same privilege. It highlights an exclusive offer, appealing to the reader's desire.

(16) samrap phokha maekha kho hai poet phaeng khai kan yangtemthi ngat thuk konlayut ma duengdut lukkha lae khakhai duai khwamsuesat

[For the sellers, I would like you to open your stalls to your fullest ability, use every strategy to attract customers, and trade with integrity.]

On the other hand, Example 16 focuses on persuading sellers to conduct their trades with maximum potential and integrity. The seller employs directives and suggestions to motivate fellow sellers (illocutionary force). By emphasizing the significance of effort and ethical conduct, the seller aims to encourage fellow sellers to improve their performance and contribute to the overall success of the marketplace (a perlocutionary effect).

2. Solidarity Impact on Purchasing Decisions

To investigate the impact of solidarity on purchasing decisions within the online marketplace, quantitative data analysis was conducted. Initially, the survey responses concerning the solidarity influence on purchasing decisions received from 400 online respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Perceived influence of solidarity on purchasing decisions

Levels of Influence	Numbers of respondents	Percentage
Moderate	221	52.75
High	136	34.00
Low	43	10.75
Negligible	10	2.50
Total	400	100.00

Table 1 displays the perceived influence of solidarity among the respondents, categorized into four levels: high, medium, low, and negligible. Among the responses, 211 individuals (52.75%) indicated a moderate level, 136 individuals (34.00%) indicated a high level, and 43 individuals (10.75%) indicated a low level. Additionally, 10 respondents (2.50%) did not perceive solidarity as influential in their purchasing decisions.

Out of the total of 390 respondents (97.50%) who perceived the influence of solidarity, their reasons for this perception were similar. The most prevalent reason was "credibility," as traceability and ease of contact with sellers provided reassurance in case of any issues. Buyers also had the ability to access previous selling posts for feedback. The second reason was "belonging" within the community, which encompassed a sense of family, connection, friendliness, and intimacy among members. The third reason was "sympathy," as many buyers wanted to support acquaintances within the same institution. Additionally, there were some minor reasons, such as the "Law of Continuity" and "shipping cost reduction." This was due to the possibility of in-person product pick-up, resulting in convenience and cost savings.
On the other hand, 10 respondents (2.50%) expressed doubt about the influence of solidarity. Their responses indicated a priority placed on the product itself, with an emphasis on factors such as selling presentations and information rather than institutional affiliation because the institution could not guarantee the quality of goods. Some respondents did not attribute significant importance to the institution. Interestingly, one respondent raised the possibility that a seller may not genuinely be a member of the community.

Secondly, the survey responses regarding the influence of each seller's status on purchasing decisions are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Influence of seller's status on purchasing decisions

Seller's status	Frequency	Percentage
Friend or acquaintance	370	92.50
Famous person	111	27.75
Senior or respected person	95	23.75
Stranger	35	8.75

Note: Multiple options could be chosen.

According to the data presented in Table 2, purchasing decisions were most influenced by being a friend or acquaintance, chosen 370 times (92.50%). This manifests the significance of personal relationships and trust in purchasing decisions within the community. Buyers are more willing to purchase from those they know personally, indicating the importance of familiarity, confidence, and loyalty.

This was followed by being a famous person, chosen 111 times (27.75%). Public figures can evidently impact purchasing decisions due to their visibility and credibility. Meanwhile, being a senior or respected person was chosen 95 times (23.75%). This reveals the importance of respect, hierarchical status, and trustworthiness within the community. Lastly, being a stranger was chosen 35 times (8.75%), reflecting the lack of trust and hesitation buyers feel towards unknown sellers.

Conclusion and Discussion

Upon a thorough examination of online selling captions and the influence of solidarity on purchasing behaviors, several noteworthy findings are well worth discussing.

First and foremost, the key findings illuminate that online selling captions serve a dual purpose within the context of solidarity discourse: fostering community bonds and driving commercial success within an online university marketplace. Observed through speech acts, solidarity discourse plays a key role in fostering trust, loyalty, and a sense of belonging among community members. The sellers strategically employ all of the five solidarity acts to create a shared identity, offer exclusive benefits, and encourage mutual support. These efforts ultimately contribute to increased sales and customer satisfaction. In response to the great pandemic, the most prevalent act is the commissive act, which serves as a strategic tool for building trust and assuring customers of future benefits. By promising future actions, the sellers demonstrate their commitment to the community and mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic on their businesses. This act provides confidence and confirmation regarding what buyers can anticipate in the post-pandemic era (Alharbi, 2018). The identifying act is also prevalent, establishing a sense of "we" (Alharbi, 2018) through various shared affiliations and identities. By positioning buyers as members of a specific group, sellers create a sense of

belonging and exclusivity, employing kinship terms of siblings, clan, and alumni, to define their mutual affiliation. While the regrouping act is less frequent, its strategic use in differentiating the target group from others highlights the importance of positioning within the marketplace. The seller reinforces the unique value proposition of their offerings to distinguish their community from external groups. Furthermore, the regrouping act is consistent with the online survey results, which indicates that a sense of belonging drives buyers' purchasing decisions. Through the captions, sellers not only receive help from the university's members, but buyers can also assist and obtain products and services from community members simultaneously.

Secondly, regarding the influence of solidarity, the research emphasizes the vital role of solidarity as a strategic tool for business operations. Defined as a sense of belonging and shared responsibility within a community (Mulyana, Briandana, & Puspa, 2019), solidarity has proven essential in fostering trust and loyalty among online marketplace participants. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, solidarity remained significant as it cultivates a profound connection for collectively addressing challenges (Sanguankaew et al., 2020). Furthermore, solidarity unites individuals who share fundamental values into a cohesive collective (Hechter, 2001). Within the online university marketplace, sellers effectively leveraged solidarity discourse through commissives, such as offering exclusive discounts to fellow members, and assertives, such as emphasizing shared values, to create a sense of shared identity, belonging, and increased purchase intent. By integrating solidarity discourse into their selling captions, sellers have the opportunity to foster a sense of belonging and engagement among buyers, ultimately influencing purchasing decisions. The expression of solidarity through online selling captions thus possesses the capability to strengthen group cohesiveness and yield significant benefits for businesses.

Aside from fostering a sense of solidarity, seller status plays a crucial role in shaping the purchasing decisions of community members, in conjunction with other marketing factors like price and product quality. While solidarity discourse contributes to building trust and loyalty, the impact of seller status, particularly as friends, acquaintances, or celebrities, often overrides other factors. As a marketing strategy, being a friend or acquaintance ranks highest in influencing purchasing decisions due to trust, confidence, and loyalty, even if the captions do not reveal solidarity discourse. However, it is essential to note that solidarity can amplify the influence of seller status, as consumers are more likely to trust and support friends or acquaintances who share their values and identities.

Interestingly, sellers with public fame rank as the second most favored status. This suggests that endorsements by well-known individuals not only lend credibility to a seller but also tap into consumers' aspirations and desires for association with renowned figures. Celebrities consistently receive high engagement, even when their captions or visual media are of poor quality (Taibanguai, 2022). As supported by Lestari and Wahyono (2021), the presence of a celebrity positively impacts purchasing decisions by signaling visibility, credibility, attractiveness, and influence. Therefore, a balanced approach that combines the benefits of both solidarity and celebrity influence is crucial for sustained success in the online marketplace.

The insights derived from this study offer valuable guidance for sellers and marketers, presenting a distinctive opportunity to leverage solidarity as a strategic tool for business growth and customer engagement.

Limitations and Recommendation

The current research faced several limitations. Despite the large number of members in the marketplace, few were willing to respond to the survey. Additionally, the nature of online content, such as deleted posts, changes in sellers' badges, and edited captions, could affect data consistency.

Future research should delve deeper into the specific discourse features that influence consumer behavior and conduct studies after the pandemic or in several types of communities aside from an academic context for a more comprehensive understanding. Expanding the sample size to include diverse participants and to observe changes over time will also enhance the generalizability and depth of the findings.

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