

AN ANALYSIS OF CUSTOMER REQUESTS ON THE FACEBOOK PAGE OF A
MOBILE OPERATOR IN THAILAND



Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication
at Srinakharinwirot University

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This study aims to analyze the various requests that made by customers on the Facebook page of a mobile operator in Thailand, and to identify the various types of service or assistance requested by its customers. In this particular study, the data gathered is a sampling of the request messages that were posted in English within a one-month period. The data was analyzed by using various categories types of request strategies adapted from Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) and categories of the service types of the company. The results revealed that the use of request strategies posted on Facebook page by customers, Direct Request Strategy (D) was the most frequently used by customers (56.66%), followed by Non-Conventional Indirect Request Strategy (NCI), and Conventional Indirect Request Strategy (CI) respectively. In the use of the direct request forms, the want statements were the most frequently used by customers. Moreover, it was found that requesting for information, or asking for information was in the first rank of service types which customers make a request or ask the provider. From the results of this study, the company could create a manual such as a quick guideline to provide prompt and correct answers to the queries of customers, set up a morning brief before work to allow staff to receive updated information on new products and services, enabling the web/chat staff in serving customers faster and more efficiently. In turn, the customers would be more satisfied and remain loyal to customers of the company.

การวิเคราะห์คำร้องขอของลูกค้านหน้าเฟซบุ๊กของผู้ให้บริการโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ในประเทศไทย



เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา

ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

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สารนิพนธ์: อาจารย์ปิยวรรณ กุลมัย

การวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์คำร้องขอต่างๆที่ลูกค้าใช้บนหน้าเฟซบุ๊กของผู้ให้บริการโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ในประเทศไทย และเพื่อระบุประเภทของบริการหรือความต้องการที่ลูกค้าร้องขอ ข้อมูลที่ใช้ในการศึกษาเป็นตัวอย่างของข้อความคำร้องขอที่โพสต์เป็นภาษาอังกฤษ ภายในระยะเวลาหนึ่งเดือนบนหน้าเฟซบุ๊กของผู้ให้บริการโทรศัพท์เคลื่อนที่ โดยข้อมูลจะถูกวิเคราะห์โดยใช้เครื่องมือคือประเภทของกลวิธีการร้องขอที่ดัดแปลงมาจาก Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) และประเภทของบริการของบริษัท จากการศึกษาพบว่าการใช้กลวิธีการร้องขอของลูกค้าบนหน้าเฟซบุ๊กนั้น การร้องขอแบบตรงไปตรงมา (D) เป็นกลวิธีที่ลูกค้าใช้บ่อยที่สุด (56.66%) ตามด้วยการร้องขอแบบอ้อมค้อมที่ไม่เป็นไปตามธรรมเนียมปฏิบัติ (Non-Conventional Indirect Request Strategy: NCI) และการร้องขอแบบอ้อมค้อมตามธรรมเนียมปฏิบัติ (Conventional Indirect Request Strategy: CI) ตามลำดับ ในการใช้วิธีร้องขอแบบตรงไปตรงมานั้น การอ้างถึงความต้องการของผู้พูด (want statement) เป็นแบบฟอร์มที่ลูกค้าใช้บ่อยที่สุด นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่าการร้องขอข้อมูลหรือสอบถามข้อมูล เป็นอันดับหนึ่งของประเภทบริการที่ลูกค้าร้องขอหรือสอบถามมายังผู้ให้บริการ จากผลการศึกษา บริษัทอาจสามารถสร้างคู่มือ เช่น คำแนะนำเพื่อเป็นแนวทางในการตอบคำถามที่รวดเร็วและถูกต้องต่อคำร้องขอของลูกค้า หรือบริษัทอาจจัดให้มีการแนะนำวิธีทำงานแบบสั้นๆในช่วงเข้าก่อนเริ่มทำงาน เพื่ออัปเดตข้อมูลใหม่ๆให้พนักงานได้รับทราบข้อมูลล่าสุดเกี่ยวกับข้อมูลผลิตภัณฑ์และบริการใหม่ๆที่จะช่วยให้พนักงาน เว็บ/แชท ให้บริการลูกค้านั้น สามารถให้บริการได้เร็วขึ้นและมีประสิทธิภาพมากยิ่งขึ้น ซึ่งจะส่งผลทำให้ลูกค้าพึงพอใจและยังคงเป็นลูกค้าประจำที่ใช้บริการอย่างต่อเนื่องกับบริษัท

The Master's Project titled
“An Analysis of Customer Requests on the Facebook Page of a Mobile Operator in
Thailand”

By

Wasittee Thaweewat

has been approved by the Graduate School as partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of
Srinakharinwirot University.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

English language and communication play an important role in connecting people. Although people in different countries use their mother tongue to communicate in their normal transactions, they are tending to use English more as it has become the accepted international language when dealing with multinational or large corporate companies. As a result, English communication is playing an increasingly important role for individual users and international businesses. According to the Thai Chamber of Commerce, using a common language to communicate facilitates international communication making it easier to do business. The use of English has been further advanced by the popularity of the Internet as a cost effective medium for communication between people, both within a country and beyond its borders.

English has become more important in ASEAN since ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) was established in 2015. According to Kirkpatrick (2012), there are more than one thousand languages in ASEAN such as Burmese, Lao, Thai, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Baha – Indonesia. Thus, English will be the medium tool for people in AEC member countries to communicate with each other, especially in the business context as the language of communication among business people.

Social media is emerging as an extremely popular mode of communication. Golder, Wilkinson, and Huberman (2007) indicated that people are spending more and more time using online social network services for messaging, sharing information, and keeping in touch with other people. Social media is available and accessible to anyone who is connected to the Internet Abbasi, Kumar, Filho, and Liu (2012). Therefore, social

media is not only increasingly being used by individual users to communicate with each other but also to communicate with businesses who in turn reach out to connect with customers.

In terms of business, the Internet and online services are major communication tools of business worldwide (Sangiamchit, 2007). Many businesses use online channels for their marketing tools or even for customer service tool. Debatin et al. (2009) state that Facebook began in 2014 and quickly became a basic tool for social interaction. It is one of the most popular social media websites which has been used for promoting products or services, and also for customer service channel as well.

The mobile operator company in Thailand which is the focus of this study does not only provide customer service at a shop front desk – front desk and telephone call center, but also has web/chat staff who provide customer service in a similar way as telephone call centers. They use social media such as a Facebook page to contact customers instead of using telephone. From the April 2017 records of the web/chat department of this mobile operator, there are about 50-70 messages per day sent from customers, in both Thai and English. Many customers frequently use social media to contact customer service, for example, asking for information or requesting different services, or complaining about products or services. Social media such as Facebook is quite attractive to customers who want to make contact with a company employee quickly and instantly without having to write an email or make an expensive call only to be kept on hold or end up talking to an automated Interactive Voice Response (IVR).

The key points for customers contacting customer service is that they mostly need action. Neal (2012) pointed out that when customers contact companies using social media about any issue, it is because this way is easy, and they want a quick response. If customers do not get a speedy reply they might feel undervalued. In order to action

correctly as per customers' request, the staff needs to firstly understand what customers' want. Therefore, understanding customer messages is the most important key to serve them. Once the staff knows what action is required, they can quickly reply to the customers.

Statement of the problem

Misunderstanding causes miscommunication and it leads to very serious issues in providing an efficient service to customers. A staff member who intends to provide services to customers, yet lacks understanding of their wants, will give inaccurate or inappropriate answers to queries. Such staff members are inexperienced or lack training guidelines. From the Quality Assurance Department (QA) report, there were some misunderstandings of the customers' messages, especially with new staff, and this led to unprofessional responses because they were not providing the right service to customers.

Sometimes the original message gets lost and needs to be interpreted. If the staff member does not understand messages correctly, they might provide have provided incorrect or inappropriate solutions which can make the problem worse than it was originally. Customers might be under stress in dealing with officials, especially with problems that involve money. As a result, they may show their irritation by being rude or using abusive language. Customers expect a prompt response to their queries, so, understanding in customer requirement is very important.

In this company, the customers are both native and non-native speakers of English, who are using English as a language to contact the web/chat customer service. The various styles or strategies that they use in their requests are different. Some may show their queries directly but some may not. Some customers may use different words

to ask which does not state the requirement directly. Therefore, this study will show the different request strategies that customers use and what types of service they request.

Working in customer service, especially to serve foreigners, is a prime motivation to carry out this study. It will focus on the requests from customers using social media, specifically the Facebook page of the company. Facebook has recently become a popular channel for customers to contact to company, as shown in the report of the increasing number of messages from customers using this channel of the mobile operator company. In addition, it was felt that knowledge can help staff to more fully understand styles of customer request, and what types of company service have been requested. Therefore, when customers make contact or send requests to the company through the Facebook page, it is very important that the staff should respond efficiently so as not to lose valued customers to their business competitors.

Purposes of the Study

This study is to examine the request strategies used by customers and identify the types of service requested by the customers on the Facebook page of a mobile operator Thailand in order to understand the actual meaning of customers' request messages. First of all, the researcher will analyze request strategies in customer messages that have been posted on the Facebook page of this particular mobile phone provider. Second, the researcher will identify the types of service requested in those messages.

Significance of the study

This study will provide useful data for staff who work in customer service, especially web/chat staff, be better understand the request messages of customers in order to provide correct information, services, and appropriate answers. Moreover, the study

will provide information regarding which service types have been most requested to this particular mobile operator company so that the company can be better equipped to prepare and provide appropriate information to their customers. The company could use the data from this study to create a manual such as a brief guidelines or a template to provide prompt and correct answers to the customer queries. This will in turn help in the on job training (OJT) of staff in order to provide an efficient service to their customer base.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What request strategies are used by customers when posting on the company Facebook page?
2. What service type is requested by customers when they use indirect request strategies on the company Facebook page?

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on written request messages that have been posted by customers on the Facebook page of a mobile operator in Thailand. The variables of this study are request strategies that have been used by customers and company service types that have been requested by customers. The researcher will collect the data within a one-month period. This study is a qualitative research which applies content analysis focusing on customer request messages posted in English on the Facebook page of a mobile phone operator in Thailand.

Definition of Terms

1. Request strategy: the tactic to present an act of demand for asking people to do something.

1.1 Direct Request (D) is the act in which a speaker or requester performs a request which directly states what the requester wants or desires such as “I want to have roaming service on this number”.

1.2 Conventional Indirect Request (CI) is the act in which speaker or requester performs a request following a conventional form of request, such as “can you activate roaming service for me?” or “would it be possible to activate roaming service on this number?”

1.3 Non-Conventional Indirect Request (NCI) is the act in which speaker or requester performs a request indirectly by giving hints to the hearer such as “This number must be worked in other countries” to signal to the hearer that the speaker wants roaming service on this mobile number.

2. Service types: the type of services that the mobile operator provides to customers.

Outline of the Study

This study is based on the topic “An analysis of customer requests on the Facebook page of a mobile operator in Thailand”. Therefore, this study is divided into five chapters in all. The description of each of the chapters is given below:

Chapter 1: This is the ‘*Introduction*’ chapter and introduces the topic of the study. This also provides the readers with the details of the background of the study, statement of problem, purpose of the study, and significance of the study. It also provides the research aims and objectives along with the key terms that were used in this study.

Chapter 2: This is the '*Literature Review*' for the current study. It discusses the literature pertinent to the topic of the study. This second chapter presents a review of relevant literature, highlighting the previous research carried out in this field.

Chapter 3: This is the '*Methodology*' chapter discussing the methods and the techniques that were adopted for fulfilling the aims and objectives of the study. The details of the data collection and the data analysis were carried out to find answers to the research questions.

Chapter 4: This is the '*Findings*' chapter of the study that present the results of the data and the information gathered in order to acquire answers to the research questions. The data and the facts gathered from the analysis are then presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5: This is the fifth chapter "*Conclusion and Discussion*" that concludes the study, discusses the results, and presents the limitations and recommendations for further study.

At the end, a list of references used is provided and an appendix section is attached.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech Act of Requests

Speech act is the language used in context in society. According to Austin (1962), speech act is the actions performed in saying something. Searle (1969) described speech act theory that the speaker perform illocutionary acts by producing utterances. The illocutionary act is a particular language function performed by an utterance. The speakers conduct various communicative intentions, such as requests, apologies, advice, compliments, refusals, complaints, and thanking. Request is one of a type of speech act which has two main types that are directness and indirectness. It has been focused for the discussion in many studies.

Request Strategy

Request is one term of a speech act. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p.11), requests are “pre-event acts which express the speaker’s expectation of the hearer with regard to forthcoming action, verbal or nonverbal.” Requests will be included references, for example, the requestor ‘I’ is the speaker, the requestee ‘You’ is the hearer. Kitao (1990) points out that the speakers will minimize the imposition in order to get the hearer’s compliance on a request. Speakers can choose different ways to request something. There are several direct and indirect ways for making requests. The researcher would like to present request strategies which are classified into three strategies by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) because this model has been mostly used to classify request strategies such as in the study of Fe’lix-Brasdefer (2005), Taguchi (2006),

Suttipanyo (2007), Ogiermann, (2009), etc. This strategy will be also used for analyzing data in this current paper in order to classify the request strategy of customers.

2.1. Direct Strategy

Speakers perform requests directly, for example, a want statement-the statement shows that the speaker wants the hearer to carry out the act, “I would like you to present your paper a week earlier.” Direct strategy has five levels which are mood derivable/imperatives, performative, hedged performative, obligations, and want statements.

Descriptive category	Examples
1. Mood Derivable	Clean up the kitchen. Move your car.
2. Performative	I'm asking you to move your car.
3. Hedged Performative	I would like to ask you to move your car.
4. Obligation Statement	You'll have to move your car.
5. Want Statement	I would like you to clean the kitchen. I want you to move your car.

Figure 1. Examples of Direct Request Strategies

2.2. Conventional Indirect Strategy

Speakers perform requests with the conventional form of requests, for example, using a suggestory formulae-the speaker makes a suggestion to do something, “Why don't we study together?” This conventional indirect strategy has 2 levels which are a suggestory formulae and a query preparatory.

Descriptive category	Examples
6. Suggestory Formulae	How about cleaning up? Why don't you come and clean up the mess you made last night?
7. Query Preparatory	Could you clean up the mess in kitchen? Would you mind moving your car?

Figure 2. Examples of Conventional Indirect Request Strategies

2.3. Non-conventional Indirect Strategy

Speakers perform requests indirectly by giving hints to the hearer. For example, strong hints-the speaker performs requests by containing partial reference to the object or the element needed for the implementation of the act, “Have you read the book yet? or Have you finished this book? (Intent: asking for a book)”. Non-conventional indirect strategy has 2 levels which are strong hints and mild hints.

Descriptive category	Examples
8. Strong Hints (A)	You’ve left the kitchen in a right mess.
9. Mild Hints (B)	We don’t want any crowding (as a request to move the car

Figure 3. Examples of Non-Conventional Indirect Request Strategies

The Internet and Social Media – Facebook

The Internet and social networks have become the important tools in human life. Tyler (2002) stated that the Internet allows people to work easily from their home. To put it another way, the Internet and social media help people to work easier and help to save time. People are reluctant to waste time writing letters to each other. They can use e-mail, chat, or web boards to contact or communicate with other people. In the industrialized urbanized world, everything is at a faster pace and this includes how we communicate with each other. People want the best channel to make fast and efficient contact.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: p. 61) defined social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content.” Social media also refers to the Internet based applications that allow people to communicate and share information (Lindsay, 2011). Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram have

become a part of daily activity of many people around the world (Charoensukmongkol, 2014). People are now online and can be connected to each other easily by using these online social media.

Facebook is one of the largest social networking and biggest community today, which provide customers who are engaged with sites and unlocking the loyalty since 2004, then and now. Expectedly, there are approximately more than 500 million popularities active on the sites. Although there are well-maintained competitors, but Facebook has kept its profile to the top level in regulating the satisfaction for the customers, both new and existing customers. In contrast, it plays an importantly in the real business oriented, and also it retains the world's class business virtual sites ever. Moreover, it enables people to connect with friends, fan following pages, boosting the active pages, and etc. However, we can also call Facebook as a branded creation among other social networking sites (Ellison, 2007).

Facebook is one of the popular choices for many companies to use for contacting with their customers. More of it, Facebook is well-known for the marketing tools as a main hub, which is nailed in fostering relationships with customers (Phelan et al., 2012). Many companies use Facebook to advertise their companies' products and information, but increasingly they use it to deal with customer service. For example, they use it as a contact channel like the traditional call center. However, customers do not have to pay for calling to the call center, they can use Facebook as their preferred contact channel with that company and so save their money. Thus, in the business arena, most organizations, and many companies, now have a "presence" on social media, especially for Business Communication has a Facebook page (Dyrud, 2011).

However, the key point is the messages posted on Facebook can be seen by the public. Other people can see what customers and the staff reply on the Facebook page.

Therefore, before posting any answers, customer service representatives need to recheck the messages because the replies will be seen by the greater public not just by the individual customer. Customers who posted their requirements on social media such as Facebook page which messages can be seen by others want the company to solve their problems as soon as possible. They are in effect putting pressure on the company to deal with their queries efficiently. The selected mobile phone provider in this study is one of the companies that use Facebook as a contact channel with customers. The company advertises product information, provide customer service through their Facebook page, and customers can request or complain through this Facebook page as well.

Mobile Internet Service Provider – Thailand

Mobile communication services were started in Thailand more than two decades ago (Srinuan et al., 2012). The use of mobile started from voice call, SMS, and then internet connectivity on mobile was first introduced in 2000 by AIS. The mobile internet users are increasing every year, for example, from 39 million users in 2015 to 43 users in 2016 (NBTC, 2017). There are 3 major mobile operators in Thailand which are AIS, TRUE, and DTAC. With 49% market share as of Q4 2016, AIS is the no.1 of mobile operator in Thailand, followed by DTAC 26% and TRUE 25% (AIS, 2017).

The 3 major mobile operators in Thailand do not only focus on network quality, but also focus on the service quality, especially after sales service. The shops – front desk service – are ready to support their customers. Furthermore, they provide 24/7 call center to serve their customers. Since social network has become more powerful and widely used across country, the mobile operators in Thailand have brought the online social network to be used as their communication tool. They use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram,

Live chat for the communication channel with customers such as advertisement, product marketing update, and even for customer service.

According to the information of Human Resource (2017) of one mobile operator in Thailand, there are various service types provided to customers. In term of customer's enquiries, the mobile operator has categorized the main service types that are mostly delivered by customers into five main services as the following categories;

1) *Requesting for general information*, customers ask for mobile or package information, shop or services information, etc. 2) *Requesting for activation of service*, for example, requesting to activate promotion and package, to apply value added service such as calling melody, call forwarding, international direct dial, international roaming, etc. 3.) *Requesting for deactivation of service*, for example, requesting to cancel promotion and package, to apply value added service such as calling melody, call forwarding, international direct dial, international roaming, etc. 4) *Requesting for investigation* such as checking billing charge, top up issue, etc. 5) *Suggestions for the company*, for example, customers sometimes recommend the company to have some new products or services as per customers' enquiries.

Customer Loyalty

In competing in the world's market, customer satisfaction and its relationships is obvious quite keen important to the businesses, which leads to the values and equity of brands, respectively. There are important aspects in considering the generating the businesses and its shareholder, i.e., identifying the existing customers (which enables the previous and now) reputation and loyalty in compiling the necessities towards the customer satisfactions and what it takes to the account of leading in the future. By ignoring or denying customers' requirements in goods and services, or even providing

service which is not what customers' want, it leads to the failure in positive relationship for the long-term, and it does really create a bad reputation to the business and low quality is indeed brings to an end. However, in satisfying and winning consumer's heart is somewhat a big task to move ahead on. One of the major tasks that every business need to keep an eye on the quality and the initial based, then the next level marketing on brand image and loyalty would readily excel well-off (Thaichon et al., 2014).

According to Thaichon (2015), in gaining profits and more chunks of benefits in the business, customer loyalty pays a great point in providing services. It is marked as an essential that goods and services plays a co-existence with the customer satisfaction. In most of the cases, the most crucial point where customers are maintained by the service providers in easing betterment with excellence in brand values and generation profits. On the other hand, if suppose service providers fail to at this point, the other businesses would compete and lead crossed further. Anyhow, most of the industries would always look forward in building long-term relationships.

Previous Studies

Blum-Kulka studied and conducted a lot of studies on requests. For example, Blum-Kulka (1982, 1983) conducted a study to compare speech acts in making requests in Hebrew as a second language of both native speakers of Hebrew and English. She used a discourse completion test (DCT) as an instrument. She found that the requests were close to native speaker level because they translated word by word from one language to the other. Next, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) conducted the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) to investigate cross-cultural and intralingua variation in two speech acts: request and apologies. This was done to compare the language use of native and non-native English speakers. They found that the

participants tend to use unnecessary or inappropriate information in their requests. Non-native will make a longer request than native speakers because they will add explanations and unnecessary or inappropriate information to support their requests. To put it another way, almost all non-native speakers employ high-context in their communication.

Furthermore, House and Kasper (1987) conducted a comparative study on request performance by Danish and German learners of English and native speakers of English. They studied verbosity in requests. They found that non-native speakers use higher verbosity in requests compared to native speakers. For example, Danish learners and German learners use more modifiers than the British native speaker. Lastly for request, Suttipanyo (2007) conducted a study of request strategies by Thai learners of English and American exchange students. She focused on the use of request head acts and the internal modification. She used a discourse completion test (DCT) which was adapted from the CCSARP project on request of Blum-Kulka et al., (1989). She found that both Thai learners and American exchange students use conventional indirect requests, followed by the direct request, and the non-conventional indirect request.

Moreover, there are some previous studies on social media, for example, Sumlitpanit (2004) conducted a study of an exploration of writing characteristic in instant messaging. He collected data by using a questionnaire. The participants were 30 students who used instant messenger software and used English as the medium for communicating. He found that most of participants felt that sending messages through IM is easy and friendly. They do not have to worry about grammar or spelling. Next, Golder, Wilkinson, and Huberman (2007) conducted a study of Rhythms of social interaction: messaging within a massive online network. They examined how factors such as school affiliation and informal online “friend” lists affect the observed behavior

and temporal patterns. They show that Facebook users appear to be clustered by school with respect to their temporal messaging patterns.

Finally, there is a research about the use of social media for disaster. Lindsay (2011) conducted a study of social media and disaster: current users, future options, and policy considerations. Abbasi, Kumar, Filho, and Liu (2012) conducted a study of lesson learned in using social media for disaster relief – ASU crisis response game. These studies observed and concerned about how to use social media to request for assistance in crisis or disasters.

From these previous studies, the researcher found that there was still a gap between request and social media in terms of business uses. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to analyze the requests of customers by using social media which is Facebook. The request messages in this field will be concerned about products and service of a mobile phone company, posted by customers to the company. The analysis of this paper will be useful for business companies and customer service in order to understand styles of customers and to provide appropriate and efficient answers for them.

CHAPTER III

MEDTHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detailed discussion regarding the methodology that was adapted by the researcher for conducting the current study.

Research Design

Qualitative research methodology was applied to this study. The qualitative data collected from the sampling request messages were analyzed by using content analysis which follow the data analysis method of the classification of request strategies adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The qualitative data of this study was also identified the requested service types by using content analysis which follow the data analysis method of the categories of service types of one mobile operator company.

Instrument

The researcher used the adapted classification of request strategies presented by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) which has three main levels of request expressions: direct, conventional indirect, and non-conventional indirect (hints). Each level has several types of requests. Direct request strategies have imperatives, performative, hedged performative, obligations, and want statements. Conventional indirect request strategies have suggestory formulae and query preparatory requests. Non-conventional indirect request strategies have strong and mild hints (see Figure 4).

Direct requests	
1. Imperatives	e.g. Please activate roaming service on this number.
2. Performative	e.g. I'm asking you to activate roaming service.
3. Hedged Performative	e.g. I would like to ask you how to activate roaming service.
4. Obligation Statement	e.g. You have to/need to activate roaming service for me.
5. Want Statement	e.g. I want to/would like to have roaming service on this no.
Conventional indirect requests	
6. Suggestory Formulae	e.g. How about/Why don't you activate roaming service for me?
7. Query Preparatory	e.g. Can/Could you activate roaming service for me? Would it be possible to activate roaming service on this no.?
Non-conventional indirect requests	
8. Strong Hints	e.g. This number must be worked in other countries .
9. Mild Hints	e.g. Can you help to make this number work in other countries?

Figure 4. Classification of request strategies adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989)

The above samples of each levels have been modified by using real samples of request messages of the mobile company together with the categories presented by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) in order to applied for the analysis in this mobile business context.

In addition, the data would be identified by using a classification of service types of one mobile operator company as follows; requesting for general information,

requesting for activation of service, requesting for deactivation of service, requesting for investigation, and suggestions for the company (see Figure 5).

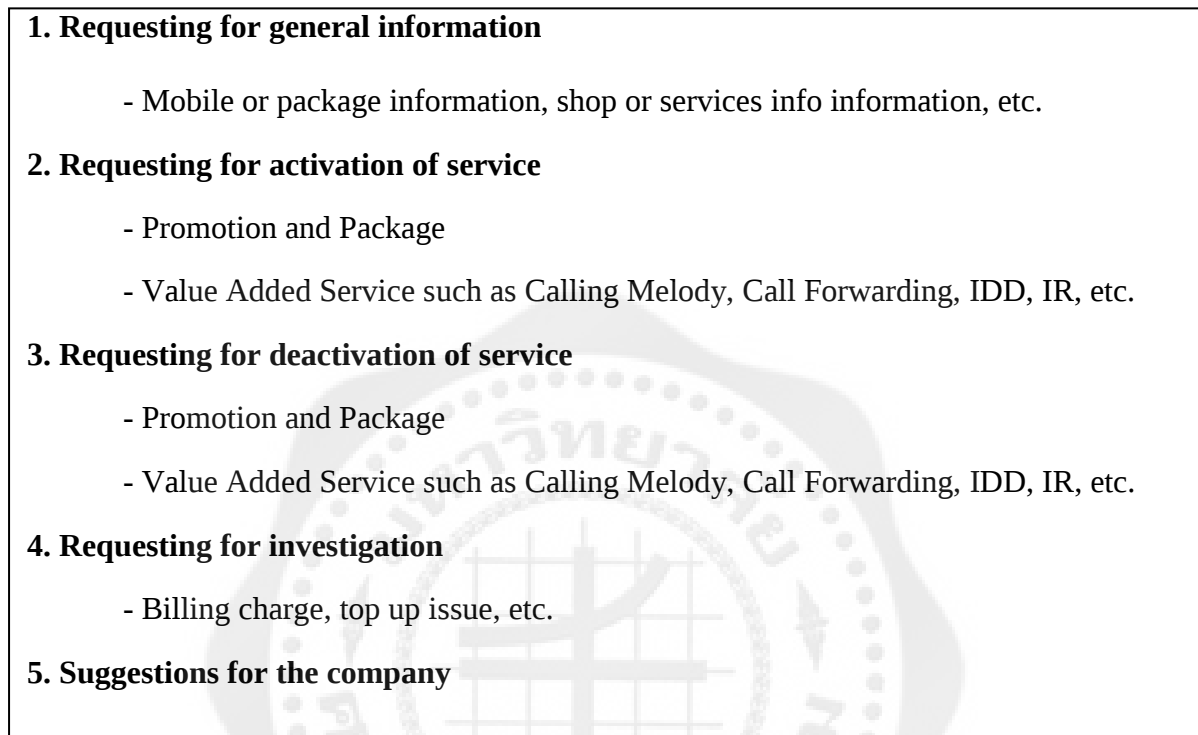


Figure 5. Classification of service types of the mobile operator company

Data Collection

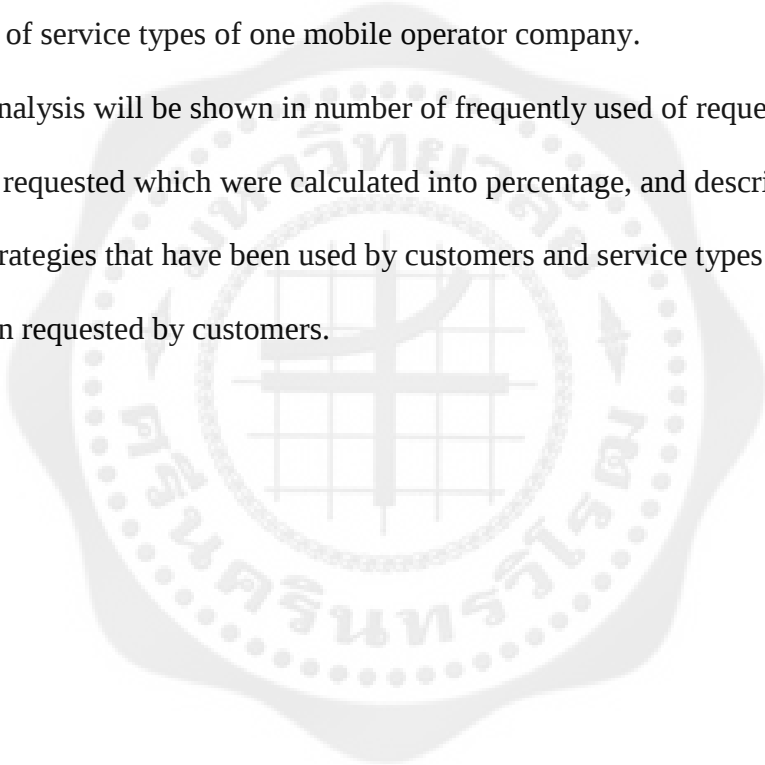
The sampling request messages for this study were collected within a one-month period, in April 2017. The researcher had to request to the web/chat customer service department of one mobile operator to get the log of request messages from customers during one-month period. The management of the department would firstly review and classify the sampling messages by removing customer's names, mobile number of customer, since the name and mobile numbers cannot be provided. Also the other types of messages which is not request messages would be removed such as complained messages because it is not related to the study. Then web/chat customer service

department provided the sampling request messages to the researcher. After the researcher received data, the data were analyzed.

Data Analysis

Content analysis has been applied for this study. The collected data will be analyzed based on the request strategies presented by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), and identified using a classification of service types of the company by using the classification of service types of one mobile operator company.

The analysis will be shown in number of frequently used of request strategies and service types requested which were calculated into percentage, and described to present the request strategies that have been used by customers and service types of the company that have been requested by customers.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study that answer two research questions, which are 1) what request strategies are used by customers when posting on the company Facebook page, and 2) what service type is requested by customers when they use indirect request strategies on the company Facebook page. The results shown the frequency of request strategies used and the percentage presented according to the research questions.

Research Question Number 1

Research question number 1 of this study is “What request strategies are used by customers when posting on the company Facebook page?”. To find out the most request strategies used, the sampling request messages were collected and analyzed. The results are presented in Tables as follows:

Table 1

The Division of Three Main Request Strategies

Request Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Direct Request	17	56.66
2. Conventional Indirect Request	5	16.67
3. Non-Conventional Indirect Request	8	26.67
Total	30	100.00

Table 1 presents the numbers of request strategies that used in 30 sampling request messages which produced in three main levels of request expressions: Direct Request (D), Conventional Indirect (CI), and Non-Conventional Indirect (NCI). The most frequently used request strategies was Direct Request (D) at 17 messages (56.66%), followed by Non-Conventional Indirect (NCI) at 8 messages (26.67%), and Conventional Indirect (CI) is the least frequently used by customer at 5 messages (16.67%).

Table 2

Frequency of Request Strategies used

Request Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Direct Requests		
1.1 Imperatives	4	13.33
1.2 Performative	1	3.33
1.3 Hedged Performative	2	6.67
1.4 Obligation Statement	0	0.00
1.5 Want Statement	10	33.33
2. Conventional Indirect Requests		
2.1 Suggestory Formulae	0	0.00
2.2 Query Preparatory	5	16.67
3. Non-Conventional Indirect Requests		
3.1 Strong Hints	3	10.00
3.2 Mild Hints	5	16.67
Total	30	100.00

Table 2 presents the numbers of request strategies in each level were used in 30 sampling request messages. The want statement was the most frequency used in direct request which shown in 10 messages (33.33%), sampling message was *“I would like to check WHEN and WHERE my sim card was activated”* or *“Hi, I want to re-activate my sim card. I just came back from oversea. My number is xxxxxxxxxx”*. The second rank were query preparatory used in conventional indirect requests which shown in 5 messages (16.67%), sampling message was *“Can you help me cancel all voice mail so that calls are not diverted to CALL BACK service?”* or *“My mobile number is not set for English. I get text messages with unreadable squares. Could you change the language to English, international use?”*, and mild hints used in non-conventional indirect requests which shown in 5 messages (16.67%), sampling message was *“I bought SIM2Fly sIm card in Hong Kong but can't use.”* or *“I am in Vietnam, but my international roaming is not working.”*. Meanwhile, obligation statement under direct request and suggestory formulae under conventional indirect request have not been used at all.

Research Question Number 2

Research question number 2 of this study is “What service type is requested by customers when they use indirect request strategies on the company Facebook page?” To find out the most service types requested, the sampling request messages were collected and analyzed. The results are presented in Table 2 as follows:

Table 3

Frequency of service types requested found in total 30 sampling request messages

Service Types	Frequency	Percentage
1. Requesting for information	14	46.67
2. Requesting for activation of service	5	16.67
3. Requesting for deactivation of service	4	13.33
4. Requesting for investigation	7	23.33
5. Suggestions for the company	0	0.00
Total	30	100

Table 3 shows the numbers of service types were requested in 30 sampling request messages. Requesting for information was the most frequency requested which shown in 14 messages (46.67%), sampling message was *"I would like to get fiber net for my condo, how can I register online?"*. The second rank of service type requested was requesting for investigation which shown in 7 messages (23.33%), sampling message was *"My phone has stopped receiving signal. I need your help to check on this."* The third range of service type requested was requesting for activation of service which shown in 5 messages (15.67%), sampling message was *"Hi, I want to re-activate my sim card. I just came back from oversea. My number is xxxxxxxxxx"*. This table shows that there was no suggestion for the company from 30 sampling request messages.

Table 4

Frequency of service types requested by using only indirect request strategies

Service Types	Frequency	Percentage
1. Requesting for information	6	46.15
2. Requesting for activation of service	2	15.38
3. Requesting for deactivation of service	1	7.70
4. Requesting for investigation	4	30.77
5. Suggestions for the company	0	0.00
Total	13	100

Table 4 shows the numbers of service types were requested by using indirect request strategies. There were 13 request messages which customers used indirect request strategies to request somethings to the company. Requesting for information was the most frequency requested which shown in 6 messages (46.15%), sampling message was *“I can't top up via Taiwan credit card. How can I do?”*. This message is under mild hint form. The second rank of service type which customers used indirect request strategies to request was requesting for investigation which shown in 4 messages (30.77%), sampling message was *“What is this charge on my statement: BUG1113(IVR) (Minute)? If it is voicemail, I never used voicemail.”* This message is under strong hint form. On the other hand, there was no service type of suggestions for the company requested by customer.

Summary

To sum up, the direct request strategy (D) is the most frequently used strategy of customer requests, followed by non-conventional indirect (NCI), and conventional indirect (CI). In the use of direct request strategies, want statement was the most frequency used by customers in making request to the company. Meanwhile, there was no Obligation Statement, under D, and Suggestory Formulae, under CI, used in making request by customer. Moreover, for the service types of the company, requesting for information was found highly requested from customers. On the other hand, there was no suggestions for the company made from customers. These results refer to the sampling request messages using all request strategies and using only indirect request strategies.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study is to examine the request strategies used by customers and identify the types of service that they requested. This chapter presents a summary of the study which is divided into four parts: conclusions of the study, discussion of the findings, limitation of the study and recommendations for further study.

Conclusion

This study aims to classify request strategies used by customers and the service types requested by customers who posted requests in English to a mobile operator in Thailand. The sampling request messages that were posted in English within a one-month period were analyzed by categories of request strategies adapted from Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), as well as the categories of mobile operator company service types. The results showed that Direct Request Strategy (D) was the most frequently used by customer (56.66%), followed by Non-Conventional Indirect Request Strategy (NCI) 26.67%, and Conventional Indirect Request Strategy (CI) respectively (16.67%). In the use of direct request form, want statement was the most frequently used form by customers. Moreover, it was found that requesting for information, or asking for information is the first rank of service types which customers requested or asked to the provider, shown by 46.67%. The details of the findings are discussed in discussion part as follows:

Discussion

The findings from this study show that the frequency of the use of request strategies and services types that were requested which answered the research questions as follows.

Research question 1: What request strategies are used by customers when posting on the company Facebook page?

From studying the request strategies used by customers, it was found that the direct request strategy was the most frequently used, accounting for 56.67% of all request strategies used by customers to post a request on the Facebook page of the company. The forms of direct request which was used the most was the want statement which similar to Suttipanyo (2007) who had a study on request strategies of Thai learners of English and American exchange students. She found that the want statement was the most frequently used form of direct request strategy. Another direct request form which was used for posting requests to the company was the imperative form. The performative form was rarely used in customer requests. Meanwhile, the obligation statement form under direct strategy was not used by customers in the sampled request messages at all.

The non-conventional indirect request strategy ranked second of request strategies used by customers, accounting for 26.67% of all requests. There were both mild hint and strong hint used by customers to request something from the company.

Conventional indirect request strategy accounted for 16.67% of requests. In the use of conventional indirect request strategy, query preparatory form was used by customers to make requests to the company. On the other hand, the suggestory formulae form was not used by customers at all.

Research question 2: What service type is requested by customers when they use indirect request strategies on the company Facebook page?

Regarding types of services that were requested by customers using indirect request strategies, requesting information ranked first, at 46.15%. This was followed by requesting for investigation, then requesting for activation of service, and finally requesting for deactivation of service. These results do not have suggestion for the company.

The results show that customers used both direct and indirect strategies, as per the classification of request strategies of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The findings of this study also show the most common requested behaviors of customers.

Customers are most likely to express directly what they want, as shown by want statements under direct request strategies, in which customers state their requirements clearly to the customer service team. In this case, the staff understand instantly what customers want, and it will be easier for the staff to provide answers or service. However, indirect request strategies are also sometimes used by customers to make requests to the company.

Regarding the use of indirect request strategies, customers used both conventional indirect requests and non-conventional indirect requests. The staff can understand the messages which were used by query preparatory under conventional indirect request strategy in the context of what the customer wants since it contains the reference of the request in the message.

Some customers may request in a way which does not indicate directly what exact service is being requested, as shown in the results with thirteen examples of indirect request messages. Some request messages were used in hint form, which need to be interpreted in order to understand what customers want so that the staff respond appropriately. In this example, *"I am in Vietnam, but my international roaming is not working."* The customer needed the staff to activate international roaming for him. The

clue in the message is “*international roaming is not working*” with key words showing the service requested by the customer. The experience of staff will help to correctly identify such indirect requests. Therefore, the following will be very useful for new staff: key words given in a set of guidelines, and sharing of cases and experience by more experienced staff.

As a comparison of request strategies, Suttipanyo (2007) studied the request strategies used by Thai learners and American exchange students and found that conventional indirect request (CI) was the most preferred strategy used by both groups of students. These findings differ from this study, which shows that direct request (D) was the most frequently used by customers. It can be assumed that customers, who are in a more powerful position in relation to the company staff, would express requests more directly. This is in contrast to the students in the above study, who perform the requests to other students who are in an equally powerful position, resulting in use of conventional indirect requests. However, in both studies, the want statement under direct request (D) was the preferred request form.

Lindsay (2011) and Abbasi et al. (2012) studied how social media could be used to request assistance during disasters. The similarity to the current study is that people use social media as a tool for making requests, though the request objectives of course differ. Since the current study focuses on the requests which are made only to a mobile company, the objectives and the results of the analysis would be mostly related to mobility services. Meanwhile, the studies of Lindsay (2011) and Abbasi et al. (2012) presented results of people who used social media requesting for assistance in disasters.

The findings of this study reveal that customers mostly request information from the company, such as information about purchasing a sim card, information about their sim card package, and information about the best promotion to get with a latest device

model. These results show that requesting information was the most requested service type, and appeared in all direct request strategies (D, CI, and NCI), as well as in the strategy of indirect request. To sum up, for both direct and indirect request strategies, requesting information is the most frequently requested by customers; therefore, the staff should have updated information on products and services in order to provide accurate and timely information to customers.

To sum up, the results of this study reveal that customers mostly asked for information from the customer service team. Therefore, the company should provide ways to give the staff updated information on new products and services. For example, the company could create a manual in the form of brief guidelines which use key words from hint messages, in order to provide prompt and accurate answers to the customers' queries. The company could also set-up a morning brief for information updates, sharing cases, or having a competency test for staff to encourage staff knowledge. This will help the staff, especially staff undergoing on-the-job training (OJT), to provide efficient service to the customers.

Limitations of the Study

1. The sample of request messages were only 30 messages which were collected within a one-month period, thus the findings might not be generalizable to all request strategies used and all service types requested by customers.

2. The sampled request messages were collected from one channel, the Facebook page of the company only; therefore, the results might not be generalizable to all request strategies and service types requested via other channels.

Recommendations

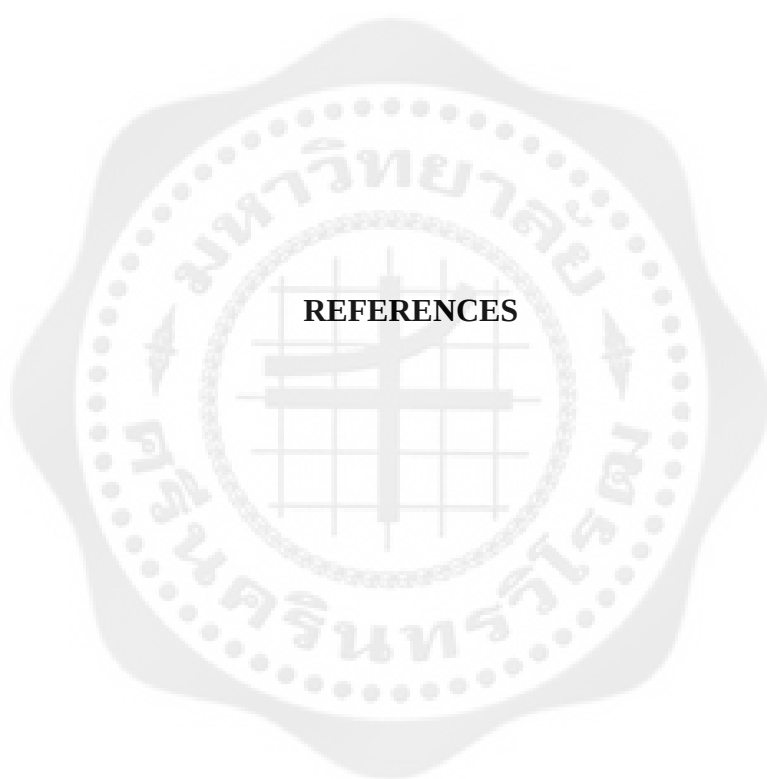
The results of the study reveal the request strategies used by customers and the service types that they requested. Customers mostly request *information*, such as information about purchasing a sim card, information about their sim card package, information about the best promotion to buy a latest device model, and information about roaming services. From these results, the researcher recommends that the mobile operator should set up a morning brief, or a short brief at the beginning of the shift for customer service staff in each team before starting work, in order to give the staff updated information on new products and services, especially the latest promotion updates. For example, if customers have heard some news about a new campaign and ask the operator, it is very important that he or she knows about this new campaign before the customer asks.

Moreover, the company should prepare brief guidelines or a template which includes key words from the messages of this study for each service type requested by customers. For example, if a customer mentions any other country in the message, staff should first check for the activation of international roaming service. These can help the staff to provide prompt and efficient service to the customers.

As this study focuses only on requests made via the Facebook page of the company, further studies should be conducted of other channels such as telephone calls, email, Internet sites such as pantip.com, so that the findings will be more generalizable to all strategies used by customers as they make requests to the company.

In addition, as this study focuses only on the request messages from customers, further study should be conducted on the responses message of the staff, to analyze the staff's understanding of those request messages.

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APENDIX



Appendix

Sampling request messages of the study

No	Sampling Messages
1	I would like to get fiber net for my condo, how can I register online?
2	Hello, I'm traveling right now, I'm asking you to connect me roaming, I need to pay my loan and receive information from Thailand
3	I bought SIM2Fly sIm card in Hong Kong but can't use. I tried in 3 different devices, mobile phone, ipad and portable wifi. They all show "no service". I have checked with the Hong Kong Reseller, it said the card was already activated and cannot refund. What should I do!!!
4	I would like to check WHEN and WHERE my sim card was activated
5	Please advise how to register my debit/credit card for "Top up" my number.
6	'special' numbers - do you have a webpage where I can select the mobile phone number I like? I am thinking of some 'cool' numbers. Thank you
7	I can't top up via Taiwan credit card. How can I do?
8	Can you confirm my phone number validation from Japan?
9	I want someone to call me back about my Internet!!
10	I would like to obtained the best promotion for buying new iPhone 7 .
11	My mobile number is not set for English. I get text messages with unreadable squares. Could you change the language to English, international use.
12	Please cancel wifi service for my number xxxxxxxxxx
13	how can I contact you from EUROPE, I would like know how to contact you to reactivate my Sim. Is there a specific Phone I can call?
14	Hi, I want to re-activate my sim card. I just came back from oversea. My number is xxxxxxxxxx
15	Pls turn off advertisements to this number
16	Do u have song for calling melofy By Range song name is Just wana Love you tnx
17	I now have an Iphone. Can you give the instructions how I can access the internet from my macbook using my Iphone.
18	Hi, I would like to know if i use my thai nr from abroad how much sending messages costs to send to my thai girlfriend.
19	I want to remove or Inactive or stop Call Screen Service from my phone number xxx xxx xxxx. I dislike it and want to Stop it.
20	Can you help me cancel all voice mail so that calls are not diverted to CALL BACK service. I did it on my phone but it's not getting results. Thank you.

No	Sampling Messages
21	My phone has stopped receiving signal. I need your help to check on this.
22	I have \$299 Traveller Sim, I want to know what is the speed after 2.5GB, 64kbps or 384 kbps?
23	Please tell me the PUK code. I mistook the pin code of sim three times, so sim locked up.
24	I lost my phone and need to get evidence of my phone usage whilst in Thailand on holiday for the insurance company. Can you please send any details you have of my account/ sim usage?
25	I am in Vietnam, but my international roaming is not working.
26	I am currently on holiday in South Africa I would like to change my email address from xxxxx to xxxx and I need a customer reference number to pay my bill from my bank account
27	I am from Taiwanese travel agency, I would like to purchase 100 Traveller Sim Cards (Free 7days, unlimited internet). Need advice.
28	I couldn't top up for a while and now my sim is not working. I can't do online payments. How to reactivate the sim
29	I have a problem with Internet, before I have 3G, I don't know why I have 3Gr now.
30	What is this charge on my statement: BUG1113(IVR) (Minute)? If it is voicemail, I never used voicemail.



VITAE

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