DIGITAL MARKETING, E-COMMERCE

Live, Post, Promote: Digital Marketing Practices of Online Sellers in Pangasinan

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Abstract

Small online sellers in the Philippines now market their products through live selling, short videos, paid ads, vouchers, and affiliates, often with little training or budget. This study described the digital marketing practices of online sellers in Pangasinan, how much sellers believe each practice helps their sales, and the main marketing problems they face. A descriptive quantitative design was used. Thirty online sellers who had been selling for at least six months answered a 10-item online questionnaire. Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, weighted means, ranks, and a gap analysis comparing the use of each practice with its perceived helpfulness. Replying quickly to customer chats was both the most used (WM = 4.70, Always) and the most helpful (WM = 4.63, A great deal) practice, followed by vouchers, discounts, or free shipping and by short videos. Live selling and affiliates or influencers were used least. Use and perceived helpfulness followed the same rank order (Spearman's ρ = 1.00), which suggests that sellers spend effort where they see results. Affiliates or influencers was the only practice rated more helpful than it was used (gap = +0.30). All 30 respondents (100.0%) named a low budget for ads as their biggest marketing challenge, and 86.7% said they would join free digital marketing training. The findings point to low-cost, conversation-based marketing as the core of micro online selling in the province, and to commission-based affiliate programs as an underused option. The results can guide online sellers, trainers, the Department of Trade and Industry, and local governments in designing practical, low-budget marketing support.

Keywords: digital marketing; e-commerce; live selling; marketing mix; micro-enterprises; online sellers

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The Philippine digital economy keeps growing. The e-Conomy SEA 2025 report by Google, Temasek, and Bain & Company estimated its gross merchandise value at US$36 billion in 2025, up 16% from the previous year, with e-commerce making up more than 60% of the total [1]. Much of this activity comes from small online sellers who sell through Shopee, Lazada, TikTok Shop, and Facebook from their homes in the provinces.

Selling online is easy to start, but standing out is hard. A seller competes with thousands of others on the same platform and must decide how to spend limited time and money on marketing: going live, making short videos, paying for ads, offering vouchers and free shipping, working with affiliates, or building reviews. Online selling is also more regulated than before. The Internet Transactions Act of 2023 (Republic Act No. 11967) sets out the duties of online sellers and marketplaces [2], which adds to the need for sellers to run their business with care.

Marketing management offers a way to think about these choices. The marketing mix of product, price, place, and promotion [3] and the broader process of choosing target customers and creating value for them [4] apply to a one-person online shop as much as to a large firm. Studies of small and medium enterprises show that they tend to adopt easy, low-cost digital channels first and use more advanced tools unevenly [5], and recent reviews of digital and social media marketing research call for more evidence from small firms in emerging markets [6]. Little is known about which digital marketing practices small provincial online sellers in the Philippines actually use, and which ones they find worthwhile.

This study looks at online sellers in Pangasinan to describe their digital marketing practices, compare how often they use each practice with how much it helps their sales in their own view, and identify their main marketing problems.

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study describes the digital marketing practices of online sellers in Pangasinan. Specifically, it answers the following questions:

1. 1) What is the profile of the respondents in terms of location, main products, main selling platform, years of selling online, and monthly marketing budget?
2. 2) To what extent do the respondents use digital marketing practices such as live selling, short videos, paid ads, vouchers and discounts, affiliates or influencers, customer reviews, and quick replies to customer chats?
3. 3) How much do the respondents believe each practice helps their sales?
4. 4) How does the use of each practice compare with its perceived helpfulness?
5. 5) What are the respondents' main marketing challenges, and how interested are they in digital marketing training?

1.3 Significance of the study

1. 1) *Online sellers* can compare their marketing practices with those of other sellers and see which ones others find most helpful.
2. 2) *Trainers and coaches* can focus their lessons on practices that sellers find helpful but use the least.
3. 3) *The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and local governments* can use the results to design marketing support for micro online businesses.
4. 4) *Business students and teachers* can use the study as a local case of marketing management in small online businesses.

1.4 Scope and limitations

The study covers 30 online sellers based in Pangasinan who have been selling online for at least six months. It describes their marketing practices, their own views on how much each practice helps their sales, and their main challenges. It does not measure actual sales or test whether a practice causes higher sales. The results describe the respondents only and cannot be generalized to all online sellers.

2 Review of related literature

2.1 Online selling in the Philippines

E-commerce is the largest part of the Philippine digital economy, accounting for more than 60% of its estimated US$36 billion value in 2025 [1]. Online selling lets small entrepreneurs reach customers far beyond their own town, but it also places them in crowded marketplaces where visibility depends on marketing. The Internet Transactions Act of 2023 [2] now sets rules for online merchants and marketplaces, including their obligations to consumers.

2.2 The marketing mix

McCarthy [3] grouped the decisions a marketer controls into four parts: product, price, place, and promotion. For an online seller, product covers what is sold and how it is presented; price covers the selling price, discounts, and vouchers; place covers the platforms and delivery; and promotion covers live selling, videos, ads, affiliates, and reviews. Most of the practices in this study belong to promotion and price, while quick chat replies support the service side of the offer.

2.3 Marketing management in the digital age

Kotler, Keller, and Chernev [4] describe marketing management as choosing target markets and creating, delivering, and communicating value to them, and they note that digital channels let even small firms reach and talk with customers directly. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick [7] add that digital marketing works best when firms combine owned content, paid media, and earned media such as reviews and shares. Leeflang et al. [8] warn, however, that firms often lack the skills and data to use digital tools well. For a small online seller, this means that replies, reviews, videos, and live selling are central to how value is communicated, and that skills and budget can limit how far each is used.

2.4 Digital marketing practices of small sellers

Research on specific practices gives some guidance. Among small and medium enterprises, low-cost channels such as social media and e-mail are adopted widely, while paid and analytics-heavy channels are used less [5]. Live streaming helps social commerce sellers build trust by showing products in real time and answering questions on the spot [9]. Influencer content shapes consumer trust in branded posts through its informative value and the credibility of the influencer [10]. Online customer reviews are linked to sales, with more and better reviews associated with higher demand [11]. These studies suggest that each practice can help, but they were mostly done with larger firms or consumers, not with provincial micro-sellers.

2.5 Conceptual framework

The study links the seller's profile to two sets of variables: how often each digital marketing practice is used, and how much the seller believes it helps sales. Comparing the two shows where effort and perceived results match, and where a practice is rated helpful but used little, which suggests room for improvement. Marketing challenges are treated as factors that may limit the use of helpful practices.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study used a descriptive quantitative design. It describes the respondents' profile, marketing practices, views on what helps sales, and challenges, without manipulating any conditions or testing causal hypotheses.

3.2 Respondents and sampling

The respondents were 30 online sellers based in Pangasinan, reached through online seller groups and referrals from other sellers (convenience and snowball sampling). To take part, a respondent had to (a) sell products online and be based in Pangasinan, and (b) have been selling online for at least six months.

3.3 Research instrument

The instrument was a short researcher-made online questionnaire in Google Forms (see Appendix). It has 10 items: one consent and eligibility item, five on the seller's profile, two rating grids, one on the main marketing challenge, and one on interest in training. The first grid asks how often the seller uses each of seven practices, from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). The second asks how much each practice helps sales, from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (A great deal). The form accepted one response per Google account. Three experts in marketing and research methods reviewed the questionnaire for content and clarity.

3.4 Data gathering procedure

The questionnaire link was shared directly with online sellers and in online seller groups. Data were collected in November 2026 and exported from Google Forms to a spreadsheet. All 30 respondents gave informed consent and met the eligibility criteria, so all 30 responses were retained for analysis.

3.5 Data analysis

Profile items, challenges, and training interest were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Rating items were analyzed using the weighted mean (WM), computed as $WM = \Sigma(f \times w) \div n$, where f is the number of respondents choosing a point on the scale, w is the value of that point, and n is the number of respondents. Means were interpreted using equal intervals of 0.80 [12], as shown in Table I, and items were ranked from highest to lowest. For each practice, the gap between the helpfulness mean and the use mean was computed; a positive gap means a practice is rated more helpful than it is used.

Internal consistency of each grid was checked using Cronbach's alpha [13]. The practice use grid yielded $\alpha = 0.78$, above the commonly used 0.70 threshold [14]. The perceived helpfulness grid yielded $\alpha = 0.52$, which is below that threshold; helpfulness results are therefore interpreted with caution. The agreement between the rank orders of use and helpfulness was checked using Spearman's rank correlation [15].

Table 1. Scale for interpreting weighted means

Range	Use	Helpfulness
4.21–5.00	Always	A great deal

Range	Use	Helpfulness
3.41–4.20	Often	Much
2.61–3.40	Sometimes	Moderately
1.81–2.60	Rarely	Slightly
1.00–1.80	Never	Not at all

3.6 Ethical considerations

Participation was voluntary, and respondents could stop at any time. No names or shop names were collected, and results are reported only as group totals and averages. Data were handled in line with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 [16]. [Add ethics committee approval details if required.]

4 Results

4.1 Profile of respondents

Table II summarizes the profile of the 30 respondents. Most were based in Dagupan City (19, or 63.3%), followed by Calasiao (4, or 13.3%), Mangaldan (3, or 10.0%), Lingayen (2, or 6.7%), and Binmaley (2, or 6.7%). Food and drinks (36.7%) and home and kitchen items (30.0%) were the most common product lines, together accounting for two-thirds of the sample. TikTok Shop was the main platform for nearly half of the sellers (46.7%), ahead of Shopee (23.3%), Facebook or Marketplace (16.7%), and Lazada (13.3%). Most respondents were relatively new to online selling: 43.3% had sold for six months to one year and 36.7% for one to two years. More than half (53.3%) spent below ₱500 per month on marketing and another 33.3% spent ₱500–₱1,999, so 90.0% operated on a monthly marketing budget below ₱2,000.

Table 2. Profile of respondents (N = 30)

Characteristic	Category	f	%
Main products	Clothing and accessories	3	10.0
	Food and drinks	11	36.7
	Beauty and personal care	2	6.7
	Gadgets and electronics	5	16.7
	Home and kitchen	9	30.0
	Other	0	0.0
Main platform	Shopee	7	23.3
	Lazada	4	13.3
	TikTok Shop	14	46.7
	Facebook or Marketplace	5	16.7
	Other	0	0.0
Years selling online	6 months to 1 year	13	43.3
	1–2 years	11	36.7
	3–5 years	6	20.0

Characteristic	Category	f	%
	More than 5 years	0	0.0
Monthly marketing budget	None	1	3.3
	Below ₱500	16	53.3
	₱500–₱1,999	10	33.3
	₱2,000–₱4,999	1	3.3
	₱5,000 or more	2	6.7

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100.0 due to rounding. Location: Dagupan City (n = 19, 63.3%), Calasiao (n = 4, 13.3%), and one respondent each from seven other towns and cities.

4.2 Use of digital marketing practices

Table III presents the extent to which the respondents used the seven practices. Overall, sellers used them sometimes (WM = 3.17). Replying quickly to customer chats ranked first and was the only practice rated as Always used (WM = 4.70), with every respondent replying either always (70.0%) or often (30.0%). Vouchers, discounts, or free shipping ranked second (WM = 3.90, Often), followed by short videos on TikTok or Reels (WM = 3.53, Often). Asking customers for reviews (WM = 2.90) and paid ads or boosted posts (WM = 2.73) were used sometimes. Live selling (WM = 2.57) and affiliates or influencers (WM = 1.87) were the least used, both in the Rarely range.

Table 3. Use of digital marketing practices (N = 30)

Practice	WM	Interpretation	Rank
Live selling	2.57	Rarely	6
Short videos (TikTok, Reels)	3.53	Often	3
Paid ads or boosted posts	2.73	Sometimes	5
Vouchers, discounts, or free shipping	3.90	Often	2
Affiliates or influencers	1.87	Rarely	7
Asking customers for reviews	2.90	Sometimes	4
Replying quickly to customer chats	4.70	Always	1
Overall	**3.17**	**Sometimes**	—

4.3 Perceived helpfulness of each practice

As shown in Table IV, sellers rated the practices as moderately helpful overall (WM = 3.12). Replying quickly to customer chats was rated most helpful (WM = 4.63, A great deal), with 96.7% of sellers saying it helped their sales much or a great deal. Vouchers, discounts, or free shipping ranked second (WM = 3.87, Much) and short videos third (WM = 3.50, Much). Asking customers for reviews was rated moderately helpful (WM = 2.67). Paid ads or boosted posts (WM = 2.60), live selling (WM = 2.40), and affiliates or influencers (WM = 2.17) were rated only slightly helpful.

Table 4. Perceived helpfulness of each practice for sales (N = 30)

Practice	WM	Interpretation	Rank
Live selling	2.40	Slightly	6

Practice	WM	Interpretation	Rank
Short videos (TikTok, Reels)	3.50	Much	3
Paid ads or boosted posts	2.60	Slightly	5
Vouchers, discounts, or free shipping	3.87	Much	2
Affiliates or influencers	2.17	Slightly	7
Asking customers for reviews	2.67	Moderately	4
Replying quickly to customer chats	4.63	A great deal	1
Overall	**3.12**	**Moderately**	—

4.4 Use compared with helpfulness

Table V compares the weighted means for use and perceived helpfulness. The two rank orders were identical (Spearman's ρ = 1.00), meaning that the practices sellers use most are also the ones they find most helpful. Six of the seven practices had small negative gaps between −0.03 and −0.23, so sellers already apply their top-rated practices, such as quick chat replies (−0.07), vouchers (−0.03), and short videos (−0.03), at levels that match their perceived value. Affiliates or influencers was the only practice with a positive gap (+0.30, from 1.87 in use to 2.17 in helpfulness), making it the only practice rated more helpful than it is currently used.

Table 5. Gap between helpfulness and use

Practice	Use WM	Help WM	Gap
Live selling	2.57	2.40	−0.17
Short videos (TikTok, Reels)	3.53	3.50	−0.03
Paid ads or boosted posts	2.73	2.60	−0.13
Vouchers, discounts, or free shipping	3.90	3.87	−0.03
Affiliates or influencers	1.87	2.17	**+0.30**
Asking customers for reviews	2.90	2.67	−0.23
Replying quickly to customer chats	4.70	4.63	−0.07

Note: Gap = Help WM - Use WM. A positive gap means the practice is rated more helpful than it is used.

4.5 Marketing challenges and interest in training

Table VI shows the respondents' main marketing challenge and interest in training. All 30 respondents (100.0%) identified a low budget for ads as their biggest marketing challenge; no respondent chose competition, platform fees, time, skills, or rule changes as the main barrier. Interest in training was strong: 26 sellers (86.7%) said they would join a free digital marketing training, the remaining four (13.3%) answered maybe, and none declined.

Table 6. Main marketing challenge and interest in training (N = 30)

Item	Category	f	%
Main challenge	Too many competitors	0	0.0
	Low budget for ads	30	100.0

Item	Category	f	%
	High platform fees	0	0.0
	No time to make content	0	0.0
	Lack of skills in content or ads	0	0.0
	Changing platform rules	0	0.0
	Other	0	0.0
Interest in training	Yes	26	86.7
	Maybe	4	13.3
	No	0	0.0

5 Discussion

5.1 What sellers do most

Small online sellers in Pangasinan rely most on low-cost, high-control practices within the marketing mix [3]. Replying quickly to customer chats (WM = 4.70) topped all practices, showing how micro-sellers use direct conversation with buyers to close sales without spending cash. Within the price element, vouchers, discounts, and free shipping (WM = 3.90) were used often, since platform promotions help listings stand out in crowded feeds. Within promotion, sellers favored short videos on TikTok and Reels (WM = 3.53), which fits the 46.7% who sell mainly on TikTok Shop, over live selling (WM = 2.57) and paid ads (WM = 2.73). This pattern matches earlier findings that small firms adopt easy, low-cost channels first [5] and shows a preference for recorded, organic content over real-time broadcasts or paid traffic.

5.2 What sellers find most helpful

The helpfulness ratings support the view that digital marketing creates value through direct, two-way engagement with customers [4, 7]. Quick chat replies (WM = 4.63) were seen as helping sales a great deal, likely because fast answers build trust, clear up product questions, and reduce abandoned carts. Vouchers and free shipping (WM = 3.87) and short videos (WM = 3.50) were also rated as helping much, as they combine visible price value with product demonstration. Live selling was rated only slightly helpful (WM = 2.40), even though it can build trust in social commerce [9]. For a micro-seller, a live session takes time, a steady audience, and some equipment, so its returns may seem low when it is done only now and then. Paid ads (WM = 2.60) were rated similarly, which suggests that small boosts on a budget below ₱2,000 a month bring limited visible results.

5.3 Helpful but underused practices

Affiliates or influencers recorded the lowest use (WM = 1.87) yet was the only practice with a positive gap (+0.30). Although sellers rated affiliates only slightly helpful overall, nearly half (43.3%) saw moderate to high sales value in creator partnerships, while 73.3% used them rarely or never. Influencer content can raise trust in branded posts [10], so the gap points to an opportunity. The low budget for ads, cited by every respondent, likely explains part of this underuse, since many sellers assume that working with influencers means paying fees upfront. However, the commission-based affiliate programs on TikTok Shop and Shopee pay creators only when a sale is made. This suggests that the barrier is partly a lack of awareness or know-how, consistent with the skills gap that Leeflang

et al. [8] describe, and not only a lack of money. Asking customers for reviews (gap = −0.23) was used more than it was valued, even though reviews are linked to sales in other settings [11]; sellers may not see a direct effect from reviews in the short term.

5.4 Implications for practice

Because use and perceived helpfulness move together (ρ = 1.00), sellers seem to have settled on a practical core of quick replies, price promotions, and short videos. The main room for growth lies in practices that cost little cash but need skill, such as setting up affiliate commissions and running regular, planned live sessions. Training that teaches these low-cash practices is likely to be well received, given that 86.7% of respondents would join free training.

5.5 Limitations

The study has several limitations. First, the sample is small and non-random and is concentrated in Dagupan City, so the results describe these 30 sellers only. Second, helpfulness is based on sellers' own views, not on measured sales, and the helpfulness grid had low internal consistency (α = 0.52). Third, the challenge item allowed only one answer, so the unanimous choice of low ad budget may hide secondary problems such as lack of skills or time. Fourth, the seven practices do not cover every marketing activity, and the data cover a single period. Future studies could link practices to actual sales data, use a larger and more balanced sample, allow multiple answers for challenges, and compare sellers by platform or product type.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

First, the 30 online sellers were concentrated in Dagupan City (63.3%), mainly sold food and drinks (36.7%) or home and kitchen goods (30.0%) on TikTok Shop (46.7%) and Shopee (23.3%), had two years or less of selling experience (80.0%), and spent under ₱2,000 a month on marketing (90.0%). Second, sellers used digital marketing practices sometimes overall (WM = 3.17), led by quick replies to customer chats (WM = 4.70, Always), vouchers and free shipping (WM = 3.90, Often), and short videos (WM = 3.53, Often), while live selling (WM = 2.57) and affiliates (WM = 1.87) were used rarely. Third, perceived helpfulness followed the same ranking (overall WM = 3.12; ρ = 1.00), with quick chat replies rated highest (WM = 4.63, A great deal) and affiliates or influencers showing the only positive gap between helpfulness and use (+0.30). Fourth, all respondents (100.0%) cited a low budget for ads as their main marketing challenge, and 86.7% wanted to join free digital marketing training. Overall, provincial micro-sellers depend on low-cost, conversation-based marketing, and budget limits shape which practices they use.

6.2 Recommendations

1. 1) *Online sellers* may keep fast chat replies as a core practice, for example by using saved replies and setting regular hours for answering messages.
2. 2) *Online sellers* may try commission-based affiliate programs on TikTok Shop and Shopee, which need no upfront fee, and track the orders that affiliates bring in.
3. 3) *Online sellers* may set a small, fixed monthly marketing budget and record which practices bring orders, so they can move money to what works.

4. 4) *Trainers, DTI, and local governments* may offer free, hands-on training on low-cash practices, especially affiliate setup, short video production, and planning live sessions.
5. 5) *Future researchers* may link marketing practices to actual sales, use larger and random samples across Pangasinan, and compare results by platform and product type.

Appendix. Questionnaire items (Google Form)

Questionnaire items (Google Form). Choices are shown in parentheses.

1. 1) I have read the information above, I sell products online and am based in Pangasinan, I have been selling online for at least 6 months, and I voluntarily agree to take part. (Yes / No)
2. 2) In which town or city in Pangasinan are you based? (Dropdown list of Pangasinan towns and cities)
3. 3) What do you mainly sell? (Clothing and accessories / Food and drinks / Beauty and personal care / Gadgets and electronics / Home and kitchen / Other)
4. 4) Where do you sell the most? (Shopee / Lazada / TikTok Shop / Facebook or Marketplace / Other)
5. 5) How long have you been selling online? (6 months to 1 year / 1–2 years / 3–5 years / More than 5 years)
6. 6) About how much do you spend on marketing per month, such as ads, vouchers, and affiliate fees? (None / Below ₱500 / ₱500–₱1,999 / ₱2,000–₱4,999 / ₱5,000 or more)
7. 7) How often do you use each of the following? (Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Often / Always): live selling; short videos such as TikTok or Reels; paid ads or boosted posts; vouchers, discounts, or free shipping; affiliates or influencers; asking customers for reviews; replying quickly to customer chats.
8. 8) How much does each of the following help your sales? (Not at all / Slightly / Moderately / Much / A great deal): same seven practices as item 7.
9. 9) What is your biggest marketing challenge? (Too many competitors / Low budget for ads / High platform fees / No time to make content / Lack of skills in content or ads / Changing platform rules / Other)
10. 10) Would you join a free training on digital marketing for online sellers? (Yes / Maybe / No)

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