Building a R.I.C.H. Brand in 10 Hours: Teaching Sustainability Concepts through Thai MOOC

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***Abstract*—Global educators in higher education are increasingly using massive open online courses (MOOCs) as a platform to convert traditional degree programs into short courses and certification programs. This study aims to investigate how Thai MOOCs were created and delivered, to teach learners about sustainability, a topic that academics, policymakers, practitioners, and the public in Thailand are interested in. A mixed methods approach was used to evaluate the creation and delivery of a sustainability course in Thai MOOC Platform. According to the findings, most participants in the instructor-led course were satisfied with their course experience. The format of the course, the complexity of the material, and how well a student interacted with the instructors were all factors that affected how well they could complete the course. The course's survey revealed that Thai MOOC learners came from a variety of backgrounds. This demonstrates how crucial course personalization is for enabling self-paced online learning.**

***Index Terms*—Brand building, distance education, massive open online course, Thai MOOC**

I. Introduction

Massive open online courses (MOOCs), which provide free online courses to millions of students, have grown in popularity in the online learning community [1]. Students from all across the world can access free, high-quality classes through MOOCs [2]. Global educators have started to pay attention to MOOCs due to MOOCs' capacity to provide free education anywhere, especially in developing countries where governments also serve as developers. MOOCs have the potential to alter the way that higher education is taught and learned [3].

The Thai Ministry of Education has been guiding Thailand toward Thailand 4.0, with the country's ambitions to develop a digital economy and society, in order to keep up with the rest of the world in many sectors, including politics, the economy, society, and technological innovation. The Thai government has made an effort to develop a nationwide online education platform using cutting-edge information and digital technologies in order to improve Thai manpower. As a result, the Thai MOOC project under the Thailand 4.0 model, which was established in 2017 as a free, open platform for online education, was launched. The project aimed to increase access to information and communication technologies among Thai people under the National Digital Economy and Society Development Plan and Policy (2018–2037) [4]. This is in line with the United Nations Thailand Sustainable Development Goal 4, which stresses the importance of quality education to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

In the early phase of Thai MOOC, courses were developed in cooperation with educational networks nationwide. All courses were designed to promote and disseminate the government's basic policy to citizens, students, and officials to ensure sustainable country development [4]. Currently, the Thai MOOC platform has around 300 courses available for self-paced learning. Due to sustainable development has gained popular attention as a result of government advocacy in the media, Thai educational designers are drawn to developing courses that tackle sustainability concerns from a number of perspectives. Thai MOOCs consequently provide a range of subjects covering sustainability-related concerns.

Given that the majority of MOOC courses are offered as self-paced learning options, enhancing course instruction to assist students in finishing the course is a crucial issue [5]. As a result, the purpose of this research is to investigate the design and delivery of Thai MOOC courses, with a particular emphasis on courses that deal with the concept of sustainability. The 10-hour module swu012 on "Building Good Brand with R.I.C.H." was selected as the case study for a number of reasons. Firstly, the term R.I.C.H. was used as a guiding principle in the course swu012 to emphasize the topic of brand sustainability. In this course, R.I.C.H. has special connotation, where R. stands for radical, I. for integrate, C. for care, and H. for humanity. Secondly, there was no prerequisite for the course because the course was designed for learners from a variety of backgrounds. As a result, this reflects the majority of Thai MOOC students. Thirdly, the course was made available in a variety of formats: a stand-alone online course, a blended classroom course, an instructor-led course, and a self-paced course, allowing for various forms of assessment.

II. Literature Review

A. From Traditional Classrooms to MOOCs

Many scholars consider MOOCs as a disruptive technology and paradigm-shifting innovation in higher education [6–8]. MOOCs have enormous benefits for both individuals and society. Given that many MOOC courses are offered for free and require no educational prerequisites, these help to overcome some of the traditional barriers to pursuing higher education, such as costs and academic background [5]. Additionally, the accessibility of MOOCs has greatly improved university instruction [9]. The MOOC format offers new possibilities to complement in-person classes in higher education as well as the ability to use it as a self-regulated, stand-alone online course without official

Manuscript received May 28, 2022; revised July 4, 2022; accepted July 18, 2022.

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doi: 10.18178/ijiet.2023.13.5.1878

credit in academic institutions [10]. Today, MOOCs have evolved as a new form of blended learning in traditional face-to-face university courses. Blended MOOCs (bMOOCs), a learning method that combines the use of MOOC platform-supported activities and video-based content with in-class face-to-face activities, have become popular in universities [11]. Universities are also looking into how to incorporate MOOCs into normal curricula and classroom settings by using a variety of integration strategies. A paradigm for integrating MOOCs with standard university curricula is the curriculum-inclusive MOOC (ciMOOC) [12].

B. Development of Thai MOOCs

In 2017, Thai Cyber University (TCU) and the office of the Higher Education Commission, in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, launched the Thai MOOC, an open platform for online education. Thai MOOC is the country's official MOOC provider; it is a project designed to motivate Thai learners to pursue lifelong learning. There are approximately 300 courses available, with 94,000 members, 150,000 registrations, delivering both local context and contemporary online distance-learning education [13].

Thai MOOC offers elements that support digital learning platform. With an unlimited number of participants, no entrance exams, and no prerequisites, such as age limitations, learners can study for free online. Thai MOOC has six core components: 1) reading materials, 2) video lectures, 3) discussion boards, 4) quizzes, 5) assignments, and 6) certificates [14]. With an effort to promote the nation's identity, Thai universities have developed courses in five areas that characterize the region's distinctiveness: 1) agriculture, 2) health promotion, 3) career advancement and entrepreneurship, 4) technology, and 5) language, culture, and art.

Early Thai MOOC courses were created in collaboration with national educational networks. Four progressive strategies were used by Thai MOOC to manage and grow its user base: 1) expanding through nine regional university networks, that have received funding from the TCU Target Program, 2) forming partnerships with educational institutions and related agencies both domestically and internationally by signing a memorandum of understanding, 3) co-creating courses with governmental organizations to encourage lifelong learning, 4) allowing other organizations to request the use of the Thai MOOC platform [13].

Thai MOOC was created as freely accessible, on-demand self-study content for independent study, regardless of time or location. This highlights the benefits of using Thai MOOCs to provide timely, free training that is always accessible [15]. Although most Thai MOOC learners have studied without earning credits, the long-term objective of the Thai MOOC project is to facilitate credit transfers and educational certifications at Thai universities in a manner similar to that of traditional classrooms [16].

C. Teaching Sustainability Concept in Thai MOOC

There are numerous subjects in MOOC covering a wide range of disciplines, fields of study, and ways of thinking [17]. Today, sustainable development has become a public priority, and the notion of sustainability and sustainable development in Thailand is tied to a "sufficiency economy," which promotes Buddhist concepts of moderation and "enough" sufficiency. The concept of sufficiency has become critical to long-term sustainable development in contemporary Thailand [18]. Thai MOOCs provide a variety of sustainability-related courses, including topics on social entrepreneurship, sustainable development, and sufficiency concepts. Since the launch of Thai MOOC, educators in institutions throughout Thailand have been designing courses focusing on sustainability concepts that highlight the region's uniqueness to contribute to sustainable development and practices [13]. Table I exemplifies courses in Thai MOOC with sustainability focus.

TABLE I: COURSES WITH SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS IN THAI MOOC

Subject	Affiliation
The conservation and sustainable use of native Thai plants	Mahidol University
The innovation of sustainable home	Chulalongkorn University
Architecture and sustainable development for everyone	Naresuan university
Thai wisdom with agricultural sustainable development	Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University
Sufficiency Economy	Hatyai University
Philosophy of sufficiency economy	Uttaradit Rajabhat University
Introduction to social entrepreneurship	Srinakharinwirot University
Building Good Brand with R.I.C.H.	Srinakharinwirot University

Source: Author's own compilation, retrieved from https://thaimooc.org

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study selected one of the courses in the Thai MOOC platform, "swu012: Building Good Brand with R.I.C.H.," as a case study. This course was selected as the case study because it meets the following criteria: it was created to emphasize the topic of sustainability; there were no prerequisites or specific educational requirements for the course; and it was made available in a variety of formats, including instructor-led, self-paced, blended classroom, and stand-alone online course. For specific social research inquiries, a single case study is a relevant and acceptable research approach because it leads to a deeper understanding of the discipline. The case study provides context-dependent knowledge, making it particularly well adapted to human learning [19]. To assess the course's design and delivery, mixed methods were used by integrating surveys and content analysis. Surveys are the most common methodology in MOOC research [20]. On the other hand, content analysis is an appropriate method because it can be applied to any type of written text or visual element, regardless of the source [21]. The survey results provided descriptive information on the learners in the course, while content analysis was used to draw some interpretation of the design and delivery of the course swu012. The exit survey was sent to 334 active learners who participated in course activities during the period of August 20–26, 2019. A total of 205 people responded, accounting for 61.4% of the total.

IV. Results

A. Course Overview

A course in the Thai MOOC platform involves a team of faculty members or professionals from educational institutions acting as instructional designers to create courses for Thai learners. The course "Building a Strong Brand with R.I.C.H." or swu012 is a 10-hour module of Thai MOOC designed by two instructors at Srinakharinwirot University in Bangkok, Thailand. The course targets learners of all ages and has no specific prerequisites. The swu012 was run as a one-week instructor-led course that began on August 20, 2019 and ended on August 26, 2019. During that time, the course had 433 enrollments; 334 of them (77%) were active or took part in course activities at least once, while 99 of them (23%) enrolled in the course but did not take part in any course activities. To successfully complete the course, it was advised that students dedicate two hours a week to self-learning. Fig. 1 depicts the course overview once students enrolled in the course.

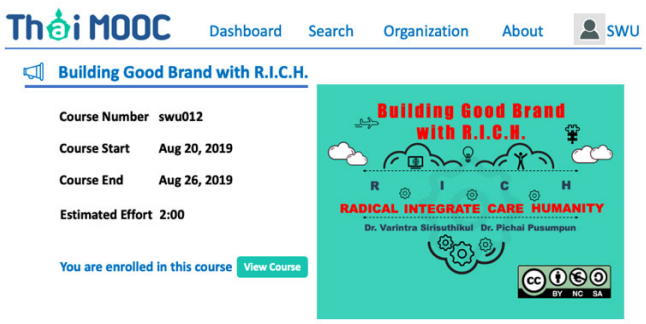

Fig. 1. Course overview of swu012.

B. Learner's Characteristics

There were three distinct groups of learners for swu012. Among the 205 respondents who took the survey, 125 respondents (61%) indicated that they were taking the course as part of a class assignment, 39 respondents (19%) said it was for personal interests, and 35 respondents (17%) reported that their instructors encouraged them to take the course.

There were 143 female respondents (69.8%) and 62 male respondents (30.2%). The respondents' ages ranged from below 13 to over 65. There were 180 respondents (88%) between the ages of 18 and 24, and only 14 respondents (6.8%) were over 65. The respondents' educational levels ranged from less than a bachelor's degree to a doctoral degree, with 160 respondents (77.6%) currently pursuing a bachelor's degree, 29 respondents (14%) having already completed one, 20 respondents (9.7%) not having completed a university degree, and 8 respondents (4%) having completed a doctoral degree.

C. Learner's Course Experiences

Of the 334 active learners who participated in the course activities, 227 (68%) passed the course and received a certificate, while 107 (32%) scored below 70 and failed the course. Among those who passed the course, 182 (80%) said they were able to complete the course because of their ability to manage their time and balance it with other personal or work commitments.

When examined among the different groups of learners, it was discovered that the 125 learners who were taking the course as part of a class assignment had a 100% course completion rate, followed by those who took the course for personal interests with a 74% course completion rate, and those who were encouraged to take the course by their instructors with a 68% course completion rate.

In terms of the time required to complete the course, 87% of learners were able to complete the course within 1–3 days, 8% of learners finished the course in less than 10 days, 3% finished the course in under 30 days, and 2% needed longer than 30 days to complete the course.

According to the survey, 90 respondents (44%) stated they were highly satisfied with the course, 68 respondents (33%) said they were satisfied, and 45 respondents (22%) said they were moderately satisfied. None of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the course. When questioned about the factors that influenced course completion, respondents commented that the structure of the course was simple to follow, the animation in the video helped to explain the material, and communications with the instructors inspired them to keep learning (discussion boards and email notifications).

D. Course Structure and Outline

Fig. 2. Course outline of swu012.

E. Course Delivery

This course is a 10-hour module designed to teach Thai learners of all ages and educational levels the concept of sustainable branding. It is divided into five sections. The history and core principles of brand and branding are

presented in the first section, which leads to the concept of "R.I.C.H. Branding" in the next four sections. In this course, the term R.I.C.H stands for "Radical, Integrate, Care, and Humanity." The four steps of the R.I.C.H. Branding are tied to the plan-do-check-act cycle to enable actions.

Following the initial release, all courses on Thai MOOC platforms were converted to self-paced learning mode courses after passing a review, requiring participants to complete the course on their own time and receive a certificate. It was created as self-study material for independent study that is freely accessible regardless of location or time constraints. Table II compares a university course and Thai MOOC.

TABLE II: COMPARING A UNIVERSITY COURSE AND THAI MOOC

Methods	University	Thai MOOC
Lecture time (per session)	120–180 minutes	Up to 10 minutes
Studying time (per week)	1–5 hours	1–2 hours
Course Duration	15 Weeks	5 Weeks
Course Completion	45 hours	10 hours

F. Course Design

Design is the process of identifying what and how the course is to be learned. The swu012 course follows the Thai MOOC's basic course formats, which contain six essential components: reading materials, video lectures, discussion boards, quizzes, assignments, and certificates. Supplemental resources are also created for the course, providing external links to the sites. There are 35 video lectures, each lasting less than 10 minutes, totaling 3.30 hours in length, and a two-minute course introduction video. The video components are central to the course's learning. All the video lectures were prerecorded and can be categorized into three types: 1) concept development videos, 2) topic introduction videos, and 3) interview videos. Below are sample pages of "concept development video," as in Fig. 3, and "topic introduction video," as in Fig. 4.

Fig. 3. Example of a concept development video.

A sample of the concept development video is shown in Fig. 3. Under the first topic, there are four concept development videos, each lasting 4–8 minutes and explaining the fundamentals of brand building through animation. Fig. 4 is an example of a topic-introduction video. Four one-minute introductory videos are used to briefly convey the concept of "R.I.C.H." defined for the course.

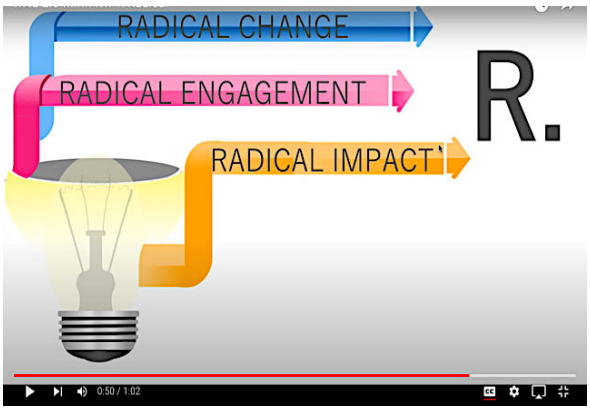

Fig. 4. Example of topic introduction video.

V. DISCUSSION

For MOOCs, which are self-paced online learning environments with no personal instruction from an instructor, technical support is limited. The low completion rate of MOOCs, which is usually below 10%, is a major issue [5]. The swu012 course, on the other hand, had a completion rate of over 60%, which was at least six times greater than the global MOOC average. It should be noted, however, that instructor-led courses in Thai MOOCs usually had a high completion rate. This could be attributed to a number of circumstances. Firstly, in the instructor-led mode, a variety of tools facilitated communication between instructors and learners, including emails, discussion boards, and announcements, which allowed instructors to enhance student's learning process. Secondly, because the majority of courses in Thai MOOC were created by instructors from universities across the country, instructors might encourage students to complete their courses by assigning them as part of class assignments. Finally, because the Thai MOOC project was created as a government initiative to provide free lifelong learning for all Thai learners, most courses were designed as foundation courses for people of all ages, with no educational prerequisites, therefore the course was easy to follow, thus encouraging course completion.

Interestingly, the survey revealed that over 80% of learners were able to finish the course in 1–3 days, with a much lower percentage of learners needing more time. This implies that it is crucial that the course's structure is easy to follow. In addition, interactions between instructors and learners can help inspire learners to continue learning. Course instructors can motivate learners to complete the course, as they can explain to learners the potential benefits of enrolling in the course, along with providing guidance. As a result, MOOC content, perceived effectiveness, and instructor interaction are all found to have a considerable impact on student retention [22], especially for instructor-led MOOCs in which a certain level of communication is possible.

Thai MOOC is the country's official MOOC provider, with the goal of promoting online learning in any location at any time. MOOCs have emerged as a viable alternative to traditional education, both nationally and globally. MOOCs offer many benefits, including flexibility and the capacity to meet the requirements of specific learners. Nevertheless, many learners who participate in MOOCs may experience

initial frustration because they are not adequately prepared for the online learning experience. Adapting the curriculum and learning environment to suit various learning preferences provides learners with the opportunity to pursue their own goals and learn freely, without feeling the pressure of comparing themselves to other learners.

MOOC video lectures with visual components, colors, moving images, and animations are likely to increase learners' attention, making the course more engaging. Moreover, the use of multimedia elements, such as animation, in the video may also help clarify the topic. Incorporating real-life case studies to highlight real-world methods could also be valuable and entertaining, particularly for learners who are part of a startup, entrepreneur, or working group. The use of a "live" case brings the case closer to reality, which helps students learn more effectively [23].

As a result, delivering a Thai MOOC as a self-regulated course necessitates instructional designers to personalize the course experience to match the demands of a diverse group of learners. Enhancing learner engagement by incorporating interactive features (word cloud, discussion forums), increasing flexibility so that students can focus primarily on subjects they are interested in studying, and increasing instructor–learner interaction are all examples of ways to personalize an online learner's course experience. As a large number of learners actively participate in MOOCs out of self-interest, it is crucial for them to be able to manage their own time and plan their activities in accordance with their learning goals. The meaning of success for a learner is linked to their motivation and goals, as lifelong learners have different learning objectives [24]. Goal-oriented and self-regulated learning have been acknowledged as valuable skill sets in online learning because of their favorable impact on students' accomplishment [25].

VI. Conclusion

MOOC learners typically come from a wide range of academic backgrounds, professional backgrounds, ages, and educational levels. They have different academic goals and ways to use MOOC information. As a result, it is necessary to alter the learning materials and delivery of MOOCs from what was originally taught at universities. With the nature of MOOCs, which are self-paced online learning environments with no personal instruction from an instructor, communication and support are limited. This underscores how important it is for educational designers to personalize courses in order to promote self-paced online learning. Understanding learners' academic and social backgrounds and the elements that stimulate their interests and enhance their learning, such as a simple course structure, the use of animations, and other non-academic conditions, including communications between instructors and learners, is crucial before personalizing course content and delivery. Furthermore, supporting varied learner goals and interests and instructional preferences is important. Finally, special consideration must also be paid to the design and facilitation of the course structure and content. Therefore, course length, pace, scope, and difficulty should be considered in this light.

Because lifelong learners have diverse learning objectives, the meaning of success for them is tied to their motivation and goals. Because of the diversity of learners, MOOC design and delivery must be carefully constructed and linked with these pedagogical abilities for online teaching. Furthermore, it is critical to serve a wide range of learners' goals, interests, and instructional preferences.

VII. Future Research

The current study attempts to provide an in-depth perspective and valuable insights into designing and delivering Thai MOOC content; nevertheless, several limitations should be addressed. First, the research was carried out in the context of one course in Thai MOOC. This could limit the applicability of the results. Second, because the study focuses on Thai learners, some implications may be contextual. As a result, future studies could focus on MOOC subjects with international audiences.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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