

Eat Well, Live Well.



Ajinomoto (Thailand) Co., Ltd.

EAT WELL, LIVE WELL.

Topic: Ajinomoto Thailand's Key to Success. Peek into the Strategy and Approaches of Managing Online Market in Digital Age.

Introduction

If we're thinking about cooking, an ingredient that's the most necessary and people most think of will probably be Monosodium Glutamate (MSG). And when we talk about MSG, the brand that comes to people's mind is probably "AJI-NO-MOTO®".

Ajinomoto Thailand is a leader in the fields of foods & beverages both in wholesale and industrial level. Ajinomoto Thailand was established in 1960 and over the last 63 years they have been growing and evolving into "Ajinomoto Group" in Thailand to develop and produce food & beverages-related products and services such as seasoning, beverage and instant noodle to answers consumers' needs that keep evolving with the time.

"Ajinomoto's business started by producing and selling MSG under the name "AJI-NO-MOTO®" (Umami seasoning). Later, we expanded into flavors seasoning & menu seasonings and beverages for example, "RosDee®", "Birdy®", "Birdy® 3in1" and instant noodle "Yum-Yum®"."

Mr. Hironari, Digital Marketing Department Manager told us about the origin of Ajinomoto's business in Thailand and the evolution through the years.

When we're thinking of Ajinomoto, the locations that you've seen their products most often are probably supermarkets, hypermarkets, convenience stores or roadside shops. However, Ajinomoto have not only stopped their dominance in the offline market but is still constantly evolving.

In the last 3-4 years since the COVID-19 outbreak, Ajinomoto have recognized the importance of online

channels that can answer the needs of consumers who can no longer purchase the products normally at the department store or convenience store due to lockdowns. And the efforts they have put into developing online channels & e-commerce have been changed into success and are still producing desirable results.



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What was the approach of Ajinomoto in adapting to the market? What's the key to their success in online channel?

transcosmos Thailand had the chance to interview Mr. Hironari Tatematsu, Department Manager and Ms. Pimanmas Wasatammasit, E-commerce Operation Section Manager, both from Ajinomoto Thailand's Digital Marketing Department to inquire about the thoughts and the factors behind their decisions. And in this article, we would like to summarize their insights and details for all of you.

Changing point in the purchase channels of Ajinomoto's products

"E-commerce or the EC market was a rapidly expanding channel. And of course, the company has recognized it, especially after the COVID-19 outbreak, which was when the EC sales, not only in Thailand but also all over the world, grew. The business and the market itself grew rapidly." Mr. Hironari said regarding the factor behind their decision to focus on online channels and e-commerce.

"Historically, our company was very strong in terms of offline channels, for example, wet market, roadside

shop, convenience store, supermarket, or hypermarket. For online channel, we did not want to be left behind because we see it as a new touchpoint with our consumers."

Ajinomoto has seen and recognized the significance of online channels which have become one of the touchpoints between Ajinomoto and their customers. Online channels can answer the needs of consumers who prefer to access the products and its information on the application and website, especially e-commerce platforms which can address the users who prefer to purchase the products online and have the products delivered directly to their home.

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Ajinomoto's E-Commerce Channels

lazada.co.th/shop/ajinomoto-official

shopee.co.th/ajinomoto_officialshop

The beginning of partnership between Ajinomoto and transcosmos

“However, we didn’t have any experience in terms of online channels, so we needed some partner that we can walk together. We were looking for someone, we called it in Japanese “Banso(伴走)” which means walking together.”

“At that time, we met transcosmos Thailand and that’s when we started the discussion, starting to know each other as well as telling transcosmos about our expectation, and understand what TCT can provide us. And after several discussion we thought that TCT is the right partner to choose.” Mr. Hironari said about seeking a “Banso” partner who specialized in the fields of online channels and partnering up with transcosmos.

The services that transcosmos provided to Ajinomoto are divided into two. The first one is the management of digital marketing, both on social media and on e-commerce platforms. The second one is data management. transcosmos have provided interactive dashboards that collect and compile all the data in one location and then provide the analysis to find insights which can be used to further the development

of products or services and adjust marketing strategies to match customer’s behavior.

“Currently Ajinomoto is using 2 services from transcosmos. The first one is paid media such as Facebook Collaborative Performance Advertising Solution (CPAS) and Google Shopping. Including other on platform ads such as Shopee ads and Lazada ads. transcosmos also provides platform marketing tools to manage paid media as a whole.”

“The second service is the interactive dashboard report that transcosmos provided to collect the data, customers insights and provide data analysis for Ajinomoto.” Miss Pimanmas, E-commerce Operation Section Manager said about the services that Ajinomoto is currently using from transcosmos.



Factors and insights behind the success of Ajinomoto’s online channels initiative

“We saw the importance of online channels and how it has become a part of consumers daily lives in the current age, so we decided to partner with various marketplace platforms such as Shopee and Lazada to increase the reach of our products. We are also considering expanding to TikTok since we think of it as one of the potential channels that can increase online sales and expanding the user base for Ajinomoto.”

Miss Pimanmas shared her thoughts about the approach that Ajinomoto took when initiating e-commerce channels.

“Our second approach is focusing on data, especially data analysis. This enables us to do personalization marketing and data-driven marketing. We can see the customers insights about the customer’s behavior which we then can use to adjust and develop new products and services to match their behavior and lifestyle. We aim to incorporate those data into our business to improve purchase experience and customer experience.”

We can see that other than expanding into e-commerce space to sales their products on more platforms and reach the online userbase, Ajinomoto also places significant importance in customers and consumers data. Currently, transcosmos and Ajinomoto is launching Customer Data Platform (CDP) project which uses CDP tools to collect, sort and analyze the data that Ajinomoto got from consumers who visited or purchased products from their website or e-commerce stores.

The purpose is to use the data that we collected via CDP to find customer insights such as what's the product that consumers are most interested in, how long did they stop at the product information page, what kind of advertisements or announcements are the most viewed by consumers which the brand then can use to do segmentation and improve overall customer experience. The data can also help with establishing marketing plans and making business decisions.

“I’m really satisfied with transcosmos’ services. The team from transcosmos is very proactive and always willing to help with all kinds of matters. They always provide the right solutions to solve critical issues that Ajinomoto face and help us to achieve our goals.”

“They are our true business partner. When we encounter any problems, have difficulties, or want to do something new, we can always talk with TCT. The team always come up with good solutions with a very quick response. Number two is the one-stop service that TCT can provide. Since Ajinomoto is still not that proficient in this field yet, we need a partner like TCT. And since TCT has a lot of fields that they are specializes in and can provide services, they can always guide us through those hurdles together.”

Comments from Ms. Pimanmas and Mr. Hironari about their feelings after about the services provided by transcosmos.

Determination to never settle and keep advancing Ajinomoto’s business

From the interview, we can see that Ajinomoto is currently putting their efforts into social media to promote their products and e-commerce platforms to increase purchasing channels and reach more consumers. Lastly, we’ve asked both Mr. Hironari and Ms. Pimanmas about Ajinomoto’s direction going forward for online channels.

“We have 3 points that we want to work on in the future. The first one is improving digital marketing by being more effective and efficient of social media and turning it into a low-cost, high-performance operation. The second one is e-commerce, in which we plan to make the overall operation work more seamlessly so we can punctually deliver our products and services and improve customer satisfaction. The last one is data analysis. We have recognized the importance of customer data which we can use to analyze to find insights. We can then use those insights to plan marketing campaigns or adjust communications and products to match the preferences and needs of consumers.”

Until now Ajinomoto have been constantly improving and evolving their online channels, be it improving channels management to be more efficient, creating excellent customer experience, or analyze customer data to find insights that can help with overall business management. It’s clear that, now with proven success under their belt, Ajinomoto is looking towards a bright future for their digital marketing and e-commerce sections.

“We believe that digital marketing field has the capabilities to expand or maximize the customer experience. We just started launching the Customer Data Platform project, after the evaluation process we have decided that we want to go with TCT as an official partner. We’re going to start a new journey together. And after CDP? Our expectation for TCT is that we can walk together as a “Banso” partner for further expanding fields in digital marketing.”



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