

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THAI CONSUMERS
ONLINE BEHAVIOUR**



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entitled
**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THAI CONSUMERS
ONLINE BEHAVIOR**

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Miss Prathana Sinthukiow
Candidate

Asst. Prof. Kannika Leelapanyalert,
Ph.D.
Advisor

Asst. Prof. Prattana Punnakitkashem,
Ph.D.
Committee member

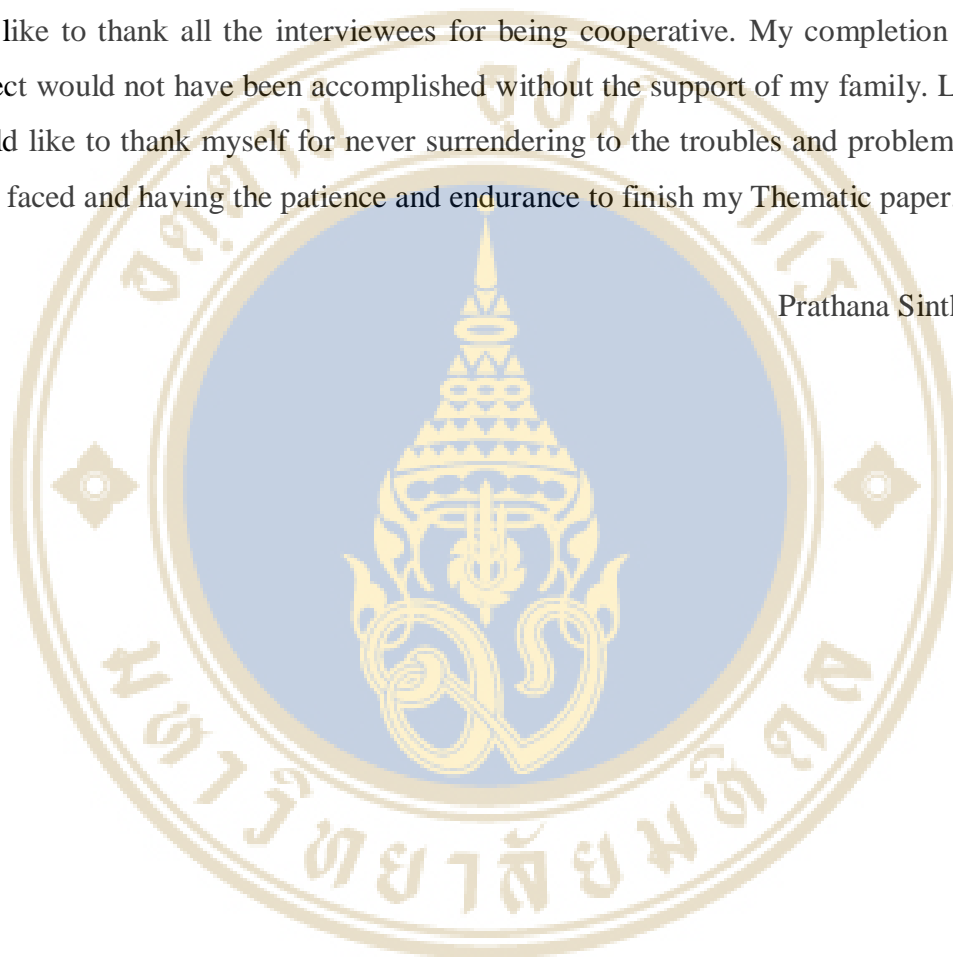
Assoc. Prof. Anoop Tanlamai,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

Dr. Detlef Reis,
Ph.D.
Committee member

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Prathana Sinthukiow



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PRATHANA SINTHUKIOW 5549281

M.M. (GENERAL MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASST. PROF. KANNIKA
LEELAPANYALERT, Ph.D., ASST. PROF. PRATTANA PUNNAKITIKASHEM,
Ph.D., DETLEF REIS, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The study aims to understand how important are online peer discussions in influencing Thai consumers purchase decisions? It is important for brands to be aware of the path that consumers take to make decisions when researching online to influence brands positive return on investment. Qualitative research methodology was applied in the research. Fifteen persons participated in the interview aged from 22-30. These participants were from Bangkok who used social media on a regular basis.

The results revealed that the degree to which participants relied on peers' communications depended on the type of product s/he is researching. For high involvement products, consumers tend to rely more heavily on peers communications through online channels such as review sites and search. This behavior could be connected because the aforementioned channels tend to be information heavy than social networking sites. However, peer communications are not very significant with low involvement products because the nature of these products is less risky and therefore, opinions of others do have much effect in comparisons to high involvement products. The result also revealed that Thai consumers would rely and trust information's' given by peers more than what brands advertise, as they believe that peers are the actual consumers of products.

KEY WORDS: Social Media, online peer communications

77 pages

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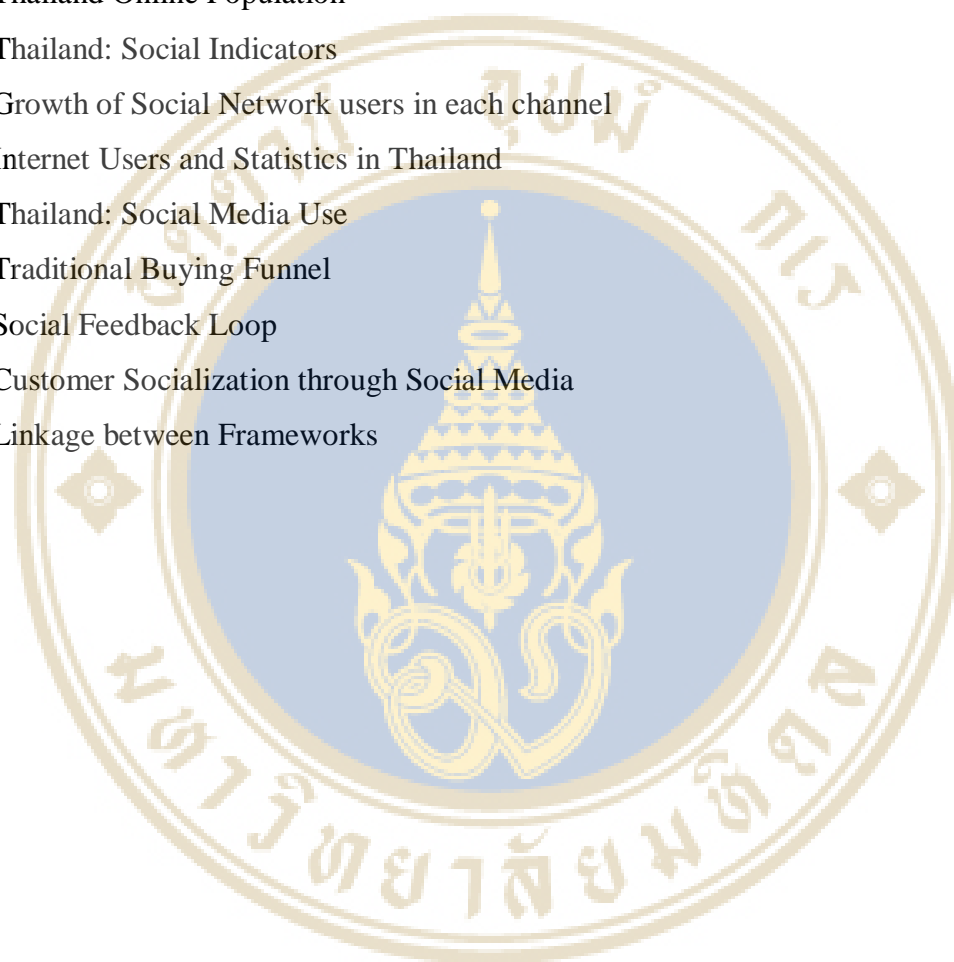
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Social networks now a day is very much present in our lives where ideas are shared or exchanged in virtual communities. They also represent a place to share news and information of all kinds. The connections made among “netizens”, habitual users of the Internet (Oxford, 2009) in these networks along with information shared can have huge effects on the thoughts and beliefs of individuals. Moreover, according to MRA/IMRO Guide to The Top 16 Social Media Research Questions, even the flow of information itself can be a powerful predictor of key business and program outcomes. By acknowledging the power of social networks, researches have increasingly begun to take advantage of social media to answer critical business questions because Social Media is able to provide businesses a more direct path of contact between itself and their market (Tara Urso, 2014).

Social networks allow brands to communicate effectively with existing and potential users. Not only does social media connect brands with the right people, it is also a tool that allow brands to maintain relationships with the network that was formed (Bernado, E, n.d.). In a way it creates a link between person-to-person interaction and person to technology interaction. Businesses are able to raise awareness and familiarity of businesses by actively using social media outlets such as: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram (Social networking for businesses, 2013).

1.2 The Aim and Purpose

In recent years, the numbers of internet and social media users have risen exponentially and the trends seem to rise. Thailand’s population has risen to 67,108,507 in 2014 (World Population Review, 2014) out of which, 26,140,473 are internet users (Internet Information Research Network Technology Lab, 2014) mainly

because the other population is based in rural area where internet penetration has not been established. According to the chart (Statistics 4) retrieved from Internet Information Research Network Technology Lab website, we can see an on-going trends in the rise of Internet users. With the increasing popularity of social media, statistics have also shown a tremendous rise in the number of social media users over the years. It is also interesting to see how Thailand is becoming one of emerging leaders in Southeast Asia in terms of social media adoption and tech innovations. Despite the fact that the country's internet penetration remains low at 26%, but its mobile penetration rate is quite high. According to estimates made by NBCT: Thailand ICT Information, the total number of mobile subscribers in the 4th quarter of 2013 to be 90.97 subscribers which is 136.27% of mobile penetration to the whole country's population (IMC Institute, 2014). Therefore, creating good business opportunities via both social media through both mobile penetration and online medias.

Hence, brands can take advantage of this rising trends by studying the behavior of consumers online in order to understand Thai consumers. Online interactions can be studied via several online channels including social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and social applications such as Socialcam and Instagram and other online channels such as blogs and forums. The paper also aims to study what actions consumers take after interacting with brands through aforementioned channels. In addition, the study aims to understand how the findings are related to the 2 frameworks, Social Feedback Loop and Customer Socialization on Social Media such as how does peer discussions have an affect on being involved with products? What is the consumer active consideration process when making purchase decisions?

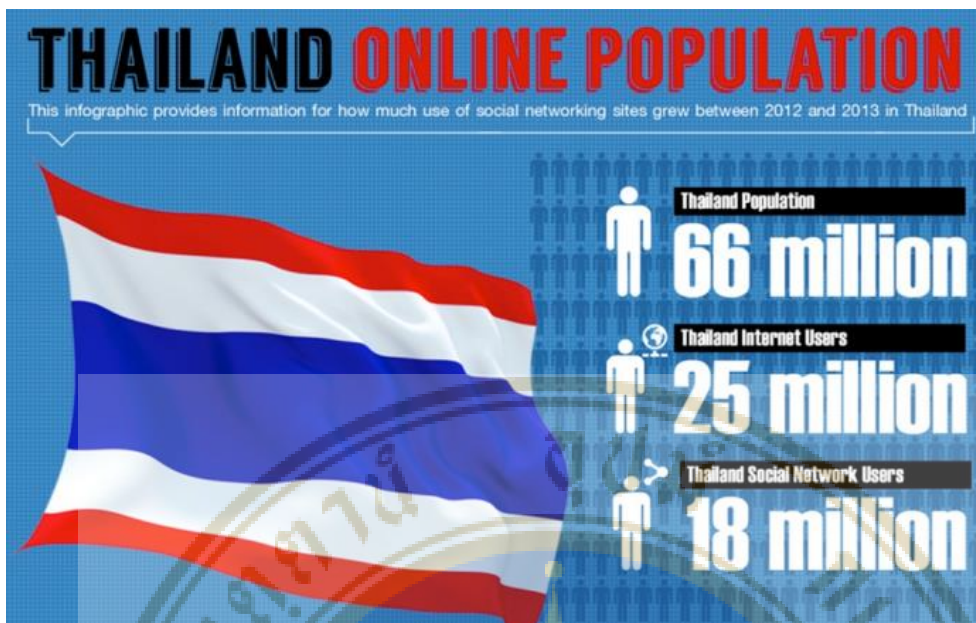


Figure 1.1 Thailand Online Population

Source: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/lite/topstories/356736/favicon.ico>



Figure 1.2 Thailand: Social Indicators

Source: <http://e27.co/southeast-asia-25-internet-penetration-109-mobile-penetration/>

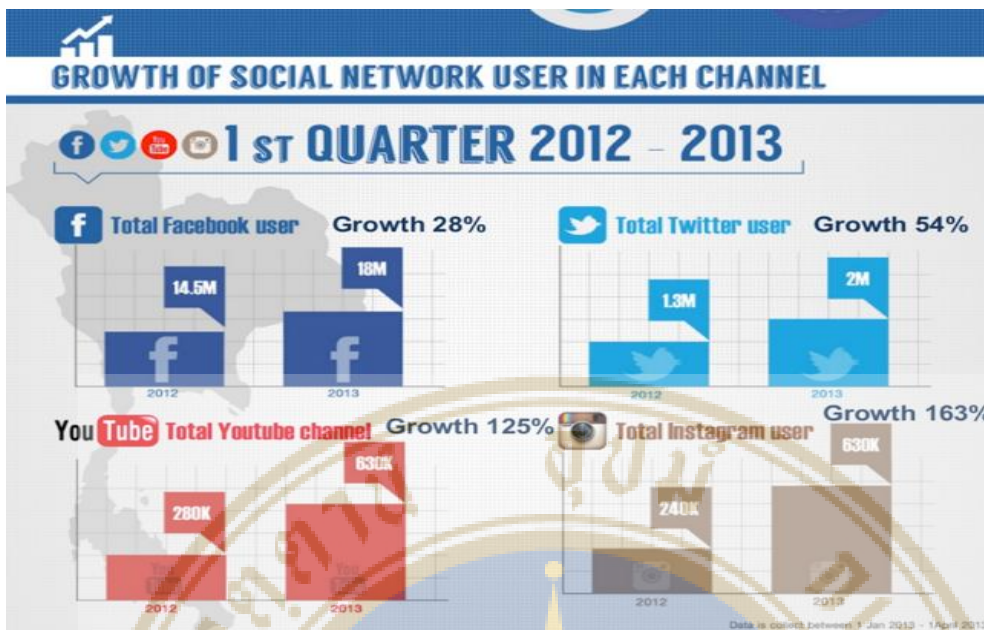


Figure 1.3 Growth of Social Network users in each channel
 Source: <http://www.techinasia.com/thailand-18-million-social-media-users-in-2013/>

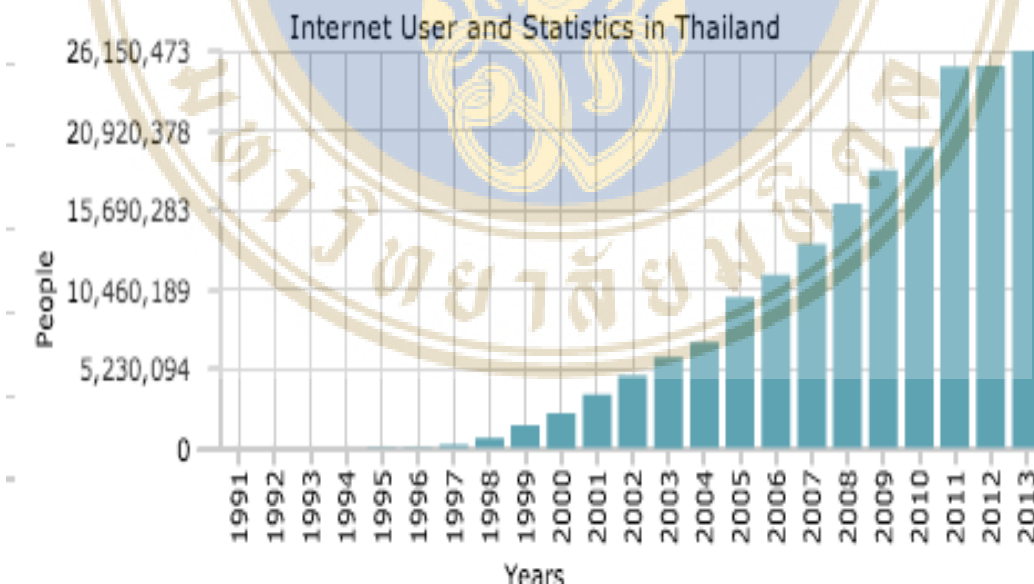


Figure 1.4 Internet Users and Statistics in Thailand
 Source: <http://internet.nectec.or.th/webstats/home.iir?Sec=home>

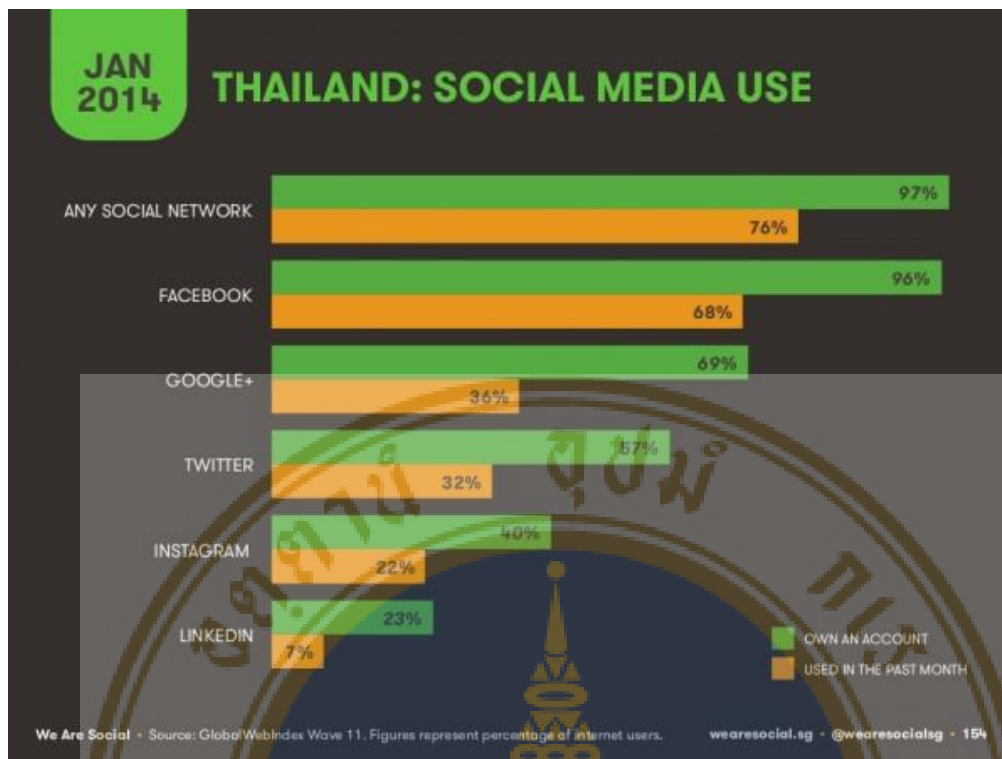


Figure 1.5 Thailand: Social Media Use

Source: <http://budiputra.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/thailand-social-e1390430862793.jpg>

1.3 Problem Statement

Recent studies of social media tying it to the concepts of business models, Enterprise 2.0, social web enterprise (Riegner, 2007) so on and so forth have been studied recently in the past few years. Researchers both in Western countries and Asia have taken interests in such field due to foreseen opportunities, a result of the social media boom. A previous number of social media studies have focused on Social Media as a mechanism for Engagement (C.M. Sashi, 2012), Social Media Business opportunities (Kirk Hazlett 2012) and Virtual Community Attraction (Ridings, C. M., & Gefen, D. (2004). Nevertheless, there is little study that focuses on understanding the influence of social media on Thai consumers' online behavior. A few research studies have identified that peer discussions on social media played a significant role in stirring interests in potential consumers.

The research showed that people tend to talk and share their good and bad experiences about products and brands on social networking sites where their opinions

are critical which could lead to potential sales. However, the research, “Social Media Peer Communications and Impacts on Purchase Intentions: A Consumer Socialization Framework” Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, (2012) was focused on Chinese consumers and simply social networking sites, however, this paper would like to explore the behavior of Thai online consumers purchasing behavior on various online platforms including blogs, forums, YouTube, Facebook to get a more in-depth understanding on how Thai consumers find information, how influential are peers in decision making process. Peer communication in social media is described as interactions among individual consumers regarding products or services via social networking channels (Moschis and Churchill 1978). However, peer communications on consumers' purchase decisions rarely has been investigated in Thai market. Therefore, this paper would like to investigate the effects of online peer communications on social media and its impacts on consumers' product attitudes and purchase intentions.

1.4 Topic Selection

The goal of the study was to determine the path consumers take when researching online to inform product purchase decisions, information, which companies can use to tailor their websites and social media activities for their specific target groups.

1.5 Research Scope

In this research, qualitative methodology was used to collect all the data by interviewing 15 Thai consumers who are exposed to using social media websites and other online channels on a regular basis. These participants would be interviewed to see if their pattern of online behavior is similar to one another. A majority of young adults tend to be active information seekers and have high exposure to using internet and therefore, social networking sites and other online channels. A high level of technological confidence within this group tends to be an encouraging factor when it

comes to product information research online, therefore, the participant group of age ranging from 22-30 were selected.

1.6 Research Question:

To fulfill the aim and purpose of this study, the author has formulated the research questions by relying on the background, the aim and purpose and problem statement as the following:

1. How important are online peer discussions in influencing Thai consumers purchase decisions?



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important for brands to understand how consumers behave online, such as how do they search for information? How they interact with brands or products? This is to be able to design effective strategies to draw consumers to have awareness about the product, be involved with the product and eventually lead to purchase intentions.

2.1 Factors that influence purchase decisions on social media: Social Feedback Cycle

With reference to the various studies explaining the consumer's perception on the social media engagement in many aspects, the researcher have selected some of studies to be the key conceptual model for this research.

According to research study conducted by Dave Evans and Jake McKee (2010), the social feedback cycle is the flow of conversational information that begins after an experience (e.g., a purchase) and then circulates around the social Web. This feedback finds its way back into the purchase funnel at the point of consideration where it becomes part of the next cycle and the next purchase evaluation process. A purchase funnel is a path customer follows while deciding whether to make a purchase involving four stages such as;

1. Consumers become **aware** of the product
2. Consumers become **interested** in the products
3. Consumers have the **desire** a particular brand or brands of the product
4. Customer takes **action** based on the desire they previously developed.

These stages of product involvement that inspired Dave Evans and Jake Mckee was originally designed and developed by E. St. Elmo Lewis in 1898 who

referred his model as **AIDA**, an acronym for **Awareness, Interests, Desire** and **Action** as explained above (Ayda Darban and Wei Li, 2012)

Table 2.1 Literature Review Summary

Theory and Concept	Logic	Main Aspect	Example of Studies
Traditional Purchase Funnel	Understanding the theoretical customer journey from the moment of first contact with your brand to the ultimate goal of a purchase	This model is used to understand the behavior of consumers throughout the process so brands can design effective marketing strategy consist of 4 stages which are Awareness, Research, Decision/Consideration and Purchase.	Bidding On The Buying Funnel For Sponsored Search and Keywords Advertising” by Bernard J. Jansen and Simone Schuster, 2011
Social Feedback Cycle	Understand how social feedback cycle influence purchase decisions of netizens.	Social feedback cycle is a conversational loop that connects the experience of the past customer with the though process of the next one.	Dave Evans with Jake Mckee (2010) "Social Media Marketing, The Next Generation of Business Engagement Hennig-Thurau, T., & Walsh, G. (2003). Electronic word-of-mouth: Motives for and consequences of reading customer articulations on the Internet. <i>International Journal of Electronic Commerce</i> , 8(2), 51-74 Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P.,

Table 2.1 Literature Review Summary (cont.)

			<p>Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word of mouth via consumer opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? <i>Journal of Interactive Marketing</i>, 18(1), 38-52</p> <p>Dellarocas, C. (2003). The digitization of word of mouth: Promise and challenges of online feedback mechanisms. <i>Management Science</i>, 49(10), 1407-1424</p>
Consumer Socialization	Understand how consumer socialization (peers) influence purchases intentions online.	Consumer Socialization is another concept whereby, individual consumers learn about knowledge from others via communications through online peers.	<p>Lueg et al., 2006 Teenagers' Use of Alternative Shopping Channels: A Consumer Socialization Perspective</p> <p>Gershoff and Johar, 2006 Andrew D. Gershoff, Gita Venkataramani Johar Do You Know Me? Consumer Calibration of Friends' Knowledge</p> <p>Taylor et al., 2011 David G. Taylor, Jeffery E. Lewin, David Strutton Friends, Fans, and Followers: Do Ads</p>

Table 2.1 Literature Review Summary (cont.)

		<p>Work on Social Networks? How Gender and Age Shape Receptivity Journal of Advertising Research, 51 (1) (2011), pp. 258–276</p> <p>Lueg and Zachary Finney, 2007 Jason E. Lueg, R. Zachary Finney Interpersonal Communication in the Consumer Socialization Process: Scale Development and Validation</p> <p>Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, (2012) Social Media Peer Communication and Impacts on Purchase Intentions: A Consumer Socialization Framework</p>
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2.1 Traditional Purchase Funnel

Now let's get a clearer picture by comparing the Social Feedback Cycle to that of a traditional purchase funnel. So what is a traditional purchase funnel? Marketing Made Simple describes traditional marketing funnel as.

“The purchase / purchasing funnel is a model which describes the theoretical customer journey from the moment of first contact with your brand to the ultimate goal of a purchase.”

This model is used to understand the behavior of consumers throughout the process so brands can design effective marketing strategy. The Traditional Buying Funnel was further developed from the AIDA model and according to the research paper, "Bidding On The Buying Funnel For Sponsored Search and Keywords Advertising" (Bernard J. Jansen, 2011) consist of 4 stages which are Awareness, Research, Decision/Consideration and Purchase. However, for simplicity, the researcher has chosen to summarize 3 stages of the traditional purchase funnel, which include Awareness, Consideration and Purchase to make readers able to compare and contrast to the modern purchase funnel namely the Social Feedback Cycle.



Figure 2.1 Traditional Buying Funnel

Source: adapted from "Bidding on the Buying Funnel for Sponsored Search and Keywords Advertising" by Bernard J. Jansen, 2011

The purchase cycle is often referred as a purchase funnel, which includes (for simplicity) 3 basic steps in a traditional marketing concept. 1) Awareness, 2) Consideration, 3) Purchase.

1. Awareness

Traditional media and marketing is focused on the awareness phase of the purchase funnel. The goal of marketing messages is to make the consumer aware of the product and what it offers. For instance, advertising through television

commercials, print ads, billboards, magazine etc. The logic is that the more often the consumer is reminded the better; the more aware (or familiar) they are of the product, the more likely they are to choose it.

2. Consideration

Traditional brands are unable to tackle the consideration phase, as they do not really have any influence on it. On the other hand, social media and the social web “*connect with and involve the customer from awareness all the way through consideration*” (Evans, 2008, p83) because any person can go on the Internet and search through consumer-generated media about a product to aid them in their decision-making. It is the same as physical word-of-mouth but moved into an online environment.

3. Purchase

Consumers, after making a final decision on the brand and product and whether they can afford it (possible comparisons of price, convenience of purchase) progress to purchase or not purchase the product(s) or/and service(s).

2.2 Social Feedback Cycle

The Social Feedback Cycle is important to understand because it forms the basis of social business. The Social Feedback loop represents the way in which Internet and social technology has connected people around businesses. It has become the ultimate marketing tool for word of mouth. People tend to talk about products and services on the Internet, sharing both good and bad experiences and opinions. These experiences and opinions hold far more weight and value, and are considered trustworthy, than any information provided by marketers and are thus, an important factor in making a purchase decision.

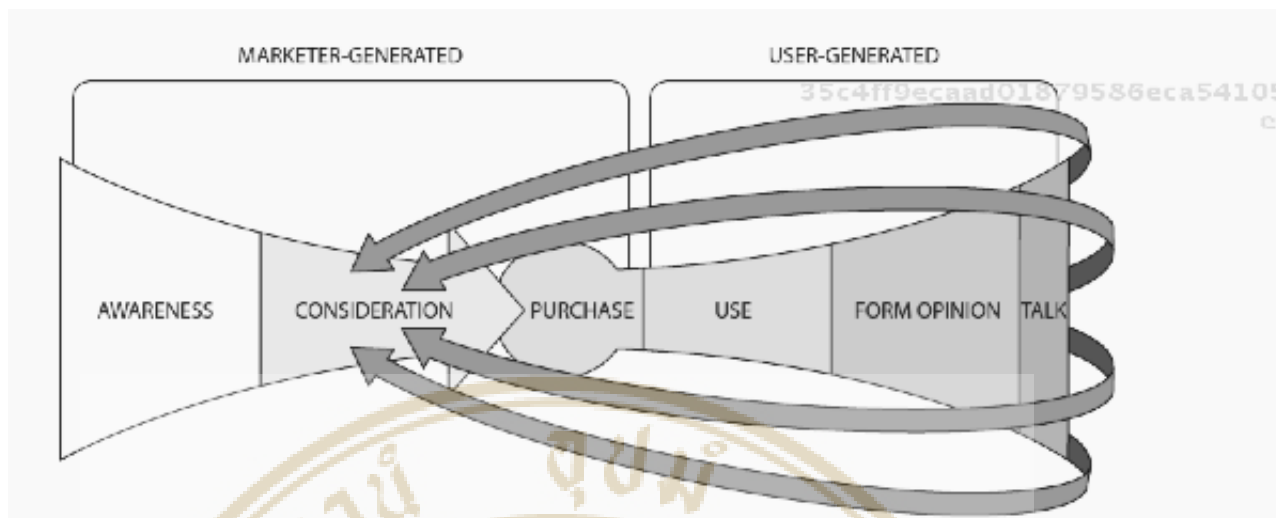


Figure 2.2 Social Feedback Loop

Source: Social Media Marketing: The Next Generations of Business Engagement by Dave Evans and Jake Mckee (2010)

Market Generated: refers to analyzing needs, producing goods and advertising them to the target markets.

1. Awareness

Consumers become aware of the product either through traditional marketing (television commercials, billboards, radio etc.) or from social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram or traditional/ digital word- of-mouth. Here is where the purchase intent is triggered leading to further research.

2. Consideration

Consumers become interested in the product and start gathering information about it. They are likely to start comparing products, read reviews, learning the functions and features of the product and seeking for others opinions. Consideration is the most critical phase where consumers thoroughly study the opinions and thoughts of other consumers on a particular product(s) or service(s) they are interested in. Often the consideration phase will include consumers going through a series of pros and cons of the product. This phase can be short or long depending on the value of the product. For instance, a person may spend more time researching for a

new smartphone, Samsung VS Apple and spends less number of hours researching on which shade of lipstick to purchase next. If the consumer is satisfied with the product and is able to accept its negative aspects, the consumer moves on to the purchase stage.

3. Purchase

Consumers purchase the products after going through a series of talks/opinions, which were formulated by users who have already had experience in using the products before.

User Generated: refers to content generated by users on social media platforms on the internet. (Financial Times, 2014)

4. Use

After purchasing the product or service, consumers use the product or service and begin to form negative or positive opinions around it.

5. Form Opinion

After consumers have used the product or service, they formulate opinions by posting/sharing their opinions in the form of reviews, comments through various channels and sites such as forums, blogs, vlogs, videos (YouTube, Socialcam).

6. Talk, Social networking (linked back to 2. Consideration)

This phase creates and bound the social feedback cycle because future consumers in their purchase decisions use consumer talks and opinions about the product or service on the social web. These talks are linked to the consideration stage and have a heavy influence on whether consumers would like to move forward to the purchase stage or not.

The Social Feedback cycle is built on the post-purchase feedbacks leading to a conversational loop, therefore, Social web can play a significant role in the basic consideration phrase. The reviews read by potential customers shared by existing customers can very much determine the faith of whether a product can be sold or not

because what netizens write about your product can have a direct effect on another person purchase decision.

2.3 Consumer Socialization

Consumer Socialization is another concept whereby, individual consumers learn about knowledge from others via communications (Ward, 1974). Conventional socialization is described as interactions among people you know for instance, friends, and family, however, online socialization fuels interactions among both people you know and strangers. According to Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, (2012), there are 3 main factors that that encourage consumer socialization among peers online:

1. Instant Messaging

Blogs, forums, instant messaging, and social networking sites all provide communication tools that make the socialization process easy and convenient (Isabelle Muratore, 2008).

2. Boom of Social Media sites

Increasing numbers of consumers visit social media websites to communicate with others and find information to help them make various consumption-related decisions (Lueg et al., 2006).

3. Secondary information

Social media enable education and information because they feature multitudes of friends or peers who act as socializing agents and provide numeroud product informations and evaluations (Gershoff and Johar, 2006 and Taylor et al., 2011). Referring to the consumer socialization framework, Taylor, Lewin, and Strutton (2011) find that online consumers' attitudes toward social network advertising depend greatly on socialization factors (i.e., peers). Lueg and Finney (2007) further reveal that peer communications online can influence consumers and trigger purchase intents.

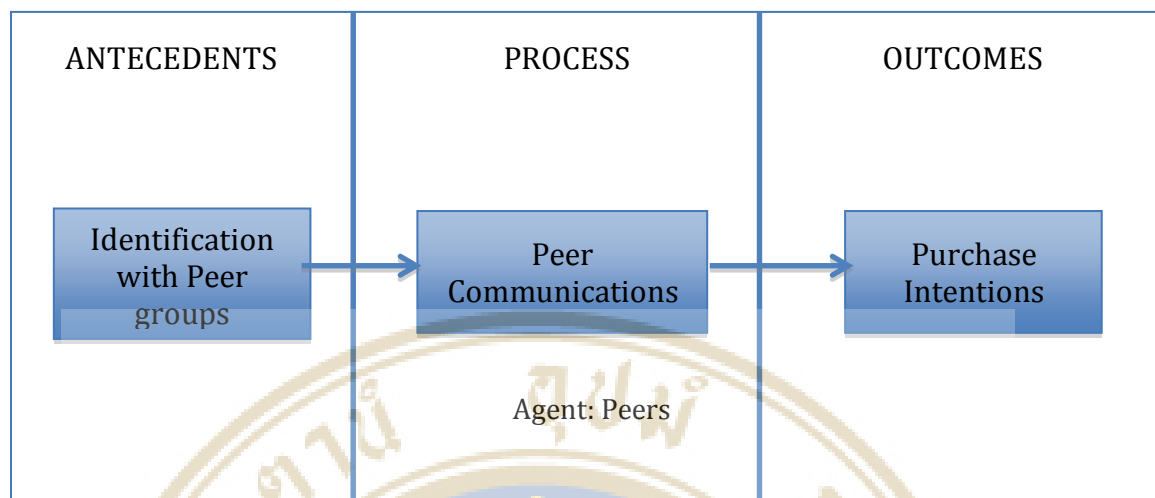


Figure 2.3 Customer Socialization through Social Media

Source: Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, (2012). Journal of Interactive Marketing, “Social Media Peer Communications and Impacts on Purchase Intentions: A Consumer Socialization Framework

Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, (2012) has designed the Customer Socialization through Social media framework where three of the seven elements were chosen to be further studied as the following:

Identification with Peers

The most important element for communication in virtual communities is very much dependent on peers groups. This is because once an individual identifies himself or herself as belonging to the group, wants and needs are triggered to maintain a positive relationship to the group and is therefore, willing to engage in community activities. Identification with peer group, according to Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, (2012) has a positive correlation and implications with peer communications.

Peer communications

Peer communication is the process related to learning about a product, service, brand whereby, these information is acquired through interactions between the

consumer and socialization agents such as “peers” and channels such as LINE, Facebook and other online channels such as blogs, forums, review sites.

Purchase Intentions

People decision to purchase product(s) and service(s) are based on the effects and degree of influence by peer communications. At this stage, consumers may choose to purchase the product or discard it.

Agent, Peers

Studies on Social Customizations confirmed that peers are an important socializing agent other than family and friends (Köhler et al., 2011), (Shim, 1996), whereby, consumers tend to interact with peers on consumption matters which influences their attitude towards a product or service (Churchill and Moschis, 1978 and Mukhopadhyay and Yeung, 2010).

2.4 Inside look at Social Consumers

Several studies have looked at how consumers behave depending on which product or service they are interested in. The Science of Sharing study, exposes the methods consumers use to research different kinds of products online and the influence social media can have on other consumer's purchases. Beyond Thinking Digital and Mbooth which are global communications companies conducted the study. According to a study, The Science of Sharing, An inside Look at Social Consumers categorized the extensiveness of online research and the sites that consumers go to in to two groups, which are for high involvement and low involvement products. However, a key notion surrounds the amount of involvement a consumer is with the brand.

High involvement is described as goods that involve high risks. Consumers would therefore, spend a considerable amount of time and resources in searching for these products. Such products tend to be a one-time purchase for example: cars. Conversely, low involvement products on the other hand do not require research as products are purchased more frequently. They are less risky and therefore,

deliberate research is not required, for example: fast moving consumer goods (Beyond Rethinking Digital and M Booth, N.D.).

The study found out that the way consumers use online channels depended on what product and service s/he is researching. For instance, when researching for high involvement products, consumers would rely more heavily on review sites, product websites and search because these sites tend to be more information heavy than social networking sites. Usually consumers have already developed purchase intents before extensively searching for the information. Consumers tend to rely on such sites because high involvements products are risky, are a one- time purchase and may involve a lot of time and resources, therefore, getting utmost information before purchase is important. For example: a consumer has an interest to purchase a car from Ford. This consumer then relies on car review sites to decide whether s/he should purchase a Ford Fiesta or a Ford Focus model (Beyond Rethinking Digital and M Booth, N.D.).

On the other hand, consumers tend to skip the research intensive when using social networking sites. Most of the time, they use it for entertainment and keep up to date purpose. These consumers usually fall upon products while surfing and build purchase intent after being exposed to it. For example: Facebook users develop purchase intents after seeing an earring displayed on her Facebook newsfeeds.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study aims to provide an insight on Thai netizen online consumer behavior. This study seeks to identify aspects, which can influence Thai netizens on how they obtain information, how they identify with brands and whether peer communication has an effect on their purchase decisions and to which degree.

3.1 Research Design

This study is to find out Thai consumers online behavior and what trigger their purchase factor. As far as consumer behaviors change related to preferences shift, understanding valuation in what consumer determines as important when identifying with brand, searching for information online, therefore, leading to purchase intentions. An exploratory research methodology is taken in this study so that, the research can explore the factors that frame Thai consumers online interaction. Likewise, the research could help brands to understand the path that their customers are most likely to take online before designing a social strategy. Qualitative approach is conducted in this study where 15 participants were interviewed.

3.2 Data Collection Methodology

The population

According to the methodology, qualitative research is developed to study people who are exposed to using social media or are interactive with online channels such as forums and blogs almost every. Usages of social media could vary from one netizen to another because some may use to connect with friends, some may use to

keep them updated with latest information, some may use to keep updated with latest fashion trends while some may use it for work or to simply scroll through contents.

Sampling

The judgment sampling and convenience sampling methods were used to recruit the interview participants. Participants were selected based on researcher's judgment so that, participants can answer the questions as a specific purpose. Small samples of social media users were selected in Bangkok, Thailand with the age group ranging from 22 – 30 because majority of these young adults tend to be active information seekers. Also a high level of technological confidence within this group tends to be an encouraging factor when it comes to product information research online.

According to sampling method, qualitative research with the structured interview was applied to explore key aspects of Thai netizens consumers' behavior online. Therefore, the researcher recruited participants with various backgrounds (gender, age, number of hours spent on internet/day, exposure to reading blogs and forums/week, occupation).

Data Collection

Data Collection was conducted with interview participants about their perception, feelings, behaviors, attitudes and actions regarding their experiences when searching for information online, interaction among peers and whether peer communications has any effects on their purchase experiences. The questions ranged from the number of hours spent on social media and their reasons behind using it, number of hours spent reading blogs and forums, identification with peers and interests, attitudes about aspects in peers' communications such as comments, reviews, blogs, forums, vlogs and what participants valued toward these dimensions.

Initial questions were demographic questions to see how much the participants are exposed to using social media, how many hours they spent on it and how they keep track of their interests on online platforms. Further detailed questions interviewed by the researcher related to how participants gathered information online, how they keep track with the latest information with regards to their interests, how

likely or unlikely are online peer communications to influence in their purchase decisions and attitudes before purchase decisions. The semi-structured schedule of questions for the interview was open-ended, allowing for the participants to elaborate on each question. Participants were asked as a side question whether they valued peer communications over what brands advertised and why.

Upon the completion of the interview, similar aspects of usage of social media to connect and search for information were presented. Participants were requested to elaborate on the answers with reasoning's and examples. Additional questions were asked up to the participants' responses.

The interview was audio-tapped with participant consent and later transcribed for accuracy and analysis. All interviewees were informed that the interview would be recorded and used for the educational purpose. Lastly, this study aims to understand Thai netizens online behavior. The result will allow brands to understand how Thai consumers behave online and what actions would be required while planning their social media strategies.

3.3 Instrument

The interview was transcribed and then used for the development of the thematic interpretation. General trends and patterns were examined relative to participant's behavior online. The research began by asking participant to response to four behavior aspects dimensions - social media usage aspects, influence of peer communications aspects, product involvement due to peer communications, and the influence of peer communications to influence in purchase decisions. Then, the interview was used to explore aspects or perspectives related to Thai consumers' online behavior. Moreover, opened-ended questions and interview were encouraged to allow participants to reveal their feelings, perceptions and behavioral intentions towards using social media.

The interview questions were developed from (Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, 2012), Social Media Peer Communications and Impacts on Purchase Intentions: A Consumer Socialization Framework research, which was modified to

adapt with the situations. This study then developed to conclude the analysis as the following questions:

Demographic:

- How often do you use social media and why do you use it?
- How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

Identification with Peer groups:

- Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?
- How by going on blogs and forums or Facebook can you learn more about the product?

Peer Communications:

- How likely or unlikely are peer communications online in influencing you to be involved with the product?
- Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Purchase Intentions:

- How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

In analyzing the collected data, the researcher followed a content analysis procedure. The data was collected as semi-structured, which included interview for asking questions to look for trends among interview participants.

In this case, the content was analyzed at one level: interpretative where the differences and similarities were used to identify the relationship between the usages of social media to search for information's and peer communications. This step was studied whether online peer communications impacted purchasing aspects. Finally, the aspects were interpreted reasons behind the aspects, which were important to participants. These results could be used in marketing strategies on social media and online platforms.

As a result of the analysis of interview, similar perspectives emerged. Each dimension and its respective themes from a part of the complete interpretation of what participants' value in regards to their online behavior aspects were studied. Specifically, participants were similar in backgrounds, exposure to social media and education.

4.1 Observation findings

Social media has basically engulfed in most of our daily lives since its boom. Most participants used social media to connect with friends, keep themselves up to date with the latest information with their interests groups and to seek for information's in general.

4.2 Demographic profiles of respondents

Briefly, 15 participants who are regular social media users were interviewed. A face – to face, one - on - one interview was conducted. These participants were selected because some of their jobs required them to use social media as a mean of communication with customers while most of them are exposed to using social networking sites and other online channels almost every day. Since these participants are quite active on social media, therefore, it would be interesting to see whether peers discussions on social media platforms and other online channels have influence on them. Names, occupations, age and number of hours spent on internet/day are as follows:

Table 4.1 Participant’s Biography

Name	Occupation	Age	Number of hours on internet/ day
Sucharee Sinthukiow	Intensive English language program teacher at Ekamai International School	27	5
Varut Aphimanchidakul	M-Commerce Team Lead & iOS Developer - Asia Pacific at Allianz Global Assistance	24	6-8
Kodchapan Kaewprom	Administration Officer at Aeronautical Radio of Thailand Ltd.	30	2
Kamolporn Tangboriboonsuk	Resource Executive at Tesco Lotus	29	5
Yoskorn Sethichaiyen	Strategic Planning Engineer at Pacific Pipe company limited	24	3-4

Table 4.1 Participant's Biography (cont.)

Nuttapon Jitngamaphong	Project Manager at AdYim	24	12
Theeradej Raktaprachit	Assistant Manager at A E Asia Co., Ltd.	26	4- 8
Withoon Hardat	Business Analyst at NetSol Technologies	29	3
Saint Thura Aung	Administrative and marketing officer at Saint John's International School	22	Every 10 minutes
Tidarat Ounwattananukul	Senior Account Executive at iSentia Online Intelligence Business	26	1-2
Phattanun Chiemprapha	Research Executive at Acorn marketing and research consultant	28	2
Vorapol Athayu	Jewelry business	29	10 minutes interval
Kamornrath Tangsirikit	IT officer at Sanook.com	24	>12
Preeyanan Rueangwarawat	Derivative Sales at CIMB	25	4
Amita Srimokla	Marketing Manager at Nescafé Dolce Gusto Thailand	25	6

All participants interviewed graduated from university with bachelor's degree and some with master's degree while the other are in the middle of pursuing a master degree. The age range from 22- 30 years old and the average income was about THB40, 000 per month.

4.3 Thai consumers' online behavior

The results of interview were explored to understand the behavior of Thai consumers online such as identification with peers and interests, peer communications, product involvement and purchase intentions. The results interviews were shown as below:

Identification with peers

Most informants opined to use social media to be connected with friends and seek for new interesting information's. Significantly, according to the interview, connection with friends and following interests were stated together when informants were asked about why they used social media. Social Media according to informants are mostly used to connect with friends, for leisure purpose, update themselves with the latest information's, research purpose, entertainment and out of boredom.

“I use social media every day. I use it during my free time so the number of hours maybe up to 4 hours a day. I use it because I want to know some feeds update from my friends or maybe because now a days the contents are moving online too so I can get update for my interests fast.” – Participant 10

According to the interview, there are several ways consumers can identify with peer groups because there are several online channels that are information heavy. Participants listed liking Facebook Fan Pages of the products they are interested in or conduct Google search to see if opinions and thoughts about a certain product is shared. Some netizens identified with peer groups by subscribing to their interests YouTube gurus accounts, for instance, Laura in the Kitchen and Make up by Eman so as to get the latest videos about new dishes or make up products that are worth investing in. Other consumers follow their interests by watching vlogs, or reading news. Some of them even mentioned to follow gamers specific sites such as

game reviews to keep abreast with all the latest games released in market. Hence, consumers are constantly looking for channels to build interests. The results agrees with the research conducted by Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, (2012) that consumers would seek a way to identify with peers groups but did not go on to explain the mechanism. Therefore, from analyzing the interview, it is evident that consumers do not restrict themselves from following their interests to only a channel, but takes account of several online sources to gather information thereby allowing them to identify with their peer groups. Hence, consumers are able to socialize more, gain information's and identify with peers more easily due to boom of social media, instant messaging and availability of secondary information. (Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, (2012)

Peer Communications

The result of this study agrees with previous research study, "Social Media Peer Communications and Impacts on Purchase Intentions: A Consumer Socialization Framework" wherein, Thai consumers have the same behavior with that of Chinese consumers when it comes to being influenced by peer communications in the virtual world. Therefore, peers is identified as an important agent. Most of the Thai consumers do very much regard peer communications as an important factor while making purchase decisions. Also, when consumers are interested in a product or service, they "identify with the group" by liking Facebook fan pages or follow their interests closely on online channels such as forums, blogs, news, website and YouTube. This result concludes that digital-word- of - mouth plays a vital role in stirring consumers' purchase interests.

The study also agrees with Social Media Marketing: The Next Generations of Business Engagement by Dave Evans and Jake Mckee, Social Feedback Loop where there is an on-going loop in the virtual world, right from when a consumer use a product and talk about it on social network. This is also one of the reasons why Thai consumers prefer searching for information online because they are exposed to both positive and negative aspects about the product they are interested in, giving them a clearer picture about the product or service. Thai consumers also agreed to take such reviews and comments more seriously and are considered to be more credible than

what brands marketing message as they believe that these reviewers actually used the product and are real consumers voicing opinions, therefore, the information written or spoken in the form of blogs, reviews and comments are more trustworthy. Most of the interviewees confirmed that peer communications online or the “talk phrase” in Dave Evan’s Social Feedback Loop is very important, as it becomes the gateway for purchase intents.

The results revealed that participants considered peer communications such as reviews, comments, blogs etc. to be significantly important while researching for high involvement product due the characteristics of high involvement product as it involves more risks and are purchased less often. Hence, a considerable amount of time is required during the research phrase. Low involvement product on the other hand involves less risk, is purchased more frequently and sometimes on impulse or a purchase done out of habit, hence, the time required to conduct research is little to non. This results agrees with the research conducted by The Science of Sharing which found out that American consumers tend to search from information heavy sites when considering to purchase a high involvement product, whereas, consumers looking for low involvement can be triggered to purchase a product by simply scrolling through their Facebook page or sites that are not information heavy. This study co-incised with Thai consumers online behavior where the usage behavior is identified as the following:

High involvement product – Information heavy channels such as forums, blogs, and extensive comments preferred during decision-making process. Peer communications is considered to be significantly important, therefore, creating a positive correlation between higher price to dependence on peer communications and online research.

Low involvement product – Low involvement product can be divided in to 2 categories as the following:

Category 1: Less information heavy channels such as Facebook, Instagram. Peer communications is considered to have a low impact when making purchase decisions, therefore, creating a correlation between lower prices of product or service to less dependency on peer communications and online research. Example: clothes, jewelries, low cost games.

Category 2: Specific information channel sites related to the product. Channels such as Facebook fan pages, blogs and forums such as Pantip.com and YouTube are taken when searching for information. Peer communications are considered to have a moderate to high impact when making purchase decisions. For example, products such as cosmetics.

Finally, the result shows that the way people use online channels depend on the type of product s/he is researching. For high involvement product consumers tend to rely more on channels such as review sites, search and product websites. This behavior could be connected in a way because the aforementioned channels tend to be information heavy than social networking sites. Consumers used these channels because product quality is their top priority; therefore, a considerable amount of time is spent on these sites to ensure that once the product or service is purchased, it meets the requirements and expectations of consumers.

Peer communications as a source of information

Further, informants attached peer communications as an important factor when researching for products or service for most interviewees. However, there are limitations to this. Most of the participants find peer communication as very important when researching for high involvement products. This is not only because high involvement product means more risk but because consumers have limited product knowledge about it. For instance, one interviewee mentioned to rely on peer communications because she wanted to learn more about house refinancing. As a result of which, she did her research on forums such as Pantip and learnt more about MLR rates and which banks offered low interests loan rates. This suggests that peer communications is important to those consumers who have little product knowledge and would like to get in-depth insights. Below is a sample quote from the interview when a participant was asked on how peer communications are useful when seeking for information's:

“It has now been 3 years that I took house finance loan from Thanachart bank and now they allow customers to refinance which basically means I can pay lesser interests. However, I do not have much knowledge on how to calculate MLR or

all those housing rates. So for that purpose I would go to forums such as Pantip and read people's experience and comments." – Participant 15

Online peer communications is not only restricted to whether a consumer ends up purchasing or not purchasing a product but it can also be used as a source of information. Most of the time consumers may only have the intention to research for something whereby this knowledge could be used to purchase another product a service. For instance, a participant mentioned to be interested in travelling; therefore, she would read opinions and thoughts of others on sites such as Trip Adviors to see if travelling to a certain destination is appealing.

"If the reviews say like it's an amazing place to go then yes, that should be my next destination." – Participant 9

Peer communication is not important for those who have adequate product knowledge

On the other hand, consumers who feel that they already have enough knowledge about a product, whether it is a high involvement product, do not rely on peer communications because they believe to know more. Below is a sample quote from the interview when a participant was asked on how significant were online peer communications in making him/her purchase a product:

"It influences me quite a bit. If I do not have any knowledge about a particular product, then reviews will help me a lot. But if I have knowledge about a product and know as much as what people are saying on the internet then I will not consider reviews that much." – Participant 8

Purchase Intentions

Informants distinguished purchased intentions after reading reviews and how significant reviews are depending on the type of product or service (low vs high involvement). The purchase intentions of product depended on what typed of product were being involved. For instance, peer communications do have have more importance and therefore, leading to a purchase for riskier products or products that consumers have little knowledge of. However, peer communications on the other was said to have little impact of consumers purchase intentions because the price of the

product tends to be low. Therefore, the more the product is risky, high investment and consumers have low knowledge about, peer communications is most likely to be unlikely to cause consumers to purchase a product. Conversely, the less risky the product and less pricey, peer communications have very little impact to cause consumers to purchase a product.

“Yes because if the product is important to me and it’s quite expensive, for example, if someone comes and say “hey this not good as how it has been advertised” then I would probably stop and think before. But if the product is quite cheap and I came across someone’s comment that “it sucks” then maybe I still purchase it because it is not that expensive to try.” – Participant 14

Table 4.2 Findings

Theory and Concept	Results
Identification with peer groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers have different ways of identifying with peer groups. Consumers identify by following news, subscribing to blogs, channels or liking Facebook fan pages to get latest updates.
Peer Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer communications play a vital role when making purchase decisions. (Xia Wang, Chunling Yu and Yujie Wei, (2012). • Peer communications tend to be more valued and when researching for high involvement products. • Peer communications are a source of informations • Peer communications could have little to no importance for products that consumers already have adequate amount of knowledge. This is applicable for both low and high involvement products. • Consumers tend to believe what peers communicate more than what marketers advertise because thoughts and opinions of peers are seen to be more sincere.
Purchase intents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumers may decide to purchase or discard purchase intentions depending on what peers communicate. • Purchase intentions could be triggered if opinions regarding the limitations of product is considered acceptable by

prospective consumer.

Table 4.2 Findings (cont.)

- Peer communications has little impact on consumer purchase intents for low involvement products because the price of the product tends to be low.
- Peer communications is the gateway for purchase intents.

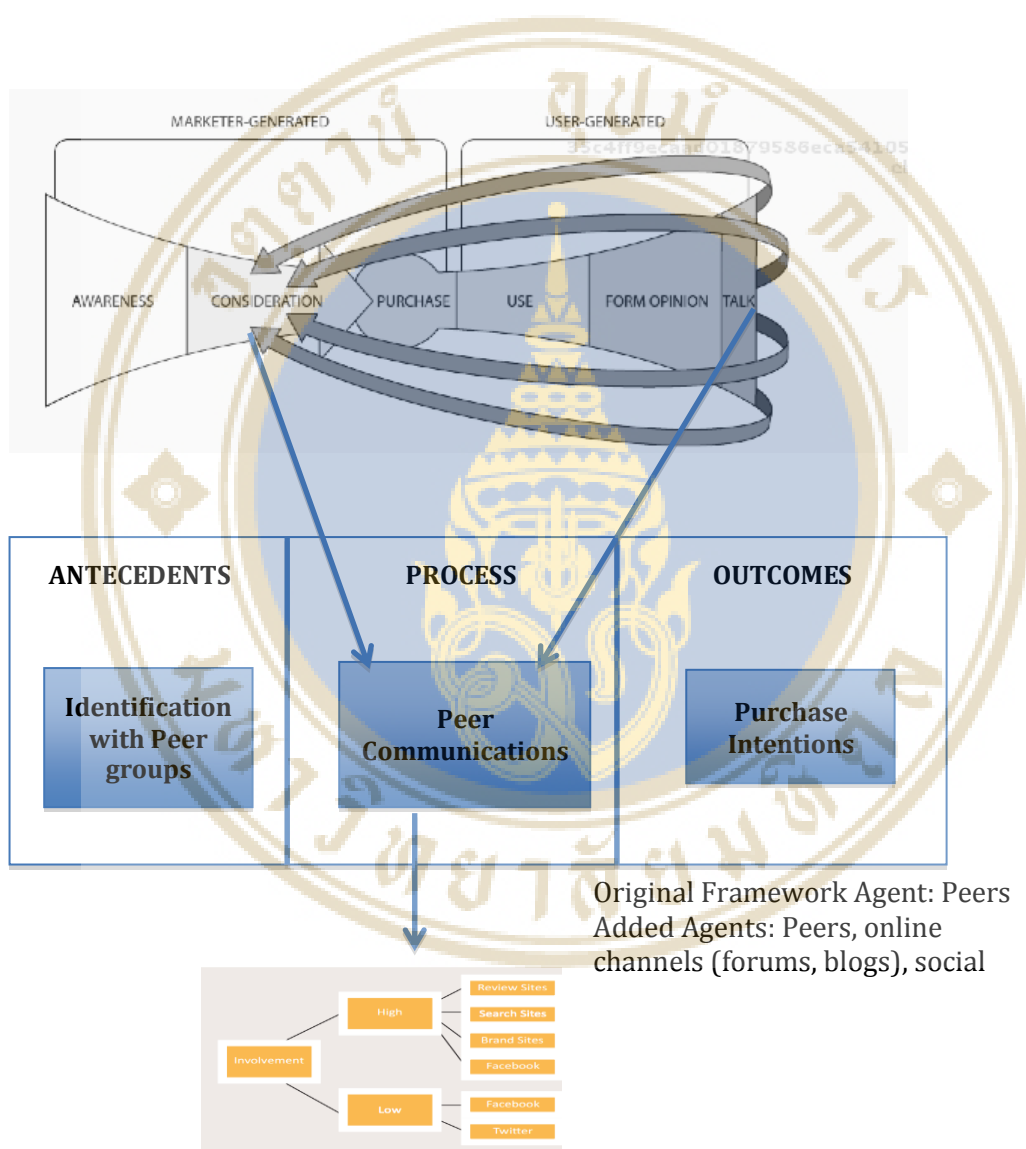


Figure 4.1 Linkage between Frameworks

The researcher has found a linkage between Framework in Figure 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 wherein, the consideration and talk phrase in Framework in Figure 2.2 is

connected to Framework in Figure 2.3's Peer communications. This is because during the talk and consideration phase, peer communications is the main agent for sourcing information's and is the gateway to purchase intentions. Peer communications in Framework in Figure 2.3 is also connected to Framework in Figure 2.4 in the sense that the weight of peer communications may depend and vary on the types of product or services a consumer is researching. For instance, if consumers were researching for low involvement products, peer communications may not be an important agent. However, if the product being researched involves high risks then peer communications is very important.

To sum up, in this study, the consideration phase is the most important central link between the Social Web and Marketing. This connection of social media based marketing, where conversations between consumers based on experiences carry further and with greater trust than traditional media. Hence, social media plays a significant role in marketing where the conversations that take place on the Social Web determines the impact of your product and services be it positive or negative. These conversations phrase involves peer communications, which plays a vital role in stirring purchase intents. For several years, media have spent huge amount of money on building product awareness where it drives demands and point- of- sales. However, marketers have overlooked the importance of consideration process through which consumers evaluate purchase options (Dave Evans and Jake Mckee, 2008).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS

This study examined to understand Thai consumers online behavior with all participants chosen in Bangkok, Thailand and whether online peer communications had effects to purchase decisions from qualitative perspective. The purpose of this study was (1) How important are online peer discussions in influencing Thai consumers purchase decisions?

5.1 Conclusion

Research Question: *How important are online peer discussions in influencing Thai consumers purchase decisions?*

A thematic interpretation of the data revealed that the factors influencing Thai consumers to use social media were to search for information, stay connected, and follow interests closely.

The findings agree with the main paper, Social Media Peer Communications and Impacts on Purchase Intentions: A Consumer Socialization Framework, wherein, peer communications have a lot of importance in steering consumer purchase interests. Peer communications is very important for Thai consumers when considering purchasing products. All interviewees voiced that online channels are the main source to seek information and opinions and thoughts of other consumers because it tends to be more credible and holds more weight than what marketers advertise. Because social media has triggered the platform growth of consumers' reviews and recommendations, therefore, consumers tend to be more influenced by how others perceive a brand. People are no longer inert consumers to traditional marketing, campaigns and advertisements. Instead people are now more focused on what others have to say via a non-traditional media sources in the form of

reviews, comments on blogs, forums and sites such like YouTube. (The Science of Sharing, N.D.).

The results also agrees with Dave Ewans with Jake Mckee (2008) "Social Media Marketing, The Next Generation of Business Engagement study that the Social Feedback Loop that opinions and talks of previous consumers in the forms of reviews, comments have high influence in the consideration phrase for the next sets of potential buyers. This means that consumers rely on information's provided by others and decide on those opinions on whether they wish to purchase a product simply because consumers believe peers opinions to be much more credible than brands advertise which was said to advertise only their good traits. The result also agrees with The Science of Sharing wherein, the degree to which a consumer relies on peer communications depends on the type of product s/he is researching. Therefore, peer communications is more important when researching for high involvement products while peer communication has less to no importance (depending on the product and consumers familiarity of the product) when consumers consider purchasing low involvement goods.

5.2 Recommendation

Although the findings of this study are market specific, it has important implications in providing marketer with a greater understanding of Thai online consumer behavior. Consumer consideration during the purchase funnel would offer brands more effective tools for accurately diagnosing the needs and wants of the target consumer to which they market.

Moreover, by knowing how consumers evaluate the aspects during purchasing decision, marketers can perhaps influence the development of future criteria. A greater understanding of Thai consumers' online values would provide a point of departure for predicting behavioral intention. Marketers and retailers could focus their social media marketing strategies on these values; thereby better suiting that, which motivates their consumers.

In summary, if the product is high involvement such as smartphone then marketers need to focus on people who value the quality of products and services on reviews sites and forums that can be easily found through search. However, if brands are focused on fashionable items such as clothing's and jewelry, using social networking sites should be sufficient in stirring consumers' interests that are involved in such platforms. Furthermore, brands such as cosmetics should consider using reviews sites and YouTube to market their product by again, focusing on influential individual related to that industry to make reviews on products. Hence, brands must design effective social strategy depending on the nature of their products and the target groups.

Also brands should be aware that consumers are talking about their products both positively and negatively on the internet, by sharing their opinions as well as both good and bad experiences with the products. These experiences and opinions hold far more weight and value, and are considered trust worthier, than any information provided by marketers, therefore, brands need to keep an eye on the conversations which can allow them to take necessary actions quick.

This also leads to business opportunities for Online Intelligence Companies, such as Brandtology, iSentia and Social Bakers to monitor consumers' conversations online and produce analytical reports to brands in order to help brands better understand their clients.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The findings of this study provide insight into the importance of consideration stage in the purchase funnel phrase, which was highly impacted by reviews and comments for high involvement products. A few participants considered comments and reviews to be equally important while researching for low involvement product, however, a few other deemed peer communications to have no impact when considering purchasing a low involvement product. There are limitations that could be addressed in future research. This study was focused only Bangkok, a city of Thailand and interview questions designed did not take difference in industries of products and services in account. For instance, participants weighted the importance

of comments and reviews differently for clothing's and cosmetics even though both are considered to be a low involvement product. Also the study could be further enhanced if we can identify the characteristics of the person and categorize them in to groups such as, do they use social media to simply seek for information? Do consumers take action (purchase a product) after researching for information? Even though demography plays an important role, psychograph and consumer personalities may also play a vital role in determining one's online consumer behavior.

Also the sample size was only 15 participants, which was small and probably could not represent population of all Thai online consumers. It would be fruitful to expand the sample size by taking the research to a quantitative approach, taking in to consideration the difference of sample size in demographics such as age group, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, Generation Z, occupation to investigate the differences in other aspects of usage of social media as well as difference in age group and interests.

The time spent on this study was limited to 6 weeks and interviewed only once while, online trends of consumers could possibly change over time. Willingness to participate in a depth-interview was also another restriction. Several participants requested to wrap up the interview within 10 minutes. Future research is needed to examine consumer decision-making with regard to variety of online channels, which reflects different level of influence depending on the product type involved. For example, when researching a high involvement product like smartphone or cars, consumers are more likely to be influenced by review sites.

Hence, for brands to be aware of the path that consumers take to make decisions when researching online is important to influence brands positive return on investment. Being aware and taking corrective actions could act as a positive magnifier leading towards force multiplier effects of recommendation, loyalty and purchase. This study provides a much-needed qualitative foundation for understanding the Thai online consumer behavior; however, more empirical research is needed which focuses on theories and applied to the decision-making process specifically with regard to industry specific products and services and the impact of social media.

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APPENDIX A: Interviews

Participant 1. Withoon Hardat, 29

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

Very often, approximately 3 hours a day. I go on social media to pass time during the morning hours, lunchtime and before going to bed. I go on social media to search for information, keep myself updated as well in terms of what my friends are doing and if there is any new interesting articles I can read on the internet.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

Very less. I only read forums if I want to find out some information or reviews about a particular product I am interested in.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

By information I think I would break down in to 2 parts. First is about the specifications or the product information itself. So here I would go to various websites because some website might have some details that others might not have which will give me a complete picture of what the product is all about. Second piece of information is about the reviews that people post after using the product, which I am interested in.

So in a way you can gather information through the reviews and what people talk about?

Yes, exactly.

How by going on blogs and forums or Facebook can you learn more about the product?

I highly regard reviews as a very good source of information if I am looking for a product that is really expensive or a one-time purchase. For instance, if I have interests

to purchase a smartphone, I would really go deep in to the product information and compare the specifications from one point to another. And more importantly I would also go into reviews sites to read the reviews of people who have used this phone before. But if it were some commodity product for example, a computer table I would go buy it without searching for more information.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online in influencing you to be involved with the product?

Well, online reviews are very impactful for me. But if it also comes from peers or somebody I know then it adds more credibility. For instance, if they are saying a product is good then I really do believe it.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

I think 100%. If it is especially a one –time purchase or a long term purchase then I definitely I would not purchase anything without going through the reviews.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Yes, very sure because brands will always advertise good things and say good things about the products. There is no brand that will talk about the disadvantages of the product. But if the customers in their reviews can really tell the other side of the products that we would have never come across or are be aware of. But even within the reviews, I would not believe all the good things written because the marketing department of could manipulate this the brands. But overall, I think that both positive and negative reviews and blogs can give me a greater picture of the brands I am interested in.

Participant 2. Sucharee Sinthukiow, 27

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

Every day, approximately 5 hours per day. I use it for work, entertainment and for research purpose.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week?

Maybe twice per week if I see interesting topics.

What do you mean by interesting topics?

The topic that I like such as Liposuction so if I see articles surrounding this then I would read.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, in this case Liposuction, how would you seek information for it?

By going to websites such as Pantip, they write forums about Liposuction and I like to read from there because people come and share their real life experiences and a lot of information's are provided, so I like to read them.

How by going on forums and blogs as you mentioned can you learn more about a product or service?

By reading, researching and going through different bloggers to gain in depth information. Reading again and again because you will be investing a lot so you have to go in depth and read and research about it.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online in influencing you to be involved with the product?

It is very important and I give it 100% for making me be involved with Liposuction because I think they give the real life experience so you can follow through them and get to know more information about the doctors, fees and services. So overall, it does help a lot.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

It depends. If I am looking for Liposuction then yes, the reviews do have a lot of influence because I have to find in depth information and research about it as it involves with my life and figure. But if for example I am looking to purchase a lipstick then I would not look for in depth information. Perhaps I may read only 1 or 2 reviews. For instance, I have a warm skin tone so I will search which brand and which color will suit me the most and purchase it. Also YouTube, they also have a lot of make up artist these days. So you can just look up their reviews, see their skin tone color and which lipstick color they use so you can follow them.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Yes because brand would only advertise the positive points of their products. But with peers, both negative and positive opinions are shared so you really know in depth about what you need to know. So I would 100% believe what peers are discussing and only 50% of what brands advertise themselves to be because of course these brands have to heavily advertise themselves as they want to sell their products well. But on the other hand, consumers they really buy with their own money so obviously they would tell both negative and positive aspects of the products and how do they feel about the product.

So from this interview can I conclude that peers communication is an important aspect when deciding to purchase a product?

Absolutely 100% true.

Participant 3. Kamolporn Tangborinboonsuk, 29

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

Maybe around 5 hours a day. I use it when I have free times or at times when I want to search for some information.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

Maybe 5 times a week. I read it because sometimes these articles are shared on Facebook and are shown on my newsfeed or sometimes my friends share on Facebook so I read it.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

Currently I am interested in the iPhone 6 so I like to search for information about it.

How would you seek information for iPhone 6?

Actually the iPhone 6 is not launched yet so when they have articles about the product development or articles comparing latest smartphones then I try to search for it. And mostly I get my information from Facebook because the new function allows users to share and seed articles, websites, YouTube videos and news articles from various sources.

How by going on Facebook as you mentioned, can you learn more about a product or service?

I think that most of the knowledge that I gain is from the comment because many people can share the technical aspects and suggest you what is good and bad.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online in influencing you to be involved with the product?

I think it is very interesting because when they comment they share their real experience as a consumer perspective. Sometimes bloggers can fake articles if they

were sponsored by brands so I feel that comments made by consumers are the real deal.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

I think it is very important for me because when I read it, they influenced me.

So reviews are important for high investment product such as iPhone but how about products such as clothes that are selling on Facebook? Do you think that reviews are still significant in this case?

I think comments in this case is also important because if I am purchasing from a new shop they I would definitely seek for opinions and comments from other customers whether is it a reliable shop, will the clothes be delivered after payment is made? Hence, opinions are still important.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Yes because as I mentioned, brands have to promote themselves, however, comments and opinions may not consist of only the positive aspect.

How by reading the reviews as you mentioned, can you learn more about the product?

I can learn both the negative and positive sides of the product and what consumers who have already used this product think about it.

And that is important to you?

Yes.

Participant 4. Kamornrath Tangsirikit, 23

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

I use it 24/7 because I like to connect with friends and look at what they update.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

Once a week as I tend to read what my friends share on Facebook.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

Yes, I am interested in computer mouse. So when I am interested in any product I would just search and find information about it via Google or through the brands website. And once I select the mouse that I like then I would search for reviews about it.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online to influence your involvement with the product?

Not much because if I really want that product then others opinions would not matter but if I am hesitant about a product and cannot decide which product to purchase in this case the computer mouse then I would seek for reviews and go for what other people suggests.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

It depends on the product. If for instance the product is very expensive such like the technological gadgets, then the reviews are important. However, if it were clothes or fashion then reviews are not very significant because it depends on my preference. However, I would consider reviews to be important when searching for which restaurants to visit.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Absolutely. This is because brand will advertise only the good things. However, comments have several angles to it, which can be both good and bad. Sometimes companies or brands may pay them to say good things so it really depends on the end consumers on what they wish to believe in.



Participant 5. Kodchapan Kaewprom, 30

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

Every day, approximately 2 hours on Facebook. I use it because Facebook has a community which I can connect to for instance, the community that is interested in stock market fan page. So I can get updated information every minute and hours in real time which is faster than searching on websites.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

Actually I read financial blog every day because I follow the stock news in the market so I have to monitor it every hour.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

I am interested in Condominium at the moment. I am trying to look for a condominium in down town Sathorn or Silom road. I keep abreast with the latest information or updates of condominium by entering community web board such as Pakard web board or DD Property because if I want to buy a property, the value is quite high so I need to know in details before making a purchase decision. And I can learn more details about the property through comments, for instance, is Sansiri condominiums good or what other options do I have?

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online to influence your involvement with the product?

I have to find the webboard or the website that is trustable and believable because when I read their comments I would like to believe that the insights given is relevant and true.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

In my opinion, I think it depends on the products. For instance, if it were clothing's or jewelry that women like to buy then maybe reviews would not be that significant because they just buy because they want to and it has nothing to do with others opinions.

But if you are looking for a car, smartphone or property then more information and reviews are important to make purchase decision because it involves a lot of money to purchase these goods. Also let's take the case of condominium, problems may arise if you purchased a room near the garage room or the location of the room is not good. So by reading the articles and reviews, I can learn new information that I never knew before. So I learnt that I should not purchase a room near the garage disposal room from reading these reviews.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

I will believe people comments more than what brand advertise because advertisement can go beyond the truth but for me I think it is important to hear the voice and opinions of consumers who have experienced using those products before.

Participant 6. Varut Aphimanchindakul, 24

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

Everyday, approximately 6 – 8 hours. I use it to chat with friends and read news and to browse for goods online and maybe purchase it.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

Almost everyday. I usually go to Pantip.com to read on people's views on society.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

I might look at some chilling place at night such as from channels like Chillpainai.com. So by browsing through website or connecting on Facebook community by liking the restaurant Facebook fan pages, I can the latest recommendations on my newsfeed. I can learn more about the product because mostly people come and write new comments and most of them can recommend places of where to go, they give the ratings, they recommend the menu, the price of the food so from there you can directly have an idea of which new place you would like to visit next.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online to influence your involvement with the product?

As I said, because people leave comments it means that they have been to that place already so they know what kind of food it is and how chill the place is so from there obviously you would be more likely to go by reading their comments.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

I think it is very important because people they have used the product, they know how it is. They wouldn't just advertise it or just market about it. So obviously, it is very important. For example, when you buy car, you can just go into any car website or forums and read people's recommendations. Obviously they will review all the car

brands but you can choose which car brand you like, go in to their Facebook page, blogs, Instagram or any forums where you can read people's comments and learn more about not product and not directly go to the manufacturer to seek for information but you can actually know how real people who use the car feels about it.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Yes it is more credible because brands will just advertise and do marketing but people's comments they know the look and feel of the product, they have used it before so it's much more important.

You mentioned that for when looking to purchase cars, reviews are quite important, but can you give an example of those products where you think reviews is not that significant?

Maybe the clothing brands where after you see the product you can maybe directly buy it you don't have to go read comments you just buy what you like. But for cars you don't buy it everyday.

So you mean to say that for those products that are expensive and have a huge investment, reviews and peers communications are significant?

Yes, because you invest only one time.

Participant 7. Tidarat Ounwattananukul, 26

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

I use it every day, approximately 1 or 2 hours. I use it to update myself with news, information's, and latest events and also chat with friends.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

I think every day. I would like to know new product for my lifestyle such as cosmetics and trend of fashion.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

Actually I am interested in cars. I keep myself updated with information by searching on Google and follow posts and comments on forum website such as Pantip or some automotive blogs to find the information of the car I would like to buy and weight the pros and cons of the cars I like.

How by going to the forums and blog sites can you learn more about the product?

By going to these forums and blogs, I can learn more about the product for example, sometimes I gain new information regarding the after sales service which I was not aware of before so I can learn from someone that used it and this information can help make my decision process be easier.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online to influence your involvement with the product?

I always read comments for example if it is positive comments so I can make sure that the product that I will buy for example BMW, can make me trust this brand more than before. But if the brand gained more negative comments then I can learn about it and see whether I can accept the negative aspects or not.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

I think the online review is very important for our lifestyle now because we will share our own information and experience and we can learn more about a product that we cannot learn from the sales person or friends but we can get very useful information directly from the person who used it by sharing their experience through reviews and comments. For instance, I follow Shiseido Thailand Facebook fan page and Instagram. By doing so, I can get the latest information about the product. For example, if Shiseido launched a new product so I will gain the latest information. I also think that social media is quite important for several brands in various industries because it can help businesses be more engaging with the end consumers and you can obtain more accurate information.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Actually my personality is as such, that if I like a product then I would purchase it regardless of what people say for example, clothing's items. If several of my friends buy it and it's the latest trend but if I do not like it then I would not purchase. I would rather opt to purchase the clothes I like rather than follow trends. Overall, I think social media is good. You can learn from direct and indirect experience from each other but anyway I think that our own preference is the most important and social media will help to make purchase decisions easier in some case.

Participant 8. Theeradej Raktaprachit, 26

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

Everyday. Approximately 4-8 hours. I use it to keep myself updated.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

I think every day. I read it because I subscribe to the things I am interested in and I want to keep up with all those things. For example, video games and gadgets.

From which channel do you gain information about games or gadgets?

Facebook, websites and YouTube.

And how by going to these forums and blogs can you learn more about the products?

Because these channels have reviews where they play certain footage of the certain video games and suggest you whether it is worth buying or not.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online regarding games to influence your involvement with the product?

Sometimes yes and sometimes no. If that video game is launched by a big company, I will always buy that video game no matter what people say. But, if that game is so – so rate or I am not sure whether it is going to be good or not, then I will read the reviews first and then decide.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

It influences me quite a bit. If I do not have any knowledge about a particular product, then reviews will help me a lot. But if I have knowledge about a product and know as much as what people are saying on the internet then I will not consider reviews that much. Like, if a gadget that I keep reading the news about it and I know its features and some people say that it's not that good or something like that but I know more

stuffs than what they wrote on the internet or something, I will not consider their opinions very much.

If I ask you to compare between a high and low involvement product, how much weight or significance are reviews for these two types of products?

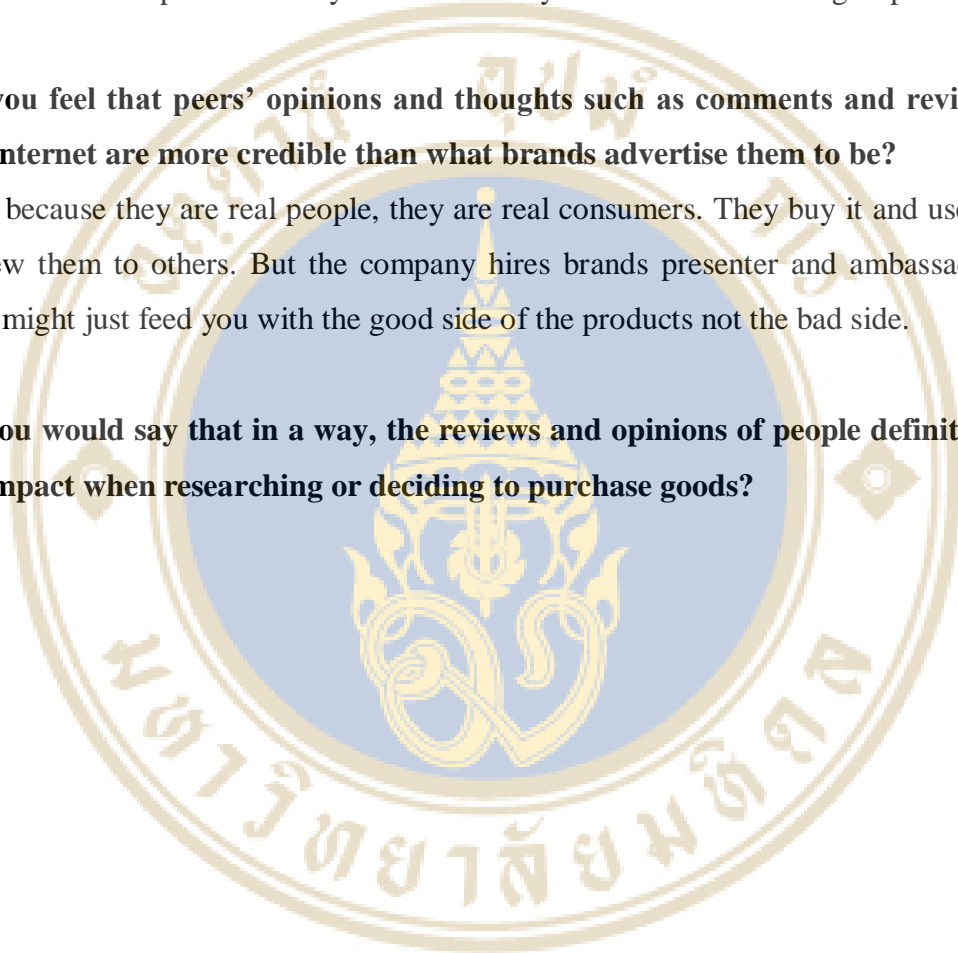
I give high priority to for high involvement product and it depends on price as well because if it is expensive then you have to study it first before deciding to purchase it.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Yes, because they are real people, they are real consumers. They buy it and use it and review them to others. But the company hires brands presenter and ambassadors so they might just feed you with the good side of the products not the bad side.

So you would say that in a way, the reviews and opinions of people definitely has an impact when researching or deciding to purchase goods?

Yes.



Participant 9. Saint Thura Aung, 22

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

Everyday. I check my Facebook like every 10 minutes. So quite often. I use it to follow news and pages and if I want to keep myself updated then I just check them.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

Not via the website but from social media. For example, Bangkok Post, I do not go to their website but I just check it via Facebook on my newsfeeds. It is easier that way. I read it because I just like to keep myself updated.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

I am interested in Travelling. I keep myself updated by normally going to Google or Tripadvisor and read reviews of places or I can just ask my friends around who travel.

How by going on Tripadvisor can you learn more about the destinations and where to travel?

Yes, because some people have a very good long reviews so I can normally just go through it and see whether it is a good place or not.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online regarding games to influence your involvement with the product?

If the reviews say like it's an amazing place to go then yes, then that should be my next destination.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

Quite often, I would say mostly everytime. Like if I don't know the product. Well, it depends on what products. If I don't really know the product then I might ask around or read reviews but if I already know about the products then I do not need reviews. It also depends.

Can you give an example of an actual product that reviews do not really impact you?

For example, I heard a lot about Bali. Some people say that it's a very nice place while some people say that it's not very nice then, I need to do the research. Not only on Facebook, but also Google and Tripadvisor to see what the majority and minority of reviews are good and then I will decide after that.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

I think so yes, I agree with this. Because the reviews are from people who have had actually used it and advertising, they won't say that the products are not good. It doesn't make sense because they are advertising their product and then if you see the review then you really know that what people have been using and then the reviews are mostly or most likely correct.

So you would say that in a way, the reviews and opinions of people definitely has an impact when researching or deciding to purchase goods?

Yes, definitely have impact.

Participant 10. Nuttapon Jitngamphong, 24

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

I use social media every day. I use it during my free time so the number of hours maybe up to 4 hours a day. I use it because I want to know some feeds update from my friends or maybe because now a days the contents are moving online too so I can get update for my interests fast.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

I can say daily. I read it because I am interested about technology and technological development happens daily.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

I am interested in new technology product. I keep myself updated by reading from the technology blog because latest updates would be written in these technology blogs.

So how by going on the technology blog can you learn more about the new technology?

Usually the news of new technology comes from the company and the blog is able to declare the benefit of each technology so if we read it then we can know what they can do in exactly in customer point of view.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online regarding games to influence your involvement with the product?

Not much because I think that when consumers search for a particular product they already have intentions to buy but if just search for some negative feedbacks or limitations of products.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

I am just looking for the limitation of the product and if it is acceptable then I will buy it anyway because if the product is really bad then I don't want it.

If I ask you to compare between high involvement and low involvement product which one do you think has more weight on reviews and comments when searching for information?

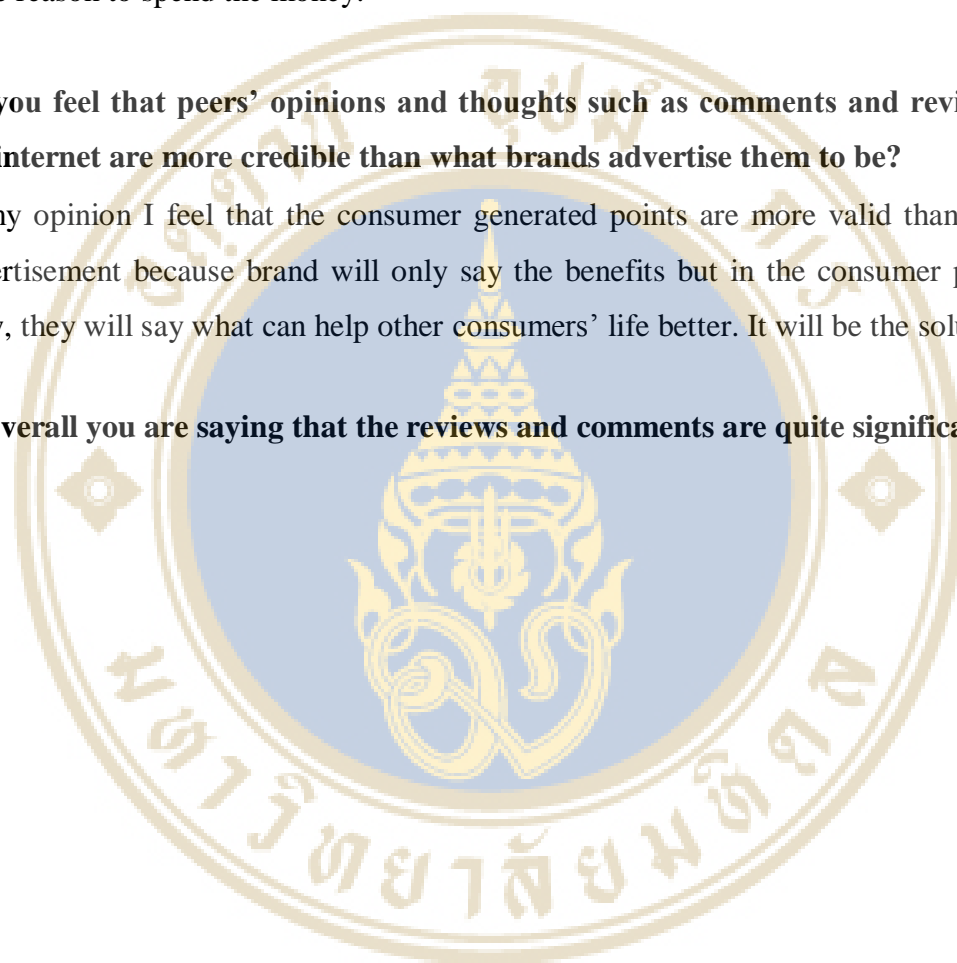
I think high involvement product because with the high involvement product you need more reason to spend the money.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

In my opinion I feel that the consumer generated points are more valid than brands advertisement because brand will only say the benefits but in the consumer point of view, they will say what can help other consumers' life better. It will be the solution.

So overall you are saying that the reviews and comments are quite significant?

Yes.



Participant 11. Phattanun Chiemprapha, 28

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

Every day, around 2 hours per day. I use it for updating the fashion trends and to follow other marketing news because my job revolves around marketing, so I have to keep myself updated.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

I read 4 times a week. I read them because of I like to read comments and another thing is very funny and nice to read things that people are talking about online.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

I am interested in cosmetics. Actually I read on the blogs and websites Jeban and another website is Sanook and I follow them on Twitter and become a fan of cosmetics brands on Facebook.

How by you liking the Facebook fan page or reading the blogs can you learn more about the product?

I see another person comments when they use the product. How the product benefit can reach the objective and goal that they advertise. For example, for the eye cream they say that they can take the wrinkles off. So some of the eye cream cannot do as what they advertise but some can and a few eye cream can also give you brightness.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online regarding games to influence your involvement with the product?

Yes for the online. For the online mostly I read for the basic information and I love to talk with my friends or people around me about the product because some of them already used that so I would like to get insights of the product feedbacks.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

For online reviews if like, I can rank 1 to 10, I will rank around 6 -7 because I like to read opinions and comments.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Yes. I think for comments or opinions of the people is more reliable because they use the product already but for advertise it is how brands what to position their products.



Participant 12. Yoskorn Sethichaiyen, 24

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

Well, I am on social media every day I suppose. Well sometimes I get on every few minutes, sometimes it's about 1 or 2 hours but total a lot maybe 3- 4 hours a day. Well, I use because of boredom. It's a habit, checking out what's going on, seeing if there's anything news. It's just a habit. Nothing really.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

I don't read a lot of articles or forums. I mean in a week maybe 1 or 2. Most of the time I like to watch videos rather, when it comes to reviews. Political videos and science related videos, these are the types of things I like to watch such as Vlogs.

So why do you watch the Vlogs? What do you get out of it?

Well, many of them I follow are science related. So those are the things I am interested in, such as any update in the science community or any new discoveries? Sometimes I look in to some political things or religion mainly due to interests.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

Maybe service related to stock trading information's because I have started getting in to stock markets so any service related to that and banking as well.

So, how would you seek for information about banking or stocks?

To be honest, my main source of information will be through co-workers and new people I meet because I work with a lot of people who do have a lot of experience and they have a portfolio, so it comes from chat to chat. I do not look in to online for these matters. I prefer talking face- to - face with the people who have actual experience.

Can you share your experience about a product or service that you are interested in and you look for information online?

Oh well, when it comes to online I look for movies and games. I search a lot of them alone. When it comes to games, online review is important before I decide to buy a

new game. I like to go through the recent updates, to see if there are any upcoming new games. I do not do this anymore because I do not have a lot of time to play games but yes, when it comes to reviews, then games count for a lot.

Which channel do you visit to get the latest updates for games and how can you learn more about the product?

GameSpot for reviews, for updates and even articles on gaming and everything because everything is available on that platform. It also comes up on my newsfeeds on Facebook and I click in it. Usually it takes me to an article. So I look for top 10 games for the year.

Do you learn about new products through people's comments?

Yes, yes, yes. Those count too. Sometimes when you look at games you look at the rating. And these ratings also come through comments so most of the time you check the ratings and comments. But you can learn the nature of the game through comments as well. And if it is not your style then you do not go for it.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online regarding games to influence your involvement with the product?

Would say mainly when it comes to gaming I go for the rating first. Usually comments they just add a little bit knowledge. Sometimes when I find out that the game has really good ratings but I find out that the nature of the game is not my type such as sport gaming. But most of the times the main reviews and ratings really counts for the games I like.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

It depends really. If my main mode of information comes from online then it would matter a lot. But usually when I purchase a product, I will look for reviews through personal talk. Such as, when I am buying a phone suppose, when I pick a brand of the phone it comes from talking to other people who have used different brands. Then I come down to a decision whether I should buy it or not.

Apart from gaming, for which products do you feel that reviews are significant?

Well, any sort of electronics products such as television programs, gaming consoles, computer. These would be the type of products I will look for online reviews because the online would be a lot faster in updating and understanding new products.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

I would that also depends. First of all credibility yes, definitely, the comments from people are usually a lot more credible because it comes from experience. Whereas, the advertisement are what the brand image is trying to project to you to make you believe. So I would say that when it comes to credibility, comments and reviews weight a lot more.



Participant 13. Vorapol Athayu, 28

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

I use it on a weekly basis for Facebook. LINE I use it every day. Twitter not that much. Instagram only when I am bored. I would say I use these social media for 10 minutes interval. So I use it for 10 minutes, take a break and then come back, basically I use it frequently.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

Actually almost every day. I read it because they update it every day and there is always something new to read about. So I enter and see what they have to offer.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

I am interested in baseball gloves. Well, let me change the product. Actually baseball glove is something I really want right now but they don't sell in Thailand. Let's change it to online games. I keep track with the latest games by usually looking for information on reviews websites such as mmohot.com, moorpg.com those information website. The other part comes from the software. Where you can download the software and stream downloads from there. So the software notifies me when there are latest games are available for downloads.

How by visiting game websites or review sites can you learn more about the product?

First, from the website that I mentioned, I look for the quality for example, the graphics, the screen shots of the games and how it looks like in games. Does it look appealing or not? Next I would look at the features of the games.

So do you get intrigued by what others have to say? Because I think that gamers would come together to share opinions to particular sites?

Not on the site that much but it is my friends who play the games with me that will influence. If they don't like it but I like it then I would probably not play because we

are pretty tight group of people. There is like an unwritten rule that all of us would play the game together as we don't want to leave anybody out.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online regarding games to influence your involvement with the product?

Actually that reminds me of a game that my friends didn't want to play until I showed them the reviews from other people that this is actually "amazing"! And eventually they agreed to play. So it did not directly influence me but it helps me influence my arguments against my friends and influence them to play the game. After reading the comments and after they decided to download or purchase the game, when we start playing, I have to go extra mil to keep them entertained. So they would keep on playing with me otherwise we have to get rid of the game.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

In terms of games, it influence me only if the comments are valid or relates to some concern because the only reasons for online games to fun and entertaining to the mass is the economics in the game. If somebody raise the concern of the economy of the game, inside the game, for instance, when you trade something in the game, if it's not affective then I would be concerned. Hackers then I will be concerned and culture of people playing the game. Now we have a new terminology in Thai called "krian" and it is so annoying to play with "krian".

Do you think and reviews and comments are significant for low involvement product? Why or why not?

In terms of gaming, there are both high and low. Some games cost massive amount of money. Not only in the initial payment but you have to pay every month and I consider that to be very high involvement versus free games, those have no involvement at all. I can just download it and delete it the next day but still it wasted time to download.

In terms of high involvement, the games that I have to pay every month then yes, significantly because not only that the reviews and comments have to convince me but

it also has to help me argue and convince 10 other people. For low involvement, of course, we all can download it, waste 2 hours, play it, don't like it, delete it, whatever because it doesn't matter.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Oh yes definitely! I don't trust anything the company says anymore. Only the thing I would trust company is for the information of what the game can do. And then I will try the game and if it cannot do as promised then it's terrible.

The reason that I weight reviews more because they are the actual people playing the game just like me and it let me see the connection between him and me or her and me. It's not like the company is trying to sell something to me. So I feel that there is that connection in terms of being a player as well as higher degree of honesty. Though some comments are like, "This game sucks", period and then doesn't help me then of course I would ignore those types of comments but if you that it sucks because of A, B, C and D then I'll consider.

Participant 14. Preeyanan Rueangwarawat, 25

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

I use social media for contacting friends and if my friends use Facebook then I would definitely use one. The reason is that, in order to keep in touch with people and update myself.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

Maybe 4 to 5 times a week for reading the online reviews of products that I am interested to buy or services that I am interested to use in the future. So basically I read these forums to keep up with my interests and to learn more about it.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

If the product I am interested to buy is quite expensive, for example cars, then I would definitely read a lot of reviews before I make a purchase because it is an investment and the price is not that cheap. On the other hand, if I am going to buy a shampoo or lipstick, something that is not expensive then I may just only read a short review on what people think but I may not take it in too much consideration. For example, I may buy 2 to 3 shades of lipstick color but I am not going to read a lot about that.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online to influence your involvement with the product?

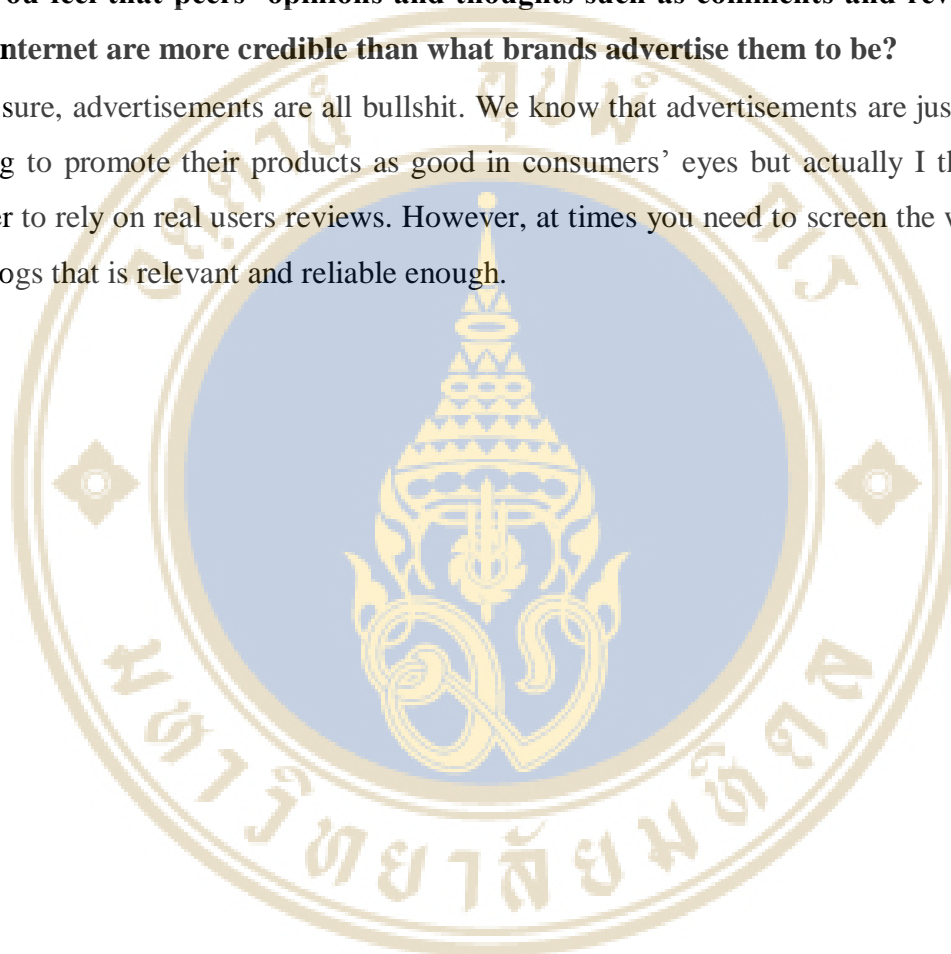
I think it is quite important but it is only important on the products that I am interested in for example, if the product is high involvement that needs a lot of consideration then social media will have a lot of impact but if the product is low involvement like the shampoo example I told you then it would not affect much.

Does this also apply with how online reviews influence you to actually purchase a product?

Yes because if the product is important to me and it's quite expensive, for example, if someone comes and say "hey this not good as how it has been advertised" then I would probably stop and think before. But if the product is quite cheap and I came across someone's comment that "it sucks" then maybe I still purchase it because it is not that expensive to try.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Yeh sure, advertisements are all bullshit. We know that advertisements are just brands trying to promote their products as good in consumers' eyes but actually I think it's better to rely on real users reviews. However, at times you need to screen the websites or blogs that is relevant and reliable enough.



Participant 15. Amita Srimokla, 25

How often do you use social media and why do you use it?

I use it every day because I like to search for latest information especially with new make-up products releases. I also like to keep with what's going on with my friends on Facebook. For instance, where have they been? Which restaurants did they visit so I can visit as well? Also I like to follow news or basically about anything that interests me at the moment.

How often do you read articles, blogs, and forums in a week and why do you read it?

I don't read blogs or forums that often. I only read them when I want to get thorough information. For instance, it has now been 3 years that I took house finance loan from Thanachart bank and now they allow customers to refinance which basically means I can pay lesser interests. However, I do not have much knowledge on how to calculate MLR or all those housing rates. So for that purpose I would go to forums such as Pantip and read people's experience and comments. Such as how did they calculate the house refinance? How do you know if it's worth refinancing? How much interests were they able to save after refinancing or are there any other expenses with house refinance? For instance I also learnt that government banking's offer cheaper refinance rates than commercial banks like SCB and Kasikornbank. So of course, now that I have this knowledge, all thanks to the reviewers, I will decide to refinance with Omsin Bank.

Let's say that you are currently interested in a product or service, how would you seek information for it?

There are many ways I can search for information. First I could ask my friends but normally I notice sometimes they don't know about it. However, the internet is very reliable. All you have to do is type in your queries and so many suggestions come up. For instance, I just recently bought a car, Ford Focus. I noticed that my car plates started to rust after 3 months on purchasing. Of course I panicked and was very worried. I thought something was wrong with my car. After asking my friends on

LINE, they told me that something may be wrong. So I decided to search on Pantip. To my surprise I learnt that it was normal for new cars to rust and that the rust would eventually go away. Reading those comments made me feel very happy. Also regarding the housing loan, I learnt the information from peers on Pantip. They are very helpful. Another way is I subscribe to channels on YouTube. I like to cook for my family, so I would subscribe to Laura in the Kitchen YouTube cooking star. In that way I can learn so much more about cuisines. Also after watching the YouTube video, I like to read other followers comments. Sometimes these people's comments are very helpful. For instance, they suggest drip olive oil on pasta noodles after it's cooked so that the pasta noodles would not stick with each other. I also follow my interests by liking Facebook Fan Pages such as Revlon Facebook and Maybelline Facebook to learn more about the latest product releases.

How likely or unlikely are peer communications online to influence your involvement with the product?

I think it definitely makes me more involved. At first I was afraid to go to bank to ask about house refinance because I had so little knowledge about it. I didn't know what to ask or didn't know what I should be careful of. But after reading peoples experience, suggestions, thoughts, I became more confident and more involved. And because of them I would not approach for house refinance from SCB because the interests is extremely high so now my main focus in on Omsin Bank.

How significant are online reviews in influencing you to purchase a product?

Well, very much. I remember subscribing to a beauty guru on YouTube. Her channel name is Makeup by Eman. I was so intrigued with all the products she used in her video. So I made a list of all those products and eventually end up buying I think HD foundation from Make Up Forever at Sephora because of her. Also I read peoples comments and they seem to rave the product so I gave it a try.

But I also think it depends on what products you are interested in. For instance if I see a shirt or earring on my Facebook and I really like it then in that context, peer communications would not have any impact on me. I think peers will only have

impact on products you have little knowledge about. If that's the case, like the housing loan, I do very much rely on them.

Do you feel that peers' opinions and thoughts such as comments and reviews on the internet are more credible than what brands advertise them to be?

Yes definitely. Advertisers tend to bullshit a lot these days. Showing off only positive sides of the products to compel you to purchase. But peer communications have 2 sides. I get both positive and negative opinions, which is very important. For instance, beauty bloggers would not only review positive sides of products they will also tell you the cons sides. All of this is done to make consumers life much easier. Imagine having to invest THB2,000 in a foundation just to find out that it sucks! How devastating is that? So definitely peer communications are much more credible than advertisers.

