

**CONSUMER BACKLASH, IDEOLOGY, AND BRAND
DISENGAGEMENT: BAR-B-Q PLAZA AND LAZADA
CASE STUDIES**



**A THEMATIC PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT
COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT
MAHIDOL UNIVERISTY
2022**

COPYRIGHT OF MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY

Thematic paper
entitled
**CONSUMER BACKLASH, IDEOLOGY, AND BRAND
DISENGAGEMENT: BAR-B-Q PLAZA AND LAZADA
CASE STUDIES**

was submitted to the College of Management, Mahidol University
for the degree of Master of Management
on
September 4, 2022



Wiwana Lert-Asavapatra

Miss Wiwan Lert-Asavapatra
Candidate

Winai W

Assoc. Prof. Winai Wongsurawat,
Ph.D.
Advisor

Nathasit Gerd Sri

Assoc. Prof. Nathasit Gerd Sri,
Ph.D.
Chairperson

Vichita Ractham

Assoc. Prof. Vichita Ractham,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

P. S.

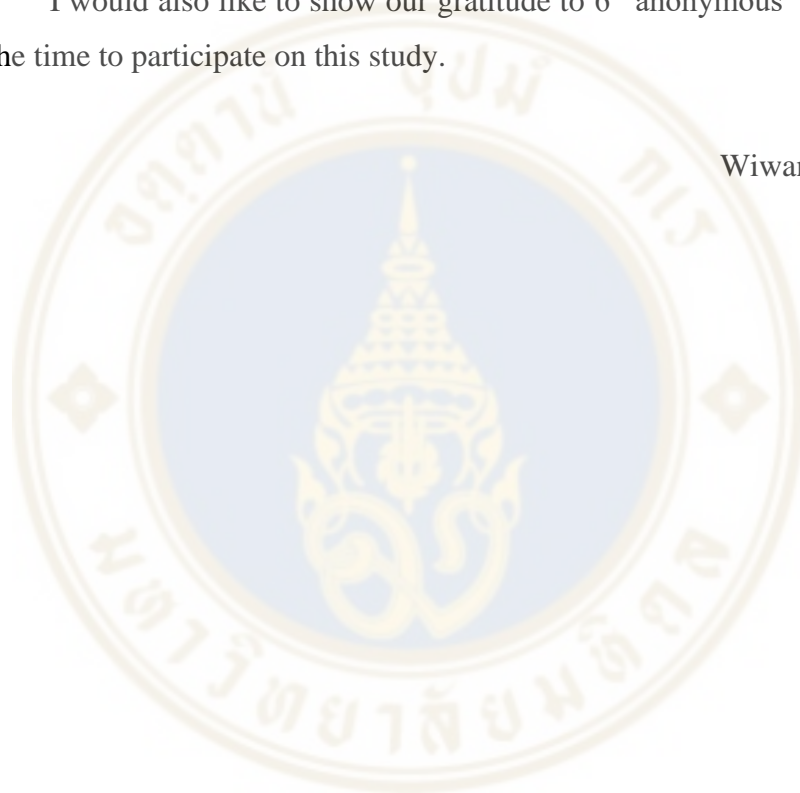
Pabhawan Suttiprasit,
Ph.D.
Committee member

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thematic paper was supported by College of Management, Mahidol University. I thank Associate Professor Doctor Winai Wongsurawat for comments that greatly improved the manuscript.

I would also like to show our gratitude to 6 “anonymous” interviewees for taking the time to participate on this study.

Wiwat Lert-Asavaptra



**CONSUMER BACKLASH, IDEOLOGY, AND BRAND DISENGAGEMENT:
BAR-B-Q PLAZA AND LAZADA CASE STUDIES**

WIWAN LERT-ASAVAPATRA 6349088

M.M. (MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASSOC. PROF. WINAI
WONGSURAWAT, Ph.D., ASSOC. PROF. NATHASIT GERDSRI, Ph.D.,
PABHAWAN SUTTIPRASIT, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

For over thousands of years, humankind has been growing through the change of social norms of each global era. We have been developing beliefs and ideologies with the hope to unite people in the society. Conflict, however, seems to be an inevitable factor occurring in all aspects of society and could appear to be the factor creating opposing ideologies of humankind throughout history.

The political situation in Thailand has been separating Thai people into two groups that represent two opposing perspectives. The first group being the group of right-wingers, the Thais that show loyalty toward the royal Chakri dynasty members especially King Bhumibhol Adulyadej and his heirs. Because of the strong loyalty for the royals, they relatively support the political parties that declare themselves being protective of the traditional political regime. The opposing group being the group of left-wingers who are the Thais standing up for democracy and promoting the liberalist ideas introducing the change in political regime and the reconstruction of deep-routed Thai primitive mindsets.

The different views in politics seem to create a great impact in people's way of thinking, way of living, and judgements toward the society; the judgment that does not only interfere with individuals, but also with the appreciation towards celebrities, and businesses. This paper mainly studies how political ideologies, specifically in Thailand, create changes in consumers' buying motivation toward brands and the prevention of consumer backlash happening based on different ideologies shown through brand activities.

KEY WORDS: BACKLASH / IDEOLOGY / BRAND ENGAGEMENT

28 pages

CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Motivation for this study	2
1.2 Industry value of this study	2
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1 Backlash	4
2.2 Ideology	5
2.3 Brand Engagement	6
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	7
3.1 Interviewee Criteria	7
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS ANALYSIS	11
4.1 Bar-B-Q Plaza	11
4.2 Lazada	14
4.3 Analysis from the findings	17
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	22
5.1 Limitation of this study	24
5.2 Recommendation for future studies	24
REFERENCES	26
BIOGRAPHY	28

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
3.1	The interview questions for Bar-B-Q Plaza	8
3.2	The interview questions for Lazada	9



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On June 4, 2020, the mysterious disappearance of Mr. Wanchalerm Satsaksit, Thai political refugee in Phnom Penh, had driven the wave of left-wingers, liberalists, and human-rights activists calling out for international help on social media. The incident became the talk-of-the-town and has stayed as the number one mentioned hashtag on Twitter Trend. In parallel, Bar-B-Q Plaza, a well-known self-cooking barbeque chain restaurant, had also announced a marketing campaign under the quarantine giving away Barbegon, the brand mascot, to walk-in customers that had to participate in social distancing regulation while receiving the service in the restaurant. After a few days, on June 7, 2020, the brand broadcasted a Line message stating “วันนี้พี่ก่อนจะโดนอุ้ม!” which in English means Barbegon will be kidnapped today!, to capture customers’ attention on the campaign that later on became a trigger to the burning discussed issues on the disappearance of Mr. Wanchalerm.

Thai left-wingers were raging against the brand for releasing an indifferent marketing announcement and believed this was a mimic of what happened to the disappeared Wanchalerm. Many of the left-wingers shared negative comments on social media and declared to stop all support and consumption toward the brand. The liberalists claimed that not only was the brand marketing activity indifferent to the incident, but also it seemed to promote the disappearance of the victim.

In May 2022, another similar case happened when one of the biggest e-commerce platforms in Thailand, Lazada, announced their 5.5 campaign with a social media video advertisement starring Nara Crepe Kathoey and Nurat, promoting customers to shop for discounted products on the platform. Spotted by the right-wingers, the portrayal of the advertisement seemed to be a parody mimicking the royal members which received a lot of negative criticism from the royalist netizens. While there were a lot of different voices over the internet debating whether or not the advertisement provokes anything against the royal family, Lazada decided to take down the content

from social media. The marketing campaign of Lazada had created some hatred against the brand from not only the right-wing consumers, but also the military party claiming no support toward Lazada moving forward. However, although the content is no longer available, many people still carried on with the discussion and a lot say that the content does not provoke anything against the royal family, or at least, not directly.

1.1 Motivation for this study

A lot of the time, we see consumer's reactions to many disappointing marketing campaigns that show or represent opposing social views and ideologies. These reactions include both criticism and different degrees of disengagement. However, oftentimes we find that these consumer negative reactions only last for a period, in other words, the consumer backlash can eventually become unsuccessful overtime. The aim of this study is to firstly understand at a deeper level how the representation of ideology from brands can create a sudden backlash in consumers. Moreover, as mentioned earlier that the backlash tends to not last for a very long time, this study also seeks to find out the potential barriers that make the brand disengagement unsuccessful based on the two case studies disclosed in this thematic paper.

In addition, since the two consumer groups have different political ideologies which play a big role in their perspectives and their way of living, this study might be able to identify which consumer groups convey stronger backlash toward brands that could also be beneficial for brands to be more considerate before launching each campaign. Lastly, this study seeks to provide insights based on consumers' perspectives for brands to grasp as a guidance of their future solutions or what brands can do once they face consumer backlash in order to gain back consumer's reliance moving forward.

1.2 Industry value of this study

Since this paper mainly focuses on marketing campaigns that are relevant to mass communication, the study is helpful for B2C business leaders to foresee consumer reactions toward brands when planning to launch each marketing campaign

that could potentially be against any consumer groups' ideologies. The study might help businesses to be more mindful about conveying company political ideologies through their marketing activities or media. Finally, the findings of this study are beneficial for businesses that have faced consumer backlash and wish to gain back customer engagement.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Backlash

In today's society, people seem to have developed more of their own independence shown through their way of thinking. We have come to the time where 'norm' does not set the standard of thoughts and living any longer. When people recognize the independence of thoughts, judgments are also made with more freedom, and from time to time, with freedom, these judgments are made at a sudden time, which later, lead to certain reactions.

“Backlash is a reaction in the opposite direction, and thus a return to something prior.” (Alter, and Zurn, 2020) In the modern world, we see backlash coming out in variety of contexts such as the backlash against the U.S.'s new abortion law starring the group of people calling themselves “pro-choice” making movements for women to have rights for their own bodies. Therefore, the term backlash can be discussed as “reactionary movements” (Alter and Zurn, 2020.) Some other common forms of backlash could be anti-LGBTQ, anti-royalists, and since Thailand is influenced by a lot of East Asian pop culture like K-Pop, we can commonly see a lot of anti-artists rising up against their hated artists such as anti-SITALAs who rise up against Sitala and her father's political ideology. (Patanasophon, 2022)

Although Backlash may seem to be seen as some kind of social movement consisting of a large number of people calling out for certain things, or against certain things, backlash can also happen in the form of consumers against brands as well. The main focus of this paper for backlash is to draw out how backlash is invoked in the business context, and how mass communication methodologies impact consumer backlash against brands which could bring out another informative angle of consumer behavior of the millennial era.

2.2 Ideology

The explanation of ideology is that it is concerned with values which is how people ought to treat each other and live together in the society, and that all ideologies have a conception of an ideal society which embodies the values that ideologies believe in. (Adams, 2001, P.3) The form of ideology discussed in this study is mainly the political ideology or how ideology takes a role in convincing the perception of people toward the current situation of Thailand regarding the national leaders, and national civilian rights.

In this study, not only that audience will learn that ideology is the concept that involves constitution and patterning of how human beings live their lives (Therbon, 1999, P.15) and how they reflect their own values from the acts or portrayals of brands, but also that ideology can be used as a tool for ones to influence others to pursue their goals, which in this context, the researcher refers to brand and its business goals.

One of the two ideologies presented in this study is repetitively referred to as ‘left-wing’ or the current concept that hints the activism core of the Thailand’s new constitution that is provided for the division of state power, and individual rights, and the redress of the use of Thailand’s arbitrary power.(Cornors, 2007, P.440) The representatives from the left-wing group are mentioned in as the interviewees for this research in Bar-B-Q Plaza’s case which also express certain degree of reactions that convey their values and ideologies toward the incident according to the above discussion. Another ideology presented is repetitively referred to as ‘right-wing’ of which the common characteristics are “conservative middle-class and upper-class group” that have been drawn to the anti-democratic, hyper-royalism, hyper-nationalism, and fascist ideology. (Hewison, 2014, P.9) The representatives of this ideology are the interviewees selected for the Lazada’s case which audience can perceive the protective feelings that these representatives have with the monarch.

The purpose of selecting these two groups of ideologies is because the researcher notice that these two ideologies play the biggest role in Thai political movements and the reaction to the viral commercial contents are likely to be offensive most against these two ideologies.

2.3 Brand Engagement

“In the marketing domain, engagement is associated with the level of an active relationship that a customer shares with a firm.” (Palmatier, Harmeling, and Kumar, 2018, P.3) This research discusses the opposing form of disengagement against brands which is referred to as consumer backlash. The characteristics of the disengagement could be seen in the context of this study as the rejection of products and services, the intention to stop consuming from brands, or the intention to destroy the brand directly and indirectly. It can also be inferred to as a form of the lower degree of constant relationship that the consumer used to have with the brands.

Engagement is also a significant factor that led companies to achieve higher business outcome. In *Customer Management Marketing*, the result from the research has shown that with higher level of engagement from customers, the average profits have been improved by 5.65 % which indicates that the engagement can creates impact to better business outcomes and could imply that the low level of engagement, or disengagement, would also send negative impact to the profitability and the overall business outcomes.

In this research, the researcher may not have the direct purpose to measure the performance of Bar-B-Q Plaza and Lazada that could potentially be impacted by the disengagement from the consumers since the two incidents happening only within a short period of time. Therefore, the disengagement that would be mentioned repetitively would be seen as a phenomenon of a sudden disengagement or consumer backlash.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the subjects focused on this study are subjective and opinion-based, the research is made with qualitative methodology specifically through one-on-one interviews. The interview method helps researchers to understand consumer's reactions better in the way they convey through both their verbal language and body language. The researcher began by selecting two consumer backlash phenomena happening in Thailand within the past two years of the time the research was conducted, June 2022, which include the cases of 1. Bar-B-Q Plaza's 2020's Mascot Giveaway Campaign, and 2. Lazada's 2022 5.5 Video Advertisement. Because these cases created two backlash phenomena among two groups of consumers that hold opposing political ideologies, the researcher also aims to compare the findings gathered from interviewing these two targeted groups, therefore, the interview questions are divided into two sets of questions: one for the Bar-B-Q Plaza case, and one for Lazada case, to be asked to 6 interviewees selected for the discussion of each case.

3.1 Interviewee Criteria

Because this study seeks to understand the disengagement of consumers in a deeper level, the researcher has set the criteria for the selected interviewees to be those who used to be Bar-B-Q Plaza engaging customer, or in other words, they should be those who, from time to time, used to receive and consume the products and service from Bar-B-Q Plaza, therefore the transition between their engagement and disengagement can become more distinctive for audience. Moreover, the selected interviewees must be the left-wingers who were empathetic about the mysterious absence of Mr.Wanchalerm and at the same time acknowledged the brand activity and had negative response for the brand.

In Lazada's case, the interviewees selected are right-wingers who appreciate the existence of the royal family. In addition, before the online advertisement was released, they should be using the service of Lazada constantly and then later acknowledge the content of the advertisement.

Table 3.1 The interview questions for Bar-B-Q Plaza

The interview questions for Bar-B-Q Plaza case were created by following:

Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you describe your political ideology? • What have you heard about the disappearance of Mr.Wanchalerm? • What do you think about the situation of Mr.Wanchalerm?
Brand Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you describe your engagement with Bar-B-Q Plaza? • Have you been consuming from the brand after the incident, why or why not? • What are your thoughts about the brand moving forward?
Backlash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have you heard about Bar-B-Q Plaza's campaign? • How do you describe your thoughts and feelings toward the campaign? • What was your reaction like? • Have you been discussing the incident further with your connections, sharing, or reacting on social media about the incident?

Table 3.2 The interview questions for Lazada

The interview questions for Lazada case were created by following:

Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you describe your political ideology? • How do you describe your thoughts toward Nara Crepe Katoey and Nurat?
Brand Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you describe your engagement with Lazada? • Have you been consuming from the brand after the incident, why or why not? • What are your thoughts about the brand moving forward?
Backlash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have you heard about Lazada's 5.5 online advertisement campaign? • How do you describe your thoughts and feelings toward the campaign? • What was your reaction like? • Have you been discussing the incident further with your connections, sharing, or reacting on social media about the incident?

The questions have been decided to be open-ended in order to capture as much storytelling from consumers and additional comments they may have toward the incidents. The same set of questions also apply to both interviewees, but the researcher cut out two irrelevant questions to be used with the right-wingers that are “What have you heard about the disappearance of Mr.Wanchalerm?” and “What do you think about the situation of Mr.Wanchalerm?”

Each group of interviewees consists of 3 respondents for which makes a total of 6 respondents for the whole research. The interviews were all conducted online via Google Meet Platform, and Line Video Calls. Some additional details of how the researchers come across these interviewees are explained in the following items.

1.Ms. Cherry (12.04-minute interview)

The researcher has known Ms. Cherry since 2014 while both of us were the undergraduate students at Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University.

2.Mr. Ken (10.49-minute interview)

Ms. Ken is Ms. Cherry's close companion.

3.Mr. Jack (13.22-minute interview)

Mr. Jack is Ms. Ken's close companion.

4.Ms. Namtarn (9.37-minute interview)

Ms.Namtarn is the researcher's current senior colleague (2022) at an international private corporate.

5.Mr. Pat (9.53-minute interview)

Mr. Pat was the researcher's co-worker in an international private corporate who left the company in November 2020, but still stays in touch with the researcher.

6.Ms. Mild (16.01-minute interview)

Ms. Mild is the direct report of Ms. Cherry whom the researcher had never met or had personal connection with before this study was conducted. The researcher could access to Ms. Mild by seeking for the kind support from Ms. Cherry to recommend a participant whose response could be beneficial to the research.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS ANALYSIS

The interviews were sectioned into two cases: Bar-B-Q Plaza and Lazada. In this part, the researcher will start by narrating the story beginning with Bar-B-Q Plaza Case, then followed by Lazada case. By the time this research was conducted, there was still the spread of Covid-19 which impacts to some inconvenience for researcher and interviewees to meet face-to-face, therefore, all interviews made for this study were via Google Meet, and Line Video Calls. Moreover, since the information from interviewees might contain sensitive contents that could potentially be risky for interviewee's safety, the researcher has guaranteed anonymity to all participants, and instead, they were given by made-up names to avoid confusions for audience.

4.1 Bar-B-Q Plaza

Ms. Cherry

Ms.Cherry is a 28 year-old working with an international firm in Bangkok. What she mentioned about her political ideology is that she believes in democracy and freedom, and she considered herself being left-winged in Thailand's context. She has known Bar-B-Q plaza since the time she was a little girl and had constantly consumed from the brand most often in her school time for the price was rather on the affordable range and was reachable for students.

What kept her going back to the restaurant was the sauce that is quite unique in the taste. Before the incident happened, she believed she had been consuming from the brand for an average 5 times a year. She discovered the news about Mr.Wanchalerm on Twitter because she follows a lot of political movement accounts and activists, therefore she saw a lot of updates about his disappearance and a lot of people called out for this issue on social media. She feels sad about what happened to him and that no one deserves to be punished for having a freedom of thoughts.

When Bar-B-Q Plaza released this marketing message, she felt very angry and thought that the brand was very ignorant and indifferent about the situation. She said that before one campaign is launched, it requires certain approvals internally and if this one was approved, it means that the management should be ignorant and indifferent as well. She believes strongly that the brand tried to mockup the incident because of its timeline. The first thing that popped up in her mind after the incident is that she will stop consuming from this brand forever. She mentioned that she was one of those people reposting the news about what the brand has done, and she tries not to engage with the brand in every way possible including influencing her connections not to consume from the brand.

She mentioned that when a situation like this happens, it changes her perspective about the brand completely, and makes her reckon more negative things about the quality of the restaurant. Although the brand has already apologized, it does not mean that they did not have intention to mock. She has not once visited the restaurant ever again and she mentioned that there are too many restaurants that are similar to Bar-B-Q Plaza in Bangkok. She could find more compatible options from many other places. She said that Bar-B-Q Plaza's core product is Moo Kra Ta, and she knows many places that have better Moo Kra Ta at even cheaper prices.

Mr. Ken

Mr. Ken is a 26 year-old man who works at a beverage manufacturer. He considers himself to be a left-winger in Thailand's current political situation because he is against the current government and has more hearts for the opposing political parties. With Bar-B-Q Plaza, it has always been the place he went with his friends although he made some comments that the taste from the restaurant and the quality of ingredients were not very satisfying, however, it somehow is a place where he went when he had no idea what to eat at that time.

He said that what happened to Mr. Wanchalerm was the talk of the town for a certain period of time. Every day he would see people reposting his news on Instagram and Facebook and even called out for international connections to reshare the post for the hope that Thailand would be pressured by international media, however he did not really follow up if it works. He said that he usually does not participate in sharing contents on social media, for him it was more to read some news or the updates.

He heard about the campaign from Bar-B-Q Plaza from his friend's Instagram story. The first feeling he had was not anger but rather disappointment. He believes that it should not be a coincidence because the news about the disappearance was everywhere. He admits that he did not want to engage with the brand because he thinks that maybe the brand should get some lesson from what they did but he does not think that he himself would make that much impact to the brand so if only himself does not consume from the brand any longer, there are still some other customers in the restaurant anyway. So, he does not want to say that he disengages with the brand completely. It might not be the first choice, but when a lot of friends pick Bar-B-Q plaza for example, he would have to agree and go along with the majority because he respects people's rights to choose to consume what they want, and he does not want to influence anyone's thought. After the incident he has not been to Bar-B-Q plaza yet because he has not met friends that often, and he usually does not go there by himself because the portion of food is not for one person.

Mr. Jack

Mr. Jack is a 26 year-old data engineer in a tech start-up company. He describes himself as a left-winger in Thailand's current political context. He said that when he was young, he used to be part of the yellow shirt mob and attended the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) following the influence of his parents. He said that he has become more and more left ever since he realizes about the propaganda, from discussing politics with friends, and from noticing that Thailand's economy has been moving downhill with the current government. He said that he has a private anonymous account on Twitter created specifically to read about forbidden information that Thai people are not supposed to know. So, as someone who has been blinded by the media for almost 20 years, he said that he is more empathetic about the current situation of Thailand including what happened to Mr. Wanchalerm.

Although he was not the one reposting and sharing the update of his disappearance online as much as his friends, he kept reading and following up with the news all the time. He said that the situation made him not only feel sorry for the family and Mr. Wanchalerm himself, but also feel sorry for all the Thais that are suppressed by the authorities. With Bar-B-Q Plaza, it is a usual venue that his family would go to every month because they have the membership card, and the food is very affordable. He

mentions that his mother loves this place because she likes the sauce and the variety of snacks. For him, Bar-B-Q plaza is like a go-to family dining venue because he has a big family. So, he is very disappointed to know that the restaurant he likes would come out with a thoughtless marketing campaign. He said he is not sure that the brand really had an intention to mock Mr.Wanchalerm, however it became coincidentally inappropriate in his view. He also acknowledges that the brand has released the paper to apologize, however, the brand did not state that they stand up for human rights or did not show any care for the disappearance, so he assumed that the brand was only trying to defend themselves from the mistake.

For him, if he could choose, he would not select Bar-B-Q plaza as the first choice because of the ideology of the brand and himself are not allied. However, after the incident happened, he still went to eat at the restaurant because his family wanted to. In addition, because his parents are on the opposing side of politics, he could not really say anything to influence them not to consume from this place because it could destroy the relationship and bonding in the family.

4.2 Lazada

Ms. Namtarn

Ms.Namtarn is a 40 year-old international corporate worker. She participated in right-winged movements such as the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) and she voted for the current Prime Minister in the latest election. She said that she has been a loyal customer of Lazada because she finds that the application is easier to use, and the campaign and promotions are most of the time more convincing than the competitor applications.

She had heard about Lazada's 5.5 online advertisement campaign on the news feed of Facebook but had not come across the pop-up advertisement itself on social media before it was taken down. She said that, based on the news, the actor acts as if they are mocking Thailand's beloved royals. She is not sure about the intention of the brand, but if the overall details look close to the royals, in her view, it is inappropriate. She made some comments about the actors on the advertisement that she knows that Nara Crepe Katoey made a lot of content online against the royal family and the

government, and for this reason, she feels that Lazada should have been more mindful about their casting criteria. She said that she did not have any reaction against the brand. She did not leave any hate comments online.

She feels disappointed about Lazada for releasing the advertisement without serious screening process, however she continues using the application like usual because she does not want to make an effort to get used to another application because she has been very familiar with this app more than the others already.

Mr. Pat

Mr. Pat is a 31 year-old business development manager at a corporate firm. He considers himself neutral in politics, but he loves and respects the royal family especially King Rama 9. His family and himself voted for the military party in the latest prime minister election because they were seeking for peace in Thailand for the hope that there would be no mob and protests on the street any longer. He mentions that he uses both Lazada and the competitive brand when it comes to e-commerce platforms. But since his girlfriend has an Instagram clothing brand that collaborates with Lazada, he uses Lazada more than the rest.

The products he buys from Lazada are such as Car Care products and gadgets. He said that Lazada has more unique and rare products and the user interface is better in his opinion. Regarding the incident, the advertisement for 5.5 was very viral when it came out and at first, he did not think that it was a mock, but he knows that the actor is quite left-winged. He later saw some comments on social media about the video being made as a parody toward the royal family. He believes that if there are more than one people who think that way, there must be the reasons why, however he did not know for sure why, but he believes it might be because one of the actors has made a lot of YouTube videos against the government and people might create some connections about it. He had been discussing the campaign with his girlfriend, but he did not want to disengage with Lazada completely because Lazada has a better offer for online retailers and shoppers. He is glad that Lazada does not keep the advertisement, so it is no longer ambiguous. He made some comments that Lazada should be more neutral when it comes to politics.

He said that he still stays engaged with the brand because this is the first time, but he cannot guarantee that if Lazada does something against his political

ideology, he would still stay engaged with Lazada. Despite what happened, he still decides to stay with the app because of its functions, promotions, and the variety of products the app provides.

Ms. Mild

She is a 36 year-old working in an international private corporate as an associate director and also a direct report of Ms.Cherry who is an interviewee in Bar-B-Q Plaza's interview section. She and her family have been very loyal to the royal family. They participated in the yellow shirt mob as well as the PDRC mob in the later years. However, she mentions that she is neutral now in the current political in Thailand. She mentions that she has heard of them on some amusing viral videos on social medias mainly on shared Facebook posts. She does not have much thought on Nurat because she has not seen Nurat a lot, but she mentioned that Nara has been quite well-known especially in royalist community. She had made a lot of YouTube videos against the government as well as being negative about Thailand. She addresses that Nara Crepe Katoey seems to be quite a funny YouTube personality, but she thinks that she should respect some audience who may have opposed thought regarding the political subject.

She said she uses quite many e-commerce platforms to purchase household and fashion goods. It really depends which platform has better deal on those particular goods. Sometimes she could find better deals on Lazada and sometimes on other platforms. So, she also thinks that she is Lazada's loyal customer because she has always had Lazada app registered on her phone even when she had to change her cell phone to another one.

Ms. Mild said that she still continues to buy goods and to browse for products on Lazada even after the incident, however her parents and relatives have been very upset, and some of them even deleted the app. She said her family is very loyal and could understand the implications of Lazada's viral advertisement right away even though the messages were not clear that they try to mock some of the royal members.

For her, she understands that people have started to view the monarch differently nowadays partly because we are reigned by a different crown, and a lot of Thai people were only attached to the previous crown, therefore, they do not continue to be as loyal as before. She confirms that she still has the respect for the royals no matter what, but in this incident, the advertisement does not directly state anything

against the royals. If someone did not send the video to her and told her that the intention was to mock, she might have not taken it in that way. And she thinks that Lazada still has a lot of high-quality Instagram brands registered on the platform, and she believes she has been using Lazada even before she got to know the competitors, and she has become very used to the user interface that Lazada provides. She mentions that the company will get the lesson from this as well as the actors, so she does not need to make any of her own effort to pressure the brand.

She is aware that Lazada has been the top leader in E-commerce industry, and it seems to her that the advertisement does not devalue the brand as much as what some people may think. As long as the company still provides good quality of service, it will still stay.

She also added that because new generation seems to be more radical about the politics and they have different thoughts that people from her age, maybe this advertisement was created by the group of young people and was created for the group of young people. In the future, people will forget about this incident or might talk about this incident in a different way. In this case, she thinks that the company should take more time to double check the contents before releasing it because the content might be too sensitive to some groups of people who still love the royals. But after she has seen the video, she did not repost or share the video to anyone. However, the video was shared by her relatives in the family Line group and that is how she received the information. She believes that many people that really dislikes the content would do so to create some influential impact.

4.3 Analysis from the findings

Referring to the conversations that the researcher has conducted with six interviewees, the representation of ideology from brands can create a sudden backlash in consumers due to some following possibilities.

1. The Appearance of Brand Insensitivity

Both two consumer groups, right-wingers, and left-wingers, hold two opposing ideologies which stand for two different values. Consumers such as Ms.Cherry and Mr.Jack have shown the value of the significance of human rights, whereas Mr.Pat

and Ms.Mild have value of respecting beloved royal figures that also compliment the nationalism ideology. Therefore, when brand present contents or conduct any brand activities that do not align with their ideologies and values, it shows the intensity of the brands which could be perceived by each consumer group as a driver that interferes their values or dignity. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, people have two types of esteem needs which are the internal self-esteem which is the thoughts and respect that ones have toward themselves. Another type of self-esteem is created from the external source which is the need that ones seek to be perceived by others. This could be the respect or the recognition from others toward any aspects of themselves. With the representation of ideologies from brands that do not compliments consumer's ideologies, it could be perceived as a form of a 'disrespect' toward the two distinctive values that each consumer group holds.

The appearance of brand insensitivity does not only create the perception of disrespect from the brand but can also lead to another perception that consumer might have which is the carelessness in providing service. Mentioned in the study from Eisingerich and Bell (2008), "customers, however, also seek effective relationships with professionals who care, listen, and relate to their ideas, feelings, and concerns." The assumption that the researcher has made to this point is the effect that the incident of both cases made is similarly to when customers walk into a physical retail and have negatives experience with the sellers such as careless response from sellers, unprofessional conversations from sellers, or experience with sellers that do not care about customers' concerns, then what tend to happen after this is 'the neglect of consumers' due to the seller's acts. The previous study mentioned has also complimented the ideas that in order for consumers to start and continue pursuing products and service from brands, there must be positive relationship and bond between service providers and consumers which make consumers perceive that they are cared, and their ideas and feelings are well nurtured. Thus, the two incidents of Bar-B-Q Plaza, and Lazada, the appearance of brand insensitivity might make consumers think that their feelings are not well-nurtured by the brands and later they do or try to neglect the brands.

2. Negative Perceived Brand Reliability

Based on the interviews, some of the interviewees of both Bar-B-Q Plaza and Lazada cases have mentioned about the brand's pre-launched process that appear to

be reckless. As Ms.Cherry believes that before one marketing campaign is launched, it has to get through several internal processes, and the incident creates a sudden shift of her perspective toward the brand completely. On Lazada case, Ms.Namtarn also had some disappointment on the casting process, and the unscreened contents from the brand. The assumption made based on the mentioned, “internal process,” “casting process,” and “unscreened contents,” imply the recklessness of the two brands are perceived by consumers, which create doubts and decrease trust that the consumers used to have toward the brands’ product and service quality.

While trust is defined as customer’s confidence in a service and seller’s reliability and integrity (Eisingerich, and Bell, 2008) with Bar-B-Q Plaza and Lazada’s recklessness in internal process may imply the sudden image of brand’s unprofessionalism which the consumers did not see or notice before the incidents. Once the brands convey this unprofessionalism, with or without intention, consumers have a sudden trust decrease in the service quality and could lead to the sudden backlash.

In this study, the researcher also aims to look at unsuccessful brand disengagement that may occur during the consumer’s innate process in creating the backlash. The researcher has found from the conversations with some interviewees that the following factors could be the potential barriers that lead to unsuccessful brand disengagement

1. Limitation of Product and Service Alternatives

Referring to the response from Ms.Cherry, after the incident, she has not visited the restaurant due to her ability to find similar products and services from other providers in the market. This could imply that if the situation were the opposite, for instance, it is not the case that there are any more options for consumers to choose from, she may not be able to get away from using the service from Bar-B-Q Plaza, or be as successful as it is for her in participating in this brand disengagement.

2. Brand’s Popularity

Brand’s popularity may play a role in consumer’s disengagement in the sense that while ones try to disengage with the brand, the awareness that there are still many other people aside from them who still continue pursuing the product and service from the brand can be the factor that decreases the effort to building brand disengagement because they may realize that in order to make an impact to the brands,

it requires more than an effort from one consumer. To clarify this point, referring to the response from Mr.Ken, he thinks that only himself would not make much impact to the brand. Although he stops consuming from the brand, other people still continue to visit the restaurant.

3. Social Relationship

As mentioned in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it explains that the needs that people pursue include both romantic relationships and ties to friends and family members. In addition to this, it also includes people's needs that they belong to a social group. Both Mr.Ken and Mr.Jack are the two examples that prove that they are still long for this need while being in the society despite their disagreement toward brands' marketing campaign and activity, and intention to disengage with the brand. While both interviewees would not have Bar-B-Q Plaza at the top of their mind when it comes to choosing the dining venue, due to the sense of belonging from people around them, they would still continue to revisit the restaurant.

4. Service Quality

This study has shown that the service quality has a significant impact to customer engagement and disengagement with brands. In Lazada case, the response from interviewees shows that the quality of platform which include user interface, offers and promotions, variety of products on the app, are what remain Ms.Namtarn, Mr.Pat, and Ms.Mild's interest in Lazada's e-commerce service. According to Dawson, Findlay, and Sparks (2008), "the issue of quality was one of the key components of business and management practice...in order to compete successfully businesses were encouraged to achieve high quality in goods and services." Due to the expected quality that Lazada provides, the consumers still feel convinced to still stay with the brand regardless of their negative thoughts and feelings with the marketing activity. This can be concluded that the service quality is one of the barriers that creates the unsuccessful brand disengagement among consumers.

Finally, to compare the two consumers groups, the left-wingers and the right-wingers, the responses that the researcher gathered from the interviews appear to be that the left-wingers convey higher degree of backlash and the potential to stop consuming from Bar-B-Q plaza, based on the internal motivation alone, or in other words, without external factors from friends and family, seems to be higher than the

interviewees from Lazada case. The ideology conveyed during the interview was clear in the sense that they could state directly what they stand for in the current Thailand's political situation and they could describe themselves clearly that they are "left-winged." Toward the incident, they show stronger concerns to the situation of Mr.Wanchalerm and their disappointments against Bar-B-Q Plaza. However, in practice, also with external factors such as bonding between themselves and people around them, the disengagement might not be very successful, but there is still at least one interviewee that is Ms.Cherry that could accomplish her backlash intention. In addition to Ms.Cherry, Mr.Jack also stated his view that the brand's apology seems to be only a self-defense and he still wishes that the brand should have come out to declare their concerns for the disappearance of Mr.Wanchalerm.

Looking at the responses from Lazada's case, it seems that most interviewees do not state directly that they are right-winged. The common response is that they are neutral in the current political situation with the respect to the royals. Their reactions, based on the first-handed conversation between the researcher and the interviewees, are that they are aware of the incidents but do not intend to stop pursuing the service.

Only some messages from Ms.Mild that her relatives deleted the application after acknowledging the incident, however, due to the limitation of the researcher's access to her relatives, the further details were not able to be gathered. In addition, the researcher might not able to prove this point clearly because the cases select to compare are from the two distinctive industries being the chain restaurant and the e-commerce platform, therefore, moving forward If there are any further studies on similar topics, it could be more effective for future researchers to pick similar business as the comparison to grasp the answer for this objective.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, the researcher has understood the characteristics of consumer's ideologies in higher level. The sudden backlash that occurs from both Bar-B-Q Plaza and Lazada incident has also been explained during the interviews very deeply in which the study concludes that the sudden backlash occurred due to two potential main factors that that first one being the appearance of brand insensitivity which has been elaborated that it plays a role on reducing consumer's self-esteem in the form of disrespect against the consumers' values. In addition, it also implies that the businesses do not wish to nurture consumers' thoughts and feelings leading to the intention to neglect the products and services of brands.

Moreover, the sudden backlash also occurs due to the consumer's negative perceived brand reliability as a response to the recklessness of brand's internal content proving process which decreases the trust in quality of products and services and implies brand's unprofessionalism. The comments from both consumer groups are that businesses should have been more careful with their actions.

The study has found that the limitation of product and service alternatives could be one of the potential barriers that get in the way of successful brand disengagement because if there are other options in the market, it is likely that consumers would seek for products and services from other providers. On the other hands, consumers feel obliged to consume from the current provider when realizing that there are no other options. Another potential barrier is brand popularity for consumers may feel that their effort in stop consuming from the brand has no value added in decreasing the brand's business outcome, so the consumers may feel that their effort is worthless and eventually the effort and intention fail. Social relationship could also act as another potential barriers that support the unsuccessful brand disengagement as in it acts as a social pressure that influences consumers to still consume from brands and also compliments consumers' common needs in love and belonging. Lastly, the service

quality of brands could also be the potential barriers that consumers are unsuccessful to keep themselves away from consuming from brands for they might feel that it is uneasy to find products or service with the quality at equal or compatible level and which also might lower their satisfaction the service experiences.

In addition, since the two consumer groups have different political ideologies which play a big role in their perspectives and their way of living, this study might be able to identify which consumer groups convey stronger backlash toward brands that could also be beneficial for brands to be more considerate before launching each campaign.

The results from the interview have also shown that the sudden backlash appear stronger in the left-winged consumer groups than in the right-winged consumer groups in a small degree. This could be partly because the awareness of their ideologies is stronger for they can convey it with clearer expressions.

Because the researcher wishes that this study would add some value to the B2C businesses specifically within the mass communication area which requires a lot of understanding in consumers' emotions, and thoughts to make any campaign successful and to avoid negativity response from consumers as the common key business goal is to gain as much sales and profits from consumers, thus, the researcher has gathered a few recommendations for businesses as a guideline for future activities.

1. Conduct more research to understand the targeted consumer's demographic background.

Learned from the analysis from the interview, businesses might seek to observe and gather more information regarding the current social ideologies and values. As the time goes by, there will be the coming of new generations of people whose ideas and values might be more diverse and some contents that did not seem to be sensitive in the past years might become more sensitive to people's today's perspective for they have developed new values derived from the accessibility to new knowledge and the development of technology.

The company might start from encouraging the team to monitor the contents and news on social media and constantly conduct market research specifically on the consumers demographic to understand which consumer groups are part of the bigger portion of the whole brand's consumers to understand what kind of contents would

motivate their buying impulsiveness, and also to see whether the smaller portion of consumers could potentially create any impact to brand image, for instance with their ability to utilize social medias as a tool to influence consumers demotivation or by other acts, in case the contents produced do not meet their expectations.

2.Develop of the quality of products and services

This study has shown that the quality of products and services are key factors that remain the consumers with brands. This could also be elaborate to the competition aspect as well that the better the quality of products and services the brands provide, the lower competition in the market referred to the response from Lazada case, and which will also lead to the lesser number of alternatives or choices for consumers to leave from the brands referring to the analysis made from the response of Ms.Cherry. In conclusion, the brand should invest to keep developing its product and service quality to be more advanced than competitors and to create more reliability for consumer to have long-term trust on the products and services regardless of any disruptions.

5.1 Limitation of this study

The researcher has conducted the study in between May to August 2022 during the existence of Covid-19 outbreak in Thailand with limitation to meet with the interviewees physically and all the interviews were conducted online via video meetings and might not be able to capture all emotions from the interviewees as well as the physical meetings especially when this research discusses the contents related to consumers' thoughts and feelings.

5.2 Recommendation for future studies

The assumptions and analysis are based on the first-handed information gathered from only 6 interviewees. Without the time constraint, the researcher might be able to gather more information from bigger number of interviewees from different demographic backgrounds such as from different age group to learn whether age and generations would make any impact to some aspects of consumer backlash or the success of brand disengagement, and from different occupations which relates to the

income and social status of consumers that also have some relevance to their political ideologies.



REFERENCES

- Adams, I. (2001). *Political Ideology Today* (2nd ed.). Manchester University Press.
- Alter, K. J., & Zurn, M. (2020). Theorising backlash politics: Conclusion to a special issue on backlash politics in comparison [Review of Theorising backlash politics: Conclusion to a special issue on backlash politics in comparison]. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 22(4), 739.
- Connors, M. K. (2003). Goodbye to the security state: Thailand and ideological change. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 440.
- Dawson, J., Findlay, A., & Sparks, L. (2008). *The Retailing Reader* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Eisingerich, A. B., & Bell, S. J. (2008). Perceived Service Quality and Customer Trust. *Does Enhancing Customers' Service Knowledge Matter*, 10(3).
- Hewison, K. (2014). Thailand: The Lessons of Protest. *ASEAN STUDIES Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia*, 9.
- Palmatier, R. W. (2018). *Customer Engagement Marketing* (C. M. Harmeling & V. Kuma, Eds.; 1st ed.) [E-book]. Springer Nature.
- Patanasophon, N. (2022, January 6). *Sitala faces more backlash after taking neutral stance in new interview*. Thai Enquirer. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://www.thaienquirer.com/36254/sitala-faces-more-backlash-after-taking-neutral-stance-in-new-interview/>
- Perera, K. (n.d.). *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. More Self Esteem. Retrieved July 28, 2022, from <https://more-selfesteem.com/self-esteem-and-maslows-hierarchy-of-needs/>
- Prachathai. (2022, May 10). *How LAZADA makes an enemy out of royalists, Thai military and royal shops*. Prachathai. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://prachatai.com/english/node/9820>

REFERENCES (cont.)

- Rassarin (2020, June 7). “อุ้มบาร์บี้คอน” อุบัติเหตุการตลาด บทเรียนนักการตลาดยุคโซเชียลมีเดียครองเมือง “ครามา” เอยจงครองพิภพ. Brand Buffet. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://www.brandbuffet.in.th/2020/06/barbqplaza-drama-free-barbgon-dolls/>
- Therbon, G. (1999). The general dialect of ideology. In *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (4th ed., p. 15). Biddle Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn.
- Wright, G., & Praithongyaem, I. (2020, July 2). Wanchalearn Satsaksit: The Thai satirist abducted in broad daylight. BBC. Retrieved June 25, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53212932>