

Reference Group Influences on Consumer's Product and Brand Decisions

Miss Nathathida Kovitcharoenkul



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อิทธิพลของกลุ่มอ้างอิงต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกซื้อสินค้าและตราสินค้าของผู้บริโภค



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Thesis Title	Reference Group Influences on Consumer's Product and Brand Decisions
By	Miss Nathathida Kovitcharoenkul
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Thesis Advisor	Associate Professor Saravudh Anantachart, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree

.....Dean of the Faculty of Communication Arts
(Assistant Professor Duang-kamol Chartprasert, Ph.D.)

THESIS COMMITTEE

.....Chairman
(Dr. Jirayudh Sinthuphan)
.....Thesis Advisor
(Associate Professor Saravudh Anantachart, Ph.D.)
.....External Examiner
(Assistant Professor Bunga Chaisuwan, Ph.D.)

ณัฐธิดา โกวิทเจริญกุล : อิทธิพลของกลุ่มอ้างอิงต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกซื้อสินค้าและตราสินค้าของผู้บริโภค (Reference Group Influences on Consumer's Product and Brand Decisions) อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: สราวุธ อนันตชาติ, 131 หน้า.

งานวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาอิทธิพลของกลุ่มอ้างอิง 3 ประเภท ต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกสินค้าและตราสินค้า โดยใช้การวิจัยเชิงปริมาณด้วยใช้วิธีวิจัยเชิงสำรวจเก็บข้อมูลจากกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่เป็นนิสิตนักศึกษาทั้งจากมหาวิทยาลัยของรัฐและเอกชน จำนวน 400 คน ในเขตกรุงเทพมหานครและปริมณฑล สำหรับประเภทสินค้าและตราสินค้าที่ใช้ในการศึกษานั้นได้แก่ 1) สินค้าประเภทฟุ่มเฟือยที่ใช้ในที่สาธารณะ (กระเป๋าถือ) 2) สินค้าประเภทจำเป็นที่ใช้ในที่สาธารณะ (โทรศัพท์มือถือ) และ 3) สินค้าประเภทฟุ่มเฟือยที่ใช้ในส่วนตัว (น้ำหอม)

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า อิทธิพลด้านข้อมูลเป็นอิทธิพลที่มีผลกระทบต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกซื้อสินค้าและตราสินค้าอย่างเห็นได้ชัดเจน ในขณะที่อิทธิพลด้านบรรทัดฐานมีผลกระทบต่อกลุ่มผู้ใหญ่มากกว่า เนื่องจากคนกลุ่มนี้ต้องการเป็นผู้มีอิทธิพลมากกว่าที่จะเป็นผู้ที่ถูกอิทธิพลชักจูง อย่างไรก็ตาม อิทธิพลด้านค่านิยมในการแสดงออก นั้นไม่มีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกสินค้าและตราสินค้าของผู้บริโภคเลย ดังนั้น ผลจากการวิจัยนี้จึงสอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Deutsch และ Gerard (1955) ในประเทศสหรัฐอเมริกาที่พบว่า อิทธิพลหลักของกลุ่มอ้างอิงต่อผู้บริโภคประกอบด้วย 2 ประเภทหลักคือ อิทธิพลด้านข้อมูลและอิทธิพลด้านบรรทัดฐาน

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This research study aims to examine the influences of three types of reference groups on consumer's product and brand decisions. Quantitatively, self-administered questionnaires were used to collect survey data from 400 undergraduate students who are studying in public and private institutions in Bangkok Metropolitan Areas, Thailand. Three product categories were tested and selected to represent a) publicly-consumed, luxurious product (handbags), b) publicly-consumed, necessary product (mobile phones), and c) privately-consumed, luxurious product (perfumes).

As result, informational influence is found to be the most outperformed approach shown to impact on all product and brand selections. Meanwhile, normative influence shows less impact on young adults since they are likely to be an influencer rather than being influenced by others. However, value-expressive influence presents non-significant evidence to explain its power on consumer product and brand decisions. Therefore, this research supports Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) original work with the non-U.S. samples that there should be only two types of reference group influences.

Field of Study: Strategic Communication Student's Signature

Management

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Significances of the Study

In a borderless world, where information enables marketers to communicate easier with their target customers. As there are many businesses growing and competing in the market place, consumer can choose and compare the products and brands that match with their needs and wants. Whereas the marketers develop many marketing tactics to attract the attention of the consumer to buy the product, they also wish to attain high sales and profits. Besides that, marketers aim for brand loyal customers, which is the most difficult asset to achieve but it will benefit the business in the long run.

Unfortunately, many sources supported in the same direction that nowadays brand loyal customers have declined. According to Deloitte Development's (2013) survey, research found that an average of the "must have brand" rating across all categories and brands has been declined since the year 2010, where 33 percent of the samples are loyal to brand. In the contrast, 31 percent of the samples are still loyal to the brand in the year 2011 but later drop to 29 percent within the year 2012 (DeloitteDevelopment, 2014). Olenski (2012) reports that only one fourth of American customers are loyal to the brands (Olenski, 2012). This implies that three-fourth of American tend to switch brands from one to another. In addition, Rick (2013) states that in the past, consumers were loyal to only one brand but now they put less trust in brands and tend to switch from one brand to another as well

(Rick, 2013). Moreover, Colen (2001) reports that a consumer cohort called generation Y, who has the age between 12 and 24 years old, are the least loyal consumers (Colen, 2001). Since the generation Y customers encounter with bombarded message and overloaded information, they are forced to seek the best brand option to suit them. These groups of young adults have behaved differently from the previous generations. They tend to switch from one brand to another brand due to many influential factors affecting them.

As the famous 80/20 rule, where 20 percent of the customers generate 80 percent of the revenue for the business, has been changed into 60/40 rule, where 40 percent of customers generate 60 percent of the revenue. In consequences, this rule might slowly evolve towards 50/50 rule in the future. As this can obviously be seen by the example of many of Nokia's loyalty customers that switched to Apple or Samsung and tend to attach quickly with the new brand in the market (Belleghem, 2013; Rick, 2013). While many marketers are reluctantly deciding whether they should continue investing on loyalty strategy or investing in mass media, Rick (2013) specifies that there are many ways to solve the problem but marketers need to deeply understand their targeted consumers.

Furthermore, Taylor and Cosenza (2002) report that consumer often establishes their brand preferences between the ages of 15 to 25 depending on product category (Taylor & Cosenza, 2002). Therefore, it is very crucial for marketers to study the behavior of young adults in order to communicate and satisfy the target customers. Although, it is very difficult and challenging to establish a brand loyalty among the young adults as they always switch from one brand to another, but marketers cannot overlook this group of people since they are huge population and

can be seen as a long term investment for the business. According to the teenage consumer spending statistics (2014), the numbers of young adults with the age of 15 to 24 that are living in America are around 43 billion people, while in Thailand, based on Official Statistics Registration Systems (2013), there are around 7.6 million of young adults with the age of 17 to 24. This implies that there are huge numbers of target customer for marketers to target on as they have high potential in purchasing power (TeenageConsumerSpendingStatistics, 2014).

Salzman (2014) cited that Euro RSCG Worldwide PR reports that all teens spend more than \$200 billion each year, so they represent a critical step for brand success (Salzman, 2014). Behind their spending power, young adults are financially supported by their parents either two working parents or single parent (Childers & Rao, 1992; Tudor & Carley, 1998). Surprisingly, Thai PBS (2012) remarks that students who are studying in the higher education institutes over spent their allowance from their parents. This infers that students are likely to spend easier since they are not responsible for making the money (ThaiPBS, 2012).

One of the most essential influencing factors that drive consumer behavior is the reference group as individual can attach with the brand in order to associate oneself with the brand image that represent their self-image (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Sirgy (1982) also support that the products that are conspicuous tend to have a high repurchase rate since consumers try to express their self-image (Sirgy, 1982). While Salzman (2014) indicates that the social interaction including shopping behavior of young adults are driven by the intimacy of friends and family. Young adults are also confident and are likely opinion leaders that influence others in the area that they feel most authoritative, such as film, electronics, and mobile phones

whereas they tend to influence the spending habits of their parents (Taylor & Cosenza, 2002; Uyenco & Kingdon, 2012).

In addition, young adults, especially female plays an important role in spreading the information for the brand to their close ones because they often share information to their sister or best friend as well as when they discover a new brand, they tend to update their acquaintance (Salzman, 2014). Based on Parment (2013), young adults put much effort to find information that suit with their interests and often stay active with the current news. Young adults even visit the stores themselves without the marketers' effort to persuade them (Parment, 2013).

Mangleburg, Doney, and Bristol (2004) signify that peer influence effect on individual, yet, teen enjoys shopping for their hedonic and social pleasures (Mangleburg, Doney, & Bristol, 2004). Even though Parment's (2013) finding supports that young adults are flexible when buying expensive and cheap products and have variety-seeking purchase behavior, young adults have a high degree of image-awareness. Therefore, it could be expected that they prefer manufacturer brands more than retail brands as they are likely be attracted by a brand with strong value. Nevertheless, young adults still generate revenue set for the retail venues like malls and shopping centers (Taylor & Cosenza, 2002). It can be seen that young adults have high potential purchasing power and likely be influenced by the reference group.

With this implication, marketers cannot ignore this target group as they can generate revenue for the business. Hence, to establish brand loyalty among young adults is a long-term asset for the business. Still, it is crucial for marketers to

understand how reference group influence impact on young adults purchasing behavior toward product and brand decisions before developing an effective marketing strategy. Although, few studies have been studying in the similar issues but the research studies are conducted since a long time ago around 1980s (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989; Brinberg & Plimpton, 1986; Childers & Rao, 1992) However, consumers behave differently from the past. Moreover, there are still controversial issues on the types of reference group influence that is proposed by Park and Lessig (1977) on value-expressive influence. Many research studies support Park and Lessig's (1977) research while many research studies oppose it by employing only two types of reference group influence following the original propose by Deutsch and Gerard (1955). Meanwhile, Parment's (2013) supports that the young adults have a high degree of image-awareness so it is important to discover more in value-expressive influence, which might later be valuable for marketers to understand which types of reference group influence is the best approach to attract the target group with a specific types of product consumption. In addition, those studies are from the western research studies that have explored differently compare to the context in Thailand. Therefore, these lead to the reason to explore more in this area on the reference group influences on consumer's product and brand decisions.

In conclusion, many businesses are competing for customer loyalty, which determines the future's asset whereas many sources found that customers are less loyal to brand especially among young adults. They have potential in purchasing products and brands while taking a role as an influencer and being influenced mostly by their friends. Therefore, it is very essential to study how reference group influences on consumer's products and brands decisions. Hopefully, this research will benefit in

the academic field in building body of knowledge for other research involves reference group influences and consumer behavior, and benefit the marketers and advertisers in order to develop an effective marketing strategy to satisfy the needs and wants of the customers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the reference group influences on consumer's product decision
2. To study the reference group influences on consumer's brand decision

Research Questions

1. What are the reference group influences on consumer's product decision?
2. What are the reference group influences on consumer's brand decision?

Scope of the Study

This research explores in the area of the three types of reference group influences on individual's product and brand purchase decisions. They are normative influence, informational influence, and value-expressive influence (Park & Lessig, 1977). Based on Nelson, Story, Larson, Sztainer, and Lytle (2008), the study focuses on young adults with the age range from 17 to 24 years old (Nelson, Story, Larson, Sztainer, & Lytle, 2008). The data are collected from 400 students living in Bangkok Metropolitan area since these groups of people are financially supported by their parents and spend most of the time with friends in the college. This implies that these groups of target have the purchasing potential and are likely to be susceptible to peer influence. The target samples are collected from the top five universities from both

public and private institutions in Bangkok Metropolitan area. In each university, 40 undergraduate students using handbag (publicly consumed luxuries product), perfume (privately consumed luxuries product), and mobile phone, (publicly consumed necessities product) are chosen as the target sample. The data are collected during September and November 2014.

Operational Definitions of the Variables

Reference group influences on consumer's product decision means how reference group affects on influencing individual when purchasing the product. It can be measured from the three types of influences that reference group have on consumers. They are normative influence, informational influence (Bearden et al., 1989), and value-expressive influence (Park & Lessig, 1977). In addition, the types of product decision measured are handbags (PUL), perfume (PRL), and mobile phone (PUN).

Reference group influences on consumer's brand decision means how reference group affects on influencing individual when purchasing the brand. It can be measured from the three types of influences that reference group have on consumers. They were normative influence, informational influence, and value-expressive influence (Park & Lessig, 1977). In addition, the brand decision is measured based on brands of each type of product decision, which are handbags (PUL), perfume (PRL), and mobile phone (PUN).

Expected Benefits from the Study

1. Academically, the result of this research should help build body of knowledge about the importance of reference group influences.
2. Professionally, the result of this research should enable marketers and advertisers to develop a more effective marketing strategy to serve to needs and wants of the target in the future.



CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter reviews on the three concepts that are related to reference group influences on consumer's product and brand decisions, which covers reference groups, branding, and consumer behavior.

Reference Groups

Many past research studies have given attention on how reference group influences on individual. This section reviews many aspects related to reference group involving definition, types of reference group, types of reference group influence, types of reference behavior, and four dimensions of product consumptions.

Definitions

Many researchers have given definitions of a term, "reference group," in the same direction. Park and Lessig (1977) state that a reference group is an actual or imaginary individual or a group that has significant relevance on evaluation, aspirations, or behavior. Bearden and Etzel (1982) define a reference group as a person or group of people that significantly influences an individual's behavior, which is widely known and cited in many academic researches. Childers and Rao (1992) also describe reference group as a group influence on individual behavior. As in marketing to consumer behavior perspective, it can be seen that influence of reference group on individual behavior is somehow connected to the types of product and brand that individual purchases.

Stafford (1966) summarizes that reference group is a group which a person actually belong, wish to belong, or wish not to belong in. Moreover, many psychologists consider reference groups as a personal source of values, norms, and perspectives (Stafford, 1966).

Stafford (1966) mentions that reference group can influence in two types of level, which are aspiration level and kinds of behavior. Firstly, reference group can influence aspiration level by producing satisfaction or frustration. Hence, if one, which is a member in the group found that other members in the group are better, one may be dissatisfied with his own achievement and may strive to do well as other members in the group. Secondly, reference group influence kinds of behavior. This means that the reference group may establish the pattern of using wealthy items or wearing prestige product. This then creates conformity and implies certain perceptions on individual, who attribute characteristic following their reference group. This also involved psychological rewards and punishment after the result of one's behavior.

Types of Reference Group

Aside from the definition of the reference group, individual also belongs to a reference group. This concept occurs when individual in a specific group buys a certain product, then one tends to compare oneself with another person in the group (direct membership) or in different group (indirect membership) over the same or different product (Salmon, 2008).

Assael (1998) states that there are four types of reference groups (see Figure 2.1), which can be viewed with positive and negative attitudes (Assael, 1998). While

Williams (1970) also mentions that there are high and low degrees of relationship, where it indicates positive and negative attitude of an individual (M. A. Williams, 1970).

Figure 2.1 Types of Reference Groups

	MEMBERSHIP	NONMEMBERSHIP
POSITIVE ATTITUDE	Positive Membership Group	Aspiration Group
NEGATIVE ATTITUDE	Disclaimant Group	Dissociative Group

Source: Assael, H. (1998). *Consumer behavior and marketing action* (6th ed.).

Cincinnati, OH: International Thompson, p. 538.

Assael (1998) mentions that in a membership group, individual can have positive attitude toward the group which can be called positive membership group and negative attitude toward the group which can be called disclaimant group.

Furthermore, Salmon (2008) adds that the indirect membership or the non-membership has subdivided into aspiration group, which means that an individual has a positive attitude toward the reference group and wants to associate with. On the other hand, non-aspirational reference groups can be called dissociative group. It means even though an individual is not a member of the group, one can have negative attitude toward the reference group and wants to detach from it.

Types of Reference Group Influence

Deutsch and Gerard (1955) are the first to distinguish the specific types of social influence, which are informational social influence and normative social influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Informational social influence is an influence to accept the obtained information from others as an evident about reality. Normative social influence is the desire to conform to expectations of another person or a group (Tudor & Carley, 1998).

Most researchers agree upon with Deutsch and Gerard (1955) until the late 1970s before different opinion arose by Park and Lessig (1977). They proposed the third type of influence by breaking normative social influence into two distinct parts, which are utilitarian group influence and value-expressive group influence (Tudor & Carley, 1998).

Therefore, according to Park and Lessig (1977), there are three motivational influences of reference groups, which are informational reference group influence, utilitarian reference group influence, and value-expressive reference group influence.

Park and Lessig (1977) define informational reference group influence as an influence that is accepted from individual's knowledge of one environment. The information source is the one that others perceived as being credible. Therefore, source of high credibility plays a crucial role in building conformity. Bearden and Etzel (1982) add that informational influence is based on desire to make a decision. Since individual faces with any uncertainty, one will seek for information to reduce the risk of facing the uncertainty situation. The characteristic of the source is to be

seen as being credible, this includes being an expertise or a professional in a particular field.

Cohen and Golden (1972) refer that informational reference group influence is an influence to accept information that is provided by others and is taken as evidence about reality (Cohen & Golden, 1972). Meanwhile, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) note that informational reference group influence is defined as an influence to accept information obtaining from reliable source, which trustworthiness usually reflects from experience of the group member.

Stafford (1966) also explains a reference behavior of informational influence that individual must have some degree of knowledge to serve as a guide to the use of the referent. Park and Lessig (1977) interpret two ways that individual may use an informational reference group. Firstly, one can actively search for information from their opinion leaders or other group members with expertise area. Secondly, individual makes an implication by observing behavior of others.

Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) findings support that individual normally use others' product evaluations as a source of information about the product. The findings show that after observing others, one might evaluate a product favorably. As a result, one tends to perceive the product more favorably than they would have perceived. Therefore, information influence has been found to effect on consumer decision making process toward selecting product.

Rosen and Olshavsky (1987) distinct two forms of information as attribute-value information and recommendations. Attribute-value information is referred to specific information about particular product attributes or features, while

recommendations is defined as an alternative for the best available as evaluated by the referent which does not need any specific information about a particular product (Rosen & Olshavsky, 1987).

Mangleburg's et al. (2004) findings found to support that teens have perception that friends have greater knowledge of marketing phenomena. This is because friends can help construct desirable social identity or avoid embarrassing and negative social consequences. Moreover, informational influence may help shape attitude and behavior of individual as well. As the findings show that teenagers are more susceptible to informational influence from peers than normative influence. This means that people tend to be influenced more by information than group pressures. Susceptibility in this context refers to an individual willingness to accept information when purchasing product or likeliness to conform to other sources (Bearden et al., 1989).

Since Park and Lessig (1977) propose utilitarian function and value-expressive function under the normative reference group influence, they develop a set of scales for measuring the three functions dimensions of reference group influence. These scales are tested and found that the evidence supports their proposition. They also discovered that reference group influences are varied across product types (Tudor & Carley, 1998).

Normative group influence refers as influence to conform with certain expectations held by others are Cohen and Golden (1972). Tudor and Carley (1998) also support the term that it is a desire to conform to group norm or the expectations of another person.

Brinberg and Plimpton (1986) cite that normative group influence reflect the awareness of group norms, values, and accepted practices (Brinberg & Plimpton, 1986). While Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) findings originate that normative social influence on individual judgment will be greater among individual who is a member of a group rather than individual who is not a member of a group.

Childers and Rao (1992) suggest that parents, teachers, and peer are representatives of normative referent that can provide one with norms, attitude, and value through direct interaction.

There are findings from Mangleburg et al. (2004) found that teenagers that are susceptible to normative influence from peers often perceived risk of social embarrassment tends to shop less with peers than they do alone, which instead one turn to shop with other types of pals, such as family members. Therefore, the risk of disapproval might occur with peer is more heavily weighted comparing to the chance of approval by peers while shopping. This notion connect to Hu's (1944) concept of "face," which describe the feelings of an individual when encounter with the disapproval of the society. Face concept is a social sanction for determining moral standards and an internalized sanction (Hu, 1944).

Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) specify that a normative social influence can accomplish by the process of compliance (utilitarian group influence) or identification (value-expressive group influence).

Based on Kelman (1961) the compliance process is said to occur when individual accepts influence from others in the group or not in the group because one hopes to achieve favorable result such as attaining rewards or avoiding punishments.

In this case, it is related to the term “conformity” because individual behaves due to the desire to identify and be approved by others. Consequently, if individual is motivated to realize a reward or avoid a punishment from the group member, one would behave only when individual believes that one’s performance or behavior will be seen or known to others. Hence, when individual encounters product evaluation situation, they will comply oneself product evaluation with product evaluation of others and will occur through an internalization process. However, this process is only occurring where individual’s evaluation is seen to others who have power to give rewards or punishments. Therefore, this is very essential for individual to behave to gain approval from the group. In consequences, the reaction of others may serve as a basis for making inferences about the product characteristics (Kelman, 1961).

Kelman’s (1961) research on identification process is also another factor that occur within value-expressive group influence from the normative group influence. It is said to occur when individual adopts the behavior from other persons or a group. This is to perform particular behavior because of the satisfaction toward the person or a group. This is to establish or maintain the relationship with others in the group or a group, which also forms a part of self-image on individual.

Utilitarian group influence and value-expressive group influence are under normative group influence based on Park and Lessig’s (1977) research. Utilitarian group influence definition is defined by Bearden and Etzel (1982) that it is reflected in an attempt to comply with the wish or expectation of others in order to achieve rewards or avoid punishment. Thus, individual will act in certain kinds of behavior in a way that they felt that they would be rewarded or avoid punishment from others through the process of compliance, which is similar to normative group influence.

According to Park and Lessig (1977), utilitarian group influence occurs during product purchasing decision, an individual is to expect to comply the preference and expectation of others when (a) he perceived that any significant individual mediates rewards or punishments; (b) he believes that his action or behavior will be observed or seen by others; (c) he is motivated to realize the reward or avoid punishment.

The differences between normative group influence and utilitarian group influence is that normative group influence just focuses on the explicit rewards and punishments, which is specific to a group membership and norms.

Value-expressive group influence or comparative group influence is another function in normative group influence based on Park and Lessig (1977) research. It is when individual owns the self-concept to meet the expectation of others. As value-expressive group influence appears through process of identification, individual will adopt behavior or opinion of others, which is associated with satisfying self-defining relationship (Kelman, 1961).

Value-expressive is characterized by the two processes which are the need for psychological association with a person or a group, which can be reflected by positive expressed reaction from others and the liking for the group (Bearden & Etzel 1982; Park & Lessig 1977).

Firstly, an individual uses reference group to express oneself or bolster one's ego. In this process, there is a consistency-connected link between desire to express oneself and psychological self-image to attach within the reference group. Secondly, an individual is influenced by the value-expressive group influence because of one's affect or liking for the group. Although, there is no consistency-connected link

between desires to express oneself and psychological self-image to attach within the reference group, individual responds to the reference group through content of response that is irrelevant to the group.

Burnkrant and Cousineu (1975) find that value-expressive group influence affects on individual's selection decision of vary types of product that are conspicuousness or visible by others.

Childers and Rao (1992) prescribe the characteristic of value-expressive referent or comparative referent as sports, heroes, and entertainment figures. This provides standard of achievement that individual aspire but is only be able to observe the behavior of the referent without any direct social contact with the referent. Escalas and Bettman (2013) also agree with Childers and Rao (1992) that there is likely more impact of celebrity influence even though there are many individual factors that come into play with celebrities. Especially, in the case of celebrity influence on brand associations that consumer sees the connection between celebrity and the brand, which could influence them by either celebrity use of the brand or by perceived fit between the celebrity and the brand.

Value-expressive group influence or comparative influence is a group that can influence an individual on attitude, values, and behavior. This type of influence does not require any social interaction with the referent; in this case, the recipient is being attracted to the group member or activities. Value-expressive is different with normative influence, where it requires some degree of interaction with the group member in order to evaluate individual's conformity to the group norm (Cocanougher & Bruce, 1971).

While Park and Lessig's (1977) findings are widely accepted among researchers, few studies have re-examined Park and Lessig's work and have failed to confirm it. Since some researchers fails to proof that the three-dimensional structure are valid, they instead offer support for Deutsch and Gerard (1955) for the two-dimensional approach consisting only normative group influence and informational group influence (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Bearden et al., 1989; Brinberg & Plimpton, 1986; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Tudor & Carley, 1998).

Tudor and Carley (1998) state that more research needs to be done to determine the types of reference group influence because currently there is not adequate evidence to support Park and Lessig's (1977) research on value-expressive group influence or identificational reference group. However, there are many research studies that also support Park and Lessig's position (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Kelman, 1961; Stafford, 1966).

Types of Reference Behavior

Turner (1956) states that there are two different usage of the term, "reference group" as it means a group which one uses to compare himself with when making self-judgment and another usage of reference group is a source of individual's value (Turner, 1956).

Stafford (1966) stipulates that there are three types of reference behavior, which are knowledge, affectivity, and sanctions. Firstly, for knowledge, it will occur when individual is aware or has the existing knowledge in order to serve as a guide for one to use of a referent. This can be done through direct and indirect communication, so the member of the group will learn the norms and value of the

informal group and adapt to corresponding behavior pattern to fit in the group. A knowledge type of behavior belongs to the informational group influence. Based on Solomon (2013), the referent owns information power because one knows something others would like to know (Solomon, 2013).

Secondly, the affectivity is related to the identification of a person, which links with the value-expressive group influence. A person's degree of identification is very crucial to a reference group to build and maintain relationship in order to enhance their self-image. Based on Solomon (2013), this type of referent owns referent power. This is because it occurs when a person admires another person or a group, so one would try to imitate the behavior of the referent behavior.

Thirdly, the sanctions are perceived by individual, which is a concept of referent that individual would accept and behave in an informal social group in order to attain rewards or avoid punishments. This is also used in the evaluation of norms, values, statuses, and behavior. This kind of behavior relates to normative group influence and utilitarian group influence. Based on Solomon (2013), the referent in this case possesses social power, which enables the referent to change the actions of others by the power of giving rewards or punishments.

Four Dimensions of Product Consumptions

As cited in Piron (2000), Bourne (1957) investigates that the impact of reference group on product and brand decisions are a function of two forms of conspicuousness, which are exclusivity and visibility (Piron, 2000).

For exclusivity, it is the factor that can affect product decision, which it must be luxurious and possessed by only a few people. Luxury in this context means a

product that is not commonly owned or used and it requires a level of expenditure, which uses extensive cognitive process. So if everyone owns it, then it is not conspicuous in this context. As Bourne (1957) explains a distinction between luxuries and necessities, where the product can be commonly owned by anyone and does not involve extensive cognitive process (Lawan, Zanna, & Abba, 2013; Parment, 2013).

For visibility, it relates to the product that is usually consumed or used either publicly, where other people can see one using the product, or privately, where no one can see that individual is using the product. Hence, in this condition, the reference group influence will affect individual on brand decision when the item is visible or has a chance to be identified or observed by others.

Since there is no formal definition of the term, “conspicuousness,” Bourne (1957) describes it as the social and public visibility surrounding the consumption of product. Furthermore, consumption will be conspicuous only when there is a social event or publicly seen by other people. In this circumstance, consumption of product is more conspicuous when the item is used publicly rather than privately (Bourne, 1957, as cited in Piron, 2000).

Bourne’s (1957) typology is used to investigate the private versus public consumption of luxury versus necessity products. Followed by the research of Bearden and Etzel (1982), they use such dimension to test the effect of reference group’s influence on product and brand decisions, which is accepted. While the private and public dimension is the component of conspicuousness, luxury and necessity dimension represents the consumer’s desires to express themselves to others. (Piron, 2000)

When combining these concepts of Bourne (1957) between the relationship of reference group influence and product conspicuousness, it creates four conditions which is explained down below: (1) publicly consumed luxuries (PUL), (2) publicly consumed necessities (PUN), (3) privately consumed luxuries (PRL), and (4) privately consumed necessities (PRN) (Bourne, 1957, as cited in Bearden & Etzel, 1982).

Firstly, publicly consumed luxury (PUL) is a product that is consumed in the public area and it is not commonly owned or used. Secondly, privately consumed luxury (PRL) is a product that is consumed out of public area and is not commonly owned or used. Thirdly, publicly consumed necessity (PUN) is a product that is consumed in the public area and virtually everyone owns it. Lastly, privately consumed necessity (PRN) is a product that is consumed out of public area and virtually everyone owns it (see Figure 2.2).

Bearden and Etzel (1982) originate framework indicates that publicly consumed necessities is influencing weakly on product but strongly on brand. Publicly consumed luxuries is strongly influencing on both product and brand. For privately consumed necessities influence, it is weakly influencing on both product and brand. Privately consumed luxuries is strongly influencing product but weakly on brand.

Bearden and Etzel's (1982) findings found that luxury-necessity dimension of conspicuousness are more sensitive on individual's perception of informational reference group influence. While public-private dimension affects on individual's perception of value-expressive reference group influence and utilitarian reference

group influence to a greater degree. As for product decisions, public necessities are perceived to involve more value-expressive influence and utilitarian influence than private luxuries. The reason behind this is because there is a fear of embarrassment from not owning products, which one might feel that it is a must to have the item for the normal living. While for brand decision, public necessities involved less informational influence than private luxuries. This is because individual might think that the necessity ownership is so common, so it is not necessary to seek for more information about the product.

Figure 2.2 Four Dimensions of Product Consumptions

		Public		
	Product	Weak reference group influence (-)	Strong reference group influence (+)	
Brand				
Strong reference group influence (+)		<i>Public necessities</i> Influence: Weak product and strong brand Examples: Wristwatch, automobile, man's suit	<i>Public luxuries</i> Influence: Strong product and brand Examples: Golf clubs, snow skis, sailboat	
Necessity				Luxury
Weak reference group influence (-)		<i>Private necessities</i> Influence: Weak product and brand Examples: Mattress, floor lamp, refrigerator	<i>Private luxuries</i> Influence: Strong product and weak brand Examples: TV game, trash compactor, icemaker	
		Private		

Source: Bearden, W. O., & Etzel, M. J. (1982), Reference group influence on product and brand purchase decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(2), p. 185.

As Bearden and Etzel (1982) suggest that there can be other role of reference group that might have influence on private consumption decision, later Childers and Rao (1992) have done a research on influence of familial and peer-based reference groups on consumer decisions. Childers and Rao's (1992) research findings found

that peer group influence and familial transfer brand loyalty. Both roles of reference group take part in influencing individual. Therefore, whenever the decision is not influenced by peer, the family would exercise an influence on individual.

Based on Childer and Rao's (1992) research, peer influence affects higher on individual for public necessities rather than private necessities. Similar to luxuries, regardless of public and private consumption, peers provide a high degree level of influence as well. Besides peer influence, familial influence takes part for private production consumption including both luxuries and necessities.

Besides from the importance of reference group, brand is also crucial for marketers to understand as it can be used to distinguish among other competitors in the market by its image. Meanwhile, a strong brand creates a lasting impression in consumer mindset, which leads to consumer purchase of the product or brand.

Branding

Since brand is a long-term asset having both financial value and psychological value for company and consumers, understanding about branding enables marketers to develop a stronger strategy in the future.

There are many definitions of brand given by many researchers, which this topic is still gaining attention among various sectors. Therefore, it can be seen that brand is the core value of business. This section reviews about brand image, brand personality, and brand measurement.

Definitions

A brand can be defined as a name, symbol, design, or combination of them that identifies the good and service of a seller or a group of seller. A brand is used to differentiate from itself from competitors (Kotler, 1991). However, there are many criticisms over the definition that it is too product-oriented. Later the definition has been modified from specifying “the good and service” to be “any other feature” in order to allow intangible product, such as an image to be differentiate (Wood, 2000).

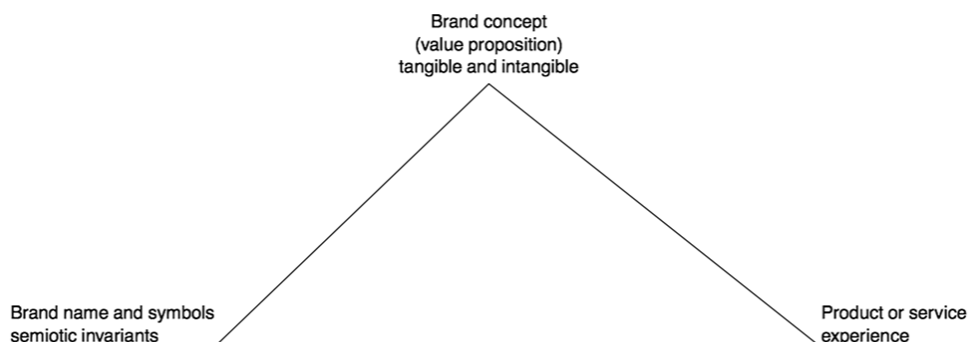
Maurya and Mishra (2012) prescribe brands as conditional, intangible, and legal assets for firms. It is a signal for all stakeholders to perceive on its value, which may range from functional to psychological associations through various interactions and point of contact (Maurya & Mishra, 2012). Mootee (2013) adds that a brand is an intangible asset that lives in people’s hearts and minds. It is a trust-based and value-producing relationship that keeps repeating the process and sustains its value of the product (Mootee, 2013). Then, Kapferer (2008) adds that brands can only be developed through a long-term consistency (Kapferer, 2008).

Plummer (1984) refers that brand can be described in three different classes of characteristics. Firstly, a brand consists of physical attributes. Secondly, a brand can be described as having functional characteristics or contained consequences of using the brand, which in some case, functional consequences of using a brand includes external function and internal effects of using the product. Finally, the third way of describing a brand characteristic is the manner that a brand can be characterized such as modern or old-fashioned. This aspect of brand is called “brand personality,” which is created by the result of communication.

There are many factors that differentiate a product from a brand stated by Mootee (2013). First, a product is built in a factory but a brand is built from trust and relationships. Second, a product is easily to duplicate but a brand is already unique by itself. Third, a product is an object but a brand is a personality. Fourth, a product is sold by a merchant but a brand is bought by a customer. Last, a product is quickly outdated but a brand is timeless (Mootee, 2013). While, Kapferer (2008) states that products are mute so brand gives them the meaning and guide for the product perception.

In addition, Kapferer (2008) mentions that the power of brand can be acquired by the combination of three elements, which are product or service, name and concepts (see Figure 2.3). In other words, product or service interacts with the consumer at the point of contact within the market, the price, and the place through all sources of communication. As a result of this relationship, it creates customer brand experience.

Figure 2.3 The Brand System



Source: Kapferer, J. (2008). *The new strategic brand management: Creating and sustaining brand equity long term* (4th ed.). London: Kogan Page, p. 12.

When mentioning brand, people often infer to a name or a logo but a brand is including the whole system in building the concept of differentiation that enhance in value the products or services. This brand concept can be summarized into a unique set of attribute including both tangible and intangible that composed the value of the brand (Kapferer, 2008). Therefore, Stine (2002) significantly notes that brand differentiation is a key or else it is just a commodity product, which needs to compete in the market based on price and product availability (Stine, 2002).

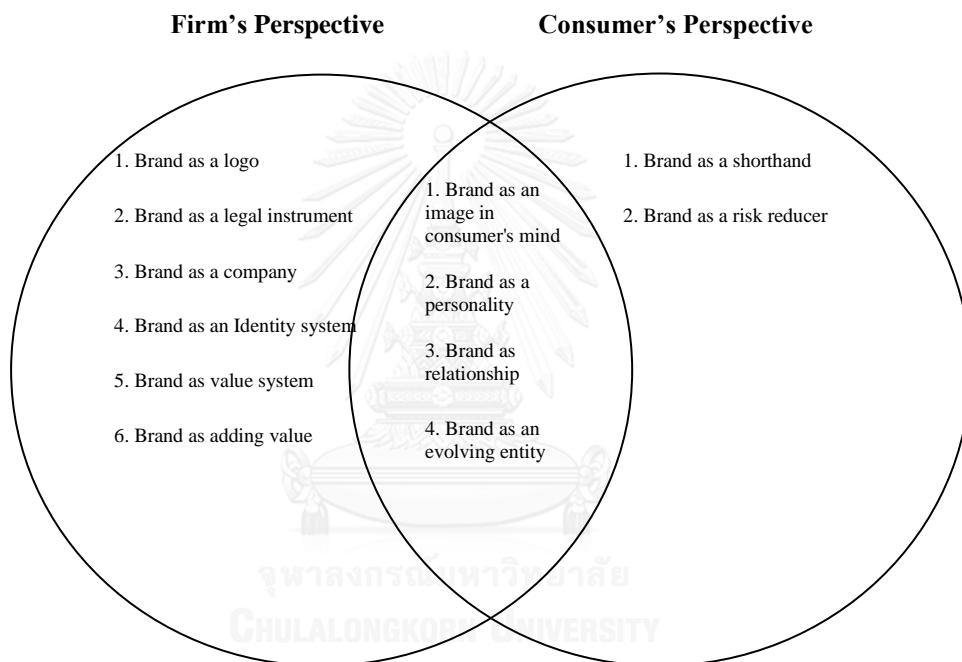
As Kapferer (2008) propagate, brands are diversities among all sectors such as luxurious product, fresh produced product, innovative product, universities, celebrities, pharmaceutical product, or even business-to-business enterprise. They can all be perceived as a brand. Although there are many types of brand, this research will only focus on luxury brand. The concept of luxury is perceived differently among people.

The first characteristics of luxury are that the brand gives high quality and uniqueness of the product such as Rolls-Royce, Cartier, and Hermès. The second characteristics of luxury are the creativity and sensuality of the product such as Gucci and Boss. The third characteristics of luxury are the value of timeliness and its international reputation such as Porsche, Vuitton, and Dunhill. The fourth characteristics of luxury are the feeling of rarity to procession and consumption to the brand such as Chivas and Mercedes (Kapferer, 2008).

Maurya and Mishra (2012) assemble the twelve themes of brand definitions which are that brand as a logo, brand as a legal instrument, brand as a company, brand as a shorthand, brand as a risk reducer, brand as a identity system, brand as an image

in consumer's mind, brand as a value system, brand as a personality, brand as a relationship, brand as an adding value, and brand as an evolving entity. Hence, the twelve themes of brand definitions can be divided into two broad categories, which are based on consumer's perspective and firm's perspective (see Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 Themes of Brand Definition



Source: Adapted from Maurya, U. K., & Mishra, P. (2012). What is a brand? A perspective on brand meaning. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 4(3), p. 128.

There are four themes of brand definition that are repeated between consumer's perspective and firm's perspective. They are brand as an image in consumer's mind, brand as a personality, brand as a relationship, and brand as an evolving entity. For consumer's perspective, there are 6 themes that considered as

themes of brand definitions in consumer's perspective. Consumer perceives that brand as a shorthand (way to express oneself); brand as a risk reducer (buying brand to reduce risk); brand as an image in consumer's mind (forming a part of content in their mind); Brand as a personality (differentiating brand by symbolic value); brand as relationship (having bonding and attitude toward the brand); and brand as an evolving entity (offering more than a product benefit) (Boulding, 1988; Chernatony & Rilley, 1998; Maurya & Mishra, 2012).

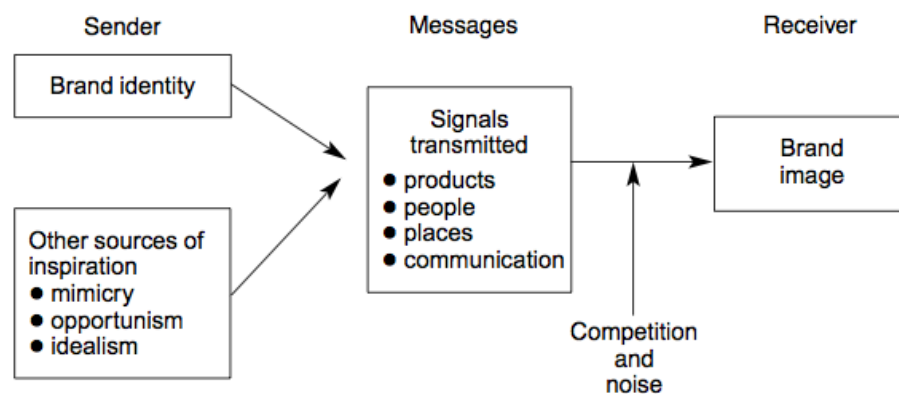
On the other hand, there are 10 themes of brand definitions in firm's perspectives. Firm perceives brand as a logo (differentiating from competitors); brand as a legal instrument (marking for ownership); brand as a company (relating to corporate identity); brand as an identity system (relating to self-image of the brand); brand as a value system (finding a value in a brand); brand as an adding value (benefiting more than functional value); brand as an image in consumer's mind (forming a part of content in their mind); Brand as a personality (differentiating brand by symbolic value); brand as relationship (having bonding and attitude toward the brand); and brand as an evolving entity (offering more than a product benefit) (Boulding, 1988; de Chernatony & Rilley, 1998; Maurya & Mishra, 2012).

Brand Image

Besides the distinction between a brand and a product, a brand is not only a name of a product like many people are thinking. Behind a brand, there is a vision that drives as a creation of the product and service in which that vision is the key belief of the brand and its core values. This is called identity, which enables the brand to create the cult and loyalty from customers within tangible and intangible

characteristics (Kapferer, 2008). Keller (1993) also states that the component that builds up a brand is called, “brand identity” in the perspective of the marketer, or “brand image” in the perspective of the consumer. Kapferer (2008) has concluded in the same direction as Keller’s (1993) that brand identity is on the sender’s side (marketer) and brand image is on the receiver’s side (consumer) (see Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5 Brand Identity and Brand Image



Source: Kapferer, J. (2008). *The new strategic brand management: Creating and sustaining brand equity long term* (4th ed.). London: Kogan Page, p. 174.

Nevertheless, Kapferer (2008) adds that on the sender’s side, it is to identify the brand’s meaning, objective, and its self-image as image is resulted from the interpretation of both sides. Hence, the identity that is created by the sender later builds up an image before projecting the image to the public with the brand message that can be sent through communication, product, people, or places. On the other hand, brand image is on the receiver’s side (consumer) where image in this context refers to the way that receiver (consumer) decodes the signal from the product, service, or communication that is sent through the brand by the sender (marketer).

However, there are also external factors that negatively affect on the sender and the message during transmitting. There are some cases that the companies imitate others because they have no clear idea of their own brand identity. Moreover, noise may occur while transmitting the message to the public due to overloaded information and too many business competitions in the market. As a result, consumer may ignore the information from the brand (Kapferer, 2008).

Although, brand image is widely known and vital in the concept of marketing, but there is no absolute agreement on its appropriate term (Keller 1993). Tariq, R. Nawaz, M. Nawaz, and Butt (2013) illustrate that brand image can be influenced by promotion factors which correspond with the findings that there is a connected link between brand image and purchase intention (Tariq, Nawaz, Nawaz, & Butt, 2013).

Based on Keller's (1993) assembling of the term, brand image is a perception about brand which is reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory that relates to associative network memory as a model of brand knowledge. Hence, brand knowledge is composed of brand image and brand awareness, which consist of brand recognition and brand recall.

Keller (1993) explains that brand associations are other information nodes that link with other brand nodes in the memory. This contains the meaning of each brand that is perceived by the consumers with the degree of strength and weakness.

Fernandez's (2009) research findings found that the participants associated brands with quality, image and status, and expensive products. They seek for brands that are visible and this also connects with the feeling of success. This is because they

are trying to create an identity and image to represent themselves through lifestyle, personalities, and values (Fernandez, 2009).

Brand associations are varied in different forms and it can be distinguished by the amount of information that has been summarized in the association operation. Brand associations can be classified into three major categories, which are attribute, benefits, and attitude (Keller, 1993). Firstly, starting with attribute, it is defined as a feature that characterized a product or service. Attributes are distinguished based on how they directly relate to the product or service performance.

The first type of attribute is product-related attributes. It is how product or service performs its function and it relates to a product's physical structure or a service requirements. Aaker (1997) implies that product-related attributes serve as a utilitarian function for consumer.

The second type of attribute is non-product-related attribute, which are defined as external aspect of the product or service that relate to consumer purchase or consumption. The non-product-related attributes are subdivided into four categories. Firstly, price information involves individual strong belief on price may affect product category knowledge in one's mind. Secondly, packing or product appearance information involves a part of purchase and consumption process. Thirdly, non-product-related attitude is user imagery, and fourthly, involves usage imagery. For user and usage imagery attribute can be established from individual's experience and contact with the brand through the source of information (Aaker, 1997; Keller, 1993).

Secondly, benefit is considered a type of brand association because of its personal value that consumers feel that they are attached to the product or service

attributes. Benefit can be distinguished into three categories. First, functional benefit has fundamental advantages of product or service consumption. Second, experiential benefit is how consumers feel when they use the product or service. And third, symbolic benefit gives extrinsic advantages of product or service consumption and consumer use it for personal expression or to gain social approval (Keller, 1993). Therefore, consumer values brand benefit because it helps consumers build their self-identity by forming association with brand and present themselves to others (Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

Thirdly, brand attitude is the component of brand association. It is the overall evaluation of the consumer toward the brand. Multi-attribute attitude model (Fishbein, 1963, as cited in Keller, 1993) is a theory of an attitude formation that functions in consumer belief about attribute and benefit of a brand. It is one of many approaches that have been widely accepted in the academic world out of many different brand attitude models. Attitude serves as a value-expressive function because it allows individual to express their self-concept. Attitude toward the brand is difficult to specify how it is relevant to attribute or benefit value of the brand (Keller, 1993).

However, Olson, Toy, and Dover's (1982) research found that cognitive responses operate only for message content that effects on individual beliefs, and this belief effects on attitudes. In consequences, attitude plays a role in effecting on behavioral intention (Olson, Toy, & Dover, 1982).

Moreover, brand image is one of the crucial factors that stimulate consumer purchase intention. This is because consumer tends to consume its value on the specific brand in having a good brand image. It enables one to decide the best

alternative brand. Furthermore, a good brand image helps to create long-term relationships between the product and consumer (Tariq et al., 2013). As Escalas and Bettman (2003) investigate, consumer who perceives oneself as a member of the group or consumer who wishes to belong in an aspiration group will be affected by the group's brand usage on consumer's self-brand connection. Interbrand (2013) suggests that in order to be a strong brand in the perception of customer, the brand should be functions, engaged, and has a sense of responsibility (Interbrand, 2013).

Brand Personality

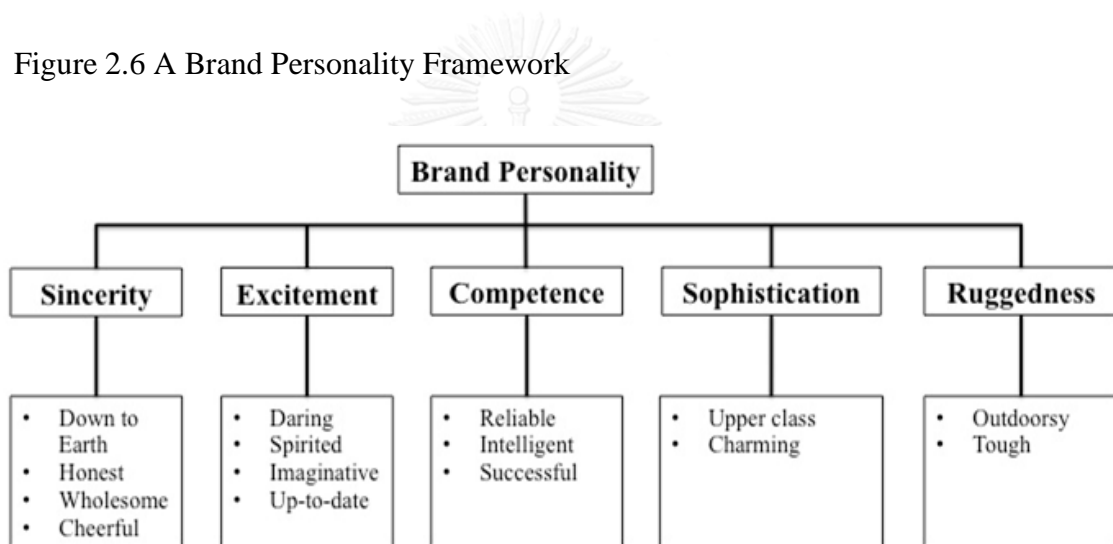
Based on Maurya and Mishra (2012), brand personality is considered as one of the twelve themes of brand definition among consumer perspective. Brand personality is defined as a set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997). Plummer (1984) prescribes that the brand personality is a perceptual reality from the consumer perception. Brand personality reflects how consumer feels about the brand, not how marketer wants consumers to feel about the brand (Plummer, 1984).

Goldberg (1990) indicates that "Big-Five" factors of personality description are the theoretical orientation that is used to apply with the study of brand personality. The big five factors are agreeableness, extroversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness (Goldberg, 1990). However, Liu, Li, Mizerski, and Soh (2012) argue that the Big Five Model is not only a personality model that explains brand personality. This is because this model is a scale that can measure brand personality from trait, cognitive, and psychoanalytic perspective. Nevertheless, the model might not be able to specifically define brand personality and characterized its development process (F. Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012).

While product-related-attributes tends to serve a utilitarian function for consumer, non-product-related attributes such as brand personality tend to serve a symbolic value and benefit as well as self-expressive function for the consumer (Aaker, 1997; Keller, 1993).

Later, Aaker (1997) develops a framework of the five brand personality dimension that is systematically chosen set of brands across product categories (see Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6 A Brand Personality Framework



Source: Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34, p. 352.

The consumers perceived brands in five distinct personalities, which are sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. However, the research found that three out of five brand personalities are still capturing the same concept. From agreeableness to sincerity, both aspects still hold the idea of warmth and acceptance. From extroversion to excitement, both aspects still hold the idea of sociability, energy, and activity. From conscientiousness to competence, both aspects

captured responsibility, dependability, and security. However, the last two dimensions which are sophistication and ruggedness found by Aaker (1997), are different from the Big Five of human personality. Sophistication and ruggedness are dimensions that individual desires but do not necessarily has. Sophistication brand can be used with consumer who wishes to belong in a particular group, such as the upper class. For rugged brand, it is similar to sophistication brand but it gives a feeling of tough and strength. This concept of five brand personality can also imply the understanding on the symbolic use of brands for individual self-expressive purpose, which are varies across culture (Aaker, 1997).

Brand Measurement

Brands have financial and psychological values as they can create assets in heart and mind of the consumers, distributor, and opinion leaders. These assets are brand awareness, brand belief, and emotional bonding (Kapferer, 2008).

Brand name awareness is the essential beginning step that may lead to the end-chain of consumer purchasing the brand. It consists of brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition related to consumers' ability to distinguish a brand whether they have seen or heard about it after the exposure of a brand when given a cue. Brand recall relates to consumers' ability to remember and identify the brand when they are given a product category. In the process of recall, the information of the brand is pulled from the long-term memory (Keller, 1993). Therefore, Bettman (1979) suggests that the importance of brand recognition may be when consumer makes their decisions in the store and the importance of brand recall may be when consumer makes their decisions outside the store or at home (Bettman, 1979).

According to Bettman (1979), individual stores information in their short-memory, which has lower capacity. It required amount of time to transfer chunk of information from short-term memory into long-term memory, which has a larger storage. In case the process has been performed repeatedly, it will form a rehearsal, which leads to retention. In the process of recognition, two to five seconds may be needed to refer a chunk of information from the short-term memory but in the process of recall, five to ten seconds may be needed to recall a chunk of information from the long-term memory.

Keller (1993) describes that brand awareness is reflected by consumer's ability to identify the brand under different conditions. This may result from individual's interests in the brands and individual's previous experience level with the brand. In other words, it is a result from brand identity performance (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Keller, 1993).

However, Macdonald and Sharp (2000) postulate that brand awareness plays an important role only in consumer habitual choice, which is mainly on low involvement product (MacDonald & Sharp, 2000). Whereas Young & Rubicam Advertising Agency (Y&R) has developed findings to create brand measurement model by using Brand Asset Valuator or BAV Model to measure brand value, which is created in consumer's mind. Brand Asset Valuator can be used to measure brand across product categories. It measures brand using the four key indicators, which are differentiation, relevance, esteem, and knowledge (Y&R, 2014)

The first indicator found by Y&R (2014) is differentiation. It is used to measure brand's meaning, energy, and dynamisms as well as how brand can be

distinguished among competitors and captured the attention from consumers.

Relevance is used to measure the connection or relationship that brand has with the consumer. Brand Asset Valuator shows that relevance is related with market penetration, so if there is a great demand from the consumers, the brand can grow and expand their business size in the market (Y&R, 2014).

Therefore, based on Y&R (2014), the relationships between differentiation and relevance represents brand strength that can strongly indicate the future performance, brand potential, and growth value of the brand in the long-term.

Y&R's (2014) third pillar of Brand Asset Valuator is esteem as it follows differentiation and relevance in the progression of building brand. Esteem is how highly the consumer respects and regards the brand. The brand that has high esteem is more likely to see repeating usage by the consumers. A perception of quality and popularity is the two key factors that help drive behind esteem but these factors are varied by country and culture. Therefore, Brand Asset Valuator also enables marketers to manage the perceptions of consumers.

Lastly, after the brand has established its relevant differentiation and consumer hold the brand in high esteem, brand knowledge is the outcome that represents the success of the brand. Brand knowledge is used to measure the consumer understanding of the brand, which the consumer experience with the brand also helps shape the brand knowledge among the consumers. Therefore, the relationships between esteem and knowledge build up brand stature, which indicate consumer involvement with the brand (Y&R, 2014).

According to Y&R (2014), brand strength and brand stature are a combination of brand asset, if properly managing these four factors, they can be the key to a successful brand building and retention of brand value.

Apart from measuring brand, it is very important for marketers to understand how consumer evaluates brand. As information on brands is distributed from various sources, it is overloaded for consumers to remember all the brands. In consequences, consumers have set a decision rule for evaluating brands before purchasing it. Information-processing strategies are the decision rules that consumers use in evaluating brands. Hence, there are factors that impact on how consumers evaluate the brand, which depends on amount of knowledge that an individual has about the brand, the level of involvement with the brand, and whether the information is new or already stored in the memory (Assael, 2004).

Assael (2004) illustrates that consumer often uses non-evaluative strategy, which is a simple decision rule to avoid complex decision making in choosing brand. Meanwhile, evaluative strategy is a more complex decision making which requires consumer to organize information that they have about the brand.

When consumer evaluates brands, consumer may use either category based strategy (overall evaluations of brand rather than on specific attributes) or attribute specific strategy (consumer evaluates brand by comparing each brand alternative on specific attribute). Basically, category based processing is based on overall brand image of the product, which in this case it is likely used to evaluate hedonic products. For attribute specific processing, it occurs when there is a new product introduced for consumer to compare or when consumer goes through more complicated process of

comparing brands. Attribute specific strategy is likely used to evaluate utilitarian product (Assael, 2004).

Consumer tends to use attribute specific process when one is involved with the brand or one is knowledgeable about the product category. Attribute specific strategy can be divided into two processes, which are compensatory processing or brand-by-attribute processing (evaluating brands one at a time across ranges of attributes) and non-compensatory processing or attribute-by-brand processing (evaluating specific attributes across the range of brands). In some cases, consumer may use non-compensatory strategy to screen out brands that does not meet the specific attribute (Assael, 2004).

Non-compensatory strategy can be divided into two distinct strategies, which are conjunctive strategy (consumer considers a brand only when it meets personal standards on key attributes) and lexicographic strategy (consumer evaluates brands on the most important attribute) (Assael, 2004). Therefore, Assael (2004) suggests that marketer should develop and provide message closely and make sure it is always available to serve the consumers.

Apart from the importance of brands, the last section involves consumer behavior in which it is another field that can be used to apply with the current research.

Consumer Behavior

Since the goal of marketers is to gain profit in the business by satisfying the needs and wants for the consumer, consumer behavior is an essential study field for

the marketers to understand the process of consumer buying behavior. Consumer behavior is a process of consumer buying behavior that links from pre-purchase to post-purchase whereas the relationship of cognitive, affective, and conative of consumer affect in consumer purchasing behavior. Therefore, this section covers about consumer perception, consumer attitudes, and consumer decision making.

Definitions

Solomon (2013) defines consumer behavior as a study of process that involves individual or groups who select, purchase, use or disposed of products, services, ideas, or experiences in order to satisfy needs and desires. Hudson (2007) adds that consumer behavior is related to why consumer buy particular product and how one makes a decision to purchase or not purchase such product or brand (Hudson, 2007).

Ward (1987) prescribes that consumer behavior focus on the transactions between seller (marketer) and consumer (buyer) which result as a consumption of goods and services (S. Ward, 1987). Khan (2006) terms consumer behavior as a process of consumer decision-making and involves physical activity, such as acquiring, evaluating, using, and disposing of good and services (Khan, 2006).

Based on American Marketing Association (2014), consumer behavior is a dynamic interaction of affect, cognition, behavior, and environment where human being exchanges aspects of living. It can also define as an overt action of consumers. Furthermore, it can refer to the behavior of consumer or decision maker in the market place of products and services. It is often used as a term of interdisciplinary field of scientific study describing such behavior (AmericanMarketingAssociation, 2014).

Solomon (2013) states that consumer behavior covers all the stages of consumer consumption process, which includes pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. Whereas Khan (2006) agrees that consumer behavior is not only just a process of buying good and service but the process mainly starts before the good and service have been acquired or bought, which falls in the pre-purchase process.

Solomon (2013) indicates that pre-purchase process is the first step, which is related to how consumer decides to use a product or service. In marketing perspective, it is to understand how consumer attitudes toward product are formed or changed. Khan (2006) specifies that the process between pre-purchase and purchase involved consumer finding alternative product to compare the advantages and disadvantages. In consequences, this leads to the external and internal search. Then, it is followed by the consumer decision-making for purchasing the product.

Solomon (2013) mentions that the second step of consumption process is purchase issues, which are related to the consumer experience of using the product or service. From the marketing perspective, it is to study about situational factors that affect on consumer's purchase decision.

Lastly, post-purchase issues are related to how product satisfy or dissatisfy the consumer. From the marketing perspective, it deals with the satisfaction of the product. So if consumer is favorable toward the product, then there is a chance of repurchasing of the product. Moreover, this implies that experience with the product may help influence consumer purchasing decision as consumer use product to define identities in different setting (Solomon, 2013). Khan (2006) supports that post-

purchase behavior is very important for the marketers because it gives a hint on product successfulness.

Consumer Perception

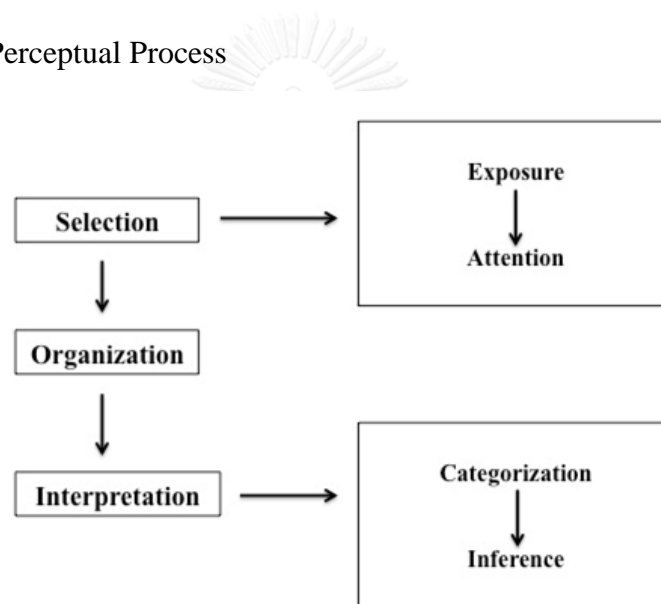
While marketer plays a major role in creating and shaping consumer perception toward their product or brand, it is fundamental to know how consumer perceive and comprehend things around them.

Perception is a process when people select, organize, and interpret the sensation from the sensory receptors (eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin). Perception consists of three stages of process, which are exposure, attention, and interpretation (Solomon, 2013). Hudson (2007) defines that perception is an overall mind-picture of the world, which is shaped by information that people send and receive. Since people choose to expose, attend, and interpret in different way, it can be considered as a concept of bias and distortion. Solomon (2013) agrees with Hudson that individual interprets the meaning of a stimulus with one own unique biases, needs, and experiences. Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) also state that consumers act and react based on their perceptions, not on objective reality (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010).

Khan (2006) describes perception as a process consists of stimulus, registration, interpretation, feedback, and reaction. On the other hand, when talking about brand, Kapferer (2008) explains that awareness and image can be composed of a brand perception. It determines that brands shape individual perception of the product but product may also send back a signal that brand can use to establish its identity.

According to American Marketing Association (2014), perception is the cognitive impression that is a formed of reality, which influences individual's actions and behavior toward an object. Solomon (2013) states that there are three stages that make up the process of perception, which are exposure, attention, and interpretation. As individual received external stimuli (sensory inputs) or intrinsic stimuli (tangible product), the five senses detect the stimuli and that begins the perceptual process (see Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7 The Perceptual Process



Source: Adapted from Assael, H. (1998). *Consumer behavior and marketing action* (6th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: International Thompson, p. 218.

The first step of perceptual process by Solomon (2013) is perceptual selection, which is divided into selective exposure and selective attention. Selective exposure is when consumer is concentrating on selected stimuli, while ignoring stimuli that are not important to them. Whereas Khan (2006) expresses that most of the stimuli that individual exposed to is the self-selected information and avoid the one that is not interested. For selective attention based on Solomon (2013), it is when consumer is

concentrating on interesting information while avoiding irrelevant information. Khan (2006) indicates that selective attention happens when individual selectively choose to attend to products and messages. Attention is determined by stimulus, individual, and situation, which these are key factors that attracts individual.

Solomon (2013) verifies that there are two types of selective perception or personal selection factors as Hudson (2007) infers that selective perception occurs when consumers choose to interpret and ignore some factors.

The first type of selective perception is perceptual vigilance, which individual is aware of stimuli that are related to their needs. The second type of selective perception is perceptual defense, which an individual screens out stimuli that one finds psychological threatening. Therefore, individual selects what one wants to see and chooses to ignore what one does not want to see. In case of threatening, individual may screen out or distort the meaning to be acceptable for ones. This type of selective perception serves as the opposite side to the perceptual vigilance (Solomon, 2013).

The second step of perceptual process is perceptual organization. It is when a consumer groups information from various sources into a meaningful whole. This is related to Gestalt psychology in the principle of perceptual integration that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The first type of perceptual organization is the principle of closure, which is to perceive incomplete picture as a whole. The second type is the principle of grouping, which is to group an object that shares the similar physical characteristics. Lastly, the third type of perceptual organization is the

principle of context, which that one part of the stimulus, takes role to dominate all the other parts (Solomon, 2013).

The last step of perceptual process based on Solomon (2013) is perceptual interpretation. It refers to the meaning that consumer assigns to the sensory stimuli. Khan (2006) determines in perceptual interpretation, the same message can be interpreted in different ways due to personal meaning toward the sensations. Moreover, interpretation involves factual component and emotional response by cognitive component. According to Solomon (2013), there are two processes involved, which are perceptual categorization. It is a process of translating sensory input into identification of particular stimulus by the schema, which is a set of belief from personal past experience. Another process of perceptual interpretation is perceptual inference. It is a development between two stimuli, which are semiotic (consists of object, sign, and interpretant) and image (a total perception of object that consumer form over time through information processing from various sources) (Solomon, 2013).

Khan's (2006) explanation of the perceptual process supports in the similar direction with Solomon (2013) that individual is first exposed to the stimuli and later individual's attention is attracted. However, Khan (2016) adds that after the attention has been attracted, one interprets the stimuli. Then, the situation goes into memory as a result of the reaction can be seen by the means of purchasing the product.

Consumer Attitudes

The term “attitude” is often used in ordinary days through different contexts. However, attitude has a deeper meaning in the context of psychology, which is one of the key aspects that connect other aspects together within consumer behavior field.

Based on the definition of attitude (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, as cited in Lutz, 1991), attitude is a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object. Hudson (2007) describes attitude as an ingrained feeling about various factors of personal experience which is difficult to change.

Solomon (2013) defines attitudes as a lasting over time, a general evaluation of people, object, advertisement, or other issues. Thus, attitude towards an object (A_O) has positive, negative, or motivational component. Hence, it is a system of cognitive, affective and conative tendencies. Meanwhile, American Marketing Association (2014) defines that attitude, in the consumer behavior field, is a person’s overall evaluation of a concept, which involves affective response as feeling liking or favorability, and cognitive process which involves positive and negative valence, feelings, or emotions.

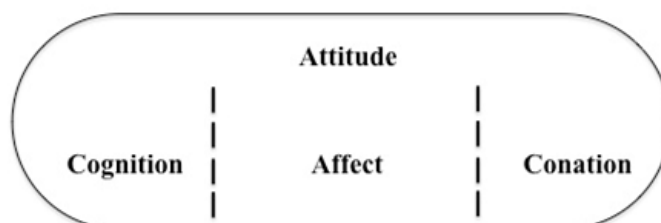
Furthermore, Hudson (2007) defines consumer attitudes as a consumer’s long-term favorable or unfavorable cognitive evaluation, emotional feelings, and action toward some object or idea. In addition, Assael (1998) who describes that attitude towards brands are consumers’ learned tendencies to evaluate brands in consistency favorable or unfavorable way on overall of brand from poor to excellent.

Lutz (1991) expresses that individual learns the feelings of favorability and unfavorability through information and direct experience on attitude object (both tangible and intangible object). Attitudes are unobserved internal actions and no one can see it. Even though attitude is a covert behavior, it is often used as a guide to predict the consumer behavior, since many theorists believe that attitudes can lead to action or behavior and it can explain the cause of action. Apart from attitudes, the attitude objects that are mentioned earlier are attitude towards some object. Object in this context refer to a person, issue, or behavior.

In conclusion, attitudes can be defined as covert feeling of favorability and unfavorability toward an object, person, issue, or behavior which is built over time by being exposed to the object through information or direct experience (Lutz, 1991).

Based on Lutz (1991), there are two perspectives in terms of theoretical orientation of attitude; tripartite view and unidimension view. Firstly, attitudes are made up of cognition, affect, and conation whereas each attitude is consists of greater or lesser degree (see Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8 The Tripartite View of Attitude



Source: Lutz, R. J. (1991). The role of attitude theory in marketing. In H. H.

Kassarjian & T. S. Robertson (Eds.), *Perspectives in consumer behavior* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, p. 319.

However, this model is no longer used as Lutz (1991) specifies that attitude is a unidimensional that it belongs in only the affective part (see Figure 2.9). For beliefs (cognition) is viewed as an antecedent of attitude while intention to buy and behavior (conation) are viewed as the consequences of attitude. Assael (1998) supports Lutz that attitudes are only the affective component.

Figure 2.9 The Unidimensionalist View of Attitude



Source: Lutz, R. J. (1991). The role of attitude theory in marketing. In H. H.

Kassarjian & T. S. Robertson (Eds.), *Perspectives in consumer behavior* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, p. 320.

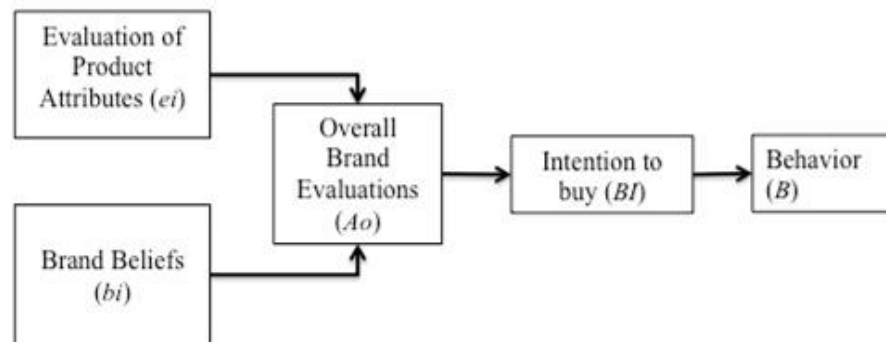
There are several attitude models that are widely accepted in academic society, which can be used to explain individual's relationship on cognitive, affective, and conative. In other words, attitude is the key in explaining individual's cognitive and conative parts.

Fishbein (1963, as cited in Lutz, 1991) has developed many theories and one of the most popular models is the multiattribute attitude model, which is based on the affective-cognitive consistency theory in consistency theory adopted by Rosenberg on the relationship between attitudes and cognitions. Fishbein (1963) draw his support for the proposition from behavior learning theory in 1963, result as a greatest influence on consumer attitudes research (Lutz, 1991).

In Multiattribute Attitude Model (see Figure 2.10), an attitude formation is a

function of consumer belief about an attribute and benefit of a brand (Fishbein, 1963, as cited in Assael, 1998). Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) explain that multiattribute attitude models portray consumers' attitudes with regard to an attitude object as a function of consumers' perception, key attributes, and behavior toward an attitude object.

Figure 2.10 Fishbein's Multiattribute Attitude Model



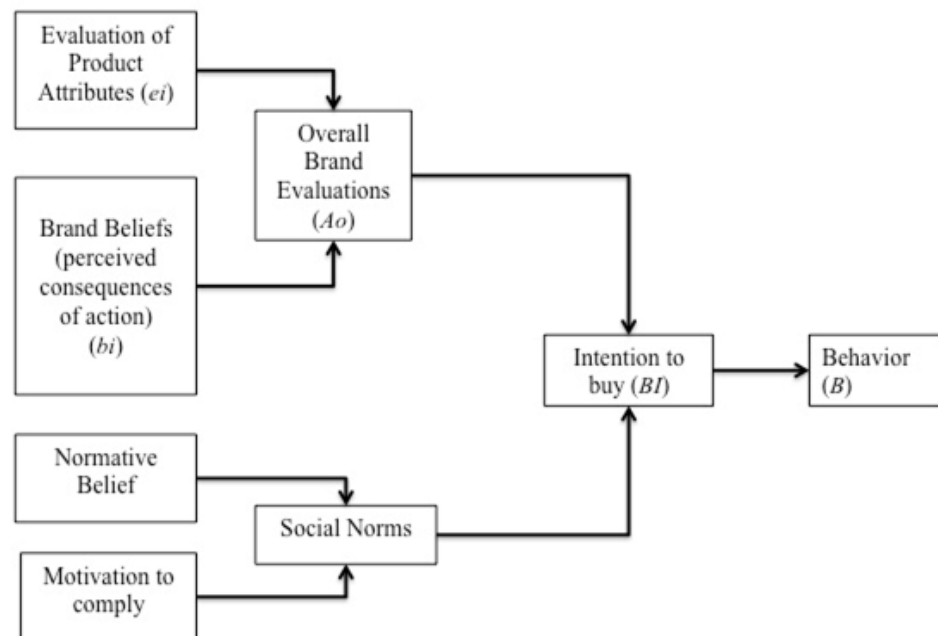
Source: Adapted from Assael, H. (1998). *Consumer behavior and marketing action* (6th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: International Thompson, p. 304.

The variables in this model are related to each other that when belief strength (B_i) and evaluation of product attribute (e_i) combine together will create an overall brand evaluation/attitude towards object (A_o) and intention to buy (BI). Even though individual may not be satisfied with the attribute, but one can compensate the weakness of brand on one attribute by another strength attribute. Multiattribute attitude measurement uses linear compensatory model as a way to measure the overall total score of attribute that is rated by an individual. Meanwhile, Fishbein's model underlies a few linkages between brand evaluation and intention to buy or actual behavior. Individual who has positive (or negative) attitude towards the brand tends to

have (have no) intention to buy the brand. Therefore, positive buying intention is likely to lead to the actual behavior, which can also be influenced by their belief or direct experience towards the product (Assael, 1998; Lutz, 1991).

However, multiattribute attitude model is mainly explains about belief and attitude, which cannot accurately measure the behavior. Fishbein (1963, as cited in Assael, 1998), then, made an attempt to better explain the link between attitude and behavior by developing from the multiattribute attitude model, which result as a theory of reasoned action (see Figure 2.11) (Assael, 1998).

Figure 2.11 Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action



Source: Adapted from Assael, H. (1998). *Consumer behavior and marketing action* (6th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: International Thompson, p. 308.

Theory of reasoned action has connected belief, attitude, intention, and actual behavior while focusing on person's intention to perform (or not to perform). The

behavior is determining the action as person is expected to act based on intention. However, intention may change over time due to the two types of personal factors that influence on personal intention. The first factor is the personal positive or negative attitude when performing the behavior (attitude toward behavior). The second factor is personal perception of social pressure that pushes one to perform or not to perform the behavior (subjective norm). Subject norms are assumed to be the function of believes and subject norm can be subcategorized by normative belief, which occurs when a person believes that the referent thinks that one should perform or not to perform the behavior due to social influence. Moreover, subjective norm also underlies motivation to comply with specific referent, which later lead to intention and behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

In conclusion, attitude is related to only the affective component while cognitive component belongs to the antecedents of attitude and conative component belongs to the consequences of attitude. This allows marketers to understand what consumer believes as well as how one decides to perform or not to perform one's behavior due to various factors that are influencing ones. It enables the marketers to foresee the behavior of their consumers more effectively.

Consumer Decision Making

Apart from the needs and wants of the consumers, marketers are eager to know how consumer chooses to buy products or brands in order to develop a guideline to create an effective marketing strategies.

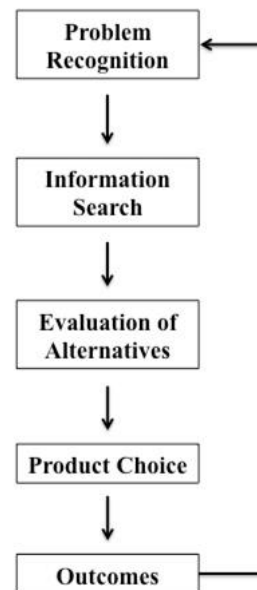
According to American Marketing Association (2014), decision making is a process of selecting products, brands, or ideas from several choices. Schiffman and

Kanuk (2010) also support that decision making process occurs when an individual decides to select from an option of two or more alternative choices that are available.

There is a process for consumer decision, which explains the steps that consumer goes through in solving a problem or making decision. The process of consumer decision is consisting of five stages following by problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and outcomes (see Figure 2.12). The steps occur in consumer purchasing because they realized that they are having a problem thus, they respond to the problem (Engel, Kollat, & Blackwell, 1973; Solomon, 2013). The steps of consumer decision making will later be explained in the review.

The five steps can be used to describe the behavior processes from consumer recognizing problem until the post-purchase step of the brand (Engel et al., 1973). The first step of problem recognition or need recognition is likely to occur when consumer is facing a problem. Solomon (2013) postulates that it is a difference between the current state of affairs and state of desire. In addition, there are two types of problems, which are actual state (need recognition) and ideal states (opportunity recognition). Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) explicate that actual state occurs when consumers realized that they have a problem when a product fails to perform satisfactorily. On the other hand, desired state occurs when there is something new, which trigger the desire to take a decision to purchase it.

Figure 2.12 Stages in Consumer Decision Making



Source: Solomon, M. R. (2013). *Consumer behavior: Buying, having, and being* (10th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, p. 320.

The second step of decision making process is information search or the pre-purchase search. This step takes a major role in influencing consumer decision. Consumer past experience is considered as an internal search while marketing and other information sources are considered as an external search. In case that there are high-perceived risks, consumers tend to engage in complex decision making and extensive information in order to evaluate the alternative brands. In contrast that there are low-perceived risks, consumers tend to use simple decision making and limited information search to evaluate the brands (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010).

Besides the internal and external search, Solomon (2013) adds two types of external search, which are called ongoing search, where consumers always stay active for the current information about what they are interested in. The other type of

external search is called purchase-specific search, where consumer search for information only when they are interested in buying a product.

The third step of consumer decision making is alternative evaluation. Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) illustrate that consumers tend to use either a list of brand that they plan to buy or a criteria they set to select a brand. Each consumer has different evoked set, which refers to specific brands that consumer plans to purchase or finds the brand acceptable. In contrast to evoked set, there is an inept set, which is consists of brands that consumer has overlooked, feel indifferent, or feel unaccepted. For consumer's criteria, it is consumer's personal requirement that is used to evaluate alternative brands from the evoked set.

The fourth step is called purchase or product choice, which is considered as an output of brand evaluation. This stage links between intention to buy and actual purchase whereas in-store decision may affect consumer decision making since consumers are making brand decision in the store (Assael, 1998; Solomon, 2013). In addition, Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) divide purchase behavior into three types. Firstly, trial purchase occurs when consumer buys a small portion to evaluate the product by experience. Secondly, repeat purchases occur when consumers satisfied with a particular brand more than others and they tend to repurchase. Lastly, a long-term commitment purchase occurs when consumer repeats buying the brand and leads to brand loyalty.

However, Assael (1998) argues that consumer does not always purchase the brand after going through the steps of decision making. This is because in some case, consumer might make a delay purchase or not to buy at all.

Finally, the fifth step of consumer decision making is called post-purchase or an outcome. When consumer is using a product, they tend to evaluate the performance while experiencing the product. There are three possible outcomes of evaluations suggested by Schiffman and Kanuk (2010). The first outcome is that actual performance matched one's expectation, leads to positive feelings. The second outcome is that the performance exceeds one's expectation, leads to positive satisfaction. The third outcome is that the performance is below one's expectation, leads to dissatisfaction. Assael (1998) confirms that satisfaction reinforces positive attitudes toward the brand, leads to probability of repeat purchase. On the other hand, dissatisfaction reinforces negative attitudes toward the brand, leads to likelihood that consumer will not buy the brand again. However, post-purchase cognitive dissonance may occur when there is negative information about the brand, which is contradicted with one's belief. As a result, consumer tends to seek for supportive information and avoid negative information about the brand to reassure that they already made a wise choice on buying the brand.

Nevertheless, Assael (1998) mentions that consumer decision making is not a uniform process. There are distinctions between decision making versus habit, high-involvement versus low-involvement, and how situation influences on consumer purchasing decision. The four types of consumer purchasing decisions are based on the two dimensions; the extent of decision making and degree of involvement in the purchase (Assael, 1998), which is explained down below (see Figure 2.13).

The first dimension represents the range from decision making to habit where consumers go through cognitive process of information search and evaluate the brand

alternatives. On the other hand, consumer made a little or no decision making since they are already satisfied with what they are buying.

For the second dimension, it represents the range from high-involvement to low-involvement. High-involvement purchases are those products that are important to the consumer. Normally, those products tend to represent the self-image or involve some financial, social, or personal risk. Therefore, consumers need to think carefully before purchasing the product or brand. Low-involvement purchases are those that are not important to the consumer, which the level of risks is less than the high-involvement purchase. Therefore, it does not worth time and effort to find more information about the product.

Figure 2.13 Four Types of Consumer Behavior

	HIGH INVOLVEMENT	LOW INVOLVEMENT
DECISION MAKING	Complex Decision-Making	Limited Decision-Making
HABIT	Brand Loyalty	Inertia

Source: Adapted from Assael, H. (2004). *Consumer behavior: A strategic approach*.

Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, p. 100.

These two dimensions create the four types of consumer purchase process. The first process is called complex decision making (upper left-hand box), which occurs when involvement is high and decision is made. In some case that the consumers have time, they tend to search for more information about the products or brands. In consequences, the consumers used the acquired information to evaluate and select the products or brands. Assael (2004) describes this process types by “think-before-you-act,” which required consumer to develop the brand attitude and later evaluate it.

The second process occurs when consumer makes a decision with low-involvement condition, this process is called limited decision making (upper right-hand box). In this process, consumers are not aware of or involved with the product category as a result, information search is limited and only few brands are evaluated. Limited decision making may sometimes occur when consumer is seeking for variety due to the boredom of the product. Assael (2004) describes that in this process, consumer forms belief about the brand first. Then they purchase and later evaluate the brand.

When consumers repeatedly purchase the particular brand, consumer forms an experience with the product and learns which product satisfied or unsatisfied them. Brand loyalty (lower left-hand box) is the third process of consumer purchasing decision, which is the result of repeated positive satisfaction and commitment to a particular brand. Assael (2004) describes that consumers already have belief and already evaluate the brand. Therefore, they are only just repurchasing the brand.

The last process is called inertia (lower right-hand box), it occurs when consumers have low-involvement with the product and take no decision making when

buying it since the product is not worth time to search for more information. As a result, consumers end up buying the same brand not because of the brand loyalty but they are buying it because they do not want to take a decision. These actions lead to a spurious loyalty. Assael (2004) describes the process that it occurs starting by consumer forming a belief of the brand and purchases it. In this case, consumer is in a passive state, where they keep repurchasing as long as it achieves a certain minimum level of satisfaction.

Apart from the four types of consumer purchasing decisions, Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) clarify that there are levels of consumer decision making due to consumer faces a problem. It can be distinct by the search of information and the process of brand evaluation in order to cope with the encountered problem.

Based on Schiffman and Kanuk (2010), the first level of consumer decision making is the extensive problem solving, when consumer made a lot of decision making effort. In this level, consumer needs a great amount of information in order to evaluate brand alternatives, due to situation that consumers are purchasing an expensive brand.

The second level is limited problem solving, consumers already have their basic criteria for their product evaluation but they have not selected a brand. In consequences, consumers search for a little more information to discriminate one brand from another.

Finally, the last level of consumer decision making is habitual decision making or routinized response behavior. At this level, consumers already have

experience with the product category and have set brand evaluation criteria.

Therefore, small amount of information is acquired before purchasing the brand.

In conclusion, understanding of the overall process of consumer decision making guides the ways for marketer to serve needs and desires to the consumers as all marketers ended goal is to aim for customer brand loyalty.



CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study on “Reference Group Influences on Consumer’s Product and Brand Decisions” is a research that utilizes quantitative research method by using a survey research method (cross-sectional study) to measure the participants’ attitudes on product and brand purchase decisions and how they are influenced by their reference groups. This chapter is composed of population and sample, sampling method, product and brand selections, questionnaire format, measures of the variables, reliability and validity tests, and data analysis.

Population and Sample

The population in this research context focuses on young adults with the age range from 17 to 24 years old based on Nelson et al. (2008). These groups of young adults are studying in Bangkok Metropolitan area, Thailand, which is where major institutions are founded. The reason that this population is the target group required for the research is because students that are studying in university mostly do not have income and are still receiving allowance from their parents. Therefore, this enables them to spend freely. Moreover, Liu and Laird (2008) state that compulsive buying tendencies usually developed by the early adolescent age (C. Liu & Laird, 2008). In addition, Mangleburg et al. (2004) state that teens that shop with friends tends to over spent money than they normally do when they are alone.

Hence, based on the Official Statistics Registration Systems (2013), the populations of young adults with the age range of 17 to 24 that are living in Bangkok

are 633,483 people (OfficialStatisticsRegistrationSystems, 2013).

The sample size that is randomly selected for this research is then calculated by using Yamane (1973, as cited in Mora & Kloet, 2010) with 95 percent confidence level as +/- 5% precision rate assumed reliable. The formula from Yamane is shown down below (Mora & Kloet, 2010).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size

e = the level of precision

The calculated result is shown down below:

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHU

633,483

$$1 + (633,483 * 0.0025)$$

After calculating the formula using Yamane (1973, as cited in Mora & Kloet, 2010), n is equal to 399.75. Therefore, the sample is 400.

Sampling Method

This study focuses on young adults with the age range of 17 to 24 years old that are undergraduate students who are studying in university around Bangkok Metropolitan area, Thailand. The samples of 400 are collected from public and private university in Bangkok Metropolitan area.

Therefore, in order to select the target, purposive sampling method is used by selecting the top five public and private universities based on the highest ranking of undergraduate students that are studying in the university to represent as samples from various universities, excluding the public universities with unlimited number of students (Ministry of Education, 2008)

The list ranking top 5 public higher institutions are:

1. Chulalongkorn University	25,339 students
2. Kasetsart University	26,104 students
3. Thammasat University	22,925 students
4. Mahidol University	18,907 students
5. Srinakharinwirot University	18,770 students

The list ranking top 5 private higher institutions are:

1. Bangkok University	26,743 students
2. Rangsit University	25,483 students
3. Assumption University	16,379 students
4. University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce	16,254 students
5. Dhurakij Pundit University	15,545 students

From the 10 universities listed above, 40 students are selected from each university using the quota sampling method. Then, purposive sampling method is used again to select students from each university. The screening questions is asked at the beginning of the survey to make sure that each participant is using the three product categories, which are handbag, perfume, and mobile phone that represent the dimensions of product consumptions.

Product and Brand Selections

The product categories that are used in the research are selected from the pretesting questionnaire in order to study how reference group influence on the target's product and brand decisions. The pre-test was given to 15 students to rank the top three product categories and brand names that they perceived to which each belongs to the four dimensions of product consumptions. In the pre-test survey, all definitions of the three dimensions of product consumptions were given which there are publicly consumed luxuries (PUL), privately consumed luxuries (PRL), and publicly consumed necessities (PUN).

The fourth type which is privately consumed necessities (Bearden & Etzel, 1982) is not significantly different because the reference group does not have influence on both product and brand.

As a result, the top three product categories of publicly consumed luxuries are wristwatch, handbag, and car. Even though wristwatch is rated a little higher than handbag but handbag is widely used among students. Therefore, handbag is chosen to represent the product category for publicly consumed luxuries (PUL). The top three product categories of privately consumed luxuries are perfume, underwear, and

cosmetic. In this case, perfume significantly has the highest rank. Therefore, perfume is chosen to represent the product category for privately consumed luxuries (PRL).

Lastly, the top product categories of publicly consumed necessities are clothing, mobile phone, and shoe. Although clothing ranks the highest score, there are many classes and styles, which will be difficult to study. However, everyone owns mobile phone. Therefore, mobile phone is chosen to represent the product category for publicly consumed necessities (PUN).

On the other hand, the result of the top three brand names are varied among product categories, there is no significant brand that is widely used among the students. Therefore, the questionnaire involving brand name will be given a product category for the students to fill out the brand name themselves. This enables the participant to recall the brand that they are using, which will relate to each participant and help them answer the questions easily based on the specified brands.

Questionnaire Format

This research employs both types of question formats, which are open-ended question and close-ended question. The four-point Likert scale will be given to the participants and will enable them to make a definite choice without a mid-point (Garland, 1991). The survey consists of screening questionnaire and main questionnaire. Screening questionnaire is consisting of one question asking whether the participant is using the three types of product categories or not, which are handbag, perfume, mobile phone (see Appendix A). For the main questionnaire, it is

divided into 3 parts (see Appendix B for English version and Appendix C for Thai version), which are:

Part 1 Demographic questions composed of age, gender, income, and education.

Part 2 Types of reference group influence on product decision, consisting of 17 questions that contain 8 questions of normative influence, 4 questions of informational influence, and 5 questions of value-expressive influence.

Part 3 Types of reference group influence on brand decision, consisting of 14 questions that contain 4 questions of utilitarian influence, 5 questions of informational influence, and 5 questions of value-expressive influence.

Measures for the Variables

There are two main variables in this research, which are reference group influence on product and brand decisions.

Reference Group Influences on Product Decision

The three types of reference group influence consist of normative influence, informative influence, and value-expressive influence. In order to measure how three types of reference group influences students, the researcher borrows the scale measurement from Bearden et al. (1989) and Park and Lessig (1977) to ensure they are reliable and valid. Bearden's et al. (1989) scale contains only two types of influence, which are normative influence that consists of 8 questions (reliability coefficient = .82) and informational influence that consists of 4 questions (reliability

coefficient = .88). In addition, the researcher borrows items from Park and Lessig (1977) to measure the value-expressive influence on product decision, that consists of 5 questions (reliability coefficient at the acceptable level). These scales are used to measure on how individual can be influenced on given product category toward the reference group influence. In these parts, respondents will be asked to indicate the degree of their agreement with the statement on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 4 = strongly agreed, 3 = slightly agreed, 2 = slightly disagreed, to 1 = strongly disagreed within the three types of product influence which consists of normative influence, informational influence, and value-expressive influence on consumer purchasing decision toward the given product which are handbag, perfume, and mobile phone.

Reference Group Influences on Brand Decision

The scale of Park and Lessig (1977) is borrowed to measure how individual can be influenced on brand decision toward the three types of reference group influence which contain utilitarian influence, informational influence, and value-expressive influence (the scales have reliability coefficient at the acceptable level). In these parts, respondents will be asked to fill out the brand names that they are using most by the three given product categories, which are handbag, perfume, and mobile phone. Then, the samples rank each brand by the degree of their agreement with the statement on a 4 = strongly agreed, 3 = slightly agreed, 2 = slightly disagreed, to 1 = strongly disagreed within the three types of brand influence on purchase behavior.

Checks for Reliability and Validity of the Measurement

The study measures the variables using the scales from Bearden et al. (1989) and Park and Lessig (1977) because the scales were tested on their validity and

reliability. In addition, they are checked for the approval by the thesis advisor and academic experts which will ensure the content validity of the survey.

After the survey has been edited, the researcher runs a pretesting survey on undergraduate young adults who are studying in Bangkok Metropolitan area. The target that is eligible for doing the survey must have all qualification characteristics. The pretesting survey is given to 15 students to measure the understanding toward the questions in order to adjust the survey before collecting the data.

When all 400 samples have been collected, the internal consistency of the measures are tested by using Cronbach's citation (1951) method of coefficient alpha to test the reliability of the measures (Cortina, 1993).

Data Analysis

After all data have been collected, they are coded and analyzed in the computer in order to do statistical calculation, this includes descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. For descriptive statistics, it indicates the results in percentages and means. This also includes standard deviations in order to analyze the data related to the samples. For inferential statistics, it is used to indicate the differences among each type of reference group influences on product and brand decisions by using *t*-test and *F*-test. Relationships among different types of influences and decisions will be run by correlation coefficient. The significance level is set at .05.

CHAPTER 4

Research Findings

This research on “Reference Group Inferences on Consumer’s Product and Brand Decisions” is a quantitative research that aims to study on the three types of reference group influence on individual’s product and brand purchase decisions. This research uses a survey method by using questionnaire as an instrument to collect data. The sample of 400 young adults with the age range of 17 to 24 years old who are studying in Bangkok Metropolitan area were collected from the top five public and private institutions based on the highest ranking of undergraduate students. The data were collected from September to October 2014 which all 400 questionnaires can be used to analyze and report here into four parts.

- Part I Demographic Profile
- Part II Influences of Reference Group on Consumer’s Product and Brand Decisions
 - A. Product Selections
 - B. Brand Selections
- Part III Statistical Tests
 - A. Differences between reference group influences
 - B. Differences between product and brand types
 - C. Differences between product and brand Decisions
- Part IV Additional Findings

Part I Demographic Profile

The demographic profile section is consisted of gender, age, income, university, program, faculty, and Cronbach's alpha.

Gender

Based on 400 samples of undergraduate students, there are slightly more women than men. There are 202 women which can be calculated as 50.5 percent while there are 198 men which can be calculated as 49.5 percent (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Gender of the Sample

Gender	<i>f</i>	%
Female	202	50.5
Male	198	49.5
Total	400	100.0

Age

When the range of age are categorized into three groups, it is found that majority of the samples are in the age of 20 to 22 years old with the number of 234 samples which is equal to 58.5 percent (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Age of the Sample

Age	<i>f</i>	%
17-19 years old	138	34.5
20-22 years old	234	58.5
23-24 years old	28	7.0
Total	400	100.0

The second highest numbers of samples, 138 respondents are in the age of 17 to 19 which is equivalent to 34.5 percent. And in the last age group, only 28 samples

are in the age of 23 to 24 years old which is equal to only 7 percent out of 400 samples.

Monthly Allowance

The ranges of allowance are divided into five groups which the result in this study found that majority of the samples received around 5,001 to 10,000 Baht which has the number of 164 samples or 41.2 percent (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Monthly Allowance of the Sample

Allowance	<i>f</i>	%
5,000 Baht or lower	85	21.4
5,001-10,000 Baht	164	41.2
10,001-15,000 Baht	83	20.9
15,001-20,000 Baht	38	9.5
20,001 Baht or more	28	7.0
Total	398	100.0

Note: Missing value = 2

The second highest group of samples received 5,000 Baht or lower with a number of 85 samples which is equal to 21.4 percent while group of samples who received 10,001 to 15,000 Baht are slightly different in number of samples with a number of 83 samples which is equal to 20.9 percent. The fourth group has a number of 38 samples who received 15,001 to 20,000 Baht or 9.5 percent while the last group has the least number of 28 samples who received the highest allowance around 20,001 Baht or more which are considered as only 7 percent of all 398 samples.

University Demographics

In the findings, university in this research context is divided into two types which are public university and private university. Based on the research findings,

200 samples of undergraduate students, who are studying in public universities, were collected which can be calculated as 50 percent of the samples (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 University Demographics

University	<i>f</i>	%
Public University	200	50.0
Private University	200	50.0
Total	400	100.0

Public university in this research context is composed of the top five public institutions with the highest numbers of undergraduate students in Bangkok Metropolitan area. They are Chulalongkorn University, Kasetsart University, Thammasat University, Mahidol University, and Srinakharinwirot University. On the other hand, 200 samples of undergraduate students studying in five private universities were collected as well which is considered as the other 50 percent of the samples. The top five private institutions are Bangkok University, Rangsit University, Assumption University, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, and Dhurakij Pundit University.

Program of the Study

For the program of the study that the samples have taken, regular program or Thai program held a majority of the 303 samples (75.8 percent) (see Table 4.5). Meanwhile, the other 97 samples are studying in international programs at the universities which are equivalent to 24.3 percent.

Table 4.5 Program of the Study of the Sample

Program	<i>f</i>	%
International Program	97	24.2
Regular Program	303	75.8
Total	400	100.0

Faculty Demographics

In this analysis, faculty demographic is categorized into non-science fields and science fields based on 396 samples. Non-sciences have 282 samples which is equal to 71.2 percent (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6 Faculty Demographics

Faculty	<i>f</i>	%
Non Sciences	282	71.2
Sciences	114	28.8
Total	396	100.0

Note: Missing value = 4

They consist of many faculties which are Business Administration, Economics, Political Science, Law, Education, Communication Arts, Arts, Hospitality Management, and Music. In contrast, there are 114 undergraduate students who are studying in science fields which are equal to 28.8 percent. Sciences in this research context consist of Engineering, Information Technology, Forestry, Environmental Science, Science, Medical Science, Dentistry, Pharmacy, and Veterinary Science.

Cronbach's Alphas of the Variables Measured

This research employs Cronbach's Alphas to measure the internal consistency of the variables studied which can be categorized into three types of influence for product and brand sections. Based on the results, for handbag product, the reliability coefficients for the normative influence, informational influence, and value-expressive influence are ranged from .71 to .79 (see Table 4.7). Next, from the 17 questions used to measure the three types of influences on perfume product, the reliability coefficients range from .71 to .79. Similarly, the reliability coefficients for mobile phone range from .70 to .77.

Table 4.7 Cronbach's Alphas in the Study

Types of Influence	Product			Brand		
	Handbag	Perfume	Mobile Phone	Handbag	Perfume	Mobile Phone
Normative Influence	.79	.79	.77	.77	.74	.76
Informational Influence	.71	.71	.70	.81	.80	.76
Value-expressive Influence	.73	.71	.74	.77	.78	.79
Total	.75	.75	.76	.79	.73	.72

On the other hand, handbag brand which consists of normative influence, informational influence, and value-expressive influence has the reliability coefficients range from .77 to .79. For perfume brand, the reliability coefficients range from .74 to .80. Lastly, from the 14 questions used to measure the three types of influences on mobile phone brand, the reliability coefficients range from .76 to .79.

Part II Influences of Reference Groups on Product and Brand Decisions

This section is focusing on the influences of reference groups toward product and brand selections which explores on the three types of reference group influences on individual's product and brand purchase decisions. Based on Park and Lessig's (1977) work, there are three types of reference group influence which are normative influence, informational influence, and value-expressive influence.

In the second part of the questionnaire (see Appendix B) measures how the three types of influence affect individual's product and brand decisions. Therefore, the four-point Likert scale is employed and enables participants to take side either agree or disagree with the statement in the questionnaire (Garland, 1991).

Product Selections

The research scale is consisted of 17 questions in total which contains 8 questions of normative influence, 4 questions of informational influence (Bearden et al., 1989) and 5 questions of value-expressive influence (Park & Lessig, 1977). Furthermore, the types of product decision that are used to measure in this research are handbag, perfume, and mobile phone.

Handbag in this context implies one of the four dimensions of product consumption which is stated in the beginning of the research that it is considered as publicly consumed luxury product (PUL), based on definition of Bourne (1957, as cited in Bearden & Etzel, 1982) that it is a product that is consumed in the public area and is not commonly owned by other people.

The second type of product is a perfume, which is used to measure how influence effects on individual's product decision. Perfume in this context represents

privately consumed luxury product which is defined by of Bourne (1957, as cited in Bearden & Etzel, 1982) as a product that is consumed out of public and is not commonly owned by other people.

Mobile phone is the last product that is used to measure influence towards consumer's product decision as it represents publicly consumed necessity (Bourne 1957, as cited in Bearden & Etzel, 1982) which means a product that is consumed in the public area and anyone can owns it.

From Table 4.8, in product decision, normative influence has played the most important role in affecting product decision on mobile phone with the mean of 2.22, followed by handbag with the mean of 2.14 while perfume is the least affected by normative influence with the mean of 2.11.

Informational influence also plays a major role in affecting product decision on mobile phone with the mean of 2.70, followed by handbag with the mean of 2.55, and perfume with the mean of 2.43.

The third types of influence is value-expressive influence which mobile phone again has the highest mean of 2.55 while handbag has a mean of 2.49 which is slightly different from perfume with a mean of 2.48.

Therefore, the samples within this research finding are likely influenced on product decision toward mobile phone with the highest mean of 2.49 compared to the other types of product while handbag and perfume have slightly different with a mean of 2.39 and 2.34, respectively.

Table 4.8 Means and Standard Deviations for Product Decisions

Influences	Handbag		Perfume		Mobile Phone	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Normative Influence	2.14	0.59	2.11	0.61	2.22	0.70
1. Rarely purchase product until friends approved	2.15	0.87	2.11	0.94	2.29	0.95
2. It is important that others like the product that one buys	2.34	0.91	2.36	0.96	2.37	0.92
3. One buys product that one thinks others will approve of	1.97	0.91	1.97	0.94	2.11	0.98
4. One often purchase what others expect one to buy	2.14	0.88	2.11	0.90	2.21	0.97
5. One likes to know which product make good impressions on others	2.48	0.95	2.58	0.99	2.45	0.97
6. Achieving a sense of belonging by purchasing the same product that others purchase	2.36	1.05	2.23	1.03	2.49	1.07
7. When one wants to be like someone, one often buy the same product that others buy	1.84	0.96	1.77	0.96	1.92	1.85
8. Identifying with other people by purchasing the same product that other purchase	1.82	0.90	1.77	0.91	1.91	0.98

Table 4.8 (continued)

Influences	Handbag		Perfume		Mobile Phone	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Informational Influence	2.55	0.69	2.43	0.73	2.70	0.70
9. Observing what others are buying and using	2.27	0.91	2.19	0.92	2.35	0.97
10. When one has little experience with a product, one often ask friends about it	2.60	0.97	2.48	0.99	2.81	0.97
11. Consulting others help choose the best alternative available	2.71	0.95	2.56	0.99	2.83	0.99
12. Gathering information from friends about a product before buying	2.62	0.93	2.49	1.00	2.82	0.93
Value-expressive Influence	2.49	0.66	2.48	0.65	2.55	0.67
13. Purchasing of product enhance the image that others have of oneself	2.86	0.96	2.81	0.95	3.00	0.91
14. Purchasing of product possess the characteristics that one would like to have	2.96	0.87	2.92	0.90	2.91	0.85
15. Feeling good to be like the type of person which advertisements show using a particular product	2.05	0.99	2.05	0.98	2.09	1.04

Table 4.8 (continued)

Influences	Handbag		Perfume		Mobile Phone	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
16. People who purchase a particular product are admired or respected by others	2.17	0.95	2.17	0.96	2.24	0.97
17. Purchasing of the product helps represent one or what one like to be	2.41	0.99	2.44	0.98	2.51	1.01
Grand total	2.39	0.67	2.34	0.68	2.49	0.72

Note: The 4-pointed Likert scale is employed, ranging from strongly agree = 4 to strongly disagree = 1

Brand Selections

According to the questionnaire (see Appendix B), it measures how the three types of influence affect individual's brand decision. There are three types of product that are used to measure in this research which are handbag (PUL), perfume (PRL), and mobile phone (PUN). In this part, respondents are required to fill out the brands that they are currently using in each type of product category and then answer the questions toward those particular brands.

In the survey research, it is found that handbag brands are fragmented which can be seen more than half of samples are using many handbag brands as 277 samples out of 400 or 69.3 percent (see Table 4.9) are using other handbag brands. However, there are top five handbag brands that are widely used among the students. It is found that 44 undergraduate students from various universities are using Louis Vuitton

handbags which is equal to 11 percent. The second highest usage of handbag brand is Lyn where 23 samples or 5.8 percent are using this brand while 20 samples or 5 percent are using Coach handbags. Meanwhile, Nike handbag came in the fourth place where it is considered as a sport wear brand but 19 samples or 4.7 percent are using it. Finally, the last handbag brand is Chanel, 17 samples are using it and is equivalent to 4.2 percent.

Table 4.9 Top Five Handbag Brands widely used among the Samples

Handbag Brand	<i>f</i>	%
Louis Vuitton	44	11.0
Lyn	23	5.8
Coach	20	5.0
Nike	19	4.7
Chanel	17	4.2
Others	277	69.3
Total	400	100.0

The samples in this research use various perfume brands but are repeatedly used more than handbag brand as 208 samples or 52.0 percent (see Table 4.10) show to be using other brands of perfume. However, the most frequent brand that is widely used among undergraduate students is Calvin Klein which 71 samples or 17.8 percent are using this brand. The second widely used perfume brand is Chanel, where 46 samples or 11.5 percent are using it while 29 samples or 7.2 percent are using Dior and 25 samples or 6.3 percent are using DKNY. Meanwhile, it is founded that 21 samples or 5.2 percent are using AXE.

Table 4.10 Top Five Perfume Brands widely used among the Samples

Perfume Brand	<i>f</i>	%
Calvin Klein	71	17.8
Chanel	46	11.5
Dior	29	7.2
DKNY	25	6.3
Axe	21	5.2
Others	208	52.0
Total	400	100.0

Brands of mobile phone comparing with brands of handbag and perfume is lesser and less fragmented. Therefore, mobile phone is the only product that has the number of samples using particular brand. There are four brands that samples in this research are using which are Apple, Samsung, Sony, and Nokia. Almost three quarter of samples, 299 undergraduate students or 74.8 percent (see Table 4.11) are using Apple while Samsung is far behind as 70 samples or 17.5 percent are using it. Meanwhile, Sony and Nokia have the same number of samples that are using the brands which is 7 samples for each of the brands or 1.7 percent. Furthermore, 17 samples are using other mobile phone brand which is calculated as 4.3 percent.

Table 4.11 Top Five Mobile Phone Brands widely used among the Samples

Mobile Phone Brand	<i>f</i>	%
Apple	299	74.8
Samsung	70	17.5
Sony	7	1.7
Nokia	7	1.7
Others	17	4.3
Total	400	100.0

In measuring brand selection, the research scale is consisted of 14 questions in total which contains 4 questions of normative influence, 5 questions of informational influence and 5 questions of value-expressive influence (Park & Lessig, 1977).

Normative influence has played a major role in affecting brand decision on mobile phone with the mean of 2.29 (see Table 4.12), followed by handbag with the mean of 2.19 while perfume is the least affected by normative influence with the mean of 2.17.

Table 4.12 Means and Standard Deviations for Brand Decisions

Influences	Handbag		Perfume		Mobile Phone	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Normative Influence	2.19	0.77	2.17	0.74	2.29	0.80
1. One seeks information about various brands from an association of professionals or group of experts	1.98	1.00	1.99	0.99	2.10	1.05
2. One seeks information from those who work with the brand as a profession	2.15	0.96	2.17	0.98	2.21	0.99
3. One seeks brand related knowledge and experience from friends who have reliable information	2.25	1.02	2.16	0.98	2.37	1.04
4. One selects the brand that is already approved by an independent testing agency	2.38	1.01	2.36	1.01	2.47	1.04
5. One selects the brand from observing of what experts use	2.52	0.92	2.57	0.93	3.02	0.92

Table 4.12 (continued)

Influences	Handbag		Perfume		Mobile Phone	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Informational Influence	2.56	0.72	2.42	0.71	2.98	0.67
6. One decides to purchase a particular brand to satisfy expectations of friend's preference	2.32	0.98	2.40	0.99	2.80	1.00
7. One decides to purchase a particular brand by the preferences of people that one has social interaction with	2.62	0.97	2.63	0.95	3.05	0.93
8. One decides to purchase a particular brand by the preference of family members	2.96	0.92	2.95	0.93	3.30	0.85
9. One feels the desire to satisfy the expectations of others has impact on one's choice	2.37	0.98	2.37	0.95	2.74	0.10
Value-expressive Influence	2.50	0.72	2.46	0.73	2.54	0.73
10. Purchasing of Brand enhance the image that others have of oneself	2.76	0.94	2.70	0.95	2.78	0.95
11. Purchasing of Brand possess the characteristics that one would like to have	2.82	0.97	2.75	1.01	2.81	0.96
12. Feeling good to be like the type of person which advertisements show using a particular Brand	2.12	1.05	2.06	1.03	2.15	1.07
13. People who purchase a particular Brand are admired or respected by others	2.30	0.98	2.30	0.95	2.37	0.99

Table 4.12 (continued)

Influences	Handbag		Perfume		Mobile Phone	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
14. Purchasing of the brand helps represent one or what one like to be	2.53	1.02	2.48	1.03	2.57	1.03
Grand total	2.42	0.75	2.40	0.74	2.60	0.79

Note: The 4-pointed Likert scale is employed, ranging from strongly agree = 4 to strongly disagree = 1

Individual's brand decision on mobile phone still a type of product that is influenced not only by normative influence but also by informational influence as well with the highest mean of 2.98 while perfume and handbag are slightly different in affecting consumer's brand decision with a mean of 2.58 and a mean of 2.56, respectively.

The result of value-expressive influence also shows to effect on individual's brand decision toward mobile phone with the highest mean of 2.54 compared to other types of product while handbag and perfume have slightly different with a mean of 2.51 and 2.46, respectively.

Therefore, all of the three types of influence are found to effect on mobile phone brand as it can be seen from its highest mean of 2.60 compared to handbag brand or perfume brand.

Part III Statistical Tests

The third part is focusing on statistical tests by using *F*-tests and *t*-tests to compare and explore differences between: a) reference group influences, b) product and brand types, and c) product and brand decisions.

Differences between Reference Group Influences

This section focuses on the three types of influence on product decision toward the three types of product. *F*-test analysis is employed to measure each type of influence and which one has most effect on which types of product by comparing among handbag, perfume, and mobile phone. By using LSD in Post-hoc analysis, out of the three types of product, mobile phone is shown to have the highest mean, 2.22 (see Table 4.13). This implies that individual's product decision on mobile phone is likely to be impacted by the normative influence comparing to the decision on perfume product with a mean of 2.11. The *F*-test value of normative influence is 3.05 while this result is shown at a significant level of .048. Therefore, individual's product decision toward mobile phone is likely to be influenced by normative influence more than perfume.

The result of informational influence is shown similarly with the normative influence that individual is likely to be influenced on decision toward mobile phone with a mean of 2.70 more than handbag and perfume with a mean of 2.55 and 2.43, respectively. Furthermore, the *F*-test value of informational influence is 14.92 at a significant level of .00. Therefore, individual's product decision tends to be influenced by informational influence toward mobile phone than handbag and perfume.

Table 4.13 Types of Influences on Product Decision

	Handbag	Perfume	Mobile Phone	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Post-hoc Analysis
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>			
Normative Influence	2.14	2.11	2.22	3.05	.048	(3) > (2)
Informational Influence	2.55	2.43	2.70	14.92	.00	(3) > (1), (2)
Value-expressive Influence	2.49	2.48	2.55	1.23	.29	
Total	2.39	2.34	2.49	6.31	.00	(3) > (1), (2)

Besides from normative influence and informational influence, value-expressive influence shows non-significant result due to a slightly different on mean of the three types of product studied.

Aside from comparing the types of reference group influences on product decision, there are also the types of reference group influences on brand decision which is still using the same types of product which are handbag, perfume, and mobile phone.

The results show that informational influence has the highest effect on mobile phone on brand decision with a mean of 2.98 (see Table 4.14) compared to handbag brand with a mean of 2.56 and followed by perfume brand with a mean of 2.43. Moreover, the *F*-test value of informational influence is 68.21 at the significant level of .00.

Therefore, the result shows that individual is more likely to be influenced by informational influence toward mobile phone brand, handbag brand, and perfume brand, respectively.

However, neither normative influence nor value-expressive influence is shown to have a significant result.

Table 4.14 Types of Influences on Brand Decision

	Handbag	Perfume	Mobile Phone	F	p	Post-hoc Analysis
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>			
Normative Influence	2.19	2.17	2.29	2.77	.06	
Informational Influence	2.56	2.43	2.98	68.21	.00	(3) > (1) > (2)
Value-expressive Influence	2.50	2.46	2.54	1.24	.29	
Total	2.42	2.40	2.60	14.46	.00	(3) > (1), (2)

Differences between Types of Product and Brand

In measuring the types of product and brand, *F*-test is used to measure and compare the three types of reference group influence toward each type of product.

Based on the results of consumer's product decision, consumer is shown to be affected by informational influence with a mean of 2.55 and value-expressive influence with a mean of 2.49 toward the decision on handbag more than normative influence with a mean of 2.14 (see Table 4.15). Moreover, the *F*-test value of handbag is 47.56 at a significant level of .00. Therefore, it can be concluded that informational influence and value-expressive can impact on individual's product decision toward handbag more than normative influence.

Perfume is the second types of product in which results that individual tends to be influenced by value-expressive influence with a mean of 2.48 and informational

influence with a mean of 2.43 more than on normative influence with a mean of 2.11. The *F*-test of perfume is equal to 35.91 at a significant level of .00. Therefore, it can be implied that individual is influenced by value-expressive influence and informational influence more than normative influence toward perfume product.

Table 4.15 Comparison for the Product Types

	Normative Influence	Informational Influence	Value- expressive Influence	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Post-hoc Analysis
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>			
Handbag	2.14	2.55	2.49	47.56	.00	(2), (3) > (1)
Perfume	2.11	2.43	2.48	35.91	.00	(3), (2) > (1)
Mobile Phone	2.22	2.70	2.55	50.82	.00	(2) > (3) > (1)
Total	2.16	2.56	2.51	128.17	.00	(2), (3) > (1)

The last types of product in measuring product decision is mobile phone, which informational influence shows a highest mean of 2.70 compared with value-expressive influence with a mean of 2.55 and normative influence with a mean of 2.22. Furthermore, the *F*-test value of mobile phone is 50.82 at a significant level of .00. Therefore, informational influence and value-expressive influence play most active role in effecting consumer on product decision toward mobile phone than on normative influence.

According to the result of consumer's brand decision, handbag brand has shown to be affected by informational influence with a mean of 2.56 and value-expressive influence with a mean of 2.50 (see Table 4.16) more than normative influence with a mean of 2.19. The *F*-test result is 29.67 at the significant level of .00.

Therefore, individual is more likely be influenced by informational influence and value-expressive influence toward handbag decision more than normative influence.

The result of decision on perfume brand has shown to be most affected by informational influence with a mean of 2.58 followed by value-expressive with a mean of 2.46 and then normative influence with a mean of 2.17. The *F*-test value of perfume brand decision is 34.44 at the significant level of .00.

Table 4.16 Comparison for the Brand Types

	Normative Influence	Informational Influence	Value- expressive Influence	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Post-hoc Analysis
	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>			
Handbag	2.19	2.56	2.50	29.67	.00	(2), (3) > (1)
Perfume	2.17	2.58	2.46	34.44	.00	(2) > (3) > (1)
Mobile Phone	2.29	2.98	2.54	92.38	.00	(2) > (3) > (1)
Total	2.22	2.71	2.50	108.45	.00	(2) > (3) > (1)

Lastly, the result of consumer's decision on perfume brand is similar to the result of mobile phone brand as informational influence with a mean of 2.98 has the most impact on consumer's brand decision more than value-expressive with a mean of 2.54 and followed by normative influence with a mean of 2.29. The *F*-test result of mobile phone is 92.38 at a significant level of .00. Therefore, individual's brand decision of mobile phone tends to be affected by informational influence more than value-expressive influence and normative influence, respectively.

Differences between Product and Brand Decisions

In this part, paired samples *t*-test is employed to compare between consumer's

product and brand decisions toward each type of product and types of reference group influence.

When comparing handbag product over handbag brand, the result shows that in overall, handbag brand has a slightly higher mean of 2.42 (see Table 4.17) compared to handbag product with a mean of 2.39. Therefore, handbag has non-significant result in the analysis.

Table 4.17 Product vs Brand Decisions

		Product	Brand	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>		
Handbag	Normative Influence	2.14	2.19	-1.66	.10
	Informational Influence	2.55	2.56	-2.42	.81
	Value-expressive Influence	2.49	2.50	-.49	.63
	Total	2.39	2.42	-1.34	.18
Perfume	Normative Influence	2.11	2.12	-1.72	.10
	Informational Influence	2.43	2.58	-4.29	.00
	Value-expressive Influence	2.48	2.46	.84	.40
	Total	2.34	2.40	-3.37	.00

Table 4.17 (continued)

		Product	Brand	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>M</i>		
Mobile Phone	Normative Influence	2.22	2.29	-1.99	.047
	Informational Influence	2.70	2.98	-8.11	.00
	Value- expressive Influence	2.55	2.54	.40	.69
Total		2.49	2.60	-5.95	.00

For perfume product and perfume brand, informational influence is the only type of influence out of three that shows a significant level of .00 which perfume brand has a higher mean of 2.58 than perfume product with a mean of 2.43.

It turns out that mobile phone brand has a higher mean of 2.29 on the normative influence compared to mobile phone product with a mean of 2.22 in which the *t*-test value is -1.99 at the significant level of .047. On the other hand, mobile phone brand also results in a higher mean of 2.98 on informational influence which is more than mobile phone product with a mean of 2.70. In addition, the *t*-test value of mobile phone is -8.11 at a significant level of .00.

Part IV Additional Findings

After the results have been shown through the statistics, it can be seen that there are few areas remain interesting to explore. Therefore, more research have been studied for additional findings involve with the differences between consumer's

decision on product and brand decisions toward the types of influence among public and private university students.

For the overall types of influence on consumer's product decision shows that only one out of three cases are shown to be significant at the level of .00 (see Table 4.18). Firstly, normative influence shows that private university students are more likely to be affected on product decision than public university students with a mean of 2.25 and 2.02, respectively, and the *t*-test value is -4.09.

Table 4.18 Public vs. Private University Students on Overall Types of Influence

	Product				Brand			
	Public	Private	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Public	Private	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Normative Influence	2.02	2.25	-4.09	.00	2.43	2.69	-3.69	.00
Informational Influence	2.53	2.57	-.525	.60	2.03	2.35	-4.27	.00
Value-expressive Influence	2.43	2.69	-1.11	.27	2.42	2.59	-2.50	.01
Total	2.35	2.47	-2.41	.02	2.37	2.58	-3.80	.00

On the other hand, the results of brand decision among university students also show that normative influence is likely impact on private university students with a mean of 2.69 more than on public university students with a mean of 2.43 at a significant level of .00 with the *t*-test value of -3.69.

For informational influence, it is found that private university students with a mean of 2.35 are affected by informational influence more than public university students with a mean of 2.03 at the significant level of .00. Moreover, private

university students with a mean of 2.59 are more affected by value-expressive influence more than public university students with a mean of 2.42 at a significant level of .01. Therefore, private university students are shown to be affected by all types of influence more than public university students toward both product and brand decisions.

In overall of types of product, all types of product in product decisions are found to be within the significant level of .05 (see Table 4.19).

Table 4.19 Public vs. Private University Students on Overall Types of Product

	Product				Brand			
	Public	Private	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Public	Private	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Handbag	2.27	2.41	-2.73	.01	2.31	2.56	-4.13	.00
Perfume	2.22	2.37	-2.72	.01	2.31	2.52	-3.58	.00
Mobile Phone	2.36	2.50	-2.37	.02	2.55	2.70	-2.50	.01
Total	2.28	2.42	-2.82	.01	2.39	2.59	-3.69	.00

The findings show that private university students are likely influenced on all types of product including mobile phone with the highest mean of 2.50, handbag with a mean of 2.41, and perfume with a mean of 2.37 more than public university students with a mean of 2.36, 2.27, and 2.22, respectively. On the other hand, the result has shown that private university students have been impacted by brand decision toward mobile phone brand (mean is 2.70), handbag brand (mean is 2.56), and perfume brand (mean is 2.52) more than public university students (means are 2.55, 2.31, and 2.31, respectively).

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Discussion

During the 1980s, reference group influences are widely known among consumer researchers which have shown to effect on an individual's purchase decision on product and brand by the three types of reference group influences as normative, informational, and value-expressive influence (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989; Brinberg & Plimpton, 1986; Childers & Rao, 1992). Meanwhile, people nowadays tend to behave differently from the past, especially young adults who tend to switch brands and result in declining on brand loyalty. Therefore, it is very essential for marketers to understand the behavior of young adult consumers as they often establish their brand preference during the age of 15 to 25 years old and might be developed as brand loyalty later in the future (Taylor & Cosenza, 2002).

In order to understand how reference group influences on young adult consumer's product and brand decisions, three product categories were tested and selected to represent a) publicly-consumed, luxurious product (handbags), b) publicly-consumed, necessary product (mobile phones), and c) privately-consumed, luxurious product (perfumes). However, the last product type, privately-consumed, necessary product, was not studied since Bearden and Etzel (1982) mentioned that it has not received influence from the reference group.

Thus, these are the reasons behind the study of reference group influences on young adult consumer's product and brand decisions while using survey research

method to foresee the result of analysis. This chapter includes the summary of data analysis, discussion, directions for future research, and practical implications.

Summary

According to all 400 samples that were collected from the research survey, there are 202 young adult women (50.5 percent) and 198 young adult men (49.5 percent) whereas majority age of 234 samples are around 20 – 22 years old (58.5 percent). Moreover, 164 samples (41.2 percent) received monthly allowance around 5,001-10,000 Baht. Meanwhile, 200 undergraduate students (50.0 percent) are studying in public universities and the other 200 undergraduate students (50.0 percent) are studying in private universities. Within the universities, 303 samples (75.8 percent) are studying in regular programs while only 97 samples (24.2 percent) are studying in international programs. It is also found from the research that there are 282 samples (71.2 percent) who are studying in non-science fields while 114 samples (28.8 percent) are studying in science fields.

There are three types of product used within this survey research, which are handbags, perfumes, and mobile phones which represent the three dimensions of product which are publicly-consumed luxury product, privately-consumed necessity product, and publicly-consumed necessity product, respectively.

Hence, the result of analysis on influences of reference groups on product and brand decisions can be presented as influences of reference group on consumer's product and brand decisions, differences between product and brand types, and the differences between product and brand decisions.

Reference Group Influences on Consumer's Product and Brand Decisions

Overall, the questions for reference group influences toward product decision consist of 17 items measuring normative influence (8 questions), informational influence (4 questions) (Bearden et al., 1989) and value-expressive influence (5 questions) (Park & Lessig, 1977). Four-pointed, Likert scale is employed whereas three product categories (handbag, perfume, and mobile phone) were selected to measure an individual's purchase on product decision. The results of types of reference group influence on product decision shows that normative influence has an effect on consumer's decision on publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) with a mean of 2.22 more than privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) with a mean of 2.11. Moreover, informational influence is found to impact on consumer's decision toward publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) with a mean of 2.70 more than publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) with a mean of 2.55 and privately-consumed necessity product (perfume) with a mean of 2.43. However, value-expressive influence does not show any significant result.

The measurement of reference group influences toward brand decision is consisted of 14 questions which contain 4 questions of normative influence, 5 questions of informational influence, and 5 questions of value-expressive influence (Park & Lessig, 1977). Surprisingly, informational influence turns out to be the only type of influence which is similar to the product decision that publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) with a mean of 2.98 is still the most effective product category that is affected by informational influence, followed by publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) with a mean of 2.56, and then privately-consumed necessity product (perfume) with a mean of 2.43.

Differences between Product and Brand Types

Aside from the types reference group influence on product and brand decisions, types of product can also be implied for some of the useful results. According to the survey research, publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) and privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) are shown with the similar result. For publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag), it is shown that informational influence with a mean of 2.55 and value-expressive influence with a mean of 2.49 have more impact on consumer's product decision than normative influence with a mean of 2.14.

In a similar manner, consumer's product decision toward privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) is shown to be affected mostly by value-expressive influence with a mean of 2.48 and informational influence with a mean of 2.43 compared to normative influence with a mean of 2.11. On the other hand, it can be seen orderly that publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) is affected by informational influence with a mean of 2.70, followed by value-expressive influence with a mean of 2.55, and then normative influence with a mean of 2.22.

Not only types of product that shows a significantly result, but types of brand also show the same result but when involving with brand, informational influence, again, became the most effective approach toward all types of product studied. Started with publicly-consumed necessity product (handbag brand), informational influence with a mean of 2.56 and value-expressive influence with a mean of 2.50 are shown to have more impact on consumer's brand decision than normative influence with a mean of 2.19. Meanwhile, Informational influence has the highest effect on publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone brand) with a mean of 2.98 and privately-

consumed luxury product (perfume brand) with a mean of 2.58, followed by value-expressive influence and then normative influence, respectively.

Differences between Product and Brand Decisions

When comparing between product and brand decisions, publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) is found to be affected by informational influence on brand decision (mean is 2.98) more than product decision (mean is 2.70) while normative influence is also likely to be most influenced on individual's brand decision (mean is 2.29) than product decision (mean is 2.22).

Informational influence is the only type of influence in privately-consumed luxury product (perfume). As a result, individual is more likely to be influenced by informational influence toward brand decision (mean is 2.58) more than product decision (mean is 2.43). Nevertheless, none of the result in publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) is shown to be affected by the three types of influence toward product and brand decisions.

Additional Findings

Apart from the reference group influences, types of product and brand, and the differences between products and brands, the results have remained some other noteworthy outcomes to be studied. University is one of the demographics within the research that there is a different between public and private university students toward the three types of reference group influence and the types of product and brand.

It is found that normative influence has an effect on public and private university students on product decisions. Individuals who are studying in private

universities (mean is 2.25) are likely to be more influenced by normative approach than individuals who are studying in public universities (mean is 2.02). Meanwhile, informational influence and value-expressive influence have shown non-significantly different results.

In contrast of consumer's product decision, all types of influence in brand decision are found to have significant results. Normative influence is more likely to affect more on private university students (mean is 2.69) than on public university students (mean is 2.43). Similarly, informational influence is also resulted to be more effective on private university students (mean is 2.35) than on public university students (mean is 2.03) while value-expressive influence also shows the same outcome where private university students (mean is 2.59) are more affected by value-expressive influence than those who are studying in public university (mean is 2.42

Another additional data that is found from the research survey involves with the types of product and brand toward public and private university students. For product decision, private university students are shown to be influenced by publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone), publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag), and privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) (means are 2.50, 2.41, and 2.37, respectively) more than public university students (means are 2.36, 2.27, and 2.22, respectively).

The results in brand decision show that private university students tend to be more influenced by publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone), publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag), and privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) (means are 2.70, 2.56, and 2.52, respectively) than public university students (means are 2.55, 2.31, and 2.31, respectively).

Discussion

Based on the summarized data from the research results, it is discussed and clearly divided into 2 parts which are types of reference group influences on product and brand decisions, and the types of product and brand.

Types of Reference Group Influences on Product and Brand Decisions

In order to measure the three types of reference group influences on product and brand decisions, scales from Bearden et al. (1989) and Park and Lessig (1977) are borrowed to ensure reliability and validity. In measuring reference group influences on product decision, the survey is consisted of 17 questions while a total of 14 questions are used to measure reference group influences on brand decision. In addition, the three types of product decision that were used to measure in this research are handbag (publicly-consumed luxury), perfume (privately-consumed luxury), and mobile phone (publicly-consumed necessity).

Types of Reference Group Influences on Product Decision

Within the research study, the three types of reference group influences on product decision is measured based on the 7-pointed Likert scale developed from Bearden et al. (1989) on 8 questions of normative influence and 4 questions of informational influence, ranging from 7 as strongly agree to 1 as strongly disagree while 6-pointed, Likert scale is used based on Park and Lessig (1977) to measure value-expressive influence which consists of 5 questions. This research adapted the scale into 4-pointed, Likert scale in order to eliminate respondent's neutral decision.

According to the result on types of influence on product decision, informational influence is the most effective approach to influence on consumer's

decision on publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) more than publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag), and privately-consumed luxury product (perfume).

Since the young adults or the generation Y who were born during 1977 to 1994 have grown up in the age of information technology therefore, they must stay connected online all the time. The characteristics of the young adults in generation Y are that they are unique and have a strong sense of independence (K. C. Williams, Page, Petrosky, & Hernandez, 2010). Hence, mobile phone which represents publicly-consumed necessity is needed among digital-savvy in this generation as their must-have item. The findings in this research confirms the findings of Bearden and Etzel (1982) that the luxury-necessity of product dimension show the most significant result on consumer's perception toward informational reference group influence. Moreover, informational influence is more likely to impact on consumer's decision on mobile phone more than other types of product because it is comparable in terms of the specification and functional attribute. Besides, consumer often consults peers whenever one is lack of experience of product usage as it is publicly-consumed necessity product.

Apart from informational influence on consumer's product selection of publicly-consumed luxury product (mobile phone), young adults also tend to search for information before they purchase an expensive product like a luxurious handbag (publicly-consumed luxury product) in an in-store shop (Chehab & Benjaminsen, 2013). Moreover, Asare (2014) supports the findings with the study from Albatross Global Solutions that around 54 percent of luxury consumers seek for information on luxury product mainly from the in-store shop before they purchase the product (Asare,

2014). In addition, Makgosa and Mohube (2007) also mention that young adults tend to comply with expectation from peers and seek for information from them whenever the product is observed when consumed which corresponds with the findings in the research (Makgosa & Mohube, 2007).

Even though informational influence has less impact on consumer's decision on privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) compared to publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone), many studies agree that consumer seeks for information on all types of luxury product before purchasing it to reassure that they have chosen the best one (Chehab & Benjaminsen, 2013; Dauriz, Remy, & Sandri, 2014).

Normative influence is another type of influence that has an effect on product decision mainly on publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) since it is a necessary product that one needs to own to stay connected with members in the group where one belongs (Zimbardo, 2014). However, in this case, having or not having publicly-consumed necessity or mobile phone does not result as a punishment but one need to conform to own the product in order to show one's presented and stay connected with the group. Yet, it sometimes involves with increasing impression from others toward oneself which Burnkrant and Cousineau's (1975) findings also add that consumers normally buy the same product with the member in the group. This is not because of self-filling of oneself or others or to obtain reward or avoid punishment, but rather to purchase what they perceived as a good product. Moreover, nowadays, people need to get access to information through internet. Hence, publicly-consumed necessity product or mobile phone serves as a main source of internet access while owning mobile phone in this context symbolizing them as well-educated persons who

own technology asset with an affordable income to afford a smartphone (Smith, 2011).

The reason that normative influence has a less effect on privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) than publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) is because privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) is owned and consumed inconspicuously. Makgosa and Mohube's (2007) findings coincide with the result in this research which state that since product is not publicly-consumed on everyday basis, the motivation to comply the expectation of the group member is lesser compared to the consumption of publicly-consumed product.

Value-expressive influence or comparative influence is one of the three types of influence that has an effect on consumer's attitude, values, and behavior through psychological contact in order to express one's self-image to conform within the group (Park & Lessig, 1977). Moreover, it is an influence that individual may be impacted by celebrity influence (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). However, the result has shown that value-expressive influence has failed to influence on consumer's product selection on all three types of product including handbag (PUL), perfume (PRL), and mobile phone (PUN). At the same time, Brinberg and Plimpton (1986) also have the same stand point that the mean values of value-expressive influence are slightly different. Therefore, value-expressive influence and normative influence are similar in terms of influence that motivate behavior based on the expectation which, at the end, value-expressive is derived from normative pressure. Therefore, many studies have seen value-expressive influence as another component of normative influence (Bearden et al., 1989; Brinberg & Plimpton, 1986; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975; Grimm, Agrawal, & Richardson, 1999).

Types of Reference Group Influences on Brand Decision

Aside from measuring the reference group influences on product decision, the scale developed from Park and Lessig (1977) is also used to measure all three types of influence on brand decision which consist of 4 questions on normative influence, 5 questions on informational influence, and 5 questions on value-expressive influence. An original 6-pointed, Likert scale was adapted to 4-pointed Likert scale is adapted to employ in the survey in order to reduce the respondent's exhaustion.

The most and the only type of influence that is shown to effect on the consumer's brand decision is the informational influence. Among the three types of product dimensions, informational influence is mainly influencing on publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone), followed by publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag), and then privately-consumed luxury product (perfume), respectively. Based on the result, family serves as an informative influencer on brand preference in every type of product dimensions as most of Thai students are given allowance by their parents or family which they would somehow have an influence on an individual's decision. Tovikkai and Jirawattananukool's (2010) work is found to support with the findings (Tovikkai & Jirawattananukool, 2010).

When brand decision is involved based on Keller (1993), consumer knowledge of brand determines how one perceived about the brand especially, in this case that informational influence play the most active role in influencing consumer on brand decision toward publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) because the product is to be consumed in the public. Childers and Rao (1992) suggest that consumer tends to be influenced on brand decision toward publicly-consumed

necessity product since a specific brand is being consumed conspicuously that it will likely attract peer influence. As a result, this leads to several influencing factors that effect on brand purchase decision that consumer tends to seek for information about brand from various sources including reviews and recommendations from friends and experts in order to reassure their risk of purchasing the brand (Laja, 2014).

Publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) came after publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) as the second in the rank of brand decision to be influenced by informational influence. Although, it is luxurious product where consumers seek for pleasure when consuming the brand but consumers tend to be influenced by informational influence to cope with the risk of uncertainty in purchasing the brand. In contrast, publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) is based on necessity product where consumers tend to seek for the value of brand's functional attributes. In consequence, consumers are likely to be influenced by informational influence on brand decision toward publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) more than publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) (Batra & Ahtola, 1990).

Informational influence is still having a minor influence on privately-consumed luxury compared with the two previous types of product dimension, since the brand is being consumed privately. In addition, Childers and Rao (1991) findings show that there is a weak link on brand influence among peers while appeared as a strong link among family members in influencing the product decision since it is not being consumed conspicuously. Therefore, the results of consumer's brand decision on privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) toward informational influence is different from product decision where consumers are strongly influenced by peers.

Aside from informational influence that has an effect on individual's brand decision, normative influence and value-expressive influence do not have an impact on consumer's brand decision while Tran, Balas, Shao, Dubinsky, and Jackson (2014) discuss in their research findings that brand decision is derived from a social norm in a group which an individual is motivated to follow by making a brand selection (Tran, Balas, Shao, Dubinsky, & Jackson, 2014). However, different places or organizations contain different standards and norms (Americorps, 2014) which result as respondents using varieties of brand, and does not show any influence on consumer's brand decision in any type of product dimensions.

Despite many studies mentioning that value-expressive influence is a component of normative influence, value-expressive influence is a type of influence that involves with social class and self-image. Likewise, all of the three types of product dimension represent one's self in different ways with a similar degree level of influence, such as level of education and occupation, income, and social status (Roach, 2014)

Furthermore, there are noteworthy results from the research findings that normative influence can influence on private university students more than public university students on product decision. Meanwhile, all three types of influence can also influence on brand decision among private university students compared to public university students. Surprisingly, there is a very limited research about this issue in Thailand. According to Marin and Siehl (1983), organization culture creates attitude, behavior, value, norms, and custom but those are different among groups or organizations (Martin & Siehl, 1983). Ramachandran, Chong, and Ismail (2011) also support that cultural value helps shape the environment within the organization which

in this context, public and private university students behaved differently in a culturally diverse environment (Ramachandran, Chong, & Ismail, 1987).

Product and Brand Types

The second part is focusing on the types of product and brand which there are many studies that have been exploring within similar topic of product and brand types (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992; Makgosa & Mahube, 2007; Park & Lessig, 1977). Nevertheless, this research employs the three types of product dimensions consisting of publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag), privately-consumed luxury product (perfume), and publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone).

Product Types

In the types of product on publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag), it is likely that informational influence and value-expressive influence have effects on publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) more than normative influence does. Since the product is consumed in the public while it has a degree of luxury, this tends to drive attention among peer influences (Childers & Rao, 1992). Makgosa and Mohube (2007) findings also coincide that young adults tend to conform the expectation of their peers while seeking for information from them regardless of luxury or necessity. Meanwhile, value-expressive influence is another approach that is shown to have an effect on consumer's decision on the type of product. Whereas McFerran, Aquino, and Tracy (2014) findings show that one consumes luxury product in the public while at the same time gaining pleasure and enhancing self-esteem from owning the product which represents social status, wealth, and exclusiveness

(McFerran, Aquino, & Tracy, 2014). Nevertheless, normative influence only shows a slight effect on influencing an individual's decision on publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) as normally normative influence is to reflect on one's motivation to comply in order to avoid punishment or receive a reward. However, in this case, it is to gain social acceptance from the group members (Childers & Rao, 1992).

Consumer's decision on privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) is mainly influenced by value-expressive influence and informational influence more than normative influence. Since the product is not consumed in public, one usually seeks for social gratification and personal achievement with the pleasure of owning or using the product (Tovikkai & Jirawattananukool, 2010). In the meantime, informational influence also plays a role in influencing an individual on decision due to its luxurious-based nature and high-involvement type of product. In consequence, one must find information about the product before purchasing it. Lastly, it is obviously that normative influence has the least effect on consumer's product type of decision because it is a privately consumed product which has no peer pressuring effects (Childers & Rao, 1992).

Beside of publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) and privately-consumed luxury product (perfume), consumer's decision on publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) is found to be most influenced by informational approach. The reason behind this is because the product is being consumed in the public and it is a necessary product that one needs to own it. Then, one needs information in order to make careful judgment on the product by seeking for more recommendations from people around them as a useful reference to reduce the social risk (Yi, Yuan, & Kumah, 2013). Moreover, experienced internet users often search

for more product information from many websites online (M. R. Ward & Lee, 2000). Meanwhile, in this research value-expressive influence also plays a lesser the role in influencing consumer's decision on privately-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) compared with informational influence. But in this case where mobile phone is used to represent this type of product, it is also seen as a reflection of educational level, income level, and digital savvy (Smith, 2011). And again, normative influence came last but it does not mean that individual is not affected by normative influence. Therefore, an individual is shown to be affected by normative influence when purchasing the type of product studied in order to be accepted and stay connected among members in the group.

Brand Types

Consumer's decision on the types of brands containing publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone), publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag), and privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) are shown with the similar results. Based on the findings, publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) is shown to be influenced by informational approach and value-expressive approach more than normative approach since the product is luxurious and being consumed conspicuously. Publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone) and privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) are also shown to be affected by informational influence, followed by value-expressive influence, and then normative influence. While informational influence has the highest effect on consumer's brand decision, value-expressive influence and normative influence came after from the rank. According to Ward and Lee (2000) brand names is represented as consumers'

gathering for direct information, especially on the internet whereas Moorthy, Ratchford, and Talukdar (1997) findings found that when there is a relative uncertainty about brands which mean consumers are uncertainty about which brand is the best, it leads to an increasing of information search. However, when experience about the brand increases, the information search about the brand decreases (Moorthy, Ratchford, & Talukdar, 1997).

While Nelissen and Meijers' (2010) findings support that value-expressive influence is seen to have an effect on consumer's decision on brand in every type of product dimensions because luxury consumption enhance social status. This leads to normative influence to have an effect on consumer that the conspicuous displays of luxury produce benefit in terms of social interaction and create more trustworthy perception among others. Nevertheless, normative influence is the type of influence that is found to have least effect on young adult towards both product and brand types as they are the new generation who seek for information from others to ensure value and quality of the product or brand. Based on the findings, young adults do not just follow the norm in the society but rather search for information before purchasing product and brand (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011).

According to the additional findings, private university students are likely to be influenced on all three types of product and brand decisions more than public university students. Pusser and Loss (2014) defines that each university has different institutional type, culture, and its history which helps create the university environment (Pusser & Loss, 2014). Kaushik (2011) also adds that the cost of education in private universities is higher than in public universities. Thus, people

often perceived that students who are studying in private universities seem to be richer than public university students. Therefore, it is likely that private university students are competing on owning brand over one another within different environment conditions (Kaushik, 2011).

Differences between Product and Brand Decisions

In terms of consumer's product and brand decisions of publicly-consumed necessity product (mobile phone), informational influence and normative influence are shown to be influenced on consumer's decision. According to the results, consumer is being influenced on brand decisions more than product decisions. Meanwhile, consumer seeks for information in terms of product image and quality to reduce their uncertain of product and brand (Naing & Chaipoopirutana, 2014). Although, privately-consumed luxury product (perfume) is shown to be influenced by informational influence more on brand decisions rather than product decisions, but publicly-consumed luxury product (handbag) has no effect on any types of influence due to variety of brands among the respondents (Naing & Chaipoopirutana, 2014). In addition, value-expressive influence does not show any significant result between product and brand decisions whereas there are many research studies that have similar results and have gone back to support Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) work that there are only two types of influence which are normative influence and informational influence (Bearden et al., 1989; Brinberg & Plimpton, 1986; Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). While Brinberg and Plimpton's (1986) studies perceived value-expressive influence as one component to accomplish normative influence, Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) also perceived that value-expressive influence belongs to normative influence that it is a consequence of observing other people's reaction.

Directions for Future Research

The research aims to study on the reference group influence on young adult's product and brand decisions. Nevertheless, this study only focuses on young adults with the age range of 17 to 24 years old who are financially supported by their parents and will become a large target group in the future. Therefore, it is suggested for future research to expand the age segmentation to compare and contrast on the reference group influences on consumer's product and brand decisions on other age groups, such as high school students and office workers within the context of Thailand in order to see a transition between ages and which types of influence can effect on each target group. Moreover, it can also be done to compare and contrast on reference group influences on product and brand decisions among different generations, such as generation z, generation x, and the baby boomer.

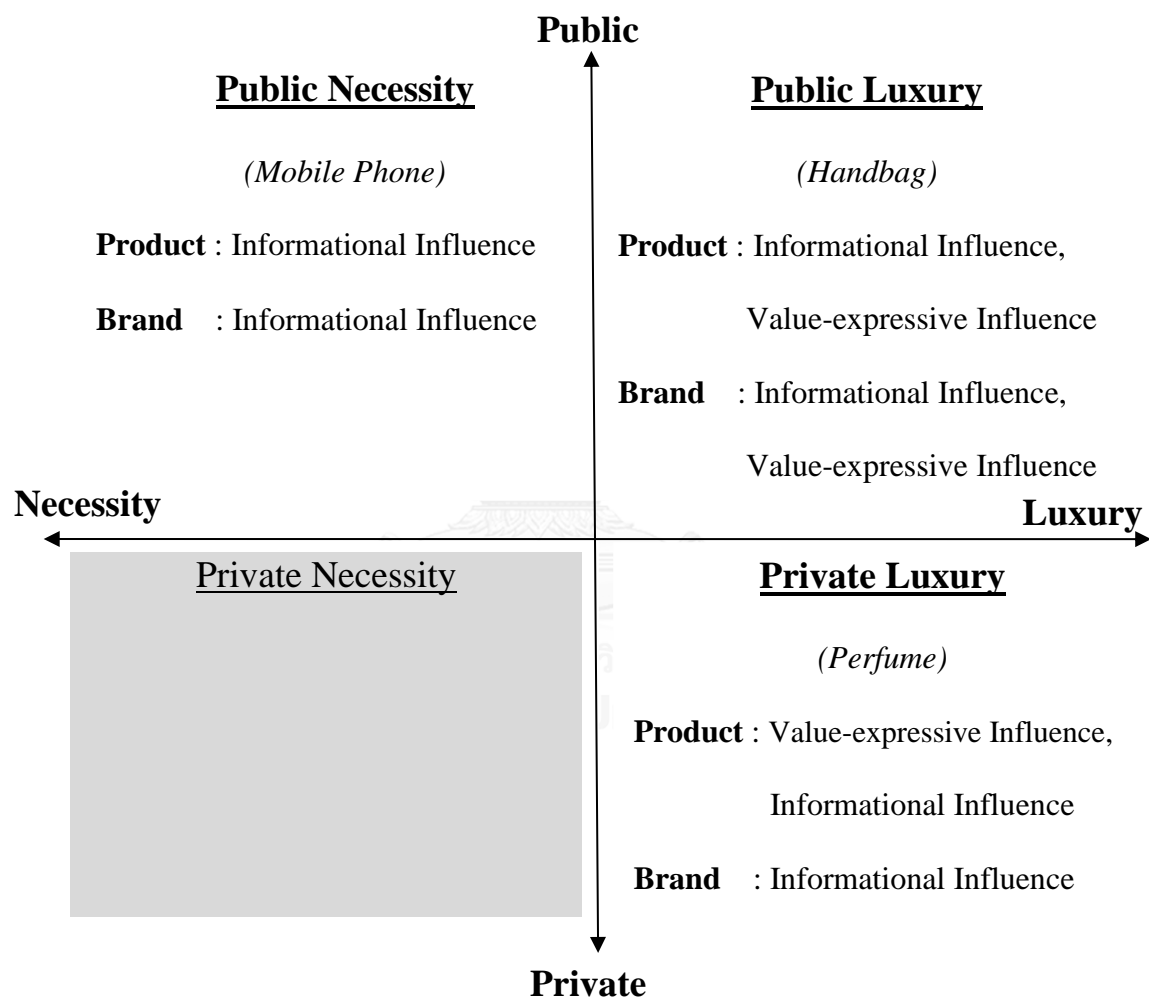
Since this research has already been studied employing quantitative method, a qualitative method can also be used for future research on reference group influences on consumer's product and brand decisions, such as an in-depth interviews to collect more detail personally without others' interference. A group discussion can also be employed in order to tackle the thoughts and attitudes toward the group. Lastly, an experimental design may also be used to observe an individual's behavior and factors influencing them.

Practical Implications

It is stated in the beginning of the study that this research intends to give a better understanding and strengthen the importance of reference group influences on an individual's product and brand decisions. Within the exploring topic, informational

influence is considered as the most effective influence that has an effect on an individual's product and brand decisions as the product is being conspicuously consumed while in another case is that the product is luxurious-based nature (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Public-Private and Luxury-Necessity Dimensions



While informational approach has an effect on product decision on public necessity (mobile phone), it also has an effect on brand decision as well. Therefore, it is crucial for marketers to be informative by using various techniques to attract consumer since the product and brand is conspicuously consumed. Hence, young

adult targets tend to seek information from their family, peers, experts, and reviewing website about the product or brand in order to reduce performance risk, physical risk, psychological risk, and social risk.

For public luxury (handbag), product decision is shown to be influenced mostly by informational influence and value-expressive influence while brand decision shown with the similar results. Therefore, this can be implied that marketers should provide enough information in order to ensure the quality and strengthen the brand image of the product and brand so that consumers can perceive the value from owning or using it. Moreover, marketers should promote self-fulfillment based on value-expressive approach in order to enhance on a self-uplifting emotional feeling since it is luxurious-based type of product which is consumed in the public. Therefore, it is very important toward one's self on how others perceive of them.

Lastly, value-expressive influence and informational influence are shown to be effective on product decision in private luxury (perfume) as it is privately consumed and others do not perceive that one is using it. However, owning the private luxury product or brand can fulfill an individual's self-esteem which an individual tends to seek for pleasure when consuming it. On the other hand, marketers should ensure that consumers can access to information available through various channels whenever they want.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire Survey on Consumer Behavior on Product Selection

This research survey is for a thesis submitted in a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University. This study aims to explore on “Consumer Behavior on Product Selection.” Therefore, your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Please read and answer the following questions down below, as this can be beneficial for educational purpose in the future. All information gathered in this form will remain confidential and will only be held on the overall picture of the results.

Screening Questions

Please complete all questions and mark ✓ in the bracket () that represents you

1. I am currently using handbag

() 1. Yes () 2. No (End the interview)

2. I am currently using perfume

() 1. Yes () 2. No (End the interview)

3. I am currently using mobile phone

() 1. Yes () 2. No (End the interview)

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire Survey on Consumer Behavior on Product Selection

This Rresearch survey is for a thesis submitted in a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University. This study aims to explore on “Consumer Behavior on Product Selection.” Therefore, your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Please read and answer the following questions down below, as this can be beneficial for educational purpose in the future. All information gathered in this form will remain confidential and will only be held on the overall picture of the results.

Part 1

Please complete all questions and mark ✓ in the bracket () that represents you

1. Your gender

() 1. Woman () 2. Man

2. Your age

() 1. 17 - 19 years old () 2. 20 - 22 years old
() 3. 23 - 24 years old

3. Average allowance per month is

() 1. ฿5,000 or lower () 2. ฿5,001 – ฿10,000
() 3. ฿10,001 – ฿15,000 () 4. ฿15,001 – ฿20,000
() 5. ฿20,001 or higher

4. I am studying in

() 1. International Program () 2. Thai Program

5. I am studying at

Faculty:_____

Part 2

Please mark a ✓ in the box that represents your feeling toward given product categories (Handbag, Perfume, and Mobile Phone). Please complete all questions.

The scales are ranging from 4 = strongly agreed, 3 = slightly agreed, 2 = slightly disagreed, to 1 = strongly disagreed

No.	Statement	Handbag				Perfume				Mobile Phone			
		4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
1.	I rarely purchase the latest until I am sure my friends approve of them.												
2.	It is important that others like the that I buy.												
3.	When buying, I generally purchase those that I think others will approve of.												
4.	If other people can see me using a, I often purchase what they expect me to buy.												
5.	I like to know which make good impressions on others.												
6.	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same that others purchase.												
7.	If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same that they buy.												
8.	I often identify with other people by purchasing the same they purchase.												

Part 3

1. Please write down your most favorite “*brand*” that you are using in the three blanks down below with the three given product categories.

1. Handbag: _____

2. Perfume: _____

3. Mobile Phone: _____

2. First, please fill the name of brands from question 1 on the top of the table. Then, mark the ✓ in the box that represents your feeling toward each brand name.

The scales are ranging from 4 = strongly agreed, 3 = slightly agreed, 2 = slightly disagreed, to 1 = strongly disagreed

No.	Statement	(Handbag)				(Perfume)				(Mobile Phone)			
		4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
1.	I seek information about various brands of the from an association of professionals or group of experts.												
2.	I seek information from those who work with the as a profession.												
3.	I seek related knowledge and experience (such as how Brand A’s performance compares to Brand B’s) from friends who have reliable information about the												

No.	Statement	----- (Handbag)				----- (Perfume)				----- (Mobile Phone)			
		4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
4.	I select the that is already approved by an independent testing agency.												
5.	I select the from observing of what experts use.												
6.	I decide to purchase a particular to satisfy the expectations of my friend's preference.												
7.	I decide to purchase a particular by the preferences of people that I have social interaction with.												
8.	I decide to purchase a particular by the preference of my family members.												
9.	I feel that the desire to satisfy the expectations that other have of me has an impact on my choice of.....												
10.	I feel that the purchase or use of a particular will enhance my image that others have of me.												
11.	I feel that the purchase or use of a particular possess the characteristics that I would like to have.												
12.	I sometimes feel that it would be nice to be like the type of person which advertisements show using a particular												

No.	Statement	----- (Handbag)				----- (Perfume)				----- (Mobile Phone)			
		4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
13.	I feel that the people who purchase a particular are admired or respected by others.												
14.	I feel that the purchase of a particular helps me show others what I am like, or would like to be.												

Thank you for your cooperation! ☺



APPENDIX C

แบบสอบถาม

เรื่องพฤติกรรมผู้บริโภคต่อการเลือกสินค้า

แบบสอบถามนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการทำวิทยานิพนธ์ของนิสิตชั้นปริญญาโท คณะนิเทศศาสตร์ จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย เรื่อง “พฤติกรรมผู้บริโภคต่อการเลือกสินค้า” จึงใคร่ขอความร่วมมือจากท่าน โปรดตอบคำถามตามความเป็นจริง เพื่อจะนำไปใช้ประโยชน์ทางการศึกษาต่อไป โดยข้อมูลที่ท่านตอบในแบบสอบถามทั้งหมดจะถือเป็นความลับ ซึ่งผู้วิจัยจะนำเสนอผลแต่เพียงภาพรวมเท่านั้น

คำชี้แจง กรุณาตอบคำถามโดยทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ในช่องว่าง () ที่ตรงกับท่านเพียงข้อเดียว และกรุณาตอบให้ครบทุกข้อ

- ในปัจจุบัน ท่านใช้กระเป๋าถือ/กระเป๋าสะพายไหล่หรือไม่
() 1. ใช่ () 2. ไม่ใช่
(ปิดการสัมภาษณ์)
- ในปัจจุบัน ท่านใช้น้ำหอมใช่หรือไม่
() 1. ใช่ () 2. ไม่ใช่
(ปิดการสัมภาษณ์)
- ในปัจจุบัน ท่านใช้โทรศัพท์มือถือใช่หรือไม่
() 1. ใช่ () 2. ไม่ใช่
(ปิดการสัมภาษณ์)

ส่วนที่ 1

คำชี้แจง กรุณาตอบคำถามโดยทำเครื่องหมาย ✓ ในช่องว่าง () ที่ตรงกับท่านเพียงข้อเดียว และกรุณาตอบให้ครบทุกข้อ

1. เพศของท่าน

- () 1. ผู้หญิง () 2. ผู้ชาย

2. อายุของท่าน

- () 1. 17 - 19 ปี () 2. 20 - 22 ปี
() 3. 23 - 24 ปี

3. รายได้ของท่านเฉลี่ยต่อเดือน

- () 1. 5,000 บาท หรือน้อยกว่า () 2. 5,001 – 10,000 บาท
() 3. 10,001 – 15,000 บาท () 4. 15,001 – 20,000 บาท
() 5. 20,001 บาท หรือมากกว่า

4. ท่านศึกษาใน

- () 1. หลักสูตรนานาชาติ () 2. หลักสูตรไทย

4. ท่านกำลังศึกษาที่

คณะ: _____

ข้อที่	ข้อความ	กระเป่าถั่ว				น้ำหอม				โทรศัพท์มือถือ			
		4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
15.	บางครั้งฉันรู้สึกอยากเป็นเหมือน ดารา/นักร้องในโฆษณาที่กำลังใช้.....นั้น												
16.	ฉันรู้สึกว่าคนที่ซื้อ.....นี้ จะได้รับการชื่นชม หรือยอมรับจากคนรอบข้าง												
17.	ฉันรู้สึกว่าคนที่ซื้อ.....นี้ จะสามารถ สะท้อนสิ่งที่ฉันอยากจะเป็นได้												

ส่วนที่ 3

1. คำชี้แจง โปรดระบุ ชื่อแบรนด์ ของแต่ละประเภทสินค้าต่อไปนี้ที่ท่านใช้มากที่สุด 1 แบรนด์

1. กระเป่าถือ: _____
2. น้ำหอม: _____
3. โทรศัพท์มือถือ: _____

2. คำชี้แจง จากแบรนด์ที่ท่านตอบในข้อที่ 1 โปรดนำชื่อแบรนด์ทั้งสามมาใส่ในหัวตารางด้านล่าง และแสดงความคิดเห็นของท่านว่าท่านเห็นด้วยกับแต่ละข้อความและแต่ละแบรนด์ ที่ท่านใช้มากน้อยเพียงใด

เกณฑ์ในการวัด: เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง = 4, เห็นด้วย = 3, ไม่เห็นด้วย = 2, และ ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง = 1

ข้อที่	ข้อความ	-----				-----				-----			
		(กระเป่าถือ)				(น้ำหอม)				(โทรศัพท์มือถือ)			
		4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
1.	ฉันได้ค้นหาข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับ.....จากผู้เชี่ยวชาญหรือผู้มีความรู้เกี่ยวกับ.....ก่อนตัดสินใจซื้อ												
2.	ฉันได้ค้นหาข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับ.....จาก ผู้ที่ทำงาน เกี่ยวข้องกับ.....ก่อนตัดสินใจซื้อ												
3.	ฉันได้ถามหาข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับ.....และประสบการณ์ในการใช้ผลิตภัณฑ์ จากเพื่อนที่เคยใช้.....นั้น เพื่อให้เห็นความแตกต่างระหว่างแบรนด์ ก่อนตัดสินใจซื้อ												

ข้อที่	ข้อความ	----- (กระเป๋าสี)				----- (น้ำหอม)				----- (โทรศัพท์มือถือ)			
		4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
		4.	ฉันได้เลือกซื้อ.....ที่ได้รับ การรับรอง มาตรฐานจาก องค์กรที่น่าเชื่อถือ										
5.	ฉันได้เลือกซื้อ.....ตามที่ เห็น ผู้เชี่ยวชาญใช้												
6.	ฉันได้เลือกซื้อ.....ตาม ความชอบของเพื่อนๆ												
7.	ฉันได้เลือกซื้อ.....ตาม ความชอบของคนที่ฉัน สนิทหรือ มีปฏิสัมพันธ์ ด้วย												
8.	ฉันได้เลือกซื้อ.....ตาม ความชอบของคนใน ครอบครัว												
9.	ฉันคิดว่าการจะตอบ สนองความคาดหวังให้ ผู้อื่นพึงพอใจในตัวฉัน มี ผลกระทบต่อกาเลือก.....												
10.	ฉันรู้สึกว่าการซื้อหรือการ ใช้.....นี้จะ สามารถ เสริมสร้างภาพลักษณ์ ที่ คนอื่นมีต่อฉันได้												
11.	ฉันรู้สึกว่.....ที่ซื้อหรือใช้ อยู่ สามารถสะท้อนความ เป็นตัวฉันได้												

ข้อที่	ข้อความ	----- (กระเป๋าคู่)				----- (น้ำหอม)				----- (โทรศัพท์มือถือ)			
		4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
		12.	บางครั้งฉันรู้สึกอยากเป็นเหมือนดารา/ นักร้องในโฆษณาที่กำลังใช้.....นั้น										
13.	ฉันรู้สึกว่าคุณที่ชื่อ.....นี้จะได้รับ การชื่นชมหรือยอมรับจากคนรอบข้าง												
14.	ฉันรู้สึกว่าการที่ชื่อ.....นี้จะสามารถสะท้อนสิ่งที่คุณอยากจะเป็นได้												

ขอขอบพระคุณท่านที่ได้สละเวลาในการตอบแบบสอบถามค่ะ ☺

VITA

The author, Miss Nathathida Kovitcharoenkul, was born on September 1, 1991 in Bangkok, Thailand. In 2009, she attended the faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication (Media Studies) in an English program at Thammasat University. Right after she graduated in 2013, she pursued for master's degree in Strategic communication Management) at Chulalongkorn University in the same year.

